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Narodnost` and Obshchechelovechnost` in 19th century Russian missionary work: N.I.Il`minskii and the Christianization of the Chuvash

PhD Thesis submitted by Alison Ruth Kolosova

Material Abstract

Nikolai Il`minskii, a specialist in Arabic and the Turkic languages which he taught at the Kazan Theological Academy and Kazan University from the 1840s to 1860s, became in 1872 the Director of the Kazan Teachers' Seminary where the first teachers were trained for native-language schools among the Turkic and Finnic peoples of the Volga-Urals and Siberia. With the help of these teachers and their pupils, as well as those of other schools set up on his model, Il`minskii created alphabets and oversaw biblical and liturgical translations into their languages, thus paving the way for native-language Orthodox parishes with indigenous clergy.

The thesis explores the context in which Il`minskii's ideas arose and their impact on the Turkic Chuvash people of the Volga region from the 1870s to the 1920s. It traces how teachers and graduates of the Simbirsk Chuvash Teachers' School laid the foundations of Chuvash-language Orthodox parishes and liturgical life, leading to the indigenization of Orthodox Christianity among the Chuvash and the transformation, rather than the annihilation, of their traditional religious worldview and rites. The increased sense of Chuvash national consciousness *narodnost`* resulting from the creation of a Chuvash literary language used in schools and churches, was accompanied by a desire for recognition of their *obshchechelovechnost`*, their common humanity with all other peoples, which led after the 1917 Revolution to the pursuit of Chuvash political and ecclesial autonomy.

The thesis argues that it was Il`minskii's own writings and practices, defended from the 1880s as a continuation of Orthodox tradition rather than an innovation, which laid the foundation for what became known as the Cyrillo-Methodian Orthodox missionary tradition in the late 20th century.

Narodnost` and Obshchechelovechnost` in 19th century Russian missionary work:

N.I.Il`minskii and the Christianization of the Chuvash

PhD Thesis

Submitted at the Department of Theology and Religion

Durham University, United Kingdom

By

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Abbreviations

AChSSR	Autonomous Chuvash Soviet Socialist Republic
BFBS	British and Foreign Bible Society
BSG	Brotherhood of St Gurii
BSG TC	Brotherhood of St Gurii Translation Committee
CMS	Church Missionary Society
KCBTS	Kazan Central Baptised Tatar School
KMC	Kazan Missionary Courses
KTS	Kazan Teachers' Seminary
KYO	Kazanskii Uchebnyi Okrug (Kazan Educational District)
MNP	Ministerstvo Narodnogo Prosveshcheniia (Ministry of National Education)
NKVD	Narodnyi Komissariat Vnutrennykh Del (People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs)
OGPU	Ob`edinennoe Gosudarstvennoe Politicheskoe Upravlenie (Political organ combating anti-revolutionary activity in the autonomous republics and regions)
OMS	Orthodox Missionary Society
SCTS	Simbirsk Chuvash Teachers' School
UVMP	Union of Volga Minority Peoples

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Introduction

‘Does Kazan realize that on 30th December it buried an entire historical epoch of native education in the eastern region?’ Thus remarked a Kazan historian in the week after the death of Nikolai Ivanovich Il`minskii at the end of 1891.¹

Nikolai Il`minskii (1822-1891), a specialist in Arabic and the Turkic languages which he taught at the Kazan Theological Academy and Kazan University from the 1840s to 1860s, became in 1872 the Director of the Kazan Teachers’ Seminary where the first teachers were trained for native-language schools among the Turkic and Finnic peoples of the Volga-Urals and Siberia. With the help of these teachers and their pupils, as well as those of other schools set up on his model, Il`minskii created alphabets and oversaw biblical and liturgical translations into their languages, thus paving the way for native-language Orthodox parishes with indigenous clergy.

Il`minskii has been described as a ‘quasi-minister of native affairs’² while the Oberprokuror of the Synod K.P. Pobedonostsev (1827-1907) said of him in semi-serious jest ‘He appoints Archbishops to their seats. He himself is more than an Archbishop. He is a Patriarch.’³ None who have studied Il`minskii’s life and work have doubted that they constitute an entire historical epoch, but the content and interpretation of that historical epoch have been hotly disputed with extremely contradictory views emerging.

Historiography of N.I.Il`minskii

Although Il`minskii’s ideas caused controversy during his lifetime, immediately after his death his life and work were described and evaluated in books and articles written by colleagues and sympathizers, such as P.V.Znamenskii⁴ and V.I.Vitevskii.⁵ During the 1890s and early 1900s, however, his work came under attack from several sides. On the one hand, developing Russian

¹ Znamenskii 1892, 2

² Kreindler 1969, 98

³ Iakovlev 1997, 212

⁴ Znamenskii 1892

⁵ Vitevskii 1892

nationalist feeling led to accusations that his system was spawning separatism among the non-Russian peoples.⁶ On the other hand, the language of russification used by Il`minskii and his disciples aroused accusations from the Muslim Tatar community who perceived his work as a threat to their religious and national identity.<sup>7</sup> Within the Russian Church itself, Il`minskii's emphasis on lay teachers and native-language schools as a missionary method, and his commitment to an indigenous clergy and native-language parishes, raised issues concerning the role of the diocese and clergy in missionary work, liturgical language use and the relationship of Russian and non-Russian clergy and teachers.⁸

These attacks led to a wave of literature from about 1900, defending Il`minskii's work, publishing much of his correspondence and other writings, and researching the current impact of his system among the non-Russian peoples. This defence of Il`minskii is represented by the writings of P.V. Znamenskii, K.V.Kharlampovich, S.V.Chicherina, A.S. Rozhdestvin, N.A.Spasskii, D.Valedinskii, Archbishop Nikanor (Kamenskii 1847-1910), A.A.Voskresenskii and P.Afanasiev.⁹ To this period belongs the work of the 1910 Kazan Missionary Congress which was used by Il`minskii's disciples to defend him, and also the first writings by non-Russian disciples of Il`minskii, for example the Chuvash Ivan Iakovlev, N.V.Nikol'skii, and the priests D.Filimonov, A.Ivanov and K. Prokop`ev.<sup>10</sup> Eugene Smirnoff's 1903 English-language book on Russian missions which has done much to shape the image in the English-speaking world of both Il`minskii's work and of Russian missions as a whole, is largely a eulogy of Il`minskii's ideas, and also fits into this period.¹¹

⁶ See Krasnodubrovskii 1903 and Zalesskii 1910

⁷ See Geraci 2001, 112, 272

⁸ Nikandr 1899

⁹ Znamenskii 1900, Kharlampovich 1905-1906, Chicherina 1905-1907, Rozhdestvin 1900, N.A.Spasskii 1900, Valendinskii 1901, Archbishop Nikanor (Kamenskii)1909, A.A.Voskresenskii 1913, P.Afanasiev 1914-15

¹⁰ Iakovlev 1900, Nikol'skii 1904, 1905, Filimonov 1901, A.Ivanov 1901, 1904, K.Prokopiev 1904, 1905

¹¹ Smirnoff 1903, 46-47

Although Il'minskii's native disciples continued to paint a positive, grateful picture of him into the 1920s,¹² after the revolution he was portrayed in negative terms, as a reactionary Orthodox missionary whose work was an instrument of the Tsarist colonial policy of russification.¹³ In 1941 a more objective view of the scale and significance of his work emerged in a book by V.M. Gorokhov, which nevertheless accused Il'minskii of collaborating with the reactionary Oberprokurors of the Synod, D.A.Tolstoi and K.P.Pobedonostsev, and using schools for government and missionary aims.¹⁴ In the post-war period and the Krushchev 'thaw', it became possible to conduct research into questions of religious belief and history, and the rehabilitation of Il'minskii's non-Russian disciples began in the national republics of the Volga-Urals. Regional researchers such as P.V.Denisov in Chuvashia, N.F.Mokshin and M.P.Soldatkin in Mordovia,¹⁵ began to write on the religious traditions and christianization of their peoples in works which nevertheless reflect the ideology of their time.

In the West, interest in Il'minskii's work was aroused in the 1960s by A.Bennigsen's Centre russe in Paris which sought to reinterpret Russia's imperial past through research focused on Tatar perceptions of Russian imperial history. Lemerrier-Quelquejay and Saussay continued the portrayal of Il'minskii as an anti-Islamic russifier, whose overriding aim was the assimilation of the non-Russian peoples into the Russian State, Church and culture.¹⁶ This viewpoint has been adopted unquestioningly by several later authors such as Byrnes¹⁷ and Blank¹⁸, while making limited use of Il'minskii's original writings. Kreindler, while describing Il'minskii's negative view of Muslims in the 1880s,¹⁹ nevertheless challenged this general trend in concluding that 'The notion of forcible assimilation to the Russian culture (...) was quite foreign to Il'minskii.'²⁰ Quite the contrary, his system 'stimulated a self-esteem and eventually a national self-

¹² See Iakovlev 1997, Filimonov 1926

¹³ Firsov 1926, Ibragimov 1926, Matorin 1929, Bazanov 1936

¹⁴ Gorokhov 1941

¹⁵ Denisov 1959, Mokshin 1968, Soldatkin 1974

¹⁶ Brower and Lazzerini 1997, Introduction, xiii-xviii; Lemerrier-Quelquejay 1967; Saussay 1967, 416

¹⁷ Byrnes 1969

¹⁸ Blank 1983

¹⁹ Kreindler 1969, 21, 103

²⁰ Ibid. 128

consciousness which (...) worked directly against russification.’²¹ S.Lallukka came to similar conclusions concerning the role played by the Kazan Teachers’ Seminary in affirming the ethnic identity of the Finnic Mari, Mordva and Udmurt peoples.²²

More recent research by R.R.Iskhakova and A.N.Pavlova into Il’minskii’s role in the development of national educational systems, schools and teacher training, has continued this theme with Iskhakova concluding that before the Soviet period the Kazan Teachers’ Seminary ‘was the only educational establishment where representatives of the native population could feel comfortable and confident, where teaching took place in national languages.’²³ While these studies emphasize Il’minskii’s affirmation of ethnic identity, they pay relatively little attention to the Orthodox missionary aims of the schools and the accompanying creation of Orthodox parishes.

Several chapters in recent books by L.A. Taimasov,²⁴ P.Werth²⁵ and R.Geraci²⁶ set Il’minskii in the context of Russian colonial history and interpret his work as aiming at the russification or assimilation of the non-Russian peoples. In this their arguments are in line with Lamin Sanneh’s comment that ‘Modern historiography has established a tradition that mission was the surrogate of Western [or Russian in this case] colonialism, and that (...) together these two movements combined to destroy indigenous cultures.’²⁷ They therefore express surprise at how Il’minskii’s work paved the way for the awakening of ethnic identity and culture, and explain away the contradiction by saying Il’minskii’s long-term aim was assimilation, but in the short term he left intact national cultures.²⁸ Werth, however, openly admits that some non-Russians ‘began the process of forging indigenous Orthodoxies.’²⁹ Kappeler writes of Il’minskii’s work as

²¹ Ibid. 206-7

²² Lallukka 1987, 162

²³ Iskhakova 2001, 52

²⁴ Taimasov 2004, 230-231

²⁵ Werth 2002, 3-4

²⁶ Geraci 2001, 253

²⁷ Sanneh 2009, 4

²⁸ Taimasov 2004, 230-231, 319-320; Geraci 2001, 83, 253

²⁹ Werth 2002, 3-4; See also Werth 2000b, 127

‘integrating’ rather than ‘assimilating’ non-Russians into the empire, and ‘it was of greater importance that the creation of written languages, of native-language schools, and of a small class of intellectuals laid the foundations for national movements in many ethnic groups.’³⁰

In Russia, the new ideological climate at the turn of the 21st century has witnessed increasing access to local archives and scholarly activity devoted to the significance of the Christianization of the peoples of the national republics of the Volga-Urals, leading to several conferences marking 2000 years of Christianity.³¹ Two of the most significant figures in the history of Chuvashia, Il’minskii’s disciple Ivan Iakovlev, and Iakinf Bichurin, Head of the Peking Spiritual Mission from 1808-22, have been reassessed at international conferences and in scholarly works, while monographs written in Soviet times have been rewritten.³² The years 2004 to 2009 saw the publication of the complete historical and ethnographical writings of N.V.Nikol’skii, lecturer at the Kazan Missionary Courses in the early 20th century.³³ Important monographs have been written on Chuvash traditional rites by A.Salmin, on Chuvash music by M.G.Kondrat’ev, on Chuvash traditional decorative art by D.Madurov, on Chuvash literature by V.G.Rodionov, and on the ethnic history and geography of the Chuvash by V.Ivanov, all of which reflect the transition of the Chuvash to Christianity.³⁴ In 2012 a Synodicon of the Soviet martyrs of the Chuvash lands was published,³⁵ and in 2009 the Bible in Chuvash was published by the Russian Bible Society after twenty years of translation work, some of it based on Ivan Iakovlev’s prerevolutionary translations.³⁶ The Chuvash became only the second people in the Russian Federation, apart from the Russians themselves, to have the entire Bible translated into their contemporary language.

³⁰ Kappeler 2001, 263

³¹ Khristianizatsiia narodov Srednego Povolzh’ia 2000, Obshchestvo, gosudarstvo, religiia 2002

³² Iakovlev 2001, 2009; Grigor’ev V.S. 2009

³³ Nikol’skii 2004-2009

³⁴ Salmin 1994, Kondrat’ev 2007, Madurov 2004, Rodionov 2006, V.P. Ivanov 2005. Concerning the other peoples of the Volga-Kama and Caucasus regions see Mokshina 2004, Makurina 2002, Dzanagova 2003, Kudaeva 2001, Almeteva 2001

³⁵ Kliuchnikov 2012

³⁶ Bibli 2009

Nikolai Il'minskii and the Orthodox missionary tradition

While there has been a general trend towards moving away from the negative labels of 'russifier' and 'anti-Muslim' in recent years, Kreindler's phrase that 'in their works Il'minskii appears curiously detached from his Orthodox moorings,'³⁷ is still to some extent true of most scholars, although less the case with Werth, Taimasov, and Kreindler. However, this task of re-attaching Il'minskii to his Orthodox moorings is not without its problems. Owing to the close connection of Church and State in Russia, and the influence of Il'minskii's ideas on state education, scholars have been right to set his work in the context of education, of empire and national movements. Until Johnson and Kolcherin's recent work there have been no detailed attempts to place Il'minskii in the context of the history of Orthodox missions in general. Glazik's treatment was more detailed than most,³⁸ and Efimov devotes to him a chapter.³⁹ But in general histories of the Russian Church and its missions, Il'minskii's life and work have at best been given scant treatment.⁴⁰ Kolcherin has recently provided in Russian a broad picture of Il'minskii's life and activities together with a description of the archives containing his letters, but like many scholars his picture focuses on the Baptised Tatars, and he still does not present a detailed picture of Il'minskii's long-term impact on them.⁴¹ Johnson has also focused on Il'minskii's work among the Tatars which he compares in detail with that of Cyril and Methodius as his main thesis is that 'Their approach served as both the inspiration and grounding for Il'minskii's later work.'⁴²

Johnson's approach follows the general approach in texts on the history of the Russian Church and its missions, which usually describe Il'minskii's work as one of the outstanding examples of the Byzantine or Cyrillo-Methodian tradition of Orthodox missionary work, along with Saints Stephen of Perm, Innokentii Veniaminov of Alaska, Makarii Glukharev of the Altai and

³⁷ Kreindler 1969, 19

³⁸ Glazik 1959, 133-147

³⁹ Efimov 2007

⁴⁰ Bolshakoff 1943, 41; Struve 1963, 40; Stamoolis 1986, 31-33; Pospelovsky 1998, 160-161; Tsypin 2006, 186; Il'minskii is sadly absent from Veronis' 1994 book on Orthodox missionaries, as he was from the conference on the missions of the Russian Church held at Bose, Italy in September 2006.

⁴¹ Kolcherin 2014

⁴² Johnson 2005, 14

Nicholas of Japan.⁴³ This tradition, usually named after the Apostles of the Slavs who created the Slavonic alphabet and translated biblical and liturgical texts into Slavonic, is summed up by Archbishop Anastasios Yannoulatos when he says of Orthodox missionaries ‘They created an alphabet for unwritten languages. The Bible and liturgical texts were translated into new tongues. The Liturgy was celebrated in various local dialects, and they carried out systematic linguistic efforts. They prepared and promoted native clergy as quickly as possible and encouraged the joint participation of clergy and laity, with an emphasis on the mobilization of all the faithful. They provided for education in agriculture, technological development, and generally, the sociocultural evolution of the tribes and peoples attracted to Orthodoxy.’⁴⁴

Similar lists of the distinctive features of the Cyrillo-Methodian tradition appear in the works of other Orthodox missiologists, with Oleksa considering its twin goals to be ‘the incarnation of the Logos of God into the language and customs of a country’ and ‘the growth of an indigenous Church which will sanctify and endorse the people’s personality.’⁴⁵ Other formulations of the ultimate goal include ‘the eventual creation of an autonomous or autocephalous Church within the worldwide community of the Orthodox Churches,’⁴⁶ ‘the responsible selfhood of the church’⁴⁷ and ‘the conception of a national diocese and Church’.⁴⁸ The tradition is also portrayed as a continuation of Pentecost, with Meyendorff writing ‘The Cyrillo-Methodian path of creating national churches, not forcing linguistic uniformity on them from without, was a direct and living application in the sphere of mission of the miracle of Pentecost.’⁴⁹

Rooted therefore in the New Testament, the tradition’s affirmative approach to non-Christian cultures is recognized as developing out of the patristic writings, such as the generous and

⁴³ Efimov 2006, 9; Struve 1965, 309; Stamoolis 1986, 28-34

⁴⁴ Anastasios 2010, 197-198

⁴⁵ Oleksa 1992, 11

⁴⁶ Oleksa 1993, 353

⁴⁷ Stamoolis 1986, 22

⁴⁸ Efimov 2006, 8; Bria 1986, 64-65

⁴⁹ Meyendorff 1999, 85; See also Anastasios 2003, 88; Oleksa 1992, 6

optimistic view of pagan culture of Justin Martyr with his notion that ‘Christ the divine Logos has sown seeds of truth, *logoi spermatikoi*, in the hearts of all humans, for all alike are created in God’s image’ and Clement of Alexandria’s vision that Greek philosophy prepared the Greeks for Christ’s incarnation, just as the Old Testament had prepared the Jews.⁵⁰ The tradition is viewed as rooted in the patristic panentheistic vision of the existence of ‘all in God’ which Mousalimas argues is one of the main reasons that Orthodoxy has become indigenized among native Alaskan peoples.⁵¹ Znamenski comes to similar conclusions: ‘Orthodoxy’s being integrated into Dena’ina society constituted neither a superficial imposition on traditional beliefs, nor a carbon copy of Russian Christianity. It became rather a native church or popular Indian Orthodoxy.’⁵²

The Alaskan Oleksa attributes this capacity for indigenization to the vision of Maximus the Confessor whose

theology in effect laid the foundations for the positive view which Orthodox missions generally have had of traditional societies in central and eastern Europe in the ninth and tenth centuries, and across Central Asia and into eastern Siberia and Alaska over the next eight hundred years. Orthodox evangelists felt no obligation to attack all the pre-contact religious beliefs of the shamanistic tribes, for they could perceive in them some of the positive appreciation of the cosmos that is central to St Maximus’ theology.⁵³

This vision of the Byzantine missionary tradition entering Russia and continuing as an unbroken tradition down the centuries is also supported by Yannoulatos when he writes ‘Russian missionaries faithfully followed the Byzantine tradition in their own missionary efforts, applying with originality and boldness the methods they had inherited from Christian Byzantium.’⁵⁴

Struve presents an equally optimistic picture writing ‘Russian missionaries always preached the

⁵⁰ Kallistos 1999, 561; See also Khodr in 1999, 304-305; Mousalimas 2003, 88-93

⁵¹ Mousalimas 2003, 116-131

⁵² Znamenski 1999, 105

⁵³ Oleksa 1992, 61

⁵⁴ Anastasios 2003, 91

gospel to the most uncivilized peoples in their native tongue (...) one of the constants of Russian missions was to be the promotion as rapidly as possible of an indigenous clergy.’⁵⁵

These writers have drawn missiological principles from the concrete historical situation and example of Cyril and Methodius as well as the multi-lingualism and cultural pluralism of the Church in the Eastern Empire and beyond before Cyril and Methodius’ time, and used these as the basis of their theology of mission. It should be noted, however, that they were seeking to formulate and defend a specifically Orthodox theology of mission for an audience in the Western, largely non-Orthodox world, in the late 20th century. In their writings they sometimes contrast this Orthodox tradition with their perceptions of the Western missionary tradition, with Yannoulatos stating ‘Certain fundamental principles which have only recently been adopted by Western missionaries, were from the beginning the unquestioned foundations of the Orthodox missionary efforts.’⁵⁶

Inconsistencies in the Cyrillo-Methodian tradition

There are, however, problems with this homogenous and optimistic view of the Cyrillo-Methodian tradition presented by recent writers to a Western audience, not least that it has not always been the view of Orthodox writings on mission, nor of Orthodox writings on Cyril and Methodius, and the recent writers leave unraised some of the issues that troubled earlier writers. While there certainly was Russian missionary work in the centuries after Stephen,⁵⁷ there is nevertheless often a curious silence from recent proponents of the Cyrillo-Methodian tradition concerning the 400 years from the 15th to the 18th centuries. Some writers make us aware of this gap but do not raise the question as to why it occurred. Smirnoff wrote of the missionary ideal in the spirit of St Stephen of Perm ‘Forgotten, as it were, during the course of many centuries, it was not until the 19th century that it came to life again, and received its final development in

⁵⁵ Struve 1963, 33; [My underlining]

⁵⁶ Anastasios 2010, 198; [My underlining]

⁵⁷ See Efimov 2007; Stamoolis 1986, 27-28; Neill 1990; 179-187

Russia.⁵⁸ Efimov wrote of Makarii Glukharev and Innokentii Veniaminov that they ‘independently and almost at the same time managed to implement in its entirety the Orthodox missionary tradition of Sts Cyril and Methodius. This was a huge victory several centuries after St Stephen of Perm. Before them there were many unsuccessful attempts.’⁵⁹

Not only were there these several centuries when there was, apparently, no significant implementation of the tradition, but Stephen’s work appears to have had few lasting consequences⁶⁰ and his example was not followed among all the other Finnic peoples.⁶¹ Struve admits ‘The literary Zyrian language did not long survive its founder and his disciples; it was soon superseded by the powerful and expressive Russian tongue; the national church of which Stephen dreamed never materialized.’⁶² He does not discuss the question as to why it never materialized. This lack of implementation and long-term consequences of Stephen’s work raises questions about the Cyrillo-Methodian tradition as presented by recent Orthodox writers in the West.

The ‘reverse side’ of the Byzantine missionary tradition

There is a ‘reverse side’ to the Cyrillo-Methodian tradition which helps to explain these inconsistencies. These are the potential consequences for a national culture of receiving the Gospel by means of the distinctive features of this tradition. This ‘reverse side’ is pointed to by Meyendorff ‘The traditional Byzantine approach to mission, perpetuated by Sts Cyril and Methodius in the 9th century, consisted of translating Holy Scripture as well as the Liturgy into local languages. This led to the creation of Christian nations which absorbed Christianity profoundly into their ethnic and cultural life.’⁶³ Tachiaos similarly writes of ‘the great heritage connecting the Slavic world of the Cyrillic script with the Greek Byzantine tradition. This

⁵⁸ Smirnoff 1903, 5

⁵⁹ Efimov 2006, 9

⁶⁰ See Shestakov 1877; Greidan, Ponomareva 2010, 203-204

⁶¹ See Kreindler 1985b; Mokshina 2004; Mikhailov 1851

⁶² Struve 1963, 32

⁶³ Meyendorff 1999, 82; See also Florovsky 1979, 7

tradition lives on more strongly in the soul of the people, because it is there that its roots lie; a whole worldview has developed within it and, however faded, its archetype is always recognizable.’⁶⁴ It is this way that the Gospel so permeates their language and thought structures that is celebrated at events surrounding the feast of Sts Cyril and Methodius in parishes and towns across Russia and other Slavic countries today.

Yet there are potential problems with such a close identification of the Christian Gospel with national culture. The indigenization of the Gospel can so profoundly shape the national identity that the Christian national heritage can become an end in itself, and this has frequently happened among the Orthodox peoples. Meyendorff points to this as a corollary of the Byzantine approach to mission ‘The mission of the Church was clearly understood as the preservation and dissemination of this (Orthodox Church) tradition, together with the national and social life of the so-called “Orthodox peoples”’.⁶⁵ This close identification of the Gospel with national culture has led Yannoulatos to warn the Orthodox churches ‘Imprisonment (of the Gospel) in any of the cultural forms of this world is inexcusable; there is no justification for the closed circle of chauvinism.’⁶⁶ The consequences of this chauvinism for Orthodox mission were voiced by the Protestant missiologist Bosch who, despite a sympathetic attitude towards Orthodoxy, wrote ‘Orthodox churches tended to become ingrown, excessively nationalistic, and without concern for those outside.’⁶⁷ More recently, the Catholic scholar Basil Cousins has stated ‘There would appear to be a distinct possibility that (the Russian Church) will remain a mono-ethnic church with strong nationalistic overtones.’⁶⁸ In the wake of terrorist attacks in France in early 2015, the Orthodox journal *Contacts* has devoted an issue to phyletism or ecclesial nationalism ‘ce mal insidieux du phyletisme, littéralement “tribalisme” ecclesial qui voudrait que l’Eglise soit

⁶⁴ Tachaios 2001, 140

⁶⁵ Meyendorff 1999, 82; [My underlining]

⁶⁶ Anastasios 2003, 97

⁶⁷ Bosch 1991, 212

⁶⁸ Cousins 2008, 39

soumise au principe national.⁶⁹ Closer to Orthodox heartlands, the situation in the Ukraine during 2013-2015 has been equally a reminder of the dangers of this ecclesial nationalism.⁷⁰

There are, therefore, two sides to the Cyrillo-Methodian missionary tradition. On the one hand an incarnational, indigenizing side which affirms that the Gospel can and must be ‘en-fleshed’ in the language and culture of any people, in their national cultural particularity, where it will ‘bring forth from their own living tradition original expressions of Christian life, celebration and thought.’⁷¹ This indigenizing side of the tradition, however, carries with it the potential danger of the national culture and the Christian faith becoming too identified with each other. The indigenizing side also reminds us that ‘The Christian faith never exists except as “translated” into a culture.’⁷² Therefore any missionary work will inevitably bear the imprint of the culture from which it is transmitted. On the other hand there is a pneumatological, apostolic, universal side to the tradition which affirms that the Gospel cannot and must not be allowed to be imprisoned in any one particular cultural and national form if it is to remain truly the Gospel. ‘The flame of Pentecost abolishes linguistic, ethnic and cultural borders. Culture is on the one hand accepted, but at the same time transcended. While the Gospel emphasizes its eternal and divine character, it has no difficulty in being incarnated in time, and again in the specific cultural body of each epoch.’⁷³

Sanneh reminds us that this is not a uniquely Orthodox problem. ‘Christianity is embroiled in this profound tension, confidently affirming God in the channels of cultural particularity and just as confidently rejecting any one expression as definitive of the truth.’⁷⁴ Sanneh also challenges the Orthodox assumption that the Cyrillo-Methodian tradition is the unique property of the Eastern Church, and he traces its influence through mediaeval Prague to John Hus, John

⁶⁹ Contacts No. 249, 3

⁷⁰ See for example Hovorun 2014, 43

⁷¹ Bosch 1991, 454

⁷² Ibid. 447

⁷³ Anastasios 2003, 88

⁷⁴ Sanneh 2009, 81

Wycliffe, the Reformers, and ultimately the British and Foreign Bible Society.⁷⁵ In his study of the cultural impact of mission in Africa, he relates Cyril and Methodius to the above issue of the tension between incarnational cultural particularity and Pentecostal universality. ‘True to its Jewish roots, Christianity proclaims a universal God as the logic and safeguard of its monotheist message, and yet the religion’s translatable nature does not allow it to adopt an abstract, de-cultured notion of faith, but to embrace cultural specificity in each historical manifestation of the religion. (...) The Rule of Constantine-Cyril of the ninth century is still valid, namely, that God’s rain falls upon all equally...’⁷⁶

It is this tension between national cultural particularity or *narodnost*⁷⁷, and the universality or *obshchechelovechnost*⁷⁸ of the Christian Gospel in 19th century Russian missionary work, and especially in the missionary movement associated with Nikolai Il’minskii, that is the subject of this thesis. Chapters One and Two and Appendix One portray the missionary atmosphere of the early and mid-19th century Russian Church in the context of which Il’minskii’s missionary motivation developed. Chapters Three to Seven explore the impact of Il’minskii’s ideas on the Chuvash people from the 1870s to the 1920s. Sanneh argues ‘The history of missions is more than the account of organizing the missionary effort (...) It is also about the actual reception and operation in the field where the richness of detail makes the question of the missionaries’ alleged cultural motives somewhat peripheral (...) it makes sense that scholars who propose to study the missionary movement should pay attention to the forces on the ground.’⁷⁹ This sums up the general approach of this thesis, and especially Chapters Four and Five which trace the impact of Il’minskii’s ideas on Chuvash villages and on the Old Chuvash Faith. Despite this approach, the thesis also pays attention to Il’minskii’s relationship to the Cyrillo-Methodian heritage, arguing

⁷⁵ Ibid. 87-88

⁷⁶ Ibid. 242

⁷⁷ From Russian *narod* (people, nation). It is inadequately translated into English as ‘nationality’ as it embraces the concepts of ‘national spirit’ and ‘belonging to the way of life of the common people’. See Knight 2000a.

⁷⁸ From Russian *obshchii* (common, general) and *chelovek* (person, human being) so it embraces the concepts of common to all mankind, universality, common humanity.

⁷⁹ Sanneh 2009, 248

that his early inspiration lay elsewhere, but by the end of the 19th century it was his own ideas and practices, eventually identified with the names of the Thessalonian brothers, which provided the foundation for what has become known as the Cyrillo-Methodian missionary tradition in the late 20th century.

Summary of thesis

Reaction to the influence of Western Europe in 18th century Russia led in the second quarter of the 19th century to an increasing sense of Russian *narodnost`* which had important consequences for the Russian Church's understanding of mission. On the one hand there was renewed interest in Russia's specifically Orthodox spiritual and cultural heritage, and on the other hand an increased sense of the universality of Orthodoxy, its *obshchechelovechnost`*.

One particular group of churchmen, influenced by Metropolitan Philaret (Drozdov 1782-1867) of Moscow and collaboration with the Russian Bible Society from 1812-1826, expressed their reaction to the use of Latin and Western theology in the Russian Church by stressing the use of vernacular Russian in church education, preaching and Bible translation. Philaret stressed that all languages, including vernacular languages, could be sanctified by the translation into them of the word of God. The closure of the Russian Bible Society contributed to the redirection of Philaret and his disciples' energies into the new Russian missions of the 1820s where increasing use was made of local vernacular languages, and of schools which emphasized integral education of the mind and heart for a practical life of Orthodox piety, in contrast to rational, secular understandings of education. Philaret's view of sanctification informed the general positive approach to non-Christian cultures of this generation of missionaries, an approach which was not however attributed to Sts Cyril and Methodius whose names were associated at this time with Russia's Slavonic heritage.

This missionary approach influenced Kazan in the 1840s, particularly through Philaret's students Archbishop Grigorii Postnikov (1784-1860) and Archimandrite Feodor Bukharev (1822-1871).

Nikolai Il'minskii's missionary ideas developed in this context, as well as out of his experience of Orthodoxy in the Middle East, his immersion in non-Russian and non-Christian cultures, and the immediate situation in the Mid-Volga where the widespread adoption of Islam among the non-Russian Volga peoples in the early 19th century raised the issue of the Russian Church's response. In the reform atmosphere of the 1860s he and his collaborators challenged their opponents to break out of identifying Orthodoxy with Russian *narodnost'* alone, and rediscover the universality of the Church, and the common humanity of Russia's non-Russian peoples.

The impact of Il'minskii's ideas is illustrated through their practical application among the Chuvash people by the teachers and graduates of Ivan Iakovlev's Simbirsk Chuvash Teachers' School which laid the foundations of Chuvash-language Orthodox parishes and liturgical life. The development of Chuvash literacy, the involvement of the wider Chuvash community in the collective translation process, the regular conferences of teachers and clergy for training and consultation, the flourishing of congregational liturgical singing, Iakovlev's involvement in land issues, his development of practical trades and skills, and the mass publication of Chuvash liturgical and scriptural texts in collaboration with the British and Foreign Bible Society, led to a popular Orthodox movement accompanied by an increasing sense of Chuvash *narodnost'*. This resulted in research and publications on Chuvash ethnography, history and philology, an associated search for the origins of the Chuvash ethnos and traditional culture, the first multi-volume dictionary of the Chuvash language, publications of Chuvash prose and poetry, and the first Chuvash-language newspaper.

Ethnographic descriptions of the Chuvash in the 19th century show that their traditional worldview and rites at this time were the result of the many cultures they had come into contact with in the course of their migrations to the Mid-Volga, including the significant influence of Orthodox calendar rites over several centuries. Accounts of popular devotion in Chuvash parishes at the time of the Il'minskii movement show that their traditional worldview and rites

were gradually undergoing transformation due to the introduction of native-language Orthodox rites and practices with which they had many points of correspondence. Rather than the annihilation of Chuvash traditional culture and the cultural assimilation of the Chuvash into the Russian people, the impact of Il'minskii's system among the Chuvash was therefore an indigenization of Orthodoxy which transformed their traditional culture.

The end of Il'minskii's life coincided with the rise of Russian patriotic nationalism in the 1880s. On the one hand this led him to a fierce defence of the use of native languages in school and church. On the other hand, his own sense of Russia's unique Orthodox heritage led to his authorship of Slavonic textbooks for the church-parish school system and an emphasis on Cyril and Methodius' Slavonic legacy. Il'minskii's reforming projects and self-critical language of the 1850s-60s, and his integralist projects and language of tradition in the 1880s account for the perceived progressive and conservative aspects of his writings, and for Il'minskii's legacy among the Volga peoples being challenged by, yet also contributing to movements for reform in both church and state at the turn of the 20th century.

The integralist vision of church and state which undergirded the Il'minskii system, its emphasis on *narodnost'* and the broad involvement of the laity, were questioned from within the Church owing to debates over the relationship of clergy and laity, church and state, yet this same emphasis on *narodnost'* led the new native clergy to identify above all with the progressive wing of the church reform movement which emphasized the role of the laity, and the separation of church from state. It also led to Chuvash involvement in revolutionary movements, increasing fears of Chuvash separatism from within the State, and resulting attempts to suppress use of native languages. The increased sense of Chuvash *narodnost'* was accompanied by a desire for the recognition of their *obshchechelovechnost'*, their common humanity and dignity with the other peoples of the world, which was expressed after the 1917 Revolution in the context of the Church by the call for a national diocese and national bishops, and by some, for autocephaly, and

in the context of the state by the creation of the Chuvash National Society and the pursuit of Chuvash political autonomy.

Criticism of Il`minskii from within both Church and State led to a debate over the nature of mission in the early 20th century, with Ilminskii being defended not only by Russian supporters but by an increasingly articulate native clergy and intelligentsia whose prolific writings defended his impact on their cultures. Defence of Il`minskii sought to illustrate that use of native languages and personnel had been a traditional feature of Orthodox missionary work, with Cyril and Methodius being cited as a model of the Church's apostolic task in all epochs and for all peoples, their *obshchechelovechnost`*, rather than simply their significance for Slavic *narodnost`*. Their example, as well as that of St Stephen of Perm, was used to appeal to the Russian patriotic opponents of Ilminskii, even if authors were critically aware that Il`minskii's principles had frequently not been applied. It was therefore Il`minskii's own writings and practices, defended from the 1880s with reference to Cyril and Methodius, which laid the foundation for what has become known as the Cyrillo-Methodian Orthodox missionary tradition in the 20th century.

Chapter 1

Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow and the sanctification of the languages

In this chapter we will examine the missionary climate of the Russian Orthodox Church from the 1820s-50s. In a brief overview of writings, reports and letters reflecting the situation in both the capitals and at Russia's missions in Siberia and Alaska, we shall illustrate some of the issues that the hierarchy and missionaries of the Russian Church were facing at this time. The aim is to draw up a picture of the missionary thinking and practices in the context of which Ilminskii's own ideas and methods arose, assess to what extent the distinctive features of the Cyrillo-Methodian missionary tradition were being advocated and implemented in the decades immediately preceding his work, and clarify the motivation of the missionaries. Were they, in fact, inspired by the tradition of Sts Cyril and Methodius, or by something else?

The legacy of the 18th century church seminaries

In the first half of the 18th century, Roman Catholic textbooks and Aristotelian scholasticism prevailed in Russian seminaries, giving way in the middle of the century, under the influence of Theofan Prokopovich, to Protestant scholasticism using German textbooks written in Latin. Much of the seminary course was devoted to Latin grammar, rhetoric and poetics, and in the late 18th more attention was paid to German philosophy than to theology. The Scriptures were usually read in Latin rather than Slavonic, while the Greek language only became a compulsory subject in 1798. Commenting on the effects of this westernization of the Russian clergy, Florovsky wrote 'the transplant of Latin schools in Russian soil signified a breach in the church's consciousness: a breach separating theological "learning" from ecclesiastical experience. (...) This unhealthy breach in the church's consciousness may well have been the most tragic consequence of the Petrine epoch.'¹

¹ Florovsky 1979, 134-5; Nichols 1978a, 77-79

The 18th century, however, also saw the first attempts at translating the Scriptures and writing theological texts in the vernacular Russian language, and these had a direct influence on the future Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow who played the most significant role in the reform of clergy schools in the early 19th century. Bishop Tikhon of Voronezh (Zadonsk 1724-1782) translated the Psalter into Russian and contemplated translating the New Testament, Archbishop Amvrosii (Zertis-Kamenskii 1708-1771) of Moscow also translated the Psalter, while Mefodii (Smirnov 1761-1815), Bishop of Kolomna during Philaret's studies there, published the Epistle to the Romans with parallel Russian and Slavonic texts in 1794.² Metropolitan Platon (Levshin 1737-1812), the leading figure at the Moscow Seminary during Philaret's studies, produced numerous catechisms in the Russian vernacular for use in the popular schools set up from 1782 by Catherine the Great.³ Platon's disciple, Amvrosii Podobedov (1742-1818) compiled a seminary textbook *A Guide to reading the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament*⁴ which was remarkable at the time for being in Russian rather than Latin.⁵ In 1801 Amvrosii became Metropolitan of St Petersburg where he remained until his death in 1818, so he ordained Philaret to the priesthood and influenced his early career as Rector of the St Petersburg Academy from 1812.

Under Philaret's influence, the trend of using the Russian vernacular continued in the early 19th century church owing to his concern for clergy education to take place in Russian, for translations into the Russian vernacular of scriptural and patristic texts, for the word of God to be known by the people through improved catechetical teaching and preaching in accessible language, and for parish schools teaching basic literacy. At the St Petersburg Academy, Philaret's proposals for curriculum reform led to a greater emphasis on the reading of Scripture in the original languages, its interpretation using patristic commentaries and its use in preaching. In his 1814 guidelines for clergy education, Holy Scripture is described as 'the root on which all

² Nichols 1972, 15-16; Florovsky 1979, 157-158

³ See Platon 1786 and Nichols Ibid. 25-37; Nichols 1978a, 67, 75-79

⁴ Amvrosii 1803

⁵ Chistovich 1860, 151, 217;

branches of theological knowledge are established, and from which they draw life and power’ and learning to preach was to be ‘instruction in using the Word of God in teachings for the edification of the Church.’⁶

Philaret also sought to improve teaching at the parish level through his *Opinions* of 1820 and 1822 which introduced short catechetical talks in conversational style into the Liturgy.⁷ Philaret described his own famous Catechism, originally published in 1823, as a ‘Catechism for the people’⁸ and he published compilations of readings in Russian from both the Old and New Testament Scriptures for use in schools ‘in order that the acquired art of reading, at its very beginnings, should be sanctified by edifying and sacred reading.’⁹ He supported initiatives to improve elementary schools through his involvement in the St Petersburg Society for Mutual Instruction, set up in June 1819 under the patronage of the Empress, to support the spread of the Lancaster Method of mutual instruction, and through encouraging teacher training.¹⁰

We thus see Philaret seeking to combat the westernization of both clergy and popular education through the introduction of the Russian language, an emphasis on biblically-based Orthodox theology rather than philosophy, and a desire that ‘schools might exchange scholastic “memorization” for genuine understanding’.¹¹

Philaret and the Russian Bible Society

During the brief existence of the Russian Bible Society from 1812-1826, the task of translation into Russian was entrusted to the St Petersburg Academy, which in practice meant Philaret who drew up guidelines for translation, and himself translated the Gospel of John.¹² While the

⁶ Philaret SMIOF, Vol.1, 127-7, 146

⁷ Philaret SMIOF, Vol 2, 23-24, 77

⁸ Philaret SMIOF Vol.2, 23-24

⁹ Philaret 1819, *Predvedomlenie*, III-IV

¹⁰ Philaret SMIOF Vol. 1, 341-344; *Vypiska* 1823, 99-107; *Sbornik MNP* 1864, 1519 (29.106a); Seebohm 1860, 401

¹¹ Nichols 1978a, 82-85

¹² Tsurikov 2003, 134

Society's work clearly encouraged Philaret's view of the centrality of Scripture in theological teaching, Philaret's own profound knowledge of the Scriptures in the original Hebrew and Greek languages, acquired from his seminary education and teaching, made a vast contribution to the Society's success. The Orthodox hierarchs gave leadership to the work of the Society, especially after September 1814 when Metropolitan Amvrosii (Podobedov) and Bishop Seraphim (Glagolevskii) of Tver` became Vice-Presidents, and Philaret became a Director. By 1818 there were 49 local Divisions with 124 affiliates throughout the land, the vast majority of them functioning under the leadership of Orthodox bishops and clergy.¹³

Philaret's Foreword to the 1819 first edition of the Gospels in Russian shows clearly his sense of the eternal Word of God acting throughout history and reaching all peoples in the form of the written Scriptures. We see a common theme in his writings, that it is the Word of God that sanctifies a language or a person, rather than the language being sufficiently eloquent and lofty in itself to express the Word of God.

By the Word of God all things were created, and all of creation is held together by the power of the Word of God. (...) and since ancient times the Word of God has sanctified many languages, through translations of the Sacred books, including our native Slavonic.¹⁴

Philaret's emphasis on making Scripture accessible to the people continues in his Foreword to the first edition of the Russian Psalter in 1822 'as special use is made by Orthodox Christians of this book for prayer, in church and at home, there is, therefore, a great need to make it as comprehensible as possible for all.' He then asks that God 'whose good will it has been for His Word to be preached in all languages and tongues' should bless this work, and that the reader 'should not seek literary art, but the power of the Lord's Spirit breathing through the lips of the

¹³ RBS Otchet 1818, 9; Chistovich 1872, 390

¹⁴ Evangelie 1819, Foreword, III-V

Prophet so that they should feel its power to the edification, consolation and salvation of their souls.’¹⁵

Philaret’s view can be compared with that of Admiral Shishkov, from 1824 Minister of Education and a major figure in the downfall of the Russian Bible Society. In contrast to Philaret’s emphasis on reading Scripture to feel the power of the Lord’s Spirit, Shishkov emphasized reading Scripture to understand the eloquence of the Slavonic language ‘for without reading and exercising ourselves in it [Scripture], we shall never know the height and power of our language.’¹⁶ In an 1810 text he lamented the passion for French in Russian society and showed the superiority of Slavonic over any modern foreign language as ‘its qualities give to Holy Scripture the loftiness to which none of the modern languages can attain. (...) And what are we to think of those proponents of the new eloquence who cry out against it [Slavonic], maintaining that the Russian language is different from Slavonic and that we should always and everywhere write in the spoken language?’¹⁷

From its inception, there had been grave suspicion in some circles of the Russian Bible Society with its Protestant emphases on direct knowledge of God through the Scriptures, and the unity of all Christian denominations. Many of its members were influenced by the mystical and Pietist circles fashionable in St Petersburg at the time. The publication of the Russian Psalter in 1822 and the start of the translation of the Old Testament into Russian brought to a head the many controversies surrounding the Society’s translation and publication practices.¹⁸ In November 1824, at Shishkov’s instigation, the Tsar was asked to prevent circulation of the Bible Society’s

¹⁵ Psaltir` 1822, Foreword, I, II, XI

¹⁶ Shishkov 1810, 24

¹⁷ Ibid, 89, 64

¹⁸ Chistovich 1872, 390-400; Cohen-Zacek 1964, 249-280; Nichols 1972, 120-126

translations and by a decree of 17th November 1824 the printing and distribution of Philaret's Catechisms was stopped.¹⁹

During this troubled period, Philaret's former student and close friend, Grigorii Postnikov, was Vicar-Bishop to Metropolitan Seraphim (Glagolevskii) of St Petersburg. His letters to Philaret show how he kept Philaret informed of events in St Petersburg, and sought to sway Seraphim in favour of Philaret's position. In a letter of 13th June 1824 Grigorii wrote

They are saying of the Bible Society that it was set up to introduce a Reformation. (...) I said to (Seraphim) that he should (...) not destroy everything at once, and spare the honour of the Bishops, of whom many have spoken and are speaking out zealously in favour of this work. (...) (Seraphim) wanted to ask the Tsar to stop the translation of the Old Testament. I was only able to stop him with great difficulty.²⁰

In a further letter of 3rd July he sympathizes with Philaret's distressed state due to criticism of his Catechism and reassures Philaret that he is supporting his cause before Seraphim.²¹

Following Alexander I's death, Nicholas I officially dissolved the Russian Bible Society in April 1826. The printing of the Pentateuch in Russian was completed by 1825 but with the Society's closure, all the copies were confiscated and burned. Cohen-Zacek concluded that 'The abolition of the Russian Bible Society effectively ended the work of spreading the Holy Scriptures among all the inhabitants of the Russian Empire in their own languages.'²² Yet, in fact, in the late 1820s Philaret's emphases on making the Word of God accessible to the people began to have an impact on the dioceses of the Empire with non-Russian populations. Florovsky wrote of Philaret that 'he had no direct disciples and did not create a school, but he created something more important: a spiritual movement.'²³ This movement is especially noticeable among the first graduates and teachers of the St Petersburg Academy who represented what Florovsky described

¹⁹ Snychev 1994, 164; Korsunskii 1884-1885, 757-784

²⁰ Philaret 1900, 63-64

²¹ Ibid. 65-66, 86

²² Cohen-Zacek 1964, 315

²³ Florovsky 1979, 218

as ‘the theology of the heart’. Of these, by 1830 Philaret Amfiteatrov (1779-1857) was Bishop of Kazan, Evgenii Kazantsev (1778-1871) was Bishop of Tobolsk, Kirill Bogoslovskii-Platonov (1788-1849) was Bishop of Viatka, Archimandrite Makarii Glukharev (1792-1847) was Head of the Altai Mission, while Grigorii Postnikov was to become Bishop of Kazan in 1848.²⁴

All of these men were serving in dioceses where most of the local non-Russian population had been baptised from the 16th-18th centuries, but for a variety of reasons, including the lack of catechetical teaching and translations into local languages, were reverting to, or simply more openly practising, traditional rites and beliefs in the early 19th century. It is not surprising therefore that we see them seeking to do in their local situations, with greater or lesser success, what Philaret had been doing for the Russian people in the previous decades. We will examine briefly the examples of Siberian missions in the Altai and Alaska in this chapter, and the Volga missions in Appendix One.

Archimandrite Makarii Glukharev, Head of the Altai Mission

While studying under Philaret in St Petersburg from 1814-1817, Makarii Glukharev was influenced by the mystical and pietist writings then in fashion, particularly Arndt’s *True Christianity* which provided the inspiration for Tikhon of Zadonsk’s *On True Christianity*, one of the most important spiritual writings of 18th century Russia.²⁵ After graduating, Makarii taught at Ekaterinoslav and Kostroma seminaries, during which time Philaret drew him into translating patristic texts into vernacular Russian.²⁶ His teaching experience led him to write his *Thoughts on the improvement of clergy education*²⁷ in which he envisions clergy being educated in a monastic setting. One of his main concerns, however, is the use of the living language, and the withdrawal of foreign, scholastic textbooks, if the gulf between the clergy and the people is to be overcome.

²⁴ Ibid. 220-230

²⁵ Efimov, Striganova 2008, 41; Meshcherinov 2013, 1-4; Bouyer 1982, 38, 101; Tikhon 2004, 30-38

²⁶ Makarii 1905, 120-121; Nesterov 2005, 13

²⁷ Efimov, Striganova 2008, 162-194

The value of textbooks in the language of the fatherland is, firstly, that truths taught in the living, native language would more easily take root in the heart, and would be more lively in the ministry of the word; secondly, the pupils would (study) according to systems becoming the purity of our Church, and produced in accordance with its very spirit.²⁸

The clergy were also to study subjects such as agriculture and medicine so that they would be ‘the great benefactors of agricultural labourers and, attaching the people to themselves by various ties of gratitude, they would be more successful and effective in the ministry of the Word and of God’s Sacraments.’²⁹ In March 1828 Makarii sent his *Thoughts* to Philaret who broadened them from a concern for the clergy, to the needs of the Russian Church as a whole, especially its missionary dioceses. Philaret lamented that clergy

choose profitable and honourable placements; but are often unprepared to go to places where they are threatened by need, poverty and difficulty, despite the fact that they are called to such places by the grace of God, the desire of the Church, love for one’s neighbor. (...) How many people there are near the frontiers and almost within the frontiers of the Russian Church, sitting in the darkness and shadow of death, unilluminated by the light of the Gospel, or drawn away from this light into the darkness by false teachers? And where are the people ready to go to them, leaving everything behind apart from the Gospel?³⁰

In 1828 the Synod set up new missions in the Kazan and Tobolsk dioceses. In 1827 in the Volga region, there had been large-scale resurgences of the practice of traditional religious rites among the Cheremys people of Viatka province, and requests to adopt Islam from baptized Tatars in Kazan province. This evidence of the lack of long-term fruit of previous missionary policies, with their almost total lack of translations into native languages, and their efforts to educate an indigenous clergy which had led to russification,³¹ led the Synod in December 1828 to request that Bishop Evgenii of Tobolsk and Archbishop Philaret (Amphiteatrov) of Kazan should draw

²⁸ Ibid. 192

²⁹ Ibid, 194

³⁰ Ibid, 195

³¹ See Appendix One for this situation in the Volga region.

up plans for the education of missionaries with greater emphasis on catechetical preaching and teaching using the native language.

In a letter of March 28th 1829, Philaret of Moscow suggested to Makarii that he should go to Tobolsk where his ideas on clergy education could be put to good use.

The Bishop of Tobolsk has been asked to draw up a plan for a missionary institution for the region. You know him (...) Perhaps the plan for education which you have dreamed about and which I tried to help you think through in a realistic way, could be partially implemented there.³²

It was therefore Philaret who suggested Makarii should go to the Altai to implement their joint plans. Philaret's support for Makarii was to continue during all the time he was in the Altai where Makarii was preoccupied with all the same concerns as Philaret: the preaching of the Word of God and catechizing in accessible language, using Philaret's Catechism and his own catechetical texts, setting up schools and hospitals, translating the Scriptures into both Russian and the local Teleut language.

While Makarii made some translations into native languages,³³ he also emphasized the need for the Altaians to learn Russian and Slavonic in order to read the Word of God and fellowship with Russians. He wrote to Philaret in 1841

The one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church of Christ unites all peoples into the one family of God, and each local Christian church has this sacred character of universality; therefore the Russian Church awaits and accepts people from all mankind, for whom the Slavonic and Russian word is destined to become the organ of the Word of God. (...) for better knowledge of this saving faith they should seek fellowship with (the Russian people) in the Russian language, and

³² Philaret 1888, 110

³³ See Collins 1991, 19; Makarii 1905, 152

study this living language in which our Church already has, by God's mercy, the New Testament.³⁴

It was precisely because of the need to awaken the Russian people to this missionary calling that Makarii advocated the need for a Russian Bible.

As the Christian Church in Russia is the Apostolic Church, it is the most sacred task and a crown of honour which belongs to it, to be this for the many peoples who do not know Jesus Christ, but have become subjugated to the Russian realm by Jesus Christ the Almighty God. (...) In order to more successfully arouse and strengthen the sense of this sacred calling in the spirit of the Russian people (...) there is a need for the publication of the whole Bible in living, popular language.³⁵

In June 1836 Makarii wrote from the Altai to the Oberprokuror of the Synod, S.D.Nechaev, urging the need for a Russian Bible

When the living languages of the peoples contemporary with us, one after another are being sanctified and becoming organs of all of God's revelation to man, (...) why are the Russian language and people so slow to partake in full measure of this sanctification through God's truth and word? When the Holy Spirit came down on the divine apostles and gave them the ability to preach in different tongues the great acts of God, did He not sanctify all human languages?³⁶

In desperation, Makarii began his own translation of the Old Testament in 1837, and he sent the book of Job to St Petersburg with a letter stating 'the New Testament, Genesis and the Psalter in the Russian language bear witness that the Russian tongue has reached the necessary maturity for it to be fulfilled and perfected in union with God's word.'³⁷ When in spring 1839 he himself arrived in St Petersburg to present his translations and his reworked *Thoughts*, his request aroused fears among those who had advocated closure of the Bible Society, and Metropolitan

³⁴ Makarii 1905, 152

³⁵ Makarii 1839, 168

³⁶ Makarii 1905, 176

³⁷ Ibid. 188-193; See Batalden 2013, 112-124 on Makarii's battle for a Russian translation of the Bible.

Seraphim threatened to have him escorted by gendarmes out of the capital.³⁸ During his return trip to the Altai, he spent three months of 1840 in Kazan where he studied Tatar with A.K.Kazem-Bek, Il`minskii's future teacher, thus setting a precedent for students of the Kazan Theological Academy to study the non-Russian languages needed on the mission field.³⁹

Makarii's 1839 *Thoughts* are entirely devoted to the training of missionaries and to the creation of a Missionary Society which would

publish Bibles in Slavonic, Russian and the languages of other Christian peoples in the Russian state who are worthy of boasting of having the Orthodox Bible in their living languages.⁴⁰

He also proposed the creation of a missionary seminary based near Kazan in a monastic setting where there would be the same practical emphasis as his 1828 *Thoughts*, with a church, a printing press, hospital, pharmacy, mill, brick factory, and its own farm animals and beehives so that the students could learn agriculture.⁴¹ We shall see in later chapters how closely Iakovlev's Simbirsk Chuvash Teachers' School corresponded to Makarii's proposals.

Il`minskii would have heard of Makarii from Kazem-Bek, his teacher of Tatar who also taught Makarii in 1840. He may have known of him earlier as Makarii's travel journals were published from 1834-1838 in *Khristianskoe Chtenie*. He would undoubtedly have heard a lot more from Grigorii Postnikov after he became Archbishop of Kazan in 1848. Il`minskii only mentions Makarii in his writings in 1862, and he most likely did not feel free to write about such a *persona non grata* at the end of Nicholas I's reign. Nevertheless, Il`minskii's awe before Makarii and the other great Siberian missionary of the early 19th century, Innokentii Veniaminov, is evident in an 1886 letter

³⁸ Vasilievskii 1888, 427-428

³⁹ Kharlampovich 1904, 218

⁴⁰ Makarii 1839, 179

⁴¹ Ibid. 239

In the Old Testament Tabernacle there was a sacred fire which never went out (...) it had a special, grace-filled, mysterious power which was not possessed by every fire in the world. (...) By this grace and power of God there were two missionaries “made-without-hands” that is without artificial man-made missionary and scholarly training and sending, two missionary fires of Siberia: Innokentii and Makarii Glukharev.⁴²

Bishop Innokentii Veniaminov and the Alaskan and Siberian missions

Despite growing up near Irkutsk where he graduated from the seminary in 1818, it is evident from Innokentii Veniaminov’s writings that the pietist spiritual ferment and educational reforms of the capitals affected him in distant Siberia and Alaska.⁴³ After graduation, the future Innokentii became a teacher in a parish school, and after his ordination as priest in May 1821, he taught catechism to both boys and girls before the Liturgy.⁴⁴ The Irkutsk Bible Society Division opened in December 1819 and was at the height of its activity in promoting translation and publication of Holy Scripture and literacy under its Vice-Presidents, Bishop Mikhail and M.M.Speranskii, Governor-General of Siberia.⁴⁵ An 1845 letter shows Innokentii’s frustrated desire to make education more widespread was one of the reasons he went to America.

To teach all the children of the ordinary people – that is the question which has long since preoccupied me and which I have partly managed to implement and seen bear fruit. This thought arose in me while still in Irkutsk, (and the Bishop) instructed all the town’s priests to act in accordance with my plan. But none of my fellow clergy wanted to implement it. (...) This greatly upset me but the Lord rewarded me and gave me the desire to go to America. At the time this desire arose my first thought was “There [in America] I will be able to act on my own and I will teach when and how I want”.⁴⁶

⁴² Il’minskii 1895, 185

⁴³ See Kliment 2009, 106 and Kallistos 1999, 557

⁴⁴ Garrett 1979, 25

⁴⁵ See RBS Otchet 1820, 5, 60-61; Cohen-Zacek 1964, 237-238

⁴⁶ Pivovarov 1997, 193-4

Innokentii's desire to teach when and how he wanted is reflected in his writings on education which reveal the same emphasis as Philaret and Makarii on the education of the heart and the will as much as the mind.

The school method, that is, learning the Catechism by rote and so on, will not be entirely useful.⁴⁷

Schools at present enlighten and educate only the mind and not the mind and heart together.⁴⁸

In the schools they teach only to know, but the implementation (...) is left to each according to his will.⁴⁹

In his catechetical teaching, he also emphasized the role of the heart in the reception of the word of God.

Christianity is a requirement, satisfaction and comfort above all of the heart, and not of the mind alone, and therefore in teaching the faith you must seek to act more on the heart than on the mind. (...) But in order to act on the heart, you must speak from the heart.⁵⁰

When commenting on why the Iakut Catechism had little influence he wrote

The main reason for this is, undoubtedly, that we forget that it is in the word of God alone that there is power which acts on the human heart and therefore you must catechize first of all using the word of God itself, despite it seeming incomprehensible to the catechized and therefore untimely...and only then offer your catechetical teachings.⁵¹

The central role of Holy Scripture in catechization led to translations into several Alaskan languages and later into Iakut. In Innokentii's writing on Scripture and the translation process, we see the hallmarks of Philaret's emphasis on the translation of the word of God sanctifying the

⁴⁷ Ibid, 196

⁴⁸ Innokentii 1886-1888, Kn. 1, 292

⁴⁹ Ibid. 293

⁵⁰ Ibid. 243

⁵¹ Ibid. Kn.2, 322

language, rather than the words in themselves being sacred. In his Foreword to St Matthew's Gospel in Aleut, Innokentii warns that

in this book there are a few words which do not entirely express the words of the Russian language, and this is because in your language there are not equivalent words, and such words without equivalence are printed differently. And therefore do not think that this translation will never need correction. And do not get attached to the words alone of this translation but enter into the very meaning and spirit of the Divine Word.⁵²

Innokentii stressed the need for education in the native language, and in 1840 wrote of the Kolosh that many would agree to send their children to school, but how can they learn to read and write when they don't know Russian, and why learn when they don't have any books in their own language.⁵³ In the 1840s the Kolosh language was used in Scripture reading, prayers and preaching,⁵⁴ and when the Kamchatka diocese expanded to include the Iakutsk region, Innokentii expressed his desire that 'all church services be conducted in Iakut churches in their language.'⁵⁵ After the transfer of Alaska to American rule, he recommended the appointment of 'a new bishop from among those who know the English language,' the ordination of American citizens, and the celebration of the Liturgy in English.⁵⁶ Innokentii expected his clergy to study the local language and translate biblical and liturgical texts.

In order to be more truly useful to your parishioners, you must in a short space of time learn their language (...) It is the indispensable duty of the subdeacon serving with you to learn their language fluently.⁵⁷

Public gatherings for prayer carried out in the local language, native-language schools, the translation process, the vast distances and difficulty of travelling to inaccessible islands, led to

⁵² Ibid. Kn.1, 236

⁵³ Innokentii 1840a, Part 2, 137

⁵⁴ Kliment 2009, 185

⁵⁵ Innokentii 1852, 299

⁵⁶ Oleksa 1992, 166-167

⁵⁷ Innokentii 1840b, 257

the development of indigenous lay readers or altar servers.⁵⁸ In 1841, a church school to train clergy was opened in New Arkhangel with 23 Creole and native students, and by 1856 there were 81 pupils.⁵⁹ In 1852 he considered 65 readers were needed in the Iakut region and so he recommended ‘taking into the clergy estate from the natives and from the tribute-paying estate’ as they would be needed for services in Iakut, and could eventually become deacons.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, Innokentii did not envisage the Alaskan church being able to develop local leadership quickly. In 1848 he wrote

Our own home-grown (...) missionaries we will not have for a long, long time; (...) of the natives and local so-called Creoles, scarcely 1 in 50 is fit to be a missionary. No, the further we go the more evident it is that Creoles in their mental ability and character, are far from being like Russians (...) we will have to wait for a long time for them to work without assistance, and in the area of learning, speaking in public is a stumbling block.

He considered that missionaries and money would have to be sought in Russia for the moment, and he wished someone would set up a society like the English Missionary Society.⁶¹

A striking feature of Innokentii’s writings is his view of traditional Alaskan cultures. In his 1840 *Instructions* he emphasizes the unwritten natural law which reveals the power, might and glory of God and so ‘you can hear from the savages themselves echoes and affirmations of the truths of this law indelibly inscribed on the scrolls of the heart of each.’ All the nations and peoples originating from the first man are ‘living memorials and visible proof of God’s creative omnipotence and wisdom.’⁶² This accounts for a central theme of Innokentii’s catechetical writings in which he draws together themes from the mystical and pietist writings popular in early 19th century Russia, with Orthodox teaching on the sacraments. He emphasizes the all-pervasive presence of the Holy Spirit writing

⁵⁸ See Garrett 1979, 51; Innokentii 1842-1843, 62, 64, 68

⁵⁹ Innokentii 1997, 328

⁶⁰ Innokentii 1852, 312-3

⁶¹ Barsukov 1997, 246-247

⁶² Innokentii 1840b, 244 and 1840a, 142

You do not need to search for the Holy Spirit in some special place. He is always with us, always surrounds us and as soon as He finds in some person a simple and pure heart, immediately occupies it little by little, just as water fills a vessel immersed in it.⁶³

This leads him to conclude that, while the Holy Spirit is received through baptism and constantly fills the soul through holy communion, the Holy Spirit also came down on the centurion Cornelius before baptism and

such an occurrence shows that any pagan, any unbaptised person, if he has hope according to his own law, that is, fulfils all that his reason and conscience tell him to do, can soon receive the Holy Spirit, such a person only needs to hear of Jesus Christ and come to know Him.⁶⁴

After serving in Alaska from 1824 to 1839, Veniaminov made his first journey to St Petersburg and Moscow from 1839 to 1841, during which time he met Metropolitan Philaret with whom he stayed in Moscow. When Veniaminov's wife died it was Philaret who encouraged him to take up the monastic vocation, tonsured him with the name Innokentii,⁶⁵ and remained a close friend and patron of his missionary work which continued in Iakutsk after 1852 and on the Amur after 1858.

Innokentii's detailed reports on the Alaskan missions in letters to Philaret were published regularly after 1843 in the journal *Supplements to the Works of the Holy Fathers*, and thus became well-known in Russia at large.⁶⁶ Il'minskii mentions these *Supplements*,⁶⁷ and he would have known Innokentii's many ethnographical publications of the 1840s. From 1850 there was collaboration between Kazan and Iakutsk over translations into Iakut, and Il'minskii's letter of May 1855 explaining his translation principles to Dmitrii Khitrov, head of the Iakut Translation

⁶³ Innokentii 1886-1888, 106

⁶⁴ Ibid, 111

⁶⁵ Kliment 2009, 135-142

⁶⁶ See Barsukov 1997, 186, 215, 220, 295, 304, 309, 313, 330, 337, 506

⁶⁷ Il'minskii 1885, 8

Committee, was later published.⁶⁸ Ivan Iakovlev wrote that Innokentii ‘when travelling to St Petersburg along the Kama and Volga, always let Il`minskii know of his journey, and called in to see him in Kazan. (Il`minskii) was in awe of him.’⁶⁹ Innokentii visited Il`minskii in this way in August 1857 and February 1858, on his way to and from meetings in the Synod when translation of the Russian Bible was resumed.⁷⁰ When Innokentii was on his final journey to replace Philaret as Metropolitan of Moscow on May 22nd 1868, several key figures in Kazan missionary circles, including Il`minskii, Fr Viktor Vishnevskii and Fr Vasilii Timofeev, rushed to meet him at the quayside.⁷¹

The motivation of the early 19th century missionaries

Neither Makarii nor Innokentii’s writings make reference to Sts Cyril and Methodius as the inspiration for their work, and while we see the beginnings of the implementation of features of what has become known as the Cyrillo-Methodian missionary tradition, there are areas where these features do not seem to have impinged on their thinking or practices.

Although Makarii studied Teleut and Tatar and left unpublished translations into these languages, the use of native languages is not a concern of his writings. In his 1839 *Thoughts* he surprisingly never suggests that missionaries should learn the local language, or use native languages in schools, and he depicts his missionaries making translations into Russian of patristic and Western spiritual writings, rather than translating into native languages. One of his own major preoccupations while in the Altai was the translation of the Russian Bible. He nowhere suggests training an indigenous clergy or missionaries, and his vision of missionary education presupposes that the missionaries will come from Russia, although he nevertheless sowed the seeds of a future indigenous clergy by discipling Mikhail Chevalkov who was

⁶⁸ Dionisii 1902

⁶⁹ Iakovlev 1997, 267

⁷⁰ Il`minskii 1895, 329

⁷¹ Barsukov 1997, 586-587

ordained deacon in 1870. Il'minskii noted this relative lack of emphasis on native languages in Makarii's approach.

Makarii had a certain mystical side, and tried to arouse a Christian, grace-filled spirit in the natives, although he did not deny, and even recognized the benefit of local languages.

He contrasts Makarii with Innokentii who

acted above all through catechetical preaching and native translations which he with complete conviction considered (and rightly so) a necessary weapon of mission.⁷²

We have seen many examples of Innokentii promoting the scriptural and liturgical use of local languages and this inevitably meant he encouraged indigenous readers, altar servers and school teachers, and as a bishop, he was able to implement this in his dioceses. Yet he saw many problems in the development of an indigenous priesthood and missionaries, and he certainly did not eagerly promote this as the only way forward as Il'minskii was later to do.

Rather than being inspired by the tradition of Cyril and Methodius, the missionaries' motivation can be traced to the movement in the early 19th century Russian Church to make the Word of God accessible to the people through improved catechetical teaching and preaching, through use of the Russian vernacular in the Scriptures and textbooks, which in the missionary context led to use of local vernaculars which could be equally sanctified by the translation of the Word of God. Makarii and Innokentii's missionary work thus developed directly out of, and was also a parallel expression of concerns in the heart of Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow.

The recommencement of translation work on the Russian Bible

It is not surprising then that we see Makarii and Innokentii, alongside Philaret and Grigorii Postnikov, fully involved in the struggle to keep the Russian Bible cause alive both during and after Nicholas' reign. Makarii Glukharev did not see the outcome of his battle to translate the

⁷² Il'minskii 1895, 185

Bible into Russian owing to his death in 1847. Korsunskii considers that Grigorii Postnikov was the only other hierarch who firmly supported Philaret of Moscow's views on scriptural translation at this time.⁷³ In an 1844 letter to Philaret, Postnikov argues that the rule that Christians in general should not read Scripture is found only in the Western church after its separation from the Orthodox Church, and he quotes from many Church Fathers who recommended the reading of Scripture by the laity. He concludes that

in accepting a rule which would limit the reading of Scripture, we would on the one hand be placing ourselves against the opinion of the entire ancient orthodox church (we would become schismatics in relation to it); we would also become even further removed from unification with our own schismatics (who), using their own translations, have a firm belief in the general duty of reading Holy Scripture. (...) How long ago it was necessary to give the people guidance in reading Holy Scripture! O Sovereign Lord! Do not remove from us your bounties! (...) The mere thought of forbidding the ordinary people to read Holy Scripture makes me fearful.⁷⁴

With the death of both Nicholas I and Oberprokuror Protasov in early 1855, we see both Grigorii and Innokentii playing an active role in putting the Russian Bible back on the synodal agenda. In September 1856 Grigorii Postnikov was appointed Metropolitan of St Petersburg, and in a letter of 19th November 1857 to Philaret, Innokentii recounts how a report on biblical translation had been presented by Grigorii on 18th November to the Synod, saying 'there's no need for a lot of discussion, we must rather set to work' and asking for Philaret of Moscow's guidance on how to set about the task, to which there was unanimous agreement.⁷⁵ Innokentii encouraged Philaret 'At the present time, who better than you can revise the translation? I am of the belief that the Lord is keeping you precisely for this great work.'⁷⁶ Batalden comments on how the renewal of biblical translation reflected the ascendancy of Philaret who guided the process until his death in

⁷³ Korsunskii 1883, 89

⁷⁴ Grigorii 1844, 13, 16

⁷⁵ Philaret 1900, 367-8

⁷⁶ Ibid, 371

1867.⁷⁷ Despite the opposition of Metropolitan Philaret of Kiev during a two-year debate,⁷⁸ work on the Russian translations proceeded, with the Four Gospels published in 1860, the Epistles and Acts of the Apostles in 1862,⁷⁹ and the whole Bible in the synodal translation in 1876.⁸⁰

Was there a Cyrillo-Methodian missionary tradition in early 19th century Russia?

If Makarii and Innokentii did not associate their missionary work with Sts Cyril and Methodius, we need to examine more closely the resurgence of interest in the Thessalonian brothers in the second quarter of the 19th century in Russia in order to understand the missionaries' silence about them.

An awakening of interest in the origins of Slavic languages, the Slavonic script and Liturgy arose in the 18th century among the Slavs seeking to defend use of their languages in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and this was inevitably accompanied by a resurgence of interest in Sts Cyril and Methodius. Before this time, the monastic communities, with their continuous use of Glagolitic and Old Church Slavonic, had been the most prominent bearers and creators of the Cyrillo-Methodian cultural memory among the Western and Southern Slavs.⁸¹

One important figure in the 18th century awakening was the Czech Iosif Dobrovskii who in 1822 published a Church Slavonic Grammar which was followed in 1823 by *Cyrrill und Method der Slaven Apostol*.⁸² This renewed scholarly interest in Slavic philology and Cyril and Methodius' contribution to the origins of the written Slavonic language, was taken up by the Russian historian and publicist M.P. Pogodin who translated Dobrovskii's book into Russian in 1825, and in his Foreword expressed the desire that 'the book would give rise to new research in our

⁷⁷ Batalden 2013, 125

⁷⁸ See Vasilevskii 1888, 371-375, 382

⁷⁹ Snychev 1994, 337-339

⁸⁰ See Batalden Ibid.

⁸¹ Homza 2013, 1-2, 6-7 and Sanneh 2009, 88

⁸² Lavrov 1929, 544, 573, 593, 598

fatherland into Cyril and Methodius whose story has been “so entangled by ignoramuses”.⁸³ Although Russians would have known of the Lives of Sts Cyril and Methodius from St Dmitrii of Rostov’s *Lives of the Saints* and Karamzin’s *History of the Russian State*, Pogodin’s translation of Dobrovskii’s book marks a new stage in scholarly interest and research into the sources of their Lives. The fact that there was no church service in honour of the saints in the Russian service books until 1863 points to the lack of significance they held in the Russian cultural memory at this time.

Moscow University Professor of Russian history from 1835, editor of the journals *Moskovskii Vestnik* and *Moskvitianin*, and ‘one of the notable expounders of the government doctrine of Official Nationality’⁸⁴ with its threefold emphasis on Orthodoxy, Autocracy and nationality, Pogodin passionately promoted interest in the history of the Slavs as part of the renewed search for Russian *narodnost`* during Nicholas I’s reign. Pogodin expressed his later views in an article “Sts Cyril and Methodius were Slavs, not Greeks”. While arguing his case well, he reveals that he is not entirely unbiased. ‘In our time, in the epoch of national awareness, this question attracts more attention, and we would very much like to put the images of two such great figures as Sts Cyril and Methodius, in the temple of Slavic history.’⁸⁵ Pogodin actively promoted the unification of all Slavs, was foremost amongst the initiators of celebrating the 1000th anniversary of Sts Cyril and Methodius in 1863, and published in 1865 his *Kirillo-Mefodievskii Sbornik*, articles by scholars on original sources relating to the brothers’ Lives.⁸⁶

This emphasis in the second quarter of the 19th century on Sts Cyril and Methodius’ significance for Slavic history and culture, as creators of the Slavonic alphabet and literary language, and

⁸³ Dobrovskii 1825, Foreword, I,VII

⁸⁴ Riasanovsky 1959, 55

⁸⁵ Pogodin 1864, 2

⁸⁶ Pogodin 1865

important figures for Russia's own sense of *narodnost*, helps to explain why the Thessalonian brothers were not regarded as models for mission among non-Slavic peoples by the early 19th century Russian missionaries with their emphasis on use of the Russian and other vernaculars. This also helps to explain Philaret of Moscow's reaction to the proposal to celebrate the 1000th anniversary of Sts Cyril and Methodius in 1863. His main concern was the liturgical form the celebration should take as there was no service to the Saints in the Russian Menaion. If a service was to be composed then it needed to be decided what actually the Church was celebrating

The Slavonic alphabet? Of course not. It is proper (for the Church) to celebrate the sanctification of the Slavonic language by the translation into it of the Word of God. And should Cyril and Methodius alone be glorified for this? Of course not, (...) above all we should glorify the Trihypostatic God and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, of which Cyril and Methodius were the instruments.⁸⁷

Philaret argued that it would be more fitting to celebrate the 1000th anniversary of the baptism of Saint Olga or Saint Vladimir 'as actually relating to the Russian Church and the Russian people'⁸⁸ and that the initiative to celebrate Sts Cyril and Methodius had not come from within the Church.

The Orthodox Church institutes extraordinary celebrations as a result of an especial stirring of popular, pious feeling due to extraordinary events and signs of God's Providence. The present case does not present such a clear indication of popular reverence. The idea of the proposed celebration arose not in the spiritual sphere, but among scholarly and political lovers of the Slavs [*slavianoliubtsev*]. Will the people be inspired by their idea when it is introduced into the Church? (...) It is already evident that the Slavs outside our borders attribute almost more national and political, than spiritual and ecclesial significance to the proposed celebration. And

⁸⁷ Philaret SMIOF Vol.5, 244-5

⁸⁸ Ibid. 244

this is already increasing hostility and arousing opposition from those who are not the well-wishers of Orthodoxy and Slavdom.⁸⁹

Philaret opposed the use of the term ‘Equal-to-the-Apostles’ for Cyril and Methodius, which had been proposed by Metropolitan Philaret of Kiev in his 1857 Memorandum which defended the inviolability of the Slavonic Scriptures at the time when it had been proposed to resume work on the Russian translation of the Bible.⁹⁰

The Synod drew elements from the recommendations of both Philarets, with the term ‘Equal-to-the-Apostles’ being adopted of Sts Cyril and Methodius after 1863, and the insertion into the Canon to the Saints of verses written by Philaret of Moscow which identify the creation of the Slavonic alphabet with the apostolic purpose of passing on the Holy Scriptures and Liturgy to the people, Philaret’s lifelong concern shared, as we have seen, by Makarii and Innokentii.

Having crafted Slavonic letters, O wise Cyril, you at once used them to write down the Divine Scriptures and liturgical books which you passed on to the people. Pray to Christ, the Wisdom of God, that the sons of Russia, having earnestly desired literacy and learning, should not turn to various types of alien learning, but should enlighten their minds with the word of God and the teaching of the saints, and have their hearts confirmed by grace.⁹¹

Philaret clearly emphasizes the enlightenment of both mind and heart, the Word of God and the patristic writings, while his phrase ‘sons of Russia’ embraces both the Slavic and non-Slavic peoples of the Empire among whom he encouraged missionary work throughout his life.

Philaret’s reference to ‘the scholarly and political lovers of the Slavs [*slavianoliubtsev*]’ raises the issue of his and the missionaries’ relationship to the rediscovery and promotion of Russian *narodnost`* in Russian intellectual circles in the early 19th century. Nichols points out that

⁸⁹ Ibid. 374

⁹⁰ Vasilevskii 1888, 372-3

⁹¹ Mineiia 2002 May vol.3, 411

Philaret and the Slavophiles should have been logical allies as they had much in common, above all a desire for the rediscovery of Russia's unique Orthodox spiritual heritage after a century of westernization. Yet there was little correspondence between them, and Nichols concludes that Philaret and the Slavophiles were not in fact ideologically close. In contrast to Slavophile idealization of the Russian people and the Christian brotherhood of the peasant commune, Philaret was only too aware of the unchurched quality of peasant Christianity, and he also did not believe, as many Slavophiles did, that the history of the Russian people is the only history in the world of a Christian people.⁹²

Conclusion

We have seen in this chapter how Philaret's burden for clergy and popular education, and for use of the living language, arose out of his concern to catechize the people, to provide education of both heart and mind on the basis of Orthodox teaching, in particular the Scriptures. These emphases characterize the missionary activities of Makarii and Innokentii who were both directly and indirectly inspired by Philaret and his educational movement, and fought for the use of vernacular languages on the mission field out of a belief in their sanctification by God's Word. Philaret's sense of the universality of God's action in history, sanctifying many languages, precluded any sense of national exclusivity, and this universality of God's revelation, both among the peoples and in the created world itself, is also a feature of the writings of Makarii and Innokentii. Thus, although the movement Philaret awakened was, in its way, a reaction to 18th century westernization, and a reaffirmation of the Russian Orthodox heritage, it retained a sense of the universality of the Church and knowledge of God which precluded any strong emphasis on Russian *narodnost`* and national particularity. Philaret kept his distance from the intellectual and philosophical circles for which Russia's Slavonic heritage was of prime importance, and so the missionary movement he encouraged did not associate its work with Sts Cyril and Methodius. Nevertheless, one of Philaret's contributions to the 1863 anniversary of

⁹² Nichols 1993, 316-321

the saints, his verses added to the Canon, reminded Russia of the broader missionary aim of the creation of the Slavonic alphabet, and the increasing association of Cyril and Methodius with the missionary movement begins from this time as we shall see in later chapters.

Makarii, Innokentii and Grigorii Postnikov were among the staunchest supporters of translating the Bible into Russian, with the latter two playing key roles in the recommencement of the translation process by the Synod in the late 1850s. From 1848, Grigorii Postnikov was Archbishop of Kazan, and so while Nikolai Il'minskii received the heritage of Makarii and Innokentii through their writings and some direct and indirect contact, it was Grigorii who played the most significant role in passing on the heritage of Philaret's movement to Kazan as we shall see in chapter Two.

Chapter 2

Nikolai Il'minskii and the changing missionary paradigm 1845-1872

Introduction

In Chapter One we surveyed the writings and activities of some of the key figures who contributed to the overall missionary climate of the Russian Church in the early decades of the 19th century, each of whom influenced Nikolai Il'minskii. In Chapter Two we will examine the situations and people who more immediately influenced the development of his ideas from the time he began to study Arabic and Tatar at the Kazan Theological Academy in 1845, to the time he became Director of the Kazan Teachers' Seminary in 1872. From 1845-62 his ideas on mission remained largely theoretical, although he spent two prolonged periods immersed in non-Russian cultures, both of which had a profound effect on his development. From 1862-72 his ideas began to take a more practical orientation at the time that Russia as a whole was going through the upheavals of Alexander II's reforms. As the thesis as a whole focuses on the Chuvash people, I will only briefly summarize Il'minskii's work among the Baptised Tatars, which has received a lot of attention from scholars elsewhere,¹ while giving enough detail to provide a background to his writings at this time.

The influence of J.G.Herder and the Slavophiles

Philaret, Makarii and Innokentii were all born in the 1780s-90s, so while their writings and activities had a profound influence on Il'minskii, he nevertheless represents a later generation. Nichols asserts that Philaret and the Slavophiles were not ideologically close, whereas Il'minskii, born in 1822, grew up amid the intellectual currents of the 1830s-40s. Zen'kovskii writes that 'those who developed spiritually in the 1830s, in their later creative work took to a logical conclusion the ideas which inspired them then' and the intellectual climate they created was only

¹ See references below

superseded after the Crimean War in the 1850s.² Zen`kovskii has Gogol, the early Slavophiles and Herzen in mind, but these were the decades when Il`minskii and his fellow young lecturers at the Kazan Theological Academy also developed spiritually, as is testified to by their communal reading of *Dead Souls* through the night with Gogol's portrait on the table in the late 1840s.³

The early Slavophiles and Gogol were influenced by German Romanticism with its sense of the crisis of Western European culture, and thus had a sense of the crisis of Russian culture in as much as it had imitated Western Europe in the 18th century. They believed that Russia should rediscover her own specific national culture with its Orthodox roots, still observable in the customs and thinking of the common people, while the State and educated elite after Peter the Great had imitated Western culture and institutions, and so grown apart from the people.

Rabow-Edling argues that Slavophilism was a form of cultural nationalism, and demonstrates the influence of the German theologian J.F. Herder and his ideas of cultural uniqueness. For Herder, society was a living organism growing out of a common culture, the national spirit of a people expressed in its religion, language, literary and artistic traditions.⁴ The different peoples and cultures of the world were therefore 'interrelated and interacting organisms, each of which is necessary to the whole' yet each of which must retain and develop its own unique national characteristics,⁵ ideas Herder summed up in his *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, published in Russian in 1829.⁶ The missionaries' fascination with Herder is shown in a letter Makarii Glukharev wrote after his stay in Kazan in 1840 when the university library 'tempted and lured me to either Herder, De Kandel or Herschel.'⁷

² Zen`kovskii 2005, 27

³ Il`minskii, 1865d, 447

⁴ Rabow-Edling 2006, 65-67, 90-95; Zen`kovskii 2005, 33-37

⁵ Rabow-Edling Ibid. 67

⁶ Herder 1829

⁷ Quoted in Kharlampovich 1904, 225

In their diagnosis of how Russia was to rediscover and develop its national distinctiveness, the Slavophiles also drew on Herder's thought, which stressed the role of artists and writers who were to articulate a people's collective individuality, and historical scholars who were to rediscover the people's history, literary traditions and folklore. As national traditions needed to be transmitted and assimilated, education or enlightenment (*prosveshchenie*) played an important role in shaping a community's identity and moral development. For Herder, it was the middle-class burghers who were to lead this educational activity becoming 'popular leaders who would spread the gospel of education and guide the rest of the nation'.⁸ This raised a problem for the Slavophiles who saw Russia's educated elite as alienated from the life of the people, with little knowledge of Russia's own history and culture. They therefore urged Russian intellectuals to participate fully in the life of the people, whose village communes were idealized in both Slavophile and Westernizer writings.⁹

Early Slavophile writings nevertheless retained a sense of the universality of human enlightenment and progress, to which Russia would only be able to make a genuine contribution through rediscovering her unique, national path.¹⁰ The words *obshchechelovecheskii* or *vsechelovecheskii* (common to all mankind, universal), therefore remain a distinct feature of their writings. Kireevskii wrote

Torn away from Europe, we cease to be a universal nation (*obshchechelovecheskaia natsional`nost`*) (...) love for European education, just as love for our own education, both concur in (...) a single aspiration to a living and therefore universal and truly Christian enlightenment.¹¹

These intellectual currents of the 1830s-40s, and the language of *narodnost`* and *obshchechelovechnost`* used to express them, are vital if we are to understand Il'minskii's writings, and see how he both adopted the Slavophile sense of Russia's calling among the

⁸ Rabow-Edling 2006, 67-69

⁹ Ibid. 56

¹⁰ Zen'kovskii 2005, 41-50, Rabow-Edling 2006, 46-49

¹¹ Zen'kovskii 2005, 42

nations, and yet extended the concern for each nation to rediscover its unique national culture, history and language, to the non-Slavic nations he encountered during his formative years.

The Kazan Theological Academy Missionary Departments

Nikolai Ivanovich Il'minskii was the son of a priest from Penza where he attended the church school and seminary before becoming one of the students in the first intake at the newly created Kazan Theological Academy in 1842. When in January 1845 two optional courses for the study of missionary languages were introduced Il'minskii joined the Arabic and Tatar course out of fascination for the lecturer, A.K. Kazem-Bek (1802-1870).¹² Kazem-Bek was born in Persia, the son of a distinguished Muslim judge, but after his family's exile to Astrakhan in the Russian empire, he taught Turkish and Arabic from 1822 to Scottish missionaries who gradually won him over to the Christian faith. He travelled round the Turkic-speaking peoples of the North Caucasus with the missionaries, writing tracts and explaining the Christian faith in local languages.¹³ The closure of the Bible Society in 1825 led to Kazem-Bek being sent to Kazan where he became a university lecturer and from 1844 Dean of the Faculty of Oriental languages. He remained loyal to the faith of the Scottish missionaries into later life, in 1842 still describing himself as 'of the Reformed faith.'¹⁴ Schimmelpenninck comments on Kazem-Bek's sympathetic view of Islam which he considered neither a conscious deception nor a malevolent heresy. He often stressed the West's Eastern ancestry and saw no fundamental divide between Orient and Occident. Nevertheless he believed that 'The West cannot restore enlightenment to the East...Only those born in the Orient's own lands can achieve their reform.'¹⁵

When an imperial decree of January 1847 set up a committee to translate the Orthodox liturgy into Tatar, it was Kazem-Bek who was appointed to lead the work with Il'minskii's help.¹⁶ In Il'minskii's reviews of translations sent in from different seminaries, we see him struggling with

¹² Znamenskii 1892, 15

¹³ See Glashev 2010 on the activities and translations of these missionaries.

¹⁴ Boratynskaia 1893, 209-226

¹⁵ Schimmelpenninck 2010, 107-108

¹⁶ Znamenskii 1892, 32

the issue of what kind of speech and alphabet to use in translations, and beginning to move towards use of the vernacular.¹⁷ Many of the translators had used the 1818 Bible Society translation of the New Testament into literary Tatar, on which Il`minskii commented ‘The translation of Christian church services into the Tatar language being the most important means towards a rebirth by grace of the Tatars, should be marked by living, popular speech. So, apart from the Tatar translation of the Gospel, the translator should make use of the living word heard on the lips of the Tatar people.’¹⁸ Il`minskii decided to learn the living Tatar language by enrolling at a Muslim medressa and moving to live in Kazan’s Tatar quarter. He wrote that he ‘tried above all to become familiar with the inner life of Muslims, with official Muslim teachings, practices, popular beliefs and customs and to this end studied the Arabic language and Muslim theological works.’¹⁹

According to Rabow-Edling, Herder’s ‘idea of diversity, or uniqueness, gave the concept of the nation a relativistic character. If all cultures were incommensurable, genuine translation from one way of life to another was impossible. (...) not only was human nature unique in different parts of the world, each age and civilization was unique and incomparable as well. (This principle) implied that to understand a culture, one must enter the time and place of a people and fully immerse oneself in their situation.’²⁰ We have seen Makarii and Innokentii all practising this principle which we see Il`minskii adopting, and which his fellow lecturer in the Mongolian and Kalmyk department, A.A. Bobrovnikov, was to adopt too.

Archbishop Grigorii Postnikov and missionary work in Kazan in the 1850s

Grigorii Postnikov, Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow’s friend and supporter in the cause of translating the Bible into Russian, was Archbishop of Kazan from March 1848 to October 1856 and played a significant role in shaping Il`minskii’s ideas and career, and the missionary

¹⁷ Ibid. 34-35

¹⁸ Ibid. 36

¹⁹ Ibid. 23-25

²⁰ Rabow-Edling 2006, 67

attitudes of the Kazan clergy in general. Grigorii's knowledge of the Old Believer Schism meant he was an appropriate appointment to the Kazan diocese which covered the old borderlands of the Russian state where many Old Believers had settled or been exiled. His famous apologetic work on Old Belief *The truly ancient and truly Orthodox Church of Christ*²¹ was published in 1855 and at Grigorii's initiative the Kazan Theological Academy journal *Pravoslavnyi Sobesednik* began publication in 1855, with the initial aim of publishing apologetic material about Old Belief. In August 1854 Il'minskii was appointed secretary of the editorial committee.²² The name of the journal reflects Grigorii's view of missionary work needing to take the form of peaceful conversation, rather than violence or polemic.²³

In Grigorii's *Conversations with the clergy of the Kazan diocese*, he stressed that missionary work among Old Believers could only be carried out after thorough study of their traditions as expressed in their own texts. Kazan clergy were to know why the liturgical books had been corrected, to find out which branch of the schism its teachers belonged to, and then use arguments from their own books. If agreement could not be reached, there was to be no threatening behavior or insults.²⁴ The *Conversations* condemned previous policies of forced baptisms carried out without teaching, and the lone missionary travelling around to enforce church attendance. They stressed conversion of the heart, encouraging priests 'to introduce the Chuvash, Cheremys and Votiaks to a genuine and heartfelt acceptance of Orthodoxy'²⁵ which could only come through improved teaching based on Holy Scripture interpreted with the help of patristic writings, together with thorough catechetical teaching both before and after baptism.²⁶ He also stressed the need for priests to learn the Tatar language and use Muslim sacred writings

²¹ Grigorii, 1855a

²² NA RT f.10, op.1, d.1324, l.14v,16v,108-109 and d.1302, l.4

²³ Znamenskii 1892, 372,402

²⁴ Grigorii 1855b, 30-40, 44

²⁵ Ibid. 15,17

²⁶ Ibid. 42-52

in debate with them.²⁷ We find all of these aspects of Grigorii's missionary teaching in Il'minskii's early writings and activities when the two men were working in close collaboration. At Grigorii's request, Il'minskii spent the summers of 1848 and 1849 travelling semi-incognito around Baptised Tatar villages. He observed how the Baptised Tatars saw that the Muslim Tatars were literate, lived in good, sober conditions and attended the mosque with reverence. 'Naturally a person who does not understand the spirit of Christianity, seeing how it is lived out by its Russian followers, cannot prefer it to Islam.'²⁸ The *Proposal on Tatar Mission*²⁹ put forward on 19th April 1849 voiced all of Il'minskii's concerns. He was very critical of previous styles of missionary work involving 'so-called missionaries' who did not speak Tatar, nor understand the Muslim faith, and conducted services in mobile churches with police protection. Il'minskii's main proposal, and of greatest significance for his future work, was the need to draw the Tatar people as a whole to Christianity through education, rather than converting individuals who would be influenced by the masses to turn back to Islam.³⁰ Il'minskii stressed the need for Tatar-speaking priests raised in Tatar parishes, who at Seminary would study Arabic and Muslim Theology using manuals from Tatar schools, with the most capable going on to the Academy where they would study the Koran and other sources of Islamic teaching. In order to prepare a lecturer for these courses, Il'minskii suggested one student should be sent to the Middle East for two years, a proposal he was selected to implement.³¹

The Kazem-Bek Translation Committee continued its work in Kazan until 1850, during which time it edited the translations of Mattins, the Liturgy and the Typika, and the Canon and prayers before and after Holy Communion, and sought to rewrite the Bible Society translation of the New Testament.³² From July 1850 Il'minskii was released from teaching in Kazan in order to

²⁷ Ibid. 24-25

²⁸ Iskhakov 2012, 93

²⁹ Znamenskii 1892, 323-337

³⁰ Ibid. 73

³¹ Znamenskii 1892, 78

³² Ibid. 65

spend a year in St Petersburg as part of the new Translation Committee formed there under Grigorii, now a permanent member of the Synod.³³ Il`minskii lodged with Grigorii, and the two often spent their free evening hours discussing common concerns, one of which was undoubtedly Il`minskii's forthcoming trip to the Middle East from 1851-1854.³⁴

According to Grigorii's instructions for the trip, Il`minskii was to study the Islamic faith 'according to its sources, i.e. according to the Koran and Mohammedan tradition, investigating moreover the weak aspects of the Mohammedan faith and indicating the easiest ways of leaving this faith for Christianity.'³⁵ He was also to study Sufi sects³⁶ and was to investigate the Roman Catholic and Protestant missions in the Middle East. During the trip Il`minskii continued to live out the principle of immersing himself in the local culture as he lived in Cairo in the home of his Arabic teacher. We see the seeds of his own future emphasis on the role of Scripture and music in his evaluation of Muslim primary schools. 'The Koran is studied with great zeal, (...) as the word of God, sanctifying and delighting readers and listeners with its refined Arabic sounds. There is a special estate of those who know the Koran by heart and chant it to melodies which have been preserved from ancient times.'³⁷

The trip also developed his convictions about the use of the native language spoken by native personnel in school and church as he was impressed by Protestant schools where native Arabs were teachers, and extracts from the Bible in Arabic used in textbooks.³⁸ Among Orthodox believers, Il`minskii noted positively that liturgical books were in Arabic.³⁹ He lamented that the hierarchs of the Patriarch of Antioch were native Greeks who hindered the advancement of the local people whereas 'bishops of the same nationality would be incomparably more useful for

³³ NA RT f.10, op.1, d.898

³⁴ Ibid. and Znamenskii 1892, 67

³⁵ NA RT f.10 op.1, d.994, l.4-5

³⁶ Ibid. l.5v

³⁷ Ibid. l.66-70

³⁸ Ibid. l.82v, 86

³⁹ Ibid. l.86

the Church, than foreigners,⁴⁰ and emphasized that the native Syrian Uniate hierarchy ‘must give great unity and concord to the Uniates.’⁴¹

Il`minskii returned to Kazan by the beginning of the 1854-55 academic year when Grigorii had just obtained synodal approval for the Kazan Missionary Departments.⁴² In a letter to the Oberprokuror Protasov of 27th April 1854, Grigorii explained that more satisfactory study of the Arabic, Tatar, Mongol and Kalmyk languages was now needed not only ‘in order to translate into them liturgical, catechetical and instructive books and texts, but detailed and precise knowledge of the Muslim and Buddhist religions are needed in order to protect converted Tatars and Mongols from the harmful influence of their fellow tribesmen who are Muslims and Buddhists, and dispose unconverted natives if possible towards accepting Christianity.’ He therefore recommended that separate Chairs should be created for Il`minskii and Bobrovnikov,⁴³ that a Chuvash-Cheremys department should be opened under Fr Viktor Vishnevskii, as well as a Department concerning Old Belief.⁴⁴

Il`minskii and the Tatar and Arabic Department

Il`minskii was instructed by Grigorii to teach the Muslim faith according to its own sources, the general character, way of thinking, customs, habits and predilections of the Tatars, and to teach the Tatar and Arabic languages to the high level required for explaining Christian truths rather than just everyday speech.⁴⁵ In a speech to the Academy in November 1856, Il`minskii made it clear that he viewed Islamic teachings as falsehood and refuted the divine origin of the Koran, but pointed out that a polemical attitude would bear no fruit. ‘For our proofs and conclusions to be understandable and persuasive for the Tatars, we cannot use our Christian sources and historical data, but on the contrary we must take a Muslim viewpoint and take as given their

⁴⁰ Ibid. l.87v.

⁴¹ Ibid. l.81

⁴² NA RT f.10, op.1, d.1324 l.15, 93-93

⁴³ Ibid. d. 994, l.109-110

⁴⁴ Ibid. d.1324, l.91v-94

⁴⁵ Ibid. d.1324, l.93

religious opinions and stories which for Muslims are powerful and true.’⁴⁶ Many of the truths within Islam ‘their idea of God as a supreme, personal being endowed with all the perfections,’ (he gives other examples) ‘all these beliefs corrected and developed can provide a bridge into Christian teaching.’⁴⁷ This approach to mission among the Tatars began to cause controversy, especially after the arrival in 1856 of Archbishop Afanasii who demanded that students refute Muslim teachings on the basis of Orthodox theology, rather than explaining how Tatars would prove them on the basis of Muslim theology.⁴⁸ The new Academy Rector in 1857, Ioann Sokolov, was also dismissive of the missionary departments.⁴⁹

While Il`minskii was facing this crisis in attitudes to his teaching, another crisis in his thinking was taking place. In summer 1856 Il`minskii went to try out the translations of the Kazem-Bek Translation Committee, and discovered that not only did the Old Baptised Tatars whom he met not understand the literary Tatar of the translations, but the few who had learnt to read and write in parish schools knew the Cyrillic alphabet rather than the Arabic script. Il`minskii’s new convictions were expressed in a report of February 1858, in which he recommended more ‘constant, peaceful and systematic measures,’ in particular the need for schools where teaching should take place in both Russian and Tatar with schoolbooks and religious texts translated into the spoken Tatar language using the Cyrillic alphabet. Il`minskii recommended that schools should be developed first of all among the Baptised Tatars who could then themselves help with the missionary task.<sup>50</sup> However, the opportunity for Il`minskii to put his ideas into practice did not come for another four years. In a reform of the Academy of July 1858 the Missionary Departments ceased to exist and their subjects were spread over the whole Academy course so that students had some knowledge of both Old Belief and Islam, but without the thorough study

⁴⁶ Il`minskii 1856. Quoted in Znamenskii 1892, 388

⁴⁷ Ibid. 390

⁴⁸ Znamenskii 1892, 109

⁴⁹ Ibid. 108; See also Freeze 1988, 117

⁵⁰ Znamenskii 1892, 411, 429

Il'minskii desired.⁵¹ In September 1858 Il'minskii set off for Orenburg after telling the Rector he was going to look for a new post.⁵²

A.A.Bobrovnikov and the Mongolian and Kalmyk Department

Alexei Bobrovnikov was appointed lecturer in the Mongolian and Kalmyk Department, the languages of which he knew as he was the son of a missionary priest at the Russian Transbaikalian Mission, reopened in 1821 in response to the English mission to the Buriats founded in 1818.⁵³ Bobrovnikov spent the summer of 1846 living among the Kalmyks near Astrakhan and then made proposals that envisaged monastic missionaries, similar to the Mongolian lamaist clergy, who were to use a mobile church so that services could be held in the *ulus* itself in the Kalmyk language.⁵⁴ They should lead a nomadic lifestyle thus showing that one could be a Christian without abandoning the traditional Kalmyk lifestyle. Missionaries were to study both the spoken and literary language of the Mongolians, their Shamanist and Buddhist beliefs, as well as medicine, as the Mongolian clergy were influential due to their medical skills. The Kalmyks' strong sense of national identity was the main barrier to mission as 'To accept Christianity means in their way of thinking, to stop being a Kalmyk. (...) Giving up their steppes, their settlement, their herds of horses, their smoky tent, is for a Kalmyk the same as giving up his life.' Consequently the Kalmyks did not want to adopt the settled Russian lifestyle and agriculture or send their children to Russian schools. 'A Kalmyk looks on baptism as ruin and death.'⁵⁵

Bobrovnikov published a Grammar of the Mongolian and Kalmyk languages in 1849 in Kazan⁵⁶ and sought to immerse his students in the living culture by composing conversations in Kalmyk, which introduced students to their everyday customs and beliefs,⁵⁷ in collaboration with the

⁵¹ Ibid. 415

⁵² Ibid. 416

⁵³ "Russkiiia pravoslavnyiia missii" (1864), 330

⁵⁴ Bobrovnikov A. 1865, 497, 499-500, 505-506

⁵⁵ Ibid. 503-509; Znamenskii 1892, 369-70

⁵⁶ Bobrovnikov A. 1849

⁵⁷ NA RT f.10, op.1, d.1305, l.6-28

native Mongolian speaker Galsan Gomboev. In his 1855 comments on Kalmyk translations sent from Astrakhan, Bobrovnikov said that the time had not yet come for biblical and liturgical translations as the languages were insufficiently developed to express Christian concepts. The translator needed to ‘search for means to express that which has never existed in the thought of the people, and so has no ready-made designation. The translator must above all create from the elements of the language of the Mongols a new language, which would approximate in its perfections to the Greek and Slavonic languages.’⁵⁸ He nevertheless obviously believed that the language could be developed to become a vehicle for Christian truths so that native-language services could be held.

Fr Viktor Vishnevskii and the Chuvash/Cheremys Missionary Department

It was Fr Viktor Vishnevskii, a priest of Chuvash origins, who had compiled a Grammar and Dictionary of Chuvash, written on their ethnography in the 1830s-40s, then worked as a missionary among them from 1843,⁵⁹ who was appointed lecturer in this department. As he had roots in Chuvash villages, his department did not suffer from the lack of connection with the real situation at parish level, from which Il’minskii and Bobrovnikov’s departments suffered. In a letter of 20th August 1854 Vishnevskii was instructed by Postnikov to teach the ‘Chuvash, Cheremys and Votiak faith with all its alleged foundations’ and show their ‘character, customs, inclinations and occupations, (...) all their way of life.’⁶⁰ The closure of the department in 1856, after only two years of existence, was justified by the Academy saying ‘a sufficient number of graduates have been educated to satisfy the requirements of the region,’⁶¹ a statement which strictly speaking was true if we bear in mind the number of Chuvash-speaking priests at the parish level at this time. But the attitude to Chuvash and Cheremys culture as being not worthy

⁵⁸ Znamenskii 1892, 344-5; NA RT f.10 op.1 d.916, l.3, 5, 9-9v, 16

⁵⁸ NA RT f.10 op. d.916, l. 16

⁵⁹ See Appendix One

⁶⁰ NA RT f.10, op.1, d.1324, l.93

⁶¹ Ibid. l.99v

of attention at the level of the Academy comes through in the statement ‘it is no longer considered necessary to explain to them the content (which is moreover meagre) of the faith of these natives,’⁶² a view reflecting Vishnevskii’s own negative opinion of the Old Chuvash Faith seen in his *Teachings* of 1846.⁶³

Il`minskii in Orenburg and his return to Kazan 1858-1862

After leaving the Kazan Theological Academy in 1858 Il`minskii worked at the Orenburg Frontier Commission which administered the affairs of the western Kazakhs. His ideas developed further due to his immersion in the language and culture of the Kazakhs, as well as the influence of the Chairman V.V.Grigor`ev’s ideas on education and national culture.⁶⁴ Here Il`minskii compiled the first Kirghiz-Russian Dictionary and Grammar published in 1861, and wrote a bilingual Russian-Kirghiz textbook for the Kirghiz schools Grigor`ev had set up.⁶⁵

Grigor`ev shared the preoccupation with Russian *narodnost`* of the 1830s-40s generation.⁶⁶ It is evident that he saw Russia’s discovery of its own national distinctiveness as being intrinsically linked to a decentralizing process which would give greater autonomy to local regions within Russia. ‘In order not to rot entirely, nor fall under the sway of Western Europe, we need above all for our hands to be untied, for the yoke of centralization to be loosened, so that in Astrakhan, Perm and Chernigov people can think about their own needs with their own mind, and undertake something which affects them exclusively.’⁶⁷ He extended this concern for local decision-making to the non-Russian peoples whose lifestyle he considered their own affair. ‘The excessive zeal with which local government interferes in the economic life of this people and regulates every aspect, in this way killing in the people any disposition to independent action in

⁶² Ibid. l.99v

⁶³ Vishnevskii 1846

⁶⁴ Since 1926 the term Kazakh has been used to refer to the people whom Il`minskii knew as the Kirghiz.

⁶⁵ Veselovskii 1887, 217, 197

⁶⁶ Ibid. 169

⁶⁷ Ibid. 156

this sphere, and turning them from a living organism, producing for itself the means for existence, into a mechanism merely passively carrying out somebody else's will.'⁶⁸

Knight shows how Grigor'ev's ideas were often frustrated by, and at times in opposition to the bureaucratic Governor-Generals under whom he served.⁶⁹ He concludes that 'Grigor'ev's views and experiences in Orenburg (...) lend support to recent interpretations of Russian imperialism that stress its disparate nature, its embeddedness in local contexts (...) while downplaying monolithic notions of "Russification" and innate Russian expansionism.'⁷⁰ Grigor'ev's influence on Il'minskii's alleged russificatory orientation therefore needs to be questioned.⁷¹ On the contrary, his desire for local decision-making and not interfering in indigenous lifestyles were to become features of the Il'minskii movement.

Describing the impact of his time among the Kirghiz Il'minskii wrote 'The Kirghiz steppe once and for all reared in me a respect for popular speech which I then began to view as genuine material for linguistic research whereas the literary language is a more or less artificial, accidental and arbitrary compilation of different languages and dialects. With such a radically changed viewpoint I returned to Kazan.'⁷²

Il'minskii's Inaugural lecture at Kazan University where he returned to teach in February 1862 reveals his worldview at this time. Using the language and ideas of Herder and the Slavophiles, yet referring to Russia's Turkic peoples, Il'minskii opens his lecture by dwelling on the origins of language as an 'organism', a 'living being', an expression of 'national genius' directly connected with a people's thought, intellectual and social state, and changing as a people comes into contact with other peoples and tribes. 'Language embraces the entire life of a people (*narodnaia zhizn'*), all its thinking and customs, and to have a perfect command of a language is

⁶⁸ Ibid. Appendix p.068

⁶⁹ Knight 2000, 92

⁷⁰ Knight 2000, 98 footnote

⁷¹ See Kreindler 1969, 120

⁷² NA RT f.968, op.1, d.8, l.72-73

to know its people.’⁷³ Yet despite this emphasis on *narodnost*, on the need to study the full variety of peoples and dialects, Il’minskii retains a sense of the unity of mankind. He is concerned that minority languages which were disappearing and being absorbed by a stronger tribe should be studied in particular as ‘a language, even if in our opinion the most meagre, is a memorial to the life and activity of that same human nature down through the centuries, a small fragment of what was once possibly a great whole.’ Stressing that the natives themselves can help in studying their language and national culture (*narodnost*) he marvels at ‘with what a wide variety of different hues could be shot through one and the same nature, taken from different soils but ennobled by education common to all mankind (*obshcheloverycheskoe*).’⁷⁴

The picture Il’minskii paints of both the value of national distinctiveness, and yet also the interaction of languages and cultures, of a common human nature and common human values to be transmitted through education, was the basic worldview with which Il’minskii began his practical missionary work among the Tatars. This worldview is still perceptible in his later writings, despite the increased use of the vocabulary of russification which began to appear in his writings as he defended his ideas before those who feared the separatist tendencies of the native peoples. Il’minskii’s attitudes as a missionary can be more fully understood if we compare him with N.Ia. Danilevskii whose 1871 book *Rossiia i Evropa* rejected the notion of a common human (*obshcheloverycheskaia*) civilization and culture as something Western Europe attributed to itself, and therefore felt had the right to foist on all mankind. Danilevskii used instead the language of separate ‘cultural-historical types’ each of which had to develop according to its own distinctive principles, one of which was the Slavic type.⁷⁵ Zen’kovskii wrote of Danilevskii ‘That common human (*obshcheloverycheskii*) ideal, against which Danilevskii arms himself so powerfully, has above all Christianity as its root, (...) Christianity

⁷³ Il’minskii 1862, 6,8-9,17

⁷⁴ Ibid. 20

⁷⁵ Danilevskii 1888, 95-118

with its call to the brotherhood of peoples and the union of all in faith and life.’⁷⁶ It is this sense of the brotherhood of the peoples and the union of all in faith and life which pervades the writings of Il`minskii and those surrounding him in the 1850s-60s.

Feodor Bukharev and missionary attitudes at the Kazan Theological Academy in the late 1850s

The upheavals at the Kazan Missionary Departments in 1858 need to be understood in the context of the general ideological and theological upheavals which surfaced at the beginning of Alexander II’s reign, and were particularly manifest at the Kazan Theological Academy. With the rise of political radicalism in the 1840s-50s, the Church faced increasingly the issue of its relationship to contemporary society and its struggles.⁷⁷

One figure whose writings epitomized this crucial issue of the relationship of the Orthodox Church to contemporary life was Archimandrite Feodor Bukharev who graduated in 1846 from the Moscow Academy where he became lecturer in biblical studies, enjoying the patronage of Metropolitan Philaret.⁷⁸ The increasing controversy caused by his teaching and writings⁷⁹ led to his transfer to Kazan at Grigorii’s request in September 1854 when he became Professor of Dogmatic and Apologetic Theology, taught missionary pedagogy in the Missionary Department relating to Old Belief, and was on the Editorial Committee of *Pravoslavnyi Sobesednik*.⁸⁰ In Bukharev’s view, the missionary among Old Believers must acquire Christ the Lamb of God’s ‘love for the sinner, according to which others’ burdens of weakness and error are raised and carried as one’s own’. He was in humility to ‘consider himself guilty of the absurd errors, blindness and stubbornness of the Old Believer’ just as ‘the Lamb of God took on himself the sins of the world as though He alone was guilty of everything.’⁸¹ In every conversation ‘let the missionary look with the eyes of faith and love (...) at the Lord Himself Who became man for

⁷⁶ Zen`kovskii 2005, 74

⁷⁷ Zen`kovskii 1989 vol.1, 326

⁷⁸ Ibid. 342

⁷⁹ There is a detailed account of Bukharev’s theology in Valliere 2000

⁸⁰ NA RT f.10, op.1, d.1305; Feodor 1997, 760-764

⁸¹ Feodor 1860a, 269

the schismatic also, (...) and let him look on the schismatic as His living icon (...) worthy of honour.’⁸²

Bukharev’s missionary theology was thus rooted in Christ’s kenosis and incarnation, which also led him to a broad vision of Christians needing to be actively involved in all spheres and issues of contemporary life. ‘All areas of knowledge and life where there are the idols of any kind of ideas which are not according to Christ, we should try in every possible way to illumine with the light of Christ’s truth and grace.’⁸³ Consequently ‘not only the sciences and the arts, but agriculture and trade and other earthly interests (...) for Orthodox should have (...) great significance as the discovery and use of the treasures of our Heavenly Father’s good will revealed to us in His Only-Begotten Son (...) who became fully man to save everything human from sin and ruin.’⁸⁴ This included education which, if secularized, would leave the varied spheres of human knowledge without the light of Christ.

The correspondences between Bukharev and Il’minskii’s ideas are striking. Bukharev’s kenotic approach to mission can be seen in Il’minskii’s immersion in Tatar culture and Muslim teachings which he sought to understand from within. Christ’s incarnation undergirds Bukharev’s theology, and Il’minskii speaks of the Gospel becoming incarnate in Tatar language and culture. For Il’minskii religious faith imbued all aspects of life, and he realized that this was even more so for the native peoples,⁸⁵ so the notion of secular schools for the natives was alien, just as the secular Enlightenment worldview was alien for both him and Bukharev. Bukharev’s call for Christians to be involved in all areas of contemporary society led to his emphasis on all secular callings and professions as expressions of the royal priesthood of all believers.⁸⁶ Il’minskii remained a layman, and he trained lay teachers who would be knowledgeable and exemplary in all aspects of village life. Although the similarities between Bukharev and Il’minskii can be

⁸² Ibid. 287

⁸³ Feodor 1991, 57

⁸⁴ Feodor 1860a, 298

⁸⁵ See Il’minskii 1885, 8

⁸⁶ Feodor 1860a, 294

partly explained by their belonging to the same generation of Orthodox churchmen and the influence of Metropolitans Philaret and Grigorii, the degree of similarity can only be explained by the four years they worked together in Kazan where they undoubtedly influenced each other.

The debate concerning Orthodoxy and contemporary life in the periodical press

The connection between Bukharev and Il'minskii was not confined to the Kazan Theological Academy as both of them featured largely on the pages of the journal *Pravoslavnoe Obozrenie*, the declared aim of which was 'to draw theological scholarship into closer relationship with life, society into closer relationship with the clergy.'⁸⁷ A January 1861 editorial defended Bukharev's views saying 'The lack of connection between religious interests and the interests of society long ago became established in our country and has far from declined. It is one of the saddest and most painful phenomena of our society's life. (...) We do not see in Orthodoxy anything hostile to the progress of mankind; on the contrary, we recognize in (Orthodoxy) the strongest and truest pledges of historical progress.'⁸⁸

The journal reflected all of the concerns of its patron, Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow, who wrote to Innokentii (Veniaminov) in February 1860 saying that he had taken out a subscription for him and hoped he would become a good-willed reader and collaborator.⁸⁹ Throughout the 1860s, almost all the issues contained a portion of Makarii Glukharev's translations of the Old Testament from the Hebrew into modern Russian, usually accompanied by Fr A.A.Sergievskaia's translations from the Septuagint. There were patristic texts and modern foreign theologians in translation, as well as news of the non-Orthodox churches. An 1861 issue contained Grigorii Postnikov's 1844 letter on the reading of Holy Scripture,⁹⁰ the Notes of the Altai missionary V.Verbitskii were published in 1863,⁹¹ and in 1867 the Journals of an Alaskan missionary.⁹² In

⁸⁷ PO 1863 t.3, 987

⁸⁸ "Ob'iasnenie" 1861, 9, 13, 16-17, 22; See Znamenskii 1902, 37

⁸⁹ Philaret 1881, 30

⁹⁰ Grigorii 1844, 3-18

⁹¹ PO 1863 t.10, 143

⁹² PO 1867 t.23, 219

1863 Sergei Nurminskii lamented government interference in missionary work, and so it was understandable ‘that the parish church and its priest, as a government institution, were alienated from the local population’.⁹³ P.V.Znamenskii’s 1866 article on the Cheremys religious movement stressed the importance of translations into Cheremys in the 1820s-40s, and the role of lay teachers.⁹⁴ An 1864 article on Russian missions in the Transbaikal, the Altai and China, also described with approval translations into native languages, and the work of indigenous priests, catechists and missionaries.⁹⁵

The attempt to draw theology and life closer together was also a feature of the Kazan journal *Pravoslavnyi Sobesednik* which was notable for its articles giving critical, and sometimes radical views on questions such as land ownership, the liberation of the serfs, Russia’s native peoples, native education, and mission.⁹⁶ The Kazan journal came under Moscow censorship in 1859 due to its perceived radicalism, although this was after both Il`minskii and Bukharev had left the editorial committee and had left Kazan.

After 1863, Il`minskii published three or four articles each year in *Pravoslavnoe Obozrenie* until 1866, after which they began to appear in a wider spectrum of journals. His writings and the beginnings of his practical missionary work among the Tatars in the early 1860s need to be viewed, therefore, in the context of this progressive movement which sought to bring theology and life, clergy and laity into closer relationship. It not only stressed use of the native language, but also advocated the role of the laity and the need for leadership and initiative to come from within the native peoples themselves, while stressing that mission should not be the task of the state. In Chapter One we saw the beginnings of Philaret’s movement as his students became bishops and leaders in missionary dioceses in the late 1820s. In *Pravoslavnoe Obozrenie* in the

⁹³ Nurminskii 1863, 224. Nurminskii collaborated actively with Il`minskii, with whose support he was appointed Inspector of Public Schools in Viatka province in September 1869. See Stepanov 2008, 67-111

⁹⁴ Znamenskii 1866, 63

⁹⁵ “Russkiiia pravoslavnyiia missii” 1864, 335, 346

⁹⁶ See for example, “Golos drevnei tserkvi” 1859; “Diciatel`nost` pastyrei Tserkvi” 1860; Nurminskii 1864

1860s we see the continuation and fruit of that movement, with Bukharev and Il'minskii playing leading roles.

The initial application of Il'minskii's missionary principles 1862-1872

The 10 years from 1862-1872, that is from the year when Il'minskii began his translations into the popular Tatar language with the ensuing development of literacy, schools and Orthodox liturgical life among the Baptised Tatars, to the founding in 1872 of the Kazan Teachers' Seminary which trained the first generations of native teachers and priests for many native peoples in both the Volga-Ural region and Siberia, were a period of great reforms and change in Russian society as a whole. The emancipation of the serfs in 1861, of crown peasants in 1863, and state peasants in 1866, led to a period of great uncertainty in the countryside, which was reflected in the Kazan province in a renewed wave of Baptised Tatars seeking to adopt Islam in 1865-6.⁹⁷ This led to greater interest in Il'minskii's principles in Russian society as a whole, and was one of the factors which led to the founding in 1867 of the Brotherhood of St Gurii which gave moral and financial support to Il'minskii's work, and thus enabled the widespread application of his principles. The increase in interest in Il'minskii's work and the apostasy provoked a debate at national level over the aims and methods of education among the non-Russian peoples, and led to the 1870 *Regulations concerning measures for the education of the natives* which to a certain extent gave state backing to the adoption of Il'minskii's principles in native schools. The practical experience of translation work, schools and liturgical life among the Baptised Tatars began to be adopted among other native peoples, both in the Volga region and in Siberia. The increasing practical application of his principles in so many areas, as well as the need to defend his ideas and work in these debates led to many writings in which Il'minskii explained in detail his work and the ideological basis on which it was founded.

⁹⁷ See Werth 2002, 147-176; Johnson 2005, 100-145; Kreindler 1969, 73-74

The Kazan Central Baptised Tatar School (KCBTS) opened in 1863.⁹⁸ While Christian teaching and the liturgical cycle formed a large part of the school's curriculum, it also taught arithmetic, geometry and geography.⁹⁹ Il'minskii stressed the need for education of both the mind and the heart, and this explains the emphasis on Orthodox liturgical life in his schools. 'Knowledge acquired through study is gradually and slowly assimilated and (...) enters from the outside into a person's thinking, developing it and then affecting the heart. But involvement in religious services directly and quickly expands, elevates, ennobles and sanctifies the whole spirit of a person, bringing about their growth.'¹⁰⁰ 'The native tribes have a sincere and living religious feeling which is the more highly developed the simpler they are. And therefore the Orthodox services awaken religious feeling and move them to compunction, as long as they are expressed in the accessible form of their native language.'¹⁰¹

In his articles of the early 1860s, we see the maturing of Il'minskii's views on language use and his conviction that the popular Tatar language could be used liturgically. On a day when he entered the school and witnessed the teacher discussing the Gospel in Tatar with the pupils, he wrote 'I could only admire from a distance the lively flow of animated Tatar speech which in this way was being prepared and sanctified as an honourable vessel for the divine truths of the Gospel.'¹⁰² He insisted on using 'patterns of thought as close to the mindset of the ordinary people as possible' as 'if we want the truths taught (in schools) to put down deep roots in the consciousness of the simple people, we must enter into their worldview, accept as given their ways of thinking, and develop them. The archaically simple and few-syllabled concepts of the shamanistic natives can be assimilated by Christianity, filled and sanctified by its divine content.'¹⁰³ We see here not only the influence of Philaret's language of sanctification, but also

⁹⁸ For more detailed descriptions of KCBTS see Pavlova 2004, 1.2; Kreindler 1969, 67-73; Werth 2002, 226; Geraci 2001, 118-119

⁹⁹ See Il'minskii 1865a, 83

¹⁰⁰ Il'minskii 1865b, 94

¹⁰¹ Il'minskii 1869, 259-60

¹⁰² Il'minskii 1865b, 97

¹⁰³ Il'minskii 1863, 7-8

that of Postnikov and Bukharev in Il'minskii's stress on the need to enter into the native worldview and accept as given their ways of thinking.

Initiatives to expand the network of Baptised Tatar village schools took place amidst a further wave of requests by Baptised Tatars to adopt Islam in 1866.¹⁰⁴ KCBTS became a central school providing teachers for village schools which were built in the form of spacious but simple chapels where children could study in the day and adults could come for instructional reading and prayer, and participate in occasional liturgies.¹⁰⁵ A corollary of education in the native language was that teachers should also be from among the natives and thus have the trust and sympathy of their fellow people. The simple people did not trust collective institutions, but only individuals whom they know, and this was also a reason why schools should be private rather than state-run.¹⁰⁶

The first Divine Liturgy in Tatar took place at KCBTS in Lent 1869, and the Tatar teacher Vasilii Timofeev was ordained to the priesthood in September 1869 with the help of Hieromonk Makarii Nevskii of the Altai Mission who had come to Kazan in July 1868 to learn about Il'minskii's translation and educational work.¹⁰⁷ The beginnings of native-language liturgical life raised the issue of the ordination of native priests. In a Memorandum defending the ordination of native clergy Il'minskii wrote 'The native, prompted by inborn instinct alone, can directly influence the mind and heart of natives of the same people as himself.'¹⁰⁸ He stressed appropriate moral qualities in candidates for the priesthood rather than theological education, and recommended that they work first as school teachers to gain maturity and develop their teaching gifts.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ See Il'minskii 1867, 207-8

¹⁰⁵ Il'minskii 1887, 179, 202, 221-224, 409

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. 221-223

¹⁰⁷ Kharlampovich 1905a, 288, 293-4

¹⁰⁸ Il'minskii 1885, 9

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. 15, 12

Searching for solutions to the 1866 apostasy, the church and state authorities began to support the expansion of the Baptised Tatar schools and the St Gurii Brotherhood was founded in 1867.¹¹⁰ The two main patrons were Archbishop Antonii and the Governor of Kazan N.Ia. Skariatin, while among the founding members were the Curator of the Kazan Educational District, P.D. Shestakov (1826-1889), the Marshal of the Nobility of the Kazan Province, several Kazan merchants, as well as Il`minskii and the Inspector of Chuvash schools N.I.Zolotnitskii.¹¹¹ During its first six months the Brotherhood gave financial support to 20 schools: 6 Baptised Tatar, 11 Cheremys, 1 Russian, and 2 Chuvash schools with 102 pupils supervised by N.I. Zolotnitskii who had already published textbooks in Chuvash.¹¹² From 1869 the Synod began to send funds for Il`minskii's schools, while by 1870 the Ministry of National Education began opening schools using Il`minskii's principles, and the royal family visited KCBTS several times between 1868-70 and contributed to its financial support.¹¹³ Thus, from a small private school trying out innovative ideas before 1866, KCBTS became by 1870 a model central school with an increasing network of village schools financially and morally supported, not only by church and state leaders in Kazan, but by the central church and state authorities.

The debate over the use of native languages in the late 1860s

The debate leading to the 1870 *Regulations concerning measures for the education of the natives*¹¹⁴ brought to a head the issue of the long-term aims and possible consequences of native-language schools and Orthodox liturgical life. Did Il`minskii and his colleagues envisage long-term use of native languages which would acquire a permanent literary form, or was use of native languages only a short-term measure which would lead to assimilation with the Russian language and culture in the long-term? The texts of the late 1860s have an ambivalence about

¹¹⁰ On the St Gurii Brotherhood see: Kolcherin 2014, 4.4; Werth 2002, 226; Geraci 2001, 120; Kreindler 1969, 74-78; Pavlova 2004, 1.2; Taimasov 2004, 255-264

¹¹¹ Il`minskii 1887, 343

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid. 381-3, 402

¹¹⁴ See Kreindler 1969, 78-88; Geraci 2001, 123; Pavlova 2004, 1.3

them which means they have been quoted by scholars to prove both sides of the argument. The ambivalence suggests that at this stage the authors themselves were unclear of the long-term consequences, and were more concerned by other pressing issues.

In an 1866 report, Fr A. Baratynskii of Buinsk district defended his own school curriculum, in accordance with which pupils learnt to read in Russian in the 1st year and in Slavonic in the 2nd year. He was not entirely closed to native languages and teachers, but was more concerned that the role of priests and the religious significance of schools was decreasing with the introduction of lay teachers, and he hoped that continuing dependence of teachers on priests would lead to ‘the education of efficient and sensible teachers from the milieu of the natives themselves’ so that the schools would be ‘catechism schools (...) on the threshold of the Church.’¹¹⁵

A special committee formed of Il`minskii, the Inspector of Chuvash Schools N.I.Zolotnitskii, and E.Malov, met with the Kazan Curator P.D.Shestakov, on 19th December 1866 to discuss their approach to these issues. While agreeing with Baratynskii’s concern for the religious and moral orientation of schools, they disagreed with his desire to increase the role of priests, especially if they did not know the local language and culture. In such cases, they argued, a lay native teacher was preferable as religious and moral teaching needed to begin at an early age in the native language.¹¹⁶

N.I. Zolotnitskii had, with the help of native speakers, drawn up books for learning to read, write and count in Chuvash, a church calendar, an Old Testament Sacred History, a short explanation of the Liturgy with translations of hymns and prayers into Chuvash, and he was editing a translation of the Gospel.¹¹⁷ In an 1866 plea for use of native languages in schools, he attributed the natives’ ‘revulsion to literacy’ to children studying mechanically and assimilating nothing,

¹¹⁵ Baratynskii 1866, 179, 184

¹¹⁶ “Zhurnal” 1869, 186

¹¹⁷ Zolotnitskii 1866, 203-4

leading to poor attendance, while parents could not understand the Russian language, saw no reason for education, and had to be coerced into sending their children.¹¹⁸

The assimilation of knowledge with the soul is necessary here, and this is only possible through the medium of the living language (...) living, popular speech and, moreover, so popular that every word is drawn from life (...) and breathes life.(...) Not only is an entirely foreign language inappropriate here, but also the people's own literary language.¹¹⁹

He described the exclusive use of Russian in schools as inhumane and cast doubt on the prevalent supposition that the task of educating and russifying natives should go hand in hand.

Forcing a Chuvash child to learn Russian is requiring him all of a sudden to forget his own language and turn all of his being into a Russian child (...) If such a supernatural transformation is impossible, it means that by teaching a Chuvash child to read and write in Russian, we are not developing, but inhumanely doing violence to his mental capacities and the independence of his thought, and turning him into a machine.¹²⁰

Teaching in the native language should however 'arouse in the Chuvash an ardent self-esteem and respect for their own language.'¹²¹

Despite this ardent defence of not russifying children, there are passages in Zolotnitskii's writings which suggest a different view. In a response to V.K. Magnitskii's claim to be sorrowful that the Chuvash had never created their own Chuvash books he wrote

Magnitskii grieves over that which gladdens and should gladden every truly Russian and truly Orthodox person: we think that the absence of the Chuvashes' own literature, by which we mean a literature in accordance with their former and present-day religious beliefs, will help Russian Orthodox educators to enlighten (prosvetit') and russify (obrusit') these natives (...) we will be

¹¹⁸ Ibid. 196

¹¹⁹ Ibid. 199

¹²⁰ Ibid. 197-198

¹²¹ Ibid. 201

the first to rise up against anyone who will take it into their head to create for these same natives their national literature.¹²²

At first reading such a passage would seem to implicate Zolotnitskii in approving policies of russification and assimilation as he appears hostile to the idea of the Chuvash having their own national literature. Yet he makes it clear that when he talks about hindering a Chuvash national literature he is referring to a literature expressing their pre-Christian traditional beliefs, not a national literature using the Chuvash language as such.

We need also to place the passage in the broader context of Zolotnitskii's other writings in the fierce debate over native education in 1867. Although he speaks of russifying, he later uses other expressions such as 'rooted in Orthodoxy' and 'acquainted with Russian literacy' which clarify that he did not have in mind loss of the Chuvash language. Rodionov argues that this statement 'contradicts the activity of the author himself' and needs to be read as Zolotnitskii speaking 'in conciliatory tones for state officials' as 'the educators of the time were forced to use these slogans as a cover'.¹²³ When Zolotnitskii writes of russifying the natives through them understanding 'the moral superiority of the Russian national spirit' (*russkoi narodnosti*), he hastens to point out that this can be done without the Russian language, and only if the mental and moral level of Russians living in contact with the natives is improved through education.¹²⁴

The incomprehension and hostility with which Zolotnitskii's views were met in some quarters are well illustrated in his 1867 description of visits to the Chuvash districts of the Kazan province to introduce his Chuvash textbooks. In the Cheboksary district he met with little sympathy for his proposals,¹²⁵ whereas in Iadrin district he met with a warmer response.¹²⁶ Among the names of priests and villages in this area are several which figured at the time of the

¹²² Zolotnitskii 1867b, 8

¹²³ Zolotnitskii 2007, 484

¹²⁴ Zolotnitskii 1866, 193

¹²⁵ Zolotnitskii 1867a, 11-12

¹²⁶ Ibid. 12-13

Bible Society and who were praised for their use of Chuvash.¹²⁷ Zolotnitskii also points to the influence on these north-western Chuvash of the religious movement among the neighbouring Cheremys. It is evident from Zolotnitskii's Report that he supported local initiative wherever possible. He encouraged Ksenofont Soloviev to start a private school in his village of Shemerdianovo in October 1867 with support from the St Gurii Brotherhood.¹²⁸ In Bol'shiie Ial'chiki, Zolotnitskii encouraged a literate former soldier Efim Petrov by providing a salary and an assistant.¹²⁹ He encouraged three women teachers to be bolder in using the Chuvash language which at first they were afraid to admit they already used.¹³⁰ In Fr A. Baratynskii's Buinsk district Zolotnitskii comments frequently on the priests and teachers, including Baratynskii himself, not knowing either Chuvash or Tatar in a district with a predominantly Chuvash population and many Muslim and Baptised Tatars. He left the district 'convinced of the impossibility of directing education in this locality along rational lines.'¹³¹

An editorial in the Journal of the Ministry of Education in February 1867 presented an official viewpoint on the debate, arguing that the Russian state had a

doubly sacred task; by assimilating these natives to its predominant nationality, the Russian state would fulfil its calling as a Christian power with a European education system, and would perform a real service both to the Christian church and to the task of general civilization. (...) Christian education and entire russification of native children should be the aim of these schools.¹³² (...) There is no doubt that the Chuvash, under favourable conditions, very easily and willingly would assimilate Russian-Christian civilization and would exchange their extremely meagre unwritten language, for the Russian language.¹³³

¹²⁷ See Appendix One

¹²⁸ Zolotnitskii 1867a, 14-15

¹²⁹ Ibid. 28

¹³⁰ Ibid. 33,37,40

¹³¹ Ibid. 41

¹³² "Po voprosu ob ustroistve uchilishch" 1869, 5

¹³³ Ibid. 4

Concerning use of native languages in the church the editorial asks ‘can the lofty truths of Christian teaching be expressed and all the particularities of the prayers and hymns of the Orthodox Church be preserved in these languages without damaging their content?’¹³⁴ Literary Tatar may be adequate, but then Christian truths would be expressed through the language of Muslim teaching and ‘will not something appear that is midway between Christianity and Mohammedanism?’¹³⁵ Concerning other native languages which have no literary variant the editorial was equally fearful of tartarization. ‘Will it not be necessary to raise up Chuvash to the level of a language for school and church, to entirely tartarize it with numerous borrowings both from Tatar and other more developed Turkic languages, and so to say, create a new language for the Chuvash?’¹³⁶ The overriding fear was of national separatism. ‘Will these native schools, set up on the Il’minskii system, be capable of promoting the russification of the natives (...) or, on the contrary, will they not serve the conscious development of their national particularities which (...) would make more difficult the merging of the natives with the Russian people?’¹³⁷ The editorial concludes that the use of local languages should be a temporary measure with missionary aims, and there would be no need for them to develop their own fully-fledged literatures.¹³⁸

The Kazan Curator P.D. Shestakov entered into sharp dispute with this editorial, opposing the opinion that as a result of using the Tatar language ‘some kind of special Tatar Orthodox Church will arise.’¹³⁹ He argued that if the language into which the Scriptures were translated could not express certain concepts, then it was a general principle that the words of the original language were used.

That is what the apostles of the Slavs did: they formulated what they could in Slavonic, and that for which Slavonic terms could not be found, was expressed in the language of the Orthodox

¹³⁴ Ibid. 14

¹³⁵ Ibid. 14

¹³⁶ Ibid. 15-16

¹³⁷ Ibid. 16

¹³⁸ Ibid. 20

¹³⁹ Shestakov 1869b, 33

church, Greek, and these words, introduced into our Holy Scriptures and liturgical books, have received right of citizenship in our language.¹⁴⁰

He argues that the Chuvash language would similarly be russified through scriptural and liturgical translation.¹⁴¹ This is the first reference to Sts Cyril and Methodius I have found in the debates over missionary work in Kazan and, interestingly, Shestakov refers to them to defend the use of Russian words in the translation process, rather than as general models for use of native languages. Shestakov then continues with his broader vision of a multi-national and multi-lingual Church.

If you judge as the editors of the ZhMNP, you come to the conclusion that all national churches of the same confession form different churches, as they use a different language, different imagery and turns of phrase; then you will have, I think, to acknowledge one particular language as the predominant and even exclusive language of the Christian church. But let us remember that in the Christian church there is neither Greek, nor Jew – all peoples can in their own language glorify the Saviour who came to save not only the lost children of the house of Israel, but all people of whatever tribe, tongue and language. Let us recall that everywhere, among all tribes, in the first centuries and later, Christianity was preached and church services were held in their native languages. Let us remember the coming of the Holy Spirit on the apostles. This event shows clearly that spiritual enlightenment can and should successfully take place only in the languages of those enlightened; that those God sends, missionaries, preachers of the word of God, should know the languages of those tribes to which they preach the Gospel.¹⁴²

Concerning fear of national separatism, Shestakov remarks that when the children at Il'minskii's school had discussed if they were Tatar or Russian, they had come to the conclusion that they were Russian as they lived in Russia and were of the Russian faith. Shestakov's concern, arousing in him moral indignation, was not that this was evidence that the school was russifying

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. 34

¹⁴¹ Ibid. 40

¹⁴² Ibid. 34-38

the Tatars, but that Russian people did not share this opinion and their national prejudice was preventing the integration of the Tatars into school and church.

Such scorn by Russians for Orthodox Tatars humiliates the baptized Tatars, both in their own eyes, and in the eyes of Muslim Tatars who can all the more easily draw them to Islam. (...) Why should we be surprised at the strength of Muslim propaganda when we ourselves are entirely to blame: our society has despised the Baptised Tatars, we have not allowed them into schools, or rather we have allowed them, but taught them in the incomprehensible Russian language (...) we have not made room for the Tatar language at church services, have not distributed Tatar Holy Scriptures and liturgical books.(...) May the Tatars and other natives remain dumb and deaf and blind, as long as the threatening spectre of national distinctiveness does not arise before our eyes.¹⁴³

In a further report of March 1868, Shestakov reminded the St Gurii Brotherhood that what they were seeking to do was fully in line with the Church's tradition. Those who were opposing Zolotnitskii and Il'minskii's system 'themselves do not realize that they are opposing and holding forth at length, often with irritation and poisonous irony, not against a "new" system invented by Il'minskii and Zolotnitskii (...) but against a system confirmed by the experience of centuries, against God's saints who worked according to this system with resounding success.'¹⁴⁴ He then went on to describe the work of St John Chrysostom among the Goths, St Varsanufii among the Tatars and St Stephen among the Zyrians, and in a further 1868 article emphasized that Triphon of Pechenga preached at first as a layman who knew the Lapp language and worked through schools and literacy.¹⁴⁵ We see then that Shestakov envisaged long-term use of native languages within the Church on the model of the multi-lingual, multi-national early Church. The view that use of native languages was a temporary measure until the complete assimilation of the native

¹⁴³ Ibid. 41-2

¹⁴⁴ Il'minskii 1887, 334

¹⁴⁵ Shestakov 1868, 257; See also Shestakov 1877, 15

population into Russian culture was the view of his opponents represented by the ZhMNP editorial.

Il'minskii's translation methods and missionary vision

As the number of native schools increased and Tatar-language liturgical life developed, there was a corresponding increase in the need for the translation of liturgical texts and school textbooks. In 1871 Archbishop Antonii of Kazan invited clergy to write translations and their own original texts in the diocese's native languages while Il'minskii gave guidelines for this work in two articles of 1870 and 1871.

Il'minskii stressed the role of native speakers, explaining that he formulated the text in simple Russian words for the native speaker one sentence at a time and then wrote down their translation before reading it to the translator and to other native speakers.

How satisfactory a translation or composition is can be judged by reading it to native speakers: if it draws them into a serious and concentrated state of recollection, the translation is good; but if they listen apathetically, vacantly, or even laugh, then the translation is lacking in quality.¹⁴⁶ (...) Translations need to be constantly checked by typical native representatives of this people whose feeling for the language coincides with the feeling of the entire people.¹⁴⁷

Although Il'minskii says that 'Russians must be the active ones, giving direction, while the natives must be the passive receiving ones' he saw this as a necessity only at this initial stage. The ideal would be for them to write their own texts.

It would be much more convenient if the native could compose something directly in his own language. Of course, for this he would need to have previously become acquainted with Christian

¹⁴⁶ Il'minskii 1871, 17-18

¹⁴⁷ Il'minskii 1870, 34

teaching and have assimilated it to such an extent that he could write something independently, without looking at a Russian book.¹⁴⁸

Il`minskii disagrees with those who say that religious concepts cannot be adequately expressed in simple language.

I repeat that simplicity of language does not violate the elevated nature of Christian teaching as some suggest. The elevated nature of Christian teaching is inherent in the teaching itself, and the more simply it is expressed, the more striking is the dignity of its divine content. (...) When a simple person thinks about some serious subject, he finds in his native language worthy and honourable ways of expressing it.¹⁴⁹

He suggested using paraphrase when translating allusions to events, people and words found in the Bible, often using Greek and Hebrew constructions, which had no effect on the mind or heart of one who did not know the Scriptures.¹⁵⁰

Il`minskii realized that the translations would contain imperfections, but these could be later corrected by the native Christians themselves.

Absolute perfection is unattainable, and even relative perfection cannot be soon achieved. For the moment it is enough if translations, in their structure and content, will be generally understood and simple, even if they contain inaccuracies. Even in this imperfect form they will awaken the mental activity of the native peoples, and can later be improved and corrected in further editions, and finally, when through these translations and education the native peoples will develop and become firmly established in Christian teaching, they themselves will be able to continue and perfect the methods of their own education, as this task affects them most of all, and affects the most vital, spiritual aspect of their lives.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. 14

¹⁴⁹ Il`minskii 1871, 17-18

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. 7; 1870, 33-35

¹⁵¹ Il`minskii 1871, 26

The Christian faith would be imbibed by the Tatars ‘at first through the Christian education of a few chosen people, gifted, receptive, sincere, religious, energetic, committed.’ These initial inaccurate translations

can convey so much Christian dogmatic, moral and liturgical material that the most active and leading personalities from among the Baptised Tatars will be able to imbibe Christianity into their consciousness and heart as integrally whole and efficacious teaching. Christianity, as a living source, as leaven in the dough, will itself act on their thinking and feeling. And having been assimilated by these personalities, it will be transmitted to others from them and through them. But, in this process you must not let go of the only effective weapon, the Tatar mother tongue. The mother tongue forms the essence of the spiritual nature of a person and a people, and is the most effective means for its reeducation. (...) We believe that the evangelical word of our Saviour Jesus Christ, incarnate, so to speak, in the living and natural Tatar language, and through this language communing most sincerely with the deepest thinking and religious consciousness of the Tatars, will bring about and accomplish the Christian regeneration of this people.¹⁵²

Justifying his use of the Cyrillic alphabet rather than the Arabic script, and the use of Russian proper nouns and words where no word exists in the native language, rather than Arabic or Persian forms of words, he writes ‘Printing Christian books with Arabic script, we would be challenging them (Muslims), encroaching on their religion for which they are very zealous and would arouse opposition from their side.’¹⁵³ He also justifies it by his emphasis on the ordinary people and their simple language.

I hold to the conviction that Christianity is incompatible with any other educated culture, including Muslim educated culture. It would be like pouring new wine into old wineskins. And that’s why the simple, direct and natural people sincerely and zealously accept Christianity, while the educated classes do not accept it or try to adapt it to their own ideas. And as simple popular language reflects the simple nature of the people, we have used it in our Christian translations,

¹⁵² Il`minskii 1870, 43-45

¹⁵³ Ibid. 43

removing Arabic terms as belonging to Muslim educated culture. And as an alphabet also belongs to an educated culture, for this reason it seems to me that the Arabic alphabet is out of place in Christian books for Tatars. Christianity must radically and in all aspects transform (transfigure) the Tatars.¹⁵⁴

This rejection by Il'minskii of the Arabic script took place quite late as the Kazem-Bek translations used the Arabic script, and in Orenburg in 1858-60 Il'minskii used the Arabic script for his Kazakh textbook. The rejection is also surprising due to Il'minskii being an Arabic scholar, and his knowledge and approval of Orthodox liturgical books in Arabic in the Middle East where he was adamant that the 'genius of the Arab tongue' meant Greek words and constructions were not needed in translations.¹⁵⁵ In seeking to understand why Il'minskii turned away from use of the Arabic script, we need to remember the 1867 ZhMNP editorial voicing fears that something may 'appear that is midway between Christianity and Mohammedanism.'¹⁵⁶

Although in this way Il'minskii was seeking to promote the unity of the Russian Church and allay Muslim Tatar fears, we can raise the question of whether he was not being inconsistent with the wider Orthodox theological tradition, and its expressions in the Arabic tongue, such as those of Theodore Abu Qurrah, whose use of the Arabic language and thinking to express Orthodox doctrine marked 'the beginning of a period of Arabic theology that lasted from the ninth century to the period of the Crusades.'¹⁵⁷ There was thus an early precedent for using the Arabic language and script to express Orthodox Christian doctrine. We can ask whether a more flexible use of both the Arabic and Cyrillic scripts, at least for Tatar texts, as eventually was the case at the Altai mission, might have led to less criticism of Il'minskii from Muslim Tatars for the russification of the Tatar language owing to the Cyrillic script being increasingly used for Tatar in general. It would also have left the door open for broader knowledge of Orthodox theology in a Muslim context among the Christian Tatars.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. 43

¹⁵⁵ NA RT f.10, op.1, d.994, l.86

¹⁵⁶ Sbornik 1869, 14

¹⁵⁷ Louth 2007, 164-5; See also Griffith 1990, especially 69-70

Conclusion

We have seen Grigorii Postnikov's vital influence on Il'minskii and the development of mission in Kazan in the 1850s, and this helps to explain its emphasis on scriptural translations in the vernacular, and the need to understand a people and their culture from within, an approach developed theoretically in the theology of Feodor Bukharev. The Russian Bible Society, its missionaries and translations, also played a key role in the upbringing of A.Kazem-Bek and A.Bobrovnikov, both of whom were significant for Il'minskii and the Kazan missionary climate of the 1840s-50s.

Il'minskii's reorientation from theory to practice in 1862 can be interpreted as him gradually responding to the practical needs of the church at parish level, a reorientation many in the Russian Church, including Bukharev, saw the need for during this time of social reform, and which was expressed on the pages of *Pravoslavnoe Obozrenie*. But the new practical orientation was also an inevitable consequence of Il'minskii and Bobrovnikov's conviction of the need to immerse oneself in a foreign language and culture in order to truly understand it and pass on the Christian tradition within it. This was more than just knowing one's foe,¹⁵⁸ but developed rather out of their sense of the importance of *narodnost'*, their sense of the innate value of each language and culture which did not need to be abandoned or annihilated on reception of the Christian Gospel.

This brings us to the issue of Il'minskii's overall view of how he perceived a national tradition receives, absorbs, and is changed by the Christian tradition. In his 1866 arguments in favour of a native clergy he highlights the inherently religious nature of the native worldview and warns against seeing the non-Russian peoples as undeveloped and savage.

Every native tribe, however much it may seem undeveloped and savage, nevertheless has its worldview established in ancient times, the most essential and basic concepts of which are

¹⁵⁸ See Werth 2002, 178

religious. These concepts are childlike and simple, undeveloped, yet strong and vital (*zhiznennyi*), and the way of thinking and life (*zhizn`*) of the natives is determined by them.¹⁵⁹

If we set his use of the words *zhizn`* and *zhiznennyi* in the context of the 1860s concern for a more organic relationship between theology and life in the Russian Church, this sentence is the highest praise indeed from Il`minskii for the native way of life and worldview.

Il`minskii also wrote

In order to convey Christian dogmatic and moral teaching to the natives, and convey them not in abstract form, not as a dead letter, but so that they become the foundation of their way of thinking and life, it is necessary to adapt to their religious concepts and moral convictions, to their distinctive thought patterns.¹⁶⁰

Rather than referring condescendingly to primitive native thought, Il`minskii is in fact arguing here that native speech, thought patterns, religious and moral convictions can become the vehicle of Christian teaching, that the Christian Gospel can be communicated effectively from one cultural setting to another. He is arguing above all for the continuity which is possible due to the correspondences between traditions. Quite what this transition, this absorption of the Christian tradition into earlier beliefs and customs, would look like among the Volga peoples was to a great extent unknown to Il`minskii and his collaborators, although in their understanding it would not involve loss of their national language and identity. This is evidenced not only by their concern to use the native language and its very thought patterns, but also by their vision of the role of responsible native leadership.

The question of the long-term aim of the Il`minskii system is still being debated today, and plays an important role in the conclusions of scholars, with both Werth and Geraci interpreting Il`minskii's work in the context of 'a larger European project of modern colonialism' with its

¹⁵⁹ Il`minskii 1885, 8

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. 9

‘more conscious policy of cultural and linguistic russification after 1863’.¹⁶¹ They therefore depict the missionaries’ seemingly contradictory promotion of native languages as merely a temporary ploy on the way to complete assimilation into the Russian nation.¹⁶² It is possible to find quotes in the writings of Il`minskii and his colleagues which, when read out of context, would seem to prove that their aim was russificatory as they were all loyal Russian citizens without revolutionary intentions, and as educators they were state officials. Yet labelling them as conservative, russificatory, colonialist raises serious problems as, on the one hand their practical activities in many ways contradict this viewpoint, and on the other hand it fails to do justice to the critical tone of their writings in which they often boldly take issue with all they felt was wrong and unjust, indeed colonial, within both the education system and the Church.

It is Christianity’s ‘call to the brotherhood of peoples and the union of all in faith and life’ which must be understood when Il`minskii and company use terms such as *sliianie* (fusion, merging with the Russian people) and *obrusenie* (russifying). Their concern, as we have seen amply illustrated, was to challenge those who saw the native peoples as less than human, who considered them, their cultures and languages as unfit to be integrated into the Russian Church and state. Both Il`minskii and Shestakov wrote of the ‘russification’ of the Tatar and Chuvash languages as they absorbed Russian Christian terminology, but they clearly did not envisage the languages dying out and the people losing their distinct ethnic identity.

This aspiration to ‘the union of all in faith and life’ raises the issue of how the Kazan Missionary Departments viewed the relationship between the Orthodox tradition and other religious traditions. Recent scholars have referred to Il`minskii’s missionary department as the ‘Anti-Muslim Division’ or ‘Anti-Islam Division’,¹⁶³ which trained ‘adversaries to Islam’.¹⁶⁴ Such terminology, distasteful in the contemporary, relativist climate, has been taken up by these

¹⁶¹ Werth 2002, 136-7

¹⁶² See Geraci 2001, 83

¹⁶³ Geraci 2001, 54, Werth 2002, 188

¹⁶⁴ Geraci 2001, 56

scholars in the context of their assessment of the Kazan Theological Academy's missionary policy through the lens of a late 20th century secular worldview, creating a picture of these missionaries as rigid and fanatical about the truth of Orthodoxy and the falsehood of other faiths, with Geraci writing that 'their approach to Islam was to a large degree condescending, self-righteous, and dismissive.'¹⁶⁵

The term *Protivomusul'manskoe otdelenie* (Anti-Muslim department) was used by P.V. Znamenskii in his history of the Kazan Theological Academy published in 1892, and it was used to refer to the later scholarly publications on Islam published by the Kazan Theological Academy under the title *Protivomusul'manskii sbornik* (Anti-Muslim Anthology). However, Grigorii Postnikov referred to the department simply as the Tatar Mission Department, and the other departments are referred to in a similar way. His proposals refer to missionary departments 'for the training of personnel to enlighten those of other faiths and pagans with Christ's teaching'.¹⁶⁶ It is in letters from Protasov to Grigorii in 1853-54 that we find terms such as '*protiv raskol i inovertsev*' (against the schism and people of other faiths).¹⁶⁷ We need to bear in mind that Grigorii, together with Metropolitans Philaret of Moscow and Kiev, was at loggerheads with Protasov during Nicholas I's reign. Protasov's terminology should therefore not be ascribed to Grigorii, nor to the missionary departments he masterminded in the 1850s, as he stressed the need to be a *sobesednik*, a partner in dialogue in modern terms, and categorically rejected the use of violence and polemic.

Grigorii was deeply convinced of the truth of Orthodoxy and this is a marked feature of his writings on Old Belief. He was a man of his age who, under Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow's influence, before the Slavophiles, had gained a profound sense of the Orthodox Church's unique preservation of biblical and patristic tradition, and this undoubtedly was the basis of his missionary concern for, and aspiration to unity with Old Believers, the Western European

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ NA RT f.10, op.1, d.1324, l.95-96

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. l.14-15

Church,¹⁶⁸ and those of other religious traditions outside the Orthodox Church. Nevertheless, he and those he influenced such as Il`minskii and Bobrovnikov, could perceive elements of this tradition outside the Orthodox Church,<sup>169</sup> and we have seen many points when Il`minskii was open to mutual learning from the best of Islam in the 1850s-60s, and certainly not dismissive, even if his attitudes hardened by the 1880s. Schimmelpenninck comments on Il`minskii's report from Cairo 'Like many of his earlier writings, (Il`minskii's) essay did not seethe with fear and loathing of the infidel.'¹⁷⁰ Valliere wrote that Bukharev's call for a gentler approach to Old Believers, his 'appreciation for the humanity of God and his call for a more humane Orthodoxy, if not yet ecumenical, may be seen as preconditions for the emergence of ecumenical and interfaith dialogue in Russia',¹⁷¹ and the same can be said of Grigorii and Il`minskii's views.

In a recent discussion of whether Christian belief in the uniqueness of Christ can be sustained in a pluralist world, Rowan Williams has summarized well the viewpoint with which many recent scholars have studied the Kazan-based missions of the 1850s-60s. 'If you claim that Christ is the final truth about God and the universe, doesn't that give you a perfect excuse for trying to shut up anyone who says different? Isn't this part of the justification for crusading and colonialism and wicked things like that?' Williams argues, however, that the New Testament puts to us 'questions not only about the position of Christianity in relation to other religions, but a question about whether we believe there is something that is true in, and for, all human beings. Or do human beings have different needs and different destinies? (...) Because that, I think, is one of the difficult consequences of letting go of a doctrine of finality or uniqueness – the idea that it's right for some parts of the human world to think of their destiny as becoming sons and daughter of God, but, elsewhere in the world, that's neither here nor there, as there will be another definition of what constitutes full humanity. (...) We assume that what's good for me and for my

¹⁶⁸ See Grigorii's correspondence with A.S.Khomiakov over the desire of the Anglican Palmer to join the Orthodox Church in which Grigorii reassures Khomiakov in a letter of 5th March 1852 that, 'our door is open for them'. See Grigorii 1881

¹⁶⁹ See NA RT f.10, op.1, d.994, l.46v. See also Il`minskii 1865d, 428

¹⁷⁰ Schimmelpenninck 2010, 133

¹⁷¹ Valliere 2000, 70

neighbor is at the very least going to look quite similar at the end of the day, whatever cultural and local differences there are. (...) The unfairness would be in saying that there is no access for some at all, or in saying that we don't have to bother to share.'¹⁷²

Williams' case here is based on his sense of *obshchechelovechnost`*, and therefore it has strong echoes of the views of Il'minskii and his collaborators concerning Russian attitudes towards the native peoples. We hear these echoes in Zolotnitskii challenging inhumane views of the Chuvash, Shestakov reproaching Russians for despising Tatars and their language, and giving them no access to the Church, Nurminskii questioning colonialist views of native land, Il'minskii marveling at 'with what a wide variety of different hues could be shot through one and the same nature, taken from different soils but ennobled by education common to all mankind.' Rather than russification, the overriding concern of these men was for *obshchechelovechnost`* expressed through a concern for each people's *narodnost`* within the union of all in faith and life.

¹⁷² Williams 2010, 1-2

N.I.Il`minskii and the Christianization of the Chuvash

Introduction: The history of the Chuvash people as a source for evaluating Nikolai

Il`minskii

The writings of Ivan Iakovlev and the graduates and teachers of his Simbirsk¹ Chuvash Teachers' School (SCTS), as well as documents illustrating the educational and missionary movement they were part of among the Chuvash people, provide a unique source for understanding and evaluating Il`minskii's character, views and work. They not only illustrate the development of a native clergy and native-language texts, but also illustrate the impact of the Il`minskii system in other areas such as popular devotion, and the increasing sense of national identity. Even a brief examination of the statistics relating to numbers of native clergy and teachers, and numbers of native-language texts translated, published and distributed shows that the Chuvash far outstripped the other Volga peoples in implementing the Il`minskii system by the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, at least from the statistical point of view.<sup>2</sup> As previous evaluations of Il`minskii's work have focused almost exclusively on his work among the Tatars, there has been an unbalanced view of the impact of his work, which needs correcting by an assessment of its impact among the Chuvash. A number of reasons account for the particular success of the Il`minskii system among the Chuvash and they will be discussed in the course of the following chapters, but one major reason was the early creation of the Simbirsk Chuvash Teachers' School, largely owing to the vision and energy of Ivan Iakovlev.

Iakovlev directed SCTS from 1868 to 1918, while from 1875 to 1903 he was Inspector of Chuvash schools in the Kazan Educational District. Over this very long time span Iakovlev and

¹ Today Ul`ianovsk

² For example, in Kazan diocese in 1904 there were 30 Chuvash, 27 Tatar, 10 Cheremys and 1 Votyak priest (See NA CGIGN otd. 1, t.178, l.233-236 and Bobrovnikov 1905, 177-178). In Samara diocese in 1904 there were 56 Chuvash, 8 Mordva and 5 Tatar priests (GIA CR f.350, op.1, d.4, l.39). By 1909 the numbers of liturgical and educational texts published by the Brotherhood of St. Gurii were: Tatar 119, Chuvash 209, Cheremys 59, Votyak 52, Mordovian 12, Yakut 8, Kalmyk 5. See Chicherina 1910, 9

many of the students, teachers and priests who graduated from SCTS sought to develop Il'minskii's principles among the Chuvash people as a whole, both the compact population near Simbirsk and Kazan, and the diaspora in the Ufa, Samara and Orenburg provinces. Their experiences therefore provide a unique picture of the application of Il'minskii's ideas over a wide geographical area during changing historical circumstances, from the reform atmosphere of the late 1860s until the year 1918 which saw the closure of SCTS. Iakovlev married Ekaterina Bobrovnikova, an adopted daughter of Il'minskii and his wife who were therefore known as grandfather and grandmother by the Iakovlevs' children.³ The two families were in constant contact by letter and visited frequently along the Volga between Kazan and Simbirsk, and so Iakovlev's writings provide us with the insights not only of a disciple and colleague, but also of a son. After Iakovlev's marriage in 1878, Ekaterina directed the Girls' School at SCTS, a role she fulfilled for 40 years until 1918, thus making the school doubly an expression of Il'minskii's principles.

The vast majority of those who from 1870 became the first generation of Chuvash teachers, clergy, translators, writers, ethnographers, artists, composers, journalists passed through SCTS and Il'minskii's Kazan Teachers' Seminary (KTS) as teachers or students. Their writings and activities are a rich source of reflections and information, especially from the turn of the century until the 1920s, on the impact of Il'minskii's ideas on the history and culture of the Chuvash people. Archival collections have preserved a unique picture of this first literate generation molded by and molding the Russian Church and society within which they lived during the fifty turbulent years leading up to the 1917 Revolution and the first post-revolutionary decade. The State Historical Archive of the Chuvash Republic contains sources relating to Ivan Iakovlev's roles as Director of SCTS and Inspector of Chuvash Schools, as well as a Daniil Filimonov collection. The archives of the Chuvash State Institute of the Humanities contain the 214-volume N.V.Nikol'skii collection which apart from the writings of Nikol'skii himself, contains

³ Iakovlev 1985, 108,306-7

material relating to many key figures in the story, as well as much historical and ethnographical material. Fr Mikhail Petrov was from 1926 Director of the Chuvash National Museum which, owing to his efforts, has archival collections relating to Iakovlev, Filimonov, and Fr Alexei Rekeev, as well as important ethnographic material. The National Archive of the Republic of Tatarstan contains Il'minskii's correspondence with his students, many of them the first generation of Chuvash clergy.

Chapter 3

Ivan Iakovlev and the Simbirsk Chuvash Teachers' School

The origins of the Simbirsk Chuvash Teachers' School

Ivan Iakovlevich Iakovlev was born on 13th April 1848 in a family of Crown peasants in the Chuvash village of Koshki-Novotimbaevo in Buinsk district, Simbirsk province. He studied from 1856-60 in the nearby mixed Russian/Chuvash village of Starye Burunduki at a school⁴ run by Fr A. Baratynskii. The school functioned according to the Lancaster system with Russian as the exclusive language of instruction, although the Chuvash pupils were allowed to speak Chuvash among themselves and one of them retold Bible stories in Chuvash.⁵

Iakovlev's Memoirs give a mainly negative view of the school 'The other pupils and I knew Philaret's Catechism by heart (...) but of this Catechism I understood absolutely nothing. (...) In the religious and moral aspect, the school brought me neither good nor bad.'⁶ Nevertheless, a deep and positive impression was made on him by the hard-working Russian peasant in whose home he lived, where Orthodox rites and fasts were observed, and a book of *Readings from the Four Gospels* was read in Russian.⁷ Iakovlev later wrote to a fellow pupil 'I will never forget how we lived together and were happy going to study in Burunduki, how we thought about God.'⁸ Despite the divergence in their views after meeting Il'minskii, Iakovlev also stayed in regular contact with Baratynskii.

The land reforms and free-thinking atmosphere of the 1860s influenced Iakovlev's further development as from 1860-63 he trained in Simbirsk as a land surveyor for the Ministry of State Domains for which he worked until 1867, gaining experience of the land use, lifestyles and

⁴ Udel'noe uchilishche

⁵ Iakovlev 1997, 76,94

⁶ Ibid. 81,89

⁷ Ibid. 92-94

⁸ Iakovlev 1989, 45

customs of Russians, Chuvash, Tatars, Mordva and Old Believers over three provinces.⁹ Regular work for a Pole, Kosinskii, at the time collecting funds in support of the Polish uprising, raised the issue of his own Chuvash language.

Before this I had seen books only in Russian and Tatar. All of a sudden I discover that the Poles have books in their mother tongue like other educated peoples. Why, I thought, do the Chuvash not have such books in Chuvash? I was annoyed and hurt.¹⁰

Kosinskii's generous payment of Iakovlev enabled him to contemplate furthering his education at the Simbirsk Gymnasium with the aim of giving the Chuvash the possibility of learning to read and write.¹¹

The debates leading to the 1870 Rules¹² which sanctioned the use of the native language in elementary schools were taking place during Iakovlev's studies at the Gymnasium so his own initiatives to further his education and that of fellow Chuvash aroused interest and sympathy. The Brotherhood of St Gurii, founded in 1867 to support Il'minskii's native schools, included among its founding members Fr Viktor Vishnevskii, and it was his cousin, I.V. Vishnevskii, who was headmaster of the Simbirsk Gymnasium. He had grown up as a priest's son in a Chuvash village and encouraged Iakovlev's ambitions.¹³

For the 19 year-old Iakovlev, the first Chuvash to study at Simbirsk Gymnasium, his studies were a period of intense inward struggle. His reading matter at this time included Rousseau, Pushkin, Lermontov, Belinskii, and the revolutionary democrats and publicists D.I. Pisarev and N.A. Dobroliubov. In May 1868 he wrote to Baratynskii

A year ago I did not know that inner struggle which I (...) experienced at times during the last year (...). I felt all this as a result of acquaintance with contemporary Russian literature and

⁹ Iakovlev 1997, 104

¹⁰ Ibid. 107

¹¹ Ibid. 109

¹² See Kreindler 1969,78-88; Geraci 2001,123; Pavlova 2004, 1.3

¹³ Iakovlev 1997, 121

school life (...) I was not at all prepared for such a struggle and for a long time did not even understand what “nihilist” and “nihilism” means, how society understands these words and what attitude I should take to this phenomenon.¹⁴

Iakovlev’s background and training led to a keen understanding of the consequences of the 1860s reforms. In his Memoirs he wrote

At that time (...) I had similar views on the land to the ordinary people, and at one time was even a democrat with socialist leanings (...). Having peasant origins myself, knowing their needs, views and hopes, coming into contact with various issues concerning peasant land settlement as a surveyor who had walked and travelled all over a significant part of the lands along the Volga, I could not remain an indifferent spectator.¹⁵

During 1869 Iakovlev enabled four boys from Chuvash villages to come to study at the Simbirsk District School¹⁶ by organizing lodging for them and giving them extra tuition. When Iakovlev left to study at Kazan University in September 1870 he asked I.V. Vishnevskii to appeal to the Buinsk Zemstvo for funds for the boys with the intention they should become teachers in the Buinsk district. Vishnevskii raised funds, and also took responsibility for the Chuvash pupils and their hostel in Iakovlev’s absence.¹⁷

At this time, influenced by Baratynskii’s conviction that the Chuvash should be educated through the Russian language, Iakovlev’s intention was to help the boys study within the Russian school system, but his thinking was to take a radical change in direction as he arrived in Kazan. He immediately went to visit Il`minskii’s Baptised Tatar School (KCBTS) where, he wrote ‘for the first time I was literally shaken by the singing at the Liturgy.’<sup>18</sup> Il`minskii later wrote that the native language service led Iakovlev to ‘a thoughtful mood and a turning point in his views on

¹⁴ Iakovlev 1989, 27-28

¹⁵ Iakovlev 1997, 467

¹⁶ *Uezdnoe uchilishche*

¹⁷ Iakovlev 1989, 39-43, 63-65

¹⁸ Iakovlev 1997, 161

native education.’¹⁹ During Iakovlev’s first four months in Kazan, Iakovlev and Il`minskii met at least thirty times, often talking into the early hours of the morning. ‘Having become convinced of my doubts about ways to bring the natives in general, and the Chuvash in particular, into contact with Russian culture, and having entirely opposite views to Baratynskii, Il`minskii, finding that I could be useful in the affair, decided to change my opinions.’²⁰

The influence of their conversations can be seen in Iakovlev’s report to the Kazan Curator P.D.Shestakov of 22nd December 1870 in which he adopts the patriotic stance that characterized his entire career and uses the language of ‘merging’²¹ which has been used to substantiate the theory of Il`minskii as russifier. ‘Being a Christian, loving Russia and believing in her great future, with all my soul I would like my fellow Chuvash to be enlightened with the Gospel and merged into a single whole with the great Russian people’ and his analysis of the current situation is that ‘they must either take the side of Mohammedanism or take the side of Christianity.’²² Nevertheless, we see a thread which also runs through his writings: he defends his belief that this should take place through the native language which he sees as capable of being a literary and liturgical language.

It is necessary to use the Chuvash mother tongue to spread Christian ideas more successfully among the masses; translations must be made of religious and moral books, Holy Scripture, and even the Liturgy, into understandable Chuvash. Opponents of this, however, say that the Chuvash language (...) does not have words to express abstract concepts (...), but however meagre the Chuvash language may be, it is impossible to do without it or ignore it.

Having attended church services at KCBTS he desired to do everything within his power so that the Chuvash could also ‘hear divine words and sounds in their native (...) language.’²³

¹⁹ Il`minskii 1884, 5

²⁰ Iakovlev 1997, 166

²¹ Rn: *sliianie*

²² Iakovlev 1989, 51, 53

²³ Ibid. 53-55

Iakovlev's desire for SCTS to be modeled on KCBTS²⁴ meant that when this report was written two of his fellow Chuvash had already spent time there to experience Il'minskii's methods.²⁵ In instructions drawn up by Iakovlev for the boys, he made Scripture reading a central feature. There were to be communal prayers every morning and evening and 'On the eve of feast days, after the Vigil, occupy yourselves with reading the Gospel and Bible in the Russian language, with translation into Chuvash of passages difficult to understand, and do the same after the Liturgy until dinner.'²⁶

The further development of the Simbirsk Chuvash Teachers' School

In 1877 Iakovlev's school gained the right to train and examine its own teachers, in 1890 it was upgraded to the Simbirsk Chuvash Teachers' School and, after a long struggle with the state educational authorities who suspected Iakovlev of separatism, in 1917 it became a Teachers' Seminary, the highest rung in pre-revolutionary teacher training.²⁷ In September 1878 a Girls' department was added, which became a Girls' School in its own right in 1891, and 2-year women's pedagogical courses were added from 1900. In autumn 1878 there were 92 boys and 19 girls,²⁸ in 1902, 163 boys and 87 girls,²⁹ and in 1913, 213 boys and 154 girls.³⁰

Financing the school was always difficult as almost all the pupils were from peasant families with scant means to pay, and Iakovlev was constantly having to overcome suspicion and opposition to the school's purpose and teaching methods from the Ministry of National Education (MNP) and Zemstvos. In February 1881 Iakovlev wrote to Il'minskii that the Simbirsk District Zemstvo had refused a grant and therefore 'the existence of our school is in no way secure. Expenditure exceeds income by more than 1500 roubles for 1880. (...) Such a state

²⁴ Iakovlev 1985, 50

²⁵ Ibid. 55,62

²⁶ GIA CR f.515, op.1,d.1

²⁷ Iakovlev 1998, 54, 264-5, 322

²⁸ Iakovlev 1885, 68. Iakovlev 1893, 30

²⁹ Otchet SDB 1903

³⁰ Otchet SDB 1913

of affairs distresses me and gives me no rest day or night.’³¹ Iakovlev’s persistent vision to both expand the school’s numbers and increase the proportion of girls, broaden its curriculum and practical impact at village level, meant that much of his correspondence contains reports on the school with pleas for extra finance to the MNP, Zemstvos and Orthodox Missionary Society (OMS), which were the school’s main sources of income, alongside some local merchants and interested individuals.³²

Following the example of KCBTS and KTS, the pupils at the SCTS dressed and lived in the simple conditions of the Chuvash villages. In March 1877 Iakovlev wrote proudly to Il`minskii ‘the desired simplicity is being maintained in our school. Our senior boys have achieved a significant degree of development and with great effort have acquired thorough knowledge, but they wear Chuvash shirts and shoes.’³³ When the first teachers had moved out into the villages in February 1883 he wrote ‘Among the merits of our graduates can be numbered the fact that they (...) behave with simplicity and dress in the peasant manner.’³⁴ This meant they were more readily accepted by the communities where they worked. Iakovlev also paid SCTS teachers very modest salaries in accordance with Il`minskii’s principles, although the school’s slender financial means also dictated this policy.³⁵ He sought, however, to upgrade SCTS to a Teachers’ Seminary, and village schools from One-class to Two-class Teachers’ Schools, as this would involve teachers’ salaries being raised.³⁶ Retaining the simplicity of Chuvash rural life did not mean Iakovlev was unconcerned about overcrowded, unhygienic conditions,³⁷ although the school did suffer from outbreaks of disease in one of which Iakovlev’s own son died.

The vast majority of the school’s pupils were Chuvash although there were always small numbers of other nationalities, including Russians. In 1883, of 80 boys there were 71 Chuvash

³¹ Iakovlev 1985, 84

³² See Iakovlev 1985, 59, 107

³³ Iakovlev 1985, 107 and 1997, 300-302, 48. On the school’s finances see Otchet SDB 1904, 1913, 1912, 6

³⁴ i.e. birch-bark lapti, Iakovlev 1985, 63

³⁵ Ibid. 94

³⁶ Iakovlev 1997, 213

³⁷ Budilovich 1905, 276; Iakovlev 1998, 264-5

³⁸ Ibid. 30

and 9 Russian,³⁸ and in 1913 there were 282 Chuvash, 79 Russians, 4 Mordva and 2 Tatars.³⁹

Iakovlev's Orthodox missionary aim is evident in that he was always keen to accept pupils from among the diaspora Chuvash in Orenburg, Ufa and Saratov provinces as these were areas where Chuvash lived close to Muslim Tatars whose lifestyle and faith they were often adopting.⁴⁰ As the school had an Orthodox ethos, the overwhelming majority of the pupils were baptized, although Iakovlev did not on principle exclude those who were not Orthodox and in 1883 there were 8 unbaptised out of 80 pupils.⁴¹

Iakovlev encouraged the goodwill of parents by making the school open to their visits and involvement. 'According to Il'minskii's theory, hospitality, readiness to give help, service, advice, defend one's neighbor should be the foundation of relationships at the Russian native schools as predominantly Orthodox Christian institutions needing to provide an example for the surrounding native population.'⁴² This quasi-monastic lifestyle of the school meant that parents arriving with their horses, carts and loads were allowed to stay at the school, attending lessons, services at the church, and the craft workshops. They had to provide their own horse fodder, but 'following the example of the Trinity-St Sergius Lavra bread and kvas were given to such guests, as well as leftovers from the pupils' hot meal if there were any.'⁴³ Iakovlev emphasizes that he sought to keep the school free of a fanatical religious or political atmosphere, and although pupils read Chuvash books to visitors, there was 'a rule not to address questions of religion and politics with visitors, and remain strictly within the bounds of offering hospitality and services.'⁴⁴

The Simbirsk Chuvash Girls' School

³⁸ Iakovlev 1998, 73

³⁹ Otchet SDB 1913

⁴⁰ Iakovlev 1989, 89

⁴¹ Iakovlev 1998, 73

⁴² Iakovlev 1997, 347

⁴³ Ibid. 348

⁴⁴ Ibid. 348

By the time Iakovlev opened the Girls' department in Simbirsk in September 1878 his ideas and aims for Chuvash education as a whole had matured as he had already worked for 3 years as Inspector of Chuvash Schools, and it was his vision for SCTS to train teachers for Chuvash in all regions of Russia. He therefore chose to locate the Girls' department in Simbirsk, rather than in a Chuvash village, so that the girls' Russian language skills would develop and they would not be reluctant later to travel to other regions as teachers. He also wanted the girls to have the benefit of native liturgical life. In a report to Shestakov of 15th February 1878 he concluded 'I will say frankly that I have in mind KCBTS (...) which has a Girls' department directed by the same Vasilii Timofeev who teaches catechism (...) and what is also important in the religious and moral respect, the pupils attend the same church in which divine services are conducted in the native language.'⁴⁵ From 1881-1890 the Girls' department was financed by the MNP and had the curriculum of a Two-class school, and after 1892 it was financed by an annual grant from the OMS.⁴⁶ Between 1878 and 1895, 122 girls graduated.⁴⁷

Iakovlev's especial concern for girls' education arose as he saw that women rarely went outside of the family and village and were therefore the greatest guardians of Old Chuvash ways and most resistant to Christianity.⁴⁸ His desire that 'Orthodoxy should become for the Chuvash something common to the whole people' meant that he wanted Chuvash women to raise their families in the Orthodox manner, and therefore girls' education 'should develop above all those sides of the life of the people and the community which relate to the female sex',⁴⁹ the family and home. The initial curriculum at Simbirsk, therefore, focused on catechism and moral education, church singing, needlework and housekeeping.⁵⁰ He nevertheless stressed that later 'it will be possible to broaden these subjects and draw them closer to the curriculum of the

⁴⁵ Ibid. 47

⁴⁶ Iakovlev 1893, 335; Iakovlev 1998, 134-6

⁴⁷ Iakovlev 1893, 33

⁴⁸ Ibid. 24

⁴⁹ Ibid. 37

⁵⁰ Ibid. 37-38

corresponding Russian institutions⁵¹ and he did not envisage them as confined to their homes and villages.

In a letter of January 1884 Iakovlev wrote with joy of his first female graduate appointed as a teacher in Orenburg province. 'Here is the first Chuvash girl going afar, and moreover as a teacher – it is an unprecedented example.'⁵² In an 1895 report in which he identified reasons for the lack of Chuvash girls in school, (approximately 600 throughout all the Chuvash schools in 1895, or 15% of the total number of Chuvash pupils) he observed that where there were women teachers the numbers of girls increased, and in separate schools their abilities more readily flourished. He therefore proposed a stronger curriculum in Simbirsk, including geometry, history, geography and natural science, in order to graduate better quality women teachers. He considered that all 19 MNP Chuvash schools should have a girls' department by 1896-1897, and he proposed 49 Chuvash villages where he aimed to have a separate girls' school by 1897-1898.⁵³ The increasing number of village girls' schools meant that from 1900 there were Two-year women's pedagogical courses at SCTS which in 1911 Iakovlev sought to extend to three years.⁵⁴

By 1893 many of the first girl pupils were married to the first Chuvash priests, deacons and teachers, or had become teachers themselves.⁵⁵ Iakovlev was convinced that the female orientation towards the heart meant that they had great spiritual and moral potential. 'Chuvash women, like all women, live more according to the heart, and therefore when they become Christians, the religious and moral development of their lives is more sincere, powerful and active than in the male half of the population.'⁵⁶

The Simbirsk Chuvash Teachers' School's craft workshops and farm

⁵¹ Ibid. 39

⁵² Iakovlev 1989, 91

⁵³ Iakovlev 1998, 182-195

⁵⁴ Ibid. 270

⁵⁵ Iakovlev 1893, 34

⁵⁶ Ibid. 229

Although at first the SCTS curriculum revolved around developing literacy and numeracy skills, religious instruction, church singing, and the capacity to teach these in rural schools, the school soon acquired a focus on craftsmanship and agriculture, and this increased in the early 20th century, partly due to Iakovlev's convictions concerning the missionary role of the school in the development of the rural economy, partly as the school's workshops and farm provided a necessary source of income for expanding the school, and partly as a trend encouraged by the government which in 1883 issued a decree providing for a system of lower agricultural schools to spread improved farming techniques.⁵⁷ Land shortage, low productivity, the burden of redemption dues and taxes, a lack of crop diversification, tools and access to markets were factors which eventually led to the crop failure and catastrophic famine of 1891. Rogger argues that 'What was necessary above all – and before any complicated technology or machinery could even be thought of – was to instruct peasants in the many improvements in fertilizer, seed, implements, crop rotation and diversification that could have been made fairly simply and quickly.'⁵⁸ And this is exactly what we find Iakovlev doing.

In December 1892 Iakovlev approached Prince I.M.Obolenskii, Chairman of the Simbirsk Agricultural Society, about using the Society's experimental farm which, according to the Society's Minutes of 22nd February 1893, had been set up in 1860 'but owing to a lack of clearly recognized aim and knowledge of how and with what purpose experiments should be carried out, a lack of unity of views on how to conduct agriculture due to the transitional period' the farm had fallen into decline and the impossibility of fulfilling its purpose 'only led to apathy in all who in any way were involved.'⁵⁹ Iakovlev, with his characteristic energy and purpose, and undoubtedly galvanized by the appalling 1891-2 famine, applied to use the farm, explaining that concerned by the poverty of Chuvash peasants 'I have long since thought of (...) setting up exemplary allotments and orchards without especial expenditure at village schools. (...) The

⁵⁷ Rogger 1983, 84

⁵⁸ Ibid. 84

⁵⁹ GIA CR f.207, op.1, d.110, l.10v

question involves above all the training of teachers who, apart from special pedagogical training, would be acquainted theoretically and most importantly practically, with vegetable, fruit and cereal growing, and animal husbandry in a relevant way to the peasant economy.’⁶⁰

Iakovlev arranged that the Simbirsk Agricultural Society should give 1000 roubles of working capital and the Ministry of State Domains 1200 roubles annually for teaching agriculture at SCTS and organizing summer courses for village teachers.⁶¹ By December 1894 a winter barn for cows had been built, repairs done on the farm buildings and horses, cows and pigs bought.⁶² In a September 1894 report he proposed setting up a specialist agricultural college, explaining that his ‘experience in organizing education, and my views on popular education, the essence of which I see in modesty, simplicity, in not cutting off pupils from the environment in which they have their origins’ motivated him to make his proposals.⁶³ At the time, the farm was operating a four-year crop rotation system which he planned to improve to a full eight-year system the following year.⁶⁴ But Iakovlev had done his job too well. Having restored the farm to order and provided the vision of how it could be used, he was informed in April 1896 that in the current economic difficulties the Simbirsk Agricultural Society could not limit itself to the tasks Iakovlev proposed, and would run the Agricultural College itself.⁶⁵

SCTS continued nevertheless to teach agriculture on small, inadequate plots of land until 1906 when it was able to rent 214 *desiatin* with the aim of setting up a model farm with orchards and an apiary.⁶⁶ Only in January 1912 was the school finally able to purchase 264 *desiatin*, for which Iakovlev was severely reprimanded by the Kazan Curator, N. Kulchitskii who complained about Iakovlev distracting pupils in May and August from fulfilling their direct duties.⁶⁷

Iakovlev replied that ‘in the absence of an agricultural college among the Chuvash, the village

⁶⁰ Ibid. l.2

⁶¹ Ibid. l.11v, 28, 57, 63, 66, 68. Otchet fermi 1912, 140-141

⁶² GIA CR f.207, op.1, d.123, l.6-9v, d. 139, l.10-15v.

⁶³ Ibid. d.123, l.13v-14v.

⁶⁴ Ibid. d.139, l. 15

⁶⁵ Ibid. d.123, l.23-24v

⁶⁶ Otchet fermi 1912, 85-100

⁶⁷ Ibid. 202

teacher is, if not the only, then one of the main transmitters of agricultural knowledge to the surrounding community.’⁶⁸

As Iakovlev also sought to develop craftsmanship skills, from 1868 SCTS pupils studied cobbling and bookbinding, with larger workshops functioning from 1878 funded by the Simbirsk Zemstvo, and through taking private orders.⁶⁹ The workshop curriculum developed to cover the skills of carpentry, turnery, blacksmith, tinsmith and painter,⁷⁰ and the carpentry workshops made furniture, window frames and desks for newly opened village schools and for the Simbirsk Gymnasium,⁷¹ as well as 14 iconostases for churches. They also made the school’s own furniture, all the window frames, doors, icon mounts and the two upper rows of the iconostasis when the school’s church was enlarged in 1897, and the furniture for the school farm in 1912.⁷² From September 1888 a few pupils began serving as apprentices and working for up to 10 hours a day in the workshops, with the aim of returning to the villages as skilled craftsmen rather than teachers. In January 1893, 7 of the 93 boys at SCTS were such apprentices.⁷³

The workshops eventually thrived with Iakovlev regularly sending teachers, pupils and their wares to trade fairs in nearby cities.⁷⁴ In 1896 Iakovlev went to the Nizhnii Novgorod All-Russian Artistic and Industrial Exhibition with a group of 13 teachers from SCTS and 30 village teachers.⁷⁵ He extended the trip to take in Kostroma, Iaroslavl, the Trinity-St Sergius Lavra and Moscow to show the teachers ‘the historic past and cultural present of Russia’⁷⁶ and also took the teachers to see the exhausting and unhygienic conditions of a textile mill with 25,000 workers near Iaroslavl.⁷⁷

⁶⁸ Ibid. 206

⁶⁹ Iakovlev 1998, 100,103

⁷⁰ GIA CR f.207, op.1, d.883

⁷¹ GIA CR f.207, op.1, d.87, l.1, d.115, l.36

⁷² Iakovlev 1998, 304

⁷³ Iakovlev 1998, 100-102; Iakovlev 1893, 23

⁷⁴ Iakovlev 1985,127; 1997, 539

⁷⁵ GIA CR f.207, op.1, d.195, l.21-22

⁷⁶ Iakovlev 1997, 539

⁷⁷ Ibid. 449

Iakovlev's concern to keep up with the latest skills and innovations of benefit to the rural economy is seen in his desire to introduce fire-resistant building materials in an area where most rural buildings were wooden and thatched with straw. In July 1895 two boys were sent to Nizhnii Novgorod to study building with clay and brick⁷⁸ and Iakovlev recommended reading articles about 'the training of simple technologists, skilful and aware workers making incombustible, fire-resistant building materials.'⁷⁹

The beginnings of Chuvash liturgical life: translations and music

We have discussed above N.I.Zolotnitskii's first translations for Chuvash schools. It was under the leadership of Ivan Iakovlev, however, that Chuvash scriptural and liturgical translations were to flourish. Not only was he a native speaker, highly educated, energetic and committed to Orthodox missionary work but, most importantly for Il'minskii, he was Director of a school which, after the model of KCBTS, could be a community where texts could be translated, revised, set to music and prayed in the context of education, liturgical worship and the wider Chuvash community.

Iakovlev's translation work began under Il'minskii's supervision while he was a student at Kazan University. At the beginning of 1871 a pupil at KCBTS, Sergei Timriasov, had translated into Chuvash all of Il'minskii's recent translations into popular Tatar.⁸⁰ Timriasov spoke both Chuvash and Tatar fluently so he translated into Chuvash orally from the Tatar text, and a Russian student V.A.Belilin wrote down as best he could. Over the summer of 1871 Iakovlev went with Timriasov and Belilin to his home village in Buinsk district where they corrected the texts by reading them to the villagers.⁸¹ This translation process raised above all the question of a Chuvash alphabet and how to express the distinctive Chuvash phonetics. In the process of compiling a Chuvash Primer, a new alphabet adapted to Chuvash phonetics developed

⁷⁸ GIA CR f.207, op.1, d.160, l.3, 54, 62

⁷⁹ Iakovlev 1989, 240

⁸⁰ Timiriasov 2001, 117

⁸¹ Il'minskii 1884, 7

under the influence of N.F.Bunakov's phonetical reading system.⁸² After initially expressing Chuvash phonetics using the Russian hard and soft sign, diacritical signs both above and below letters were later used.⁸³

The translators also faced the issue of the Chuvash language's different dialects. Il'minskii believed that 'Any living language can splinter into the smallest and diverse dialects which cannot all make a claim to literary use; it is inevitable that one of these dialects, due to some particular circumstances will be adopted in translations and books and thus acquire predominant literary usage.'⁸⁴ Iakovlev's first 1872 Primer was in the lower Anatri dialect and he intended to publish a separate Primer in the upper Vir'ial dialect. In 1875 Iakovlev sent Alexei Rekeev to the Iadrin district where the upper dialect was spoken to see whether the first Primers were understood, which they were, apart from a few words specific to the lower dialect. After this, separate translations for the two dialects were not made, but Iakovlev's translations avoided words only used in the lower dialect. Iakovlev is therefore credited today with creating not only the Chuvash alphabet but a single literary language, and thus avoiding the further distancing of the two dialects.⁸⁵ In May 1879 Il'minskii sent Rekeev to see whether the Simbirsk translations were understood among the Chuvash diaspora of the Ufa, Samara and Kazan provinces, from where he reported they were comprehensible and clear for the literate Chuvash.⁸⁶

Iakovlev's correspondence with Rekeev, at the time teaching in the village of Timersiany, gives us a picture of the development of the translation process, with its emphasis on the use of the real phonetics and syntax of Chuvash, the development of translation skills among school pupils, and the revision of texts by native speakers in the village. Zolotnitskii's influence is seen in an 1872 letter explaining why Iakovlev was not using unadapted Russian letters. 'We had our reasons for this, which you can find out and understand yourself if you read Zolotnitskii's composition about

⁸² Iakovlev 1985,155

⁸³ Il'minskii 1884, 8

⁸⁴ Il'minskii 1890, 20

⁸⁵ Krasnov 2007, 289-290

⁸⁶ NA RT f.968, op.1, d.143, l. 2-4

the Chuvash language (...) and if you pay attention to the essence of Chuvash words and the Chuvash language as they differ from Russian. (...) You must make the boys translate accurately, literally, but so that it makes sense, then they will master both the Russian and Chuvash languages, and most importantly, we (...) will have excellent translators.’⁸⁷

In Kazan, Chuvash students at KCBTS and KTS such as Daniil Filimonov⁸⁸ helped Iakovlev, and these translations were then corrected by reading them in the villages. In October 1872 Iakovlev sent Rekeev a Catechism which he was to read thoroughly three times himself, then read to the boys in the school ‘then read in the village in the good homes, read to all willing to listen.’ Iakovlev sent two more copies to Simbirsk and to Koshki for correction and only after receiving comments from all three locations did he publish it in Kazan.⁸⁹ Iakovlev constantly emphasized the need for Rekeev to use the Chuvash language in his school, writing parts of his letters in Chuvash so that they remained secret. ‘You yourself know that we Chuvash must know how to read in Chuvash, be careful to remember this.’ Another note in Chuvash warns Rekeev not to draw attention to his translations, knowing how controversial this was at the time.⁹⁰ The translators collected Chuvash language material for the Primers and in February 1874 Iakovlev asked Rekeev ‘while you are still in Timersiany, could you collect more tales, recruitment songs, and other round dance songs.’⁹¹

From autumn 1874 Rekeev moved to Kazan to be the teacher at the Chuvash primary school attached to KTS, becoming a deacon in 1876 and a focal figure in the translation and educational process. Iakovlev graduated from Kazan University in 1875 and, with his characteristic desire for self-improvement, dreamt of studying in St Petersburg and abroad, while hoping that Rekeev would take up leadership of the Chuvash cause. Instead, he returned to Simbirsk, being appointed both Headmaster of SCTS and Inspector of Chuvash schools throughout the Kazan

⁸⁷ Iakovlev 1985,150

⁸⁸ GIA CR f.350, op.1, d.1,l.319v

⁸⁹ Iakovlev 1985,154

⁹⁰ Ibid. 156, 160

⁹¹ Ibid. 164-5

Educational District.⁹² Translation work continued after 1875 in collaboration with SCTS teachers and clergy, the most significant figures being Rekeev, Daniil Filimonov, an 1875 KTS graduate who became a teacher and administrator at SCTS,⁹³ and three more KTS graduates who came to teach at SCTS in 1877: Andrei Petrov, Sergei Timriasov and Petr Vasiliev.⁹⁴

The constant translation and revision process took place between Kazan and Simbirsk, with texts then being transmitted out to village schools. The Easter service was published initially in 1873, and in May 1877 Iakovlev wrote to Rekeev ‘Make haste to send here a corrected copy of the Easter service which they will learn in the school by Easter.’⁹⁵ The revised edition was published in 1879 with further editions in 1882, 1885 and 1890 as Chuvash liturgical life became established in the 1880s.⁹⁶ In 1876 Afinskii’s *Sacred History of the Old and New Testaments*, and in 1877 *The Main Church Feasts of the Lord and the Mother of God* was published. The Gospel of John was first translated by Daniil Filimonov in summer 1876 then revised at SCTS before being published by BSG in 1880. Petr Vasiliev translated the Acts of the Apostles, the Catholic and Pauline Epistles, as well as some Old Testament books with his pupils from 1877-1889.⁹⁷ Translations were also taking place in the villages, then being corrected and published in Kazan. In 1875 Makarii Glukharev’s *Teaching before Holy Baptism* was translated by Grigorii Petrov, the teacher of Alikovo School, and published by BSG in 1876.⁹⁸

Liturgical translations at the Simbirsk Chuvash School

In 1876 the BSG Kazan Translation Committee under Il’minskii’s leadership became responsible for the translations of the Orthodox Missionary Society as a whole. The OMS Chairman Innokentii (Veniaminov), by now Metropolitan of Moscow, had not found the necessary

⁹² Ibid. 167

⁹³ NA CGIGN Otd.2, ed.khr.188, Inv. 455, l.5-6

⁹⁴ GIA CR f.350, op.1, d.1, l.130-131, Iakovlev 1998, 40

⁹⁵ Iakovlev 1998, 40

⁹⁶ Mashanov 1892, 140

⁹⁷ Iakovlev 1997, 275

⁹⁸ Otchet BSG 1875-76, 36

personnel to organize such a committee in Moscow, and he approved of Il'minskii's approach.⁹⁹

The Chuvash translations of the early 1870s aimed at educating the Chuvash in Christian truth through schools, whereas the OMS Council gave the BSG 'the immediate aim of introducing divine services in native languages which is everybody's desire'.¹⁰⁰ In this aim we see the hand of Innokentii who had introduced the Liturgy in Iakut in 1859.¹⁰¹ From this time translation activity at SCTS focused therefore on the introduction of liturgical worship in the Chuvash language. This in its turn involved the building of a church at the school to be a model for village parishes, and also the setting of Chuvash liturgical texts to music.

In the course of the 1880s most of the main Orthodox service books were published in Chuvash, the All-Night Vigil and Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom (2000 copies) and the Horologion (3000 copies) in 1884, the Book of occasional rites (Trebnik) (2000) and Prayer Book (4000) in 1885, and a student's Oktoechos (3000) in 1888. The Easter services went through five editions from 1879-1890 with a total of 16,200 printed and the first collection of Chuvash liturgical texts set to music was published in 1883 (3000).¹⁰² A further collection of liturgical texts for choir (300) was published in 1887, and 4100 copies of a revised edition of the Four Gospels printed in 1890. Apart from liturgical texts, there were a further 5 editions and 21,050 copies of Afinskii's Sacred History of the Old and New Testaments before 1890, and 8 editions and 45,000 copies of the Primer before 1891.¹⁰³ As there were only 38 churches with Orthodox liturgical life in Chuvash in the Kazan, Simbirsk, Samara and Ufa dioceses in 1892, the large quantities of liturgical texts published reveal their role as teaching texts in schools.¹⁰⁴

A key figure in this translation and musical activity was Fr Andrei Petrov, born in 1858 in Sugut-Torbikovo in Iadrin district. As a boy he studied at Fr P.D.Milovidov's Choir Directors' School

⁹⁹ Otchet BSG TC 1892, 1; Il'minskii 1895, 330

¹⁰⁰ Otchet BSG TC Ibid, 2

¹⁰¹ Garrett 1979, 261

¹⁰² Iakovlev 1998, 74

¹⁰³ Mashanov 1892, 140-141

¹⁰⁴ BSG Otchet 1892

in Kazan, then from 1874 studied at KTS, becoming a teacher of catechism and singing at SCTS in 1877.¹⁰⁵ Il`minskii wrote that 'Fr Petrov, owing to his inquiring mind and diligence was the most zealous figure and helper of Iakovlev with translations.'¹⁰⁶ Just after the decree of 15th January 1883 authorizing native-language Liturgy, Iakovlev sent Petrov for six weeks to work alongside Il`minskii and the KTS music teacher, S.V.Smolenskii.

Andrei Petrov will be a living interpreter of our understanding of translation work and our knowledge of applying the methods developed and demonstrated by you. He, a native Chuvash and rubbed sore recently by translation work, will where necessary point to the specific features of the Chuvash language (...) but most importantly, in my opinion, Petrov's trip will be of especial significance in drawing the Simbirsk school into closer fellowship with you, the seminary (KTS), and the Tatar school.¹⁰⁷

Petrov's description of his translation work reflects the communal nature of the process and Iakovlev's meticulous revision.

Every translation was read by all the school's teachers and we also turned to the school's pupils when we encountered difficulties with the necessary correct Chuvash turn of phrase. After this every translation had to be read with Iakovlev who, despite being busy and the time inconvenient (often at night), looked through the translations in the most thorough manner, often to the point of punctiliousness and desire to find fault (at least it seemed like that to me) and I was often dissatisfied.¹⁰⁸

Translation activity continued in the midst of all the other school activities with Iakovlev writing in July 1883 from 2-week summer courses for teachers where Petrov was teaching singing 'I

¹⁰⁵ GIA CR f.207, op.1, d.33, l.118v.

¹⁰⁶ Il`minskii 1890, 140

¹⁰⁷ Iakovlev 1985, 92

¹⁰⁸ Il`minskii 1890, 142

have still not had time to finish reading the translation with Andrei Petrovich, the corrections made are unpleasant for him.¹⁰⁹

Petrov, Iakovlev and the school community in Simbirsk translated with the help of the Slavonic and Greek Bibles and used other aids such as Afanasiev's Manual for studying the Old Testament, Zigaben's commentaries on the New Testament as well as the scriptural commentaries of Bishop Theophan (Govorov) the Recluse. If these did not shed enough light on difficult passages they turned to Simbirsk clergy such as Fr Sergei Medvedkov, a lecturer at the Simbirsk Seminary and catechism teacher at SCTS, who knew Hebrew and had a large library of scholarly theological works.¹¹⁰ Despite the further input of Kazan scholars, Il'minskii himself, G.Sablukov and P.A.Iungerov, the Chuvash texts were constantly being revised as the translators were often criticized as they created Christian terminology.

The creation of Chuvash Christian terminology

Iakovlev's preface to the 1873 edition of St Matthew's Gospel shows his awareness of this dilemma

Christian concepts have to be planted for the first time in the soil of Chuvash thinking, and to express them you have to look for material in a language which on the whole revolves around everyday family and community relationships and contains the most elementary and undeveloped concepts of natural religion and morality (...) With time, when popular thinking will little by little assimilate Christian teaching due to the development of education among the masses of the Chuvash population, the Chuvash language will gradually arrive at the level of expressing Christian concepts, will become more elevated and sanctified by Christian content. But now when only an initial start is being made towards the Christian education of the Chuvash, some uncertainty and shakiness is unavoidable from the point of view of expression.¹¹¹

We see the Simbirsk translators struggling with issues such as the creation of neologisms, and whether terminology from the Old Chuvash Faith could acquire Christian meaning. For

¹⁰⁹ Iakovlev 1985, 98

¹¹⁰ Iakovlev 1997, 249-50

¹¹¹ Il'minskii 1884, 16-17

example, Iakovlev initially translated ‘angel’ using *pulukhs*, a servant spirit in the Old Chuvash pantheon, with the Greek and Slavonic ‘angel’ in brackets to clarify.¹¹² Later translations used only the word ‘angel’. The word *Toralykh* ‘divinity’ was created from *Tora* ‘God’ and the suffix *-ykh* used in abstract nouns such as *patshalykh* ‘kingdom’ and *s’inlykh* ‘mankind’.¹¹³ Another problematic word for a people who had lived in submission to either Tatars or Russians for most of the previous millennium and so had had no leadership figures of their own, was the word ‘Lord’. In his translations of the early 1870s Iakovlev used the phrase *terpeili sii* ‘venerable person’, but this was objected to by the Russian priest Fr Vasilii Smelov, Iakovlev’s staunchest critic, and the phrase was abandoned as unacceptable.¹¹⁴ This means that a striking feature of editions of Iakovlev’s New Testament after the late 1870s is that they have no separate word to express the Greek *Kurios* and only use the word *Tora* for God.

Fr Vasilii Smelov kept up his barrage of criticism until 1889, challenging Iakovlev’s translations of words such as Trinity, Church, mystical supper and mankind. Il’minskii himself took up defense of the Chuvash translations in his text *Correspondence about the Chuvash translations of the Translation Committee*,¹¹⁵ and Il’minskii’s debate with Smelov not only informs us about the difficulty of finding equivalents for Christian terminology in Chuvash, but also gives insight into some of Il’minskii’s most cherished beliefs and principles concerning translation.

Il’minskii always defended mining the native language for its own words before resorting to Russian or Greek words, so he advocated *Visle* (having three) *Tora* for ‘Trinity’ rather than using the chuvashified variant of hypostasis *ipostasli*. Smelov recommended that a uniform word for mankind should be *edemlykh* from the Arabic *Etem* ‘man, Adam’ which had come into Chuvash through Tatar, as he considered this a more noble and educated word than the Chuvash words

¹¹² Il’minskii 1890, 16

¹¹³ Il’minskii 1884, 12-13

¹¹⁴ Il’minskii 1890, 3-8

¹¹⁵ Il’minskii 1890

s'inlykh from *syn* 'man'. Il'minskii supported using both words in different contexts as they had slightly different shades of meaning.¹¹⁶

Il'minskii likewise insisted that a Turkic word, rather than a russified Chuvash word, should be used in translating 'mystical supper' which Smelov complained had been translated into Chuvash using the word *iashka* which for Smelov was the equivalent of the Russian *shchi* 'cabbage soup'. Il'minskii explained that *iashka* is a literal translation of the Tatar *ash* which means 'food' or 'meal', and in the Kirghiz steppe *ash* refers to a special meal prepared for guests by boiling a lamb or ram. The Tatar and Kirghiz word *ash* can be put into the dative as *ashka* which is used when one invites guests for a meal, and the Chuvash *iashka* was derived from this word and so has the necessary overtones of a festive meal prepared for guests, suitably conveying the Greek *deipnon*.¹¹⁷ Il'minskii pointed out that in some of Iakovlev's translations he had used a different Chuvash word *apat* for 'supper', but this word was merely a Chuvash variant of the Russian word *obed* and Iakovlev's preference for it was the result of a certain cooling of his attitude towards the Chuvash way of life.¹¹⁸

We see illustrated here Il'minskii's principle of consulting other Turkic or Ural-Altaic languages because of their similar vocabulary and syntax to Chuvash. This led him not only to accuse the Russian Smelov of 'looking at Chuvash syntax through the prism of Russian word construction',¹¹⁹ but even to challenge the translations of the native Chuvash Iakovlev for being russified.

Smelov also disputed Iakovlev's translations of the word 'church', complaining that he had translated Matthew 18:17 as 'tell it to the people' whereas in Matthew 16:18, 'on this rock I will build my church', he used the word commonly used among the Chuvash for a church building *chirku* (from Rn: *tserkov*'), and this same word was used in his translation of the Nicene Creed.

Il'minskii defended Iakovlev saying that the Chuvash did not as yet have a term or the notion of

¹¹⁶ Il'minskii 1890, 136

¹¹⁷ Il'minskii 1884, 25-26

¹¹⁸ Ibid. 27

¹¹⁹ Il'minskii 1890, 109

the church as the local community of believers so Iakovlev used the word ‘people’ to express this. Il`minskii agreed this could lead the Chuvash to misunderstand the text and this was why he stressed the role of the school as the context for both the translation and interpretation of religious texts.¹²⁰ We also see in this situation the possible influence of wider debates about the nature of the church at this time.¹²¹

It flowed logically out of Il`minskii’s emphasis on the role of the native speakers themselves in the translation process that he also let them defend their own translations. Fr Andrei Petrov’s response to Smelov was a description of the translation process showing the immense creative effort that went into the translation of entire phrases and entire church hymns rather than separate words, in order to capture the overall meaning of the original. ‘I remember how I walked about pondering one expression for an entire two days. I was entirely absorbed by it and could see and think of nothing else. The thought contained in the expression I analysed in a thousand ways (Rn: *lad*) and expressed in every possible manner (Rn: *lad*). Finally, somehow the necessary Chuvash expression emerged by itself, so that I was surprised how it had not come into my head before. He (Smelov) in his remarks for the most part touches on separate words and expressions, but very rarely the entire thought of a hymn.’¹²² Petrov’s use of musical terminology (*lad* = tune, harmony) and his concern for ‘the entire thought of a hymn’ emphasize that the translations were, particularly for Petrov, part of a larger process of creating liturgical hymns set to music. Petrov’s response to Smelov reveals his profound understanding of the Liturgy, knowledge of the minutest details of Scripture, and how his knowledge of the Greek New Testament and patristic texts, and consultations with experts in this field, influenced his choice of Chuvash

¹²⁰ Il`minskii 1884, 23; In the 1911 New Testament, the final version published by Iakovlev’s translation team before the 1917 Revolution, in both Mt.18:17 and 16:18 the word *chirku* is used for ‘church’.

¹²¹ See Shevzov 2004, 12-53

¹²² Il`minskii 1890, 143

words.¹²³ Defending his literal rendering of ‘thrice-holy hymn’ as *vis sviatoila iura* he comments

we who attend the Liturgy in the church which at this time becomes the place of Angels and Archangels, highest heaven, the Kingdom of God itself (St John Chrysostom in his 36th Sermon on 1 Corinthians), with our own lips sing and praise the Life-giving Essence in three persons, worshipped in holiness with the thrice-holy hymn, similar to the praises of the Cherubim and Seraphim seen by the prophet Isaiah and St John the Theologian (Isaiah 6 v.2-3, Revelation 4 v.6-8).¹²⁴

Showing us the difficulty of translating words which do not have immediate equivalents in Chuvash he explains why, on the basis of the writings of St Gregory the Sinaite and St Maximus the Confessor, he has translated the word *despondency* (Rn: *unynie*) in the Lenten Prayer of St Ephraim as *Turra manasran* (forgetfulness of God). ‘Despondency is that feeble state of spirit in which we, forgetting our calling, lose heart to such an extent that we neglect acts of virtue, or entirely abandon our endeavours of piety. (This is caused by losing) living remembrance of God.’¹²⁵

It is clear from the debate over Christian terminology with Smelov that the crux of the matter was the overall aim of translation work, and the future of the Chuvash language itself. Smelov wrote that Iakovlev should not be concerned

to give the Chuvash language the right of citizenship among other written languages, but only to make it an aid to the enlightenment of the Chuvash, and for this it is obvious that it is not necessary to think up technical words, paraphrase is sufficient to convey abstract concepts; there is also no need to try to translate as many liturgical and catechetical books as possible.¹²⁶

¹²³ Il'minskii 1890, 171, 175

¹²⁴ Ibid. 146-7

¹²⁵ Ibid. 147-9

¹²⁶ Il'minskii 1884, 33

Smelov also presupposed that ‘Sooner or later, the Chuvash must merge with the Russians, and the Chuvash language will remain merely as a memorial to the people in the libraries of inveterate philologists.’¹²⁷

Iakovlev’s view, inherited from Il’minskii and Metropolitan Philaret, radically opposed Smelov’s presupposition. ‘The Chuvash language will rise gradually to the level of Christian concepts, will become elevated and sanctified by Christian content.’¹²⁸ This view presupposes the development of the Chuvash language rather than its disappearance, and it is the view undergirding all of Il’minskii’s writings, and those of his translator disciples. If Il’minskii, Iakovlev, Petrov, and the other translators went to such lengths to create texts so permeated with popular thinking and speech, mining the Chuvash and its fellow Turkic and Ural-Altaic languages for their own expressions and creating neologisms out of these if necessary, it was because they understood their task as creating a long-term written liturgical and biblical language for the Chuvash. It is, however, Smelov’s presupposition that the Chuvash would merge with the Russians and their language die out, that has been attributed to Il’minskii and his disciples by many scholars.¹²⁹ We shall see later that a corollary of the communal creation of a written language was not linguistic and cultural homogenization with the Russians, but rather a flowering of the Chuvash language accompanied by an increasing sense of national identity in the early decades of the 20th century.

S.V.Smolenskii and liturgical music at the Simbirsk Chuvash Teachers’ School

In the late 1870s Daniil Filimonov and Andrei Petrov developed the SCTS choir, both having been taught by Stepan Vasilievich Smolenskii, the KTS music teacher from 1872-1889. Il’minskii’s wife was an adopted sister of Smolenskii’s father who served as secretary to Il’minskii’s early mentor Archbishop Grigorii Postnikov.¹³⁰ As Il’minskii and his wife were adoptive parents to Iakovlev’s wife, the three families all considered each other close relatives

¹²⁷ Ibid. 34; Il’minskii 1890, 3

¹²⁸ Il’minskii 1890,3

¹²⁹ See Geraci 2001, 83

¹³⁰ Iakovlev 1997, 365

and Iakovlev's correspondence contains frequent references to the visits of the Smolenskii family to Simbirsk.¹³¹ Both Smolenskii and Iakovlev were present at Il'minskii's bedside when he died.¹³² Smolenskii had a profound influence not only on the development of liturgical music among the Volga peoples but was to become one of the most influential Russian liturgical composers of the late 19th century. After leaving Kazan he became Director of the Moscow Synodal Choir Directors' School where, as a leading figure in the Moscow school of church singing, he inspired several of Russia's most famous composers, P.I.Tchaikovsky, S.Rachmaninov, P.Chesnokov, A.Kastal'skii, to find inspiration for their compositions in Russia's ancient liturgical chants.¹³³

Smolenskii's love of ancient chant was undoubtedly influenced by Il'minskii who considered the Russian Church's musical tradition to have been preserved only in parish and village choirs, among the ordinary people, whereas episcopal choirs had succumbed to Western influence, including Western European musical notation. 'Round notes are Italian, Catholic, foreign and heterodox. Alien and at times indecent tunes came into our church with these notes (...) We have lost, thrown out like old rubbish the honourable, purely Russian *znameny*.'¹³⁴ While Smolenskii was in Kazan, both Il'minskii and Pobedonostsev encouraged his scholarly research into the 15th and 16th century manuscripts of *znameny* chant from the library of the Solovetskii monastery.¹³⁵

Il'minskii also sought Pobedonostsev's support for Smolenskii's school textbook on church choral singing written for the Kazan Teachers' Seminary,¹³⁶ of which Il'minskii wrote 'It is so useful and necessary that it outweighs all the Oktoekhs and Horologions taken together, as

¹³¹ Iakovlev 1985, 85,103,119

¹³² Iakovlev 1997,226

¹³³ Sikur 2012, 55-56

¹³⁴ Il'minskii 1895, 56, 234-235. Ironically, numerical musical notation also came to Russia from Western Europe as it was developed by the Frenchman, Emile Cheve, whose system was advocated in Russia by the German Carl Albrecht who taught at Moscow Conservatoire from the 1860s-90s and published *Rukovodstvo k khorovomu peniu po tsifrovoi metode Cheve* (Manual for choral singing using the numerical method of Cheve) in Moscow in 1868.

¹³⁵ Il'minskii 1895, 129

¹³⁶ Smolenskii 1885

singing has more influence and power than reading.¹³⁷ As the textbook was written with schools for the common people in mind, it used a special system of numerical notation which Il`minskii explained is

extremely suitable for primary teaching, and for explaining the elementary rules of singing and harmony, (it) has taken firm hold in our Teachers' Seminary, and also among the Tatars, Chuvash and other natives. Thanks to numbers, all these simple children master thoroughly the laws of music, sing church hymns with awareness and can give an account of chord construction and the distribution of voices.¹³⁸

The textbook later went through four editions in Moscow and St Petersburg as the simplicity of numerical notation proved useful in spreading congregational choral singing throughout Russia. Andrei Petrov set Chuvash liturgical texts to music with Smolenskii's help. His pupils, Vasili Afanasiev and Sergei Vasiliev continued his work at SCTS when he left to become a priest in the Ufa diocese in 1889. In Kazan, a pupil of the Chuvash Elementary School at KTS, Nikolai Aleksandrov, also worked on setting Chuvash texts to music under Smolenskii's direct supervision.¹³⁹ After Smolenskii had moved to Moscow, some Chuvash choir directors were sent to study under him at the Moscow Synodal School, Sergei Vasiliev in December 1890,¹⁴⁰ Markel Petrov in 1895,¹⁴¹ and Petr Krylov in 1897.¹⁴² In 1901 Smolenskii moved to become Director of the St Petersburg Court Capella and in 1903 Ivan Dmitriev went to study at the Capella's choral conducting courses, returning in 1906 to become one of SCTS's most significant music teachers.

A first anthology of Chuvash liturgical texts set to music *Tserkovnye Sluzhby* (Church services) was published in 1883¹⁴³ and an anthology especially for choir directors, *Khorovye Tserkovnye*

¹³⁷ Il`minskii 1895, 115, 129. Il`minskii is here referring to the students' versions of the Oktoekh and Horologion that he was working on at the time, rather than showing contempt for these two essential liturgical books of the Orthodox Church.

¹³⁸ Il`minskii 1895, 234

¹³⁹ Iakovlev 1997, 364-5, 460

¹⁴⁰ Iakovlev 1985, 128

¹⁴¹ GIA CR f.207, op.1, d.163, l.1-3

¹⁴² Iakovlev 1998, 209

¹⁴³ Mashanov 1992, 140

Pesnopeniia (Church Hymns for Choir) was published in Kazan in 1887, with further editions in 1888, 1894, 1898 and 1903.¹⁴⁴ The anthologies are attributed to N.Aleksandrov, but Andrei Petrov's arrangements were included in them.¹⁴⁵ The demand for this latter book, due to the strong emphasis on choral singing in Chuvash village schools, is shown in Iakovlev's request to Il'minskii in September 1887 to send 30 more copies as he had already distributed the 50 copies previously sent to village teachers.¹⁴⁶ That summer at SCTS there had been a month-long course devoted entirely to church singing.¹⁴⁷

A report from Maloe Karachkino, Iadrin district by the village teacher A.P.Prokop`ev, describes how in the early 1880s Chuvash church singing was introduced by Andrei Petrov's 18-year old student, Vasilii Afanas`evich. The report reflects the Chuvash poetic mindset and the village environment, yet gives a realistic and believable picture of the role of singing in drawing the Chuvash to the Christian faith.

Vasilii's singing always continued until midnight; in the summer it began in the evening and resounded beautifully and divinely far into the quiet summer night. They usually sang behind Afanasii's house in the garden. The garden fence began to lean from the pressure of the people who pressed hard on it as they passed through to listen to the singing. The fence still leans to this day, reminding of the first Chuvash singing and Lukeria's sobbing. When they sang it seemed the stars rejoiced and the moon, as it were, admired a sight never seen before and shone more brightly.

Vasilii sang the Easter canon and then other liturgical hymns and the singing 'noticeably disposed the listeners to the Russian faith and they were, as it were, reborn.' Prokop`ev tells us his mother 'was inspired and enthusiastic about the Russian faith only when she heard Chuvash singing; once the singing was forgotten and her life continued according to the Old Chuvash

¹⁴⁴ Krasnov 2007, 266

¹⁴⁵ GIA CR f.350, op.1, d.1, l.130-131

¹⁴⁶ Iakovlev 1985, 122

¹⁴⁷ Iakovlev 1989,99

Faith, she didn't want us to go to school' although she eventually allowed Prokop`ev to study, gave up her pagan ways and took to going on pilgrimage instead.¹⁴⁸

That church singing flourished so easily among the Chuvash is not surprising given the predominant role singing played in traditional Chuvash culture, as is emphasized in many ethnographical writings. Having described Chuvash instrumental music, Komissarov comments that Chuvash creativity is most broadly and brightly expressed in its oral culture of proverbs, sayings, prayers and spells but 'by far the most valuable feature of popular culture is undoubtedly its songs' in which usually a melody is sung by two voices only, one an octave higher than the other.¹⁴⁹ In his discussion of the tasks of musical ethnography among the Volga peoples, N.V. Nikol'skii wrote 'Expressing the feelings of the Volga peoples, music is as inseparable from them as its verbal (*slovesnoe*) creativity, and as necessary to them as the word for acquiring cultural wealth from outside. To deprive the Volga peoples of musicalized speech means to destroy their very soul, turn them into semi-humans.'¹⁵⁰ How Komissarov and Nikol'skii viewed the impact of church part-singing on traditional Chuvash singing will be discussed in Chapter Seven.

Il'minskii and Smolenskii's emphasis on numerical notation, which meant that church singing was accessible to all, and not just the domain of a few professionals, was the musical equivalent of Il'minskii's emphasis on popular, living speech in his translations, designed to enable Christian truth to be assimilated by the mind and heart of the people as a whole. The use of the system helps to account for the widespread adoption of congregational liturgical singing in Chuvash parishes from the 1880s onwards. Many Chuvash parishes still use this system of notation in the early 21st century and pre-revolutionary copies of Smolenskii's textbook can still be found in the possession of Chuvash church choir directors.

The Church of the Descent of the Holy Spirit as a model for Chuvash liturgical life

¹⁴⁸ Prokopiev 1906, 326-7, 336

¹⁴⁹ Komissarov 1911, 395-396

¹⁵⁰ Nikol'skii 1920, 296

The translation and musical arrangement of Chuvash liturgical texts took place in the context of the beginnings of Orthodox liturgical life in the Chuvash language at SCTS. In June 1878 Iakovlev wrote to Bishop Feoktist of Simbirsk telling him that during the 1877-78 school year the Vigil service had been held at the school on the eve of Sundays and feast days, with the pupils reading and singing in Chuvash, while a Russian priest served. He asked for permission to continue until a school church was built.¹⁵¹ By 1882 the entire daily cycle of services apart from the Divine Liturgy was being held at the school, including during Lent.¹⁵² As Iakovlev's above letter indicates, individual bishops could give permission for native language services but there had been no general ruling from the Synod. This meant that before 1883 SCTS and KTS were sending out teachers who were encouraging Chuvash liturgical singing in schools located in parishes where this innovation was not necessarily approved.

In some cases this was causing conflict as Iakovlev's correspondence with the Inspector of Public Schools in the Buinsk district of Simbirsk province shows. On 28th August 1881 the Inspector informed him that he had approached the Simbirsk Consistory concerning the Chuvash teacher at Gorodishche School, who was keen for his pupils to sing Chuvash prayers at the church. The Consistory had given permission for such prayers to be sung using BSG texts as long as the Chuvash language in them was comprehensible for the Buinsk Chuvash, which was what the Inspector wanted to ascertain from Iakovlev as 'the enormous enlightening influence of services in the native language of each people has already become indisputable'.¹⁵³ The Consistory informed Iakovlev separately, however, that it had heard a report from the clergy in Gorodishche saying that 'in their opinion, such an innovation – the singing of prayers and hymns in churches in the Chuvash language, was entirely unnecessary.' The Bishop of Simbirsk had

¹⁵¹ GIA CR f.207, op.1, d.22, l.1

¹⁵² Il'minskii 1883, 12

¹⁵³ GIA CR f.501, op.1, d.34, l.1-3

decided that the opinions of the Gorodishche clergy should be respected and they should not be forced to use Chuvash if they found it inconvenient and unnecessary.¹⁵⁴

On 3rd May 1882 Fr Alexei Rekeev wrote to Il`minskii after celebrating Easter for the first time as priest. ‘The Chuvash celebrated together with me as for the first time in their life they heard singing at Easter in their native language.’¹⁵⁵ A Russian reader sang the Easter Canon in Slavonic, with Rekeev repeating the Irmos in Chuvash and his pupils singing the Troparion. When Rekeev shouted ‘Christ is Risen!’ in Chuvash for the first time only his pupils responded but soon the whole church resounded with ‘Chanakh Cherelne!’ Rekeev and his pupils went with an icon procession around the villages where the curious Chuvash asked him if singing in Chuvash really was allowed.¹⁵⁶

It was only on 15th January 1883 that the Synod issued a decree giving general permission to hold Orthodox services in Tatar, Chuvash, Cheremys, Votiak, Kalmyk and Mordovian, or a mixture of any of these languages with Slavonic if there were Russians present. Such a move was justified, the Synod declared, owing to the vast amount of translation work already done at KTS and SCTS. Texts published by the BSG TC were to be used, although texts in manuscript form could be used temporarily after approval by the Translation Committee. The Committee’s published texts were not to be considered final, and could be revised for future editions, but with care so as not to make a bad impression. ‘In any case, the baptized natives should look on their biblical and liturgical translations as an aid to understanding the Church Slavonic text which should serve as the basic and normative ecclesial and liturgical text.’ Despite this last cautious proviso the text of the decree said that the Synod’s approval of native language services needed to be made clear so as ‘to remove frequently arising doubts and misunderstandings delaying the implementation of this beneficial work.’¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. l.4-4v.

¹⁵⁵ NA RT f.968, op.1, d.143, l.45

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. l.45v

¹⁵⁷ GIA CR f.207, op.1, d.22, l.3

Following this decree, in March 1883 Il'minskii published an article arguing the case for native liturgical worship and making a plea for a 600-rouble per annum salary for a Chuvash priest, and 3000 roubles for a church at SCTS which would be a model for all other Chuvash parishes.¹⁵⁸

Iakovlev, never daunted by the School's lack of funds, had already begun building the church in 1881. The OMS responded to Il'minskii's plea in 1883 by sending 1000 roubles for the church¹⁵⁹ although Iakovlev still had to take a loan from the Simbirsk Society of Mutual Credit for 2255 roubles to cover building costs until the Kazan Educational District gave 3500 roubles in May 1884.¹⁶⁰ The church was built in two stages, a first storey being initially consecrated on 20th January 1885 and a second storey built in 1899-1900.

Iakovlev initially informed Shestakov in June 1883 that he proposed to name the church after St Stephen of Perm 'the bishop who labored greatly for the enlightenment of the native Zyrians',¹⁶¹ but by October 1883 Il'minskii's vision to link the church and all it signified with the universal Church's apostolic missionary tradition had prevailed, and Iakovlev asked permission of Bishop Varsanofii that the church be named after the Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles at Pentecost.¹⁶² The church's iconostasis contained icons of Sts Cyril and Methodius, Stephen of Perm and Sergius of Radonezh, copies of the icons at the KTS church, which in their turn were modeled on icons in the Church of Christ the Saviour in Moscow, thus linking the Simbirsk church with the missionary and ascetic tradition of the Russian Church as a whole.¹⁶³ The church thus reflected the patriotic atmosphere of the decade in which it was built, and is an example of Il'minskii's concern to emphasize the traditional nature of his missionary work in the

¹⁵⁸ Il'minskii 1883, 12

¹⁵⁹ GIA CR f.207, op.1, d.22, l.6-8

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. l.160. Iakovlev 1998, 77

¹⁶¹ GIA CR Ibid. l.9a

¹⁶² Ibid. l.12. Iakovlev 1997, 410

¹⁶³ Iakovlev Ibid. 409

face of the criticism he faced in this decade, and emphasize that it would not lead to separation of the native peoples from the Russian Church.¹⁶⁴

Iakovlev recommended to Archbishop Varsanofii that the music teacher, Andrei Petrov, be priest at the church. He pointed to his education in Kazan, his development of the choir at SCTS and of village choirs by his pupils, his role in translating liturgical texts over the past four years, and especially his setting to music the texts of the Vigil and Liturgy 'according to melodies used in the Orthodox Church.'¹⁶⁵ In a letter of March 1886, Iakovlev described services in the first week of Lent attended by many Chuvash who came to Simbirsk for a regional fair.

The services were held according to the Lenten rite, and the pupils fasted together with their teachers. The service took place in Chuvash, with the Vigil lasting from two and a half to three hours. Take note that the Great Canon of St Andrew of Crete, Great Compline, as well as the Horologion, have been translated and printed in Chuvash. If you add to that the reverent and heartfelt serving of the Chuvash priest Andrei Petrov and the harmonious, moving singing you can believe that the Chuvash stood through the lengthy services not only patiently but with pleasure and delight.¹⁶⁶

The ordination and training of the first Chuvash clergy

Apart from rare exceptions such as Zolotnitskii's disciple, Fr Mitrofan Dmitriev, who was ordained in May 1878,¹⁶⁷ the first generation of Chuvash priests were almost exclusively educated at KTS or SCTS, and were recommended for ordination by Il'minskii or Iakovlev who guided them through the issues of the ordination process, especially complex for non-Russians who were not from the clergy estate, and played a major role in deciding the location of their ministry.

¹⁶⁴ See Strickland's discussion of the use of architecture to promote Russian national consciousness in Strickland 2013, 43-44.

¹⁶⁵ GIA CR Ibid. l.118-118v.

¹⁶⁶ Quoted in Il'minskii 1895, 188

¹⁶⁷ Karchevskii 1906, 1445

In May 1881 Il'minskii wrote to the SCTS teacher Daniil Filimonov suggesting that he fill a priest's vacancy in Suncheleev, Chistopol' district.¹⁶⁸ Filimonov was unsure at first. 'Accepting ordination to the priesthood seemed a very important, lofty and even frightening affair both due to my origins and to my education, and I considered myself an unworthy candidate for the priesthood.'¹⁶⁹ But he eventually accepted, and was guided through the ordination process by Il'minskii who asked him in March 1882 to send references from Iakovlev about his work and behavior as a teacher at SCTS to Archbishop Sergei of Kazan.¹⁷⁰

We have seen Iakovlev's initiative in Andrei Petrov becoming priest at the SCTS church in 1885, and Il'minskii was involved in Petrov's appointment to Ufa diocese in 1889. Petrov shared all his hopes and fears with Il'minskii: his wife's refusal at first to go, his own desire to be in his native Iadrin district, and their common desire to leave Simbirsk which was not because of bad relations with Iakovlev, Petrov explained, but 'my family cannot stand the conditions of life in town where there are not the right fields, the right soil, nor the right spirit. I myself have begun to feel burdened by this life as it is false, heartless, frivolous, and things are done only for vain glory.'¹⁷¹ Petrov tells Il'minskii of his desire to be known in Ufa by his native surname Turinge, presumably arising out of a desire to preserve his national and ancestral identity in the face of moving to a distant location.¹⁷²

When Viktor Zaikov was ordained deacon in 1884 he thanked Il'minskii for helping him overcome obstacles.¹⁷³ In October 1891 Mikhail Sindiachkin thanked Il'minskii for helping in his ordination as priest in Tuarma, Samara province.¹⁷⁴ It was at Il'minskii's recommendation that Vasilii Skvortsov was ordained deacon in Bichurino in 1889, then priest in Bol'shoe

¹⁶⁸ RGB OR f.424, k.2, ed.khr. 52, l.1-2

¹⁶⁹ NA CGIGN otd. 2, ed. Khr. 188, Inv.455, l.5v

¹⁷⁰ RGB OR g.424, k.2, ed.khr.52, l.3

¹⁷¹ NA RT f.968, op.1, d.139, l.83v

¹⁷² Ibid. l.80-81

¹⁷³ Ibid. d.108, l.7-8

¹⁷⁴ Ibid. d.148, l.46

Shemiakino in 1890.¹⁷⁵ Iakovlev's correspondence also shows his many recommendations to the priesthood, as in 1882 he recommended G.Perepelkin, in 1883 K.Makarov, and in 1887 I.Ananiev. A.N.Dobrokhotova was recommended as deacon in 1887 and Il'ia Burganovskii as deacon in Sredniye Timersiany in 1885, then as priest in Bogdashkino in 1891.¹⁷⁶ By July 1890 there were 7 graduates of KTS who had served as teachers at SCTS, then become priests and deacons in the Kazan, Simbirsk, Samara and Ufa dioceses.¹⁷⁷ Of the 141 graduates of SCTS by 1890, 19 had become priests or deacons.¹⁷⁸

The ordination of Chuvash priests raised the issue of their training. In 1882 synodal edicts allowed the ordination of those who had previously been school teachers and those without a seminary education, thus enabling the ordination of the first Chuvash priests, all of whom fell into these categories.¹⁷⁹ At a Conference of Volga-Kama Bishops in Kazan in July 1885, it was decided that from 1888 two graduates of SCTS with at least two years of teaching experience could enter the 4th class of Simbirsk Seminary annually without taking the entrance exams.¹⁸⁰ Iakovlev tells us that Il'minskii was unhappy that he agreed to SCTS graduates studying at seminary as he was in general an enemy of the theological seminaries of his time, but Iakovlev himself was glad for the access that seminary education gave to university or Academy education, and he did his best to select candidates each year.¹⁸¹ By February 1890 Il'minskii had been reconciled with the idea and suggested that theological education for Chuvash from dioceses all over Russia should take place in Simbirsk, and should be available not only to candidates for the priesthood, but also for native teachers with the required qualities and

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. 1.58-61, 78-80

¹⁷⁶ Iakovlev 1998, 70-73, 87-89, 125-6

¹⁷⁷ D.Filimonov, A.Petrov, I.Burganovskii, P.Vasil'ev, G.Perepelkin, V.Skvortsov, V.Afanas'ev

¹⁷⁸ Iakovlev 1998, 111

¹⁷⁹ IKE 1882 No.13, 327 and No.4, 357

¹⁸⁰ Il'minskii 1895, 335-7

¹⁸¹ GIA CR f.501, op.1, d.264, 353, 385, 443, 503, 547

disposition.¹⁸² In February 1894 Iakovlev wrote to thank V.K.Sabler for implementing this suggestion and increasing the number of seminary students from two to three.¹⁸³

In the 1890s, while broadening the school curriculum in the areas of agriculture and crafts, Iakovlev also increased religious instruction with the aim of training future priests. In a letter to Bishop Varsonofii of June 1893 he wrote

Assuming that Your Reverence will also call the most worthy and capable graduates of the Chuvash School to the pastoral ministry in future, I have constantly aspired to educate them in the spirit of the Orthodox Church and have paid special attention to their familiarity with church services. With this in mind a school chapel has been built where most of the services are conducted by a native Chuvash priest in the native language. With this aim religious instruction has been increased (with six hours a week in each class).¹⁸⁴

In a letter to the Kazan Curator in April 1894, Iakovlev explained the aims of the school as training ‘teacher-enlighteners in the spirit of the Orthodox Church’ who have both agricultural and craftsmanship skills, and have received religious instruction covering Old and New Testament History, history of liturgical services, church history, explanation of Scripture, Church Slavonic, and practical reading and singing in church.¹⁸⁵

Iakovlev’s high expectations of the moral role his graduates, especially priests should play, as well as his critical view of Russian priests, is seen in a letter of February 1883 to Il`minskii

I have noticed that our Chuvash priests are following the old well-trodden path, with a weakness for financial gain and love of the good life. They love power over others but do not like to be subordinate. (...) To achieve their aims it appears they think that any means practised by others are good. They dispose some in the authorities towards themselves with kind words and intentions, others with money. There is not yet any evidence for attributing to Daniil Filimonov

¹⁸² Il`minskii 1895, 336-337

¹⁸³ Iakovlev 1998, 150

¹⁸⁴ GIA CR f.501, op.1, d.147, l.21

¹⁸⁵ Iakovlev 1998, 152-3

everything said about him, but I fear for him. I have given Rekeev to understand clearly that I do not approve of everything and am not satisfied with everything he does.¹⁸⁶

In several situations we see Iakovlev slowing down the ordination process as he considered the candidate not sufficiently mature or for other reasons.¹⁸⁷ In 1898 he refused to recommend Pavel Afanas`ev for ordination in Samara diocese as he believed he was irreplaceable as teacher at Ishaki school,<sup>188</sup> and in April 1888 he defended the deacon Nikita Ignat`ev against criticisms of drunkenness and dissolute behavior while another excellent and energetic teacher and reader, Feodor Danilov, he admitted got drunk and there was little hope of improvement.¹⁸⁹

Due to such situations Iakovlev played an inevitable intermediary role between bishops and Chuvash teachers and priests, so much so that when Bishop Varsanofii was on his deathbed in 1895, he said to Iakovlev ‘They are saying (...) that you are the bishop and not me. That you do everything, and not me.’¹⁹⁰ Despite Varsanofii’s support of the Il`minskii system, we see that Iakovlev’s role as organizer of the native clergy was nevertheless beginning to cause resentment, and we shall see in Chapter Six how his important role, carried out despite being a layman, was one cause of the crisis of native mission at the turn of the 20th century.

Conclusion

The Simbirsk Chuvash Teachers’ School had its origins in the reform atmosphere of the 1860s when the debates leading to the 1870 Rules aroused sympathy for native education. Its Chuvash founder, Ivan Iakovlev, was motivated by his negative experience of the pre-1860s Russian-language schools and contact with both the conditions of life in the villages and contemporary progressive intellectual currents. Although initially convinced that Chuvash schools should function in Russian, his thinking changed after meeting Il`minskii whose Kazan Central Baptised

¹⁸⁶ Iakovlev 1985, 94

¹⁸⁷ Iakovlev 1998, 136-7 and 148-9

¹⁸⁸ NA CGIGN t.246, l.487-490

¹⁸⁹ Iakovlev 1998, 92

¹⁹⁰ Iakovlev 1997, 246

Tatar School became the model for SCTS. SCTS's main aim was to train both men and women Chuvash elementary teachers providing education rooted in an Orthodox worldview, and seeking to improve the material conditions of the villages, and provide conscious understanding of the Christian faith through native-language texts and participation in Orthodox liturgical life.

SCTS's mixture of educational and missionary aims are reflected in its funding which came both from state sources, the MNP and Zemstvos, but also from the Orthodox Missionary Society and private individuals. SCTS and its offshoots thus reflected the early 19th century Russian educational ideal of *prosveshchenie*, the provision of literacy together with religious instruction in schools which made no distinction between the secular and spiritual spheres. We shall see later that this understanding of education was to cause tensions as the state-church synergy of the 19th century began to disintegrate at the turn of the 20th century.

Iakovlev's views on land issues in the wake of the 1860s reforms and his vision to train teachers who could bring about practical improvements in the village economy meant that SCTS gradually broadened its scope to give training in agriculture and craftsmanship. In accordance with Il'minskii's principles SCTS aimed to preserve among its pupils the modest lifestyle of the Chuvash villages to which its graduates were expected, and in most cases, did return. Yet by teaching literacy and practical skills which gave access to knowledge and employment in many spheres to both men and women, by providing qualifications which eventually gave access to higher education, and becoming a model of Orthodox liturgical life in the Chuvash language, SCTS inevitably became a catalyst for change in the material and spiritual culture of the Chuvash as we shall illustrate in the next two chapters.

The enormous efforts of Il'minskii and the Chuvash translators to incorporate popular Chuvash thinking and speech and mine the Chuvash language's fellow Turkic and Ural-Altaic languages for their own expressions, as well as their understanding of the development and sanctification of the Chuvash language through translations of Christian texts, reveal that they saw their task as

creating a long-term literary language for the Chuvash, rather than the translations being a temporary measure designed to pave the way for Chuvash assimilation into Slavonic liturgical life and Russian-language civic life. Translation work at SCTS took place in the context of the school community and the wider Chuvash community. In the course of the 1880s the SCTS church, with teachers and pupils serving as clergy, singers and readers became a model of Chuvash-language Orthodox liturgical life. This involvement of the whole community, this *narodnost`* of the translation process and liturgical life, was expressed in the musical sphere through the use of numerical notation which meant church choral singing was accessible to all. We shall see in the next chapter the impact of this linguistic and musical *narodnost`* in Chuvash villages, and its contribution to the indigenization of Orthodox liturgical life.

The SCTS school community in many ways reflects the ideals of Makarii Glukharev's 1839 *Thoughts* which envisioned missionary training in the context of liturgical life in a monastic community with a strong emphasis on serving practical needs such as agriculture and medicine in the village communities. While not a monastic community as such, we have seen how SCTS followed the ideals of the Trinity St Sergius Lavra. Makarii's 1839 *Thoughts*, which remained unpublished in his lifetime, formed the basis of articles in the OMS's journal *Missioner* in 1874, alongside articles on monastic missionary work in Egypt and among the Celts,¹⁹¹ just at the time SCTS was beginning to develop. We should not be surprised therefore that SCTS took on such a role in the wider Chuvash community where there were as yet no indigenous monastic communities.

¹⁹¹ See *Missioner* 1874, No.12, 117; No.46, 401; 1875, No. 18, 137; No. 27, 217

Chapter 4

The Impact on the Villages: The development of native schools, clergy and parishes

In this chapter we shall examine how the training of teachers and the beginnings of Orthodox liturgical life at the Simbirsk Chuvash Teachers' School influenced the Chuvash villages. We shall trace how teachers and graduates of SCTS, some of whom were also graduates of KTS, developed from teaching roles in the villages to ordination as clergy who in many situations built the characteristic school-churches¹ and participated in the transition to separate native parishes. This pattern is illustrated in the north-east of the compact Chuvash area, in the Tsivil'sk district of Kazan province, and in the south-east of the compact Chuvash area, in Simbirsk, Buinsk and Tetiushi districts. We shall also examine the role of short-term courses in transmitting the skills taught at the central teacher training institutions to village teachers with little or no formal education. Later sections illustrate the influence of the leadership of three bishops who had previously adhered to Il'minskii's principles in Siberia, on the implementation of the Il'minskii system in Samara, Ufa and Kazan dioceses in the 1890s. Iakovlev's concern for the material improvement of village life through developing agriculture and craftsmanship, and his active participation in the resolution of land issues will be shown to be an integral part of SCTS's impact on the villages, while a final section will explore the publication and distribution of the first Chuvash texts and the role played by Iakovlev's collaboration with the British and Foreign Bible Society.

Native schools, clergy and parishes in the north-east of the compact Chuvash area

We shall first examine the development of schools and parishes in the 1880s-90s in the north-east of the compact Chuvash area where there were many large, entirely Chuvash villages in

¹ I use the term *school-church* to refer to the multi-purpose building built initially in many villages where there was no church. The building served as a school on weekdays and became a centre for adult catechism in the evenings, while at weekend was transformed into a church where the Liturgy could be served.

close proximity to Tatar villages.² In an 1897 report on eight large Chuvash parishes,³ each with a population of between 3000 and 6000, and located in the north-east of the Tsivil'sk district, I.A.Iznoskov commented how in the late 1870s only three parishes had a school, and instruction took place in Russian. By 1897, there were 32 native schools in the 8 parishes, with one parish alone, Bateevo, having a Zemstvo school, and each of its 8 outlying villages having a Literacy School. Musirma parish had a Zemstvo school and 3 BSG schools in its outlying villages. Most of the teachers in the parish villages⁴ were graduates of KTS and SCTS, while in the outlying villages many of the teachers had studied only at local elementary schools or were entirely self-taught.⁵

In Musirma parish, the former teacher at SCTS, Fr Daniil Filimonov, described the schools' role in parish life in 1889-1890 reports. After Filimonov's arrival in 1882, he opened a Zemstvo boys' school with an SCTS graduate teacher, two further boys' schools in the outlying villages of Kudesniari and Dal'naia Musirma in 1883 and 1884, and a girls' school in Musirma in 1888. The three outlying schools, where the teachers had only elementary education, were financed by the BSG and used occasionally for church services.⁶

The central Musirma School was used for adult catechetical meetings attended also by parishioners from outlying villages. Filimonov had drawn up his own programme of 20 lessons as he disagreed with current opinion among the clergy that subjects of extra-liturgical talks should be moral exhortations 'directed against one or another prevalent evil.' His concern was 'to instill in their souls a Christian worldview, and in this way finally extinguish their rough, wild pagan thoughts and feelings,' and this could be done only 'when the Chuvash assimilate Christian teachings in detail, systematically and in historical sequence.'⁷ Filimonov's course is

² These villages today lie along the eastern border of the Chuvash Republic and the Republic of Tatarstan.

³ Baigil'dino, Toisi, Burtasy, Bateevo, Novoisheevo (today Chelkasy), Kovali, Starye Shigali, Musirma

⁴ I use the term parish village to refer to a 'selo', the central village in a parish where the church was located.

⁵ Iznoskov 1897, 219-222

⁶ Filimonov, 1890, 100

⁷ Ibid. No. 4, 73-74

strikingly centred on the Scriptures with the lesson ‘On Christ’s teaching about love of God and neighbour’ beginning with an explanation of the Ten Commandments and Christ’s command to love God and neighbor, illustrated by the Parables of the Good Samaritan and the Unmerciful Servant. Filimonov’s explanation of the redemption of the human race is adapted to a people performing blood sacrifices as it explains ‘The aim and meaning of the Old Testament animal sacrifices’ and ‘the establishment and redemptive meaning of the New Testament bloodless sacrifice.’⁸ He only complains that ‘there is great demand for the Gospel, but we do not have one copy for giving away.’⁹

The following year he explained liturgical services, and during breaks between lessons pupils of the local schools sang the Sunday Troparion and other hymns from the Vigil and Liturgy. The adult parishioners learnt prayers by heart and learnt to sing as a choir, with Filimonov commenting ‘this singing is very majestic but not entirely in tune (...) the parishioners are extremely interested in this innovation which it seems is why they have begun to attend the talks more zealously, regularly and in greater numbers.’ In 1889 between 200 and 300 regularly attended the talks.¹⁰

Filimonov’s work had a ripple effect in other villages in the Tsivil’sk district. In Teneevo, an outlying village of both baptised and unbaptised Chuvash in the neighbouring Grishino parish, he was instrumental in opening a school in 1887, and then in 1892 a school-church was consecrated where Filimonov sometimes held a Vigil service.¹¹ In 1884 some inhabitants of Filimonov’s home village of Pervoe Stepanovo in the west of Tsivil’sk district asked him to send a teacher and start a school which opened in October 1884 with 15 pupils. Parents paid 30 kopecks per head to heat the room and pay a teacher, a graduate of SCTS. In December 1884 the school was adopted by the Kazan diocesan school council and in 1885 the Tsivil’sk Zemstvo

⁸ Filimonov 1890, No. 4, 78-79

⁹ Ibid. No. 5, 103

¹⁰ Ibid. No. 5, 96

¹¹ Mike, 1904, 722

started to give a salary which was supplemented by BSG funds from 1889. At first the school did not gain the trust of the local Chuvash who neglected to pay their dues and resisted suggestions to build a school-church. But in May 1893 the village community agreed to give 500 roubles for the building as the village was 8 versts from the parish church and a school-church was eventually consecrated in honour of St Gurii of Kazan in 1901.¹²

After Filimonov was appointed priest and director of the Two-class school in the central village of Ishaki in 1894, he opened Literacy Schools in 3 outlying villages. A report sent after Filimonov had been criticized for inactivity due to the schools' low numbers, reveals the difficulties he encountered in attracting pupils to the schools. He explained that the schools were opened at his own initiative as the villagers were still practising pagan rites and were indifferent to having schools. Secondly, as the land around Ishaki was of poor quality, the peasants earned their livelihood from producing bast matting and bags, and as children of both sexes were engaged in this from age 8, it involved great financial loss to put children into school and parents refused.¹³ The process of soaking the bast meant the homes were damp and prone to disease, and when in 94 there had been a typhus epidemic in 5 villages without medical help, Filimonov had had to leave the school for whole days to visit sick villagers.¹⁴ It had taken Filimonov 18 months of going to speak regularly with the villagers in Khora Sirma about the need for literacy, but finally 10 villagers had agreed. Filimonov was just glad that the schools had finally opened despite the low numbers which he was confident would gradually increase. As in Musirma he was using the schools to gather adults on Saturdays to read prayers, Sacred History and other OMS publications.¹⁵

Filimonov was especially active when bad harvests led to the catastrophic famine of 1891. With Il'minskii's help he published an appeal in *Moskovskie Vedomosti* and by the end of the year he

¹² Filimonov 1893 No. 17, 12-18

¹³ GIA CR f.350, op.1, d.3, l.317-319

¹⁴ Iznoskov 1895, 268

¹⁵ GIA CR f.350, op.1, d.3, l.322

had received 2800 roubles.¹⁶ Records have been preserved containing lists of hundreds of villagers with the amounts of flour, wheat, barley, oats, peas and buckwheat they each received as part of a famine relief programme organized by Filimonov as secretary of the Musirma *popechitel'stvo* between February and June 1892. Food was distributed not only in Musirma but in villages across the Tsivil'sk district including Urmay, Bateevo, Novoishevo, Kudesniari, Chubaevo and Iambaevo.¹⁷

Not far from Musirma was Bateevo where the Slavonic services had been poorly attended by the Chuvash since a church had been built in 1773. When another former SCTS teacher, Petr Vasiliev, arrived as priest in 1893, there was a Zemstvo school in Bateevo, and a parish school in the outlying village of Shorkisry. He immediately set about opening Literacy Schools in the other outlying villages and by 1898 the parish had 9 schools.¹⁸ As in Filimonov's parish, the teachers themselves only had elementary education and so Vasiliev gathered them on feast days to explain how to teach lessons. When the Kazan educational official P.Mike visited the village in 1898 he reported that all the 7-20 years-olds in the parish were literate in Chuvash, as well as the majority of adults.

The teachers and the priest himself, or literate, well-read peasants under his supervision, hold lectures and talks for the people in village schools. At these talks there is congregational singing in which all take part, young and old. Lovers of singing from the whole parish gather from time to time at the parish church for a general singing practice under the direction of the priest who checks the knowledge of prayers of those beginning to attend talks, distributes teaching material to the teachers and books to successful pupils. Fr. Vasiliev has made it the duty of all parish school pupils as well as literate adults to teach literacy to their friends and people of the same age. A pupil who has taught somebody else comes with him to Batiushka who, after testing the new pupil, gives a Sacred History in Chuvash as a reward for the teacher's labours, while the one who

¹⁶ Il'minskii 1895, 401-2

¹⁷ NA CGIGN otd. 2, t.187, l.229-382

¹⁸ Mike 1904, 712

has taught 10 pupils receives a silver cross. In this way literacy among the Chuvash spreads from house to house.¹⁹

Vasiliev was also known as 'Fiery Tongue' among the locals because of his preaching, and Chuvash would come 40-50 versts from the Cheboksary and Iadrin districts to hear him preach on Sundays and feast days. His preaching and organization of schools, adult catechism, congregational singing meant that new churches were consecrated in 1897 in Bateevo, and in 1898 in Shorkisry which became a separate parish.²⁰ When Mike arrived for the Saturday evening service at Bateevo church

The people were coming in crowds from the outlying villages. (...) When the priest and deacon opened the Royal Doors the church was full to overflowing; there were, I imagine, about 1000 people. The people awaited the beginning of the service in silence. The clergy sang before the altar "Come, let us worship". Then 600 or 800 worshippers replied in one single mighty breath, "Bless the Lord, O my soul". I couldn't make it out at first and thought that the pupils of the parish school were singing, but then saw that around me the village men and women were singing; I could hear basses and descants, men's and women's voices. I have heard congregational singing in some places before, but singing as in Bateevo church I have never heard anywhere. (...) Here in a Chuvash village a multitudinous, well-organised, people's (vsenarodny) choir was singing; their singing was majestic, staggering in its grandeur. They sang "Blessed is the man" then "Lord, I have cried" in the same harmonious, majestic, heartfelt way. The service took place in Chuvash and lasted until half past nine. (...) I was told that at the Liturgy a choir of 1500 sings and then there is even greater grandeur.

Mike learned it was Fr Vasiliev who had taught such singing which had not existed before his arrival 5 years previously.²¹

¹⁹ Ibid. 713

²⁰ Ibid. 713, 716-7

²¹ Ibid. 710-711

Further to the south, in 1885 Viktor Zaikov became priest in the parish of Koshelei²² which had 15 outlying villages scattered over the border of the Tsivil'sk and Tetiushi districts. Three-quarters of the parish were baptised Chuvash with a small number of unbaptised Chuvash, and baptised Tatars who had reverted to Islam. Most of his parishioners rested on Fridays rather than Sundays, and observed rites at the *Kiremet* rather than going to church. In Lent 1885 only 40-50 Chuvash took communion. Services took place in Slavonic and, according to Zaikov, the Russian priest and two readers had no interest in using Chuvash.²³ He complained to Il'minskii 'In all the Chuvash villages of my parish, there is not one literate person (...) the people have no inclination towards literacy, nor enlightenment, they go to church extremely rarely, and then only on the instructions of the *iomzi*, but they have never gone to confession or taken communion.'²⁴

In 1885 there was one Zemstvo school in Koshelei which functioned in Russian, but by January 1886 Zaikov had opened 3 schools in Polevoi-Sundyr, Siurbeevo-Tokaev and Polevoi-Shentakhi, which at first had no exterior funding, but then began to receive a Zemstvo teacher's salary, a one-off grant from the MNP and some funding from the Diocesan School Council.²⁵ By 1890 these three schools were well attended and had local support. In February 1887 Zaikov opened a further BSG school in Polevoe Baibakhtino where thirteen households were unbaptised and unwilling to send their children to the school, although by 1889 there were 15 baptised and 4 unbaptised boys.²⁶

Zaikov wrote to Il'minskii in 1887 'Due to the school and occasional rites in the native language, the Chuvash of Polevoi-Sundyr have begun to observe Sunday rather than Friday, observe the Fasts, hold funerals using Christian rites. Almost half took communion in Lent whereas before no one did.' The situation was the same in the other outlying villages with a school, but there

²² Today Komsomolskoe.

²³ NA RT f.968, otd. 1, d.108, l.11-12

²⁴ Ibid. l.20-21v

²⁵ Zaikov 1890, 167-8

²⁶ Ibid. 168-170. NA RT f.968, otd. 1, d.108, l.1-2, 21, 30

was less sign of change in Koshelei itself, despite one-third of the population being Russian.

‘They can’t follow the example of the Russians who aren’t much further ahead than the Chuvash. When I ask the old men and women “What is the Trinity?” they answer “the Mother of God”. “And who are John the Baptist and St Nicholas?” They reply “God”. If that’s what the local Russians are like, what can we expect of the Chuvash? In the light of this, how can we not stand up for Chuvash services and schools?’²⁷

In 1889 there were 168 pupils at the 4 schools, including 18 girls, and 65 pupils had completed the school course from 1885-1889. The teachers came from the Bichurino Two-class School where Zaikov had previously been teacher, with Zaikov himself teaching religious instruction and church singing. The pupils’ choirs sang so well at the Liturgy in Koshelei that a special choir loft had been built for them where more than a hundred singers formed two choirs on left and right. As in other parishes, adults came to the schools in the evenings to ‘listen to the word of God from the Scriptures and for church singing’ and ‘my sermons are read in the native language which I give to teachers to copy with this aim.’²⁸ In order to encourage confession and communion Zaikov held church services at the outlying schools in Lent when pupils would read and sing. At the Koshelei parish church, services were held partly in Slavonic and partly in Chuvash when Zaikov served, as the deacon did not know Chuvash. Despite all his efforts, Zaikov concluded in his 1890 Report that he had far more parishioners who ‘were living according to the Old Chuvash faith rather than the Christian faith, especially in the villages without schools.’²⁹

Another KTS graduate, Vasilii Skvortsov, became deacon in Bichurino³⁰ in October 1889. He began to explain the readings from the Gospel and Epistle in the school before each Liturgy

²⁷ NA RT Ibid. I.19, 24-25, 30-32

²⁸ Zaikov 1890, 171

²⁹ Ibid. 175-177

³⁰ Bichurino was in the Cheboksary district, but located not far from Tsivil’sk.

‘mainly for the pupils, but I secretly hope to attract other listeners from outside, the Chuvash of course, but for the moment it is unsuccessful’ he wrote to Il`minskii.³¹

It was not only KTS and SCTS-trained clergy like Vasiliev, Filimonov, Zaikov and Skvortsov who were making an impact in the Tsvil`sk district. We have seen above the role played by young lay teachers with few qualifications in the outlying villages of the Musirma and Bateevo parishes. In nearby Starye Urmay, a village of 1500 Baptised Chuvash, a school was opened in 1882 by a local peasant Konstantin Efimov with the encouragement of Iakovlev and an SCTS graduate, Iakov Petrov, teacher in nearby Kovali.³² Efimov had no formal education, had taught himself to read and write and had learnt about Christianity from books in Chuvash, although he attended short-term teaching courses in 1882 in Kazan, and in 1892, 1894 and 1901 in Ishaki.³³ The school functioned in a crowded izba until the early 1890s when it was adopted by BSG, and Efimov himself built a school building. In 1898 there were 43 pupils, 15 of whom were girls, and a basic curriculum of Chuvash and Russian literacy, mathematics, catechism and church singing. The pupils and graduates sang as a choir in the local parish church, and in the evenings Efimov held talks for adult villagers. According to Mike in 1898, due to Efimov’s efforts almost all the inhabitants of Starye Urmay were literate and churchgoers.³⁴

In Podlesina, an outlying village of the nearby parish of Mozhary where both baptized and unbaptised Chuvash lived, another peasant with only elementary education, Soloviev, opened a school in his home which was later adopted by the BSG. Soloviev also held religious talks and communal singing for adults and at these talks he ‘systematically acquainted his audience with the Sacred History of the Old and New Testaments, read and interpreted the Gospel, acquainted them with the content of Christian divine services and church history.’³⁵ At first his talks were

³¹ NA RT f.968, otd. 1, d.148, l.48-9

³² Iakovlev 1985, 93

³³ GIA CR f.229, op.1, d.5, l.203v

³⁴ Mike 1904, 707-9

³⁵ Ibid. 721

attended by baptised Chuvash, but soon unbaptised also began to attend, leading to disputes.

According to Mike, Soloviev had brought more than 100 Chuvash to baptism.³⁶

Teachers such as Efimov and Soloviev with little or no formal education were a common feature of Chuvash schools in the 1880s-90s. Reports on schools in the Tsivil'sk district in 1890 only specifically mention 1 SCTS graduate and 2 graduates of KCBTS, and they were teaching in Zemstvo schools in central locations. The vast majority of schools in outlying villages were Literacy Schools with teachers from among the local peasants who received a minimal wage or none at all. In Burtasy parish an SCTS graduate in the central parish school received 180 roubles annually, another teacher received 40 roubles, and three other Literacy School teachers had no qualifications and received 24 roubles. All the salaries came from the Zemstvo.³⁷ In Novoisheevo parish, of three teachers who received an annual Zemstvo salary of 24 roubles, two had not studied anywhere and one had elementary education. The four teachers in Podgornye Timiashy had elementary education but no teaching qualification. In Malo-Kibechi the teacher received no salary.³⁸ Many schools were funded by both the Zemstvo and the BSG.³⁹

While the lack of education and qualification was noted in the reports of some priests as being far from ideal, and this became increasingly a concern in the 1890s, the teachers were nevertheless accepted members of the local community which was willing to send its children. Only in one parish, Vysovka, do the reports say the local population did not sympathize with the school, in one the attitude was satisfactory, in Novo-Churashevo the villagers had more sympathy than before, and in Churachiki there was a desire for a school in each village which lack of funds prevented.⁴⁰ Fr Feodor of Novoisheevo remarked that Zemstvo schools were too expensive and there should be more Literacy Schools. 'They will arise of their own accord in each village if a salary of 5 roubles a month is granted to their teachers. (...) There will be no

³⁶ Ibid. 721

³⁷ GIA CR f.229, op.1, d.2a, l.154

³⁸ Ibid. l.102, 109, 136-7

³⁹ Ibid. l.111 (Chuteevo), l.116 (Grishino), l.110 (Lutsk), l.124 (Norvash)

⁴⁰ Ibid. l.102, 139, 144, 164v

shortage of them as every successful Zemstvo School graduate can be a good Literacy School teacher if zealous. For the people to be well-disposed to schools they must provide above all moral and religious teaching and church singing.⁴¹ Only in one parish is it specifically mentioned that adult catechetical talks took place. In Ianshikovo in Norvash parish, pupils and adults met from 6-8pm every day, sometimes staying until 10pm. Texts in Chuvash about such subjects as life after death and drunkenness were read, with lively discussion following.⁴²

By 1905, however, there was a great increase in both schools and levels of teacher training. There were 90 Literacy Schools and 28 One-class schools in Tsivil'sk district, with 110 male and 15 female teachers, apart from the clergy. 62 teachers were qualified to teach in Elementary Schools, 39 in Literacy Schools, and 15 had no qualification.⁴³ 57 teachers are described as Chuvash peasants. Many had studied in the Two-class schools set up increasingly in the 1890s to improve educational levels, with 28 having attended Shikhazany Two-class school opened in 1899, and 16 graduates of Ishaki Two-class school opened in 1894. Only 8 had attended SCTS, 9 KTS, and 6 KCBTS.⁴⁴ At many schools the pupils all sang regularly at the church,⁴⁵ although only at Fr. Petr Vasiliev's church in Shorkisry is the singing described as *obshchenarodnoe* (congregational). In many parishes there were regular adult catechetical talks,⁴⁶ and many of the schools were receiving both Zemstvo and BSG funding.⁴⁷

Native schools, clergy and parishes in the south-east of the compact Chuvash area

We shall now examine the development of Chuvash schools and parishes in the 1880s-90s in the south-east of the compact Chuvash area, the Simbirsk and Buinsk districts of Simbirsk province, and the Tetiushi district of Kazan province.

⁴¹ Ibid. l.106-7

⁴² Ibid. 121v

⁴³ GIA CR f.229, op.1, d.5, l.1-2

⁴⁴ Ibid. l.1-207

⁴⁵ Ibid. l.171-173, 197-99, 202-203v

⁴⁶ Ibid. l.112, 133, 141, 163v, 166, 194, 197, 199, 206

⁴⁷ Ibid. l.197, 198, 202v, 203v

Ilia Burganovskii was one of the earliest pupils of SCTS who later graduated from KTS in 1877 and became a teacher in Sikterma, Spasskii district in the east of Kazan province when Iakovlev opened a Chuvash school there in 1878.⁴⁸ Iakovlev wrote ‘Burganovskii, being to the highest degree well-mannered and talkative with everybody, managed to win the sympathy of the Chuvash, who had an extremely friendly disposition both to him and to the school where he organized the teaching well.’ He soon formed a school choir which sang in Chuvash at the church. Chuvash living 30-40 versts away began to bring their children to the school, and in two outlying villages, Bol’shaia Khorada and Verkhnoe Bikhtulaevo, the Chuvash asked to have their own church and two separate parishes were formed.⁴⁹

Aware of Burganovskii’s talents, Iakovlev in 1882 appointed him teacher at the SCTS Elementary School where students did their teaching practice, and we shall see the role Burganovskii played in supervising teaching practice at short-term courses. Burganovskii did the initial translation of the Trebnik into Chuvash which was published in 1885,⁵⁰ the year he was ordained deacon in Srednie Timersiany in the Simbirsk district, an entirely Chuvash small town with more than 4000 men, where Old Chuvash rites were still very much observed and nobody went to church.⁵¹ In Srednie Timersiany Burganovskii began to preach in Chuvash between Mattins and the Liturgy, and the Chuvash began to visit his home to discuss religious questions.⁵² He also acquired simple medicines and treated the villagers, especially for the widespread eye disease trachoma.⁵³

One of the outlying villages, Bogdashkino, had 800 Chuvash men and 200 Tatars, and Bishop Varsanofii assigned Burganovskii the particular task of strengthening the Christian faith of the Bogdashkino Chuvash and setting up a separate parish with its own church. By the beginning of

⁴⁸ GIA CR f.501, op.1, d.233, l.1

⁴⁹ Ibid. l.3v.-4

⁵⁰ Ibid. f.350, op.1, d.1, l.130-131

⁵¹ NA CGIGN Otd. 1, t.228, l.2-3

⁵² Ibid. l.7v.

⁵³ CIA CR f.350, op.1, d.1, l.5

1886, under Burganovskii's influence, the Bogdashkino Chuvash sent a petition to the MNP asking that a school be opened and agreeing to give 217 roubles 50 kopecks annually, at least 1 desiatina of land for the school allotment, and to transport timber for the school building free of charge. Under Iakovlev's supervision, the Bogdashkino school was opened in October 1886 in a peasant izba, with Burganovskii as catechism teacher.

Owing to the annual MNP grant of 430 roubles, together with the peasant dues accumulated over two years 'Burganovskii had the idea of constructing not just a school building, but a school with a church.'⁵⁴ With permission from the MNP and Bishop Varsanofii, a Building Committee of five peasants formed under Burganovskii but the peasants began to have doubts about the burden of financial dues and the fear of Russian clergy settling among them, and they refused to transport the timber and observe the agreement made with the MNP. 'But Burganovskii, owing to his knowledge of the people and capacity to relate to them, managed to calm the agitation, unite the supporters of Orthodoxy and again formed a majority in favour of building a school with a chapel and forming a separate parish.'⁵⁵ By September 1888 the wooden building began to be used as a school, and after an iconostasis, bells, books and vestments had been acquired, the church was consecrated on December 19th 1890 and a separate parish formed with Burganovskii ordained priest in April 1891.⁵⁶ Of the 4000 roubles cost of the building, the peasants themselves had collected 3000 roubles and Burganovskii himself gave 200 roubles. He again formed a pupils' choir and taught catechism.⁵⁷

In nearby Bol'shaia Aksa, a separate native parish was formed out of the Gorodishche parish in 1891 with Fr. Vasilii Teniaiev serving in Chuvash. In 1904 the parish had 1390 Chuvash and about 100 Muslim and baptised Tatars who had adopted Islam, and there were two Tatar Muslim villages, each with a population of about 2000, close to the parish. Before 1886 there were no

⁵⁴ Ibid. I.5v.

⁵⁵ Ibid. I.6

⁵⁶ Ibid. I.6v and Iakovlev 1998, 125-6

⁵⁷ NA CGIGN Otd. 1, t.228, I.9

schools among these Chuvash, but a boys' school was opened in 1886 and a girls' school in 1898 in Bol'shaia Aksa itself, and a mixed school in the outlying village of Chuvashskaia Bezdna in 1892. All the schools were funded by the MNP and functioned according to the Il'minskii system with Chuvash teachers, mainly from SCTS and KTS, teaching at first in Chuvash, then in Russian. Between 1891 and 1903 the number of literate people in the village rose from approximately 30 to more than 650, with many having taught themselves outside of schools.

In his description of the parish in 1903, Fr. Teniaiev emphasized that the school and parish had developed as an organic whole expressed in its school-church building, as school teachers played an active part in leading singing and reading at the church. 'What is more (...) the schools have managed to train readers and singers from among the people themselves, and organize choirs of both pupils and graduates. (...) The teacher of the school-church (...) is organically connected with the church.'⁵⁸ Fr Teniaiev was holding adult catechetical talks as 'the people have a lively interest in lectures, talks, and especially services in their language and therefore you do not encounter those who are yawning and sleeping out of boredom. Here all are listening attentively.'⁵⁹ In 1898 the Bol'shaia Aksa parishioners took the initiative to collect 10,000 roubles over 7 years to build a separate church, and in Bezdna, 5000 roubles over 10 years.⁶⁰

The example of Bogdashkino and Bol'shaia Aksa, had repercussions in several more nearby villages. While Ilia Burganovskii was deacon in Srednie Timersiany, he was also active in Verkhnie Timersiany, where he paved the way for opening an MNP school in September 1890. The Chuvash agreed to pay 300 roubles and the MNP 226 roubles annually,⁶¹ but the school was initially located in an inconvenient flat. An agreement of 10th February 1893 gives the names of 184 of the 262 householders who wrote that the sight of the school-church in Bogdashkino had

⁵⁸ Chicherina 1905, 43

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid. p.47

⁶¹ GIA CR f.501, op.1, d.138, l.7

‘produced a joyous impression on our religious feelings’ and they also desired such a ‘treasure’⁶² after which a Building Committee was formed of the local priest, teacher, village elder and four other peasants.⁶³ Iakovlev informed the Superintendent of the Kazan Educational District that he had set himself the task of collaborating in every possible way with the School Council of the Simbirsk district to obtain 200 roubles from the Zemstvo, he had organized 617 pine logs, and asked the MNP for 1000 roubles for the building. In August 1893 the MNP gave 994 roubles and the building was consecrated with a separate parish formed in 1895.⁶⁴

The repercussions did not end there as in March 1892 Iakovlev informed Bishop Varsanofii that the representatives of the three village communities of Malaia Buianovo, Kakerli-Shigali and Tri-izby Shemursha had brought him an agreement (prigovor) drawn up by the peasants asking for a school-church to be built and the three communities to form one parish separate from the Shemursha parish to which they now belonged. The three communities had a total population of 1010, of whom 165 were baptized Tatars who had adopted Islam and 845 remained Orthodox.

Iakovlev’s active encouragement of the peasant communities, as we have seen above in Verkhnye Timersiany, in this situation was deeply resented by the land captain⁶⁵ who saw Iakovlev as interfering. He wrote to Iakovlev in June 1892 accusing him of ‘taking upon himself to intercede’ for the peasants, and telling him the three communities were not big and wealthy enough to form a separate parish. Iakovlev’s reply told the land captain that the tone of his letter was inappropriate and as the initiative had come from the Director of Public Works of the Simbirsk Province and the Simbirsk Consistory, with a donation of 3000 roubles from the Oberprokuror of the Synod, he had simply been fulfilling his duty.⁶⁶

⁶² Ibid. I.10v.

⁶³ Ibid. I.11

⁶⁴ GIA CR f.501, op.1, d.233, I.7

⁶⁵ *Zemskii nachalnik*, an office created in 1889 to watch over the rights of villagers and to their share of the land assigned to the community at the emancipation. See Rogger 1983, 72-73

⁶⁶ GIA CR f.501, op.1, d.126, I.4-8v

The nearby parish of Chepkas-Nikolaevsk in Simbirsk district had a population of 1419 Baptised Chuvash, 964 Muslim Tatars, 36 Chuvash who had adopted Islam, and 118 Russians in 1903. When Fr. Mikhail Kuzmin arrived in November 1887 the church, built in 1839, was cold, in terrible disrepair and empty, even on feast days. ‘After a snowstorm we had to sweep two to three carts of snow out of the church, but the people did not think of repairing it as they did not need it.’⁶⁷ He discovered his parishioners had a strong aversion to the church and clergy, kept Fridays rather than Sundays, followed Tatar and pagan funeral, burial and other rites, consulted *iomzi* when ill, wore Tatar dress, and were strongly inclined to adopting Islam. Fr. Mikhail despaired at first, and only stayed in the parish at the Dean’s and Bishop’s insistence.⁶⁸ He began however to serve the Liturgy in Chuvash, as well as occasional rites for which he took no payment. He held adult catechetical talks, opened two schools in outlying villages and formed a choir from the pupils. From 1887 the Zemstvo school, opened in 1839, began to use Chuvash rather than Russian as its medium of instruction, and the three schools had 84 pupils altogether in 1903. Between 1891 and 1903 the literacy rate among the Chuvash rose from 38 to 273. After 6-7 years the Chuvash had begun to attend the church which they repaired at their own expense in 1899, ordering a new iconostasis in 1903.⁶⁹

Fr Vasilii Skvortsov, another Chuvash KTS graduate, became priest in Bol’shoe Shemiakino in March 1890, and by early summer was building a church which he was worried the Chuvash would not be able to pay for as they were poor and owed a 7000 rouble fine due to a land dispute.⁷⁰ During Skvortsov’s first Lent there were 400 communicants but ‘the majority of the communicants had no idea about confession, let alone communion. This district is noticeably neglected and ignorant.’⁷¹ ‘At Easter I went round all the Chuvash and Russians with icons. Formerly, they used to gather the Chuvash in the village square, serve a general moleben, receive

⁶⁷ Chicherina 1905, 38

⁶⁸ Ibid. 38-39

⁶⁹ Ibid. 40

⁷⁰ NA RT f.968, op.1, d.148, l. 78

⁷¹ Ibid. l. 79-80

25-30 roubles for rites, then leave. I, however, went to every home and sang molebens in Chuvash. The Chuvash like them, and the ektenia after the Gospel, in which all kinds of blessings are asked for the householders and their relatives, reduced many to tears.⁷² In an outlying village, Maloe Shemiakino, Chuvash lived together with 'semi-Old Believer Russians' whom Skvortsov describes as 'rough, extremely ignorant and unpleasant'. When he introduced Chuvash services the Russians decided to go to another parish and then to build their own church in Maloe Shemiakino, which was opposed by the Chuvash who said they would go to church in Bol'shoe Shemiakino.⁷³

In all these related situations in Chuvash villages in the south-east of the compact Chuvash area it was teacher/priest graduates of KTS or SCTS who developed schools, churches and parishes. The above examples are predominantly from the Buinsk district, not far from Simbirsk and so more accessible for the direct involvement of Iakovlev and SCTS. Important factors were the leadership and relational skills of the native Chuvash teachers, deacons and priests, working in collaboration with Iakovlev and encouraging the participation of the village communities themselves through Building Committees and giving of their money and labour. Iakovlev's active involvement was especially motivated by the proximity of Muslim Tatar villages and the presence in several villages of a minority of baptised Tatars who had recently adopted Islam, including Algashi where in 1864-66 large numbers of Chuvash had adopted Islam.⁷⁴ All the situations received the financial backing of the MNP, and in Shemursha the Synod, but it was the grassroots involvement of the trusted native figures which was the crucial factor in the successful completion of school-church buildings and the opening of parishes.

The role of short-term Teacher Training Courses and local Teachers' Schools

⁷² Ibid. 79

⁷³ Ibid. 79-80

⁷⁴ Ibid. d.233, l.7v

The lack of qualified teachers explains why short-term teacher training courses and local Teachers' Schools played such an influential role, bringing the training and texts available at SCTS, KTS and KCBTS within reach of more teachers who could not attend them full-time. It also explains why in the 1880s-1890s some of the more centrally located village schools, Ishaki, Alikovo, Bichurino, Shikhazany (Kanash) became Two-class schools providing basic teacher training. In 1894, a Two-class BSG school opened in the central location of Ishaki with funding from both the BSG and Koz'modem'iansk Zemstvo, with Fr Filimonov appointed Director, and two other graduates of KTS as teachers. The aim of the school was to train teachers for Chuvash Literacy Schools throughout Koz'modem'iansk, Iadrin and Tsivil'sk districts.⁷⁵ The school retained the missionary orientation of the other BSG schools, teaching church history from Pentecost to the Ecumenical Councils, explanations of Orthodox liturgical services, the theory of singing, and icon-painting from 1896.⁷⁶

Short-term courses of 10 days to 6 weeks took place regularly after 1882 at the abovementioned Two-class schools for teachers from surrounding districts and at SCTS for the entire Kazan and Samara provinces. The first course took place in Tsivil'sk in July 1882 under Iakovlev's supervision.⁷⁷ Iakovlev justified the courses on the grounds that Chuvash teachers in isolated villages had little contact with Russians and few suitable books in their school libraries so their Russian language skills diminished after leaving SCTS.⁷⁸ The curriculum of the courses was nevertheless much broader, covering the basic subjects of reading and writing in Chuvash, Russian and Slavonic, Catechism, church singing and pedagogy, with other subjects such as hygiene and diet, the organization of school buildings, gymnastics, physics and beekeeping being later added.⁷⁹ Teaching practice was a marked feature, with the 1884 course having 5 weeks of

⁷⁵ Iznoskov 1895, 263

⁷⁶ Ibid. 264-5, 270

⁷⁷ Otchet 1891

⁷⁸ Iakovlev 1998, 76, 77, 119

⁷⁹ Otchet 1891, 4, 19.; Iakovlev 1998, 4, 121-122; Otchet Tsivil'sk 1897, 577-588

theory and a week of teaching practice, and the 1897 course in Tsivil'sk having a model primary school attached for teaching practice.⁸⁰

Despite Iakovlev's claims that they aimed primarily to develop Russian language skills, the reports reveal a gradual increase in the Chuvash teachers themselves taking responsibility for the courses and a corresponding increase in use of the Chuvash language. Ilia Burganovskii taught reading and writing at the 1883 courses, then was responsible for teaching practice at the 1884 courses. That year the Tsivil'sk Zemstvo decided to hold courses every three years, and Burganovskii was appointed director, a position he held at the 1891 courses at SCTS.⁸¹ At the 1897 Tsivil'sk course attended by 75 Chuvash teachers, many of the Catechism lessons were taught in Chuvash and after the first lessons by the priests, the teachers themselves gave the lessons. Russian language and Chuvash reading lessons were also given by the teachers themselves under the guidance of a Chuvash deacon and priest.⁸² In September 1894 the Chuvash priests D. Filimonov and P. Vasiliev co-directed a 10-day course for Chuvash teachers working in BSG schools, and in 1898 Filimonov was responsible for courses in Ishaki attended by 19 BSG teachers and 14 Literacy school teachers.⁸³

Thus while the courses aimed to develop teaching skills, they had a broader significance in developing general leadership skills and fostering a sense of solidarity and national identity among the teachers. In Filimonov's speech at the close of the 1898 Ishaki course he spoke of their great significance as 'at these courses, apart from learning the methods and skills of school teaching, we also develop close relations with each other, exchange ideas and thoughts, tell each other about our life and our school lessons. At the courses we feel that we are laboring for one common cause, we discover that we are not forgotten about, but on the contrary, the kind

⁸⁰ Otchet Tsivil'sk 1897, 580

⁸¹ Otchet 1891, 14-15. Iakovlev 1997, 283

⁸² Otchet Tsivil'sk 1897, 582; Tserkovnye shkoly 1884-1909, 367-378

⁸³ NA CGIGN otd. 2, t.246, l. 487-492, 532

authorities (...) care about our intellectual and moral improvement.’⁸⁴ The short-term courses for native teachers of the 1880s and 1890s paved the way for the frequent conferences (*s`ezdy*) of native teachers and clergy which characterized the early years of the 20th century. Filimonov’s concern to draw the Chuvash together to work for a common cause was to become an increasingly strong feature of his ministry and writings as he took on a leading role among the Chuvash.

A marked feature of the courses was the development of musical and translation skills needed for Orthodox liturgical worship in Chuvash. The religious instruction lessons at the 1884 SCTS courses were entirely devoted to the study of Scripture, including information about the Septuagint, Slavonic, Russian, and Chuvash translations of the Bible.⁸⁵ Andrei Petrov taught church singing at courses in 1883 and 1884 when the first collection of musical settings of Orthodox liturgical texts in Chuvash had just been published in 1883 and he explained ‘rules for adapting church chants to the translated text’.⁸⁶ During the Tsivil’sk 1897 course the priest Platonov taught church singing using Smolenskii’s textbook and there was one hour a day of singing in Chuvash and Slavonic using the Chuvash ‘Church Hymns for Choir’.⁸⁷ In 1887, the year this book was first published, there was a special month-long course at SCTS entirely devoted to church singing.⁸⁸

At the 1891 SCTS course, N.A.Aleksandrov of KTS taught the theory of church singing and violin which so many wished to study that more violins had to be brought and a second teacher invited.⁸⁹ Aleksandrov formed a choir from the teachers which sang at all the festal services during the course, and as some teachers had no experience of teaching liturgical singing in Chuvash, most of the services were sung entirely in Chuvash. Smolenskii’s textbook was used

⁸⁴ Ibid. I.511-512

⁸⁵ Otchet 1891, 8

⁸⁶ Ibid. 9

⁸⁷ Otchet Tsivil’sk 1897, 580

⁸⁸ Iakovlev 1989, 99

⁸⁹ GIA CR f.207, op.1, d.76, l.99

as ‘it is the manual followed by all village teachers in this region’ and the high standards expected of the teachers are evident in the comment that ‘When the choir is learning hymns, the teacher must know by heart all the parts, clearly and confidently presenting the melodies sung by all the voices (...) and must know the laws of chord construction, how to combine the voices etc. Without these skills it is impossible to organize choral singing correctly.’⁹⁰ The demanding curriculum included ‘elementary musical theory, voice exercises, study of hymns from the Vigil, Liturgy, Moleben and panikhida, violin playing, teaching singing in elementary schools and setting up a school choir’⁹¹ which meant that teachers acquired the skills of a school music teacher and church choir director and were able in many cases to implement Il`minskii and Iakovlev’s desire for church services characterized by beautiful congregational part-singing.

The courses were also used to discuss general issues connected with curriculum and school organization, and reveal an ever-present need to defend Il`minskii’s principle that education should begin in the native language, a principle that was always under siege, especially at the turn of the 20th century. At the 1884 SCTS courses, teachers were reminded that pupils should learn to read and write first in Chuvash, with the Russian alphabet being taught only at the end of the first year.⁹² The overall aim of the 1897 Tsivil`sk course was that teachers should learn to teach different subjects and ‘the explanation to teachers of the late N.I. Il`minskii’s curriculum for native schools’ which stressed mastering first the alphabet of the native language which should be the medium of instruction in the first two years.⁹³ The tradition of holding summer pedagogical courses grew even stronger in the early 20th century, with courses being held almost annually from 1898 in Cheboksary, Bol’shoe Churashevo, and Shikhazany.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Ibid. I.81-82

⁹¹ Iakovlev 1998, 121

⁹² Otchet 1891, 29-32

⁹³ Otchet Tsivil`sk 1897, 579. Il`minskii 1893

⁹⁴ Tserkovnye shkoly 1884-1909, 368-369

Iakovlev and the land

A highly significant aspect of Iakovlev's role in this spawning of native schools, churches, parishes and clergy, is pointed to in his comments on the relationship between peasants, state, land and forest in post-reform Russia.

According to the agreements made with the peasants, depending on the content, quantity and quality of forest lands, peasants could hew timber for themselves in accordance with the general rules and laws of forestry and in return for payment. But lands and forest began to rise in price. The Crown Department began to infringe agreements on rented forests and allotments on various pretexts. The peasants began to defend their rights and lawsuits began. But the poor, uneducated peasants, ignorant of the law and living far from the cities, did not have the competence to struggle with the Crown Department which had power, connections with the provincial administration, financial means and the services of experienced lawyers. (...) By the 1880s misunderstandings over land issues rose sharply and grew more litigious as the government did not take energetic measures to remove the causes of the problem, did not resettle peasants, made no efforts to support them nor make land purchase easier. (...) I could not remain indifferent and began to intervene in the interests of the Chuvash peasants in the misunderstandings arising over the agrarian issue.⁹⁵

Iakovlev's capability as a mediator meant that when he travelled to the villages in his capacity as School Inspector the peasants turned to him over land issues. His intervention began in 1876-77 in his home village of Koshki where he successfully arranged a partition of the land which took into account families with only women, who had previously been landless. 'By means of personal negotiation with the peasants, I managed to obtain allotments even for the unfortunate and deprived which not been practised previously (...) I often managed to arouse compassion for the women and children.'⁹⁶ Iakovlev helped the Koshki community buy 1086 desiatin of land

⁹⁵ Iakovlev 1997, 470-471

⁹⁶ Ibid. 471-2

between 1887 and 1899.⁹⁷ He helped the Bol'shaia Aksa community purchase 700 d. in 1900-1903 by helping with paperwork and petitioning the Peasant Bank. Other villages where he helped with land purchase included the Chuvash villages of Srednye Algashi, Bogdashkino and Nizhnie Timersiany, and the Russian villages of Kil'kino and Staro-Kul'metevo.⁹⁸ Iakovlev wrote of these experiences

In the village communities I was particularly struck by the lack of unity, inner cohesion, of communication, of mutual defense of interests. The communities did not have their own entirely honest representatives who, for example, in bargaining over rent of the land would defend the interests of their fellow villagers.⁹⁹

The significance of Iakovlev and many of the first generation of Chuvash clergy being instrumental in the creation of separate parishes with their own priests, capable of expressing community interests and providing leadership, becomes clearer in the light of these land issues. Rogger's discussion of the problems of rural Russia in the post-reform period highlights the lack of such mediators. 'The ideal of a firm, paternal supervisor of peasant affairs who knew local conditions turned out too often to be a run-of-the-mill functionary who took the post for want of a better one and had little prior knowledge of the rural masses, their customs and problems.'¹⁰⁰ Iakovlev, speaking the language of the Chuvash and committed to defending their cause, with his knowledge of land surveying, and familiarity with both town and village, was in a unique position to represent and bring cohesion in the village communities as we have seen him and his SCTS graduates doing in the above situations.

One striking example of this is the 1888 land dispute in Urmay where the self-taught peasant Konstantin Efimov set up a school in 1882 and P. Mike claimed there was 100% literacy by

⁹⁷ 40 let SCTS

⁹⁸ Iakovlev Ibid. 97-98, 112-3

⁹⁹ Ibid. 476

¹⁰⁰ Rogger 1983, 74

1898.¹⁰¹ During the 1860s the land of Urmay had been divided between the two villages of Starye and Malye Urmay, with the peasants only in the late 1870s discovering that some plots of land belonging to the latter were situated on the Starye Urmay land. The canton court had decided in favour of the Malye Urmay peasants, but the Starye Urmay peasants had not given access to a surveyor to draw new boundaries. When on 18th May 1888 a surveyor with police protection came to draw the boundaries, the Starye Urmay villagers came out with pitchforks and sticks and attacked the Malye Urmay peasants. The surveyor, canton elder and policemen ran for their lives, but three were killed and several more wounded. Seventeen of the Urmay villagers were condemned to death as the riot was perceived as an anti-state revolt.¹⁰²

Iakovlev, inspecting schools in the area at the time, collected evidence and proved that it was purely a dispute over land, rather than a revolutionary protest.¹⁰³ Il'minskii arranged for Fr Filimonov from the neighbouring Musirma parish, to which the dead belonged, to visit the convicted Chuvash in prison where many desired to confess and a moleben was served before an icon of the Mother of God. Whether due to her intercessions, or Il'minskii's intercessions before Pobedonostsev, the death sentences were reprieved, which undoubtedly played a role in the popularity of the Urmay school and catechism lessons in the 1890s.¹⁰⁴

Iakovlev's initiatives to improve craftsmanship and agriculture in the villages included his founding, in collaboration with the Chuvash priest Grigorii Alekseev, a 'Circle of Labour Aid' in his home village of Koshki. In 1899 the Circle opened a carpentry workshop for training apprentices and in 1901 Iakovlev supervised the construction of a building where cobbling, stove-building and tailoring skills could be taught.¹⁰⁵ 'It is everyone's desire that (...) there should be one spacious room adapted to holding popular lectures, the organization of which is

¹⁰¹ Mike 1904, 709

¹⁰² GIA CR f.498, op.1, d.1, l.31. Il'minskii 1895, 255-6

¹⁰³ Iakovlev 1997, 349

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. 350. Il'minskii 1895, 257-8

¹⁰⁵ 40 let SCTS, 108-9

also part of the programme of activities of the Circle.’¹⁰⁶ Another project initiated by Iakovlev in 1911 was the Varaksark women’s labour community set up on 44 desiatin of land purchased by Iakovlev himself to provide a summer holiday home for girl pupils at SCTS. A women’s monastic community developed with a church being consecrated in 1913.¹⁰⁷

In these situations we see Iakovlev working within the traditional communal forms of labour and land tenure in a situation where ‘the majority of peasants were poor and feared having to fend on their own without the minimal security afforded them by their right to a portion of communal land.’¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless in the early 20th century his experiences of dealing with agrarian issues led to a change in his views. He claimed to have held Stolypin’s views before him, and two trips to Western Europe in 1906 and 1911 confirmed his views on individual ownership and initiative. ‘Even before my trips abroad there had been a change in my thinking away from the village communities to personal initiative, individual labour, personal enterprise and finally to the grouping together of the most energetic, hard-working people in the village.’¹⁰⁹ He wrote in about 1918 ‘I can see that these communities have outlived the period when such partitions were possible. The communities have become demoralized and incapable of further development.’¹¹⁰

Tensions in the villages

The introduction of native teachers and priests into Chuvash communities inevitably disturbed the status quo, and while we have seen many communities above working together with teachers and clergy to build schools, churches and create parishes, there were also situations where the newcomers’ presence led to conflict.

When Fr Viktor Zaikov arrived in the parish of Koshelei his efforts to bring change did not go unquestioned, as he reported to Il`minskii in February 1887 that the Russian priest Rudol`skii

¹⁰⁶ Iakovlev 1989, 150

¹⁰⁷ Iakovlev 1998, 268, 313-4; Iakovlev 1997, 448

¹⁰⁸ Rogger 1983, 81

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. 477

¹¹⁰ Iakovlev 1997, 477

‘not only has no sympathy with the native cause in general but even (...) tried to prevent me serving in church in Chuvash.’ He threw the Chuvash service books into the cupboard, swore at Il`minskii and Iakovlev and remarked to other clergy that Zaikov was an ‘alien plant’.¹¹¹

Rudol`skii had the support of a local dignitary Maksimov who had complained about Zaikov to the Diocesan Schools’ Council. By September 1888, however, Zaikov reported more positively to Il`minskii that his Dean, Fr. Vasilievskii of the Trinity Cathedral in Tsivil`sk, had asked him to bring back from SCTS twenty copies each of the Chuvash Gospels, the Priest’s Service Book and Trebnik, for distribution in the deanery. The only problem was that they were out of stock.¹¹²

When Fr Vasilii Skvortsov became deacon in Bichurino the senior priest Fr Semenov encouraged him to preach in Chuvash and gave him biblical commentaries, whereas a young priest Fr Razumovskii said he had no right to preach in Chuvash, and he was supported in this by the local doctor, Kushnikov. At Christmas 1890 Skvortsov sang all the ektenias and some prayers then preached in Chuvash. After going round the village with the cross, the clergy called in for a festive meal with Kushnikov who treated them kindly but then expressed his complete disagreement with the use of Chuvash in church. Skvortsov lamented ‘What great significance one person has, especially one as important as Kushnikov is for our district. He comes first in everything here as he has education and financial means. (...) Here his word almost passes for law.’¹¹³

Complaints from the Russian clergy and provincial intelligentsia did not only concern use of Chuvash. Iakovlev often found himself dealing with criticism of or from Chuvash teachers and priests, and having to discern whether it was based on rumours and resentment, or on genuine evidence and problems. In 1880 Fr Iona Dobrosmyslov of the Taiba parish, Buinsk district accused the Chuvash teacher Nikolai Vozdvizhenskii of undermining the peasants’ respect for

¹¹¹ NA RT f.968, otd. 1, d.108, l.24-25

¹¹² Ibid. l.31-32

¹¹³ Ibid. l.49-49v

him and for church services, inciting them not to give him bread and distorting the liturgical texts. He organized card playing at the school, encouraged peasants to drink with him, and was generally of riotous behavior.¹¹⁴

Vozdvizhenskii defended himself by accusing the priest of being merely a ‘performer of rites’ rather than a priest, as he did not explain Christian truths to the parishioners, nor seek to improve their morality, and had preached only two sermons since May 1878 which were so poor that they could have ‘lead even true believers astray from the path of Orthodoxy.’¹¹⁵ He behaved towards the peasants ‘like a lord with his slaves (...) trying to destroy their personality and make them totally submissive to his will.’¹¹⁶ His main aim was to extort as much money as possible for rites and in the case of the compulsory annual confession and communion, for writing that they had attended when in fact they had not. We hear echoes of Il’minskii’s words concerning the need for inner conviction of faith as Vozdvizhenskii rages ‘Is not this only the external, ritual side of the sacrament of confession? When a person comes to this sacrament not out of desire but by force?’¹¹⁷

When Iakovlev was approached by the Simbirsk Consistory asking him to move Vozdvizhenskii to another school, Iakovlev agreed that Vozdvizhenskii was of incorrigible character and with a ‘propensity for intrigues’, and he asked the provincial Inspector of Public Schools what to do as just moving him to another school would not resolve the situation.¹¹⁸ While Vozdvizhenskii’s behavior most likely was riotous and his defence of himself is written with creative malicious humour, his high expectations of the priestly ministry and of a Christian faith based on inner conviction, presumably acquired during his SCTS education, appear to have been a major cause of the conflict.

¹¹⁴ GIA CR f.501, op.1, d.34, l.7-9

¹¹⁵ Ibid. l.14v

¹¹⁶ Ibid.l.25

¹¹⁷ Ibid. l.17, 21

¹¹⁸ Ibid. l.26-26v

In the village of Malye Ial`chiki there was a series of situations in which the higher moral expectations and energetic activity of native clergy and teachers would appear to have rocked the local status quo. When Alexei Rekeev became priest in 1881, he suggested to Il`minskii that the recently opened MNP school in Malye Ial`chiki should be transferred to his own parish of Baiglychevo. The Malye Ial`chiki villagers did not want it, and in Rekeev's village the boys were completely illiterate as there was no school. Rekeev reported that the Russian priest in nearby Baideriakovo wanted the school in his parish, but only for financial gain, and as he did not have the support of the Baideriakovo villagers he had used vodka to clinch the deal with local education officials. Rekeev complained that at the Baideriakovo School the priest, 'only tried to teach his pupils to speak Russian well, but there is nothing religious.'¹¹⁹

In another case in which Iakovlev mediated, the priest Davydov complained to the Kazan Consistory in 1887 that the teacher in Malye Ial`chiki, K.E.Vekov, was interfering in the building of a church and the collection of dues by the peasants for this purpose.¹²⁰ Vekov was obviously in financial difficulties as in summer 1886 he had turned to Iakovlev for 100 roubles needed to finish the floors and roof of a school building.¹²¹ Iakovlev defended Vekov to the Kazan Consistory saying the accusations had no foundation as the Malye Ial`chiki community were duty bound to keep the school in a decent state and were not giving the necessary funds and building material to Vekov who was having to pay himself for improvements to the school. Furthermore, Vekov was experienced in building work and the village elder and members of the parish *popechitel`stvo* were glad of his involvement in building the church. Iakovlev's letter hints that the root of the problem was that the local priest and *popechitel`stvo* chairman resented Vekov's capable initiatives in the local community. Vekov kept his post but was warned by Iakovlev not to interfere, especially where the collection of money was involved.¹²²

¹¹⁹ NA RT f.968, op. 1, d. 143, l.7-8

¹²⁰ GIA CR f.501, op.1, d.79, l.1-4

¹²¹ Iakovlev 1985, 196

¹²² GIA CR f.501, op.1, d.79, l.5v-6

The evidence suggests therefore that tensions in the villages occurring through the introduction of native teachers and priests were not only due to the use of the Chuvash language, but also due to factors such as their perceived interference in local affairs, and the high moral expectations of the newcomers due to their SCTS and KTS education.

Bishop Gurii (Burtasovskii) and the Chuvash of Samara diocese

The bishop who played arguably the greatest role in implementing Il'minskii's principles was Gurii (Burtasovskii), a student of the Kazan Theological Academy from 1868-72, Bishop of Kamchatka from 1885-92, Bishop of Samara from 1892-1904, then Bishop of Simbirsk until his death in January 1907. In April 1891 Il'minskii wrote to Pobedonostsev 'everywhere there are good, friendly bishops who vouchsafe to lend a favourable ear to me. There is only that fatal Samara, (...) the bishop is new and (...) I do not dare to thrust my schemes upon him. (...) And Samara province is a hotbed of Chuvash tartarisation.'¹²³ Pobedonostsev obviously listened as Gurii was appointed to the Samara diocese in October 1892 when there were only two native clergy. By 1904 there were 69 native priests: 56 Chuvash, 5 Tatar and 8 Mordva among whom there were 36 SCTS graduates and 23 KTS graduates.¹²⁴ Even Iakovlev with his ardent desire to encourage native clergy, criticized Gurii for being too hasty and later regretting some of the ordinations.¹²⁵ Iakovlev's correspondence as Chuvash Schools Inspector between 1897 and 1899 alone contains 24 recommendations for SCTS graduates to move to the Samara diocese as teachers, choir directors, deacons and priests.¹²⁶ Among those sent were some of the school's most gifted graduates such as the SCTS singing teacher, S.V.Vasiliev,¹²⁷ and Daniil Nikiforov whom Iakovlev recommended as being worthy, modest and straightforward.¹²⁸

¹²³ Il'minskii 1895, 387

¹²⁴ GIA CR f.350, op.1, d.4, l.39-40

¹²⁵ Iakovlev 1997, 214

¹²⁶ GIA CR f.501, op.1, d.280-284, 286-7, 294, 301, 346-352, 394-401, 405

¹²⁷ Ibid. op.1, d.184

¹²⁸ Ibid. op.1, d.224 and Iakovlev 1998, 199

Two of the overall most significant Chuvash missionary priests, Fr Antonii Ivanov and Fr Daniil Filimonov served in the Samara diocese. Ivanov, a graduate of KTS in 1890, was the first Chuvash ordained by Bishop Gurii in December 1893. In 1902 he was appointed supervisor of native parish schools in Bugul'ma district where he organized short-term courses for 50 native teachers in August 1903, and further courses in 1909. He played the most significant role in there being 141 native schools and 59 mixed Russian/native schools in Samara diocese by 1914.¹²⁹ His vast contribution to translation activity and to publicizing the native cause in the Russian press will be examined later. We have seen above Filimonov's early ministry in the Kazan diocese until 1899, after which he served in Samara diocese, becoming Dean of Bugul'ma district from 1911. From 1900 he directed the Samara BSG Translation Sub-Committee which will be discussed in Chapter Seven.

Bishop Gurii's collaboration with Iakovlev and Chuvash priests such as Ivanov and Filimonov was undoubtedly the reason for the dramatic increase in native personnel, parishes and schools. When Gurii left the Samara diocese for Simbirsk in 1904 the letter of thanks from native priests and teachers said that in all native parish churches, services were taking place in the native language.¹³⁰ S.Chicherina concluded in 1905 that 'only in the Samara diocese was Il'minskii's system widely, consistently and persistently implemented.'¹³¹

Bishop Dionisii (Khitrov) and the Chuvash of Ufa diocese

The application of Il'minskii's principles in Ufa diocese was largely due to two bishops, Nikanor (Brovkovich 1877-1883) and Dionisii (1884-1896). Nikanor was Rector of the Kazan Theological Academy from 1868-71 when he had got to know Il'minskii and his work among the Tatars. As Bishop of Ufa he shared Il'minskii's concern for the Christian native population living among a predominantly Muslim population, and began to ask for native teachers and

¹²⁹ Aleksandrov 2002, 114-119

¹³⁰ GIA CR f.350, op.1, d.4, l.7v

¹³¹ Chicherina 1905, 391

priests. In 1881 eight Tatars and Chuvash were ordained in Menzelinsk and Belebei districts and by 1883 there were 10 graduates of KTS as well as other graduates of SCTS and KCBTS serving as clergy in these districts.¹³²

This trend continued from 1884 under Dionisii (Khitrov), formerly Bishop of Iakutsk (1868-1883). Between 1884 and 1892 Dionisii created 30 native parishes in central villages where he sought to appoint native priests and readers, and actively sought funds to build churches.¹³³ Fr Andrei Petrov, formerly teacher and priest at SCTS, became the leading figure among the Ufa Chuvash after he became priest in Bizhbuliak, Belebei district in February 1889. Dionisii entrusted him with persuading the Chuvash to have a school-church in every village where the word of God would be preached and the Liturgy served. Petrov had taken slates, pencils and books from SCTS and asked to open a Girls' school in Bizhbuliak as 'there are almost no girl pupils, and in order to firmly establish Christianity among the natives, (Christian) upbringing of children with observance of Christian customs at home is needed.'¹³⁴ A BSG Girls' school was opened in Bizhbuliak in 1893.

Il'minskii's concern about the Ufa Chuvash is seen in a letter from his deathbed on 11th December 1891. He told Pobedonostsev 'standing before the fatal gates, I am calling to mind the native and missionary situations most important and dear to me, desiring to express my convictions as I say farewell.' One of these situations was Byzlyk in Belebei district where baptised Chuvash had little contact with the distantly-located Orthodox priest, and were rumoured to have close ties with local mullahs. Fulfilling the task entrusted by Dionisii 'Andrei Petrov, a very active and energetic Chuvash, heard about their precarious situation and asked them about the rumours which they denied as based on jealousy and slander.'¹³⁵ Dionisii sought funds to build a church and send native clergy, at which the Byzlyk villagers openly declared

¹³² Il'minskii 1895 p.3,5,46

¹³³ UEV 1892, 252

¹³⁴ NA RT f.968, op.1, d.139, l.87-88

¹³⁵ Il'minskii 1895, 412

their intention to adopt Islam, claiming this was allowed by the Tsar, and sent their children to the medresa. A legal process followed and, according to Il'minskii, it was only Petrov's energetic defence of the Chuvash being Orthodox which prevented many of the villagers from adopting Islam. Il'minskii's concern was that if this case was lost it would set a precedent for all the native villages in Ufa province to adopt Islam.¹³⁶

Petrov wrote to Daniil Filimonov on 2nd July 1891 to say he had opened three schools in his parish since arriving so there were now six altogether, and he had opened a Temperance Society. He had persuaded the villagers to have a Two-class teacher training school,¹³⁷ and in one outlying village¹³⁸ had petitioned to build a church with Chuvash clergy. Bishop Dionisii had taken responsibility for building the church, but Petrov was shocked by the complete indifference shown by the secular authorities towards preserving Russian Orthodoxy in the region. Petrov attached a diagram of the Chuvash schools and churches clustered around Bizhbuliak, saying there were 9 Chuvash priests and 9 Chuvash readers in Belebei district alone.¹³⁹ In the outlying village of Slakbash there were 874 Chuvash who rarely visited the nearest church which was 13 versts away and had a priest who spoke no Chuvash. In 1889 Dionisii himself went to the village to propose building a school-church which at first was refused on the grounds of poverty, but then agreed to when Dionisii said he would find the funds and send a Chuvash priest. When Dionisii revisited in May 1891 the church, funded by an Ufa merchant, was almost complete and the villagers asked him if their priest, Fr. Ioakim Ivanov, could stay forever. In December 1891 Ivanov had opened a school with 60 pupils, and when in January 1892 Dionisii went to consecrate two churches in Slakbash and nearby Byzlyk, all the Chuvash priests in the district co-served, and Petrov himself directed the choir.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ Ibid. 413

¹³⁷ The 2-class school was opened in 1901-2.

¹³⁸ Presumably Byzlyk, although he does not specify.

¹³⁹ NA RT Ibid. d.173, l.85v-88

¹⁴⁰ Tri dnia, 61-80

Archbishop Vladimir (Petrov) and the Chuvash of Kazan diocese

Vladimir (Petrov) was Head of the Altai Mission from 1865, Bishop of Biisk from 1880, then Tomsk from 1883, and finally Archbishop of Kazan from 1892 to his death in 1897. He thus inherited the missionary tradition of Makarii Glukharev, and was in constant correspondence with Il'minskii whose ideas he implemented in the Altai. Although there was not the great increase in numbers of native clergy as in Samara and Ufa, it is evident that Vladimir gave significant support to the native cause among the Chuvash of Kazan diocese in the 1890s.

In September 1893 Vladimir served the Liturgy in Musirma parish, one year after Filimonov's famine relief programme,¹⁴¹ after which he transferred Filimonov to the central Chuvash village of Ishaki so that he could preach in Chuvash to the many pilgrims who came to venerate the icon of St Nicholas.¹⁴² Filimonov was also appointed Director of the Ishaki Two-class Teachers' School and played an important role in training native teachers. In 1894 Vladimir ordained Fr Mikhail Samsonov in Raskil'dino parish after the previous priest was transferred for not knowing Chuvash.¹⁴³ Samsonov played an important role in training native teachers as Director of the Krasnye Chetai Teachers' School from 1910-1918.¹⁴⁴ Vladimir encouraged the first petitions to open the Alexandra Chuvash convent where the majority of nuns were Chuvash and the liturgical cycle was held in Chuvash.¹⁴⁵ It was also under Vladimir that the Kazan Missionary Courses were detached from the Kazan Theological Academy in 1897 and put wholly under the supervision of Archimandrite Andrei Ukhtomskii at the Transfiguration Monastery, thus fulfilling Makarii Glukharev's dream of having a missionary training establishment in the context of a monastery in Kazan.¹⁴⁶ The courses enabled native teachers

¹⁴¹ Filimonov 1893, 21, 41-47

¹⁴² See Chapter Five concerning veneration of St Nicholas in Ishaki.

¹⁴³ GIA CR f.55, op.1, No.2316

¹⁴⁴ Kliuchnikov 2009, 18

¹⁴⁵ Arkhangel'skii 1912, 395

¹⁴⁶ Valedinskii 1900, 345-6

and clergy who did not have the educational qualifications to attend seminary, to receive theological and missionary education.

Archbishop Vladimir's example of humility and prayer left a profound impression on Ukhtomskii who nevertheless wrote of him that 'When the Archbishop was a frail old man after his move to Kazan, he led an almost totally withdrawn way of life and did not keep up acquaintances'¹⁴⁷ which helps to explain why the numbers of native priests did not increase more during the 1890s in Kazan diocese. In 1904 there were approximately¹⁴⁸ 36 Chuvash priests for the 502,042 Chuvash living in Kazan province.¹⁴⁹ In January 1904 there were the following numbers of native priests in districts of the Kazan diocese where the population was predominantly Chuvash: Iadrin (90.9% Chuvash) 4 out of a total of 64 priests, Cheboksary (66.5% Chuvash) 8 out of 53, Tsivil'sk (80%) 15 out of 60, Tetiushi (16.6%) 5 out of 50, Koz'modem'iansk (47.2%) 4 out of 53.¹⁵⁰ These figures are surprisingly low when compared with the situation as Bishop Gurii left Samara in 1904 when there were 56 Chuvash priests for a population of about 92,000 Chuvash. Despite the small numbers of Chuvash in the Ufa diocese, we have seen above that there were also comparatively many more native priests than in Kazan diocese.¹⁵¹

The comparatively larger numbers of Chuvash clergy in the Samara and Ufa dioceses and in the Tsivil'sk and Tetiushi districts, where Chuvash were living in close proximity to Muslim Tatars and Bashkirs, makes it clear that the predominant motivation for introducing native-language liturgical life was the protection of the Chuvash from tartarisation and islamification, rather than the introduction of native-language Orthodoxy as such. If the motivation had been simply following an ancient Orthodox tradition of using the native language, we would expect the

¹⁴⁷ Andrei 1903, 1529

¹⁴⁸ I say approximately as the sources are not always entirely clear about the clergy's nationality.

¹⁴⁹ Ivanov V. 2005, 153. Bobrovnikov 1905, 177. NA CGIGN otd. 1, t.178, l.233-236 contains figures for slightly earlier than Bobrovnikov, but gives the nationality of priests in each district of the Kazan diocese.

¹⁵⁰ See NA CGIGN Ibid.

¹⁵¹ In 1897 there were 502,042 Chuvash in Kazan province, 159,766 in Simbirsk, 91,839 in Samara, and 60,616 in Ufa province. See Ivanov V. 2005, 151

numbers of priests to have been highest in Iadrin district which at the time had the densest Chuvash population (90.9%), but where in fact there were fewer Chuvash priests than in the Tetiushi district where only 16.6% of the population were Chuvash.

The publication and distribution of Chuvash texts

The Brotherhood of St Gurii village bookstores

Until the early 1890s Chuvash published texts, being intended for educational and liturgical use, were largely distributed through native schools and parishes. Although this continued to be the case,¹⁵² with the gradual increase in literacy, book stores for the sale and free distribution of books and leaflets began to appear. In 1893, of the BSG's 27 native book stores, 10 were among the Chuvash, including one at SCTS.¹⁵³ In 1894 new stores were opened by Fr A.Rekeev in Baiglychevo, Fr D.Filimonov in Ishaki, Fr P. Vasiliev in Bateevo, Fr Andrei Petrov in Bizhbuliak, Ufa diocese, Fr F.I. Ivanov in Tarkhany, Simbirsk diocese, and by the teacher E.V.Vasiliev in Alikovo,¹⁵⁴ while Bobrovnikov was also trying to open a store in Krasnyi Chetai.¹⁵⁵

Among the BSG TC's Chuvash publications in 1893 were Metropolitan Innokentii's *Indication of the Way into the Kingdom of Heaven* (5000 copies), *Three Sermons from the works of St Tikhon of Zadonsk* (5000 copies), a *Sacred History of the Old and New Testaments* (6000 copies), and a brochure about Il'minskii (1200 copies).¹⁵⁶ Brochures written by Fr Filimonov giving an Orthodox viewpoint on aspects of the Old Chuvash faith such as angels and evil spirits, blood sacrifice and life after death, were published in large quantities (3000-6000) in 1892 and

¹⁵² See BSG Otchet 1895, 4 and 1898, 1-2

¹⁵³ Tsivil'sk district: Tsivil'sk Cathedral under Fr A.P.Vasilievskii, Kovali under Fr V.P. Il'inskii, Koshelei under Fr V.S. Zaikov. In Iadrin district: Otochevo under Fr V.S.Iasnitskii, Asakas and Maly Iaushevo under Fr Mitrofan Dimitriev. Chistopol' under Fr E.L. Voetskii. Samara diocese: Pronkino and Tuarma. See BSG Otchet 1893, 41-43

¹⁵⁴ BSG Otchet 1894

¹⁵⁵ GIA CR f.501, op.1, d.166, l.3

¹⁵⁶ BSG Otchet 1893 and 1894

distributed free of charge.¹⁵⁷ Fr Filimonov, Fr Petr Vasiliev of Bateevo, Fr G.F.Filippov of Bichurino, together with the pupils of SCTS and KTS, were those most involved in the translation and publication of books in 1894.¹⁵⁸

In general 100 copies of each text were sent to bookstores where the success of sales depended on various factors. Fr Voetskii reported from Chistopol' in 1893 that two years of bad harvests had led to famine and poverty. He therefore asked the Diocesan Schools' Council to buy the books sent to him and distribute them free of charge. In Ishaki where Fr Filimonov only arrived in 1894, after which he began to open native schools, sales were poor despite the great flux of pilgrims, with only 7 *Sacred Histories*, 20 copies of Book 1 of *Indication*, and 20 copies of *St Tikhon* being sold. In other stores where there had been native priests and schools in some cases for over a decade, sales were more successful. All the books sent to Fr Mitrofan Dimitriev in Asakas were sold, in Alikovo 85 copies of *Indication* and 70 copies of *St Tikhon* were sold, while in Tuarma 79 copies of *Indication*, all 50 copies of the Il'minskii brochure and 170 out of 180 *Sacred Histories* were sold.¹⁵⁹

Iakovlev's collaboration with the British and Foreign Bible Society

In the above sections we have seen Il'minskii's principle of *narodnost'* expressed both in the area of translations and in the area of choral singing and how these enabled the beginnings of Chuvash liturgical life. It was the British and Foreign Bible Society which after the early 1890s enabled Iakovlev to achieve *narodnost'* in the area of publishing and distributing his scriptural translations.

Although Iakovlev's collaboration with the BFBS did not flourish until the 1890s, it began in the early 1870s after Revd William Nicolson, BFBS's St Petersburg agent from 1869-1897,

¹⁵⁷ BSG Otchet 1892, 17-18

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. 1894, 10-11

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. 1894, 30-41

established a Kazan depot in 1872.¹⁶⁰ It was Il`minskii who took the initiative to approach Nicolson who in December 1872 wrote of ‘a request from Professor Ilminsky of the Russian seminary there, together with whom there is also associated some gentlemen, who take an interest in this matter. This request bears upon a work which is being carried forward by Professor Ilminsky in preparing the Tatar scriptures for publication, but not in the Arabic, but in the Russian character. (...) They are (...) crippled for want of funds and their request is will the BFBS help them by (...) printing the Scriptures in this way...’¹⁶¹

On November 14th 1873 Nicolson wrote to London that his Kazan representative ‘Mr Salmen (...) sends me an Ochovash Gospel of St Matthew translated by a Mr Jacovlav who is at present translating or re-translating the Scriptures into that language.’¹⁶² By June 1874 Nicolson had met Il`minskii and Iakovlev and reported to London ‘I also saw an excellent young man Jacobleff who has with true Christian philanthropy devoted himself to the translation of the Scriptures and other sacred books into the language of his people, the Tschuvashes. He has already completed the Gospel of Matthew, a copy of which has been sent to London.’¹⁶³ On 1st October 1874 Nicolson wrote to Iakovlev to discuss printing the Gospel.¹⁶⁴ In his reply Iakovlev wrote ‘First of all you overjoyed me by your letter. Your proposal to print the Gospel in the Chuvash language at the expense of the esteemed British Bible Society gives me hope that my long cherished aspirations and dreams will be fulfilled – that the Chuvash will have the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in their native and understandable language at an affordable price.’¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰ BSA D1/7 137, 269-326

¹⁶¹ BSA D1/7 142, 279

¹⁶² BSA D1/7 149, 210 Although Arapovic (1988) and Krasnov (2007) have presented some of the BFBS archival material relating to Iakovlev’s collaboration with the BFBS, neither has collated this with archive and other material from Cheboksary and Kazan, nor set this material in the broader context of BFBS archival material concerning the BSG TC as a whole. I therefore use some of the archival material already published by them so that the broader picture I present makes sense.

¹⁶³ BSA E 3/1/4 No.11, 16

¹⁶⁴ GIA CR f.501, op.1, d.76, l.22

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. l.23

Iakovlev was more than willing for the BFBS to print all four Gospels as soon as he had made his own first printed edition. ‘It is better to try and give the Chuvash all the Gospels together.’¹⁶⁶

In early 1878 Iakovlev wrote to Nicolson that the Gospel of John was translated and the MNP would provide funds for printing.¹⁶⁷ Nicolson replied on 6th April 1878 ‘The Society desires to purchase or by other means to acquire these books with the aim of printing and distributing them. This would not hinder you printing them in Kazan.’ He added that he was glad the MNP would give funds and also offered 600 roubles for translations of all four Gospels.¹⁶⁸ In a letter of 10th October 1881 Nicolson thanked Iakovlev for two copies of the Gospel of John, 1200 copies of which had been published by the OMS in Kazan in 1880, and asked how much it would cost to print 5000 copies in Simbirsk. Iakovlev had obviously refused payment as Nicolson says ‘the BFBS will not accept the text of the Gospel as a gift as “labourers are worthy of their keep”’.¹⁶⁹

Obviously keen to cement their collaboration and make the most of a willing local distributor, in April 1878 Nicolson sent to Iakovlev a large number of New Testaments and Gospels for free distribution in schools, hospitals, prisons and among soldiers. Eighty Russian/Slavonic New Testaments stayed at SCTS while 45 copies of the Russian New Testament and Gospels were sent to each of 7 Chuvash schools, with other Scriptures distributed to Simbirsk hospitals and prisons.¹⁷⁰ An indication of how valuable the BFBS Scriptures were for SCTS is that in January 1879 the School had 1067 textbooks of which 155 were Scriptures donated by BFBS.¹⁷¹

Iakovlev’s reluctance to receive remuneration, and his possible reluctance to collaborate in general with the BFBS, can be more readily understood alongside Il’minskii’s entire withdrawal from collaboration, and his eventual hindering of Iakovlev’s collaboration with BFBS. Although Nicolson initially agreed with Il’minskii in June 1876 to publish his Kazan Tatar Gospels in

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. l.24

¹⁶⁷ GIA CR Ibid. l.18

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. l.17v

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. l.45-6

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. l.14, 20, 28-40

¹⁷¹ GIA CR f.501, op.1, d.25, l.17

Russian and Arabic letters, by August 1877 he had heard nothing and was accusing Il`minskii of 'more than a usual amount of Slavonic procrastination,'<sup>172</sup> and by January 1878 was 'quite hopeless about Il`minskii.'¹⁷³ While Il`minskii was undoubtedly very busy in the late 1870s, it is unlikely that procrastination was the main reason for lack of collaboration with BFBS. Iakovlev wrote 'Il`minskii, from a feeling of patriotism did not want the first edition of St Matthew's Gospel to be printed in Russia with English money. And this Gospel was printed with Russian money...'¹⁷⁴

Related to this patriotism was Il`minskii's probable resentment of the advisory role concerning Tatar texts Nicolson assigned to the German orientalist Wilhelm Radlov who became Inspector of Tatar schools in the KYO in 1871.¹⁷⁵ Another issue was Nicolson's desire to print the Tatar Four Gospels in Arabic script at a time when Il`minskii's views on using the Cyrillic script in native publications were becoming firmer.<sup>176</sup> Probably the main factor was that from 1876 the BSG TC came under the authority of the OMS and so the patriotic Il`minskii would have hoped to have adequate funding for native translations from the OMS. Il`minskii also became increasingly under the influence of Pobedonostsev who was hostile to Protestant missionary activity.<sup>177</sup> For Il`minskii the issue was not simply a matter of jealousy of what he termed 'English Bible competition'.¹⁷⁸ He viewed the Russian translation of the Bible circulated by Protestant missions as a threat to the Orthodox Church itself. His antipathy to the Russian translation of the Psalter was owing to 'its bias to the Hebrew text rather than the Greek text which, like the Septuagint translation in general, is the foundation of, and permeates the entire

¹⁷² BSA E3/1/4 No. 12, 149, 167; No. 13, p.193, 243

¹⁷³ Ibid. No. 14, p.15

¹⁷⁴ Iakovlev 1997, 278-9; see also Il`minskii 1895, 393

¹⁷⁵ BSA E3/1/4 No.12, 167; No.19, 148. See Geraci 2001, 140-151 on the relationship between Il`minskii and Radlov.

¹⁷⁶ See Il`minskii 1883b

¹⁷⁷ See Batalden Colportage 1994, 88. See also BSA Ibid. No.22, 86

¹⁷⁸ Il`minskii 1895, 143

content of our ecclesial life. By destroying our foundations, we are with our own hands preparing the way for the disintegration of our ecclesial life.’¹⁷⁹

By 1888 Nicolson was expressing reluctance over BFBS publishing for the baptised Tatars as ‘these are a special preserve for the Kazan Orthodox Brotherhood with Professor Ilminski at their head; and they have already shown so much jealousy that if we meddle with them we should find ourselves in a hornet’s nest.’¹⁸⁰ He goes on to explain why the desire to collaborate over the Chuvash Four Gospels as far back as 1874 had as yet been thwarted. ‘You remember how M. Jacobleff, a Kazan student, member of the Brotherhood, now Inspector of Schools in Simbirsk, promised us the Four Gospels in Tchuvash translated by him, but the Brotherhood interfered to prevent it.’¹⁸¹

It was only in the 1890s, after Il`minskii’s death, that Iakovlev continued collaboration with the BFBS as he realized it was the only way of supplying the extraordinary demand. We have seen above in reports and correspondence that Chuvash clergy often complained about the lack of Chuvash literature.¹⁸² In December 1887 Iakovlev informed the Kazan Curator that during 1886-7 he had revised the Four Gospels for a new edition which he hoped to publish in 1888 as the earlier editions had long since been distributed, yet the need in the 200 Chuvash schools remained unsatisfied. He had recently turned to the BSG TC but they had insufficient funds, so he asked for a grant of 1000 roubles for an edition of 3000 Chuvash Four Gospels for use in primary schools. His request was refused, and it was only after a further request for 400 roubles in November 1888 that Iakovlev was able to print 2000 Four Gospels in Simbirsk in 1889.¹⁸³

The BSG’s Annual Reports in the 1890s also reflect its struggle to finance Iakovlev’s enormous translation activities and the extraordinary demand for school books, especially among the

¹⁷⁹ Ibid. 136-7

¹⁸⁰ BSA E3/1/4 No. 24, 106

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² See for example Filimonov 1890, 78-79; Zaikov in NA RT f.968, otd.1, d.108, l.24-25

¹⁸³ GIA CR f.501, op.1, d.76, l.1-6

Chuvash. In 1895, the year the BFBS funded its first edition of the Chuvash Four Gospels, the BSG Report complains that the 5500 roubles given by the OMS was too little and should be raised to 8000 roubles.¹⁸⁴ The 1898 Report stressed the greatly increased demand for school books which the BSG sent free of charge ‘to all BSG and a large number of parish and literacy schools in the Kazan diocese,’ and claimed that ‘At the present time, with the exception of an insignificant minority, the Chuvash aspire to assimilate Orthodoxy and the Russian language which must be attributed above all to books published by the OMS in Chuvash. The demand for these books is extraordinarily great.’¹⁸⁵

Nicolson reported to London in 1892 ‘Professor Ilminski (...) died some time ago. (...) The Four Gospels were translated some time ago by Jacobleff but Prof. Ilminski stood in the way of our getting them for our use. Now the case is otherwise, (Bobrovnikov) offers to print editions for us in his institution at a moderate rate’ and Nicolson had already asked Bobrovnikov for a quote for 3000 copies of the Chuvash Four Gospels.¹⁸⁶ While the working relationship was extremely strained and almost broke down in relation to publications in Kazan Tatar, BFBS’s collaboration with Iakovlev over Chuvash publications developed. Iakovlev’s correspondence with the BFBS over the Four Gospels shows both his concern to satisfy the great demand for Chuvash religious literature, and his desire to shake off control by the BSG TC in Kazan over the publication process. In a letter to E.Kirsch of March 1896, Iakovlev wrote ‘As in your letter you write about making the price of the Gospels in the Chuvash language as cheap as possible, and I, with all my heart desiring to promote even greater distribution of the Holy Gospel and make it available if possible to all the Chuvash, propose that the BFBS republish the Holy Gospel at its own expense and fix a price both feasible and convenient’ but Iakovlev’s one condition was that ‘the edition should be printed in Simbirsk under my editorship.’¹⁸⁷ In a further letter to Nicolson of February 1897 Iakovlev agreed to do further editing personally as the BFBS has agreed to donate 1000

¹⁸⁴ BSG Otchet 1895, 8

¹⁸⁵ Ibid. 10

¹⁸⁶ BSA E3/1/4 No. 29, 159

¹⁸⁷ Iakovlev 1998, 196

copies to village schools, but again he insisted the printing should take place in Simbirsk to facilitate his task.¹⁸⁸

After the BSG's initial publication of 4000 copies of the Chuvash Four Gospels in Simbirsk in 1889, they were reprinted in Simbirsk in 1891, then in collaboration with the Bible Society in 1895, with a further edition in 1897.¹⁸⁹ In 1889 Iakovlev printed six books of the Old Testament, Wisdom of Sirach, Job, Joshua, Tobit, Ruth and 1 Maccabees, at his own expense.¹⁹⁰ A trial edition of 300 copies of the Psalter and a further revised edition were both published in Simbirsk in 1901 at the Bible Society's expense, and two trial editions of Epistles and Revelation were published in 1903 and 1906.¹⁹¹ The BFBS funded the publications, which were labeled as editions of the OMS. Despite ample funding from the BFBS and their agents' great respect for Iakovlev's work, they were at times perplexed by his translation methodology and his independent spirit. In an 1901 letter Kean complained that Iakovlev had asked BFBS to fund his trial editions of Acts and Psalms 'and it is characteristic that he embarks on this without letting me know beforehand' and 'moreover, he regards this as a proper method for the perfecting of his translations.'¹⁹² Printing a small trial edition was, however, the only practical way of sending the text out to two or three hundred Chuvash teachers and clergy who would read the text to their pupils and parishioners before sending back their comments thus ensuring it was deeply rooted in the language of the ordinary Chuvash people. This communal translation principle which was a hallmark of the Simbirsk translations was undoubtedly a further reason for the BSG TC and Iakovlev's reticence in working with the BFBS.

The BSG TC's 1895 Report defends this principle saying

¹⁸⁸ Ibid. 201

¹⁸⁹ OMS Report 1890, 30; Mashanov 1892, 140

¹⁹⁰ Arapovic 1988, 7

¹⁹¹ BSG Otchet 1906, 4-5; Foreward to 1910 Chuvash New Testament; Mashanov 1892, 140; Arapovic 1988, 3,7; BFBS Editorial Subcommittee Minutes 7/10/1904

¹⁹¹ Arapovic 1988, 7

¹⁹² Kean to Taylor 13/26th March 1901 in Arapovic 1988, 5

The translations are published for the simple, ignorant masses who are only just learning to read. The translations must therefore be distributed among the people by those who read the books to young and old. Such distributors of missionary publications are the pupils of the central missionary schools (SCTS, KTS, KCBTS). They take part in compiling the translations as described by (Il'minskii) in his writings. (...) The natives know every word of these translations, and are conscientious, intelligible readers and explainers, especially when at the end of the course they become teachers at Literacy Schools in their villages. (...) To gather a group of native youth, inspire them with genuinely Christian feeling – that is the first necessary condition (...) for the translation of the scriptural and liturgical books. The translations will be born, so to say, out of the religious life of the community as they live through the church year (...) having done away with the method, long ago condemned by history, of compiling native translations with the help of more or less learned individual translators hired by chance.¹⁹³

In conclusion, although Iakovlev accepted BFBS's sponsorship of his publications owing to financial need, there were many reasons which explain why he kept the BFBS at arm's length, took initiatives on his own without informing them, and resolutely pursued Il'minskii's translating methods which meant translations dragged on for years which the BFBS agents found hard to fathom. Nevertheless, it is significant that in this situation Iakovlev showed his independence of Il'minskii's patriotic example. Seeing the great demand for texts due to the vast increase in literacy in the Chuvash villages, the BSG's inability to supply the demand, and SCTS's own straitened financial circumstances, the practical Iakovlev was more concerned about the newly-literate Chuvash than offending Russian patriotic pride. We will examine the consequences of Iakovlev's collaboration with the BFBS in the early years of the 20th century in Chapter Seven.

¹⁹³ BSG Otchet 1895, 4-5

CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have seen the transmission of native-language Christian texts, in printed, sung and spoken form, going hand in hand with schools, literacy, improved agriculture and craftsmanship, famine relief, defence of land rights and the beginnings of native-language liturgical life and preaching. This resulted in the development of native leadership, teachers and priests who in many situations were involved in the creation of new parishes, the construction of focal central buildings such as schools and churches, adult literacy and catechetical meetings, and communal, congregational singing of both adults and children. All of this encouraged lay involvement in the parish and village community, the cohesion Iakovlev says was lacking, a greater sense of owning and belonging to a particular community and piece of land.

Sanneh highlights the symbiotic relationship between agriculture and Christianity in some regions of Africa and comments on the consequences of vernacular Scripture ‘Mother tongue Scripture (...) enshrined and sanctioned local understanding in the people’s own natural idiom, and often it spawned a people’s movement in church and society.’¹⁹⁴ In his discussion of mission in early mediaeval Europe, Richard Fletcher also comments on the limitations of an understanding of conversion as something intense, individual and spiritual, as it involved rather ‘collectivities and solidarities’ especially in a world where the main struggle was ‘just how to keep on going in a world that was chronically short of food, warmth and health,’¹⁹⁵ an apt description of the Chuvash world of the early 1890s, explaining the significance of Iakovlev and the first Chuvash priests’ concern with these needs.

This *narodnost`* of the impact of the Il`minskii system in Chuvash villages is epitomized by the low-qualified, self-educated Chuvash peasant teachers who nevertheless arose out of the local milieu, and so were accepted, along with their Christian texts, by Chuvash communities which had previously resisted schools and teachers. Although some scholars have accused the

¹⁹⁴ Sanneh 2009, 182, 214

¹⁹⁵ Fletcher 1999, 514-515

Il'minskii system and the Brotherhood of St Gurii of thus promoting poor quality education which did not open up the Chuvash to broader horizons, we have seen how most of the schools were being funded by mixed sources, and often the BSG initially sponsored local initiatives which were later adopted by the MNP or Zemstvo as they developed. Short-term courses played an important role not only in improving educational levels and numbers of teachers by 1905, but in developing leadership and teaching skills, and solidarity between the teachers and their villages.

The impact of the Il'minskii system is also characterized by the school-church, the multi-purpose building expressing the organic association of the religious and educational spheres, and of church and state, an association also embodied in the role of Iakovlev who, despite being a layman, supervised schools and the missionary teachers and clergy. We will see in Chapter Six how lack of clarity over the respective roles of the MNP and the local diocese in education and mission at a time when the desire to shake off state domination of the church was increasing, led to serious questioning of this model from within the church in the late 1890s.

The model was perpetuated, however, until 1895 in the Simbirsk diocese under Bishop Varsanofii and in the 1890s in the Kazan, Ufa and Samara dioceses by bishops who supported Il'minskii's principles as a result of applying them previously in their Siberian bishoprics. In this sense the flowering of Il'minskii's principles in the Volga region, despite attacks on them at the turn of the 20th century, can be attributed to some extent to the 'coming home' of the Siberian missionary tradition established by Innokentii Veniaminov and Makarii Glukharev.

The extent to which the Il'minskii system had been applied among the non-Russian peoples in these dioceses should not be overestimated, despite its energetic application especially by Bishops Dionisii and Gurii, whose remarkable work should not nevertheless be isolated from the broader picture. On the basis of the 1899 Samara statistics Smirnoff wrote in 1903 'At the present time wherever the country is thickly populated with native tribes, virtually ignorant of

the Russian language, it is made a rule to celebrate Divine Service in the native language at the first opportunity. (...) In the year 1899, in the diocese of Samara alone, amongst the clergy were numbered 128 persons knowing the Tchuvash language fluently (...) whereas six years previously this language was only known by three priests in all. (...) The increase is truly amazing.¹⁹⁶ The increase truly was amazing, especially when compared with the low statistics for the Kazan diocese which Smirnoff optimistically does not mention. He also omits to mention that in the year his book was published, the man who labored most of all to provide Samara diocese with native personnel, Ivan Iakovlev, was dismissed as Inspector of Chuvash Schools due to fears of separatism.¹⁹⁷

Smirnoff's book implies that it was as a consequence of the Orthodox missionary tradition of St Stephen of Perm as such that native-language liturgy was developed 'at the first opportunity', whereas by 1904 it was in the Chuvash districts bordering on, or in the midst of, predominantly Muslim areas that the numbers of native priests were highest, and in the Iadrin district which had the highest density of Chuvash population, the number of native priests was the lowest. The greatest concern of those applying Il'minskii's principles from the 1890s therefore, was to protect the Chuvash from islamification rather than to give them native-language Orthodoxy as such, although this does not negate the argument that Il'minskii and Iakovlev saw themselves as creating a long-term literary language for the Chuvash.

Il'minskii's concern to bring about 'conversion of the heart' through native-language texts, schools and worship meant that the movement he created was as much a reforming movement as a native-language movement. We have seen this reforming spirit in several situations in this chapter as Chuvash did not remain silent about the weaknesses of the Russians with whom they lived and worked. In this reforming spirit we see the beginnings of their adherence to the reform movement within the early 20th century Russian Church which will be explored further in

¹⁹⁶ Smirnoff 1903, 49-50

¹⁹⁷ The reaction against the native cause in the early 1900s will be examined in Chapter Six.

chapters Six and Seven, and also a reason for opposition to native clergy within the Russian Church.

Discussing the relationship between mission and reform movements in the church, Sanneh argues that on the one hand 'In mission the church (recognized) all cultures and the languages in which they are embodied as lawful in God's eyes' but on the other hand, the Christian life includes 'holding up the standard of prophetic witness in culture, and sometimes even against culture'.¹⁹⁸ Fletcher is less complimentary than Sanneh about this reforming spirit of missionaries with their common assumption that 'their predecessors had got it all wrong, made a mess of things, let standards slide.'¹⁹⁹ He comments 'the trouble is that the shrill denunciations of reforming rhetoric can easily conceal (...) changing assumptions, expectations and definitions from view'²⁰⁰ particularly concerning the perplexing question of 'At what point may one say of an individual, or a society 'He (or she, or it) has become, is now a Christian?''²⁰¹ It is this question that will be explored in the next chapter through an assessment of the impact on the Old Chuvash Faith of Il'minskii's native-language movement. As the Old Chuvash Faith was expressed through every aspect of daily life, the question involves more than popular devotion, it involves their culture as a whole. We shall proceed warned by Fletcher 'Old cultural habits sloughed off, new cultural garments assumed; was it a merging or a distinction, a bridge or a void? As usual there is no single or simple answer.'²⁰²

¹⁹⁸ Sanneh 2009, 54-55

¹⁹⁹ Fletcher 1999, 511

²⁰⁰ Ibid. 511-512

²⁰¹ Ibid. 9, 509

²⁰² Ibid. 520

Chapter 5

The transformation of the Old Chuvash Faith

We have seen in Chapter Four some of the impact of Il`minskii's ideas at the village level in the form of native schools and parishes. In this chapter we will explore the impact of the Il`minskii movement on the Old Chuvash Faith, the religious worldview and practices around which everyday Chuvash life revolved. The reluctance of the Chuvash to talk about the Old Faith, and the illiteracy of the majority, means that there are practically no accounts written by native speakers before the final decades of the 19th century.¹ The use of the native language in schools and churches was accompanied by the beginning of a movement, adhered to by many Chuvash graduates of the Il`minskii schools, which showed an increasing interest in gathering ethnographic material about the Chuvash and other Volga peoples. In this chapter we will examine accounts relating to Chuvash sacred places and calendar rites from the 1870s to the 1920s. Before doing this, however, we need to make some preliminary remarks about the nature of the Old Chuvash Faith, as descriptions and interpretations have depended on authors' presuppositions about its origins.

Debates surrounding the origins of the Old Chuvash Faith

P.V. Denisov's 1959 *Religious Beliefs of the Chuvash* represents the presuppositions of late Soviet literature, stating

In the prerevolutionary period the backward peasantry, stupefied by the poison of religion, wasted a mass of precious time on celebrating various religious festivals. (...) Religious festivals, as all religion as a whole, have the same origin: they can be explained by causes rooted in false notions

¹ See Appendix One concerning earlier ethnographic descriptions.

of nature in peoples' consciousness and the feeling of the powerlessness of man before the might of the elements.²

A. Salmin's 1994 *Folk Rituals of the Chuvash* reveals the dilemmas of the post-Soviet Chuvash intelligentsia, raised on the above presuppositions, when he writes of the

mass religiosity of the Chuvash intelligentsia aspiring to demonstrate at all costs their love for their national culture. (...) Guilt feelings and awareness of the necessity to change value orientations give no peace. The dilemma is not the easiest – either we go back to the caves or come to ruin in the clutches of civilization.³

Despite his desire to change value orientations, Salmin reveals the continuing bias in his scholarship

As regards the history of our question, we must have a particularly reverential attitude to the unbaptised Chuvash who were able to preserve and pass on to us the faith and rites of our distant ancestors at a time of social and religious oppression.⁴

We still see the presupposition of the Soviet period prevailing, that only among the unbaptised Chuvash had the faith and rites of the distant ancestors been preserved, and it is perhaps for this reason that he sees only two equally unappealing solutions to his dilemma.

Stella Rock comments that 'Soviet historians tended to focus on pagan survivals as evidence of active resistance by the people to the institution of the Church and the ruling classes who helped impose Christianity on the populace.'⁵ Fletcher also summarizes this Marxist viewpoint of Christianity as 'a kind of crust upon the surface of popular culture. Paganism went underground, subsided into (...) a *culture folklorique*, mute symbol of a downtrodden peasantry's resentment against its oppressors.'⁶ He consequently regards eastern European historians as shackled and

² Denisov 1959, 119, 134

³ Salmin 1994, 7-8

⁴ Ibid. 8

⁵ Rock 2007, 95

⁶ Fletcher 1999, 238

hindered by ‘the quest for the will-o’-the-wisp of a true ethnicity.’⁷ It is this kind of viewpoint which has influenced much 20th century Chuvash scholarship and its preoccupation with ethnogenesis. Scholars have seen their task as needing to rediscover the pristine Old Chuvash Faith by removing the russifying crust, rather than explore the transformation that had gradually taken place under the influence of many different cultures and faiths, including Christian Orthodoxy.

This concern to rediscover a pristine ancient faith already prevailed in the late 19th century. In the 1870s two of the most significant writers on the Old Chuvash Faith, N.I.Zolotnitskii and V.K.Magnitskii, both the sons of Russian priests in Chuvash villages, pointed to mistaken information and attitudes due to lack of linguistic knowledge, especially among Russian priests who often started by equating the Old Faith with devil worship and made distorted generalizations.

As sometimes on the lips of missionaries the shamanist views of the natives, together with their prayers and sacrificial offerings to the supreme Divinity and its ministering spirits, are summed up under the title of “devil worship”, so in the writings of authors describing the lifestyle of the Chuvash and Cheremys, the same is called “Kiremet worship”; and in the more detailed research into the religious state of the Chuvash the words “gods, spirits, kiremets and irikhs” are used interchangeably and as though they have the same meaning. This depends partly on a lack of linguistic knowledge, partly on insufficient knowledge of the foundations of the “black faith” and above all on confusion in the religious ideas of the Chuvash themselves, a confusion which is characteristic of any beliefs which lack a methodical and scholarly basis.⁸

They also warned against too great a reliance on the accounts of the Chuvash themselves

Much more dangerous and difficult to correct are the mistakes based on the linguistic explanations of “specialists” or references to the opinions and interpretations of the natives

⁷ Ibid. 332

⁸ Magnitskii 1881, 1

“themselves” and to traditions proclaiming to be popular (narodnyi), but which in essence are the personal inventions of the researchers’ guides who often treat the Old Faith with disdain.⁹

It was partly due to such mistaken research that Zolotnitskii and Magnitskii set themselves the task of ‘a scholarly restoration of the meaning and state of the Old Faith’.¹⁰ Zolotnitskii shared P.V.Znamenskii’s opinion that ‘We must hasten to carry out research, in order to capture at least something of the characteristic features of these beliefs, and keep in memory the physiognomy of this dying paganism.’¹¹ He considered that the main reason it was difficult to describe a restored, pure form of the Old Faith was due to Christian influence.

In the mythology of the Cheremys and other natives, as a result of its encounter with Christianity, a muddle has arisen which is typical of any beliefs which do not have a methodical, scholarly basis (...) many of the old beliefs have become so extremely distorted or are already forgotten forever even by those sorcerers who still carry out the old religious rites.¹²

While Zolotnitskii and Magnitskii were obviously seeking to avoid disdain for the Old Faith, we nevertheless see their presuppositions that there was a pure form of the Old Faith to be discovered, that ‘a muddle’ had arisen due to the Old Faith not having a ‘methodical, scholarly basis’ and that it was some form of ‘dying paganism’. Despite this concern to reconstruct some pristine form of Chuvash paganism, unmuddled by Christian influence, it is significant that Magnitskii and Zolotnitskii note the similarity in worldview and lifestyle of Russians living among the Chuvash who

came to their new place of settlement with a worldview which was not essentially different from the Chuvash worldview and therefore not only could they not influence in any way the worldview of the Chuvash, but even on several questions submit to the authority of the Chuvash *iomzi* up to the present time. In the village of Barskye Iseni, for example, Russians with no understanding of

⁹ Zolotnitskii 1877a, 5

¹⁰ Ibid. 7

¹¹ Ibid. 7

¹² Ibid. 3-4

Christian teaching, at the same time have an excellent knowledge of all the Chuvash religious rites and are present without fail when they are carried out (...) and have even built their houses in the Chuvash fashion.¹³

We should note that Magnitskii tells us the Russians ‘came to their new place of settlement’ with this similar worldview which was because they had ‘no understanding of Christian teaching’, and not because they lived alongside the Chuvash.

The sermons of Fr. Vasilii Smelov, the Russian priest who criticized Iakovlev’s translations, provide an example of someone who was trying to improve understanding of Christian teaching in the Chuvash context, and reveal clerical attitudes to the Old Chuvash Faith in 1879. In a sermon on how the world was populated after the Flood, and the origins of different peoples and paganisms, Smelov tells his Chuvash parishioners

Depictions of false gods are called idols, and the custom of bowing to idols – idolatry. This custom was strong on the earth; almost all people became idolators (...). There are such people now on the earth (...) it is you, the Chuvash, Cheremys, Votiaks. Although you are baptized, you still haven’t given up your old idolatry. Your kiremet is the same old idol.¹⁴

In a sermon on sacrifices Smelov gives a glimpse of how the Chuvash themselves justified their practices on the basis of Old Testament sacrifice rather than paganism, suggesting their perception that the labels of paganism and idolatry inadequately described their religious world.

Judge, my friends, how you behave incorrectly making sacrifices, even if they are to the supreme God. Judge how incorrect is your reference to Abraham who made sacrifices.¹⁵

In her study of the phenomenon of *dvoeverie*¹⁶ in Russian popular religion, Stella Rock argues that *dvoeverie* is ‘a historiographical construct that developed in the 19th century out of a preoccupation with the “folk” and a belief that by sifting through the sediment of traditional

¹³ Magnitskii 1881, 220-221, [my underlining] See also Zolotnitskii 1875, Pril. IV, 70

¹⁴ Smelov 1879, No.4, 105

¹⁵ Smelov 1879, No.5, 143

¹⁶ Double-belief, the perceived simultaneous practice of both Christian and pagan rites.

culture, one can find preserved pure elements of pre-Christian paganism.¹⁷ It was part of this typically 19th century approach ‘that religious beliefs can safely be identified as Slavonic or Finnish, or Germanic, or Celtic for that matter, and that each ethnic paganism constituted a distinct faith.’¹⁸ We see exactly this approach in Zolotnitskii, Magnitskii and Smelov’s writings, and even in their use of the term Old Chuvash Faith with its implication that it was specific to the Chuvash, despite their awareness of the similarities of Chuvash traditional rites to other Volga peoples, and to the Russians themselves. While we must be careful not to apply immediately Rock’s analysis of Russian popular religion to Chuvash popular religion, it is highly significant that she identifies the first modern use of the term *dvoeverie* in the Kazan Theological Academy journal *Pravoslavny Sobesednik* in 1861, after a decade that had seen the emergence of the Kazan Theological Academy missionary departments, making the study of attitudes to remnants of paganism very topical in the Volga region, as we have seen illustrated in Zolotnitskii, Magnitskii and Smelov’s writings.¹⁹

Rock challenges the ‘unhelpful preoccupation with identifying latent paganism in Russian culture and spirituality’²⁰ which has predominated in studies of Russian popular religion since the late 19th century, and was embraced by much Soviet scholarship as we have seen above. Levin adds ‘The search for ancient pagan roots blinded scholars to the changes in the cult, and the multilayered interaction of ecclesial image and popular veneration.’²¹ In Rock and Levin’s view, popular practices have been conceived of as pagan when they have been compared with an imaginary or subjective Christian norm, the ‘cognitive’ Orthodoxy of the modern world,²² or a ‘good’ Christianity ‘either measured by knowledge and understanding of Scripture (particularly the New Testament) which largely excludes the illiterate and uneducated from the Christian community, or by morality which excludes perhaps the vast majority of baptized sinners, or by

¹⁷ Rock 2007, 118

¹⁸ Ibid. 106

¹⁹ Ibid. 89

²⁰ Ibid. 1

²¹ Levin 1993, 45

²² Ibid.

rationality – indicated by a selective rejection of the magical, miraculous or supernatural.²³

They thus conclude that the language of *dvoeverie* has been used by reforming clerics or those involved in educational movements, particularly during periods of uncertainty and conflict,²⁴ which would account for this type of language being used in the ethnographic texts emerging out of the Il'minskii movement with its desire for 'conscious' faith acquired through Scripture reading and catechization, at a time of fear that the baptised Volga peoples would adopt Islam.

It is a recurrent feature of Chuvash ethnographic texts at the turn of the 20th century that they use the terminology of 'paganism' and 'semi-paganism', the antidote to which they perceive as native-language religious texts, preaching and liturgical life. A 1916 ethnographic work by Fr Nikolai Arkhangel'skii is entitled "The semi-pagan life of the contemporary Chuvash from the cradle to the grave".²⁵ In his previous 1899 ethnographic work on Iadrin district he writes of how they prayed both to their pagan gods and to the Christian God and 'gradually forgot, or at least, excluded from their prayers many gods, even those who were extremely significant in their ancient mythology'.²⁶ In a 1900 article entitled "Measures for the eradication of pagan customs, superstitions and sacrifices existing among the natives" the Chuvash priest Anton Ivanov proposed opening a native-language school in every village using native books, native-language church preaching and rites such as molebens at the times the Chuvash celebrated their own rites, conducted by priests who knew thoroughly the Old Faith.²⁷ In M.Vasil'ev's 1904 article on *kiremets* he concludes that

Making the most of suitable circumstances, the experienced pastor can always shake pagan beliefs at their very foundations, and at the same time give a correct understanding of the truths of

²³ Rock 2007, 146

²⁴ Ibid. 157; Levin Ibid. 39, 45

²⁵ Arkhangel'skii 1916

²⁶ Arkhangel'skii 1899, 9

²⁷ Ivanov A. 1900

the faith to the people, but it is necessary that he speaks to the people in their native (...) language.²⁸

That these priests in Chuvash villages, as well as the abovementioned Zolotnitskii, Magnitskii and Smelov, should have considered the Old Chuvash Faith to be a remnant of paganism is fully in accordance with scholarly studies of Russian popular religion of their time such as Golubinskii (1880), Kliuchevskii (1904), Gal'kovskii (1915). Rock comments that a theme prevalent in their work is that double-believing arises as a result of the poor education of clergy and/or neophytes.²⁹

Despite this language of 'paganism', however, many of the writings emerging out of the Il'minskii movement portray the popular beliefs and practices of the Volga natives in a much more positive light than their terminology would suggest, and Il'minskii himself is the foremost example of this. In 1865 Il'minskii wrote

viewing the natives from the psychological viewpoint, it is strange for me that some missionaries persecute with every available method (...) and try to destroy shamanistic beliefs and rites as if they were positively the work of the devil. In my opinion, these beliefs are no more than the aspiration to the divine and mystical, deeply implanted in human nature by the Creator Himself, but interpreted by the childlike tribes in accordance with their simple, highly undeveloped concepts.³⁰

This view was part of a broader, uncondemning view of indigenous culture and religious beliefs out of which Christian faith can naturally develop. In an 1889 letter criticizing the baptism of natives without catechetical preparation, Il'minskii wrote

²⁸ Vasil'ev 1904, 265-266. For other examples of seeing the Old Chuvash Faith as paganism, see CGIGN Otd. 1, t.228, l.2-4, 6-9v; Komissarov 1911, 381

²⁹ Rock 2007, 100-102

³⁰ Il'minskii 1887, 121-122

The unquestionable faith in the unseen, their most zealous concern to fulfil the rites of their forefathers as a necessary and effective means of protecting themselves from misfortune and illness, is worthy of approval among the natives. And doesn't it often happen that, without waiting for faith in the power of Christ's grace to arise and strengthen in place of this Old Faith natives are baptized and become neither one thing or the other?³¹

Consequently, Il'minskii's approach to traditional rites was to 'transform' them into Christian ones, rather than simply annihilating them. He wrote in 1875

Since the Orthodox Church, by means of its sacred actions set out in the *Trebnik*, and also by means of prayers of various kinds, calls down the mercy and grace of God upon all of the most important moments of life and on all the difficulties, needs and requirements of a person, and by invoking, so to say, God's power, tries to protect a person from any kind of evil, the performance of all the said sacred actions or so-called "occasional rites" for the natives in their mother tongue, and thus in an accessible and comprehensible way, should undoubtedly calm their heart disturbed by all kinds of superstitious fears, and turn them from the kiremets (...) to the Lord and His Christ.³²

Iakovlev inherited this approach from Il'minskii and defended the moral and religious emphasis of the Girls' School at SCTS on the basis of the strong moral principles of traditional Chuvash culture.

When an instinctive awareness of the precariousness of the former pagan principles of life appeared among the best people of the Chuvash tribe, it was not expressed by a destructive desire to annihilate the pagan beliefs, but on the contrary, by a desire to replace them by new Orthodox Christian ideas.³³

He therefore thought that the success of SCTS could to some degree be attributed to traditional Chuvash culture.

³¹ Il'minskii 1895, 290-291

³² Il'minskii 1875-76, 64-65

³³ Iakovlev 1893, 32

Despite all the unfavourable conditions of the school's external environment, such good results were achieved which must not however be attributed entirely to the supervision, attentiveness and experience of the staff, but must undoubtedly be attributed to the strong foundations of the national way of life of the Chuvash.³⁴

According to the Chuvash priest Gavriil Spiridonov writing in 1910

A person's inner worldview, formed on the basis of ancient traditions, cannot be broken up all at once, but rather passes through stages of experience, gradually being purified. For this an effective weapon is needed, which can penetrate to the depths of a person and remove unnecessary growths. The native language is such a weapon.

He nevertheless understood that their former zeal for the Old Faith played a role in Chuvash reception of Orthodoxy.

In the former semi-pagan Chuvash lifestyle it was valuable that they were sincere in their hopes. This sincerity, cleansed of paganism, has paved the way for a convinced reception of Christian truths.³⁵

It was the ethnographical writings of Fr Alexei Rekeev that most challenged the view of the Old Faith as paganism, and emphasized its similarities with Orthodoxy. Rekeev's opinion is significant as he was a teacher and deacon at KTS in Kazan so would have been influenced by the views of Il'minskii himself. Rekeev criticizes Sboev, Mil'kovich and Zolotnitskii for writing superficially and concluding that the Chuvash are polytheists

as they see the divinity in all things. (...) In the thinking of the Chuvash God is only one, Tura or Asla Tura, Great God, and they never confuse him with the *kiremet*. In Scripture there are different names for God and the Chuvash have the same...

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Spiridonov 1910, 1093-4

There are other good spiritual beings which the Chuvash call God, but Rekeev feels the Chuvash have got confused, just as for Russian peasants Zosima and Savvatii are the patron saints of bees and the simple people call them *pchelinye bogi*, bee gods.

The Chuvash themselves cannot explain why they call these beings gods, but maintain that they are not gods. (...) You can see that the Chuvash presuppose that there are various spiritual beings in the world with different names, just as the Russians believe in the existence of invisible, unclean powers. (...) I think however that in olden times there were not separate spirits with such names at all, and when they use these names in prayer they are addressing the same One God, Creator and Lifegiver.³⁶

That Rekeev's insistence on the Old Chuvash Faith being monotheistic upset the current viewpoint that it was polytheistic paganism is seen in the IKE editor's introductory remarks which try to excuse him. 'Rekeev is describing contemporary beliefs and therefore emphasizes that the Chuvash faith is monotheism, whereas this is a misunderstanding.'³⁷ This situation illustrates Levin's comment that, 'The concept of *dvoeverie* demanded that scholars [in this case the editor of IKE] attempt to sort out what is pagan from what is Christian, leaving no room for overlap between the two systems, or for the development of beliefs that draw on both pagan and Christian concepts.'³⁸

Rekeev's view of the overlap between the Old Faith and Orthodoxy, and in particular with the worldview of the Russian peasants, was a viewpoint largely shared by those discussing mission among 'pagans' at the 1910 Kazan Missionary Conference where the section on paganism asked itself such questions as whether, from a Christian point of view, pagan rites could be assimilated with Christian rites.³⁹ Although there were some dissenting voices, M.Mashanov, President of the Brotherhood of St Gurii, considered it was possible to give pagan rites Christian

³⁶ Rekeev 1896, 337-341, 418

³⁷ Ibid. 294

³⁸ Levin 1993, 36

³⁹ Serafim 1911-12, 116

significance,⁴⁰ and the general consensus of the discussion was that ‘replacement’ of pagan rites was possible and to be encouraged. The example was cited of a pagan place of prayer at Arino where a Christian chapel had been built and the wooden supports, used to hang pots in which sacrificial meat was boiled, made into a cross.⁴¹ In Fr M.G.Ivanov’s report he suggested that ‘their rites should not be abruptly broken up, but gradually replaced with Christian rites’⁴² and he recommended ‘sparing their traditional way of life, and gradually, step by step, through Christian influence on them, clothing their distinctive rites and customs with a pure Christian form.’⁴³ Several Chuvash priests took part in the discussion, approving this approach, and identifying the use of the Il`minskii system, the native language and texts used by native priests, as the surest means of overcoming pagan ways.⁴⁴

We can conclude then that despite the frequent terminology of ‘paganism’ and ‘semi-paganism’, the approach of Il`minskii and his collaborators to the Old Chuvash Faith was therefore largely that of seeing correspondences which could be accommodated and transformed into Christian practices and beliefs. It is this approach we see among the first generation of Chuvash clergy after the 1870s as they sought to replace or transform Chuvash rites into a ‘purer’ form of Orthodox rites such as molebens or icon processions to the fields. Journeys to *kiremets* and their sacred trees were being transformed into pilgrimages to Christian holy places and miracle-working icons while Chuvash rites for the dead and protection from evil were becoming more firmly attached to similar practices in the Orthodox annual cycle. Komissarov summarized in 1911

⁴⁰ Missionerskii S`ezd 1910, 678

⁴¹ Serafim 1911-12, 116

⁴² Missionerskii S`ezd 1910, 659

⁴³ Serafim 1911-12, 114

⁴⁴ Missionerskii S`ezd 1910, 663-4 Fr I. Dormidontov of SCTS; Ibid. 662 Fr D.Filimonov; Ibid. 680-682 Fr V.Zaikov
Serafim 1911-12, 118-9 Fr D.Filimonov; Ibid. 119-120 Fr I.Dormidontov; Ibid.122 – Fr V.Zaikov.

At the present time, under the influence of Christianity, the celebration (of pagan festivals) is adjusting to the times of Christian festivals. Under the influence of Christianity the ritual side of Chuvash festivals has also significantly changed and simplified, and their number decreased.⁴⁵

This approach of the accommodation, replacement, or transformation of traditional beliefs and rites has been identified by some scholars as a conscious strategy at times in the history of mission. Richard Fletcher argues that this approach prevailed in Western Europe in the early Middle Ages when pre-Christian sacred objects and people were transformed into Christian holy objects, holy men and women. He argues that this phenomenon prompts ‘reflections on the manner in which Christian churchmen of the early Middle Ages were prepared to make room for customs and beliefs, practices and practitioners, of long ancestry and continuing vitality outside a Christian dispensation.’⁴⁶ Sanneh, describing the cultural impact of Christian mission in Africa, argues ‘Christianity sought indigenous coefficients, and used them to propagate the Gospel’⁴⁷ and he illustrates how among the Yoruba ‘the rhythms and values (of the indigenous culture) have persisted into the new religion, with beneficial results in both directions.’⁴⁸

Mousalimas argues that this approach characterized the transition from the traditional religious worldview to Orthodoxy in Alaska.

For the transition to have been indigenous and corporate – involving these peoples’ social and spiritual processes, and occurring through the whole body of their societies, (...) there must have been vital characteristics within their own ancestral cultures that corresponded to and could engage with the Russian Orthodox Christian faith and practices. (...) Their antiquity is retained transformed – drawn up in their own way from their own roots unsevered.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Komissarov 1911, 382

⁴⁶ Fletcher 1999, 253; See also Rock 2007, 126-7, 144

⁴⁷ Sanneh 2009, 79

⁴⁸ Ibid. 220-221

⁴⁹ Mousalimas 2003, 88, 108

Oleksa also considers that in Alaska ‘The structures of pre-contact worldview and the Orthodox Christian vision paralleled and complemented each other in many significant ways.’⁵⁰

Znamenski concludes that in the Altai ‘specific artifacts of Orthodoxy did not necessarily contradict indigenous tradition and as such could be easily adjusted to native beliefs.’⁵¹

This chapter will illustrate how such correspondences and parallels were continuing to bring about a similar transformation of the Old Chuvash Faith at the turn of the 20th century. We will focus on two major themes: firstly, sacred place, with the related sub-themes of sacred objects and pilgrimage, and secondly, sacred time, how the traditional Chuvash calendar related to the official Orthodox calendar. The aim is not an ethnographic description, nor is it to establish the origins of the Old Chuvash Faith, a complex issue tied to that of Chuvash ethnogenesis, which has been the question most researched and pondered in recent Chuvash scholarship.⁵² This recent scholarship, following Znamenskii and Zolotnitskii, has tended to emphasize the ancient origins of Chuvash belief and rites, and their correspondences in other Turkic and Asian cultures. While not questioning the ancient origins of many aspects of Chuvash culture, in this study I accept that Chuvash beliefs and rites by the late 19th century were a syncretistic mixture which had much in common with the popular beliefs and rites of other Slavic and non-Slavic, Orthodox and non-Orthodox peoples throughout Europe, both east and west. I suggest therefore that there had been greater Judaeo-Christian influence on the Chuvash before their 18th century baptism than has usually been admitted, and this influence, rather than destroying a pristine, ancient faith, had gradually transformed it owing to the many correspondences between the two. This would help to account for the rapid success of the Christian native-language missionary movement of the late 19th century which built on and continued this process of transformation, while at the same time often not acknowledging the work of the past and referring to the Old Faith as paganism owing to 19th century views of *dvoeverie*.

⁵⁰ Oleksa 1992, 124-5

⁵¹ Znamenski 1999, 221; See also 224-228

⁵² See Ivanov 2011; Nikolaev 2007; Ivanov, Nikolaev, Dimitriev 2000

Sacred Place

The Chuvash Old Faith revolved around sacred places known as *kiremet*s, although many authors emphasized that the *kiremet* was the spirit who was appeased by sacrifice at the place which had also acquired the name *kiremet*. Fr Alexei Rekeev in 1896 described the *kiremet*s as the ‘guardians or protectors of those places where they dwell. All the places where these spirits dwell are considered sacred by the Chuvash. In such places there are sometimes sacred groves (...) but these groves are not themselves the *kiremet*s, but only the places where they dwell.’⁵³

The name *kiremet* was attributed by Zolotnitskii and Magnitskii to the Arabic *khurmet* (untouchable, sacred) or *keramet* (a miracle performed by a saint)⁵⁴ whereas E. Malov, seeking to prove Jewish influence on the Chuvash, traced the word to the Hebrew *kerem* (garden, orchard) from *karam* (fence off, surround).⁵⁵

Each village had one main *kiremet* and often several smaller ones. In 1911 in Podlesina, Tsivil’sk district the Chuvash had not entirely abandoned their annual sacrifices (*chuk*) to the seven *kiremet*s in the village.⁵⁶ When the Chuvash of Tuarma moved to Samara province from Korsun` district, Simbirsk province, they continued to make sacrifices to the *kiremet* in Korsun` until one of the Chuvash went out of his mind and the *iomzi* advised him to cordon off a birch grove in Tuarma and create a new *kiremet*.⁵⁷ There were also great *kiremet*s, the most famous of which was the Sorma *kiremet*, in honour of which every village in the Cheboksary and Tsivil’sk districts in the 1870s held a feast after the spring ploughing and prayers were said for protection of the crops from hail.⁵⁸ Individual families also held their own prayers and feasts in honour of Sorma *kiremet*.⁵⁹ Another great *kiremet* was the Shiner *kiremet* near the village of Abashevo.

⁵³ Rekeev 1896, 421

⁵⁴ Magnitskii 1876, 52

⁵⁵ Malov 1882, 6

⁵⁶ NA CGIGN t.215, l.100

⁵⁷ NA CGIGN t.173, l.241-244

⁵⁸ Magnitskii 1881, 9; Spiridonov 1910, 1090; Vasiliev 1904, 256

⁵⁹ Ivanov 1905, 1036

Descriptions of this *kiremet* in the late 19th century show how elements of the biblical story had been interwoven into the Chuvash understanding of its origins.

This place is considered the place of the son of God: people gather from different communities and sacrifice a 3 year-old colt, boil it and eat it in honour of the *kiremet* at a gully in the forest at night, various other sacrifices are made and things are thrown in as at the Sorma *kiremet*. Not far from the village of Abashevo a verst away, in the forest on a hill, are some big stones – like a hearth. Here the Shiner *kiremet* in honour of the son of God is situated.⁶⁰

Although by the late 19th century *kiremet*s were associated with evil and seen as a source of illness and misfortune, Sboev maintained this was the result of missionaries labeling the Old Faith as devil worship, and that the original native understanding had associated *kiremet*s with both good and evil. This helps to explain how opposing elements of the biblical story referring to the fall of Satan, but also to the incarnation of Christ and the prophet Elijah had become attached to *kiremet*s. Among the Cheremys ‘*Keremet* is the younger brother of Iuma (God), cast out of heaven for pride. At the creation of the world and man *Keremet* ruined God’s creation and spit out man’ whereas ‘for the Chuvash, *Kiremet* is the elder son of the Supreme god, who travelled in a chariot about the earth spreading prosperity everywhere, but was killed by humans and so is bitter towards them.’⁶¹

M.Vasiliev, seeking to demythologize the *kiremet*s and trace their human origins in 1904, linked them to Chuvash beliefs concerning the spirits of the dead, who were considered to retain their earthly character and activities in the afterlife, and so needed to be given food, clothing and favourite objects if the living were not to incur their wrath. Good and bad ancestors thus became good and evil *kiremet*s, but as it was evil people who made evil demands, greater attention was paid to them. This connection with the spirits of the dead meant *kiremet*s often stood near burial sites, abandoned cemeteries and the mounds of ancient settlements. Thus in Koz`modem`iansk

⁶⁰ Magnitskii 1881, 11

⁶¹ Zolotnitskii 1877a, 24

district there was a *kiremet* associated with two thieves captured by the Cheremys, who brought sacrifices to them to avert revenge. The origin of the Sorma *kiremet* was attributed to one of Pugachev's generals who was captured and hung on a birch tree at this spot. Near Shumatovo in Iadrin district until the 1850s stood an elm tree known as Priests' Elm as two of the Shumatovo clergy had been hung there during Pugachev's revolt. Nearby had stood another oak where the bodies of a further 32 people hung by Pugachev had been buried. The trees had long since been cut down and the oak replaced by a chapel 'but the people know well the places where they stood and throw wax candles and copper coins at the tree stumps.'⁶²

The *kiremet* as a sanctuary is described by Nikol'skii as a square of land in a gully or field, with a fence around it, 40-60 sazhen (80-120 metres) east to west and 50 sazhen (100 metres) north to south. There were 3 gates, on the southern side to bring water, on the western side for people to enter, and on the eastern side to bring in sacrificial animals. Towards the east of the *kiremet* was a sacrificial altar with two pillars linked by a cross beam where pots for boiling meat hung. To the west of the altar stood a 3-sided building, open to the east. There was also a hut with its door facing east where sacrifices were eaten.⁶³ Such sanctuaries had guardians who kept the site clean and made sure the sacredness of the location was not desecrated, that no one cut down the trees, scythed the grass, caught fish in its rivers and lakes, or stole the money brought as offerings. Families would also bring offerings by a sacrificial tree in the yard of their homes.⁶⁴

The replacement of Old Chuvash sacred sites

Among the Chuvash a variety of tactics were adopted to shake beliefs about the *kiremet*. One of the leaders of the Cheremys religious movement, Mikhail Gerasimov, was reputed to have slept in a tent at the cemetery to show it was not frightening, and to have cut down a sacred grove near

⁶² Vasiliev 1904, 242-243, 251-252

⁶³ Nikol'skii 1908, 126

⁶⁴ Ibid. 125

the village of Tsyganovo where he put up a cross where he also slept.⁶⁵ A.P.Prokop`ev's mother was convinced her husband had died due to cutting down the *kiremet* trees.⁶⁶ Gerasimov's example was followed by the Chuvash Kozma Ivanov who built himself a cell on the site of an ancient cemetery and *kiremet* known as *Sar tavan Surche* (hill of the friend-relative from Rus) which stood on a high hill near the main east-west Kazan to Moscow road. Ivanov lived there for 18 years until a Chuvash monastery dedicated to St Alexander Nevsky was founded with a church, consecrated on 15th July 1903, standing near the cemetery. Until Ivanov built his cell, Chuvash from neighbouring villages had gathered at the cemetery, where the stumps of ancient oaks remained, for prayer to *Sar tavan kiremet*. Fr T.Zemlianitskii, describing the monastery in 1904, suggested that their sacrifices were originally made to appease the god of the people of Rus, who in their movements back and forward along the highway brought misfortune and death to the Chuvash and Cheremys. In 1904 there were 45 monks and Zemlianitskii hoped that 'soon this monastery would flourish and become, as a replacement to *Sar tavan*, a centre of enlightenment for local Chuvash if a school was opened and church services held in Chuvash.'⁶⁷

This replacement of the old sacred sites by churches and monasteries, as we have also seen above at the Priests' Elm in Shumatovo, is a common feature of 19th century texts. Another significant example is that of Bagil`dino in Tsivil`sk district where in the 1870s all the churches were largely empty apart from Bagil`dino where much-venerated icons of St Nicholas and the Theotokos 'Joy of all who sorrow' drew many pilgrims.⁶⁸ Iznoskov attributed the current (1890s) religious revival among the Chuvash to the introduction of the native language in schools and churches without discussing the possible role of these icons in paving the way for the later revival.

⁶⁵ Prokop`ev 1906, 333

⁶⁶ Ibid. 327

⁶⁷ Zemlianitskii 1904, 1555-1557

⁶⁸ Iznoskov 1897, 220

Before the 1830s the local Chuvash had gathered at a *kiremet* at some elm trees in the Kunar forest a few versts from Bagil`dino church. According to local tradition, not far from the trees a Chuvash had dug up an icon of the crucifixion of the Saviour which he had given to the local mill-owner. News of the icon's appearance had caused even more Chuvash to visit the site, at first at night then more publicly in daylight. When the Bagil`dino priest Fr Ioann Akramovskii ordered the trees to be chopped down, the Chuvash continued to go there so Akramovskii had a wooden chapel built and put icons from the church there. The wooden chapel burnt down due to a lighted candle and a stone church was built which, due to a legal dispute with a neighbouring parish over ownership of the site, was eventually taken down and the icons taken to Bagil`dino church. Since then, pilgrims went to the church rather than the *kiremet* according to an 1872 IKE report,<sup>69</sup> whereas Magnitskii writing in 1877 tells us that Chuvash pilgrims on their way to Ishaki and other locations would call in at both Bagil`dino church and at the Kunar *kiremet*.

The use of native-language preaching was thus introduced at Bagil`dino after the Chuvash religious rites had already been diverted to some extent from the *kiremet* to the church. With Synodal approval given to use of the native language in 1883, regular preaching in Chuvash by Fr Peter Afonskii began at Bagil`dino church on 16th October 1883 and it is evident from the church's record of services that he was particularly asked to preach on days when the Chuvash held their own Old Faith rites. On Pentecost Memorial Saturday 1886 he conducted all the services including the panikhida and 'At the Liturgy he preached in Chuvash about how the dead should not be commemorated with beer, vodka and a memorial meal, but by prayer, almsgiving and bringing the bloodless sacrifice.'⁷⁰ In his sermon at Easter 1885 he reminded the Chuvash that 'on the holy days of Easter it is not right to give oneself over to drunkenness and lack of restraint'.⁷¹

⁶⁹ "Chudotvornye i osobenno mestnochtimye ikony" 1872, 401

⁷⁰ CIA CR f.247, op.1, d.50, l.40

⁷¹ Ibid. l.27v

Pilgrimage to sacred places among the Chuvash

Another aspect of the Old Chuvash Faith was travelling to a sacred place, object, or person. Fr Alexei Rekeev tells us that when Chuvash moved to live in a new location, the *kiremet* spirit stayed in the old location and the Chuvash continued to pray to it from afar 'but sometimes the *kiremet* in the old place is not satisfied with worship from afar and requires that those who have moved come to it and worship in person – then the Chuvash have to go on pilgrimage whether they like it or not.'⁷² A.P.Prokop`ev's grandmother was a fervent adherent of the Old Faith and when someone in the family fell ill and her own wisdom was not enough 'she travelled far to *iomzis*'.⁷³ The Chuvash in Maslova did not travel to the popular pilgrimage destination of Ishaki as they had an *irikh*-spirit known as Melim-Khuzia which dwelt in a square board of birchwood, like an icon without any depiction, in a barn in their village. The name came from that of a Tatar sheikh Malium-Khodzha who had visited Maslova and was buried beyond the Volga. Chuvash would come from other districts to bring a coin to Melim-Khuzia and request his help.⁷⁴

A marked feature of Chuvash popular devotion in the late 19th century was pilgrimage to Christian holy places. Magnitskii in 1877 explained why distant chapels were more readily frequented than the parish churches.

Up to the present time the Chuvash do not very willingly attend parish churches, preferring to them chapels, often 20 versts or so away from the place where they live. Undoubtedly, the strangeness of the latter phenomenon can be explained by the fact that the chapels on the whole stand in isolated places and this, more than anything else, is a favourable condition for prayers getting a favourable response at the *kiremet*s. For this reason, the Chuvash always choose midnight as a time for leaving to worship at a Christian holy place or *kiremet*.⁷⁵

⁷² Rekeev 1896, 422

⁷³ Prokop`ev 1906, 328

⁷⁴ Magnitskii 1876, 54-55

⁷⁵ Magnitskii 1881, 224

Apart from Ishaki and Bagil`dino there was a chapel at Opolzino visited by Cheremys and Chuvash from Cheboksary, Tsivil`sk and Tsarevokokshaisk districts. A chapel at Il`inskaia on the banks of the Volga held an 8-pointed cross brought in 1695 and venerated by Chuvash and Russians.⁷⁶ Viktor Zaikov wrote in 1890 that the *iomzi* in his parish of Koshelei had started to tell the Chuvash to go on pilgrimage to Khormaly and Ishaki to put up candles to St Basil the Great instead of animal sacrifices and other rites.⁷⁷ Veneration of the icon of St Nicholas at Ishaki is the most prominent example of such adaptation of Chuvash traditional rites to Orthodoxy.

The pilgrimage to Ishaki and icon veneration among the Chuvash

The reasons for going to Ishaki were varied. In the 1870s in Iadrin district, after the spring sowing, beer was brewed in honour of the Sorma *kiremet*, then prayers and offerings were held in the fields, after which one member of the community was selected to set off to venerate the icon of St Nicholas at Ishaki.⁷⁸ Arkhangel`skii, also describing the Old Faith in Iadrin district, wrote that when someone fell ill, blood sacrifices were made, but if there was no improvement

the *iomzi* would in the end advise someone in the family to go to (...) Ishaki to pray to St Nicholas and put up as many candles as the *iomzi* said.

Although he added

it is already [i.e. 1899] rare that the *iomzi* recommends sacrifices. Now they usually advise (...) either to go to Ishaki (...) or to put up candles to the icon of the Saviour in the parish church.⁷⁹

Ostroumov, describing the rites connected with illness among the Chuvash in general in 1876, says that after the *iomzi* by means of divination had discovered which god had been angered, they would send a relative to put up two candles before an icon corresponding to the Chuvash

⁷⁶ Ibid. 227-8

⁷⁷ Zaikov 1890, 176

⁷⁸ Spiridonov 1910, 1090

⁷⁹ CNM f.20, 5,12

god in the parish church. A third candle was broken into pieces according to the number of chapels along the way home, where they were left so that the small chapel gods would ask for healing before the god where the main candle had been put. In cases of serious illness, the *iomzi* would order candles to be put in especially sacred places, at crossroads, on bridges and sacred trees, or before an 'appeared' wonderworking icon such as that at Ishaki.⁸⁰ In Musirma, Tsivil'sk district in the 1880s

If someone falls ill they go on pilgrimage to Ishaki and on the way back call in at Tsivil'sk monastery, Bagil'dino and Kovali as the Musirma parishioners say that the old God lives in Kovali.⁸¹ From the Kovali church they set off for their own parish church and put up candles there. The order of visiting churches is not infringed. When someone in the family goes to Ishaki, those at home do not put up candles before the icons at home before he has returned and been in the parish church.⁸²

Magnitskii in 1877 wrote that Ishaki was visited even by unbaptised Chuvash and Cheremys.⁸³ P. Mike, describing Tsivil'sk district in 1898, wrote that it was above all the pagan Chuvash, or the baptised not yet affected by the educational movement, who called St Nicholas 'Nikola-god' and went to put up candles in Ishaki on the advice of the *iomzi* when someone fell ill or misfortunes befell the cattle, the bees or the crops.⁸⁴

The pilgrim would set out with precise instructions from the *iomzi* as to how many candles to put before which icons.⁸⁵ According to Mike, they would wrap up the promised offering, often a 25-kopeck coin, and put it in a place where nobody would notice,⁸⁶ whereas a description emphasizing how christianized the Chuvash were in 1910, says the coin was put before the

⁸⁰ Ostroumov 1876, 402-3

⁸¹ CIA CR f.498, op.1, d.1, l.19v The Musirma parish was formed in 1882 from villages which formerly belonged to Kovali parish.

⁸² Ibid. l.19v

⁸³ Magnitskii 1881, 227

⁸⁴ Mike 1904, 725-6

⁸⁵ Zolotnitskii 1875, 167. CGIGN Otd. 1, t.166, l.218

⁸⁶ Mike 1904, 726

domestic icons.⁸⁷ The pilgrim would set out in secret, usually at night, so that no one would notice their absence from the village, and so that the sacrifice ‘would be pleasing to the menacing Russian god.’⁸⁸ By 1910 preparations involved the family washing in the banya, then one family member going to the local church to put up candles so that the local icons would not begrudge the veneration of a distant, unfamiliar saint, then on the road the pilgrim was to be a model Christian and ‘try to behave himself as well as possible, avoid superfluous affairs and conversations with other travelers.’⁸⁹ He was to have no arguments or even listen to them.⁹⁰ The pilgrim took nothing with him and was to bring nothing back apart from one candle for the local church.⁹¹

On arrival in Ishaki, according to Magnitskii in 1877

the Chuvash have no intention of serving a *moleben* as Russians and Cheremys do, but only to light a candle and make their request to God, often in the form of a threat (...) As they leave the church in Ishaki, the Chuvash light candles and leave money and pieces of bread by the brick chapel by the fence at the carved Crucifix by the outer wall of the church, on the door at the entrance under the belltower, by the wooden chapel at the spring where, according to tradition, the wonderworking icon of St Nicholas was ‘found’. According to the parish priest, the carved Crucifix was once hidden, but following constant enquiries about where it had gone, it was once again put out; on the door under the belltower the Chuvash continue to put candles and money only because in this spot under the old belltower the icon stood; as a result of the enormous daily throng of Chuvash pilgrims, even from the Samara and Orenburg provinces (...) poor Chuvash manage to collect whole sacks of pieces of bread and then dry small pieces for sale by the *pud*.⁹²

According to Zolotnitskii the pilgrims bought bread buns specially made in the village, and by the chapel stood a chest for the bread so that dogs and raven would not eat the vast offerings that

⁸⁷ S.M. 1910, 783

⁸⁸ Mike 1904, 726

⁸⁹ S.M. 1910, 783

⁹⁰ Mike 1904, 726

⁹¹ Ostroumov 1876, 403

⁹² Magnitskii 1881, 227-8

accumulated.⁹³ A 1910 article emphasized that the Chuvash already ordered molebens before the icon, whereas formerly they had splashed vodka on the chapel wall and thrown pieces of bread into the spring.⁹⁴ In a less flattering 1909 report by a graduate of the Kazan Missionary Courses, G. Stepanov, he tells us that pilgrims put up a candle with a request to punish their enemies.⁹⁵

If Chuvash made their requests as a threat, it was due to their ideas about a very human St Nicholas. He was considered to be capricious and would complain to God if pilgrims did not venerate him alone which was why on the way home some Chuvash did not call in at other parish churches.⁹⁶ Fr Vasilii Smelov in 1880 reports two humorous stories about how St Nicholas and God came down to earth and got lost. God sent St Nicholas in the direction of some smoke to enquire of the way, and he found a banya where a woman was giving birth. ‘Nikola, mistaking the banya for an izba, decided to walk straight into the banya; but he had scarcely opened the door when the midwife flew at him shouting, “Where do you think you’re going, you Russian?” and hit Nikola with her switch of branches.’ An angry Nikola returned to God and asked him to deprive the newly-born of happiness in life, at which his parents and their livestock died, their house and possessions all burnt down, and the crops were ruined by hail.⁹⁷

According to G. Stepanov in 1909 ‘St Nicholas is considered the most angry god and some are afraid of venerating him, fearing to anger him. They think he is a pagan idol or kiremet.’⁹⁸ The Chronicle of Musirma parish, Tsvil’sk district tells us ‘They call St Nicholas God and believe he demands they put up candles in Ishaki or will send illness to the family.’⁹⁹ Zolotnitskii gives an example of a prayer at Ishaki to Migula-tora (Nikola-god) ‘Look here, Mikola-god! Perhaps my

⁹³ CGIGN Otd. 1, t.166, l.218 Zolotnitskii 1875, 168

⁹⁴ S.M. 1910, 783

⁹⁵ CGIGN Otd. 1, t.166, l.217

⁹⁶ S.M. 1910, 784

⁹⁷ Smelov 1881, 243-261

⁹⁸ CGIGN Otd. 1, t.166, l.218

⁹⁹ GIA CR f.498, op.1, d.1, l.19v.

neighbor Maxim has said something to you about me or tells tales. Don't you listen to him. I've done nothing wrong to him and wish him no evil – he's a good-for-nothing and a show-off.'¹⁰⁰

The significance attached to the Ishaki icon is shown by the fact that, if a person could not go themselves, there were a variety of means of showing that you intended to go but for the moment could not, or of replacing the trip entirely. The Iadrin Chuvash had chapels on the market squares in Khora-kasy, Ikkovo and Unga where they could pass on candles to Ishaki.¹⁰¹

Sometimes a Chuvash would add another coin to the one already promised and ask Nikola to wait. If all else failed others 'take the coin secretly at night out into the yard and throw it into the neighbour's yard. (...) In this way the duty of venerating the Ishaki icon is transferred to the neighbour. The one finding such a coin sees it as a bad omen and sets off immediately for Ishaki despite all obstacles. Sometimes people take the promised coin out into a field and throw it in the direction of Ishaki.'¹⁰²

The role of icons in Chuvash religious culture in the late 19th century

Although the Ishaki icon was the most revered, there were other icons to which the Chuvash went on pilgrimage, or to which they called in on their way to Ishaki. The Tikhvin icon in Tsivil'sk had 'appeared' to a local widow when Stenka Razin's Cossacks, together with local Chuvash and Cheremys, besieged the town in October 1671. According to local tradition, after a two-week siege the Cossacks, Chuvash and Cheremys went blind and began fighting among themselves. This was attributed to the Theotokos, and Chuvash in their hundreds visited the Tsivil'sk monastery to put up candles, especially on market day.¹⁰³ The carved, human-size icon of St Nicholas at the Cheboksary men's monastery was also much venerated and carried around

¹⁰⁰ Zolotnitskii 1875, 167; See Znamenski 1999, 222 and Ablazhei 2005, 138 for how St Nicholas had been absorbed into indigenous religious practices among the Altaians and the Khanty.

¹⁰¹ Spiridonov 1910, 1091

¹⁰² S.M. 1910, 784

¹⁰³ "Chudotvornye i osobenno..." 1872, 393

nearby villages on certain feastdays.¹⁰⁴ There was a wonderworking Vladimir icon of the Theotokos in the village of Vladimirskoe in Koz`modem`iansk district which in the 1870s ‘visited’ Koz`modem`iansk for 10 days every June and since 1847 visited local Cheremys villages annually. The icon had been brought in 1587 to the Koz`modem`iansk fort, built to protect the town from Cheremys and Chuvash attacks. Pilgrims were attracted by miraculous events such as the end of an outbreak of plague in 1654 after a procession with the icon, the icon alone being saved when the church was burnt down around 1690 by the pagan Cheremys, as well as 9 other miracles recorded between 1764 and 1839. In 1847-48, during a cholera epidemic, the icon had visited native villages associated with the Cheremys religious movement such as Malaia and Bol`shaia Iunga, Perniagashi, Chermyshevo, Shapkili and Maly Sundyr.¹⁰⁵

The miracles associated with veneration of these icons are undoubtedly one reason icons played a prominent role in Chuvash traditional rites by the 1870s. When a Chuvash fell ill, the *iomzi* would discover by divination which god had been angered. Bread, wax, water and icons were used in this process. The names of gods would be listed and if a piece of bread on a thread moved in a certain way when a god was named, the *iomzi* knew he or she was angry. ‘Usually divination was carried out using all the gods not excluding the domestic god i.e. the saint whose face was depicted on the icon in the home of the sick person.’¹⁰⁶ The *iomzi* would send a relative to place candles in the local church. ‘The fortune-teller indicates before which icon to put candles. The Chuvash have many gods and the fortune-tellers know which church icon corresponds to which Chuvash god.’¹⁰⁷ At the harvest rites of *Chukleme*, the leader of the rites would turn to the icon and pray ‘Tora, have mercy, do not abandon us! God-in-the-corner! [i.e.the icon] Save us from all evil!’¹⁰⁸ When Chuvash gathered to remember the dead on Thursday or Friday evening for six weeks after the death, each would put up a candle before the

¹⁰⁴ Magnitskii 1881, 229

¹⁰⁵ “Chudotvornye i osobenno...” 1872, 23-25

¹⁰⁶ Ostroumov 1876, 402

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. 402

¹⁰⁸ Zolotnitskii 1875, 219

icons or on the wall near the *izba* door, then break off a piece of each kind of food, and pour wine saying ‘May this be before (name of the departed)!’ Those who received a large inheritance from a dead relative would take his icons into their home ‘and in this way, as it were, replace the departed and take on themselves the duties of the departed towards the god of the *izba* and the ancestors.’¹⁰⁹

It is noticeable in the reports by the first Chuvash Orthodox priests that they emphasized the use of icons in Orthodox rites, and used them when challenging continuing traditional rites, as we have seen already in the building of chapels and churches at *kiremets*. When the inhabitants of thirty villages in the Tsivil’sk district went to carry out traditional sacrifices near a sacred lake due to poor crops in 1889, the new native priest served the Liturgy, then gathered all the faithful Orthodox and went with icons in procession to the place of sacrifice. He served a *moleben* and then tried to prove to the gathered Chuvash the uselessness of blood sacrifice, causing an angry uproar.¹¹⁰

Fr Viktor Zaikov reported in 1890 from Koshelei that the procession with icons at Easter went from house to house with school pupils singing and all, old and young, joining in with loud and joyful singing of ‘Christ is risen’. His parishioners received with equal joy the Cross at Christmas and holy water at Theophany.¹¹¹ When Fr Grigorii Filippov arrived in the parish of Bichurino in May 1890 he was asked to go on procession with icons to the fields due to drought, although in only one village did many Chuvash take part. After carrying out catechetical talks with the help of school pupils the Chuvash agreed more readily to have their homes blessed with icons and holy water and he blessed the rye before sowing.¹¹²

In his 1890 report on the Musirma parish, Fr Daniil Filimonov expresses concern at the Chuvash syncretistic understanding of icons which he explained as follows

¹⁰⁹ Smelov 1881, 258-259

¹¹⁰ Mike 1904, 703-4

¹¹¹ Zaikov 1890, 176-7

¹¹² Filippov 1891, 124-127

Seeing how Russians venerate holy icons the Chuvash themselves began to have a reverential attitude to religious objects venerated by Russians. The Chuvash were taught then (and unfortunately even now some teach) that each icon is *Tura* i.e. God. In the end the Chuvash acquired a false impression of icons as of Russian or church gods. The Chuvash native understanding of God and of their relationship to Him remained as before – pagan. True Orthodox teaching about God, the Mother of God, angels, saints and icons and their veneration was not assimilated by the Chuvash. As a result, in their heads they transferred their basic pagan view onto Christian holy objects; accepting Christianity as the Russian faith, they understood it in their own way, and acquired the same attitude towards icons and churches as they had towards their kiremets, as earthly, evil, secondary divinities. The only difference was that they began to relate to icons as Russian divinities and not as their own Chuvash divinities.¹¹³

In 1894 Filimonov was transferred as priest to Ishaki in order to direct the Two-class Teachers' School and to preach in Chuvash to the crowds of pilgrims. During 1894-5 he and two other teachers at the school wrote two brochures in Chuvash, one explaining holy communion and another about the icon of St Nicholas at Ishaki, 3000 copies of which were published by the Brotherhood of St Gurii for free distribution to pilgrims.¹¹⁴ Filimonov was concerned not only that the Chuvash should have a truly Orthodox understanding of the icon, but also that icons should be painted in a canonical way, and to this end opened an icon-painting workshop in 1896 at Ishaki School. In a report for BSG Filimonov explained the reasons for the workshop and described the Chuvash view of the icon in his childhood in the 1860s.

Not all will paint icons: only those who wish, are capable and godly. Sinful icon-painters in Chuvash villages could offend the religious feeling of their fellow Chuvash who, despite their lack of development concerning Christianity, have particular ideas about icons (...). When I was small and lived at home I heard from my fellow villagers that holy images are painted by righteous people. And truly, in olden times, icons were painted in Rus not by pipesmokers and

¹¹³ Filimonov 1890, 98-99

¹¹⁴ Iznoskov 1895, 269

drunkards, but by pious and god-fearing people, mainly in the monasteries. It is desirable and even necessary that icon-painting at the Ishaki missionary school should be organized on the principles of old Russia.¹¹⁵

Filimonov was particularly concerned that cheap icons in bright colours and with the clothing cut out of silver paper were flooding Chuvash villages and he hoped that icons painted at Ishaki School would replace them.¹¹⁶

P. Mike describes the use of the Ishaki booklet on icons in an attempt to correct the Chuvash view of the icon by a zealous Chuvash Christian in the village of Teneevo where Fr Daniil Filimonov had been instrumental in opening a school in 1887, and building a school-church in 1891. When grain had gone missing from a communal barn, all the men of the village had decided to meet at the village *kiremet*, a gully where a huge oak had formerly stood. According to the Old Faith, each man had to stand before the tree stump with earth in his mouth and swear an oath asking God that his body would dry up like the stump if he was guilty of the crime. On hearing of this intention, the school teacher had sent Sergei Alexandrov, the literate Christian in whose home he lived, to the village assembly to persuade the men to give up their pagan practices.

We baptised people should not pray by a tree somewhere in the gully; the place for prayer is God's church and there before the holy icons we should pray to God asking him for help and protection, and not before a soulless tree.

Alexandrov then read the Ishaki booklet on icons, but when he finished they began to object.

You tell us that worshipping God in the gully is idolatry. Is it not the same as your worship of icons? They are made from wood with human hands; so you, just like us, are praying to a tree.

¹¹⁵ Iznoskov 1895, 270

¹¹⁶ Ibid. 271

Alexandrov tried to further explain the Orthodox understanding of icons and told them how he had been healed of an illness brought on by his mother's curse, when they had both gone on pilgrimage to Kazan and Sviazhsk where they had asked forgiveness before the wonderworking icon of St Nicholas in Kiushki then venerated the relics of the Kazan wonderworkers. According to Mike, Alexandrov's story made such an impression on the Chuvash that they decided not to take the oath, and Mike continues by emphasizing the great reverence unbaptised Chuvash have for the Ishaki icon.¹¹⁷ The incident shows how icons had become a point of correspondence between the role of the sacred tree in both the Old Faith and Christian Orthodoxy.

A further example of the reverential attitude to icons among the Chuvash in the 1890s illustrates also their love and veneration for Nikolai Il'minskii, and the christianisation of their rites for the dead. In Fr A.Rekeev's speech to Archbishop Vladimir of Kazan at the consecration of the church in Baiglychevo on 19th June 1894 he said

The local Chuvash knew well the kind Nikolai Ivanovich and do not forget him even now; many of them have written his name in their commemoration list and pray for the repose of his soul. (...) Owing to all his good deeds for the Baiglychevo parish they wanted to erect in their new church, in memory of him, an identical copy of the iconostasis before which the unforgettable Nikolai Ivanovich prayed daily.¹¹⁸

A striking account of how pilgrimage and an icon were used to encourage the Chuvash to abandon the Old Faith occurs in the Chronicle of the Church of the Tikhvin Icon in Musirma, Tsivil'sk district, and also involves¹¹⁹ the former Altai missionary, Archbishop Vladimir, who presided over a Liturgy at the church on 19th September 1893. Two choirs were formed from 75 pupils of local schools, and so many parishioners attended that it took two hours for them all to venerate the cross at the end of the service. When the Archbishop asked them to do something

¹¹⁷ Mike 1904, 724-5

¹¹⁸ I.e. The iconostasis at KTS. Ivanov 1894, 6-7

¹¹⁹ GIA CR f.498, op.1, d.1 Letopis' Tikhvinskoi tserkvi

special to commemorate this event, the villagers made an agreement to no longer turn to the *iomzi* for advice, nor carry out sacrifices or open wine stalls.

In response the Archbishop decided to give them an icon of the Tikhvin Mother of God but rather than just sending the icon, he asked the new priest, Fr Gavriil Spiridonov, and his parishioners to walk to Ishaki to attend the consecration of a new church and receive the icon. The parishioners expressed 'willingness to go for the icon. The pupils of the parish schools with their teachers set off on foot for Ishaki in good time.'¹²⁰ On 14th June 1894, after walking for two days, 300 members of the Musirma parish received the icon from Archbishop Vladimir who reminded them of their promise to leave their pagan ways and asked Fr Gavriil to repeat his words in Chuvash in Musirma. The icon was carried home accompanied by the singing of the school pupils. On the first evening they reached Tsivil'sk where the icon was placed overnight in a chapel on the Market Square before being met next morning by a procession of all the town's clergy and parishioners who accompanied the icon to the Tsivil'sk Monastery for the Liturgy. When the icon set off again it was met in each village with bread and salt and a moleben was served. On the evening of 15th June the icon was placed in the school-church in Staro-Arabosy where the Novoisheevo clergy served a moleben next day before accompanying the icon to the edge of the village. As the icon approached Musirma the bells rang and the villagers gathered to accompany the icon to their parish church. The parishioners sent a message to the Archbishop saying that 'apart from minor exceptions they had all left their pagan rites and customs.' Not entirely satisfied, the Archbishop replied that they were all to tell their relatives to give up pagan ways so that 'not one servant of the devil remained'.¹²¹

In this situation we see Archbishop Vladimir attaching the commitment to abandon pagan ways to a memorable and undoubtedly enjoyable communal pilgrimage to Ishaki, and to the visual reminder of the parish Tikhvin Icon. Not only would this have brought new, positive content to

¹²⁰ Ibid. I.8

¹²¹ Ibid. I.9-9v.

the local understanding of making a pilgrimage to Ishaki, but the pilgrimage undoubtedly drew the Chuvash Christian parishes of Tsivil'sk district into greater unity with each other, with the Christian Chuvash around Ishaki where their much-loved priest Daniil Filimonov was now serving, and with the Archbishop himself.

With the increasing knowledge of the Russian language and sense of praying to the Russian God, Chuvash began to go further afield than the holy places on Chuvash territory. We have seen above how a mother and son travelled to Kazan and Sviazhsk to venerate the relics of the Kazan wonderworkers. A.P.Prokop'ev's mother, on abandoning the Old Faith 'decided to travel around the monasteries and pray only to one God.'¹²² In 1910 Daniil Filimonov wrote 'Within the last 20-30 years religious natives have begun to go on pilgrimage to monasteries. During the Apostles' Fast and Lent they go to take communion in the monasteries, order prayers for the departed, make offerings of bread, money, farm animals etc. Nothing similar could be observed among the natives previously.'¹²³ Nevertheless, with the concern for inner change typical of Filimonov's texts and undoubtedly inherited from Il'minskii and Iakovlev, he continues 'But I haven't once heard stories of what instruction and spiritual comfort the soul receives in the monasteries, what inner change took place, in which monastery their uneasy conscience found peace, where and which *startsy* gave them soul-saving advice.'¹²⁴

Il'minskii wrote to Pobedonostsev in 1886 about his concern that a 26 year-old pupil of SCTS had taken a liking to travelling to distant holy places including a desire to go to Jerusalem, but Il'minskii was concerned about the negative impression that would be made on him by the clumsy behavior of the Russian pilgrims, the thieving Greek monks and the mutual hostility of the Christian confessions.¹²⁵ Fr Gavriil Spiridonov in 1910 also attributed the increasing numbers of Chuvash becoming monastics or going on pilgrimage to Jerusalem or Mount Athos,

¹²² Prokopiev 1906, 336

¹²³ Filimonov 1910, 759

¹²⁴ Ibid. 759-60

¹²⁵ Il'minskii 1895, 188

to the spiritual movement which had arisen due to the use of the native language in churches.¹²⁶

Il'minskii again wrote in 1890 of how Chuvash of Kazan province had gone to the Sedmiozerskii and Raifskii monasteries¹²⁷ for communion in Lent, including two who had walked 350 versts from Samara province, which he considered to be the effect of a local native school.¹²⁸

There is other evidence, apart from icons, of how the sacred tree had been christianized or, more precisely, spiritualized, in the understanding of some Chuvash by the first decade of the 20th century. The Chuvash peasant Feodor Odeke had met Il'minskii and Iakovlev in the 1860s and begun to preach Christianity among his fellow villagers in Maloe Karachkino, Iadrin district, where he was instrumental in building the church consecrated in 1870. The schoolteacher, A.P.Prokop'ev, tells us that he deliberately used the image of the tree in order to christianise Old Faith beliefs. 'I need to plant a vast tree, beautiful with strong main branches and smaller branches on which wonderful fruit would grow and ripen, and wonderful nightingales and canaries would sing.' He explained that the tree was the church, the main branches – schools with pupils, the fruit – spiritual food, the nightingales and canaries – the singing of boys and girls at the church. Prokop'ev wrote that Odeke had Il'minskii, Iakovlev and Archbishop Antonii of Kazan in mind in this image and 'Through his raptures over the singing of allegorical birds he tried to uproot the precious pagan beliefs of the Chuvash.'¹²⁹

In December 1901 the curator of the Kazan Educational District wrote to Iakovlev asking him to implement more speedily a directive about holding a 'tree planting festival'. While we thus know that this festival was part of a wider government policy, the way the staff of SCTS chose to implement the directive reveals their understanding of the role of trees in the Chuvash traditional beliefs and lifestyle, and their concern to christianize these. They decided to plant 500 trees in the festive days after Easter, including oaks, elms and birches which commonly grew at the

¹²⁶ Spiridonov 1910, 1093

¹²⁷ Both located near Kazan.

¹²⁸ Il'minskii 1895, 340

¹²⁹ Prokop'ev 1906, 328-330

kiremet. They planted saplings but also seeds so that the school would have saplings for future tree planting festivals which would have ‘a greater degree of educational significance’. Near the school’s church they planted linden, elm and yellow acacia as ‘later on we should set up an apiary precisely on this spot.’¹³⁰

Beekeeping was not only a traditional occupation among the Chuvash, but also one associated with the *kiremet*, and especially a *kiremet* at Vyla in Tsivil’sk district which was thought by the Chuvash ‘to have no beginning; it is older than all the others. (...) Around it there were many beehives from which the priest (*zhrets*) took honey and made a drink which he brought as an offering to the *kiremet*.’¹³¹ Although the documents do not tell us Iakovlev aimed to replace this particular *kiremet*, by associating trees and beehives with a Christian place of worship and the Christian festival of Easter, Iakovlev was acting in accordance with Il’minskii’s emphasis on replacing rather than simply destroying the Old Faith. As we can see in this example, replacement meant not removing but using the elements of the native culture, the tree, the beehive, the sacred location, and filling them with Christian significance.

Sacred trees and groves in the wider Eurasian religious worldview

Although the Chuvash scholar Salmin emphasizes the similarities between Chuvash sacred locations and sacrifices and the pre-Christian rites of Asian, mainly Turkic and Mongolian peoples: Huns, Tubalars, Altaians, Buriats,¹³² such beliefs and rites have persisted into recent times among other peoples considering themselves Jewish or Christian. Prayers and sacrifices at sacred trees and groves were a common feature of the pre-Christian religious rites of many European and Asian peoples and consequently their replacement or destruction is a feature of accounts of early missionary work.¹³³ Fox wryly remarks ‘The triumph of Christianity was

¹³⁰ GIA CR f.207, op.1, d.325, l.2-7

¹³¹ Nikol’skii 1908, 120

¹³² See Salmin 1994, 47, 49, 60, 94, 146. Salmin also emphasizes the similarities between Chuvash and Jewish rites, for example on pages 28, 61

¹³³ Fox 1988, 43-44, 127-8; Fletcher 1999, 51-53

accompanied by the sound of the axe on age-old arboreta.¹³⁴ In the account of St Cyril's (Constantine) mission to the Khazars, he exhorts the baptized people of Phoullae¹³⁵ to abandon their sacrifices beneath a great oak tree during a drought. He himself cuts down the oak with an axe and rain falls.¹³⁶ The sacred grove (*nemeton*) was an aspect of Celtic pre-Christian religious rites, and St Martin of Tours was miraculously saved from a falling sacred tree.¹³⁷ Brown claims a 'combination of missionary zeal with a sense of cultural superiority, backed by the use of force' were features not only of early medieval Europe where St Boniface felled the sacred oak at Geismar around 723, but also 'at much the same time, Christian Nestorian missionaries from Mesopotamia were waging their own war on the great sacred trees of the mountain slopes that rose above the Caspian.'¹³⁸

Yet there is also evidence that sacred trees and their sacrifices were not only destroyed, but accommodated into the Christian dispensation. That the sacred tree and natural elements such as lightning, the rainbow and the sun, had remained accommodated in the Christian mindset of the Caucasian Christians to the west of the Caspian Sea in the late 7th century,¹³⁹ is evident from the account of Bishop Israyel of Mec Kolmank's search for the relic of Christ's cross hidden by Mesrob Mashtots at a church in Gis in Caucasian Albania.

He was not able, however, to ascertain the exact site thereof, but immediately a wonderful sign appeared over the cypresses surrounding the holy church on all sides. It shone in the shape of an arch like a flaming dawn on high, and drawing level with the dome, it completely enveloped it and shone brightly over the tops of the cypresses like a rainbow against the clouds, thus illuminating the solid, stone, tiled top of the dome where the cross of Christ lay at rest until it seemed to flash like lightning. (...) After a few days, on account of the great wonders and

¹³⁴ Fox 1988, 44

¹³⁵ Considered by scholars to be in the Crimea. See Dvornik 1970, 69

¹³⁶ *Zhitie Konstantina* 1981, 85-86.

¹³⁷ Thomas 1993, 78; Fletcher 1999, 45

¹³⁸ Brown 2013, 41

¹³⁹ Dowsett 1961, 55. Dowsett describes Dasxuranci's text as a compilation with the last redactor having written in the 11th/12th centuries. See Dowsett 1961, Introduction xx.

miracles which had appeared many times over the cypresses, he wished to consecrate them in the shape of the Lord's cross, and summoning skilled carpenters, he commissioned them to shape the trees into a cross with carved reliefs depicting the acts of the Lord.¹⁴⁰

A Life of the Celtic saint Teilo records how he and Samson 'planted a great grove of fruit-bearing trees, to the extent of three miles (...) and they are called the groves of Teilo and Samson.'¹⁴¹ Thomas remarks 'By planting an orchard Teilo and Samson were (...) showing that the fruitfulness and fertility so important to the pre-Christian Celtic religion also had a significant place in the Christian view of the nature of God's creation.'¹⁴²

Kolodny emphasizes that among the Turkic Karaims of the Crimea, believed to have adopted Karaite Judaism in the 8th century 'the cult of the sacred oaks of the ancestral cemetery has been preserved. At the end of the 19th century during a drought, in Chufut Kale¹⁴³ you could see a procession moving from the Kenasa (synagogue) to the cemetery. The name of the cemetery was significant 'Balta Tiimez' which means 'An axe will not touch it.' He reports the last Karaim Khan, S.Shapsal (1873-1961) as saying

our official religion, not being capable of standing up to popular traditions could not until the past century get rid of these exclusively pagan beliefs and rites which take us back to the time of Cyril and Methodius in the Crimea, or to the land of the Chuvash i.e. the banks of the Volga where once the lands of the Khazar state stretched.¹⁴⁴

Among the Armenians almost all Christian feast days were until the 20th century, and still are in some cases, accompanied by blood sacrifice *matal* which took place by a sacred tree, spring or stone. According to Sharf the tradition goes back to St Gregory the Illuminator who himself fixed the times of *matal* as a way of substituting Christian feasts for pagan ones.¹⁴⁵ Among the

¹⁴⁰ Dowsett Ibid. 139-141

¹⁴¹ Quoted in Thomas 1993, 78

¹⁴² Thomas 1993, 80

¹⁴³ The Karaim mountain fortress in the Crimea

¹⁴⁴ Kolodny, Filippovich 2005, 45-46

¹⁴⁵ Sharf 1982, 417-419, 448. See also *Armiane. Istoriia i etnokul'turnye traditsii*

Balkan Slavs ritual blood sacrifice *kurban* has persisted until recent times with a pig killed on a hill or by a sacred tree and the blood flowing into the ground to protect from evil spirits during *Sviatki*.¹⁴⁶ Sacred groves as cult locations were preserved until the 19-20th centuries in several regions of the Slavic world such as Bulgaria, Macedonia and Serbia where a *zapis* was a sacred tree marked with a cross consecrated on a local feast day, with sometimes lesser *zapis* surrounding the village on all sides to protect the village from lightning and bad weather.¹⁴⁷ Among the Gagauzes St George's Day is a feast almost greater than Easter as it marks the beginning of the summer livestock season. A lamb is sprinkled with holy water, censed and sacrificed by a senior male.¹⁴⁸ Gal'kovskii cites descriptions of religious rites connected with trees as late as the 17th century among the Russians and admits that the 'illiterate Russian woman' is still drawn by ancient tradition to the sacred trees and springs,¹⁴⁹ which would explain why Russian settlers among the Chuvash participated in their rites.

The Chuvash were not alone then in continuing blood sacrifice in sacred groves after their baptism into Orthodoxy, and we shall see in the next section how many features of the rites and festivals of the Chuvash annual cycle were similar to the religious practices of a wide range of Eurasian peoples. We have also seen that in several cases, perhaps most significantly among the Armenians, blood sacrifices by sacred trees were deliberately accommodated into the Christian worldview and practices, rather than simply being pagan practices that persisted due to lax clergymen or revolt against forced Christianization.

SACRED TIME

Spring festivals and rites

¹⁴⁶ Slavianskii Drevnosti 2009 t.3, 55-57

¹⁴⁷ Slavianskii Drevnosti 2009 t.2 67-68

¹⁴⁸ Kvilinkova 2001, 107-114

¹⁴⁹ Gal'kovskii 1916 t.1, 49-50, 60

Both Zolotnitskii and Komissarov tell us that the Chuvash annual cycle of festivals begins in *Noruz-oiykh*¹⁵⁰ from the Persian *No Roz* (new day) and Chuvash *ouykh* (moon/month), i.e. from the new moon in the middle or end of February.¹⁵¹ In Zoroastrian tradition, at this greatest festival of the year dead souls were released from hell to take part in the festival. After dwelling for the night in their former homes they left the earth as the New Year dawned.¹⁵² Yet Zolotnitskii notes that ‘now there is no trace of new year rites at this time.’¹⁵³ If the Chuvash had retained the name of the New Year festival still celebrated in March by Turkic (Tatar: *Novruz-aiu*) and Iranian peoples, yet carried out no rites, it was because the rites associated with the awakening of nature at the end of the winter, by Zolotnitskii’s time had become associated with the festival of *Savarni* (Chuv. Butter Week) celebrated near the time of Russian *Maslenitsa* (Cheesefare week, the final week before Lent). Arkhangelskii would seem to confirm this as he tells us that *Savarni* in pagan times had been celebrated by the Chuvash at the new moon.¹⁵⁴ Gal’kovskii considers that pagan Slav rites celebrated at the spring equinox had later been moved to before Lent or to Annunciation.¹⁵⁵

That *Savarni* had formerly not been attached to the church calendar was evidenced by the fact that in the 1870s it still began on the Thursday before Russian *Maslenitsa* with a day called Old Butter Day. The activities, games and songs of *Savarni* in the 1870s reflected the features of Russian *Maslenitsa* which were connected with fertility rites for the earth, such as scattering hempseed and burning a straw figure of *Maslenitsa* then scattering the ash on the fields, corresponding courtship rites for young people, commemoration of the dead, on whom the earth’s fertility was considered to depend, and prohibitions to protect animals from illness.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁰ *Narus* is February in modern Chuvash.

¹⁵¹ Zolotnitskii N.I. 1875, 191-2; Komissarov 1911, 382; Rittikh 1870, Part 2, 67

¹⁵² Boyce 1970, 513, 519

¹⁵³ Zolotnitskii 1875, 193

¹⁵⁴ Arkhangelskii 1910, 2

¹⁵⁵ Gal’kovskii 1916, 91-92

¹⁵⁶ Slavianskii Drevnosti 2009, t.3, 194-8

On Old Butter Day Chuvash villagers climbed to the top of a hill before dawn and then sledged down it, scattering hempseed and shouting ‘May the hemp be high!’ A straw figure was taken up the hill, which the sledgers bowed to.¹⁵⁷ The young people spent the week sledging, dancing, singing and eating pancakes as they were round like moon.¹⁵⁸ As the Chuvash traditionally began to court in the winter months before *Savarni*, young men would take their future brides sledging, and at the end of the week, sleigh-riding.¹⁵⁹ In the Chuvash year there were four times of rites for the dead, *khyvni*, when food would be prepared for the spirits of the ancestors who were believed to come as guests.¹⁶⁰ Winter rites for the dead were held during *Savarni* which began earlier than Maslenitsa as the Chuvash usually carried out rites of *khyvni* on a Thursday evening. Komissarov tells us that by 1910 Christian Chuvash were celebrating *Savarni* at exactly the same time as Maslenitsa.¹⁶¹

From the Thursday at the beginning of *Savarni* it was 7 weeks until the Thursday before *Paskha* when further rites for the dead were held, then another 7 weeks until the Thursday before Pentecost, known among the Chuvash as *Shimek*,¹⁶² and also associated with rites for the dead. Thus, in the 1870s, a key element of the Chuvash Old Faith, rites for departed ancestors, had been drawn close to the Orthodox calendar, yet still remained a predominant element over the Judaic or Christian understanding of the festivals. This will become clearer during discussion of rites at Easter and Pentecost.

Paskha (Easter)

When the Chuvash priest Mitrofan Dmitriev served in Malye Iaushi in Iadrin district from 1881, his parishioners were usually drunk on Holy Thursday and Friday as they celebrated their Paskha

¹⁵⁷ Magnitskii 1881, 101. Komissarov 1911, 384

¹⁵⁸ Salmin 1994, 29

¹⁵⁹ Komissarov 1911, 385

¹⁶⁰ Salmin 1994, 84-88

¹⁶¹ Ibid. 382

¹⁶² From Russian *Semik*, the name given to St. Simon's day, 10/23 May which falls in the pre-Pentecost season.

from Wednesday of Holy Week.¹⁶³ In his 1890 report on Musirma parish, Daniil Filimonov wrote that even the few families who still practised pagan rites had stopped celebrating Paskha on Holy Thursday the previous year.¹⁶⁴ Gavriil Spiridonov, describing the 1870s in Tsivil'sk district, said the Chuvash celebrated Paskha on different days, some on the Wednesday before Paskha and others together with Russians.¹⁶⁵

The Wednesday before Paskha was known among the Chuvash as *Kalym-kon*, the rites of which were connected with casting out evil. In the Bichurino parish the Chuvash would go at night to rivers, lakes and springs to catch sorceresses who were believed to turn into geese and ducks and steal things on this night. They would strike the water with whips or shoot it with guns to force the sorceresses to regain human form and give money as ransom.¹⁶⁶ In Iadrin district they tied rowan branches, considered sacred and used to protect from evil, to the windows and doors of houses to stop sorceresses from entering.¹⁶⁷ The same was done in Musirma, Tsivil'sk district on the Tuesday evening of Holy Week until the 1880s as 'on this evening witches meet together and seek ways to cause harm to those who have offended them. Forty-one people come to the meeting. Then the witches go home, set off on broomsticks to the homes of those they hate and try to take pieces of cloth from the shirts of those they want to punish, then go to the cemetery or *kiremet* where they express the desire that this person be punished.'¹⁶⁸ At *Kalym-kon* the Chuvash smoked orchards, gardens and apiaries to get rid of pests and they hid spindles until autumn so there would be fewer snakes in summer.¹⁶⁹ An offering of boiled millet was made to Tora in the yard of each house, with prayers thanking him for bringing them to this 'Great Day'

¹⁶³ Karchevskii 1906, 1446

¹⁶⁴ Filimonov 1890, 71

¹⁶⁵ Spiridonov 1910, 1089

¹⁶⁶ This explains the name of the day as *kalym* means 'bride price' and *kon* 'day'.

¹⁶⁷ Spiridonov 1910, *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ GIA CR f.498, op.1, d.1, l.18

¹⁶⁹ Magnitskii 1881, 104-5

and asking for goodness and health for all the family and their animals. The millet was then taken into the house where a festive meal was eaten and beer drunk.¹⁷⁰

The Great Day (Chuv. *Mun-kun*) mentioned in the prayer was the day of spring rites for the dead, and took place after *Kalym-kon*. By the late 19th century it was also known as Candles' Day as the rites began with putting up a candle for each departed relative by the door to the house.

Buns, pancakes, kasha and chicken were cooked and eggs were dyed, with portions set aside for the dead who were believed to visit and eat with their relatives.¹⁷¹ Although Christian Easter had taken the name *Mun-kun* among the Chuvash by the late 19th century, rites for the dead were held on different days in different parishes, on Holy Thursday or Saturday, or on the first or second day of Easter. A fire was made in a field on which old worn-out birch-bark shoes were burnt, and then the Chuvash would jump over the fire. They would invite the dead to warm themselves at the fire then come home to celebrate the Great Day, as at this time they were released from their graves.¹⁷² On the following days the young people would go round the houses and villages, eating, dancing and singing.¹⁷³

In Musirma, Tsivil'sk district

On Thursday of Holy Week they went early in the morning to the gully and burnt old birch-bark shoes and each householder took a bucket of beer outside. They did this so that the dead would be in new shoes. Then they boiled grain and commemorated the dead. All relatives commemorated together, first in one house, then in another until they had gone round all the homes dancing and fighting. (...) On the first day of Paskha young men and women went to Kovali not to take part in church services, but to watch the curious sight of a tarred barrel being burnt before Mattins.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. 106-7

¹⁷¹ Magnitskii 1881, 184. Komissarov 1911, 387

¹⁷² Magnitskii 1881, 183

¹⁷³ Komissarov 1911, 387

¹⁷⁴ GIA CR f.498, op.1, d.1, l.18v.

An event related to *Kalym-kon* and *Mun-kun* was known under the different names of *Suren*, *Sren* or in Iadrin district *Virem*, although Magnitskii describes them as two separate events.¹⁷⁵ *Virem* took place on either Thursday or Saturday of Holy Week, and often during the Paschal night. The young men would go from house to house hitting each person with willow branches, whirring rattles,¹⁷⁶ playing the zither and bagpipes and making as much noise as possible to chase out evil spirits. In return they received pies and eggs which they took to eat in a gully where the rattles and leftovers were thrown on the ground.¹⁷⁷ Arkhangel'skii wrote of Iadrin district that

annually on Saturday evening in Holy Week, barley is boiled in each home and, after eating a little, they drink beer and then the little children gather and run round all the houses with great shouts and with sticks of linden wood. Having run round the houses they chase the shaitans or the devil out of the village.¹⁷⁸

Rittikh describes 'the rite for casting the evil spirit out of the house which takes place on the same day as a sacrifice to the supreme god on Holy Friday.'¹⁷⁹ After prayers to Tora and a festive meal

each person praying arms themselves with a stick and begins to beat the walls, corners and different objects inside the izba. The same is done in the outbuildings then all go outside where, waving their sticks, beating the earth and any objects they meet, the entire crowd moves forward quickly to the nearest stream or gully. Then they throw the stick, eggs and bread and return home assured that the devil has been cast out.¹⁸⁰

Suren or *Sren* usually took place at the end of Easter week, although sometimes on Thursday or Friday at *Simek*, when it was considered the spirits of the dead released at *Munkun* would return

¹⁷⁵ Salmin 1994, 52

¹⁷⁶ The name *Suren* is from the Chuvash word for rattle. See Salmin Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Magnitskii 1881, 126-7

¹⁷⁸ Arkhangel'skii 1899, 6

¹⁷⁹ Rittikh 1870, Part 2, 99

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

to their graves.¹⁸¹ In 1910 among the unbaptised Chuvash of Samara province *Sren* was still practised on Wednesday evening in Holy Week.¹⁸² As at *Virem* the young men would go from house to house, but this time beating clothing brought out to them with a switch of branches to get rid of uncleanness. They would carry sticks, carved like swords, and would again sing and dance their way round the village casting out the devil and illness. They would eat the food given to them at the cemetery then beat themselves with their sticks to cleanse themselves before going home.¹⁸³

Many elements of these Chuvash traditions were present in both Armenian and Slavic popular traditions surrounding Easter. In Armenia Holy Wednesday was known as ‘destroying Wednesday’ as the house was cleaned thoroughly and uncleanness cast out.¹⁸⁴ Among the Slavs Paskha was also known as *Velik den`* (Great Day), and rites connected with the renewal of life at the spring equinox, when the day became greater than the night, had become associated with the Easter festival.¹⁸⁵

Although according to church canons the dead are not commemorated during Easter week, in the south of Russia Easter was known as *Paskha mertvykh* (Paskha of the dead) due to the belief that God opened heaven and hell on the eve of Easter so ancestors were believed to return to earth at Easter, or a day before or after. Among the Balkan Slavs and the Gagauzes *Clean Thursday* (Holy Thursday), and sometimes Holy Saturday and Pentecost, were days when food was cooked for the dead and the banya was heated and towels left out.¹⁸⁶ Homes were cleaned to celebrate the feast with the dead until they returned to the grave either at *Radonitsa* or in the week before Pentecost.¹⁸⁷ Russian sermons and confession instructions of the 17th-18th century reproach

¹⁸¹ Rittikh Ibid. 132, Spiridonov 1910, 1090 GIA CR f.498, op.1, d.1, l.19

¹⁸² NA CGIGN Otd.1, t.173, l.246

¹⁸³ Magnitskii 1881, 131-132

¹⁸⁴ Armiane, 216

¹⁸⁵ Slavianskii Drevnosti 2009, t.4, 641

¹⁸⁶ Kvilinkova 2001, 101-2, Gal'kovskii 1916, t.1, 203

¹⁸⁷ Slavianskii Drevnosti 2009 t.4, 391, 642

parishioners for serving not the dead but demons through such rites.¹⁸⁸ After Easter matins peasants would go to *khristosovat`sia*<sup>189</sup> with the departed at the cemetery and dig an egg into the grave. In Belorussia and Northern Ukraine remains of the *Velik den`* festive meal were kept until St George's day then taken to the fields and dug into the boundaries and corners to protect the field from hail and storms.

Until the end of the 19th century fires were lit at Easter near Orthodox churches and old belongings burnt on them to purify the home after winter.¹⁹⁰ Easter week was also characterized by shooting, knocking on wood, music and bellringing, in order to cast out evil spirits. The three days of Holy Saturday, *Velik den`* and Bright Monday were known as *Volochebniki*, and on different days depending on the region, a group of young men would go from house to house singing *volochebnye* songs and receiving eggs, pies and cheese. In Belorussian tradition *volochebnye* songs praise Sts George and Nicholas who protect the cows and houses, the Theotokos who sows the fields and the prophet Elijah who reaps the rye.¹⁹¹

There are thus strong correspondences between Slavic and Chuvash popular rites around the time of Easter which can be accounted for both by the influence of peasants from different regions of Russia who had settled near the Chuvash, or came into contact with them through fairs and trade. Such influence is shown by Magnitskii himself who describes traditional Easter rites in the Russian Belovolzhskoe parish near Cheremys and Chuvash villages. During molebens in homes in Easter week, wheat to be sown and an egg were consecrated. The egg was taken to the field and eaten after saying 'Christ is Risen' three times before sowing began. At Annunciation a tub of grain was consecrated at the Litiia and each peasant would take a handful which was kept carefully until sowing. At this same feast, the church warden would throw specially baked

¹⁸⁸ Gal'kovskii 1916 t.1, 96, 202-203

¹⁸⁹ I.e. Kiss them saying 'Christ is risen' and exchange eggs.

¹⁹⁰ Slavianskii Drevnosti 2009 t.4, 645

¹⁹¹ Zabylin 1880, 52-53. Slavianskii Drevnosti 2009 t.1 Article: Volochebnyi obriad

*prosfora*¹⁹² from the belltower which the peasants would eat in the field before sowing.¹⁹³ In this way prayers for the consecration of the natural world at the Litiia took on an extended and practical aspect in an agricultural community. We have also noted a similarity between Chuvash and Armenian rites, a feature we shall see again and discuss the possible reasons for later.

Pentecost, *Shimek* and *Shinshe*

The same pattern is evident at *Shimek* held seven weeks after Paskha. *Shimek* was for the Chuvash the period of summer rites for the dead. Magnitskii describing the 1870s says that in Cheboksary district some held these on the Thursday before Trinity while others had adapted to the Orthodox commemoration of the dead on Saturday before Trinity.¹⁹⁴ In Musirma in the 1880s *Shimek* was held on the Thursday before Trinity and ‘was the greatest feast for the Chuvash when they dress in their very best clothes. (...) At the cemeteries commemoration of the dead takes place and beer is poured into the graves, pieces of cream cheese pies or eggs are dug into the ground and fights take place as everyone wanders around the cemetery until evening, eating and drinking.’¹⁹⁵ In Musirma *Sren* took place on the Thursday evening of *Shimek*. Young people would go round the village collecting eggs and singing songs about how if eggs were given, the chickens would lay well.¹⁹⁶

Spiridonov in 1910 tells us ‘The Chuvash could not reconcile themselves to commemorating the dead on the Saturday before Trinity for a long time, some commemorated on Saturday, others on Thursday, and others on both days; but when clergy began to serve panikhidas at the cemetery, many, abandoning the old ways, began to join in Saturday commemorations.’¹⁹⁷ As at Paskha, rites connected with *Shimek* lasted a week and began with *Shimek kash*, the eve of the Thursday before Trinity, when sorceresses were believed to put curses on people, livestock and crops,

¹⁹² Loaves consecrated and cut into when prayers for the living and dead are said by the priest before the Liturgy.

¹⁹³ Magnitskii 1881, 108

¹⁹⁴ Magnitskii 1881, 185

¹⁹⁵ CIA CR f.498, op.1, d.1, l.19

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. l.19

¹⁹⁷ Spiridonov 1910, 1093

which was much feared by the Chuvash. The sorceresses were believed to gather on this night and visit seven cemeteries in the guise of animals and birds, ride around on broomsticks when they could be caught and returned to human form if hit with sticks.¹⁹⁸ On the following day, *Great Shimek*, food would be prepared for departed ancestors at the cemetery where all would sing, dance, weep and dig eggs into graves. The dead were again believed to frequent relatives' homes during the following week and so the Chuvash planted trees by the windows of their houses for the dead to sit on, and trees would be attached to the carts of wedding processions which frequently took place at this time, so that they would not touch the living.¹⁹⁹ On the Thursday after Trinity, *Lesser Shimek* the last rites for the dead would be held as they were accompanied back to the cemetery.²⁰⁰

Soon after *Shimek* began a period called *Shinshe* (Chuv. new summer or from *shienche* to be pregnant), when the Chuvash would rest as there were prohibitions on many activities connected with the earth which was believed to be pregnant. There were no fixed times for this period which began when the winter crops flowered, and ended with the ploughing of fallow land. Rittikh refers to the period 'from Peter's (July 12th) to Elijah's Day (August 2nd), when the grain flowers' as a time when the Chuvash considered it a sin to work.²⁰¹ In the 1870s in Maslova and Baideriakovo it lasted 12 days. In the 1880s in Musirma, Tsivil'sk district 'around the time the rye flowered the Chuvash observed absolute rest i.e. they refrained from any kind of work. The length of *Shinshe* was not the same everywhere, in some places a whole month, in others two weeks, but not less than a week. Special observers were chosen who beat mercilessly with rods those who infringed *Shinshe*.²⁰² In Timiashevo and Afon'kino, Samara province, *Shinshe* was still observed among the large numbers of still unbaptised Chuvash in 1910. 'In former times they celebrated *Shinshe* for a whole month, but now not more than a week, or even three

¹⁹⁸ Rekeev 1897, 271. Komissarov 1911, 389

¹⁹⁹ Magnitskii 1881, 186. Komissarov 1911, 389

²⁰⁰ Komissarov 1911, 389

²⁰¹ Rittikh 1870, Part 2, 107

²⁰² CIA CR f.498, op.1, d.1, l.19-19v.

days.²⁰³ Spiridonov wrote that the Iadrin Chuvash started *Shinshe* on *Dukhov den`* (Monday after Pentecost, Whit Monday).²⁰⁴ During *Shinshe* it was forbidden to build houses, dig the ground, scythe grass, transport fertilizer, dye threads, wash clothing, break off branches and leaves, and eat unripe fruit. In some parishes Chuvash would put on their best white clothes and sit outside telling stories and news, or go fishing or sleep, while young people would dance and play games.²⁰⁵

In Eastern Slav popular tradition, rites connected with *Semik* also began on the Thursday of *Semitskaia nedelia*, the 7th week after Easter, with the commemoration of the captive dead, those who had died an unnatural death and were thus unacceptable to the earth to which they returned in the form of mythical figures who harmed the living, sending drought and bad harvests, sometimes in collusion with evil spirits. They could only be commemorated at *Semik* when commemoration rites were held on battlefields and mass burial sites.²⁰⁶ Among the southern and western Slavs, the week after *Semik* was known as *rusal`naia nedelia* or *rusalii*, a time when *rusalki*, female figures with long tangled hair, by tradition girls who had died unbaptised or who had drowned, were believed to come out of rivers and lakes, swing on the branches of trees, run in the rye, and come into close contact with people from whom they steal threads and cloth.²⁰⁷ It was a time of prohibitions on work of various kinds in order to pacify the *rusalki* and receive their help. According to Zabylin, among the Russians this period was from *Semik* to *Petrov den`* when everything is in flower.²⁰⁸

Among the Turkic Gagauzes who adopted Orthodoxy in the 13th century, the rites of *Rusalii*, adopted from other Orthodox Balkan peoples, have retained many archaic features in a popular culture which has retained many Turkic elements. E.N.Kvilinkova argues that the Gagauzes

²⁰³ NA CGIGN Otd. 1, t.173, l.246

²⁰⁴ Spiridonov 1910, 1090

²⁰⁵ NA CGIGN Ibid; Magnitskii 1881, 34-35; Komissarov 1911, 390

²⁰⁶ Slavianskiie Drevnosti 2009 t.4, 612-3

²⁰⁷ Ibid. t.4, 495 In contrast to the Western European tradition of mermaids, these female figures did not have fishes' tails, although associated with water.

²⁰⁸ Gal'kovskii 1916 t.1, 61-62, 66, 94. Slavianskiie Drevnosti 2009 t.4, 497, 612. Zabylin 1880, 60

have a dual image of the *rusalii* who, on the one hand are evil female beings similar to the Iranian and Turkic *peri* of their pre-Christian beliefs, against which ritual prohibitions on work and washing are believed to provide protection. On the other hand, the *rusalii* are fertility spirits who are welcomed to the village with processions on *Rusal`naia Sreda* (Wednesday of Mid-Pentecost) and then accompanied back to the field at the end of *Rusal`naia nedelia*.²⁰⁹ She comments ‘Among the Turkic peoples of Central Asia, Asia Minor, Kazakhstan and the Northern Caucasus, the image of the *peri* has much in common with this image.’²¹⁰ On other days in the year connected by the Gagauzes with the attack of evil spirits there was a prohibition on using sharp objects which precluded many forms of work.²¹¹ Such rites and beliefs persisted not only in the Eastern Church. Until the early 1920s in Monmouthshire, Wales, in the early days of May the windows, doors and porches were festooned with green sprays and flowers, while twigs of rowan, hawthorn and birch were fashioned into crosses and kept over the doors of houses and stables to keep away witches.²¹²

The prohibitions associated with Slavic and Gagauz *Rusalia* would have been practised by the Chuvash at *Shinshe*, slightly later than *Semik*, undoubtedly due to the later arrival of summer in the north. The language used by the Chuvash to explain their refraining from work and not touching the earth as it is pregnant, is the syncretistic language of associating fertility with the Mother of God due to the consecration of grain at the feast of the Annunciation which marked the beginning of Mary’s pregnancy. We have seen above how in the Russian Belovolzhskoe parish near the Chuvash, grain was consecrated at Annunciation and in Belorussian *volochebnye* songs it was the Mother of God who sows the fields. In Armenian popular tradition, the earth was identified with a pregnant woman and so earth was taken to the church for consecration at Annunciation then scattered on the fields with the words ‘Blessed is the fruit of thy womb’.²¹³

²⁰⁹ Kvilinkova 2001, 130-138

²¹⁰ Ibid. 138

²¹¹ Ibid. 50-51

²¹² Palmer 1998, 263-4

²¹³ Armiane, 217

Among the Gagauzes, Annunciation was as great a feast as Easter, and there was a strict prohibition on work as at *Shinshe*.

While Chuvash rites at *Simek* and *Shinshe* have lost, or not adopted, the terminology of Rusalia common to the Southern Slavic, Moldavian and Gagauz peoples, the word *usal/ozal* is both an adjective and noun meaning evil, bad, harmful and evil spirit in Chuvash and Tatar, while in Chuvash the letter ‘r’ is not used at the beginning of words, except a few loan words.²¹⁴ In the Old Chuvash Faith the word *pireshti* was used of a protector spirit.²¹⁵ It would seem then that, by the late 19th century, the Chuvash had adapted their memorial and fertility rites to the Eastern Slav popular rites surrounding Paskha and Semik, with the rites of *rusalia* having been retained in the prohibitions of *shinshe*, and the *rusalki* having retained the image of the Turkic *peri*, the evil female beings of *Kalym-kon* and *Simek kash*, similar to the Gagauz identification of the *rusalii* with evil *peri*. This is a more plausible explanation than those who have sought to trace the origin of *Shinshe* to the Old Testament Sabbath year²¹⁶ or the Feast of Tabernacles.²¹⁷ The Sabbath year was held only once in seven years when the land ‘rested’ and remained unsown, and the Feast of Tabernacles was an autumnal celebration of the harvest, similar to Chuvash *Chukleme*, rather than the early summer.

Nevertheless, the persistence of a syncretised form of Turkic beliefs with rites of *Rusalia/Shinshe* among the Chuvash points to their archaic origins, certainly much earlier than their 18th century baptism, and possibly earlier than the 16th century when the Chuvash began to live within the Russian state. Kvilinkova argues that the preservation of many archaic elements in Gagauz *rusalia* traditions points to them being not the result of contact with Orthodox Balkan peoples in the 19th century, but with the ancient Slavic population on the borderlands of Rus,

²¹⁴ Zolotnitskii 1875, 18, 57; Salmin 1994, 159

²¹⁵ Salmin 1994, 100; Rekeev 1896, 419

²¹⁶ Salmin 1994, 61

²¹⁷ Malov 1882, 22-24

with whom they had contacts before their resettlement in the Balkans in the late 13th century.²¹⁸

We will consider the nature of early Christian and Judaic influence on the Chuvash before their migration from the North Caucasus to the Mid-Volga, and in Volga Bulgaria at the end of this chapter.

St Elijah's Day (August 2nd)

Iliin den` (St Elijah's Day) is to this day an important festival among the Slavs, and was known by such names as *Gromoverzhets* (Thunderer), *Gromoboi* (Thunder clap), partly due to Elijah's connection with rain, but also as his feast falls at the time stormy weather sets in at the end of the summer. With the strong Chuvash sense of the influence of the powers and spirits of nature over human life, thunder was particularly feared by them. They took a rowan branch in hand at the sound of thunder to frighten away the evil spirit they believed was being chased away by the thunder god.²¹⁹ One of the Chuvash divinities was Asla-ati (Great Father) the spirit controlling thunder. Rekeev tells us 'This spirit replaces for the Chuvash the Russian prophet Elijah, as he is imagined in popular beliefs.'²²⁰ According to Komissarov, his feast day was known to every Chuvash,²²¹ there was a prohibition on work and a foal was sacrificed.²²² Rittikh describes the prohibitions of *Shinshe* as continuing until Elijah's Day and so the haymaking did not take place until then. 'They are of the conviction that if the haymaking is begun before, the grain will be hit by hail.'²²³ Arkhangel'skii noted in 1899 how Chuvash women had begun to bring their children more frequently to communion especially in the summer period before the work of the harvest started 'and above all on the day of God's prophet Elijah which is particularly venerated by them.'²²⁴

²¹⁸ Kvilinkova 2001, 142

²¹⁹ Salmin 1994, 158

²²⁰ Rekeev 1896, 420

²²¹ Komissarov 1911, 390

²²² Nikol'skii 1908, 139

²²³ Rittikh 1870 Part 2, 76

²²⁴ Arkhangel'ski 1899, 13

Syncretistic observances took place on this day in Ishaki around 1903-4 when there was no rain from spring to Elijah's Day. As the local clergy did not serve *molebens* in the fields, the villagers decided to sacrifice a horse saying 'God's prophet Elijah's horse is old and he cannot ride on it as before, so there is no rain.' The old people were saying 'when we used to make annual sacrifices, there was always rain and an abundant harvest. Since we have begun to live like Russians, we have been dying of hunger.' On Elijah's Day the church was empty as the parish was making a sacrifice in the forest. Stepanov comments wryly 'the bloodless sacrifice was brought in the absence of the Chuvash, while outside the church a pagan sacrifice is triumphantly made in the presence of the entire parish; seeing this the priests saw fit to be silent so as not to arm the people against them; in this way they discovered their complete powerlessness in the struggle with paganism.'²²⁵

A similar situation, not specifically related to Elijah's Day, was reported by the Chuvash deacon Stefan Efremov who emphasized the need for knowledge of the Chuvash language and mindset if blood sacrifice was to be overcome. Due to drought in Podlesina, Tsivil'sk district in July 1911 the Chuvash had wanted to make blood sacrifice to appease God. Efremov had first told the Chuvash that it was right to resort to communal prayers, but without sacrifice 'which has already ceased' but at the church before the icons with the clergy. He went first to persuade the *iomzi* to whom he read the Orthodox prayers for rain which were approved by the *iomzi*. Rather than serving the *moleben* at the church, it was agreed that icons should be taken from the church and prayers said in the fields. After some rain fell that evening, the Chuvash no longer talked of blood sacrifice. Efremov adds that the Podlesina Chuvash had abandoned their annual sacrifices at the *kiremet*, although individuals continued to make sacrifices, not of real animals, however, but dough figures sold at markets.²²⁶

²²⁵ CGIGN Otd. 1, t.166, l.218-219

²²⁶ CGIGN Otd. 1, t.215, l.97-100

Fr Viktor Zaikov relates how he made use of Chuvash reverence for Elijah's day during a procession with icons to serve a moleben in the fields on *Iliin den`* in 1887. He preached a sermon to the villagers of Polevaia Shentakhova about observing Sunday rather than Friday, which at first they agreed to do, but then refused under the influence of a wealthy Chuvash who refused to come to the village assembly on the matter.

I was forced to go to his home myself and (...) having made him listen to reason, I returned with him to the people. Then after (...) telling them the story of Elijah the prophet and his sacrifices, and comparing them [the Chuvash] with the Israelite people, I managed to persuade them to stop observing Friday.²²⁷

Autumn festivals and rites

Although at first glance Chuvash autumnal rites were not as connected as the spring and summer rites with the church calendar by the late 19th century, closer examination reveals links with Slavic popular rites associated with certain feasts which have been dislocated due to the more northern climate of the Mid-Volga, and also due to the stronger persistence of the pre-Christian calendar.²²⁸ During the eighth month *avyn-oiykh* (Rn. *ovin*= barn) the threshing took place and then a feast *Kur-zyry* (autumnal beer) was held for all the families who had worked together.²²⁹ The ninth month, *Ioba-oiykh*, was when autumnal rites for the dead took place and pillars (*ioba*) standing on the grave, were struck to call up the spirits of the dead. A meal called *vyl`ne s`yn kiberi* (bridge for the dead to cross over) was prepared for the dead and laid out on a table in a gully.²³⁰ The tenth month which finished in mid-December was *Chuk-oiykh* (month of sacrifice) associated with the rites of *Chukleme*.

That *Chukleme* had previously been among the most solemn festivities of the Chuvash is evidenced by the fact that the rites were led by a master of ceremonies with helpers. The new

²²⁷ Zaikov 1890, 175

²²⁸ See Kvilinkova 2001, 50-52 for the persistence of ancient rites among the Gagauzes in November/December.

²²⁹ Zolotnitskii 1875, 197; Komissarov 1911, 390

²³⁰ Zolotnitskii 1875, 198

grain, in the form of bread and beer, was placed on the table and prayers of thanksgiving to Tora asking for future abundance and protection of the harvest were said in the direction of the door [i.e. east].²³¹ In Musirma, Tsivil'sk district in the 1880s 'In autumn, after the grain had been harvested those Chuvash who did not have old grain, but only (newly) threshed grain, carried out in their homes prayers (...) after which the new grain becomes old.'²³² Arkhangel'skii stressed that, after threshing the new grain, the Chuvash would never eat it until prayers had been said.²³³

A distinctive feature of the prayers was that they were repeated many times to each of the gods and spirits of the Chuvash, of which Magnitskii lists sixty-one, including Tora, *Tor amysh* (God's mother), the Giver of children, the One who gives fertility to the grain and makes it sway, the Giver of domestic animals, the Giver of bees, the strength of the wind, the father and mother, ears, wings and legs of the Sun, the Kiremet God who directs the fates of the human race, the one who gives birth to sweetness and gives bitterness, the one who gives life as an inheritance and gives prohibitions.²³⁴ A ceremonial carved wooden cup of beer was passed from person to person to drink during each prayer, and in the Iantsybulovo parish, even when only close neighbours attended, four buckets of beer were drunk and the prayers ended after midnight. As the prayers ended, the loaf of bread was cut up into small pieces for each person present then a festive meal began.²³⁵

Arkhangel'skii describes the rites of *chukleme* as an example of how

the religious pagan beliefs of the Chuvash stand in relation to their new Christian understanding and how they try to reconcile both of these beliefs (...) In *chukleme* two moments stand out: how they turn their faces to the door and take their crosses off, and the Christian appeal "Have mercy". Their turning towards the east and the door, and not to the icons, is a necessary aspect of *chukleme*. Evidently, clear traces of the pagan beliefs of the Chuvash in their ceremonies.

²³¹ Arkhangel'skii 1899,11

²³² GIA CR f.498, op.1, d.1, l.13v-14v

²³³ Arkhangel'skii 1899,11

²³⁴ Magnitskii 1881, 62-65

²³⁵ Ibid. 60-61

However, in the prayers and appeals themselves used at *chukleme* there are few traces of paganism. This is because the new Christian religious ideas have imperceptibly pushed out the age-old pagan ideas, although they haven't destroyed them completely.²³⁶

Zolotnitskii's description of the rite in Iadrin district (the most western and christianized) in the 1870s tells us that after the main prayers the master of ceremonies would turn to the icon and pray 'God have mercy! Do not abandon us! God in the corner [i.e. the icon] save us from all evil!' And three cups of beer would be drunk. He would then turn to the men and say on behalf of the householder 'Up to now we have eaten and drunk but not remembered the Mother of God: he proposes from the bottom of his heart to drink a cup to Her name; are you in agreement?' The men would agree and then he would ask the same of the women. After their agreement he said

this is the cup of the Mother of God. May the fields have boundaries and the meadows have limits [i.e. be protected from harmful, outside influence], may the waters be navigable and the barley so heavy that a horse cannot carry it and the hops so that a man cannot lift them.²³⁷

The similarities of these Chuvash rites with the prayers to the Theotokos and to a long list of saints followed by the distribution of consecrated bread to all at the Orthodox *Litia*²³⁸ and during the Divine Liturgy are unmistakable.

Apart from this christianizing, or more accurately theotokizing, of the content of the prayers of *Chukleme*, the timings of the Chuvash harvest rites also appear to have been in a state of flux at this time, becoming disassociated from *Chuk-oiykh* and becoming more clearly associated with the Orthodox festivals marking the end of the agrarian cycle among the Slavs. In the 1870s in the Karachevo and Bishevo parishes, *Chukleme* began before the Nativity of the Theotokos (21st September, the autumn equinox) and many neighbours and relatives were invited. In Vadakasy

²³⁶ Arkhangel'skii 1899, 11

²³⁷ Zolotnitskii 1875, 220

²³⁸ Prayers during festal Vespers when grain, wine and oil are consecrated.

parish, *Chukleme* was only celebrated by the wealthy, whereas the poor had attached it to *Kurzyry* in September, after the threshing, and invited only close neighbours.

That the Chuvash were beginning to practise rites associated with *Chukleme* in September and drawing prayers to the Theotokos into their rites corresponded to the practice of the Eastern Slavs whose harvest rites were especially connected with the feast of her Nativity. More southerly Orthodox peoples marked the end of the harvest at the Dormition of the Theotokos (15/28th August) when women went to rivers and lakes and met *Matushka Osenina* (Mother Autumn). An older woman carried a large loaf baked from new flour which was broken in pieces and distributed to all, including livestock.²³⁹ Those living in northern regions sowed winter crops at this time, and we have seen how grain to be sown was consecrated at the Marian feast of Annunciation.

Gal'kovskii cites Russian sermons of the 12th-16th centuries rebuking the tradition of singing the Troparion of the Nativity of the Theotokos at the meal (*rozhanichnaia trapeza, bab'i kasha*, usually held on the day after Christmas) in honour of Rod and Rozhanitsa who, in pre-Christian Russian mythology personified the continuation of the family line.

Under the influence of Christianity the ancient beliefs died out or were transformed. This happened with Rozhanitsa: the rites for the dead grew weaker but the memory of reverence for the mother, the bearer of children, Rozhanitsa was preserved. And some ignoramuses began to confuse Rozhanitsa with the Theotokos. The singing of the Troparion of the Nativity of the Theotokos could have arisen simply due to confusing the ideas. This custom could have been a conscious introduction by the clergy in order to supplant the ancient rite and give it a Christian colouring.²⁴⁰

Such syncretism which the Russian Church sought to stamp out in the 12th-16th centuries, could have persisted, along with other archaic practices, and become assimilated to the Chuvash' own

²³⁹ Slavianskii Drevnosti 2009, t.3, 568

²⁴⁰ Gal'kovskii 1916 t.1, 163. See also 165, 175.

autumnal rites, due to their geographical and linguistic isolation, and the lack of Chuvash-speaking clergy.

The Nativity of the Theotokos was part of a cycle of three September feasts known as *Osenina* (Rn: *osen`* = autumn) among the Slavs. That the Chuvash by the 1870s had adopted the popular Slavic understanding of one of these feasts, the Elevation of the Cross, is shown by their name for it, *Sulen` erni* (snake week)²⁴¹ or *Shulen prasnike* (snake feast).²⁴² In Slavic popular tradition, during this feast snakes went into the ground at the beginning of the winter and so it was prohibited to go to the forest.²⁴³ In Iadrin district this feast was also known as *Mar prasniki* as at this time they went to the fair at Mary in Nizhnii Novgorod province to sell their hops,²⁴⁴ further evidence of the routes by which Orthodox festivals with their associated popular agrarian rites influenced the Chuvash.

The third feast of Slavic *Oseniny* was *den` Semen letoprovodtsa* (the day of St Simeon 'farewell-to-summer (or to the year), 1st/14th September), after which work took place inside by the fire. Both Magnitskii (1881) and Komissarov (1911) list this day among the major Orthodox festivals the Chuvash knew well, and when they meticulously observed practices associated with the New Year which was kept on 1st September in pre-Petrine Russia (14th century to 1700). These practices were an expression of sympathetic magic, that what you did on this day influenced the whole year.²⁴⁵

On St Simeon's Day the Chuvash in Maslova, 1) bake pies so as not to be hungry in winter 2) do not drink water the whole day so as not to be cold in winter 3) fill ventilation shafts in the houses

²⁴¹ Magnitskii 1881, 222

²⁴² Komissarov 1911, 394

²⁴³ Slavianskii Drevnosti 2009, t.3, 569 and t.1, 400

²⁴⁴ Magnitskii 1881, 222

²⁴⁵ Zabylin 1880, 101-3, Slavianskii Drevnosti 2009 t.4, 610-611

with moss and fill gaps in the earth heaped up against the outer walls 4) go around all day in fur coats and kaftans, even if the day is warm, so that in winter it would be warm 5) bury flies...²⁴⁶

the latter practice being extensive in central and northern Russia as it was believed St Simeon got rid of insects for the whole year.²⁴⁷

Significantly, neither Magnitskii's nor Komissarov's list of Christian feastdays known by the Chuvash includes the Nativity of the Theotokos, despite the feast-days of St Simeon and St Evdokia (1st March) being mentioned. They did however know *Pokrav* (Russian *Pokrov* 1st/14th October) and *Kerkhi Kasanski* (Autumn feast of the Kazan Icon 21st October/4th November) which would have been due to the proximity of Kazan, and Pokrovskoe in the Koz'modem'iansk district with its Pokrov fair, where the Chuvash traded.²⁴⁸ These autumnal Marian feasts, connected with the Theotokos' protection from evil, were closer chronologically to the Chuvash traditional celebration of *Chukleme* in November, and to the setting in of winter in late October/early November, and probably explain the lack of emphasis on the Nativity of the Theotokos among the Chuvash. In a report about his parish of Proleika, Samara province in November 1899, Fr. D.Filimonov tells us that on the patronal feast of the Kazan Icon, he went with the icon to parishioners' homes and served molebens. One woman asked him

Batiushka, can we carry out sacrifice with the new grain and beer? We formerly did this at the feast of the Kazan Icon? I explained to her that to make sacrifice is a great sin and not only does God not accept such prayers, but he is angry with them.²⁴⁹

Midwinter traditions

In the late 19th century Chuvash midwinter rites began with *Sur khury* (Sheep's leg) and ended at *Kosharni* (Rn: *kreshchenie*, the baptism of Christ 19th/6th January, Theophany/Epiphany), between which was *Shuittan erni* (Devils' Week). As with other Chuvash rites in the late 19th

²⁴⁶ Magnitskii 1881, 223

²⁴⁷ Slavianskii Drevnosti Ibid.

²⁴⁸ See Mikhailov 1872, 125

²⁴⁹ CIA CR f.350, op.1, d.4, l.112v.

century, *Sur khury* was already associated with Orthodox Christmas, yet in Iadrin district took place on the third Friday after St Nicholas's Day (6th/19th December), and so could take place either before or after Christmas.²⁵⁰ In Cheboksary district it was celebrated only in villages closer to the town, whereas in other villages it was considered a Cheremys festival, which would suggest it had arisen in its form at that time due to contact with Russians.

The traditions connected with *Sur khury* were related to fertility and foretelling the coming year and the future in general. Magnitskii tells us the young men and boys went noisily round the houses singing, jumping and making wishes for prosperity to householders who brought a plate of soaked peas which were thrown into the air in handfuls accompanied by shouts of 'May the peas grow high!' Then the young people would gather in one home, play games, sing, dance and tell fortunes while pease porridge was cooked. The name of the event was 'Sheep's Leg' as one type of fortune-telling involved catching a sheep by the leg in the dark and the colour of the sheep would indicate whether your future spouse would be dark or fair. At the end of the meal, fresh branches were taken to the field, poked into the snow then bowed down to. Then all would lie down on the snow and listen for noises indicating what the New Year held.²⁵¹

Similar activities took place during Devils' Week which by the late 19th century was also known as *Svetke* or *Savetka* (Rn: *Sviatki* (Holy Days), the days between Christmas and Theophany).²⁵²

Similar methods of fortune-telling as at *Sur khuri* took place and the young people would again go from house to house in disguise, often as a member of the opposite sex, singing and playing the zither, domra and harmonium.²⁵³ In some villages of Cheboksary district a straw figure would be dressed in a woman's shirt and given a beard of linseed, and boys would jump and dance around it with their faces covered in soot. On the eve of Theophany the figure would be

²⁵⁰ Magnitskii 1881, 97-99

²⁵¹ Ibid., Komissarov 1911, 392-3

²⁵² Komissarov 1911, 393. Salmin 1994, 68

²⁵³ Salmin Ibid. 68-9

taken to a gully and torn apart, and those who made it would wash themselves in holy water at Theophany.²⁵⁴

By the early 20th century the Chuvash traditions had become more closely associated with the Orthodox feastdays. Komissarov tells us that when he was studying in primary school (early 1890s) the Christmas Troparion and Kontakion began to be sung, the singers wished everyone a happy Christmas, ‘in the course of time running round the houses stopped entirely’ and ‘at present *sviatki* among the Chuvash are celebrated in the same way as the Russians; girls gather for *posidenki* (Rn: *sidet*=sit) while boys go round the houses in disguise’.²⁵⁵ Nikol’skii in 1919 wrote of the influence of the educational movement ‘Among the minority of the Chuvash there is a notable desire to spend the feast discussing religious topics or reading sacred books in the native language. The main initiators of such activities are the literate and semi-literate.’²⁵⁶

In popular tradition among the Slavs the period of *Sviatki*, especially the week immediately before the sanctification of the waters at Theophany, was associated with the presence on earth of spirits of the dead and of evil spirits who were appeased by observing prohibitions. This openness to the spiritual world meant the future could be known and so fortune-telling was a marked feature, as were *riazheny* (carol-singers in disguise, mummers).²⁵⁷ Farewell was said to *Sviatki* at Theophany when straw and rubbish were burnt. In Nizhnii Novgorod province, adjacent to Iadrin district, on Theophany Eve a bale of straw was set alight and taken around the village on a sledge saying ‘Mitrofanushka is burning!’²⁵⁸

The Russians in Belovolzhskoe parish near the Chuvash had various practices connected with protecting themselves from evil spirits at Theophany, similar to Chuvash *Suren* and *Virem* at Easter. In Kartsevoi Pochinok all the villagers gathered at one end of the village with sticks

²⁵⁴ Magnitskii 1881, 100

²⁵⁵ Komissarov 1911, 393

²⁵⁶ Nikol’skii 1908, 140

²⁵⁷ Slavianskii Drevnosti 2009 t.4, 454-9, 584-9

²⁵⁸ Ibid. 588

which they used to make a great racket as they proceeded to the other end, where they cast away the sticks together with the fleeing devils. In other outlying villages the inhabitants believed that when the cross was immersed in the water at Theophany, the Holy Spirit came down and evil spirits were swallowed up by the earth. To protect their homes from the evil spirits, they would make a sign of the cross with chalk or coal on the doors and windows and, having lit the incense-burner before their icons, they would sprinkle their cowsheds with holy water consecrated on Theophany Eve.²⁵⁹ Such traditions also persisted in Wales where in Monmouthshire ‘burning the bush’ took place on New Year’s Day, birch brooms were fixed over doorways, and dishes of animal blood were put in the grate as a precaution against witches.²⁶⁰

We have seen then that despite strong evidence of the persistence of ancient Turkic and Zoroastrian beliefs and practices, and the frequent description of rites as ‘paganism’, the Old Chuvash calendar rites practiced in the final decades of the 19th century revolved to a great extent around the Orthodox liturgical calendar, and there are strong similarities with the popular rites and festivals of not only Slavic Orthodox, but Armenian, Gagauz and even Welsh popular traditions. The timings of certain festivals and rites appear to have been in a state of flux as a result of the educational movement, with both the timings and content of rites becoming more firmly attached to the official Orthodox calendar and liturgical practice by the first decade of the 20th century. There is also evidence of a tendency to spiritualize festivals, with the newly literate abstaining from popular practices, presumably due to their label of paganism.

The search for national origins

One aspect of the emphasis on what were perceived as pagan remnants in the Old Chuvash Faith was the increasing interest in its ancient origins, and correspondingly the ethnic origins of the Chuvash. This quest for origins arose out of and also contributed to the growing sense of national identity fostered by the creation of a Chuvash alphabet, Chuvash texts, schools and

²⁵⁹ Magnitskii 1881, 100-101

²⁶⁰ Palmer 1998, 254, 267

parishes by Il'minskii and Iakovlev's disciples. We will summarise views on Chuvash origins in the late and early 20th century and show how these views have shaped Chuvash scholarship at the turn of the 21st century.

Rittikh (1870) set the tone of much late 19th century writing on the Chuvash by emphasizing the ancient nature of Chuvash origins which he believed had changed little over the course of history. The Chuvash had adopted dualistic Zoroastrianism under Persian influence and 'the religion of the Chuvash has remained unembellished since the time of its adoption.'²⁶¹ They had preserved their ancient speech and religion 'their Tora, so similar to the Tor of the Goths with whom they were perhaps neighbours at that time. Delivered from slavery they found themselves neighbours of the Turkic Bulgar and Khazar tribes' and so adopted elements of Judaism.²⁶²

While also acknowledging elements of Zoroastrianism, Judaism and Islam, Zolotnitskii and Magnitskii both identified the Chuvash faith with shamanism. 'The old Chuvash faith is the black faith, common to almost all of the natives of the eastern region of European Russia, Siberia and even the inhabitants of the Pacific islands, and known otherwise as shamanism.'²⁶³

Zolotnitskii and Magnitskii collaborated with Fr. E. Malov in the 1870s, and it was Malov who presented the most developed analysis of Jewish influence on the Chuvash while vassals of the Khazars.²⁶⁴ This viewpoint influenced Ivan Iakovlev who attributed Chuvash good qualities to their Jewish past and wrote 'studying the past of the Chuvash people, its lifestyle and customs, I found in its rituals many traces of ancient Jewish beliefs, for example sacrifices, the dual celebration of Paskha – when the Orthodox celebrate it and when the Jews celebrate it. When I was in the Crimea many years later after finishing university I observed the features of the Jewish Karaims who have much in common with the Chuvash.'²⁶⁵

²⁶¹ Rittikh 1870, Part 2, 45, 82

²⁶² Ibid. 44-45

²⁶³ Zolotnitskii 1877b, 252 and 1875, *Prilozheniia* IV, 163. Magnitskii 1881, 162, 173

²⁶⁴ Malov 1882, 24

²⁶⁵ Iakovlev 1997, 61, 65

It was N.A.Ashmarin who first presented a developed theory of the Bulgar origins of the Chuvash although the theory had been suggested earlier by the Tatar philologist Feizkhanov and supported by Il'minskii,²⁶⁶ and it was adopted by the first Chuvash scholars. G.Komissarov argued for a reconciliation of the three theories: Khazar, Burtas and Bulgar,²⁶⁷ while N.V.Nikol'skii considered the Khazar and Burtas theories discredited and maintained the Bulgar theory.²⁶⁸

This quest for ethnogenesis, with a corresponding quest for the origins of the Old Chuvash Faith has been a predominant theme of much recent Chuvash scholarship which has focused on the correspondences between Chuvash material and spiritual culture, and elements in the cultures of the peoples the ancestors of the Chuvash came into contact with during their peregrinations from Asia to the Mid-Volga. While the emphasis has been on discovering the Chuvash people's ancient Turkic pre-Christian origins, several scholars have also pointed to potential early Christian influence on the Chuvash, and this is a marked feature of the writings of G.I.Tafaev and his school textbooks. Although there is, as we shall see, plausible evidence for this early Christian influence, Tafaev's work also illustrates what Fletcher describes as 'the Christianization of history.' 'It had become a matter of concern to adopt, to link up to, a biblical, universal and Christian past.'²⁶⁹ This has been a welcome and understandable change from the accusations of paganism of the 19th century missionaries, particularly as the majority of modern Chuvash today consider themselves Orthodox Christians.

We will therefore survey the work of Chuvash scholars about their origins in correlation with the writings of scholars from around the world about the history and culture of the Chuvash, as well as other peoples they have been influenced by in the course of their history, in order to present a brief possible scenario of the origins of the Old Chuvash Faith. Gerasimova points out that most

²⁶⁶ Ashmarin N.A. 2012, 140

²⁶⁷ Komissarov G. 1911, 314-327

²⁶⁸ Nikol'skii 1908, 10-12

²⁶⁹ Fletcher 1999, 240

scholars today recognize a mixture of Turkic and Finno-Ugric elements in the Chuvash culture and language, with most giving preference to the Turkic element and viewing the Chuvash as descendants of the Volga Bulgars.²⁷⁰ This is the point of view of the historians Professors V.V.Dmitriev and G.I.Tafaev and V.P.Ivanov of Chuvash State University, and it is put across in schools in textbooks by Tafaev,²⁷¹ and in popular historical works.²⁷²

The general consensus is that the ancestors of the Chuvash were among the Turkic tribes living in the northern Caucasus and Black Sea area after the 2-3rd centuries AD, until several migrations north between the 7th and 10th centuries to the mid-Volga where they were among the tribes who formed Volga Bulgaria.²⁷³ Much recent scholarship traces the roots of Chuvash culture to Great Bulgaria and focuses on the correspondence of many aspects of Chuvash culture to that of other Turkic peoples.²⁷⁴ Some scholars emphasize the continuity of Zoroastrian beliefs²⁷⁵ owing to contact with the Armenians, Caucasian Albanians, Alans and Sarmatians in the eastern Caucasus where the Savirs (Sabirs, Suvars), also identified among the ancestors of the Chuvash, dwelt from the 2nd to 8th centuries when they were sought as allies by both Byzantium and the Persians.²⁷⁶

During this period of dwelling in the Northern Caucasus they settled from their nomadic lifestyle and lived in close contact, sometimes attacking, and sometimes in alliance with peoples of varying religious beliefs and practices, including Christianity and Judaism which had already been established for several centuries in this area. The religious climate of the Caucasus at the

²⁷⁰ Gerasimova 2003, 28

²⁷¹ Tafaev 2009

²⁷² See Ivanov, Nikolaev, Dmitriev 2000 and Iukhma 1998.

²⁷³ Ivanov 2005, 81-81.; Taimasov 2001, 22-24.

²⁷⁴ See in particular Salmin 1994. Great Bulgaria existed between the Danube and Kuban rivers in the mid-7th century. See Artamonov 2002, 176-188. Golden 1980, 44-47. A.A.Osipov (2007) considers that the wedding ritual and music of the *vir`yal* Chuvash is a living tradition passed down from Great Bulgaria. M.G.Kondratiev (2004) points to the research of Hungarian composers Bela Bartok and Zoltan Kodaly who saw Chuvash melodies as the ancient roots of their own folk tradition.

²⁷⁵ See Stan`ial 2002, 96-111

²⁷⁶ Taimasov 2001, 7-33. Golden 1980, 34-36, 47, 53, 87-88. Golden comments 'The North Caucasian Suvar should certainly be connected with the Suvar/Suwaz Ibn Fadlan found in Volga Bulgaria.' Golden 1980, 35, 87-88. Artamonov 2002, 92-98

time King Tiridate proclaimed Christianity in Armenia around 311-312 AD is described by Mahe

At that time – and this is true for the three lands of the Caucasus²⁷⁷ - the situation was as follows. In the countryside there were traditional religious rites, popular religion made up of a mixture of the Iranian and Greek religions. The nobility were adherents of the reformed Zoroastrianism of the Sassanids who claimed to have returned to the true faith of Zoroastra. (...) Then there were the inhabitants of the towns to which Judaism had penetrated together with Christianity in its wake.²⁷⁸

This proximity to recently christianised peoples has led some post-perestroika Chuvash scholars to emphasize Christian influence on the ancestors of the Chuvash during this period. Tafaev points to the baptisms of Bulgar Khan Orhan (619AD) and his nephew Khan Koubrat (Qobrat) at the time of their alliance with Byzantium.²⁷⁹ Despite accounts of these baptisms of the early Bulgar khans, recent historical and archaeological studies of the Danube Bulgars reveal the persistence of pagan practices despite clear Christian influence. Sullivan documents the persistence of ‘time-sanctioned pagan usages’ among the Danube Bulgars in the 9th century at the time of Khan Boris’s conversion although he also emphasizes Christian influences from the 7th century,²⁸⁰ while recent archaeological evidence also supports this Christian presence among still pagan Danube Bulgars. Fiedler dates temples and inscriptions, previously considered evidence of Bulgar pagan practices, to the post-conversion period.²⁸¹ We can therefore surmise that Koubrat’s descendants who migrated north to the mid-Volga while possibly retaining a memory of his Christian baptism, would have also still been living according to the beliefs and practices of their Asian and Caucasian periods.

²⁷⁷ Armenia, Caucasian Albania, Georgia

²⁷⁸ Mahe 2000, 7.

²⁷⁹ Tafaev 2009, 42-44. See also Tafaev 1993, Artamonov 2002, 179-180 and Golden 1980, 44-45

²⁸⁰ Sullivan 1966, 55-139

²⁸¹ Fiedler 2008, 151-237. See also Dimitrov 1999, 79, Brentjes 1971, 214

Even more intriguing are accounts of missionary work by the Armenian and Caucasian Albanian [on the present-day territory of Azerbaidzhan] church among the peoples of the North Caucasus, including the North Caucasian Huns whom Golden describes as the most important vassals of the Khazar khanate in the Caucasian area, while Artamonov suggests their kingdom should be connected with the kingdom of the Suwar mentioned in Ibn-Xurdadhbih.²⁸² St Mesrob Mashtots, the creator of the Armenian alphabet in the early 5th century, is credited with preaching and creating an alphabet in Caucasian Albania and even further along the Caspian Sea.²⁸³ Mashtots' disciples continued his work after his death and a Hun leader was baptized as Theophil.²⁸⁴ Both Garsoian and Mahe identify the early 7th century as a time when the Persarmenian church was flourishing with much church building and liturgical development.²⁸⁵ Although the Arabs captured Dvina in 641, Armenian religious freedom continued until around 700 AD.²⁸⁶ The ruler of Caucasian Albania Juanser (628-70) fought the Arab invasion on the side of Sassanid Persia and also fought off the Khazars who had captured Albania in the 6th century, destroying churches and gospels by fire.²⁸⁷ Juanser encouraged the building of churches, some of which have survived, and Albanian churchmen continued their missions in the Northern Caucasus.²⁸⁸ After defeating a Khazar raid led by Alp Ilutuer (Alp Iluetver, Alp Il-it`uer), Juanser made a peace treaty with the Khazars in 664 AD but continuing annual raids by Hun forces led Juanser's successor Varaz-Trdat to send a spiritual mission led by Bishop Israyel of Mec-Kolmank to the Huns in 682AD.²⁸⁹

When Israyel arrives in the magnificent Hun town of Varachan he is greeted with joy by the Hun prince Alp Ilutuer who is described as having performed feats of bravery with the Khazar Khan

²⁸² Golden 1980, 90-93. See also Artamonov 2002, 199-209

²⁸³ Mahe 2005-7, 59-97, 82; Dowsett 1961, 55; On surviving manuscripts in the Old Udi alphabet of the North Caucasus, believed to date to the 4th-5th centuries, see Beerle-Moor 2010, 27-29

²⁸⁴ Dowsett 1961, 57-60

²⁸⁵ Garsoian 1998, 1157; Mahe 1998, 471

²⁸⁶ Mahe 1998, 478

²⁸⁷ Dowsett 1961, 70, 120

²⁸⁸ Dowsett 1961, 120-121; Abduragimov 1995, 3.3 and 3.4

²⁸⁹ Dowsett 1961, 120-123

to whom he gave his daughter in marriage. His tribe is described as practising ‘satanically deluded tree-worshipping errors’.

If flashes of thundering fiery lightning and ethereal fire struck a man or some material object, they considered him or it to be some sort of sacrifice to a god K’uar. Using horses as burnt offerings they worship some gigantic savage monster whom they invoke as the god T’angri Xan called Aspandiat by the Persians. (...) They made sacrifices to fire and water and to certain gods of the roads, and to the moon and to all creatures considered in their eyes to be in some way remarkable.²⁹⁰

After Israyel’s preaching, the prince and his army glorify God, undertake to observe the annual seven weeks of fasting, burn down the pagan sanctuaries and build churches in many places despite opposition from the pagan sorcerers. Alp Ilutuer asks Bishop Israyel to stay in Varachan and found a See but the Albanian Catholicos Eliazar only allows Israyel to come and go between the two countries to confirm the Huns in their faith.

From among the tall, leafy oak-trees (...) the bishop ordered one to be cut down, namely the one which was the chief and mother of all the tall trees dedicated in the name of the vain gods and which many of the land of the Huns worshipped. (...) Then the bishop commanded the priests to take axes in their hands (...) and entering the grove, the priests felled the tree. The bishop ordered it to be taken into the town of Varachan and, summoning skilled carpenters, he ordered them to transform it into a beautifully balanced well-finished cross with painted ornaments. (...) Having thus arranged and decorated the tree with many wonderful ornaments, he erected it as a place of pilgrimage and prayers in the royal court facing east, and he said: (...) Since you eat and drink the flesh and blood of your animal sacrifices offered to the demons before the trees, He has erected His cross in the midst of your land and in place of the blood of sacrifices He has given His blood for the redemption of us all.²⁹¹

²⁹⁰ Ibid. 155-156, 160

²⁹¹ Ibid. 163-164

The story of Alp Ilutuer's conversion is recounted in detail using the History of Caucasian Albania as a source by Tafaev, Iukhma and Dimitriev.²⁹² Their grounds for using this source are not just the similarities between Hun and Chuvash religious practices, but also the presence of Ulap Ilitver in Chuvash folktales. In Land of Ulyp, Ulyp is a giant sent to earth by the god of thunder Aslati. He is chained to the rocks of the Caucasus for doing evil but sends his two sons to find another homeland in the north at the confluence of two rivers.²⁹³

Whether Bishop Israyel's 682AD mission to the Huns actually involved the ancestors of the Chuvash or not, Alp Ilutuer had little time to consolidate Christianity among the Huns. One of the most significant Khazar attacks on the Caucasus took place in 684AD, and Artamonov considers one of its aims may have been to destroy the increasing diplomatic ties of its rebellious vassal with the Christian kingdoms of Armenia and Albania which were occupied by Emperor Justinian II in 688AD.²⁹⁴ This was followed by the Arab conquest of Caucasian Albania in 692AD, their conquest of Derbent in 708, and the Hun towns of Varachan, Semender and Balandzher in 722-723.²⁹⁵ According to Mahe 'In Caucasian Albania the country was very quickly islamified, as early as the 8th century, and at the same time Zoroastrianism and local paganism were wiped out.'²⁹⁶ Despite Artamonov's conclusion that 'the conversion of the Hun prince Alp-Ilitver was just an episode not playing a noticeable role in the religious life of the Hun land' he nevertheless considers that 'the spread of Christianity there which had started earlier than this episode, undoubtedly continued after it too.'²⁹⁷

Ivanov argues that a second wave of Bulgar tribes²⁹⁸ including the Savir/Suvars and Barsils migrated north between 732-737 due to Arab attacks along the Caspian and Black Sea coasts, and it was the Suvars who gave their name to the town Suvar in Volga Bulgaria and eventually

²⁹² Tafaev 2009, Iukhma 1998, Dimitriev 1993

²⁹³ Chuvashskie narodniie skazki 1993, 3-4

²⁹⁴ Artamonov 2002, 207-209

²⁹⁵ Taimasov 2001, 22-24

²⁹⁶ Mahe 2000, 3

²⁹⁷ Artamonov 2002, 208

²⁹⁸ After the first wave in the 670s under Koubrat's son, Kotrag.

to the Chuvash people.²⁹⁹ The migration of the ancestors of the Chuvash to the mid-Volga at this point would account for their religious beliefs and practices being largely Zoroastrianism and paganism, together with some Christian and Judaic influence. The latter influence may have increased during the time that Volga Bulgaria was a vassal and trading partner of the ethnically related Khazars in the 9th century.³⁰⁰ According to Ibn Rusta, the Khazar khan and nobles adopted Judaism whereas the rest of the Khazars continued their Turkic religion.³⁰¹ Scholars vary as to what type of Judaism the Khazars adopted, although Vachkova argues that it was Karaite Judaism which has been preserved to this day by the Crimean Karaims whom Ivan Iakovlev visited in his youth.³⁰²

The persistence of their own beliefs and practices, and memory of the Arab conquest of the Caucasus may be the reason that some of the Volga Bulgars refused to cooperate and did not accept Islam when a mission was sent to Volga Bulgaria by the Caliph of Baghdad in 922AD. Ibn Fadlan's account of a division among the Bulgar tribes is regarded by some scholars as referring to the Chuvash.

Then he [the Bulgar king] wanted to leave, and sent a messenger to a people called Suwaz, commanding them to march with him, but they refused and divided into two groups, one headed by his son-in-law. His name was Wiragh, and he ruled over them. (...) The other group was headed by a king of a tribe, named king Askal. He obeyed the ruler but had not entered the faith of Islam.³⁰³

Golden concludes

It seems most likely, then, that the Chuvash formed in the period after the Mongol conquest.

Oguric-speaking elements within the Bulgar state, perhaps unislamicized, fled to Finnic regions

²⁹⁹ Ivanov 2005, 81-82. Golden agrees with this. See Golden 1980, 35-36, 87-88 and Golden 1992, 396-7

³⁰⁰ Ivanov 2005, 84. Golden 1980, 86

³⁰¹ Golden 1980, 97

³⁰² Vachkova 2008, 353.

³⁰³ Lunde, Stone 2012, 42; See also Ivanov 2005, 85

that had been part of the state, some initially and others later when the Golden Horde began to break up. There they mixed with the local population, producing the Chuvash.³⁰⁴

It is therefore plausible that the Chuvash ancient Turkic religious practices and beliefs had already undergone significant transformation under Judaic and Christian influence before their migration to the Mid-Volga. Descriptions of Armenian and Caucasian Albanian missionary work among the Turkic peoples in the Northern Caucasus, as we have seen, reveal the persistence of a worldview with a strong emphasis on the sacredness of the natural world, trees, the sun, and their participation in God's action in the world. The persistence of blood sacrifice in the Armenian Church, as well as the influence of the Judaic Khazars may account for the practices which, with added Islamic influence after the 10th century, and Russian influence after the 16th century or before, became the Old Chuvash Faith. We must be careful however not to fall into the trap Levin describes of how ethnographers 'reconstructed the pre-Christian belief system on the basis of 19th century ethnography, then presented the consequent congruence as proof of continuity through the mediaeval period.'³⁰⁵ It is perhaps enough to say that rather than there being or having been a pristine Old Chuvash Faith which can be reconstructed even in the 21st century 'in the realm of popular belief clear boundaries are rare, and influences are continual and multidirectional.'³⁰⁶

Conclusion

What was known in the 1870s as the Old Chuvash Faith can be viewed as Chuvash traditional rites for the dead, for fertility, and for protection from evil spirits, having absorbed popular Orthodox traditions surrounding holy days, just as their notions of sacred place at kiremets had accommodated with Orthodox sacred locations and objects in the form of icons, chapels, churches, and typified by the pilgrimage to Ishaki. Although these popular traditions are often

³⁰⁴ Golden 1992, 397

³⁰⁵ Levin 1993, 38

³⁰⁶ Rock 2007, 106

considered pagan elements which had been retained, they can also be viewed as expressions of truths about the natural and spiritual world, about good and evil which corresponded with and could be accommodated within Christian teaching, and were the way the uneducated village people understood and expressed these truths. As the Chuvash were almost entirely illiterate and spoke little Russian when increasing contact with Russians began in the 16th century, they could not understand the Slavonic Liturgy, nor the Russian-speaking priests who lived among them. They would appear nevertheless to have assimilated, at least from this time on, many of the popular Orthodox traditions of Russians who had a similar agrarian lifestyle, and with whom the Chuvash had contact due to fairs and other trading contacts, nearby Russian parishes, and Russian clergy in Chuvash parishes.

The evidence would suggest that while the process of transformation was speeded up by the introduction of native-language texts, liturgy and preaching, transformation had already been taking place for several hundred years, with some elements possibly dating back to the first contact of their Turkic ancestors with Christianity and Judaism in the Caucasus in the middle of the first millennium AD. In Sullivan's discussion of the conversion of the Danube Bulgars he writes that 'the decisive element in the process of instituting Christian practices was the ability of the missionary forces to provide two things: substitute religious practices for the everyday simple pagan usages not acceptable to Christians, and meaningful explanations which would persuade the Bulgars to abandon practices which (...) ran counter to Christian usages.'³⁰⁷ We have seen in this chapter how to a certain extent the substitution of religious practices had taken place among the Chuvash before the 1870s, but lack of meaningful explanations in the Chuvash language meant that many archaic practices remained and it was only with the introduction of the native language that the process of substitution or transformation took sway over the old ways.

It was this same introduction of the native language and the involvement of literate native speakers, however, which speeded up ethnographic research into Chuvash ethnic and cultural

³⁰⁷ Sullivan 1966, 88-89

roots, and so at a time when the Old Faith was in some places disappearing we see a corresponding concern to record its ways. This ethnographic research, largely deprived of its late 19th-century Christian basis, has become in the 20th century a search for ethnogenesis which in many cases has resented russification and Christianization, and has given little emphasis to Christian influence during possibly 1500 years of Chuvash history, and in post-perestroika Russia has suggested it is possible to restore some pure, unsyncretised form of the Old Chuvash Faith.³⁰⁸

It is this kind of viewpoint which has influenced much 20th century writing about the impact of the Il`minskii movement on the traditional religious cultures of the Volga. Consequently, the continuity between the Old Faith and Christian Orthodoxy has not been acknowledged, and Il`minskii and Iakovlev have been blamed for putting a russifying crust over the ancient ancestral Chuvash faith rather than building on and consolidating the centuries-old transformation from within. We can ask the question of what might have been the case if the Old Chuvash Faith had entered the 20th century in its 1870s form without the influence of Il`minskii and Iakovlev? What would have been the impact of the atheism of the Soviet period?

The French Orthodox theologian Olivier Clement's account of his journey to Orthodoxy emphasizes the role played by his upbringing in a French Languedoc village in the 1930s-40s, describing how he was drawn to Orthodoxy in a 'world falling apart, in which the rites and relationship to the earth were becoming unraveled.' (...) 'I was a Mediterranean pagan. I have remained very pagan, as Orthodoxy is not a puritan form of Christianity, but a Christianity of transfiguration.'³⁰⁹ Clement is deliberately using the language of *dvoeverie* here to highlight the Orthodox Christian worldview, rooted in the relationship to the earth, and expressed in its rites which provided continuity with the ancient past amidst the rootless secularism of modernity.

³⁰⁸ See Filatov, Shchipkov 1994

³⁰⁹ Quoted in Damour 2014, 286

The following chapters will show how the Chuvash in the late 19th and early 20th were, similarly to Clement, living in a world falling apart as the rites and relationship to the earth became unraveled. The missionary approach of correspondence and transformation adopted by Il`minskii and his native Chuvash followers became a way of retaining much of the ancient religious culture of the Chuvash, albeit in a transformed, transfigured way. This represents a third, perhaps more viable, alternative to Salmin's dilemma mentioned in the opening paragraphs of this chapter. Mousalimas has written about similar processes in Alaska

Here is a viable way of life with roots deep in antiquity and with fruit in the modern world. Or alternatively expressed, here is deepest antiquity existing unsevered transformed.³¹⁰

³¹⁰ Mousalimas 2003, 224

Chapter 6

The Challenge of Modernity

Introduction

In this chapter we shall examine challenges to the Il'minskii system in the early 20th century and the debates they provoked. Apart from reforming and revolutionary currents in Russian society, the Chuvash parishes and clergy were profoundly influenced at this time by two movements within the Russian Church, both of which represented differing responses to the modernization and secularization of Russia's social and political life. The influence on the one hand of the ecclesial reform movement, and on the other hand of clerical Orthodox patriotism, was already perceptible in Il'minskii's writings and activities during the last decade of his life, and accounts for the perceived ambivalence between conservative and progressive tendencies in the Il'minskii legacy. We shall examine different challenges to this legacy from within the church, from within the Il'minskii movement itself under the influence of revolutionary activity, and from within the state educational system. These challenges provoked a debate about the nature of mission which was one local, yet highly significant manifestation of broader debates concerning the Church's relationship to the State, and the role of the laity, clergy and hierarchy within the Church, issues which were central to the movement for ecclesial reform at the turn of the 20th century and eventually led to the 1917-1918 Church Council.¹

The movement for ecclesial reform

Shevzov and Valliere have illustrated the competing visions of the Church within Russia in the late 19th century, with Archbishop Makarii Bulgakov representing what Valliere describes as the 'minimalist' position which emphasized the episcopal hierarchy to which Christ has 'granted the authority of teaching, and of priestly function and of spiritual direction' and to whom the laity

¹ Valliere 1978, 183-184; Shevzov 2004, 12-53

were to be subordinate.² In contrast, A.S.Khomiakov represented a ‘maximalist’ position emphasizing ‘the Spirit of God who lives in the totality of the ecclesial organism’ and preserves and guards the faith.³ Between these two positions, moderates, represented by the Memorandum of a Group of 32 Priests, viewed the bishops not so much as the guardians of Orthodoxy as the organic embodiment of *sobornost*, and whose authority ‘had to be justified as a derivative of Orthodoxy’s organic unity that was rooted in the local parishes.’⁴

This emphasis on the parish and laity was formulated by A.A.Papkov who believed lay men and women could participate in all aspects of parish life which ‘meant cultivating among laity the sense of their own community, so they would take more interest and responsibility in its affairs; it meant transforming laity from a passive group, on whom the Church acts and whom the Church produces, into conscious creators of that community.’⁵ At the 1906 preconciliar meetings which discussed the composition of the greatly desired All-Russian Church Council, a significant minority opposed the view that the laity and lower clergy should only have a consultative vote, as they stressed that lay people and presbyters deliberated alongside the apostles themselves, and that the Orthodox Church was ‘founded on a communal, choral principle’ (*na nachale obshchinnom, khorovom*).⁶ One of the signatories of this opposition view was Mikhail Mashanov, Chairman of the Kazan Brotherhood of St Gurii and a strong Il`minskii supporter, which was entirely in accordance with the emphasis on community, the laity, and choral singing in the native parishes which had arisen from the BSG’s missionary work as we have seen above.⁷

² Shevzov 2004, 28

³ Ibid. 29

⁴ Valliere 1978, 188

⁵ Shevzov 2004, 38

⁶ Valliere Ibid. 195 I have changed his translation to a literal version of the word *khorovoi* (choral).

⁷ See Ibid. 201, Note 25

Clerical Orthodox Patriotism

Another movement within the Russian Church at this time which had more direct influence on the laity, although promoted largely by those who adhered to the ‘minimalist’ position on church reform, was that of clerical patriotism which arose in the reactionary atmosphere of Alexander III’s reign after the assassination of Alexander II in March 1881. Knight contrasts Nicholas I’s reign with that of Alexander III

The second wave of Official Nationality under Alexander III was of a very different nature. By unequivocally associating itself with Great Russian culture, the autocracy limited the possibilities for civic inclusion. (...) The problem was not Russia’s failure to develop nationality (...) but rather the adoption of a form of nationality that was inherently at odds with its status as an empire. Fusing state and nation in a context of ethnic diversity and autocratic rule is no recipe for stability.⁸

The patriotic movement was epitomized by empire-wide public commemorations of significant anniversaries in the Russian spiritual collective memory, of Sts Cyril and Methodius in 1885, of the Baptism of Rus in 1888, of St Sergius in 1892, as well as the 1896 Coronation and the 1913 canonization of Patriarch Germogen. These events channeled the Russian popular ecclesial consciousness to Russia’s mediaeval past, to the ideal of Holy Rus, and the formation of a national community defined by the symbols and rituals of Orthodoxy.⁹

This Orthodox patriotism was promoted through an emphasis on ‘internal’ mission aiming to draw the Orthodox faithful back to the Church at a time of secularization and apostasy.¹⁰ The official organ of this ‘internal’ mission was *Missionary Review*,¹¹ founded in 1896 and edited by the lay missionary V.M. Skvortsov who was a leading figure at the Third All-Russian

⁸ Knights 2000, 59

⁹ Strickland 2013, 3, 5, 16-17, 27, 37

¹⁰ Ibid. 46

¹¹ *Missionerskoe Obozrenie* (MO)

Missionary Conference in Kazan in 1897.¹² The need for ‘internal mission’ was associated with the concept of ‘cultural mission’, an understanding that ‘Orthodox mission could not exist outside and independently of the national culture that surrounded it’ and therefore missionaries should incorporate patriotic rhetoric into their appeal to the masses.¹³ Cultural mission also emphasized Russia’s cultural particularism expressed through distinctly Russian and mediaeval motifs in art, architecture, classical and church music and literature, and a strong emphasis on Russia’s national saints during this period.¹⁴

This movement had important implications for Il`minskii’s legacy of non-Russian clergy and parishes as, especially after 1905, patriotic clergy and many state officials became increasingly aligned with the patriotic unions and ethnic nationalism. Strickland comments ‘They believed that a policy of Russification directed at national minorities, and the defense of Russian national privileges, were the keys to uniting the troubled multiethnic empire, and they believed that the Orthodox Church must play a significant role in this policy.’¹⁵ Consequently the patriotic movement embodied the tension between Church universalism and national particularism, an issue which is a marked feature of the writings of the first generation of Chuvash intelligentsia seeking to understand the place of their own people within the Russian church and state.

It is in the context of issues raised by both these movements that the history of Il`minskii’s legacy among the Chuvash must be read, although the influence of the two movements is already perceptible in Il`minskii’s writings and activities of the 1880s, the decade before his death in 1891.

¹² Strickland 2013, 37, 47-48

¹³ Ibid. 48

¹⁴ Ibid. 50-67

¹⁵ Ibid. 120

The last decade of Il'minskii's life: articulation and defence of the Orthodox missionary tradition

By the early 1880s Il'minskii's most cherished principles were coming into flower, with native schools and teachers, and native priests serving the Orthodox Liturgy in native languages not only in the Volga region but in other distant locations of the Russian Empire, and at overseas missions.¹⁶ Il'minskii's last decade was therefore one of frantic activity when, on top of directing the Kazan Teachers' Seminary and supervising native translations and publications, he was both making unflagging efforts through correspondence to make sure his principles were being applied at grassroots level and rejoicing where this was the case, but also defending them from further attack in the hope people would see the light in situations where they had been ignored or were doubted.¹⁷ The pressure Il'minskii was under is evident from his correspondence, and from the illness and depression resulting from this frantic activity and anxiety. As early as 1878 he wrote to N.P.Ostroumov in Tashkent

The thought of my uselessness for the Seminary (KTS), my absolute feebleness totally destroys me; (...) and in addition to my grief there are attacks on the native cause from all sides; everywhere native languages are being rejected, in Kazan and Simbirsk and Viatka, everywhere. Everything is like that here. Not one single idea is held onto, not only to the end, but even for a few years. Now everything is being forgotten, is changing.¹⁸

Iakovlev tells us

perhaps 8-10 years before his death, under the influence of pressure from enemies of his beloved native cause, (Il'minskii) dreamt of giving up his job, Kazan, and everything connected with this and going to the Caucasus as a missionary to the wildest Caucasian peoples...¹⁹

Despite thoughts of giving up work at KTS, he explained to Ostroumov in 1882

¹⁶ See Nikolai 1910, 203-4 for Archbishop Nikolai of Japan's acknowledgement of Il'minskii's influence on his work. For Nikolai's application of Il'minskii's principles see Chekh 2001, 39-40 and Besstremiannaia 2006, 18

¹⁷ See for example Znamenskii 1901, 666-7; Il'minskii 1891, 36, 43-46, and 1895, 118, 181, 194

¹⁸ Znamenskii 1900, 20

¹⁹ Iakovlev 1997, 223

one thing alone concerned and troubled me; that a successor appointed by chance might try to destroy everything natural, heartfelt and good invested and developed at the Seminary by its incomparable teachers.²⁰

In early 1891 Il'minskii was appointed a member of the Synodal Schools' Council with responsibility for developing church-parish schools among the native population, but when his report was discussed on 25th June 1891 he was horrified to discover that the Council knew nothing of the

situation of the native tribes of the Kazan and Volga region, the spiritual needs of the baptized natives and pagans are alien to them, the methods and means of native education developed by BSG are unknown, and therefore puzzling and questionable. The main and strongest reason for doubt was the fear that allowing native languages in school and church would create nationalities (narodnosti) to the detriment and harm of the Russian people and state.²¹

In April 1891, eight months before his death, he wrote to Pobedonostsev

I'm a man of feather-brained schemes (...) but what is to be done considering the novelty of the task, although in fact it is not new, but with difficulty penetrates peoples' consciousness and convictions. My schemes revitalize me and sometimes a practical or even sensible thought enters my head.²²

It was these fears that all would be lost as many did not share his convictions in the increasingly patriotic atmosphere of the 1880s that led to the publication of many collections of correspondence explaining and defending use of an adapted Cyrillic alphabet to transcribe native languages,²³ and the use of biblical and liturgical texts in the mother tongue in schools and native-language parishes by native teachers and clergy.²⁴ It also led to him cultivating the friendship and favour of Pobedonostsev through whom he was able both to influence the

²⁰ Ibid. 40

²¹ Ibid. 397-8

²² Il'minskii 1895,387

²³ Il'minskii 1883b

²⁴ Il'minskii 1883a, 1883d, 1884, 1885, 1887, 1890

appointment of Orthodox bishops and clergy, and gain a wider audience influential over educational policies in the empire as a whole. In December 1884 he wrote to Pobedonostsev about the collection of his and Vasilii Timofeev's writings which he was gathering together to explain his ideas at the 1885 Volga-Kama Bishops' Council

I am concerned to publish such things (...) explaining the native cause, partly as the day is fading (...) I'm rushing about so that the ideas and practices which have arisen before my very eyes should not be lost. These ideas are extremely simple and natural; but nevertheless, in past times, and even in the not so distant past, it is not evident that the native cause was clearly and firmly understood and led.²⁵

But Il'minskii did not restrict himself to publications in his desire for the native cause to be firmly understood and led. He and Iakovlev, despite being laity, were active participants in the 1885 Bishops' Council which was described in the Kazan Diocesan News as a return to the ancient conciliar principle which had been lost with the institution of the Synod in Peter's reign. The need was felt for a council of bishops from neighboring dioceses to examine the needs of their flocks and to 'introduce the conciliar principle into the activity of the bishops themselves (...) so that these small, local and temporary councils could present their conciliarly (*soborne*) taken decisions for confirmation by a permanent council.'²⁶ Il'minskii and Fr. Vasilii Timofeev presented the two main reports about native mission. Apart from the main sessions 'private, small meetings of those attending the conference took place at Il'minskii's flat'²⁷ where Iakovlev was staying, giving him the opportunity to discuss the appointment of Chuvash priests with the bishops who all attended a Vigil in Tatar at the Baptised-Tatar School.

Kreindler, seeking to illustrate Il'minskii's conservative brand of Orthodoxy, wrote that he 'seemed uninterested in a revived Church Council'²⁸ and it is true his writings do not discuss this

²⁵ Il'minskii 1895, 151-152. The collection was published as Il'minskii 1887

²⁶ O sobranii 1885, 560

²⁷ Iakovlev 1997, 244-5

²⁸ Kreindler 1969, 122

issue. Yet his participation as a layman in the 1885 Council was merely one end of the spectrum of the whole missionary movement he awakened being infused with a conciliar spirit expressed through lay involvement in church life and constant conferences (*s`ezdy*) for consultation. At the other end of the spectrum, Il`minskii's emphasis on *narodnost`*, the use of the native language, the communal translation process, congregational singing, adult catechism courses, the building of school-churches, and the creation of separate parishes with the involvement of the village communities, all increased lay articulacy and involvement at the level of the parish. The pedagogical courses gathered together lay teachers and the first native priests to discuss common concerns and by the early 20th century, conferences of native priests and laity were taking place regularly.²⁹ The Il`minskii legacy in the villages thus reflected what Valliere describes as the maximalist idea of 'a Church Council in which *narodnost`* is the central point'. He characterizes this maximalist stance as theological populism, *narodnichestvo*, and quotes Rozanov's words 'The people are the Church, Ecclesia, i.e. popular assembly (...) the fathers of the ecumenical councils never even thought of the "church" otherwise than as a popular mass, a whole nation.'³⁰

Il`minskii and clerical Orthodox patriotism

Alongside Il`minskii's defence in the 1880s of the principles he had been applying since the 1850s, which with their emphasis on native *narodnost`* foreshadowed and promoted conciliarity and the involvement of the laity in the church, in his last decade Il`minskii also became involved in projects expressive of Orthodox patriotism. He devoted much energy to publishing a Church Slavonic textbook for schools, student editions of the Horologion, the Okhtoekh, the Four Gospels on the basis of the most ancient Ostromirovo Gospel, and a commentary *Thoughts on the comparative merit in relation to language, of editions of the Church Slavonic translation of the Psalter and Gospel of varying epochs*.³¹ These activities have been something of an enigma

²⁹ At the Japanese Mission, councils attended by Japanese clergy and lay representatives of parishes were held annually from 1874, with the 1875 council electing the first native Japanese priest. See Chekh 2001, 36, 42

³⁰ Valliere 1978, 193

³¹ Il`minskii 1882

for scholars and either interpreted as a sign of his religious conservatism or passed over in silence.³² It appears contradictory that Il'minskii who was still staunchly defending use of the most popular language in his native translations, in April 1884 should write of his fears of 'a radical review and correction of liturgical books – in a russianizing direction. This is extremely undesirable and worth fighting against.'³³

There are a number of factors which help to explain Il'minskii's increased interest in Church Slavonic in the 1880s. His use of Greek and Slavonic sources when working on native translations led to a familiarity with the minutest details of the orthography and grammar of Slavonic texts, and his awareness of variants and errors in different editions of Slavonic biblical and liturgical texts also meant that he desired to clarify Slavonic texts for his native translators.³⁴ Il'minskii's experience of writing textbooks for native schools meant that Pobedonostsev entrusted him with the task of writing a Church Slavonic textbook for the church-parish schools established from 1884.³⁵

One of Il'minskii's main concerns was the way Slavonic texts had been corrected in the 18th century. In a letter Il'minskii only dared send to Pobedonostsev after he had reread it and made three prostrations, he declared boldly

In recent years I have begun to intently scrutinize our church's liturgical texts and books, collated them with the Greek, collated the new-style books with old-style books,³⁶ and come inadvertently to the conclusion that the 18th century brought much that was alien, secular, servile and of the human passions into the realm of the church, and the correctors of the Bible at the time of Peter and Elizabeth brought our sacred language to final ruin.³⁷

³² Kreindler 1969, 96 and 121-2 is an exception.

³³ Il'minskii 1895, 109-110

³⁴ See Il'minskii 1895, 140 and Iakovlev 1997, 279-280

³⁵ Il'minskii 1883. The textbook went through 14 editions by 1916.

³⁶ i.e. books printed before the 18th century.

³⁷ Il'minskii 1895, 79

He attributed these corrections to Western influence³⁸ which he also discerned in Orthodox prayer and study practices, describing the Short Prayer Book as ‘the fabrication of high society ladies who have spent too much time observing catholic customs’³⁹ and the Catechism as the invention of Western mediaeval scholasticism. ‘It was not so with the Greeks: they studied the Holy Scriptures, the liturgical books, the patristic writings directly, drew water from abundant, living springs, and not some chemist’s quintessence as is the Catechism.’⁴⁰ Il`minskii’s love for the pre-Petrine period also explains his respect for Old Believers,⁴¹ and he left instructions to be carried to his grave on a wooden trestle in their manner.⁴²

Il`minskii similarly opposed the russifying of Slavonic church texts. In his 1882 *Thoughts* he sought to prove ‘the ecclesial significance of Slavonic and how Russian is inappropriate for Orthodox services. If the Orthodox laity, captivated with the content of the Gospel and the Bible as a whole due to the clear Russian formulation, accept the Russian translation and abandon the Slavonic text, then they have already broken the inner link with the Orthodox church.’⁴³ For Il`minskii the problem with the Russian Bible was its bias towards the Hebrew text rather than the Greek Septuagint which ‘laid the foundation, and permeates all the content of our ecclesial life.’⁴⁴

Despite this concern for Slavonic texts, it was only in 1876 that for the first time Il`minskii referred to Sts Cyril and Methodius in his writings, although it was not to advocate use of Slavonic but to support his opinion that the Russian alphabet should be adapted to the phonetics of native languages and his theory that an alphabet is adopted together with a faith. He admitted in a 1876 report that at the time of his first translations into popular Tatar in 1862 ‘My main concern was to use the language of the people (*o narodnosti iazyka*); the alphabet was of

³⁸ Ibid. 110-112, 409

³⁹ Ibid. 54

⁴⁰ Ibid. 72-3

⁴¹ Ibid. 169, 448

⁴² Iakovlev 1997, 227

⁴³ Ibid. 137

⁴⁴ Ibid. 136

secondary importance.’⁴⁵ The alphabets adapted to native phonetics were forged later in the practical surroundings of the school and with the aim of helping pupils learn to read more easily, and Il`minskii did not attribute this crucial change in his ideas to the example of Cyril and Methodius. But by 1876, with the increased attention to the Thessalonian brothers owing to their 1000<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1863 Il`minskii began to use their example in passing on Orthodox tradition to justify the use of both the Cyrillic alphabet and its adaptation to native phonetics.

It is almost a historical axiom, that when one people received a faith from another people then it received its alphabet together with its faith.⁴⁶ (...) When the wise and holy first Orthodox teachers of the Slavs, motivated by a spirit of Christian love and condescension made significant additions (to the Greek alphabet) of consonants, nasal vowels and semi-vowels (...) why should we, scorning such an example, start to impose our Russian alphabet as a whole on native languages which are extremely different from our Russian language not only in inward structure but in their system of sounds.⁴⁷

In a further report of May 1878 Il`minskii broadens his reference to Cyril and Methodius to justify not only an adapted alphabet but the use of local languages in general. He contrasts this practice with that of the Latin West and Islam which used unadapted Latin and Arabic alphabets,

The Orthodox Church, on the contrary, always translated Holy Scripture and liturgical services into local native languages, being concerned to communicate teachings about the faith as an educational force. (...) The abundance and extent of scriptural and liturgical books, the loftiness and novelty of their content, required as much precision as possible both in the expression of language and in the depiction of sounds.⁴⁸

It was his desire for a recovery of this tradition and his passionate concern that the precision of the Cyrillo-Methodian texts ‘in the expression of language and in the depiction of sounds’ be

⁴⁵ Il`minskii 1883, 12

⁴⁶ Ibid. 18

⁴⁷ Ibid. 28

⁴⁸ Ibid. 35-36. [My underlining]

understood that explains his work on the earliest editions of the Slavonic Gospels in the 1880s.

He explained his intentions to Pobedonostsev in November 1884

before further attempts at correcting the Slavonic translation of the biblical and liturgical texts, we need to develop among the Russian people, and especially among the clergy, a correct taste for the splendour of ancient Slavonic, and for this we need to prepare and publish a complete study text of the Gospels using the Ostromirovo orthography.⁴⁹

After the favourable reception of the Gospel of Matthew Il'minskii planned in June 1888 to continue with the other Gospels using 'as far as possible the exact text of the Cyrillo-Methodian translation of the Gospel' as in the wake of the 1000th anniversary of St Methodius in 1885 'we should acquaint everyone with their immortal labours'.⁵⁰ In August 1890 he argued that educated people 'should be interested in the ancient text which served to instruct and enlighten Russians at the time of Grand Prince Vladimir Equal-to-the-Apostles, as the Ostromirovo Gospel was written only 68 years later than the baptism of Rus' (...) and 'is contemporary to that great deed so beneficial for us.'⁵¹

For Il'minskii then the Cyrillo-Methodian texts were above all missionary texts witnessing to Russia's own reception of the Christian tradition. His increasing veneration for the saints is seen in his request to Pobedonostsev in November 1884 that the texts of all the festal services to Cyril and Methodius and the 'Praises of Kirill' should be republished separately, and their names included in the Litany 'God, save your people' at Vespers, to commemorate the 1000th anniversary of Methodius in 1885.⁵² Il'minskii's understanding of his work as a continuation of Cyril and Methodius' transmission of the Christian tradition to the Slavs is summed up on the iconostasis at the Kazan Teachers' Seminary where St Cyril was depicted with his alphabet, St

⁴⁹ Il'minskii 1895, 138

⁵⁰ Ibid. 254

⁵¹ Ibid. 356

⁵² Ibid. 139

Methodius with the Gospel open at the first verses of St John's Gospel using the Ostromirovo text, and St Stephen of Perm with his Zyrian alphabet.⁵³

The progressive and conservative sides of the Il'minskii legacy

From the 1840s to 1860s Il'minskii, therefore, largely justified his ideas by stressing that use of the native language would lead to an inward conversion to the Christian faith which would be an antidote to the apostasy movement, and by criticizing the Russian Church's lack of use of native languages. From 1876 and increasingly in the 1880s, however, we find him reframing his arguments in the language of tradition and stressing that the Orthodox Church had always translated into native languages, in order to reassure and convince his patriotic opponents. It is in this context that his references to Cyril and Methodius and his veneration of their missionary work, which he increasingly identifies with his own, begin to emerge.

Paul Valliere argues that a 'reprise of integralism' is a pattern occurring often in the history of modern Russian Orthodoxy.

A modernist or liberal initiative, inspired by a vision of social or ecclesial renewal, inevitably produces divisions in the church and between church and society. The Orthodox sponsors of change find the divisions caused by their activism repugnant and attempt to restore the "culture of wholeness" by proposing new integralist projects. These, however, have the effect of restoring routinised patterns of thought and behavior which undermine the modernist or liberal initiative.⁵⁴

While Valliere is referring to Bukharev, his pattern is also helpful in analyzing the changes in Il'minskii's thinking in his final decade. While Il'minskii was not a theological liberal in the sense of acknowledging the autonomy of the secular spheres of life, his initial projects of the 1850s-60s can be described as modernist in that they arose from the need to adapt to changing conditions in the 1860s reform era, challenged received ways of doing things, and were inspired

⁵³ Ibid. 16

⁵⁴ Valliere 1991, 113-114. Valliere describes the culture of wholeness to have been idealized by the Slavophiles and embraces the ecclesiology of *sobornost'*, the ideal of church-state symphonia and the ethics of consensus in traditional Russian society.

by a vision of ecclesial renewal which would open up the Russian Church to the languages and cultures of non-Russian peoples. The opposition and divisions caused by his activities Il'minskii did find unbearable, and his integralist projects of the 1880s, his Slavonic texts and textbooks and support for the church-parish schools, his identification of his missionary work with the work of Sts Cyril and Methodius, won him the friendship and favour of Pobedonostsev which was a major factor in Il'minskii's ability to promote his ideas despite opposition to them in the increasingly patriotic atmosphere of the 1880s.

However, Il'minskii's integration of his missionary principles into the tradition of Sts Cyril and Methodius was not merely restoring routinised patterns of thought and behavior in the sense of rejecting liturgical life in native languages. If Cyril and Methodius' significance for the beginnings of Slavic literary culture and for Russian *narodnost'* had been restored during the second quarter of the 19th century and celebrated in 1863, Il'minskii's reprise of integralism was rather a restoration of the universal significance of Cyril and Methodius' apostolic task as a model for the Church in all epochs and among all peoples, its *obshchechelovechnost'*, and so continued his challenge to the Church to restore its apostolic vision.

Il'minskii was not a conservative clinging to the status quo, but rather a radical conservative desiring the Church to return to ancient roots and purer practices, and in this his ideas also echo the movement for church reform. Il'minskii wanted more than just a conservative restoration of the pre-Petrine and pre-Schism period, of the ideal of Holy Rus. He was also inspired by the patristic and apostolic periods, and he praised the Greeks for studying scriptural, liturgical and patristic writings which he described as abundant, living springs.⁵⁵ At the Altai Mission he praised the charismatic ministry of Fr. Mikhail Chevalkov who 'has received from the Lord authority over unclean spirits (...) God's power, healing illness and casting out spirits, convinces

⁵⁵ Il'minskii 1895, 73

everyone of the truth of Christianity.⁵⁶ In a letter to Makarii Nevskii on 22nd November 1891, one month before his death, Il'minskii wrote

It is especially dear to me that you are acting according to the spirit and form of the ancient fathers of the Church. Hold on to this spirit and this form; do not be sidetracked by the examples of others who are extremely wise, but with an earthly and vain wisdom.⁵⁷

The seeming, and in some ways real, contradiction between Il'minskii's early reforming projects and later integralist projects, explains why he has been perceived by some scholars as progressive, by others as conservative. It also helps to explain why, despite the conservative reactionary image of him portrayed in Soviet times and by some post-Soviet scholars, an image based largely on his integralism of the 1880s, the movement he spawned among the Chuvash continued the reform orientation of its origins in the 1850s-1870s despite often using the language of tradition and integration in order to defend itself and its founder in the increasingly patriotic climate. It is to this story and the texts arising out of it that we shall now turn.

The crisis of native mission at the turn of the 20th century

The opening years of the 20th century saw a crisis which shook the foundations of Il'minskii's legacy among the non-Russian peoples. Issues surrounding use of non-Russian languages and the role of native schools were sharply debated at both official meetings and in the press, with the Il'minskii system and Iakovlev's role in promoting it among the Chuvash being subjected to severe attack. Although the underlying motivation common to certain quarters of both church and state can be identified as the perceived threat of separatism owing to increased use of native languages and the rise of native leadership, the attack on the Il'minskii system took different forms within the church, within the state, and within the Il'minskii movement itself. In the rest of this chapter we will explore the particular forms these attacks took, and the ensuing responses in letters, the press, and at conferences up to the year 1910.

⁵⁶ Znamenskii 1901, 767-8, 656

⁵⁷ Ibid. 781-2

The mounting crisis during the 1890s

During the 1890s several factors can be identified as contributing to bringing these issues to a head by 1899. One factor was the enormous increase in the number of primary schools and the church's parish schools which throughout Russia as a whole increased from 4213 in 1884 to 41233 in 1906.⁵⁸ This led to a great need to increase the number of qualified teachers, a situation which was acutely felt among the Chuvash where the only two teacher training institutions in 1890 were SCTS and KTS. We have seen above the situation in the Tsivil'sk district where many teachers at best had primary level education. It also raised the issue of the roles of church and state in organizing the educational process.

Another factor was that by the 1890s Iakovlev's leadership capabilities, his wide-ranging initiatives concerning teacher training and agriculture were causing increasing resentment and fuelling fears about Chuvash separatism. Iakovlev was keenly aware of the teacher shortage and saw it as his role, especially in the 1890s, to increase the numbers of teachers and schools among the Chuvash. In November 1895 Iakovlev put forward detailed plans to the Kazan Curator concerning upgrading the SCTS Girls' School to a Womens' Teachers' School and added a list of 19 MNP schools where he recommended opening a Girls' Department and 49 Chuvash villages where a separate girls' school should be opened.⁵⁹

In a letter to I.A.Iznoskov of 6th March 1897 thanking him for Synodal stipends given to SCTS Iakovlev wrote

The demand is increasing but supply remains the same. (...) the training ground for teachers (and not for teachers alone, but also for clergy) for the whole Chuvash population is one and the same

⁵⁸ Morison 1991, 193

⁵⁹ Iakovlev 1998, 175-95

SCTS which due to its conditions is scarcely capable of training 25-30 teachers every 2 years (...) of which 5-8 are always Russians i.e. not capable of being teachers in Chuvash schools.⁶⁰

He was therefore thankful that the Synod had given the stipends which he planned to use to start a parallel class in order to increase the number of graduates by 12 to 15. This would however involve extending the buildings to house the students and he had almost lost hope for more funding from the poverty-stricken MNP.⁶¹ It is evident from the letter that Iakovlev was torn between the competing claims of the state and church authorities as SCTS was funded largely by the MNP and Zemstvos and so he was duty-bound to provide teachers for them first, rather than for the church-parish schools. We also see Iakovlev's view that Russians could not teach in Chuvash schools, and his emphasis on SCTS's role in educating Chuvash clergy. All of these issues were to become increasingly controversial.

Iakovlev's turning increasingly to the Synod in the 1890s for the means to expand SCTS and the network of Chuvash schools is partly explained by the suspicious attitude to the Chuvash schools within the Kazan Educational District where from 1893-1901 S.F. Speshkov was assistant Curator, and then Curator until 1903, the year he dismissed Iakovlev as Inspector of Chuvash schools. Iakovlev wrote of him

As many government officials who had served in the Western borderlands, he saw everywhere separatism, the aspiration of the peoples living within Russia to independence (...) Speshkov stood for the russification of the natives through the introduction of the Russian language into schools, therefore native teachers were not necessary and Russian teachers should know native languages.⁶²

It was not only in the area of teaching training that Iakovlev's initiatives were causing alarm. We have seen above how from 1892-1896 he took over the Simbirsk Agricultural Society's abandoned experimental farm, brought it into running order, only to have it taken off him and his

⁶⁰ CNM f. 10/VT4480, Iakovlev to Iznoskov 6/3/1897

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Iakovlev 1997, 335

proposals implemented by the Agricultural Society itself. In November 1898 an extended SCTS church was consecrated and the Brotherhood of the Holy Spirit was founded as a charitable body to give material support to poorer pupils. The 1890s had witnessed a great number of Chuvash teachers and clergy moving to the Samara diocese due to Iakovlev's collaboration with Bishop Gurii, while the Il'minskii system had received renewed impetus from Archbishop Vladimir Petrov in the Kazan diocese, and from Bishop Dionisii in the Ufa diocese. The 1890s had also seen increasing collaboration between Iakovlev and the BFBS.

In many situations Iakovlev had helped village communities purchase land, build churches and set up separate parishes, and by 1899 he was being cold-shouldered by the Simbirsk Consistory. He fumed in a letter to Iznoskov of December 1899 that after all his efforts to prepare for consecration a church in Buinsk district he had not been informed of the date of the consecration and consequently could not attend. 'There was not one Chuvash priest and very little Chuvash singing (...) There was nothing like this before.'⁶³ We also see how in this decade after Il'minskii's death Iakovlev felt personally responsible to keep the native cause faithful to Il'minskii's ideas, and was reluctant for Chuvash affairs to develop beyond his control. He wrote to Iznoskov 'I especially desire that SCTS remain the centre of Chuvash education as before, I fear for the strengthening of other Chuvash centres, fear that dissension will arise, that we will wander from the grace-filled path which (Il'minskii) indicated to all those working with him.'⁶⁴

At such a time of heightened Russian patriotism and fear of revolutionary and separatist activity, Iakovlev's actions and intentions were being increasingly questioned. It was not only the Simbirsk Consistory but the Simbirsk bishop, who resented Iakovlev taking so many situations into his own hands with the support of Pobedonostsev and the Synod. It was these attitudes which brought about what Iakovlev described in a letter to V.K.Sabler of 28th May 1899 as a

⁶³ CNM f.10/VT4480 Iakovlev to Iznoskov Dec. 1899

⁶⁴ Ibid. 6/3/1897

‘crisis in native education’⁶⁵ which resulted in the ‘Conference of native education leaders’ from 23rd-29th August 1899 in Samara.

The 1899 Samara Conference and the attack on the Il`minskii system from within the Church

The Samara conference was initiated by the Synod’s Schools’ Council, and the attendance of two Il`minskii supporters, V.I. Shemiakin, Inspector of Church Schools for the Russian Empire, and I.A.Iznoskov, Inspector of Church Schools for the Eastern regions, as well as the presidency of Bishop Gurii of Samara, indicated the direction the conference was intended to go. The diocesan school inspectors of nine dioceses with native populations,⁶⁶ and a specialist on native education from each diocese, including N.Bobrovnikov and I. Iakovlev, also attended. A notable aspect of the conference was the participation of 14 native priests⁶⁷ including Fr Andrei Petrov of Ufa diocese, and Fr Anton Ivanov of Samara diocese.

The Agenda stated as some of its main aims the improvement of teacher training including the training of more women, and the introduction of a four-year course into church primary schools ‘with precise application of the Il`minskii system’.⁶⁸ Reports from Viatka, Ufa and Samara supported the principle of native teachers who had trained at least in a Two-class school. This viewpoint, however, was contested by the two Simbirsk diocesan representatives and the resolutions of the 2nd Section on teacher training clearly reflected their position, stating that ‘the opinion that teachers in native schools can only be native (...) must be considered one-sided.’⁶⁹ Criticism of SCTS and Iakovlev is evident in other resolutions which said religious instruction teachers should have ‘complete theological education’ and should be graduates of Seminary or

⁶⁵ Iakovlev 1989, 149

⁶⁶ Kazan, Viatka, Perm, Simbirsk, Penza, Samara, Ufa, Orenburg and Astrakhan

⁶⁷ CNM f. 9, ChKM 646, l.21; PB 1901 No.21, 175 This was largely due to Samara diocese providing 6 representatives, all of them native priests, whereas Simbirsk diocese had no native clergy representative.

⁶⁸ GIA CR f.501, op.1, d.417, l.15

⁶⁹ CNM f.9, VM4479, l.23

Diocesan School, and that a Teachers' School under 'the direct control of the Diocesan Inspector' and with a broader course was needed.⁷⁰

In the 1st Section which discussed the language of instruction the controversy was even greater. One resolution said that in schools where natives know Russian 'It is desirable to conduct teaching in all subjects exclusively in the Russian language with the native language only being used to explain unknown words. In such schools it was desirable to have teachers predominantly from among Russians who know the local language.'⁷¹ Iakovlev's personal notes on the conference reveal how disputes raged continually in this section. On the day its conclusions were read he wrote 'The 1st Section read, or rather argued about the results of the Section's work (...) there was a strong protest against the conclusions of the section' as Russian language had become the main subject rather than religious instruction. On the following evening Iakovlev wrote 'The 2nd section almost fell apart entirely. The 1st section fought (...) the natives did not give in.'⁷² Peace was restored only due to Bishop Gurii's defence of the principle that teachers did not need to be exclusively Russian in areas where natives knew Russian, and N.Bobrovnikov's proposal to remove from a resolution the words 'only a Russian teacher can lead pupils to complete knowledge of Russian speech and entirely correct pronunciation of Russian words' which was accepted by all.⁷³

The application of Il'minskii's system as a whole was discussed by a separate section which resolved that the system could be applied only in schools where all the pupils were of the same national group and did not know Russian. Where there was a mixed population, schools should function in Russian or in the predominant local language, except where this was Tatar.⁷⁴ The Section on urgent situations concluded that 'The activity of schools alone is insufficient and a correctly organized mission is necessary' and 'native schools should be supervised by native

⁷⁰ Ibid. I.21-23

⁷¹ Ibid. I.37v

⁷² Ibid. I.11

⁷³ Ibid. I.38v

⁷⁴ Ibid. I.32-35

priests’⁷⁵ further evidence of the general trend towards clericalisation of mission at the conference. This trend inevitably questioned the role of KTS, SCTS and the BSG in native teacher training and their supervision by laymen, Iakovlev and Bobrovnikov. In his personal notes, Iakovlev twice mentions that KCBTS, KTS and BSG had to be defended from lies.⁷⁶

Despite the conference thus significantly undermining Il`minskii’s system, both its use of native languages and emphasis on the laity, it was proposed that such a conference be held every three years and dedicated to the memory of Il`minskii, while in each native diocese a Department of Native Education named after Il`minskii should be organized.<sup>77</sup> Iakovlev’s report also reveals a deeper concern with the role Il`minskii’s memory was playing in the native consciousness. In response to Shemiakin’s proposal that ‘the feast day of Sts Cyril and Methodius the Enlighteners of the Slavs should be celebrated on 11th May in native schools, just as in Russian schools’⁷⁸

Iakovlev tells us

In addition to the accepted proposal I for my part said the following: Russian people from ancient times successfully labored on Russia’s various borderlands for the enlightenment of the natives with the light of the Christian faith; St Stephen among the Zyrians (...), Sts Gurii, Varsanofii and German among the Tatars, Chuvash and Cheremys of the Kazan region, in recent times Archimandrite Makarii (...) in the Altai, and in our region before our very eyes the extremely fruitful activity of Nikolai Ivanovich Il`minskii took place. The names of the abovementioned saints and those who have recently gone to the grave are revered and hallowed among the natives to the very present. (...) All natives (...) when they discover what Il`minskii has done for them (...) can only be filled with love and deep reverence for this truly Russian person (...) and surround him with an aura of holiness.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Ibid. l.19

⁷⁶ GIA CR f.501, Ibid., l.10v-11v

⁷⁷ CNM Ibid. l.25

⁷⁸ GIA CR f.501, op.1, d.417, l.24

⁷⁹ Ibid. l.25-25v

The conference unanimously accepted that a short biography of Il'minskii should be translated into native languages, and in native schools a day should be dedicated to his memory when a memorial Liturgy would be held.

This conference, then, while showing the concern of many, particularly native representatives, to affirm Il'minskii's principles and hallow his memory alongside Sts Cyril, Methodius, and Stephen, also revealed serious attempts to undermine these principles. There were general trends towards greater use of the Russian language and teachers, away from schools alone as the predominant missionary method in favour of diocesan-oriented mission, and in favour of diocesan and clerical rather than lay supervision of both schools and teacher training.

The debate on native mission in the opening years of the 20th century

These trends became more evident when in late 1899 anonymous articles appeared in the journal of internal mission *Missionerskoe Obozrenie* reiterating the viewpoints of the Simbirsk clergy at the Samara conference. The initials SEN identified their author as Simbirsk Episkop Nikandr.⁸⁰ Although SEN claimed to respect the principle of using the native language, he was offended by Il'minskii's assertion that, even though they may not have a theological education, native priests can relate better to the native mindset and milieu. He claimed that 'these priests from among the ill-educated and semi-literate natives also very often relate arrogantly, rudely and domineeringly towards their flock and should be no less reproached for extortion when they conduct rites.'⁸¹ The article is a veiled attack on SCTS as a training centre for Chuvash priests and Iakovlev as a 'teacher of native isolationism,' jealously guarding his influence over the Chuvash seminarians in Simbirsk.

The enlightened guardians and defenders of their native tribes carefully watch over the native seminarians, zealously protecting them from infection with a Russophile spirit (...) trying to keep

⁸⁰ SEN 1899

⁸¹ SEN Ibid. 444

all their influence over them and make of the future pastors and directors of native parish life likeminded followers of themselves.⁸²

Echoing the Simbirsk proposals at the Samara conference, SEN argued that Chuvash boys should go through the standard Russian church school system rather than SCTS, and that priests in native villages should be Russian children who have grown up there.⁸³

SEN's main concern, however, was with the ill-defined boundaries between the role of church and state in native schools, which had resulted in lay people, Iakovlev himself and native teachers, usurping the Church's missionary role.

In the Il'minskii system (...) the dividing line between Christian education and civil education has been forgotten and there is no indication of what properly belongs to the mission of the Church in enlightening the natives with the Gospel and where the limits of the sphere of influence of the laity lie.⁸⁴

This questioning of lay involvement in mission led to his disapproval of lay involvement in translation of scriptural texts.⁸⁵ SEN's consequent proposals involved the greater clericalization of mission as lay 'interference from the outside (...) should not be allowed.'⁸⁶ He proposed the creation of diocesan missionaries answerable to the bishop, and the creation of native monasteries as training centres for mission rather than schools.⁸⁷ He proposed to fund the diocesan missionary by using the OMS grant to the SCTS Girls' School which would become a Diocesan Girls' School as at present it is 'directed by Ministry officials but belongs by its curriculum and purpose to the ecclesial authorities' and so is the epitome of the confusion of the tasks of church and state that characterizes the native schools.⁸⁸

⁸² Ibid. 446, 588

⁸³ Ibid. 448-9

⁸⁴ Ibid. 437

⁸⁵ Ibid. 580

⁸⁶ Ibid. 576

⁸⁷ Ibid. 582

⁸⁸ Ibid. 579, 584

Iakovlev was disconcerted by SEN's articles as they did not openly attack use of the native language but questioned the very foundations of Russian education in the 19th century which operated on the assumption of the unity of church and state as providers of Christian education.⁸⁹ This had meant that in the 1860s the Il'minskii system had developed on the basis of this lay participation in the Church's mission through schools and translations sponsored by the predominantly lay Brotherhood of St Gurii. Iakovlev wrote 'Pursuing the same tasks as the Church and with the same means, (the laity) worked in the name of the Church' with the ultimate aim of

opening an Orthodox parish which in ready-made form was handed over to the bishop. (...) Therefore there was no need in Il'minskii's system for artificially distinguishing between the spheres of ecclesial and secular activity. (...) What does it mean in practice that we deprive lay people of the right to be concerned about establishing ecclesial life among the natives? It means depriving them of the right to conduct preparatory work, necessary for years on end in native localities, it means pulling out the entire foundation from under the building (...) destroying the work of enlightening the natives with Christianity.⁹⁰

Iakovlev considered that the tasks SEN proposed for a diocesan missionary were already being carried out by rural deans and diocesan school inspectors and that SEN's main aim was 'to remove the native cause from lay hands'⁹¹ and more specifically 'to remove from us the right to supervise missionary schools.'⁹² Apart from SEN's proposals concerning native monasteries, Iakovlev considered his plans to be simply a return to the missionary methods being used before Il'minskii, methods which had proved largely futile and led to the widespread adoption of Islam by the baptized native peoples. On the opening page of one typewritten version of Iakovlev's article he has written with his own hand 'Jesus said "Father, forgive them for they know not

⁸⁹ CNM f.10/ChKM 365, l.3

⁹⁰ Ibid. l.4-5v, 7v

⁹¹ Ibid. l.22

⁹² Ibid. l.20v

what they do.” And they divided up his clothing by casting lots. Luke 23 v 34⁹³ This reference intimates Iakovlev’s understanding of the forces within Russian society at this time which were shattering the 19th century symphony of Church and state, and with it the Il`minskii system, forces which would soon lead to divisions among those working for the native cause among the Chuvash themselves. Iakovlev hoped to publish his response to SEN’s articles as a separate brochure but it did not pass the Kazan censor.⁹⁴ Nikolai Bobrovnikov’s response was however published in *Missionerskoe Obozrenie*⁹⁵ and was one of a number of articles published to defend the work of the BSG in Kazan due to the inroads caused by the trend to clericalize mission.⁹⁶

Two further significant texts defended the Il`minskii system in this broader debate on mission in the opening years of the 20th century, Hieromonk Dionisii Valedinskii’s *Ideals of Orthodox-Russian native mission [Idealy]*⁹⁷, defended as a Master’s thesis while Valedinskii was a student at the Kazan Theological Academy’s missionary departments in 1900, and Fr Eugene Smirnoff’s *Russian Orthodox Missions*⁹⁸ published in English in 1903.

Idealy is significant in that while Valedinskii is obviously a firm supporter of Il`minskii, he also defends yet reacts critically with the current trend to view mission as exclusively the domain of the Church and clergy. The 24-year old Valedinskii’s ability to embrace both sides of the missionary debate in 1900 was due to his broad life and educational experience up to this time. He studied at Ufa Seminary, getting to know Bishop Dionisii (Khitrov) before his death in September 1896. Dionisii had worked on translations into Iakut in Siberia, and a letter he received from Il`minskii in 1855 at the time of these first translations into Iakut, was in Valedinskii’s possession when he wrote *Idealy*.⁹⁹ Quotes from this letter, as well as other passages in *Idealy*, indicate Dionisii’s strong influence on *Idealy* which can be read as Dionisii’s

⁹³ Ibid. I.1

⁹⁴ CNM f.10/VT 4480, Iakovlev to Iznoskov Sept. 1900

⁹⁵ Bobrovnikov N.A. 1900

⁹⁶ See: Bobrovnikov N.A. 1905 and Koblov 1905. See Geraci’s discussion of these texts in Geraci 2001, 234-238

⁹⁷ Dionisii 1901

⁹⁸ Smirnoff 1903

⁹⁹ Valedinskii published this letter in 1902. See Dionisii 1902

missionary testament, and an attempt to reconcile different current missionary viewpoints as experienced in his own life. Dionisii was a fervent supporter of Il'minskii, yet also a bearer of the Siberian missionary tradition which influenced those involved in 'internal' mission.

Valedinskii stresses that Orthodox mission aims at exclusively spiritual enlightenment, at the acquisition of eternal life lost through sin, and therefore spiritual means should be used to bring about faith and spiritual rebirth in a person's inner being. Orthodox mission can not therefore have political aims nor be simply a means to subjugate pagans and bring them under the authority of the Russian government. He points to Bishop Nikolai Kasatkin's creation of a

national Orthodox Church from the Japanese milieu. In it everything is their own: all the priests, preachers and others are educated by Japanese teachers in the Japanese spirit. And the fact that the Orthodox Church in Japan already lives its own life, serves as a guarantee that it will preserve its vitality forever.¹⁰⁰

Responding to the promoters of 'cultural' mission, Valedinskii argues that mission should also not have cultural aims.¹⁰¹ While sympathetic to those who consider missionaries to have cultural tasks such as the improvement of material well-being and the adoption of a sedentary lifestyle, and acknowledging that a concern for material needs has been a feature of all great Orthodox missionaries, he emphasizes that when the concern to cultivate the natives takes place in the name of the state then it takes on a russifying character and leads to 'religious fanaticism, sheer religious intolerance, censure and denial of everything "non-Russian" and "non-Orthodox"'.¹⁰² He warns that such russification should not be the primary aim of mission and it should be left aside 'where the natives hold firmly to their nationality (...) and do not want to part with their way of life and customs.'¹⁰³ 'Our native spiritual mission stands outside of, and higher than all political and narrowly cultural aims and has as its only task the spread of the Kingdom of God on

¹⁰⁰ Dionisii 1901, 81-85, 87-88

¹⁰¹ Ibid. 90

¹⁰² Ibid. 95-6, 101

¹⁰³ Ibid. 90, 94, 108-110

earth.¹⁰⁴ Using mission for state aims develops ‘narrow-minded nationalism which is entirely alien to the spirit of the Universal Church of Christ’ and he quotes Bishop Nicholas of Alaska that ‘Orthodoxy cannot consist of one nationality (*narodnost*), as of its very essence it must be universal, as the Lord commanded to preach not to one nation, but to all people.’¹⁰⁵

Referring to current attacks on the Il`minskii system, Valedinskii continues

concerns to russify the natives must not turn into an attempt to completely destroy and repress the natives’ nationality (*narodnost*), to entirely banish the use of the native language in church and school (...) for Christianity, communicated to them in an alien language and adapted to the forms of an alien lifestyle, penetrates with difficulty into their souls and does not destroy their sympathy for former pagan errors and superstitions.¹⁰⁶

He responds to complaints about the missionary role of lay teachers and pupils without theological or even secular education in Il`minskii’s system, when he emphasizes that missionaries are usually trained through a life of strict monastic asceticism together with theological education as envisaged in Makarii Glukharev’s *Thoughts*, and points out that with the attachment of the Kazan Theological Academy’s Missionary Courses to the Spasskii monastery, and their supervision by its abbot Archimandrite Andrei Ukhtomskii since 1897, Makarii’s dream has finally been fulfilled.¹⁰⁷

In his final chapter on missionary methods Valedinskii discusses the overall significance and validity of Il`minskii’s principles. He stresses that ‘all great missionaries considered it their unflinching duty to conduct services for the natives in their languages.’<sup>108</sup> Writing for Il`minskii’s critics who saw his system as an inappropriate innovation leading to separatism, he asserts that his ‘system of native education is *appropriate*¹⁰⁹ at the present time’ as it is not only in

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. 95

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. 106

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. 111

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. 300-301, 331-347

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. 117-124, 141-150, 155-7, 159

¹⁰⁹ The word *normal'naia* is in italics in the original.

accordance with the practices of Orthodoxy's greatest missionaries but a much needed revival of ancient practices at a crucial juncture in Russian history.

His system was *new*, but not in the sense that he espoused views entirely alien to the understanding of the great evangelists of the Russian land of former time (...). No, Il'minskii's system was in essence the same as that practiced by the great missionary saints (...). The newness of Il'minskii's system was caused by the circumstances of the time (...) those reasonable principles of native mission which were devised by the missionaries of the universal and Russian church of former times (...) had been forgotten by some, and by others were considered *a priori* unsuitable for the present time; and only a few solitary and modest labourers on the mission field recognized and (...) applied them in practice. (Il'minskii) was the first to pay serious attention and to acquaint society with the character and methods of the educational activity of the great missionaries (...) summarized their views, developed the latter and demonstrated in practice their entire suitability and expediency for the present time. This is where the innovation of Il'minskii's system lies and his invaluable service to the Orthodox-Russian church and missionary work.¹¹⁰

Ideally turns out ultimately to be a fervent defence of Il'minskii on the basis of church tradition, and the reference in the final pages to the 1899 Samara conference which had 'confirmed the irreplaceability of Il'minskii's system'¹¹¹ reminds us that the text is not merely a general contribution to Orthodox missionary theology but a pointed contribution to current debate.

A notable feature of the text is the single reference to Sts Cyril and Methodius alongside St John Chrysostom as representatives of the universal church who enabled liturgical worship in the native language.¹¹² While their absence may be due to the patriotic tendency in 1900 to focus on Russian rather than universal saints,¹¹³ we cannot escape the conclusion that they were not yet as associated among writers on mission with the transmission of the Christian faith from Slavic to non-Slavic people as they have become in the late 20th century, as this process of transmission

¹¹⁰ Ibid. 360, 363-4

¹¹¹ Ibid. 365

¹¹² Ibid. 156

¹¹³ See Strickland 2013, 30, 67

was being hindered at this very time by those who were advocating the use of Slavonic even by non-Russian peoples.

If the 19th missionaries were not yet canonized and Sts John, Cyril and Methodius belonged to the universal church, St Stephen of Perm remained as the primary Russian example of use of non-Russian languages by a missionary. This helps to explain St Stephen's significance in Eugene Smirnov's *Russian Orthodox Missions* which refers repeatedly to 'the missionary ideal in the spirit of St Stephen of Perm',¹¹⁴ and also views Il'minskii, rather than Makarii or Innokentii, as re-establishing that ideal.¹¹⁵ Unlike Valedinskii, however, Smirnov patriotically presents to his English-speaking readership a glowing picture of Il'minskii's system being adopted throughout Russia without hindrance from Russian patriots afraid of separatism, revolutionary movements, and scant financial resources.

At the present time, wherever the country is thickly populated with native tribes virtually ignorant of the Russian language, it is made a rule to celebrate Divine Service in the native language at the first opportunity.¹¹⁶

We have already seen above how this was at best an unbalanced picture of the true state of affairs.

Valedinskii's harmonization of the conflicting views on mission being voiced in Russia at the time can claim to be the first attempt at an Orthodox missionary theology in the 20th century and clearly lays the foundation for later 20th century Orthodox missiological writings. Its influence on the native clergy within the Volga region itself can be explained by it being at the top of the reading list drawn up by N.V. Nikol'skii for students on the Kazan Missionary Courses, which after the Bible and the works of St John Chrysostom, continues with *Idealy* followed by all of

¹¹⁴ Smirnov 1903, 16, 27, 44-45. Smirnov's emphasis on St Stephen echoes N.V. Rozhdestvenskii's comments in 1900 on the icon of St. Stephen in the St Vladimir Cathedral in Kiev, built for the 1888 Baptism commemoration, which 'reminds the viewer of "the enlightening tasks of the Russian clergy and the historical role of the Russian people as the disseminator of Orthodoxy among the pagans."' See Strickland 2013, 67.

¹¹⁵ Ibid. 45

¹¹⁶ Ibid. 49

Il'minskii's key texts.¹¹⁷ It is not surprising therefore that we see the influence of these writings in the contributions native clergy and teachers were making to the debate on mission.

The awakening of a native voice

A striking feature of the debates at this time is the awakening of a native, especially Chuvash voice which reformulated Il'minskii's teachings, imbibed through KTS, SCTS, and the Kazan Missionary Courses in order to defend Il'minskii's system and give their own evaluations of the missionary experience.

In an article published to commemorate 10 years since Il'minskii's death in 1901, Fr Daniil Filimonov described the situation before Il'minskii when 'not accepting local native languages neither for the Liturgy or primary education, they tried to fashion the Chuvash spirit and its ideas according to the Russian manner' and 'the aim of education was that the natives be outwardly absorbed into the Russian nation.'¹¹⁸ Filimonov perceived the current trend as a return to the pre-Il'minskii era as

enemies of the (Il'minskii system) reproach and suspect some kind of Chuvash isolationism and support for Chuvash national identity (...) and they say that Russians in Russia are the predominant tribe and therefore workers among the natives should be only Russians, and the language used (...) should be only Russian.¹¹⁹

He presents to readers his vision of a Church in which each people and culture has a place.

Neither in Scripture, nor in the Holy Church's teaching, nor in patristic rules are there any indications that peoples and tribes, on entering the Orthodox Church, must renounce their language and their nation in general, in order to assimilate the saving teaching of the Gospel. On the contrary, history witnesses that true Christian enlightenment is successfully spread and

¹¹⁷ Nikol'skii 1909, 32-34

¹¹⁸ Filimonov D. 1901, No. 15, 292

¹¹⁹ Ibid. No.15, 292

becomes deeply rooted in a people only in the native language and with the active participation of workers of the same nation.¹²⁰

Filimonov praises Bishop Gurii in the Samara diocese for outdoing the Kazan diocese as in all Chuvash or partly-Chuvash villages there are Chuvash priests and school-churches with native teachers. He nevertheless reassures his readers in his final remark, a noticeable jibe at the current trend for greater diocesan control over native mission ‘the Bishop is keeping a strict eye on all this.’¹²¹

Fr Anton Ivanov, one of the most prolific writers of this first generation of native priests, was appointed Inspector of church schools in two districts of Samara diocese in 1902. From 1900-1902 he wrote a series of 29 articles in *Pravoslavny Blagovestnik* on missionary work among the Chuvash of Samara diocese. While on the surface the articles are mainly an account of Bishop Gurii’s frequent visits to Chuvash parishes and schools, Ivanov has woven into his articles his contribution to the current debates over the nature of the Church and mission. One way he does this is by focusing on the bishop himself and his arrival in native villages where the Chuvash in their finest festive dress line the streets, kneeling in front of their homes with the bread and salt of welcome, in contrast to the isolationism and filth the Chuvash were accused of. He also focuses on Bishop Gurii as a bearer of the Siberian missionary heritage of Innokentii.¹²²

Ivanov tells us that in the Samara diocese in 1896 a plan for ‘internal mission’ as in Siberian dioceses had been drawn up emphasizing that mission belonged to priests and deacons ‘in whom *the succession of apostolic ministry continues*’ and that in missionary parishes Christ’s Church itself comes to the people ‘in the person of the priest-missionary or his helpers: deacons, lower clergy, *and even laity*.’¹²³ However, Ivanov suddenly announces that

¹²⁰ Ibid. No. 15, 293

¹²¹ Ibid. No. 19, 120

¹²² Ivanov A. 1901 No.1, 28-35; No. 3, 126-132

¹²³ Ibid. No. 4, 164-171; No. 5, 211-218. The plan was originally published in SamEV 1896 No.1. [My italics]

This plan was not accepted by Bishop Gurii as Samara diocese has different conditions from Siberian dioceses

and he quotes Bishop Gurii's words that

if at the head of the native parishes of Samara diocese educated native priests or Russians who know native languages are appointed, and if it is part of their duties to travel round native villages conducting services in the native language and promoting the improvement of church schools

then there is no need for a special mission on the Siberian model.¹²⁴ A further 1904 article by Ivanov on religious instruction in native church schools supports all the features of the Il'minskii system which had been undermined at the 1899 Samara conference¹²⁵ and it is these same features which Ivanov proposes as measures to eradicate pagan customs in another article of 1900.¹²⁶

Another significant native voice at this time was that of Fr. Konstantin Prokop'ev (1872-1938) who while studying at SCTS up to 1890 had worked on translations of the Gospel and Psalter. After teaching in Buinsk district he studied at Simbirsk Seminary then served as priest from 1894.¹²⁷ He began research into Chuvash ethnography and history which he continued at the Kazan Theological Academy, publishing three articles in 1903 in IOAIE.¹²⁸ In 1904-5 he published further articles on the history of translation work and education among the Chuvash in PS, IKE and SimbEV.

While much of his description is based on Il'minskii, Mozharovskii, Luppov and Znamenskii's work, the significance of his articles is that for the first time a native Chuvash with higher theological education from a Russian Academy was explaining to a Russian audience the inadequacies of the pre-Il'minskii translations, based on his own practical experience of working

¹²⁴ Ibid. No. 5,216

¹²⁵ Ivanov A. 1904, 835-849

¹²⁶ Ivanov A. 1900, 26-35

¹²⁷ Bogatov 1998, 41

¹²⁸ Prokop'ev 1903 a,b,c

on the final editing of the Chuvash Psalter before its first trial publication.¹²⁹ Prokop`ev uses frank language, describing the 1804 and 1808 translations as ‘written in some kind of murderous, entirely incomprehensible language for the natives’ and done by translators who were ‘entirely unacquainted with the inner spirit and construction (of the language) and only concerned to place the corresponding native word opposite each Russian word’¹³⁰ to which Prokop`ev retorts ‘but you can translate using pure Chuvash language without in any way destroying the precision of the original.’<sup>131</sup> Prokop`ev concludes by defending Il`minskii’s use of the popular language, and its contribution to the development of the Chuvash language.

Together with the development of the people themselves, their language also develops and is enriched. Owing to everyday and commercial contact with other peoples, especially with the adoption of a new religion, new ideas also enter a people. And together with new ideas, new words appear.¹³²

Prokop`ev paints, however, a negative picture of missionary work around Kazan in the 18th century. While seemingly conciliatory, he stresses the state’s political role in missionary work and its violent results.

There is no doubt that the government issuing decrees about material incentives to the unbaptised, did not consider these incentives the main means of converting the natives to Christianity and therefore established monasteries, schools and missionaries (...) but in actual fact, owing to the ineffectiveness or weakness of the missionary methods, incentives became, if not the only, then at least the main means of drawing the natives to Christianity.¹³³

¹²⁹ Nikol’skii 1905, 145

¹³⁰ Prokop`ev 1904, No.33, 1105

¹³¹ Ibid. No.34, 1145

¹³² Ibid. No. 35, 1171-1179

¹³³ Prokop`ev 1905c, No.3-4, 81-82

Discussing the 114 clergy killed in Chuvash districts during Pugachev's revolt he concludes 'Such is the fruit of the superficial conversion of the natives to Christianity, a conversion carried out (...) not by preaching the Gospel, but through material incentives and rewards.'¹³⁴

It was in the context of this debate that N.V.Nikol'skii's first articles appeared. Nikol'skii (1878-1961) was born in the Chuvash village of Iurmeikino, Iadrin district¹³⁵ then studied at Kazan Seminary and Academy from which he graduated with a Kandidat degree in 1903. From 1904 he was lecturer of the Chuvash section of the Kazan Missionary Courses and worked for the BSG Translation Committee whose work he defended in a 1905 article which is a response to the condemnation of lay participation in scriptural translations at the central Il'minskii schools.¹³⁶ He focuses on the translation of the Chuvash Psalter which was constantly read and corrected over 10 years by Iakovlev and the teachers and pupils of SCTS before being edited by the Kazan Theological Academy Old Testament specialist P.A.Iungerov together with two Chuvash priests, followed by distribution of a trial edition for further reading and correction by the people, with native teachers and priests sending in their comments. At this point Nikol'skii's article becomes a fierce defence of the central native schools.

The missionary-educational schools run on the Il'minskii system perform great service in this work. (...) Peoples which do not have a school of this type will have to wait an extremely long time before receiving a certain book in the native language for home reading or liturgical use.¹³⁷

In Nikol'skii's opinion, lack of knowledge of each other's language had 'created a deep chasm between the ruling and the dependent nation (*narodnost*).'. Close and friendly relations could only be established by

the nation which would resolve for the sake of Christ and the Gospel to undertake a feat of selfless endeavour (...). Only a Christian nation could set out on this path (...). A truly Russian

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Nikol'skii 1905 t.3, 138-150

¹³⁶ Pamiatnaia knizhka 1907, 8

¹³⁷ Ibid. 146

man and profound Christian, N.I. Il'minskii, was able to overcome all the difficulties of the task. The different nations (*narodnosti*) began to group around this person and draw from him energy and experience for collaboration.¹³⁸

We see in Nikol'skii's words a common tactic used in texts defending the Il'minskii system at this time. Nikol'skii praises as the 'truly Russian man' born of the 'truly Christian nation,' not the one who defends the Russian language and culture but the one who has been able to draw different nations, using their own languages, into unity around him.

In another 1904 article Nikol'skii appears to be simply describing the first week of Lent in a Chuvash parish, through every minute detail emphasizing how everything is done as in a Russian parish, but when he quotes prayers and readings he gives the opening words in Chuvash. The priest enters the church then slowly enters the altar 'After a minute of silence a loud, intelligible, convinced "*Piren Tura ialanakh mukhtavla*" (Blessed be our God)' could be heard.'¹³⁹ He emphasizes how every word was being understood and reaching the heart. Nikol'skii eloquently, yet without polemic, makes the statement that the Chuvash language can be the same vehicle of heartfelt prayer and repentance as Slavonic for a Russian. And rather than leading to isolationism 'On leaving the church where he participated in the divine meal of love, the Chuvash communicant looks on all as brothers.' To emphasize this Nikol'skii closes with words from Gogol describing the effect of communion on the believer.¹⁴⁰

In contrast, Nikol'skii's *The native language as an instrument for enlightening the natives*¹⁴¹ presents the same defence but on theological and historical grounds. He opens by arguing that using the language of the people is a consequence of the incarnation of the Word.

¹³⁸ Ibid. 148

¹³⁹ Nikol'skii 1904a, 327

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. 335

¹⁴¹ Nikol'skii 1904b

God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, in order to draw to Himself “every tongue” (people), clothed Himself in the perishable flesh of man. (...) The Saviour placed Himself in the actual conditions of human life. (...) Teaching the people in the language of the people themselves.¹⁴²

Citing the pastors and teachers of the universal Church he writes

In the ancient Christian church the native language (...) was never banned from liturgical and educational use. (...) Only later, under the influence of political ideas, deviations began from the wise principle of enlightening those of other tongues through their own languages. Thus, the Roman Catholic Church, pursuing secular and power-loving aspirations, established a single liturgical language - Latin. Evidently, the desire to replace the (wise) principle of Christianization by a hellenizing principle was not alien to Byzantium either. Fortunately they were not fanatical about this idea, and Sts Cyril and Methodius translated without hindrance not only Holy Scripture, but liturgical books into Slavonic.¹⁴³

He then pleads

And now, as in former times the native language must be used in the Christian enlightenment of the natives. Depriving the Volga and Siberian natives of such a good work would be a glaring incongruity and undeserved injustice from the ecclesial point of view.¹⁴⁴

Nikol'skii concludes that the Christian religion, assimilated by the natives through their native languages, arouses in them a disposition towards the Russians, and does not develop separatism.

Christianity is a universal (*obshchechelovecheskaia*) religion in the loftiest and most noble sense, ennobling and illuminating human nature.¹⁴⁵

Another younger voice which was just beginning to be heard in print but which had already made its mark on the translation process was that of Fr Mikhail Petrov (1877-1937). Born in Iadrin district, and nephew of the liturgical translator Fr Andrei Petrov, he studied at SCTS from

¹⁴² Nikol'skii Ibid. 1

¹⁴³ Ibid. 5-6

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. 6

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. 33

1892-97 and graduated from Simbirsk Seminary in 1901. He was appointed teacher at SCTS Girls' School in 1903 then priest of the SCTS church in 1905. Iakovlev praised his great ability to translate from Slavonic into Chuvash and his contribution to liturgical life in the Chuvash language.¹⁴⁶ In a 1905 article he defends the need for native-language liturgical and religious books but reassures readers concerning Chuvash separatism.

Together with Church Slavonic which is incomprehensible for most natives, the mother tongue is recognized as being a more expedient weapon for the complete union in faith of the natives with the Russians. All kinds of fears of narrow patriotism on this matter are unfounded. For example, the Chuvash, Cheremys, Votyak have never been historically independent peoples, and of course, never will be. Therefore there is nothing to fear from ecclesial books translated into native languages.¹⁴⁷

It was to these Chuvash priests, translators, teachers and writers, among others, that S.V.Chicherina turned for testimony during her 1904 tour of native parishes and schools described in her 1905 book *With the Volga natives: Travel Notes*¹⁴⁸ which contains appendices written by all the writers discussed above. Filimonov wrote concerning Chuvash separatism 'How can they be even more isolated from Russians as they lived until recent times entirely on their own as a people due to their particular religious beliefs and customs' and 'it was Il'minskii's aim to overcome this isolation, that they should not remain stagnating in their pagan ways which isolated them from the Russian people.'¹⁴⁹ Filimonov sees the root of Russian criticism of native schools and clergy as a desire 'to display as boldly as possible their ardent patriotism and extraordinary devotion to the interests of the Russian people and fatherland, as though this is something peculiar to them.'¹⁵⁰ Filimonov specifically uses the term *Rus*, beloved of the Russian patriots, in his tribute to Il'minskii 'We hope that (...) *Rus* is also now abundant

¹⁴⁶ GIA CR f.207, op.1, d.463, l.2v-3

¹⁴⁷ Petrov M. 1905, 797

¹⁴⁸ Chicherina 1905

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. 78

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. 85

in such radiant, extraordinary, noble personalities as was our unforgettable and dear teacher and benefactor.’¹⁵¹

Fr. K.Prokop`ev expresses superiority as native-language Chuvash services will lead to more conscious knowledge of Orthodoxy than Russians.

It seems to me that if in all native parishes services will always be in native language, then in a few decades the natives will surpass the Russians in their conscious assimilation of Christianity in general and in understanding of Christian liturgy in particular (...) I would be as bold as to say that the Russian people do not understand two-thirds of the Christian services.

He adds that some Russians admit to understanding services in Chuvash better than in Slavonic.¹⁵²

We see then in the first five years of the 20th century the beginnings of a bold native voice, not only defending issues of their own language and culture, but boldly addressing perceived inadequacies in the Russian church as a whole, revealing their vision of their place in the Church universal, and proposing their as yet tentative theologies of mission born out of the experiences of the Volga native peoples. While their texts borrowed much from Russian writers who had taught and influenced them, they are significant as the beginnings of the voice of the first theologically educated Chuvash generation seeking to articulate and interpret their own history and Christianization. We shall see later how this voice gradually grew in strength in the wake of the revolutionary events of 1905-1907 which witnessed an attack on the Il`minskii movement from within.

The Simbirsk Chuvash Teachers’ School 1905-1907

The Russian Church’s schools and seminaries were seriously affected by the revolutionary events of 1905-7, with 43 seminaries closed by November 1905 and disturbances continuing into

¹⁵¹ Ibid. 91

¹⁵² Ibid. 40

1907, often with use of violence. Morison considers the main cause to have been ‘the incongruity of being expected to provide a vocational education for future priests to pupils who mostly wanted a general education to prepare them for higher education and secular employment’ and so student petitions and meetings usually presented requests concerning curriculum changes, poor teachers and living conditions. Many students joined in the political struggles, seminaries were infiltrated by Social Democrats and Socialist Revolutionaries, and students organized unions, circles, libraries, lectures and the distribution of literature, sometimes with the support of younger priests.¹⁵³

V.G. Arkhangel'skii, a lecturer at Simbirsk Seminary and later a leading figure in the Socialist Revolutionary (SR) party, aroused support for the SRs in Simbirsk, with the Chuvash seminarians G.F.Fiodorov and T.N.Nikolaev becoming devoted followers. Nikolaev became leader of the Simbirsk SRs in spring 1905, and in September 1906 he participated in the attempted assassination of the Kazan Vice-Governor D.D.Kobeko, and in the successful assassination of the Simbirsk Governor K.S.Starynkevich.¹⁵⁴ As the Chuvash seminarians in Simbirsk were SCTS graduates who often lived and ate there, they influenced SCTS pupils and graduate teachers, some of whom also joined the political struggles.

On 17th October 1905 the students of Simbirsk Seminary went on strike and there was a demonstration in the town attended also by some SCTS pupils who came back ‘excited and with new, hitherto unknown to us ideas.’¹⁵⁵ SCTS pupils met daily to discuss the ideas and compared the SCTS statute with that of a Teacher’s Seminary which they found ‘three or four times better than the statute of our school as regards material conditions.’¹⁵⁶ Continuing contact with

¹⁵³ Morison 1991, 193-209

¹⁵⁴ Izorkin 2001, 95-99

¹⁵⁵ GIA CR f.207, op.1, d.441, l.153

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. l.206

political agitators in the town led to a petition demanding more freedom to visit town and the theatre, and the removal of a teacher.¹⁵⁷

On 29th November the 2nd form students of SCTS presented the petition to Iakovlev. When he tried to discuss it with them, in the words of Iakov Dergunov ‘The 2nd form ran away and the 3rd form told you we would not start lessons until our demands were satisfied (...). After you had left, all the students gathered in class and speakers from the seniors said that (Iakovlev) does not want to satisfy our requests only because his ego will suffer.’ The pupils sent their petition to the Kazan Curator, continued to meet and sing revolutionary songs, among them the Marseillaise.¹⁵⁸ The students were sent home in early December and told to write essays explaining what had happened, with a request to return if they agreed to submit to school rules and continue their studies. Local priests were asked to write to Iakovlev about their conduct in their home villages.¹⁵⁹ Dergunov’s parents were furious and beat him, and he sent an apology to Iakovlev saying he rejected the petition. Most students asked to be taken back although a minority was recalcitrant, for example Semion Petrov wrote saying he would not study further ‘until the minimal demands of the petition have been met.’¹⁶⁰ On 22nd January 1906 Fr Daniil Filimonov wrote to Iakovlev to say that after Nikifor Solentsov’s return from SCTS he had not been going to church and had distributed a proclamation of revolutionary content among the village teachers and literate peasants.¹⁶¹

In the wake of the October Manifesto, the first issue of the Chuvash-language newspaper *Khypar* (News) was published on 8th January 1906 under the editorship of N.V.Nikol’skii. There was an initial excited reaction from the Chuvash clergy to the first issue which contained an article about Il’minskii on its first page and further articles about Witte and the Manifesto.¹⁶² However, from

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. I.153-154v

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. I.32

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. I.124

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. I.93

¹⁶¹ Ibid. I.234

¹⁶² Ibid. I.128 See the reproduction of the entire first issue of *Khypar* in Leont’ev 2011, 12

1st June 1906 the newspaper fell into the hands of the SRs and began to publish articles attacking the Chuvash clergy and church schools.¹⁶³ Following the creation of a branch of the radical All-Russian Union of Teachers in Buinsk district in 1905, a Union of Chuvash Teachers and Leaders of Enlightenment was also formed in summer 1906. When about 50 delegates attended a congress on 1st-2nd August 1906 in the forest near Simbirsk, most were SCTS graduates.

Iakovlev's authority continued to be questioned at the beginning of 1907 when disruptive behavior and protests continued at SCTS in connection with the opening of the State Duma. On 10th January 1907 all the Chuvash pupils of the 1st class refused to study with the Russian language teacher D.I.Kochurov due to his perceived contemptuous and arrogant behavior, especially towards Chuvash pupils, and his constant preferential treatment to Russians.¹⁶⁴ Iakovlev took Kochurov's side, although he felt Kochurov spoke somewhat ironically with the Chuvash pupils and rebuked him for this.¹⁶⁵ On 17th February the Simbirsk Governor called in all the Directors of educational institutions in the town asking them to hold lessons as usual on the day the Duma was to open, as the SRs had called on all students to attend a street demonstration. Although no one went into town on February 20th, the 1st and 2nd class refused to attend lessons, and the 1st years sang revolutionary songs and waved a red flag for which Kirill Mikhailov was expelled.¹⁶⁶ When the 1st class came to discuss the matter on 5th March they presented a letter from all the 1st class pupils, this time including the Russians, saying they were renewing their boycott of Kochurov as he had become even ruder since their first letter.¹⁶⁷ At a staff council on 7th March the entire 1st class of SCTS was expelled.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶³ Aleksandrov 2002, 120

¹⁶⁴ GIA CR f.207, op.1, d.504, l.11 and d.569, l.61

¹⁶⁵ Iakovlev 1997, 562

¹⁶⁶ GIA CR f.207, op.1, d.504, l.5-7

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. d.569, l.62

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. d.504, l.12, 15

During this period Iakovlev was vilified in the local liberal press. In 1906 two articles in Simbirsk News¹⁶⁹ described *Van`ka Besheny* [Mad Vanya i.e. Iakovlev] and Uncle *Gur`iana* [Bishop Gurii] and their *Vedomstvo khristianskogo zatemneniia* [Department of Christian obscurity], and Iakovlev was accused of ill-treating pupils and financial embezzlement. In January 1906 Iakovlev received a death threat, and after the dismissal of the 1st class in 1907 further death threats were received from the SRs by Iakovlev, Fr V.N.Nikiforov and the teacher D.I.Kochurov.¹⁷⁰ The revolutionary events at SCTS also led to the departure of the young priest Fr Mikhail Petrov. In his Memoirs Iakovlev writes with great admiration of Petrov's leadership qualities and commitment to use of the Chuvash language before explaining his role in the 1905-7 events. 'I noticed that the abovementioned Fr Petrov quietly urged on the school's Chuvash youth, emphasizing Kochurov's contemptuous attitude to them, his insufficient education (...) instead of supporting his authority as a teacher.'¹⁷¹ When Petrov left in autumn 1907 on the grounds of ill-health,¹⁷² Fr Dormidontov who replaced him took on the role of intriguer in the school.'¹⁷³

Despite the departure of Fr Petrov and the expulsion of the 1st class, which Iakovlev later attributed to an order from the Kazan Curator, Iakovlev was not without sympathy for teachers dismissed for political unreliability such as Romanov, Inspector of Public Schools of Buinsk district,¹⁷⁴ and Fr Konstantin Prokop`ev, dismissed from Simbirsk Commercial School in 1906, whom Iakovlev helped to find a job as teacher in Cheliabinsk.¹⁷⁵ Iakovlev also continued contact after 1907 with the expelled SCTS student Konstantin Ivanov, today known as the Chuvash national poet. Nevertheless, Iakovlev was increasingly associated with reactionary forces by the young revolutionary intelligentsia he had educated, and this was undoubtedly

¹⁶⁹ Simbirskie Vesti 1906, No. 168-9

¹⁷⁰ Iakovlev 1997, 317-320

¹⁷¹ Ibid. 562

¹⁷² GIA CR f.207, op.1, d.583, l.1

¹⁷³ Iakovlev 1997, 562

¹⁷⁴ Iakovlev 1989, 200-202

¹⁷⁵ Bogatov 1998, 41

affirmed by the patriotic stance Iakovlev adopted during the final years before the war as the whole Chuvash educational movement was besieged by accusations of separatism which hindered Iakovlev's initiatives.

The native voice after 1905

Chuvash participation in the revolutionary events of 1905-6 and the April 1905 Edict on religious toleration shook the Chuvash clergy to the core and prompted them to clarify their attitudes and aims, and promote measures to achieve them. In a letter to Iakovlev of 25th January 1906 Fr Filimonov condemned the SCTS students and showed that he did not condone Chuvash participation in Russia's political struggles. 'Socialism in Russia is utopia, at least at the present time (...). If the students sympathized with the emancipation movement then they should have evidenced this in reasonable legal forms (...). The fact is that their strike could reflect badly on the future fate of the school and the entire Chuvash nation. Is it for us, the intelligentsia of the small Chuvash people to be active participants in the political upheavals of Russia? We have a single task – the cultural development of our people according to Christian and universal principles and the creation among the Chuvash people of a correct, self-aware relationship to the regime of the Russian state and surrounding reality in general.'¹⁷⁶

Filimonov and other Chuvash clergy threw themselves therefore ever more energetically into this task of the Christian cultural development of the Chuvash. The Samara diocese native clergy met at a conference from 20-23 June 1906 where they recommended creating Brotherhoods or Unions of zealots of Orthodoxy in native parishes and continuing the work of their already energetic Translation Sub-Committee.¹⁷⁷

In a letter to Filimonov of 31st December 1906 Iakovlev regretted that old age and illness prevented him from participation 'in the struggle with the new, unexpected evil – atheism,

¹⁷⁶ GIA CR f.207, op.1, d.441, l.126-7

¹⁷⁷ NA CGIGN Otd. 1, t.246, l.116-120

impudently and foolishly preached (...) by a small handful of so called Chuvash intelligentsia drawn to this propaganda by Russian revolutionaries.’¹⁷⁸ He informed Filimonov of the efforts of local Chuvash priests to take measures to affirm the Chuvash in Orthodoxy in the face of atheism and Islam, and that Bishop Gurii had instructed Fr Andrei Petrov and other Chuvash priests to draw up a programme for a congress of all native priests to be held in the Simbirsk diocese. Iakovlev’s greatest concern was for Bishop Gurii who was seriously ill, as without his support the measures would not be implemented.¹⁷⁹

The measures proposed by the Chuvash priests were discussed by the OMS Simbirsk Diocesan Committee on 1st-2nd November 1906. Lamenting the loss of close working relationships between Chuvash teachers and priests as ‘the agitators have not left alone teachers in native schools, spreading among them denial of the authority of the Holy Church, hatred for religion, and by means of the press undermining the authority of those working for Christian education,’ the Committee proposed that ‘In order to support the cause of Christian education among the Chuvash, priests must rally together and take a livelier, more active role not only in church but in school affairs. Therefore the main figure in the parish must be the priest and he must choose teachers.’ Their proposed measures also included creating a separate Translation Committee in Simbirsk for the publication of Chuvash books and opening two-year theology courses for SCTS graduates who desired to become clergy.¹⁸⁰ Concerned for the unity of native church schools after Iakovlev’s dismissal as Inspector in 1903, the measures recommended that ‘At the head of native schools there should be a firm and experienced leader to direct the affairs of native pastors and teachers, and attentively watch over the application by native leaders of (Il`minskii’s principles).’¹⁸¹ There appears to have been no discussion of how this supervisory and unifying role related to the diocesan authorities, the crucial issue in Bishop Nikandr’s 1899 articles. But it

¹⁷⁸ GIA CR f.515, op.1, d.81

¹⁷⁹ Bishop Gurii, transferred from Samara to Simbirsk in April 1904, died on 5th January 1907, 5 days after this letter was written.

¹⁸⁰ Mery 1907, 181

¹⁸¹ Ibid. 179-180

was undoubtedly due to concern over this issue that when the Simbirsk Committee's proposals were discussed by the Preconciliar Commission on 14th December 1906, they were largely approved, but it was suggested that theology courses for Chuvash priests should be set up at the Simbirsk Pokrovskii monastery and that the Translation Committee should remain in Kazan.¹⁸²

Alongside a report with measures for strengthening Orthodoxy among the Chuvash presented to I.A.Iznoskov on 3rd February 1907,¹⁸³ Fr Filimonov published an article in *Pravoslavnyi Blagovestnik*, the background to which he explained in a letter sent with the article to Iakovlev. After the young Chuvash revolutionary intelligentsia had taken over *Khypar* in summer 1906, the newspaper had become 'monotonously quarrelsome and overtly hostile to the clergy and towards everything to do with the church.'¹⁸⁴ Filimonov went to Kazan on 21st September 1906 to ask the new editorship of *Khypar* not to attack the clergy and destroy the work of the last 30 years and while some had initially agreed, they had later carried on as before.¹⁸⁵ Filimonov lamented that 'N.I.II' minskii on his own was able to unify and guide along the right path the few labourers in his time. Now there is no such person in the East of Russia.'¹⁸⁶ He similarly lamented the death of Bishop Gurii two weeks previously. 'There is not one such bishop in the Volga dioceses now- committed to the enlightenment of the natives and their strong defender.'¹⁸⁷

The thrust of Filimonov's article is that owing to the lack of such a unifying figure a general congress (*vseobshchii s'ezd*) of all working in Chuvash education, clergy and laity, Chuvash and Russian, young and old, is needed.¹⁸⁸ He defends the Chuvash clergy's attitude to recent political events and repeats his view of the need for the Chuvash to acquire a Christian culture.

¹⁸² Ibid. 182

¹⁸³ GIA CR f.350, op.1, d.5, l.227

¹⁸⁴ NA CGIGN Otd.2, t.246, l.15

¹⁸⁵ Ibid. l.16

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. 19

¹⁸⁷ Ibid. otd.2, t.188, Inv.455, l.1

¹⁸⁸ Filimonov 1907, 181 The article is signed 'Chuvash Missionary' but a draft is in Filimonov's archive in NA CGIGN Otd. 2, t.246, 3-12

Attacks by Chuvash revolutionaries on Orthodox clergy for their passive attitude to the emancipation movement must be recognized as entirely unthinking and unjust (...). Being of the people by birth, they can in no way stand on the side of violence and tyranny, and in accordance with the dictates of their conscience they are ready to openly and courageously defend the rights and freedom of the people proclaimed from the heights of the throne. But they cannot calmly and without heartfelt pain view the entirely rash and unreasonable aspiration of the young Chuvash leaders to carry out socialist experiments on the backs of such a small, childlike people as our Chuvash. (...) Our task must only consist of enabling the Chuvash to acquire a universal (*obshchechelovecheskaia*) Christian culture and gradually walk the path of progress alongside the other peoples (*narodnosti*) of Russia. For this, leaving the political game on one side, we must devote all our powers of spirit, all our love for our kin and tribe to the rebirth of our native people into a single, general-church (*obshche- tserkovnaia*) party – not in a narrowly clerical sense, but in the spirit of the living, brotherly unity of all in one great work of God.¹⁸⁹

Filimonov's politico-ecclesial vision, expressed in his desire for a general congress embracing and unifying all 'a living brotherly unity of all in one great work of God' is an echo of the debates on church reform at this time and resonates with Valliere's maximalist idea of a church council in which *narodnost`* is the central point.¹⁹⁰ Filimonov does not raise the question of who would preside over this general Chuvash congress, nor the issue of native church leadership over a wider area than the parish, perhaps because of the very maximalist stance he was proposing with its emphasis on the participation of all.

This is further evidence that the Il'minskii system, with its emphasis on *narodnost`*, bred a generation of native teachers, clergy, and eventually bishops, who adopted the moderate and maximalist stances to church reform and the need for conciliarity at all levels of church life.

¹⁸⁹ Filimonov 1907, 182

¹⁹⁰ Valliere 1978, 193

This is also seen in Chuvash contributions to the weekly journal *Tserkovno-obshchestvennaia zhizn'* (The Life of Church and Society), published between December 1905 and November 1907 at the Kazan Theological Academy. Articles discussed the electoral principle among the clergy, the participation of priests in politics, the peaceful application of the October 17th Manifesto, and the *Union of Church Renovation* which developed out of the *Group of 32 St Petersburg priests*.¹⁹¹ One of the contributors was Mikhail Mashanov, President of BSG and, as mentioned above, a signatory to the minority opinion in the 1906 Preconciliar Committee.¹⁹²

The majority of articles about native issues, including many written under pseudonyms, were by Chuvash. Following the general call for the restoration of conciliarity in the Church, they stress the theme of unity and the participation of all in discussions preparatory to the Council. Fr A.Ivanov explained how conferences (*s'ezdy*) of missionary priests had become a feature of native church life and enabled priests 'to decide everything through their common efforts, in a brotherly way'. He stressed that Il'minskii 'recognized the great benefit of these conferences so that KTS and KCBTS conferences of teachers and missionary priests took place constantly',¹⁹³ and they could be of benefit to the All-Russian Council. A discussion of the recent aggressive behavior of Chuvash parishioners towards their Russian priests concluded 'the contemporary state of affairs must be discussed by everyone together- by the entire diocese, both pastors and flock together.'¹⁹⁴ N.V.Nikol'skii stressed how in his high-priestly prayer Christ asked that the Church may be one as the Holy Trinity is One. This love was the basis of relationships in the early Church which made no distinction on the grounds of nationality and used native languages, a principle the Church has adhered to at all times.¹⁹⁵

The 1906 Responses of the Volga-Kama bishops

¹⁹¹ TOZh No. 3 (7.1.1906) 79-85, 97-100. No.5 (20.1.1906) 185-6

¹⁹² See Bogolepov 1966, 27-34

¹⁹³ Ivanov A. TOZh No. 14 (24.3.1906), 514-5

¹⁹⁴ "Ternisty put' TOZh No. 9 (17.2.1906), 335

¹⁹⁵ Nikol'skii 1906, 214

The link between the church reform movement and the Il`minskii system is also evident in the 1906 Responses of the Volga-Kama bishops to the Holy Synod's enquiry of July 27th 1905 concerning desired church reforms.¹⁹⁶ Bishops Konstantin (Bulychev) of Samara and Gurii of Simbirsk supported the participation of the clergy and laity at the Council, at least with a consultative voice.¹⁹⁷ They likewise favoured the creation of local metropolies with the right of calling regional Councils.¹⁹⁸ Gurii extended this decentralizing, representative principle to a diocesan conference (*s`ezd*) which would meet at least once a year, with clergy and laity having a consultative voice. He also emphasized the role of missionary brotherhoods and societies for the poor at both diocesan and parish level so that all members of the Church should be involved in missionary activity. These proposals undoubtedly arose out of his experience of the conferences of native clergy which had developed out of the Il`minskii movement to which he refers writing 'The Brotherhood Councils are concerned about trying to have more frequent conferences of missionaries and parish pastors (...) for the exchange of ideas about missionary work and for developing better methods for struggling with apostasy from Orthodoxy.'¹⁹⁹

There was overwhelming concern among these bishops for the renewal of parish life. Gurii of Simbirsk denied the usefulness of the election of clergy, while Khristofor (Smirnov) of Ufa supported the electoral principle at all levels from the parish to the Patriarch.²⁰⁰ Konstantin and Gurii lamented that most parishioners were just listeners at poorly understood church services 'and the people remain poverty-stricken and starving spiritually'.²⁰¹ Both of them advocated congregational singing and the need 'to restore in the ideas of the Orthodox people awareness that singing by the whole church is the norm.'²⁰² Gurii argued that services would lose their grandeur and solemnity if translated into Russian but nevertheless texts needed simplifying and

¹⁹⁶ Otzyvy 1906. For the historical background to these Responses see Bogolepov 1966.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. Part 1, 424, Part 2, 2-3

¹⁹⁸ Ibid. Part 1, 433

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. Part 2, 30

²⁰⁰ Ibid. Part 2, 63

²⁰¹ Ibid. Part 1, 440

²⁰² Ibid.

correcting.²⁰³ Although only appointed bishop in 1907, the supervisor of the Kazan Missionary Courses, Archimandrite Andrei Ukhtomskii, also spoke out about parish renewal in 1905. ‘All provincial workers in the spiritual sphere must apply themselves to the restoration of parishes. (...) This cause will be truly of the people, based on popular principles of truth and mutual love.’²⁰⁴ Bishop Makarii (Nevskii) of Tomsk, formerly Head of the Altai Mission, desired that ‘all parishioners become genuine, living members of the parish. Then the ancient form of parish life will be resurrected.’²⁰⁵ Makarii also raised issues of native mission we have already seen being debated in the early years of the 20th century. He emphasized that ‘only the parish priest can be the true missionary in his parish’²⁰⁶ although he saw a role for diocesan missionaries in overseeing the missionary process. He warned that ‘apart from purely ecclesial aims, missions sometimes have state aims directed at russifying the native population. These mixed motives are not beneficial to the missionary cause. They are especially a disadvantage where mission takes place among natives among whom national self-awareness has been, or is being awakened.’²⁰⁷

These 1906 Responses of bishops in missionary dioceses reflect the self-critical stage that the Russian Church as a whole was going through in the pre-Council period as it sought to respond to the social problems brought into sharp focus by the 1905 events. Aware of the needs of their multi-national dioceses, they stressed decentralization and greater local representation. Their responses reflect many of Il`minskii’s concerns and many aspects of native parish life which had developed under the leadership of his disciples, the need for broad participation in church affairs through conferences at the diocesan and inter-diocesan level, the involvement of the laity, the need to understand liturgical services, and the participation of all through singing and reading. These themes were to characterize the writings of those involved in the Il`minskii movement until the 1920s.

²⁰³ Ibid. Part 2, 20

²⁰⁴ Andrei 1905, 5,9-10

²⁰⁵ Ibid. 6

²⁰⁶ Otzyvy 1906 Part 3, 377

²⁰⁷ Ibid. Part 3, 380

The bishops did not, however, raise the thorny issue of native church leadership over a wider area than the parish. In TOZh, however, at this time there was a clear call for bishops from among the natives themselves. Two anonymous 1906 articles suggested that the percentage of the native population should be taken into account in the formation of metropolitan districts, and two native bishops appointed in the Kazan diocese. One should be a Chuvash who also spoke Tatar, and one a Cheremys who knew Mordva, with one of the bishops presiding over the Brotherhood of St Gurii. The author identifies the possible reason for opposition to such bishops as being ‘the state role of bishops’.

The Russian Orthodox Church consists of many peoples, speaking almost 20 languages and, what is more, some dioceses are composed almost entirely of natives. But at the head of the dioceses are almost exclusively Russian bishops as bearers of the Russian national and state idea.²⁰⁸

The author argued that the

appointment of bishops from their own background for Orthodox natives, will increase their self-awareness, and raise them up in the eyes of their Muslim and pagan compatriots. Orthodox natives will finally stop seeing themselves as a lower race, unworthy of having national bishops and therefore forced to be eternally under the guardianship of others, and will stop seeing Orthodoxy as a method of russification.²⁰⁹

Bishop Andrei of Mamadysh and native mission after 1907

It was the charismatic Andrei Ukhtomskii (1872-1937), from an illustrious Russian aristocratic lineage, yet passionate about native mission, parish renewal and allowing the popular voice to be heard, who was appointed to fill the native leadership vacuum. In 1907 he was appointed Bishop Andrei of Mamadysh, 3rd Vicar Bishop in the Kazan diocese and Chairman of BSG, with responsibility for mission and its institutions.²¹⁰ Andrei’s views on mission developed out of his

²⁰⁸ Separatist 1906, 804

²⁰⁹ To zhe pravoslavny 1906, 689

²¹⁰ Andrei 1911a, 4

views on the resurrection of genuine Orthodox parish life, which he considered the only means to prevent the non-Russian peoples from turning to Islam or sectarianism [Protestantism]. He described the effects of the 1905 edict on freedom of religion as ‘entire native villages, entire communities are leaving Orthodoxy’²¹¹ and analysed the reasons for this apostasy, stridently condemning Muslim ‘pan-Turkic aspirations’²¹² and pointing to sectarian propaganda, its network of prayer meetings, youth groups, Sunday schools and literature distribution which was ‘evidently carefully and systematically planned.’²¹³ Yet his most strident criticism was reserved for the Orthodox Church itself. If the Orthodox natives were turning to Islam it was because

There the religious community exists, parishes exist which mutually support each other and have huge capital. The Muslim community will not allow any kind of godless or blasphemous person into its milieu. It maintains its school itself, (...) And what about us Russians? What have we to compare (...)? Precisely nothing!²¹⁴

He reproached those who

scorning the flock [laity], do not want to make it a participant in church life. (...) the leaders themselves of church life in Russia are opposed to the development of parish life (...) they are afraid it will disturb their peace, (...) the peace of slowly dying spiritually. (...) And therefore we can’t find a sufficient quantity of decent missionaries even for money while in other confessions all, in their own way, are missionaries: all are interested in the life of their house of prayer and their spiritual family, and this family exists among all apart from us. With us (...) all are divided (...) both in parish life and in other respects.²¹⁵

Out of this emphasis on the role of the laity and the local parish emerged all the other components of Andrei’s vision of organic, *narodnaia missiia*, mission by all the people.

²¹¹ Andrei 1909a, 4

²¹² Ibid. 12

²¹³ Andrei 1911c, 99

²¹⁴ Andrei 1909a, 21

²¹⁵ Ibid. 41

‘Together with this mission, the Church itself is beginning to manifest itself as a community of believers. The ecclesial community is beginning to form.’²¹⁶ *Samodeiatel`nost`*, local grassroots initiative, was to be the main feature of such a community.²¹⁷ Such organic mission began to take several forms under Andrei’s leadership. Two BSG branches at district level were set up in summer 1910 and Andrei rejoiced that ‘those people who recently considered the church’s work as for priests alone, are becoming living participants in the task.’²¹⁸ He also stressed the need to organize ‘regional mission among natives of the same language, scattered around various dioceses’²¹⁹ as lack of coordination often meant natives in different dioceses were unaware of translations and initiatives in other places.

One of Andrei’s greatest concerns was for the Kazan Missionary Courses as if adequate funding were given there could be 75 graduates a year, as opposed to 25, and ‘there would be no parishes where the priest or reader doesn’t understand the language of their flock, for whom they are a burden.’²²⁰ A list of parishes and monasteries where in 1910 he was responsible for appointing a native reader contains 196 Chuvash, 56 Cheremys, 30 Tatar, 8 Mordvin and 6 Votyak village parishes as well as 14 town churches and monasteries.²²¹ Native monasteries and schools also had a missionary role to play. Andrei himself founded two monasteries among the baptized Tatars, and by 1910 there were twelve native monasteries in the Kazan and Ufa dioceses: four Cheremys, two Tatar and six Chuvash.²²²

If Andrei was particularly scathing in his attacks on the Russian Church and its leadership in 1909, it was due to the postponement of a Missionary Conference planned that year in Kazan, the aims of which have strong echoes of Filimonov’s 1907 article as it was ‘to unite all without

²¹⁶ Andrei 1910c, 612-615

²¹⁷ Andrei 1911c, 100-101

²¹⁸ Andrei 1910c, 614. See also Ustav 1911, 621-623

²¹⁹ Andrei 1910b, 431-433

²²⁰ Andrei 1909a, 39

²²¹ Spisok inorodcheskykh prikhodov 1910, 290-293. The numbers of Chuvash parishes according to district were: Iadrin 46, Tsivil’sk 41, Cheboksary 26, Chistopol’ 29, Koz’modem’iansk 20, Tetiushi 16, Spassk 13, plus small numbers in other districts.

²²² Filimonov 1910, 757-763, 778-781

exception into one strong organic whole' and provide a platform for all local missionary initiatives in the Volga region.²²³ Andrei did not view the Conference as an end in itself but a precursor to smaller inter-diocesan conferences which would draw together those of the same language.²²⁴ He also proposed that preparatory material for the conference should be published in a journal *Brotherhood of St Gurii Co-worker* which was published between December 1909 and October 1911 and became a platform for views on mission and church reform from the editor, Andrei himself, but also from many native, especially Chuvash clergy, he drew into the task.

The journal's articles gave unwavering support to Il'minskii's use of the native language by native personnel in churches and schools.²²⁵ Many of Andrei's own articles were tirades against those attacking Il'minskii's system, in his view false Orthodox false patriots who display

such a lack of understanding of both the tasks of the Church and the essence of Orthodoxy. (...) Recently one thinker said (...) about the Kazan Mission "if you want to delay the time of the complete russification of *these* natives, then hold the Liturgy in native languages." How much there is here of the irony of the conqueror, how much proud awareness of his moral and mental superiority over *these* natives. (...) There are no natives in the Church. All, both the Russian patriots and *these* natives are entirely equal in their rights to the Kingdom of Heaven. (...) Well, gentlemen! The first word in your political formula is Orthodoxy. Where is your Orthodoxy? How is it expressed? Why are you always silent about Christ's Church?²²⁶

He emphasized that Christ's teaching and the universal Church do not know the division of mankind into nationalities. The Holy Spirit

²²³ Andrei 1909a, 49

²²⁴ Ibid. 43

²²⁵ See Il'minskii 1910 and 1910-1911; Zemlianitskii 1909 and 1911; Russkii 1910,127-8

²²⁶ Andrei 1910a, 781-783

has called all into unity (...) and if Christians in their actions and judgments were guided only by the teaching of Holy Scripture and had received the gifts of the Holy Spirit, then they would never put forward theories of one nation receiving preference over another.²²⁷

One of the Russian patriots referred to in Andrei's tirades, V.F.Zalesskii, wrote articles in the Kazan Telegraph in 1910 criticizing the Il'minskii system for not only preventing, but even causing the adoption of Islam by many Baptised Tatars, and for not bringing about the desired russification, but instead arousing separatism, especially among the Chuvash.²²⁸ In response, Fr Viktor Zaikov defended the changes among his parishioners who had started to observe Orthodox fasts and feasts and take communion.

There is no discord now between Russians and Chuvash, and everywhere you can see increased contact, (...) everything good you can now see in the Chuvash has come about only due to the application of the wise system of N.I.Il'minskii – a great man and enlightener of the Kazan natives.²²⁹

Fr Piotr Vasiliev described how in his Chuvash parish there had been great interest and concern during the Japanese war, many had sent money and food to the Red Cross, and some had gone to fight. 'Perhaps it would be useful for the various russifiers, the Vladislav Frantseviches and the like, to take a more attentive look at real life events before pronouncing with great aplomb on questions of great state significance.'²³⁰

However, despite Andrei's condemnation of false Russian patriots and his support of native languages, liturgy and clergy, his articles make clear that he himself was a Russian patriot motivated by Russian national ideals. For Andrei, the revived parish community was the only means

²²⁷ Andrei 1911d, 225-227. See also Andrei, 1911b, 19

²²⁸ Pravoslavny 1910, 580-584

²²⁹ Zaikov 1911, 232-235

²³⁰ S.P.V. (Sviashchennik Petr Vasiliev) 1911, 353-355

to develop love for Orthodox Rus` i.e. healthy Russian patriotism without fervor and boasting, and to unite the Russian natives in likeminded service of great Russian principles: the Orthodox Church, the Orthodox autocrat and Orthodox Christians of all nationalities, (...) this will be true russification.²³¹

His Russian national stance is particularly evident when he writes of the islamification of the Volga natives who ‘must immediately be saved – saved for Russia, for the Church, for themselves.’²³² In his view, there were alarming attempts to create a Russian Turkestan encompassing all the Turkic tribes of the Volga, and a single Turko-Tatar language which was ‘a purely political anti-Russian trick of our Young Turks, so-called new-methodists. There is no such language, but it is very desirable for the creators of Turkestan.’²³³

Many articles in BSGC described increasing Muslim confidence after the 1905 edict of toleration, and the corresponding fear of the baptized native peoples adopting Islam, arising out of the Orthodox clergy’s sense of powerlessness in the face of the spiritual and material strength of Muslim communities. Fr A. Ivanov wrote of how in his Bugul`ma district in 1908 Tatar mullahs, elders and communities began to ask the Zemstvo for financial support for their schools which until then had been a completely unknown quantity owing to the lack of Tatar-speaking school officials.²³⁴ This theme of Chuvash national identity being threatened not only by russifying tendencies but by the spread of Islam and Tatar culture became a predominant theme in Chuvash writings in the years after the 1905 edict of toleration.²³⁵

The 1910 Kazan Missionary Conference

²³¹ Ibid. 25-26

²³² Andrei 1909a, 11. See also Andrei 1916

²³³ Andrei 1909a, 31, 34. The new-methodists were the Jadid movement. Geraci remarks that after 1905-6 the Jadid movement ‘became more broadly cultural and political, and drew significant discussion and support at all levels of Tatar society.’ See Geraci, 2001, 266

²³⁴ Ivanov A. 1911, 92-96

²³⁵ See Ivanov A, 1908, 249-256; Filimonov 1907, 181 and 1908, 301-306

It was this self-critical stance of the church reform movement, together with concern about the strength of Islam and the resulting rise in Russian national feeling that prevailed at the Kazan Missionary Conference which eventually took place from 13-26th June 1910. Material was gathered from 22 dioceses which were represented by 237 official participants. In keeping with Bishop Andrei's emphasis on mission by all the people, students of the Kazan Missionary Courses, OMS colporteurs and BSG co-worker sisters also attended.²³⁶ Three preparatory meetings were held for native clergy, who presented reports and participated in discussions at the main conference. Fr Daniil Filimonov gave a speech on behalf of native missionaries at the opening ceremony, and further Chuvash representatives included N.V.Nikol'skii and the priests A. Ivanov, V.Zaikov, and I.Dormidontov.²³⁷

There were many admissions of failure concerning previous and current missionary work. 'Those who baptized the natives were concerned often about the number of converts and not about their inner state' lamented the Perm diocesan missionary Kuliashev who also emphasized the participation of all in mission: the diocesan missionary, the parish priest, *popechitel'stva* in parishes, brotherhoods at the diocesan level, monasteries which must hold missionary courses.²³⁸ Bishop Germogen, chairman of the section on mission to pagans, admitted that the reason for lack of success 'is in us Christians ourselves; our lives have a pagan character.' Germogen saw a need for increasing 'church discipline, not outward discipline, but discipline of the spirit of contemporary Christians, their thoughts, feelings and desires. (...) Believers must show by their own lives what a wondrous lifestyle Christianity can lead to. We must preach by our whole life.'²³⁹ In Bishop Andrei's opening speech he said

in these days, when it is left to the Church itself to defend its faith, believers must develop living, moral strength from within themselves which would attract and win over hearts. (...) this is the

²³⁶ "Missionerskii s'ezd" 1910a, 653, 671

²³⁷ Ibid. 655, 668

²³⁸ Ibid. 697-9

²³⁹ Ibid. 675, 677, 715

best preaching; we must strengthen and revive the activity of the parish, so that the missionary stands at the very source of church life.²⁴⁰

This emphasis on the renewal and participation of all believers and parishes was accompanied, however, by an affirmation of the state's role in mission to Muslims

otherwise, instead of separate minority peoples, we will soon see in the eastern region united and fanatical Muslim masses. (...) How dangerous this is for church and state – this is extremely clear for every unprejudiced person. (...) Before it is too late we must put a stop to Tatar influence on the natives. Church, state and society must participate in this struggle to defend the weak natives from being swallowed up by Islam and Tatardom.²⁴¹

There were similar concerns in a report on mission among the Lamaist Kalmyks which proposed that the post of Baksha, the Kalmyk's indigenous leader, should be abolished as 'in Kalmyk eyes the Baksha is the bearer of the idea of isolation from the Russians.'²⁴²

The memory of Il'minskii prevailed over the entire conference. The conference Chairman Archbishop Nikanor (Kamenskii 1847-1910) of Kazan, together with other participants, N.P.Ostroumov, Bishop Andrei, the native clergy, were among his personal disciples, or devotees of his principles.²⁴³ When it was discussed how to commemorate him

The shadow of Nikolai Ivanovich, as it were, came out of the grave. It seemed that his portrait hanging on the wall came to life and began to speak through the lips of his devoted disciples and co-workers.²⁴⁴

After a memorial liturgy on 19th June, all processed to Il'minskii's grave where a *panikhida* was served with prayers in different native languages,²⁴⁵ after which Nikanor addressed Il'minskii directly

²⁴⁰ Ibid. 666

²⁴¹ Ibid. 710-712

²⁴² Ibid. 673

²⁴³ Ibid. 652, 691-696

²⁴⁴ Ibid. 655

We trust that your soul rejoices at the sight of the multitude of your disciples who have gathered here from everywhere, and are praising the Lord in their different tongues.

He continued in the repentant tone of much of the conference

we have paid insufficient attention to your wise instruction and precepts, but now that we are surrounded by many dogs, we not only remember them with gratitude, but swear to be faithful to them even unto death.²⁴⁶

Nikanor's attribution of the failure to pacify the many dogs threatening church and state on all sides, to insufficient attention to Il'minskii's principles, would have only increased antagonism towards Il'minskii among Muslims, the Russian patriots and revolutionary circles, especially as the press were excluded from the conference. In IKE it was reported 'The Muslim and mohammedanizing press is alarmed and concerned, and social opinion is sulking, pointing to the Missionary Conference as very dangerous for Islam; they are saying that decisions will be taken almost violating freedom of confession.'²⁴⁷ Thus while the Kazan Missionary Conference with repentance spoke of the renewal of parish life, and of the Russian Church as a whole, so that those of other faiths would be freely drawn to loving and radiant Christian communities, it did not nevertheless manage to disentangle missionary thinking from state aims.

Bishop Andrei was unexpectedly appointed Bishop of Sukhumi in the Caucasus in June 1911. His departure was a great blow for both him and the Kazan diocese native clergy as is seen in a telegram sent to the Tsar and signed by Fr Nikolai Kuzmin and 17 other Chuvash missionary priests who wrote that Andrei 'was our exemplary leader, both on the Kazan Missionary Courses where we received missionary training, and in our pastoral and missionary work.'²⁴⁸ A further telegram sent to Metropolitan Antony (Khrapovitskii) of Kiev by the priests A.Rekeev, V.Zaikov

²⁴⁵ Ibid. 689-190

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Ibid. 656

²⁴⁸ NA CGIGN t.215, l.27-28

and N.Kuzmin, registered their concern that with Andrei's departure there would be no more funds for the Kazan Missionary Courses and the Brotherhood of St Gurii.²⁴⁹

Andrei's authority as spiritual leader of the native Christian intelligentsia is understandable in the light of his vision of a Church in which no nationality has preference over another, and where all are equal in their rights to the Kingdom of Heaven. In this respect, his writings eloquently expressed the logical outcome of everything written and done by Il'minskii, whom both Andrei and the native Christians considered the champion of their cause. Yet we can also see how Andrei's very defence of Il'minskii played a role in Il'minskii being branded a russifier. His strident anti-Muslim and Russian national stance, much more outspoken than anything said by Il'minskii even in his conservative last decade, were identified with Il'minskii in the Muslim community and among the revolutionary intelligentsia, leading to the label of reactionary tsarist russifier which remained throughout the Soviet period.²⁵⁰

CONCLUSION

The history of Il'minskii's legacy among the Chuvash, and the writings arising out of it, need to be read in the context of both the movement for ecclesial reform prior to the All-Russian Church Council of 1917-18, and the movement of clerical Orthodox patriotism which increasingly associated Orthodoxy with Russian national identity and culture. Already in Il'minskii's last decade, on the one hand he was forced to defend his principles in the face of patriotism and fears of separatism, and for this he used increasingly the language of tradition rather than the critical language of his earlier writings. On the other hand his lifelong experience as translator and teacher led to him becoming involved in integralist, patriotic projects, compiling Slavonic textbooks and texts and emphasizing Cyril and Methodius' heritage as a universal missionary model which he identified with his own missionary work. It is in this defence of the Il'minskii

²⁴⁹ Ibid. t.208, l.152

²⁵⁰ See Geraci 2001, 272 for the Kazan Tatar deputy G.Kh.Enikeev's attribution of the preoccupation with russification in Russia's schools for Muslims to Il'minskii in 1908-1909.

system using the language of tradition, a pattern continued in the writings of his disciples, that we see the origins of what has become known as the Cyrillo-Methodian missionary tradition in the late 20th century.

Il'minskii's reprise of integralism and his collaboration with Pobedonostsev have been emphasized by later historians who have perceived him as a conservative reactionary. Yet his principle of *narodnost* in mission, of active lay participation in the church, of conciliarity promoted at the local level through *s'ezdy* of clergy and teachers, prepared the ground for adherence to the maximalist, progressive wing of reform movements within both church and state. Through their active participation in mission, their defence of Il'minskii and participation in *s'ezdy*, an articulate and coordinated native leadership began to emerge with its own evaluations of the missionary experience and its own vision of the native peoples' place within the Russian state and church.

A feature of the period after Il'minskii's death was the crystallization of varying images of the man and the significance of his work. We have seen how among the Chuvash beneficiaries of his work he was already regarded as a saintly figure who had given them their Chuvash-language parishes, schools and books. In the Chuvash Christian intelligentsia's defence of Il'minskii, despite their praise of his outstanding character and role in introducing the native language into mission, in the face of patriotic criticism they describe him frequently using the patriotic rhetoric of the time, thus ironically contributing to the image of Il'minskii as the ideal of the patriotic russifying Russian. We have seen also how in the polarization of society in 1905 the moderate Iakovlev, who himself was continually frustrated with the Tsarist regime in his struggle to develop the Simbirsk Chuvash School, was perceived as reactionary by the young revolutionary intelligentsia, an image confirmed by his patriotic stance in the pre-war and war years, and an image extended to the Il'minskii system he represented. The strident criticism of pan-Islamic aspirations among the Volga Muslims and fears of the increasing islamification of the

christianized Volga native peoples especially after the 1905 edict on religious toleration, a marked feature of the writings of Bishop Andrei and the 1910 Kazan Missionary Conference, led to reaction among Tatar Muslims and criticism of the Il`minskii system for its russifying, anti-Muslim tendencies, a further aspect of Il`minskii's image which has persisted to the present. These various images, as well as the language used to react to them, have meant that scholars have been able to find material in the writings of his disciples and their opponents to support the image of Il`minskii they want to perpetuate.

In the final chapter we shall explore the further development of Chuvash native leadership, their contribution to the establishment of the Chuvash literary language through translation and publishing activity, and their later evaluations of the church and its mission, including their final images of Il`minskii and his work, amidst the turbulent years of revolution and civil war.

Chapter 7

‘Once not a people, but now God’s people’

The Coming of Age of the Chuvash Literary Language

In this final chapter we shall discuss the activities of the three centres of Chuvash translation and publishing activity in the two pre-revolutionary decades: Simbirsk under Ivan Iakovlev, Kazan under N.V.Nikol'skii, and Samara under Fr Daniil Filimonov.¹ We will examine the context in which literature was translated and published, the type and quantity of literature, the ways it was distributed, and seek to assess its impact. We shall see how this activity was accompanied by an emerging interest in Chuvash philology, history and ethnography and an increasing sense of national identity which prompted Chuvash evaluations of their own history and the impact of Christianization on their culture. We shall also explore how it was in this missionary context that the structures developed in which demands for political and ecclesial autonomy arose among the Chuvash in the years immediately after the Revolution.

The Simbirsk Chuvash Teachers’ School after 1907

After the 1905 conference on native education under A.S.Budilovich which expressed support for the Il'minskii system,² the new Kazan Curator A.N.Derevitskii had a more positive attitude to Iakovlev who raised the question of upgrading SCTS to a Teachers’ Seminary, a goal more actively pursued after 1907. However, with the appointment of P.D.Pogodin as Kazan Curator in 1909, Iakovlev found all his initiatives were delayed and thwarted, and the situation only worsened under N.K.Kulchitskii, Curator from 1912-1914. The Kazan Educational District’s hostility to Iakovlev and SCTS was expressed above all in these years by its reintroduction of primary education beginning with study of Russian rather than the native language. Iakovlev’s authority as Director of SCTS, and the principle of appointing teachers who knew Chuvash, were

¹ BSG TC Otchet 1906, 4-5

² See Trudy 1905

undermined by Pogodin who blocked two Chuvash-speaking Kazan Theological Academy candidates for the post of Russian teacher at SCTS, and appointed instead a teacher who knew no Chuvash. In November 1912 Iakovlev wrote to the Minister of National Education L.A.Kasso complaining that ‘I have in recent times been accused of separatism and am evidently destined for removal from service as a person harmful to the Russian cause in the Kazan region.’³

As his attempts to upgrade SCTS to a Teachers’ Seminary continued to be ignored, Iakovlev wrote on 14th January 1914 to I.S.Kliuzhev of the Duma education committee asking him to include SCTS in the draft law concerning Teachers’ seminaries to be discussed at the next session of the Duma, and in December 1914 Iakovlev sent to Kliuzhev a draft statute for SCTS and asked him to gain Duma approval.⁴ He explained to Kliuzhev that Pogodin and Kulchitskii ‘are extremely antagonistic to me. My most trivial representations are held up and remain without action for years at a time.’⁵

During the final years before the war Iakovlev adopted a patriotic stance in reaction to the accusations of separatism, and in the war years went to great lengths to emphasize his loyalty to Russia and the monarchy. He expressed his support for the war effort in a brochure ‘The war and the Chuvash school in Simbirsk’⁶ and sought actively to set up a refuge at the SCTS farm where agriculture was studied by orphans of Russian and Chuvash soldiers killed or maimed in the war.⁷ This patriotic stance undoubtedly contributed to him being increasingly associated with reactionary forces by the young revolutionary Chuvash intelligentsia alienated from the Il`minskii movement during 1905-7. Here we see the origins of Iakovlev, like Il`minskii, being portrayed as a Tsarist reactionary and russifier in the Soviet period, despite his urgent sense of the need for moderate reform and his own enormous frustration with the late Tsarist regime.

³ GIA CR f.515, op.1, d.52, l.1-6

⁴ Iakovlev 1998, 322

⁵ Ibid. p.231

⁶ Iakovlev 1998, 325

⁷ Ibid. 328 and 334

Despite his patriotic stance, he continually upheld use of the native language. In a 1914 letter to the Chuvash priest and teacher A.S.Mikhailov he wrote

We Chuvash are not destined to play an independent role in history. Sooner or later we must merge with the Russians. But what does it mean to merge? It does not mean to master the Russian language and wear Russian clothing. We must become Russians in spirit: think and feel in Russian. For this we must raise ourselves to the level of Russian culture, adopt the Orthodox faith, the foundations of Russian cultural and state life. We can only raise up Chuvash culture through the native language. Introducing the Russian language into church and school will hold up the development of the Chuvash, and before their merging with Russians they may die out. It is well-known that cultural backwardness leads to impoverishment, and the latter to extinction. We do not want this and so aspire to merge with the Russians as a healthy rather than a degenerating people, so that the Russian people acquire through this merging a plus and not a minus.⁸

Even in the understanding of the more conservative Iakovlev, we see then that merging with the Russians did not entail complete cultural assimilation, their extinction as a people. On the contrary, this is precisely what Iakovlev sought to avoid, and he speaks clearly of the development of the Chuvash and their culture as part of what it means to become Russians in spirit.

Iakovlev's perceived reactionary views aroused, nevertheless, the hostility of the more revolutionary-minded staff of SCTS. In 1916 the teacher Osip Andreev left the School after Iakovlev refused his request that pupils be paid for their work on the school farm.⁹ Iakovlev diagnosed the source of the problem saying

They cannot forgive me that, having lived over 70 years, 50 of which have been devoted to (state) service, I remain a representative of the old, obsolete regime, not being capable of going along with the new trends and currents. (...) There was never anything

⁸ Iakovlev 1989, 235 See also Iakovlev's letter to A.Pletnev in Iakovlev 1998, 361

⁹ Ibid. 568

revolutionary in me. I always considered that everything can be achieved by peaceful means, without shocks and violence.¹⁰

Iakovlev's attempts to bring change by peaceful means continued in 1917 with SCTS being upgraded to a Teacher's Seminary on 14th June.¹¹ This was only months, however, before Iakovlev himself was removed from his post.¹²

Simbirsk and the publication and distribution of Holy Scripture in the Chuvash language

It was against this background of Iakovlev being accused on the one hand of reaction, and on the other hand of separatism, that his Simbirsk Chuvash Teachers' School's most spectacular achievements in the area of Chuvash publications took place, evidence of Iakovlev's unswerving adherence to Il'minskii's principle of use of the native language despite his perceived reactionary and patriotic stance.

We have seen above how by 1906 all the books of the New Testament as well as the Psalter had been published separately in various trial and larger editions which were being continuously revised by Iakovlev and his translating community, then printed in collaboration with the BFBS. The whole New Testament was printed in Simbirsk between 1908-1911, with William Kean informing Iakovlev in January 1909 that 'the BFBS Committee has now approved the estimate (...) for publishing 20,000 copies of the Chuvash New Testament and Psalter. The Committee also with great pleasure heard that work on publishing will take place under your worthy supervision and direction.'¹³ In April 1911 Kean informed London that 'the whole edition is now printed off' but he had been concerned to discover that 'Mr Yacovleff has added to the title page a Preface in Russian and Chuvash. This he has done of himself, altogether without my knowledge or consent.'¹⁴ As it was BFBS practice to publish the Scriptures without any

¹⁰ Ibid. 583, 566

¹¹ Iakovlev 1998, 365

¹² GIA CR f.515, op.1, d.401, l.6-13

¹³ CNM f.10/VT 4480, Kean to Iakovlev 16th Janury 1909

¹⁴ BSA/E3/3/590 Kean to Kilgour 18th April/1st May 1911

additional comments, Kean had to inform Iakovlev that the Committee could not accept to publish the Preface which contained Iakovlev's view of the significance of the first Chuvash New Testament.¹⁵

In his Preface Iakovlev warns the Chuvash that, having received such a gift from God, they must pay it the reverence and respect it deserves, read it, live by it and interpret it in accordance with Orthodox teaching. 'Now the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is made known to you in your native language. Herein consists our joy, but herein also lies our great responsibility.' He then presents his vision of the Chuvash, with the reception of the New Testament, taking their place among the nations of all mankind.

Set high value upon that blessing which has been revealed for you and for all mankind in the Word of God. For you, for the whole world, for all the ages, there is no other blessing than this blessing of the faith of Christ. (...) It has now shone upon us also, who have hitherto been "standing in the way of the Gentiles" (Mt. 10 v5). (...) For now, according to the word of the Apostle, you also are a chosen generation, a holy nation, a people to be renewed (...) once not a people, but now God's people.¹⁶

A notable omission in the Preface is that, at a time when the Russian people were emphasizing their status as not only a holy nation, but the holy nation,¹⁷ Iakovlev makes no reference whatever to Russia or her Church's role in the Chuvash receiving the word of God, not even И`minskii.

While the New Testament was being printed, the publication of the parts of the Old Testament Iakovlev had translated was discussed, a task which revealed the tensions involved in Iakovlev's collaboration with BFBS. In January 1909 Kean wrote to London concerning Iakovlev's desire to print a small first edition. While Kean felt that low circulation of possibly 500 copies a year

¹⁵ CNM Ibid. Kean to Iakovlev 2nd May 1911

¹⁶ Ibid. Preface to the New Testament (Russian) I have used mainly Kean's translation with a few alterations.

¹⁷ See Strickland 2013, 68-89

could not justify publication,¹⁸ the Editorial Sub-Committee nevertheless resolved in March 1909 that the printing of the Chuvash Old Testament be approved.¹⁹ In June 1909 Kean sent to Iakovlev a proposal that the BFBS would pay 4000 roubles and receive 5000 copies without the Apocrypha, with Iakovlev being left to suggest the number of copies of his own edition.²⁰ On November 14th 1909 Kean resent his letter as he had heard nothing from Iakovlev whom he asked to propose his own better plan if need be.

The correspondence over this proposal ends at this point in the archives so it is not clear what exactly the problem was from Iakovlev's side. It may have been that Iakovlev only wanted to print a small trial edition of most of the Pentateuch whereas, judging by the BFBS's proposed 4000 roubles, they had in mind the whole of the Old Testament. Work on the Psalter alone had taken Iakovlev about 15 years, so the entire Old Testament may have seemed too vast a project to make such precise plans about, even if it was his intention that the whole Old Testament be published. The question of the apocryphal books being omitted from the BFBS' own copies may have been the main issue that prevented Iakovlev accepting Kean's proposal, even if the proposal suggests that Iakovlev had the liberty to print his own copies with the Apocrypha. The BFBS' greater financial means would have meant that their own editions would have had greater circulation among the Chuvash.

Concern over this issue is raised in SBSG in November 1910 in an anonymous article, most likely written by Bishop Andrei who wrote frequent articles lamenting the lack of Russian funds for missionary work.²¹ 'Now there is a translation of the whole Bible in the Chuvash language. The OMS does not have the necessary 10,000 roubles for publication of this colossal labour.' He considers that if the Bible is published by the BFBS the non-canonical books will be excluded 'which will be a great temptation among those Chuvash who will find out that their

¹⁸ BSA/E3/3/590 Kean to Taylor 13th/26th January 1909

¹⁹ BSA/E3/3/590 Editorial Superintendant to Kean 17th March 1909 and Minutes of the Editorial Sub-Committee March 3rd 1909

²⁰ CNM f.10/VT 4480, Kean to Iakovlev 30th June 1909

²¹ Russkii 1910, 861-862

Bible is not the same as that of all Orthodox.’ But it is his patriotic feelings that are offended most ‘God forbid if among the Chuvash they start saying “at the mercy of the English we have the Bible in our own language” whereas, if the Bible is published at Russian expense the Chuvash will be even more deeply permeated with an awareness of his unity with the Russian people.’²²

Iakovlev continued work on his Chuvash Pentateuch and on one day in November 1912 turned up at the BFBS St Petersburg depot to inform Kean that ‘a preliminary edition of the Old Testament which he is bringing through the press on his own account is almost ready.’²³ Kean wrote, however, to London saying ‘I do not think there is yet any particular call for the BFBS to take up the OT in Chuvash’²⁴ and this led the Editorial Committee to the conclusion there was no need for further action on the Old Testament at present.²⁵

Running through the BFBS correspondence is Kean’s and the London Committee’s enormous respect for Iakovlev’s work as both translator and educator. This prompted Kean in December 1913 to a fierce defence of Iakovlev when a casual observer who knew no Chuvash, said the Chuvash translations were poor. He wrote that Iakovlev

had made it to be that Chuvash children would no more grow up illiterate and (...) had been, along with others whom he gathered about him, for thirty years translating and revising, and translating and revising, book after book of the New Testament until at last he told us that the work was accomplished to the utmost of perfection to which he and his assistants could bring it. (...) Mr Podin (...) should not go to London and talk about things of which he is absolutely ignorant.²⁶

²² Ibid. 861-862

²³ BSA/E3/3/590 Kean to Taylor 3/16 November 1912

²⁴ Ibid. Kean to Kilgour 8/21 Dec. 1912

²⁵ Ibid. Editorial Supt. To Kean 22/1/13

²⁶ Ibid. Kean to Kilgour 2/15 Dec. 1913

The distribution of religious literature by colportage

Bishop Andrei's concern to print the Old Testament including the Apocrypha with Russian money, and Iakovlev's warning to interpret the New Testament in accordance with Orthodox teaching were undoubtedly to some extent due to the great increase in distribution of the Chuvash Scriptures by the BFBS through colportage. The 1885 BFBS Annual Report stated 'Russia is an empire of villages. It is only by colportage that the great mass of the people can be reached.'²⁷ This feature of their work distinguished the BFBS from the Il'minskii movement in which the Scriptures were largely distributed through schools and parishes. By the end of the 19th century the BFBS had developed an empire-wide network of colporteurs and hawkers, in 1913 numbering 101 who sold 187,000 portions of Scripture as they travelled around villages peddling their books at markets and fairs.²⁸ Batalden points out that while many Orthodox feared that the Bible reading practices encouraged by colportage were leading to the conversion of Orthodox believers to Protestantism, and this led to the vilification of colportage at Orthodox missionary conferences organized by Pobedonostsev in the 1890s, the colportage movement clearly appealed beyond sectarianism.²⁹ This is evident concerning the distribution of Scripture not only among the Chuvash, but among other non-Russian peoples in the early 20th century.

In 1872 a Kazan BFBS depot was set up which in 1895 had 4 colporteurs and 5 hawkers who travelled the surrounding regions which included areas settled by the Chuvash.³⁰ In May 1896 the BFBS closed both its Kazan and Saratov depots and based its operations in the 'Valley of the Volga' in Samara where there were 15 colporteurs and 3 hawkers.³¹ Even allowing for the BFBS presenting glowing accounts of sales for their supporters, the picture presented in their Annual Reports reveals the truly colossal consequences of their collaboration with Iakovlev after

²⁷ BFBS Annual Report 1885, 102

²⁸ Batalden 1993, 84-85

²⁹ Ibid. 88

³⁰ BFBS Annual Report 1891, 123; 1895, 113; See Batalden 1993, 86 for the difference between hawkers and colporteurs who were more permanent and better-paid.

³¹ BFBS Annual Report 1898, 107

the 1895 edition of the Four Gospels. In 1896 colporteur Jacob Perk had sold all of the BFBS's 1000 copies³² so a further edition of 3600 copies was printed in 1897 in Kazan, with 1000 copies being donated to the BSG TC.³³ This edition similarly sold out rapidly with colporteur Sevastianoff alone selling 1000 copies at 25 kopecks in four months in 1898.³⁴ The 1899 Annual Report looked forward to the imminent appearance of the Chuvash New Testament as

Work among the Chuvash, done mainly by colporteurs Sevastianoff and Pagge, has resulted in putting an edition of the Four Gospels into circulation in an unexpectedly short time. Another edition is in the press. Besides this, the Psalms have now been translated (...) and it is hoped that an edition will be ready in the autumn of 1899.³⁵

The BFBS, obviously encouraged by the rapid sale of these first editions, printed 6000 copies of both the Four Gospels with Acts, and the Psalms during 1901. Amazement at the speed even these larger editions sold out was expressed in the 1903 Report.

At the time [1902] these editions seemed to be rather large, for only the Four Gospels had been previously published and the Chuvash tribe, a not very numerous body, formed just a mission-field of the Orthodox Church. But both editions were speedily exhausted and before the summer was out we had not a copy of either of these books to give to the people who were still asking for them. (...) Upon colporteur Savin was laid the task of spending the summer months in travelling among the Chuvash villages, and thanks to the demand for the Chuvash new editions the record of his circulation for the year rises to the high figure of 16,096 copies. *The reports of the colporteur show that he had nothing to do with creating the demand; it was there already, and he had only to supply it.* He would time himself to be in any particular village on its weekly market day, and in the market he would easily dispose of the whole stock which he had carried with him. He tells how in one place after another, when he had first made it known that he had the new editions of the Holy Scriptures in Chuvash, the people crowded round him greedy for the books.

³² BFBS Annual Report 1896, 104

³³ Ibid. 1898, 102

³⁴ There is a note about this on the cover of the 1897 Chuvash Four Gospels in the BFBS archive. BSS/237/E97/1

³⁵ BFBS Annual Report 1899, 120-121

They paid for them without any bargaining, 25 kopecks for the Four Gospels and 15 kopecks for the Psalter, prices which amount only to about three-quarters of the mere cost of printing these books to the BS, but which were judged to be the utmost that could be charged. The demand for these Scriptures was not satisfied by the 6000 copies of which each edition was composed; there have been many enquiries for further supplies. The colporteur feels impelled to mention that he was troubled by the weight of money in his possession.³⁶

And the demand increased yet further. At the beginning of 1905, 10,000 copies each of the Four Gospels with Acts and the Psalter were received from Simbirsk, and the 1906 BFBS Report reads

After a year of no circulation through want of stock, we have again sent our colporteurs among these people with very satisfactory results. The time is now approaching when we shall have before us the question of supplying these people with the whole of the New Testament in their tongue.³⁷

But these editions also sold out by 1909, partly due to the BFBS employing from 1907 their first native Chuvash colporteur, J. Grigorieff, who sold 2492 copies in 10 months.³⁸ The 1910 Report states

Last year's circulation in Chuvash amounted to 151 copies, as against 2,020 in 1908 and 3,284 in 1907. The simple reason is that we have had no stock. But an edition of the New Testament which we hope will contribute to our circulation next year is passing through the press at Simbirsk under the editorial care of Inspector J. Jacobleff.³⁹

The 1912 Report finally announced the arrival of 20,000 New Testaments from Simbirsk

the result of much reconsideration and revision of translations of the separate books of the New Testament. (...) The appearance of this complete New Testament was anxiously awaited

³⁶ Ibid. 1903, 97, 105 [My italics]

³⁷ Ibid. 1906, 94

³⁸ Ibid. 1908, 129

³⁹ Ibid. 1910, 103

throughout the Chuvash villages; the sales in three months were 500 copies, and they would have been much larger had it not been for the serious failure of the crops in several of the Volga provinces.⁴⁰

The 1913 Report stated that 10,000 copies of the Psalms had been received⁴¹ and despite great poverty due to crop failure, parents were willingly sending their children to school and buying the Scriptures for them to read.⁴²

Sales of Chuvash Scriptures continued successfully despite the war, with 2889 New Testaments sold in 1913, 1681 volumes in 1915, 3032 volumes in 1916 and 1620 in 1917, the last year figures are available.⁴³ If we go by sales statistics alone, the Chuvash were undoubtedly the BFBS' greatest success among the non-Russian peoples of the Volga. The phenomenal demand for Chuvash Scriptures is particularly striking if we compare it with the situation among other non-Russian peoples where, apart from the Tatars, the Four Gospels were published later, in much smaller editions and with slow sales. The Votyak Four Gospels were published in 1904 having been translated by the Votyak teacher at KTS who spent the summer of 1904 as a colporteur circulating about half of the 1904 edition of 3000 copies.⁴⁴ When an edition of 3000 copies of the Four Gospels in Lowland Cheremys was published in 1906 it was the first publication of Scripture in Cheremys since the Bible Society's own 1821 New Testament.⁴⁵ After 3000 copies of the Mordovian Gospels were published in 1911,⁴⁶ it was reported in 1912 that 'the circulation of these books is slow.'⁴⁷ In 1915 when 1681 volumes sold in Chuvash,

⁴⁰ Ibid. 1912, 107

⁴¹ Ibid. 1913, 118

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid. 1913, 119; 1915, 29; 1917, 66

⁴⁴ Ibid. 1905, 95

⁴⁵ Ibid. 1908, 20

⁴⁶ Otchet BSG TC 1910-11, 10

⁴⁷ BFBS Annual Report 1912, 107

there were sales of 623 in Mordovian, 370 in Votyak and 358 in Cheremys, and in 1916 when 3032 volumes sold in Chuvash, there were less than a thousand in the other languages.⁴⁸

The 1903 Report's comment that the colporteur 'had nothing to do with creating the demand; it was there already and he had only to supply it' raises the issue of what had created such a phenomenal demand. The role of SCTS and of Iakovlev himself was obviously a large factor in this, not only through spreading literacy in the villages, but through the involvement of the villagers themselves in the translation process, and through SCTS's role as a centre of Chuvash liturgical life. Owing to Iakovlev's early organization of SCTS on the model of KCBTS, and energetic commitment to the translation process, the Four Gospels had all been translated into Chuvash by the late 1870s, whereas almost twenty years later in 1895, the BSG TC Report stresses that 'the slow development of Cheremys, Votyak and Kalmyk translations depended on the organization of the central native school.' Only in that year 'the central Cheremys school in Unzha and the central Votyak school in Karlygan are developing towards the standard of KCBTS, with a church having just been opened in Unzha by Archbishop Vladimir, but no church as yet in Karlygan.'⁴⁹ The 1908-9 Report lamented that there was as yet no central missionary school among the Mordovians and so the preparation and distribution of translations was very difficult.⁵⁰

The role played by the BFBS in enabling the publication and distribution of Chuvash Scriptures in these crucial years is also highlighted when we read the Brotherhood of St Gurii reports lamenting its incapacity to publish due to lack of finances. Up to 1893 the BSG TC received 4000 roubles annually from the OMS which from 1894 rose to 5500 roubles.⁵¹ The 1895 Report suggests raising the OMS's financial support to 8000 roubles annually whereas in 1905 only 4500 roubles was received, and although the publication of 128 texts was planned, only 59

⁴⁸ Ibid. 1915, 29

⁴⁹ BSG TC Otchet 1895, 4-5

⁵⁰ Ibid. 1908-9, 11

⁵¹ PMO 1895, 97

editions were published. Many of these were financed by other sources, the BFBS, the Samara diocese and Archimandrite Andrei.⁵² In 1906 the usual 5500 roubles were received but nevertheless ‘almost two-thirds of its translations remain in manuscript form awaiting publishers.’⁵³ The 1910-11 Report reads ‘The majority of translations remain unprinted due to lack of funds’⁵⁴ and it was estimated the Committee needed 20,000 roubles a year to do its work effectively⁵⁵ while the income from OMS in 1910-11 had fallen to 2772 roubles, and only 2256 roubles were received from sales of books.

The businesslike Iakovlev, aware from his grassroots experience of schools and parishes that the Brotherhood of St Gurii’s methods of funding, publication and distribution of texts were not going to be adequate to supply the demand which the activities of Chuvash schools and parishes were creating, chose in the 1890s to collaborate, on his own terms however, with the BFBS. This meant that his early dream of the Chuvash people having access to the Gospels at an affordable price was fulfilled by the early 1900s. If we compare the numbers of Scripture portions distributed among the Chuvash with the size of the Chuvash population, we can conclude that the overwhelming majority of Chuvash households would have possessed either the Gospels, New Testament or Psalter by 1912, and as scarce printed texts among the first literate generation they would undoubtedly have been read. Although further research is needed to assess the impact of this abundance of religious literature among the Chuvash in the first decades of the 20th century, some tentative evidence can be put forward that they were read, and not just once.

Pre-revolutionary religious literature, and specifically the Chuvash Gospel, features strongly in the memories of Chuvash from several different areas who were children in the 1960s. The grandmother (1900-1985) of Nadezhda Slesarevskaia, born near Tiurlema, Kozlovskii district,

⁵² BSG Otchet 1905, 6-9, 40

⁵³ Ibid. 1906, 2

⁵⁴ Ibid. 1910-11, 2

⁵⁵ Ibid.

had a thick, brick-like book in 'the Chuvash language with Slavonic letters' which she and her sister-in-law read every evening in turn. When their eyesight failed they asked Nadezhda to read the book. Marfa Kozlova, the grandmother (b.1898) of Mother Evsevia Sugutskiaia similarly asked her as a child in the 1960s to read from two pre-revolutionary books in leather binding which she thinks were the Chuvash Gospel and Psalter. In the summer her grandmother read the books even outside in the street and on the feasts of Christmas and Easter she would read them all through the night. Mother Evsevia remembers waking up in the night to watch her reading. There was no church in their village of Toisi, Batyrevo district, and while other people in the village had icons, her family had no icon until in 1972 a relative brought an icon of the Saviour ten kilometres from Turunovo church. Her mother 'met' the icon with bread and salt as there was such reverence for icons. Liubov` from Tinchurino, Ial`chiki district, as a child in the 1960s walked eight kilometres to the nearest church with her grandmother (c.1900-1986) who had a pre-revolutionary printed Chuvash Gospel and used to copy out prayers by hand to pass on to others.⁵⁶ It would appear then that pre-revolutionary religious literature was lovingly kept and read by those who were children in the first decade of the 20th century, who remained faithful even when churches were closed in the Soviet period, and passed their faith on to their grandchildren.

The BFBS distribution method of colportage undoubtedly had an influence on Orthodox literature distribution too. According to BFBS Reports their colporteurs received a friendly reception among Orthodox in several areas of Siberia such as the Altai Mission and the Yakutsk diocese,⁵⁷ and there were even two instances of BFBS colporteurs being ordained as Orthodox clergy.⁵⁸ By the early 1900s the Synod and local Orthodox missionary institutions were sending

⁵⁶ Based on the author's conversations with Nadezhda Nikolaevna Slesarevskiaia on 7.4.2013, Mother Evsevia (Albina Il'ichna) Sugutskiaia on 29.5.2013 and Liubov` of the Bolshoi Sundyr` parish on 29.3.2014

⁵⁷ BFBS Annual Report 1893, 114; 1894, 134; 1898, 113, 117; 1899, 119; 1903, 122-3; 1904, 102; 1905, 102, 112; 1909, 138; 1910, 129;

⁵⁸ Ibid. 1905 102; 1915, 115

out their own colporteurs,⁵⁹ including some among the Chuvash. From 1903 the book store in Filimonov's Tuarma parish, Samara diocese had its own colporteur, Timofei Andrianov, and the 1905 conference of Samara missionary translators resolved to open a further store in Stiukhino with its own colporteur.⁶⁰ At their 1909 conference they expressed the desire for more colporteurs with a fixed annual salary and at their 1911 conference N.V.Nikol'skii stressed the need for colporteurs at the provincial and parish level.⁶¹

The church mission section at the 1910 Kazan Missionary Congress resolved that 'apart from district missionaries, missionary co-workers from the laity, zealots of Orthodoxy and missionary colporteurs are needed. Always circulating among the people and enjoying their trust, these people will perform an enormous service for mission.'⁶² In his article welcoming this resolution, the Kazan diocesan missionary argued that such lay missionaries sometimes have an advantage over clergy as 'the people really have a greater attitude of trust towards people from the same milieu, and in matters of faith, towards people whose attitude to the faith is not only the consequence of their special, exclusively official, position.'⁶³ The article nevertheless expresses animosity to the BFBS colporteurs who are 'famous for their hostile attitude to Orthodoxy and in the majority of cases Baptists and evangelicals.'⁶⁴

Other translation work at SCTS in the early 20th century

Apart from scriptural texts, the translation community at SCTS in the first decade of the 20th century continued to translate and publish the liturgical texts needed to enable the entire Orthodox cycle in Chuvash, with Fr. Mikhail Petrov and Feodor Danilov playing a leading role.⁶⁵ The Liturgy of St Basil, the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, a third edition of the

⁵⁹ BFBS Annual Report 1904, 113

⁶⁰ NA CGIGN otd.1, t.246, l.126,128

⁶¹ GIA CR f.350, op.1, d.1, l.24, 122

⁶² Ivanov M, 1910, 1153

⁶³ Ibid. 1153

⁶⁴ Ibid. 1154

⁶⁵ Iakovlev 1998, 253

Oktoekh with Sunday services in the 8 tones and a selection of texts from the Lenten Triodion were published in 1906, and the Holy Week services in 1908.⁶⁶

This decade also saw the publication of school textbooks, texts about medicine, agriculture and beekeeping,⁶⁷ as well as translations of the Russian classics. The events of 1905-7 undoubtedly played a role in this although awareness of the need for non-religious texts had arisen before this. In the 1880s Iakovlev had already begun to translate medical leaflets, and a collection of 17 such leaflets covering such subjects as childbirth, breastfeeding, dysentery, malaria, German measles, consumption, Siberian plague and how to organize a childrens' crèche during the busy harvest period, were published by the Simbirsk Zemstvo in 1903.⁶⁸ In June 1907 Iakovlev asked the Kazan Curator for 1500-2000 roubles to publish Russian reading books by Lev Tolstoy and A.Baranov.⁶⁹

The most significant translator of the Russian classics was Konstantin Ivanov who was among the SCTS students expelled in 1907, but returned to teach at SCTS in October 1910 at Iakovlev's initiative.⁷⁰ Today known as the Chuvash national poet, many of his poems bear the imprint of the 1905-7 events.⁷¹ Nevertheless, his most famous epic poem *Narspi* was published at Iakovlev's initiative in 1908 in the collection *Tales and traditions of the Chuvash*. On 11th April 1908 Iakovlev sent a booklet of Lermontov's poems translated by Ivanov and N.Vasiliev to N.I.Ashmarin, asking him to send his 'frank opinion about our new attempt to translate the Russian classics into Chuvash. This is a first experiment by our pupils.'⁷² Ivanov's manifold creative talents therefore left their mark on SCTS. He contributed to Old Testament translations, painted the scenery for the school's production of Ivan Susanin in 1913, made his own wooden

⁶⁶ BSG Otchet 1906, 4-5; 1908-9, 5

⁶⁷ Krasnov 2007, 301-2

⁶⁸ Krasnov 2007, 301, 450

⁶⁹ Iakovlev 1998, 263

⁷⁰ Iakovlev 1989, 214

⁷¹ Khuzangai, Samsonova 1990, 6-9

⁷² Iakovlev 1989, 204-5

typewriter, and left a photographic record of the school in 1910-12 using one of the first cameras among the Chuvash, before tragically dying of tuberculosis at the age of 24 in March 1915.⁷³

N.V.Nikol'skii and Chuvash translations in Kazan

The development of Kazan as a centre of Chuvash translating and publication activity was largely due to N.V.Nikol'skii who in 1905 took over N. Bobrovnikov's post of executive secretary on the BSG TC Committee, and soon became the central figure in Chuvash publications in Kazan. Archimandrite Andrei Ukhtomskii encouraged the mainly non-Russian clergy attending the Kazan Missionary Courses where Nikol'skii taught, to participate in translation activity, and he also sought finance for publications.⁷⁴ In 1905, of 53 BSG TC translators, 7 were Chuvash village priests as well as the Chuvash specialists N.V. Nikol'skii and N.I. Ashmarin, and a further 10 translators were students of the Missionary Courses.⁷⁵ Nikol'skii's personal archives for these years contain many translations done by his KMC students. In March 1908 they translated St Matthew's Gospel and the Service to St John the Theologian, and in November 1915 the Service to a Single Martyr.⁷⁶ There were many translations of the *Troitskiye Knizhki*, tiny pocket booklets aimed at the ordinary people published by the Trinity St Sergius Lavra with titles such as *A kind word to trading people*, *What adorns youth?*, *The Last Judgment* and *Metropolitan Ioann of Tobolsk* being translated in 1917. Further translations included *Extracts from St Tikhon of Zadonsk* and *The sowing of lucerne and the usefulness of this plant to agriculture*.⁷⁷

In September 1905 a conference of BSG TC co-workers affirmed Il'minskii's principles, approved the publishing of secular books on topics such as agriculture, medicine and history, and

⁷³ Khuzangai, Samsonova 1990, 6, 8, 46, 63, 54

⁷⁴ BSG TC Otchet 1905, 8; 1906, 2; 1908-9, 3

⁷⁵ Ibid. 1905, 4-5

⁷⁶ NA CGIGN Otd. 1, t.163, l.29-30, 132-152; t.287, l.199-203

⁷⁷ Ibid. t.287, l.163-272

proposed setting up a newspaper or journal devoted to the cause of native enlightenment.⁷⁸ At least two publications arose out of this last proposal which made a significant contribution to the development of Chuvash as a literary language, and of a highly articulate Chuvash intelligentsia. One was the journal BSG Co-worker which, as seen above, became a platform for issues of mission and church reform, and to which Chuvash priests made a striking contribution. The more significant publication from the point of view of the development of the Chuvash language, was the first Chuvash-language newspaper *Khypar* (News) which Nikol'skii edited after receiving permission from the Governor of Kazan on 5th January 1906 to publish a weekly Chuvash newspaper providing information about government decrees, contemporary events, the Russian and foreign states, agriculture, trade, schools, translated and original stories and book reviews.⁷⁹ Nikol'skii's model was the Chuvash calendars he produced annually from 1903-14 for the BSG TC. They contained information about Christian feast days, health, schools and books, the latest innovations in agricultural practice and technology, geography, physics and astronomy. The first issues of *Khypar* were prepared together with the 1906 calendar which explained the work of the Zemstvos.⁸⁰

As the newspaper arose in the context of the BSG TC, among its most fervent advocates initially were the co-worker Chuvash priests and teachers, and all those who had passed through SCTS and KTS, including Frs A. Rekeev, A. Petrov and D. Filimonov.⁸¹ Of 40 printed labels used to distribute early issues, 12 are addressed to priests, 2 to deacons, and 3 to parish *popechitel'stva* or Temperance societies, showing how the newspaper arose very much in the context of the Il'minskii movement. In a letter of 23rd January 1906 the Chuvash priest Sergei Vasiliev wrote to Iakovlev concerning the 1905 upheavals at SCTS

⁷⁸ Ibid. I.43

⁷⁹ Leont'ev 2011, 26

⁸⁰ Ibid. 29-31

⁸¹ Ibid. 25

But every cloud has a silver lining. Everyone here is in raptures over the Chuvash newspaper. Glory and honour to the initiators! Now we feel that even we are considered to be people. Oh, if only Nikolai Ivanovich [Il`minskii] and other leaders of native education could see this. Bless and support, Lord, this good deed! The publishers must be careful so that it is not closed down.⁸²

Fr Sergei would have been particularly referring to the first issue of the newspaper which contained an article about Il`minskii on its first page, together with articles about Witte, the October 17th Manifesto, and monasteries.⁸³ It was only after June 1906 that the newspaper fell into the hands of the SRs and the content acquired a strongly anti-ecclesial and anti-government tone which it continued until being closed down in June 1907.⁸⁴

Original Chuvash compositions

A notable feature of the first decade of the 20th century was that Chuvash priests began to write their own original compositions. In a letter to Nikol`skii of December 1908, shortly after becoming priest at Maloe Karachkino in Iadrin district, Fr Mikhail Petrov wrote ‘I am holding talks [catechetical talks for adults] on Sundays (...) I talked about the harm of smoking and drunkenness using Fr Kuzmin’s book. How delightful his sermons are, simple, speaking to the heart and entirely permeated with a spirit of love towards the ignorant, dwarf-people. Well done, Fr Nikolai.’⁸⁵ In a further letter of April 1913 Petrov continued ‘It is good that you have rewarded Fr Kuzmin and others. They are worthy of reward (...) and that through sympathy and support you encourage them. It is good (...) as that is what [Il`minskii] did.’⁸⁶

Petrov continued to improve his own translations started at SCTS as well as writing his own texts. In December 1908 he wrote to Nikol`skii ‘I am reading my own translations. I have begun to translate the Irmologion, and am correcting and compiling the priests’ Service Book on

⁸² GIA CR f.207, op.1, d.441, l.128

⁸³ Khypar No.1, 8th January 1906

⁸⁴ Leont`ev 2011, 634

⁸⁵ NA CGIGN Otd. 1, t.163, l.256

⁸⁶ Ibid. t.239, l.315

the model of the Slavonic. (...) Vespers is ready, as are Mattins and the Liturgy, only the Menaion is not. (...) What will you say about the Service Book? It would be good to put it through the BSG Council and the (Translation) Committee Council at a joint session.⁸⁷

By April 1913 conflicts were arising over different versions of liturgical texts produced in Kazan and Simbirsk. Petrov asked Nikol'skii to send him all the service books published in Kazan for comparison with the Simbirsk books, and asked who the translators were who were sending reports about arbitrary variant readings and mistakes in the Chuvash liturgical books.⁸⁸ He sent with this letter notes he had compiled for a Chuvash *Sacred History* to see if Nikol'skii liked them, and in a further letter wrote 'Your response to my notes for a Sacred History consoles me. I have the idea of publishing them as textbooks for elementary and Two-class native schools. It is difficult and slow to write them. I am writing them gradually. All the existing textbooks are no use for the Chuvash.'⁸⁹

Another young Chuvash priest beginning to write and publish his own sermons at this time was Fr Grigorii Kokel'. After studying at SCTS in the 1890s, Fr Grigorii served as teacher and reader in Buinsk district, then studied at the Kazan Missionary Courses from 1907-9 before being ordained priest in the Simbirsk diocese in July 1909.⁹⁰ While studying in Kazan Fr Grigorii was a BSG TC co-worker and three titles *A conversation between a Christian and a Muslim*, *Life in heaven and life on earth* and *Against foul language* were published at his own expense in 1908. A further edition of 1200 copies of two of these titles is described as *Talks with parishioners by Fr G.A. Kokel'* in the 1911-12 BSG TC Report.⁹¹

An interesting feature of Nikol'skii's archive is that it contains a translation into Chuvash of the theologian and naturalist Henry Drummond's 1894 publication *The Greatest Thing in the*

⁸⁷ Ibid. t.163, l.257

⁸⁸ Ibid. t.238, l.565-7

⁸⁹ Ibid. t.239, l.313-315

⁹⁰ Kliuchnikov 2009, 124-5

⁹¹ BSG TC Otchet 1908-9, 6, 1911-12, 9

World,⁹² done in Mal'ye Ial'chiki, Buinsk district in June 1903. The personal library of Fr Mikhail Petrov, working on translations with Iakovlev at SCTS from 1903, also contains Russian translations of Henry Drummond's *Evolution and the progress of man*, the American psychologist William James' 1896 address *The Will to Believe*,⁹³ published in St Petersburg in 1904, and a book about the Scottish preacher Edward Irving⁹⁴ and his followers, the Irvingites, who founded a Catholic Apostolic Church with its own 'apostles', one of whom was Henry Drummond.⁹⁵ The 1903 translation into Chuvash of Henry Drummond suggests that these books could have come into Petrov's possession before he left his position as priest, teacher and translator at SCTS in the wake of the 1907 revolutionary events. The texts, discussing from a Protestant viewpoint the relationship of faith, science and reason, and the nature of the church, reveal Petrov's inquiring, freethinking mind, and may have been a factor in the difficult relationship between Iakovlev and Petrov. Apart from possibly indicating that the Scottish BFBS agent William Kean had more influence than just scriptural publications, the books show the kind of issues Chuvash teachers and priests discussed as they were involved in scriptural translation and Christian preaching on the eve of the 1905-7 events.

N.I. Ashmarin (1870-1933) and his *Dictionary of the Chuvash Language*

A monumental text in the history of Chuvash philological and ethnographic scholarship, and of Turkic scholarship as a whole, N.I. Ashmarin's *Dictionary of the Chuvash Language*, also emerged out of the Kazan-based Chuvash translation community at this time. The first two volumes were published in Kazan in 1910-12,⁹⁶ and then in its final form it was published in 17 volumes between 1928 and 1958.⁹⁷

⁹² Henry Drummond, a Scottish missionary and scientist, sought to reconcile the Bible with the natural sciences.

⁹³ An 1896 address to Yale and Brown universities defending the right to believe even if the logical intellect was not convinced.

⁹⁴ Edward Irving was a Scottish preacher whose followers, the Irvingites, tried to restore the apostolic church with the five ministries of Ephesians 4 v.11, and drew on Catholic and Orthodox liturgical rites.

⁹⁵ CNM 16865/12, 16865/2, 16865/5

⁹⁶ Ashmarin 1910-1912

⁹⁷ See Ashmarin 1930, 1934

Ashmarin grew up in a Russian family in Kurmysh where he learnt Chuvash words from his Chuvash grandmother and came into contact with Chuvash from villages near the town. After graduating from Moscow Lazarevskii Institute of Oriental Languages in 1894, he became a teacher at KCBTS from 1895-99, then at KTS until 1919.⁹⁸ In 1899 he published his first *Programme for the compiling of a Chuvash dictionary*⁹⁹ which was distributed among Chuvash teachers and pupils in many areas. One of Ashmarin's archival files containing Chuvash stories, songs and sayings is largely the exercise books from the SCTS Girls' School in 1900.¹⁰⁰ In Ashmarin's Latin preface to the first 1910 edition of the Dictionary which he initially conceived as a Chuvash-Russian-Latin dictionary, he wrote of his attempt to 'depict the very life and customs of the people (...) for the language of each particular people is connected in the closest way with all its customs and regulations.'¹⁰¹ The usage of words, including many terms connected with the rites of the Old Chuvash Faith, is illustrated by phrases and ethnographical information from named villages.¹⁰²

Ashmarin's knowledge of Latin, Greek, Arabic, Persian, Ottoman Turkish, as well as Tatar and Chuvash, meant he played a leading role in the editing and censorship of translations. In August 1899 Iakovlev sent him the recently published Chuvash Four Gospels which he asked Ashmarin to compare with the Greek text and make comments, and in June 1904 Iakovlev hoped to see Ashmarin in Kazan at a critical moment in publishing the Pauline epistles.¹⁰³ He is described in the 1905 and 1906 BSG TC Reports as a co-worker, specialist in Chuvash and other Ural-Altaic languages,¹⁰⁴ and he was also the censor of the Chuvash newspaper *Khypar*. Leont`ev credits

⁹⁸ See Ashmarin 2012, 138-9

⁹⁹ Ashmarin 1899

¹⁰⁰ NA CGIGN Otd. 1, t.25, Inv. 2248-2422

¹⁰¹ Quoted in Ashmarin 2012, 141

¹⁰² See for example "Virem" in Ashmarin 1994, Vol.5, 240-241 and "Kalam" in Ibid. Vol.6, 37-38

¹⁰³ Iakovlev 1889, 153, 188

¹⁰⁴ BSG TC Otchet 1905, 4 and 1906, 2

him with the leniency which meant the newspaper survived until 1907 despite its frequently critical political content.¹⁰⁵

The Samara Translation Sub-Committee

We have seen above how the 1899 conference on native education was held in the Samara diocese under the chairmanship of Bishop Gurii who was the most active supporter among the bishops of native ordinations and the native cause in general. This would appear to have been a major reason for the transfer of some of the BSG TC's work to Samara at a time when the Kazan Committee was under attack.¹⁰⁶ In the 1890s Fr Anton Ivanov of Samara diocese had actively collaborated with Iakovlev over translations, and Fr A. Mikhailov had translated Bishop Gurii's *Teaching on the true faith* into Chuvash in 1896.¹⁰⁷ After N.Bobrovnikov's letter to Bishop Gurii of 22nd June 1900 suggesting the creation of a BSG TC Samara Sub-committee, seven Chuvash priests met under Filimonov's chairmanship on 4th October 1900, the feast day of Sts Gurii and Varsanofii of Kazan. As the Scriptures and liturgical books had largely been published by Iakovlev in Simbirsk, the Samara translators felt the Lives of the Saints were most needed by the Samara Chuvash who lived among Muslims who had plenty of edifying stories published, whereas the Christian Chuvash had few stories of their own to tell.¹⁰⁸

Bishop Gurii's very active involvement in the Sub-committee is evident from the reports, and at the next conference of six translator priests on 4th February 1903 he lamented the lack of translations as he wanted to open missionary libraries in parishes but there were no books. He was also concerned to publish Chuvash liturgical books in Samara as the Kazan BSG TC was not satisfying the need due to its lack of funds.¹⁰⁹ The priests resolved to translate a further 42 lives of saints by the beginning of 1904 and this led to the number of translators rising in 1904 to 42

¹⁰⁵ Leont'ev 2011, 48-51

¹⁰⁶ NA CGIGN Otd.1, t.246, l.109v; GIA CR f.350, op.1, d.1, l.101

¹⁰⁷ NA CGIGN Ibid. l.107

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. l.111

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. l.113

of whom 37 were Chuvash, 3 Tatar and 2 Udmurt, and by 1911 to 48.¹¹⁰ The translators worked, however, on Il'minskii's collective translation principle, drawing in school pupils and parishioners. In a letter of February 1904 Filimonov wrote 'I read the lives of the apostles translated by the pupils of Stiukhino Two-class school with great pleasure, and am exceedingly glad that Fr Mikhailov gives his pupils practice in the translator's task.'¹¹¹

The collective aspect of the translation process was also expressed in the frequent conferences of translator missionary priests. 31 priests met again in September 1905 when they resolved to translate sermons for Sundays, Feast days and Lent.¹¹² At a further conference in June 1906 it was decided to set up an Editorial Committee of six priests including Filimonov, Fr A. Mikhailov and Fr Konstantin Prokop'ev.¹¹³ The lack of funds to finance publishing meant that the priests translated without remuneration, and in 1906 even imposed an annual levy on themselves of 6 roubles from priests, 4 roubles from deacons and 2 roubles from readers. Although 1345 roubles were raised in this way between 1907 and 1911, the levy was found burdensome and was halved at a conference in May 1911.¹¹⁴ A July 1909 conference stressed the need for translations of agricultural, medical and historical texts.¹¹⁵ Between 1900 and 1911 the Sub-committee published 93 titles, 85 in Chuvash, 10 in Votyak and 1 in Tatar, with 183,500 copies printed in total.¹¹⁶

The great output and energy of the Samara translator missionaries and their frequent conferences were undoubtedly spurred on by Filimonov's leadership and vision for unifying all into the common native cause. This is particularly evident in his letter to Nikol'skii of 18th March 1909, the day after he had heard that the Kazan Missionary Conference had been indefinitely postponed. 'And I had hoped soon to see good people at the conference and hear from them

¹¹⁰ GIA CR f.350 op.1, d.1, l.105, 121

¹¹¹ Ibid. d.2, l.121

¹¹² NA CGIGN Ibid. l.116

¹¹³ Ibid. l.120

¹¹⁴ Ibid. l.118-119; GIA CR f.350 op.1, d.1, l.29

¹¹⁵ GIA CR Ibid. l.109

¹¹⁶ Ibid. l.112-118

much that is useful, good and encouraging. My hopes are now dashed.' The letter reveals that, motivated by his passionate awareness of how not enough was being done to work together for the cause of Chuvash enlightenment, he had thought of setting up a separate Brotherhood of St Nicholas in Samara in 1906. He comments on the lack of interest in Nikol'skii's ethnographic and historical work that this is

one of the sad aspects of our life. Its cause, it seems, is that we are locked into our petty, personal interests, are apathetic to the interests of our common cause and lack solidarity. Three years ago I thought of writing a passionate appeal to all the Chuvash of Europe and Asia about the need for an aware and zealous attitude to the cause of enlightening our native people.¹¹⁷

Bitterly frustrated that the Kazan Missionary Conference would not provide a forum for such solidarity, Filimonov consoled himself by asking Fr A.Ivanov to organize a gathering of the Samara native clergy, and looked forward to pedagogical courses for Chuvash teachers and a Translators' conference in summer 1909.

So the *s'ezdy* of missionary teachers, clergy and translators obviously fulfilled the need for consultation on many matters beyond that of organizing missionary work. This is clear from Fr A.Ivanov's 1906 article in TOZh in which he explained how *s'ezdy* of missionary priests were an important example of conciliarity for the All-Russian Council.¹¹⁸ Filimonov tells us that the thought of having national bishops was expressed for the first time by the native teachers and clergy of Samara diocese at the missionary *s'ezd* in Shentalo, Samara province in July 1909,¹¹⁹ an indication that with the postponement of the Kazan Conference, the local *s'ezd* was used to air issues they had hoped to see raised in Kazan.

We see then that translation and publishing activity in the Chuvash language in Simbirsk, Kazan and Samara, not only led to increasing Chuvash national consciousness through the development

¹¹⁷ NA CGIGN otd.1, t.166, l.249-252

¹¹⁸ Ivanov A. TOZh No. 14 (24.3.1906), 514-5

¹¹⁹ GIA CR f.784, op. d.92, l. 109

of the Chuvash language itself and the accompanying awakening of interest in Chuvash history, ethnography, poetry and prose, but the very organization of this publishing activity at gatherings of the Chuvash intelligentsia provided the forum for discussing issues of national self-government, at least within the church. It is not surprising then that with the coming of the revolution, these *s'ezdy* continued in the form of a Chuvash national movement in the context of which demands for political and ecclesial autonomy were made, and that N.V.Nikol'skii and Fr D.Filimonov, leaders of translation and publishing activity, became leaders in this movement.

The events of 1917-1918 and their aftermath

The long-awaited All-Russian Church Council eventually opened on 15th August 1917. Over the summer of 1917 Bishop Andrei was chairman of the 5th section of the Pre-Council Consultation, devoted to the parish. The 6th section, devoted to liturgical questions, discussed the issue of liturgical languages other than Slavonic. Bishop Andrei pointed to the religious zeal of the Baptised Tatars 'which can be explained by the fact they have some liturgical books in Tatar, and he added that when the Liturgy was understood, it led sectarians to return [to the Church].'¹²⁰ The section approved the liturgical use of Russian and Ukrainian although considered that the speedy replacement of Slavonic was undesirable and impracticable.¹²¹

Running parallel to the Moscow Council, and true to the Il'minskii movement's emphasis on *s'ezdy*, the Volga native peoples held their own gatherings at which they discussed issues of church and state reform relevant to themselves. On 23rd April 1917 a group of 35 Chuvash priests, teachers and officers met under Filimonov's chairmanship in Bugul'ma, Samara province, with the intention of opening a branch of the Chuvash National Society (CNS) which had already formed in Simbirsk and Ufa. The aim was 'the involvement of the Chuvash in the cultural, economic and political life of the country.' They also proposed a Chuvash newspaper to

¹²⁰ Ibid. Vol.1, 629

¹²¹ Ibid. Vol.1, 631

which all 30 Samara Chuvash priest-translators would contribute.¹²² On 12th July the Bugul'ma CNS sent out a letter asking that in each Chuvash village a committee should be formed to unite the forces of the local Chuvash intelligentsia and people 'to work together in defence of national interests under the new government of Russia's free regime.'¹²³

Alongside these first efforts to defend the national interests of the Chuvash, a broader Union of the Volga Minority Peoples (UVMP) held its first congress in March 1917, at N.V.Nikol'skii's initiative, to put forward candidates for the Constituent Assembly. According to its Statute of 3rd August 1917, it aimed to defend the interests of national minorities, achieve national self-determination, a national literature and native-language education, and self-government in the localities adapted to the national culture. Its aims for the church were in line with the maximalist view of church reform, a church separate from the state, autonomous parish communities, elected priests and bishops, national dioceses with a national bishop.¹²⁴ Iakovlev was very sceptical about these national congresses, describing the UVMP's Statute as 'fantasy (...) ridiculous both in substance and details.'¹²⁵ Iakovlev's negative attitude to Nikol'skii only affirmed the picture of him as a reactionary among those supporting the Chuvash national cause and Nikol'skii's activities.

Despite Iakovlev's opinion that the CNS congresses were being used by his enemies to obtain his dismissal, he nevertheless played a prominent role in organizing the June 1917 congress in Simbirsk¹²⁶ at which Filimonov drew up the agenda for the section on the Church. It resolved that in areas with a compact Chuvash population there should be Chuvash bishops of separate dioceses, whereas in dioceses with more than 50,000 Chuvash there should be a vicar bishop, and in dioceses with less than 50,000, the Chuvash should have special representatives of clergy and laity. They also requested that in Chuvash parishes there should be Chuvash or Russian

¹²² Ibid. otd. 2, t.246, l.45

¹²³ NA CGIGN otd.2, t.246, l.83

¹²⁴ Ibid. otd. 1, t.288, l.36-37

¹²⁵ Iakovlev 1997, 571

¹²⁶ Ibid. 570-571

priests with perfect knowledge of Chuvash, and Chuvash clergy and laity should be represented in diocesan and district councils.¹²⁷ These resolutions were sent to the Samara diocesan representative at the All-Russian Church Council, together with a letter of 2nd August in which the participants of the Simbirsk congress asked him to present their resolutions to the Moscow Council which they assured 'that Orthodox Chuvash remain in complete union and filial submission to All-Russian Orthodoxy on all dogmatic and church hierarchical questions.'¹²⁸ Eventually the Chuvash Gurii Komissarov attended the Council and, together with Bishop Andrei, they raised the issue of a Chuvash diocese which did not, however, find sympathy among the Council members.¹²⁹ At the 2nd UVMP congress in Kazan in August 1917, however, Fr Konstantin Prokop`ev was proposed as bishop of a Tsivil`sk diocese, and Fr Daniil Filimonov as bishop of a Iadrin diocese.¹³⁰

Iakovlev's moderation led to efforts to remove him as Director of SCTS at a further CNS congress on 28-29 September 1917 in Kazan. SCTS pupils, in a speech to the congress, complained that Iakovlev's old age and inactivity meant the facilities and curriculum had declined, while he gave all his attention to the farm where pupils were exploited and worked in unhygienic conditions.¹³¹ Filimonov defended Iakovlev saying the pupils' speech was a disgrace for the entire Chuvash people.

Iakovlev was the first and only person to bring light to the Chuvash. The worth or lack of worth of his activities at SCTS, and in general for the education of the Chuvash, is testified to by all he has done to awaken the Chuvash to self-aware, intellectual life.¹³²

Attempts were made to restore relations between the CNS and Iakovlev and he even attended the 4th congress in May 1918 when he received a standing ovation.¹³³ With the beginning of the

¹²⁷ NA CGIGN otd.2, t.246, 47 & 51

¹²⁸ Ibid. l. 41

¹²⁹ GIA CR f.784, op.1, d.92, l.112

¹³⁰ Iakovlev 1997, 593. GIA CR f.784, op.1, d.92, l.109

¹³¹ GIA CR f.350, op.1, d.1, l.394-396

¹³² Ibid. l.389v.

Soviet government, however, his position at SCTS became intolerable and on 19th April 1918 he was dismissed by the Simbirsk Commissariat of People's Education.¹³⁴

The Chuvash intelligentsia continued to meet and discuss the issues that concerned them until May 1918 when three congresses were held in parallel.¹³⁵ At a Congress of Clergy and Laity, Filimonov spoke on the organization of parish life and the religious and moral education of the people, Fr M.Petrov on the publication of the Bible and liturgical books in Chuvash, Fr K. Prokop`ev on Chuvash church educational institutions, N.V.Nikol'skii on the organization of Chuvash clergy, Fr N.Kuzmin on the development of the co-operative movement, and V.E.Egorov on the formation of a Chuvash diocese.¹³⁶ At a Teachers' Congress, Nikol'skii spoke on teaching in the Chuvash language and on pre-school education, Filimonov on religious instruction, and G.F.Aliunov on teachers as the political educators of the people. At a Students' Congress, Fr M. Petrov spoke on the history of missionary work among the Chuvash, Nikol'skii on Chuvash history and ethnography, N.I.Ashmarin on Chuvash geography and language and G.F.Aliunov on the training of students for social and political activity.¹³⁷ Nikol'skii's lecture emphasized that each people has its own laws of development and so the Chuvash people themselves are guardians of their own history and all educated Chuvash must energetically collect examples of the people's creativity.¹³⁸ That this did not involve rejecting the Christian experience of the last 50 years is seen in the resolutions concerning musical ethnography of the 3rd UVMP congress, also held in May 1918. While emphasizing the need to preserve the Chuvash ancient musical heritage as 'each people has its own distinctive music and singing which reflect the national soul' they strongly promoted the experience of church choral singing

¹³³ Iakovlev 1997, 574

¹³⁴ GIA CR f.515, op.1, d.401, l.6-13

¹³⁵ GIA CR f.350, op.1, d.2, l.5, 29-30

¹³⁶ Ibid. l.5

¹³⁷ NA CGIGN otd. 1, f.288, l.221

¹³⁸ Ibid. l.248

among the Chuvash, and village Music and Singing Circles were to organize church choir directors' courses and conferences.¹³⁹

Further attempts by N.Bobrovnikov and Iakovlev during 1919-1920 to petition Patriarch Tikhon concerning a Chuvash national diocese and bishop met with no success,¹⁴⁰ and the start of the Civil War and persecution of Orthodox clergy from 1918 led to the scattering of the Chuvash intelligentsia. In September 1918 Fr D.Filimonov left for Ufa province then fled to the Altai. He was eventually arrested in February 1920 and imprisoned for over 4 months. After his release he was sent back to Kazan from where he returned to find his house in a state of ruin in August 1920.¹⁴¹ Fr Anton Ivanov saw his post as supervisor of church schools abolished in April 1918 and after two months in prison became priest in Bugul'ma. When he wrote to Filimonov in September 1923, he had been in prison three times, during which period all his brothers and sisters had died of starvation along with 50 others in his home village.¹⁴²

A different although equally testing fate awaited Fr Grigorii Kokel' who had studied on the Kazan Missionary Courses from 1907-1909, after which he became a very active missionary priest in Chuvash parishes in Kurmysh and Buinsk districts, publishing his own missionary brochures.¹⁴³ After the death of his wife, Kokel' moved to Petrograd in August 1921 to study at a Theological Institute set up by professors of the closed Academy. In July 1922 he informed Nikol'skii of his successful completion of the first year, and asked for his opinion of the Renovationist movement which had begun to emerge in Petrograd among the progressive clergy. That Kokel' sympathized with their cause at this time, and especially their offer to fulfil Chuvash desires for their own diocese and bishop, is evident from his letter.

¹³⁹ Nikol'skii 2008 Vol.3, 301

¹⁴⁰ GIA CR f.784, op.1, d.92, l.112-113

¹⁴¹ Aleksandrov 2002, 97-99

¹⁴² GIA CR f.350, op.1, d.12, l.51 See the photos of the ghastly effects of famine in Samara province in 1921 in Figes 1997, opposite 768.

¹⁴³ NA CGIGN otd.1, t.279, l.223 See also Kliuchnikov 2009, 126

The opportunity has arisen for us Chuvash to have a bishop from among the Chuvash. I have received a proposal from the initiators of this movement but the question is not decided yet. (...) It is a favourable opportunity for the Chuvash to receive not only a bishop, but also autocephaly (...) Only now three Chuvash bishops must definitely be appointed, otherwise it will be difficult for one (bishop) to fight the Russian hegemony. I can foresee that even now the Russians will not refrain from the habit of ruling over the natives.¹⁴⁴

However, by the time of Kokel's next letter, sent in June 1924 when he had just finished Theological Institute, his views and situation had changed significantly.

The Holy Patriarch is sending me to Bishop Afanasii of Cheboksary who will tonsure me as a monastic (...) My future post will become clearer in Kazan where I will be at the beginning of August. The Patriarch mentioned the Chuvash Bishop Timofei. I am greatly surprised – what led to him going over to the Reds? (...) Such a disgrace for the Chuvash. The Patriarch said that he considers him apostate. (...) It's sad! As now the time has come when we Chuvash could obtain a separate diocese in a legal manner. (...) I cannot, of course, participate in the unruly mob of the Renovationists. I have been at all their meetings and know all the details of their illegal affair. When you go to the churches where Renovationists serve, you find no peace as you feel that Christ is not there. Everything is self-willed and you only hear disputes and accusations of the Patriarch.¹⁴⁵

In a final letter of 22nd December 1924 from Ibresi, Kokel informed Nikol'skii that

By God's grace, I am bishop of the Chuvash region (*oblast*).¹⁴⁶

Kokel used the term Chuvash *oblast* as on 24th June 1920 Lenin's government had created an autonomous Chuvash region out of the compact Chuvash districts. The Chuvash Republic was formed on 21st April 1925 after the addition of part of the Ulianovsk province.¹⁴⁷ As Kokel's correspondence makes clear, Bishop German was not the only Chuvash bishop in this

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. t.320, l.153

¹⁴⁵ NA CGIGN otd. 1, t.290, l.60a

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. l.60b. See also Gubonin 1994, 969; Today Grigorii Kokel is New Martyr Bishop German of Alatyř

¹⁴⁷ Ivanov V.P. 2005, 201-204, 211

autonomous region in December 1924. We have seen how the more progressive wing of the church reform movement, out of which the Renovationist movement emerged, was supported by many Chuvash in the wake of 1905. By the end of 1922, many of the Chuvash clergy supported the Renovationists at a time when they controlled 66% of parishes across the country, including all churches in St Petersburg and all but four of Moscow's 400 churches.¹⁴⁸ On 22nd April 1923, just before the first Renovationist Sobor, Fr Viktor Zaikov was appointed Bishop Timofei of Tsivil'sk.¹⁴⁹ By summer 1923, about half the parishes in the Chuvash region were in the hands of Renovationist clergy.¹⁵⁰ Filimonov was appointed Bishop of Cheboksary on 19th January 1924¹⁵¹ and on 14th March 1924 the Renovationist Synod gave its blessing to a Chuvash national diocese.¹⁵²

By the end of 1924, Renovationist parishes across Russia as a whole had declined, with 30,000 parishes held by the patriarchal church and 14,000 by the Renovationists.¹⁵³ It was at this time that German Kokel' was appointed Bishop of Ibresi and entrusted by the Patriarch with the task of drawing the Chuvash back to the patriarchal church.¹⁵⁴ In the early months of 1925 Bishop German travelled around Chuvash parishes exhorting the Chuvash to remain faithful to Patriarch Tikhon and ordaining priests to replace Renovationists. On 6th May 1925 German was forced by the Chuvash OGPU to renounce administrative rights over the parishes of the Chuvash region, and on 20th August he was charged with spreading provocative rumours and claiming false administrative functions. In the following months he was at times imprisoned, at times confined to his residence in Alatyr' until in August 1926 he was sent to Bugulma, where he continued as bishop until 1927.¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁸ Pospelovsky 1998, 240

¹⁴⁹ Gubonin 1994, 994

¹⁵⁰ Braslavskii 1995, 139

¹⁵¹ Aleksandrov 2002, 102

¹⁵² GIA CR f.784, op.1, d.92, l. 111, 114

¹⁵³ Pospelovsky 1998, 240

¹⁵⁴ Kliuchnikov 2009, 130

¹⁵⁵ Gubonin 1994, 969; Kliuchnikov 2009, 130-134

Nevertheless, the tide had already turned in favour of the Tikhonites. A letter of 11th January 1926 from the Chuvash NKVD to the central Moscow NKVD, reveals that the situation of Tikhonite communities who wanted to reinstate their priests, but had no building or church plate, was a common problem.

There is much conflict between the Renovationists and the old-church Tikhonites. The latter frequently separate themselves as whole villages from their Renovationist parish churches and, forming special groups, petition the NKVD of the AChSSR to register them in religious communities separate from the Renovationists, but they do not have their own building for prayer nor objects needed for worship. If these old-church communities which are arising again are registered, then the question arises of where they should gather for prayer etc, if they do not come to a mutual agreement about dividing the church.¹⁵⁶

The Moscow NKVD replied on 19th March 1926 that religious communities could be registered without buildings, in which case they should meet in people's flats or rented buildings.¹⁵⁷ Thus, despite the immense complexities and pressures of the 1926 situation, we see Chuvash priests and parishes still gathering together, articulating their views and seeking to preserve their communities.

It was against this background that on 29th June 1926 Bishop Daniil Filimonov asked the NKVD for permission to read a report *Patriarch or Synod* in the Dormition church, Cheboksary on Sunday 11th July at 2pm. He was granted permission, provided he left out certain undesirable passages which refer to persecution of the church by its enemies, evidence that he, as a Renovationist bishop, was not simply collaborating with the Soviet regime.¹⁵⁸

Filimonov's greatest concern as a missionary and pastor was that that, amidst the current conflicts, the work of the past 50 years was being lost.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. I.46

¹⁵⁷ Ibid I.48

¹⁵⁸ GIA CR f.784, op.1, d.92, I.92-95, 98, 105

Since the higher church authorities in Russia have split into two factions, patriarchal and synodal, we cannot peacefully work in Christ's harvest field in our Chuvash homeland. (...) It is impossible for us to remain in such a state. Much labour has been expended in strengthening Orthodoxy among our native Chuvash people during the last 50 years, but now, owing to dissension and disagreements in the Russian Church, this work has come to a complete standstill. In order to save Orthodoxy among the Chuvash, we must find some positive solution and the quicker the better.¹⁵⁹

Filimonov argues that the Council or Synod has been the hallmark of church government down the centuries, called at crucial moments to resolve controversial issues as

The truth can be known much better by several people than by one, the definitions and decisions of conciliar power are more authoritative than the decisions of a single person, (...) it is more difficult for the strong of this world to influence several people than one person.¹⁶⁰

Filimonov was not, however, supporting a return to the tsarist synodal period which he condemns for its 'abnormalities'. He points to the origins of his ideas when he writes

In 1906-1907, at the Preconciliar Consultation (...) many shortcomings in church life were uncovered. The progressive part of the clergy and church society pointed then to the need for improvement, renewal (obnovlenie) in church order. But for some reason, the then church government postponed this affair.¹⁶¹

Apart from the issue of conciliarity, Filimonov considers the question of mission and stresses that the apostles spread the Gospel without state support and in local languages, leaving behind local bishops who were later ordained local priests and deacons, a model for later autocephalies.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. I.95

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. I.103, 96-100

¹⁶¹ Ibid. 105

¹⁶² Ibid. I.96, 104

The universal church acknowledged the right to an autocephalous church of each Orthodox people which, in accordance with its national development and the conditions of its political life, proved capable of independent church government.¹⁶³

Filimonov therefore laments that in the wake of 1917 the Church is in complete chaos. Instead of governing the Church together with the Synod, since 1922 Tikhon has acted on his own like the Roman Pope, has continued the Church's entanglement in politics by preaching opposition to the Soviet government, and this has led to schism.¹⁶⁴ He describes the many attempts to petition Tikhon concerning a Chuvash bishop but considers they fell on deaf ears, and Tikhon has thus 'extinguished the national aspirations of the Chuvash'.¹⁶⁵ He admits that the energetic activity of Bishop German has drawn many Chuvash to the side of Patriarch Tikhon and thus the Chuvash diocese has begun to break up.¹⁶⁶

It is very difficult to get across to some priests and laity that the time has come to unify Chuvash interests so that they can show their face among other nations and feel equal, not only to the Cheremys and Mordva, but equal to the Englishman, the Frenchman and other educated Christian nations of the world.¹⁶⁷

He concludes with a call for the Tikhonite and Synodal factions to be reconciled if the Church is not to be split into a myriad of hostile doctrines, and stresses the necessity of calling a diocesan *s'ezd* of clergy and laity to discuss and resolve all the issues he has raised, thus continuing a constant theme of Filimonov's texts since 1907.¹⁶⁸ What is striking about Filimonov's text is that, while it is a response to the particular events of 1925-1926, it continues almost seamlessly the concerns and proposals of his pre-revolutionary texts. It should not therefore be read as that of a Renovationist who had embraced heretical ideas and gone over to the Reds in the wake of 1917, but rather someone who had deeply imbibed many of the issues of the reform movement

¹⁶³ Ibid. I.105

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. I.107

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. I.113-114

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. I.112

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. I.113

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. I.114-115

leading to the 1917-1918 Church Council, partly due to their similarity with Il'minskii's concerns, and partly as they were the concerns of a large section of the Russian Church, including the Volga-Kama bishops with whom he collaborated.

Filimonov's *Patriarch or Synod* is one in a series of texts beginning, as we have seen above, at the turn of the 20th century, in which Chuvash intelligentsia reflected on their history, especially their experience of Russian missionary work, and sought to voice their identity in the context of the Russian church and state. In the last part of this chapter we shall consider some further texts written after 1910 which specifically discuss and conceptualize the impact of Russian culture and Christianization on Chuvash culture.

Evaluating history: Church, mission and nation

It was in the self-critical climate of the 1910 Kazan Missionary Conference that the first scholarly monographs on the history and ethnography of the Chuvash were written by the men today considered the Chuvash people's first professional historians and ethnographers, N.V. Nikol'skii and G.I. Komissarov. In 1905 Nikol'skii began collecting material for a Master's dissertation published in 1912 as *Christianity among the Chuvash of the Middle Volga in the 16th-18th centuries. A historical essay*.¹⁶⁹ In 1908 his lectures on ethnography at the Kazan Missionary Courses were published as *Short Notes on the ethnography of the Chuvash*,¹⁷⁰ with further expanded ethnographical works in 1919 and 1928.¹⁷¹

Nikol'skii's Master's dissertation lists the many reasons for the failure of pre-19th century Orthodox missionary work among the Chuvash, condemning ignorance of the Chuvash language, the immoral lifestyles and arrogance of Russian clergy, peasantry and government officials, the monasteries' abuse of land rights, and the baptized Chuvash loss of their language

¹⁶⁹ Nikol'skii 1912

¹⁷⁰ Nikol'skii 1908

¹⁷¹ See Nikol'ski 2004 Vol. 1, 33 and 106

and culture.¹⁷² Yet despite Nikol'skii's condemnation of missionary work among the Chuvash, and his concern for the Chuvash language and traditional lifestyle, he does not draw the conclusion that the Chuvash should have been left untouched by the missionaries. He gives examples from the 18th century of Chuvash who willingly went to church and sought the help of a priest, who joined a monastery, and who visited the saintly monk Vasilisk in the forest.¹⁷³ That Nikol'skii's work arose out of teaching Chuvash clergy is evident from his stress on the first feeble attempts in the 18th century to educate Chuvash clergy and use native-language prayers, and the scornful attitude to pre-Christian beliefs which meant graduates of the 18th century schools for baptized natives became just like Russian government officials and clergy 'entirely useless or of little use for native education on Orthodox Christian religious and moral principles.'¹⁷⁴ Nikol'skii's closing sentence is 'Such was the legacy the 18th century bequeathed to the 19th.'¹⁷⁵ We finish reading his text feeling that, rather than simply writing off missionary work, it is intended to be a preliminary to what he really wants to say about the good missionary methodology that emerged in the 19th century under Il'minskii, and that was threatened at the time Nikol'skii wrote.

Gurii Komissarov graduated from SCTS in 1903 and studied at the Kazan Theological Academy from 1908-1913, during which time he conducted research into Chuvash ethnography which he summarizes in *Chuvash of the Kazan Trans-Volga*,¹⁷⁶ originally delivered as a lecture in February 1910. He describes in detail the costume, speech, physical appearance, character, beliefs, rites, music, poetry and applied art of the three main Chuvash sub-groups. Like Nikol'skii, he is very critical of pre-19th century missionary work which led to the Chuvash seeing the school as 'a place for torturing children' while the word 'pupil' was a swear word

¹⁷² Nikol'skii 1912, 36,50-53,59-60

¹⁷³ Ibid. 175

¹⁷⁴ Ibid. 185-186, 183

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. 192

¹⁷⁶ Komissarov 1911

equivalent to 'convict'.¹⁷⁷ It was only after Il'minskii introduced use of the native language by native speakers that 'a new era in the history of Chuvash education' began, and Komissarov writes positively of Iakovlev and SCTS, Il'minskii and KTS as providing the many native schools with native teachers. He acknowledges the valuable role of the Kazan Missionary Courses and monasteries and concludes that in some parishes the Chuvash 'stand higher than Russians in the religious respect.'¹⁷⁸ As a result of Il'minskii 'at the present time they are living through a phase of cultural rebirth.'¹⁷⁹

Both men emphasized the role of Il'minskii's disciples in collecting ethnographic material. Nikol'skii refers to the rich material collected over 40 years at SCTS, his own 72 volumes, Ashmarin's 100 volumes, Bishop Andrei's ethnographic photo album, and the detailed material collected by the Chuvash priests A.Ivanov, P.Vasiliev and S.Matfeev.¹⁸⁰ Komissarov adds the priests A.Rekeev and K.Prokop'ev, together with Il'minskii and Sboev.¹⁸¹ As late as 1929 Nikol'skii still considered the priests A.Rekeev and A.Ivanov as among the most prominent ethnographers of the late 19th century.¹⁸² So we see that it was the most zealous missionaries who were also the most zealous ethnographers. This is not surprising as they spoke Chuvash, were close to their parishioners and their lifestyle, were literate and among those most zealously defending the Chuvash language and culture from russification and tartarisation at this time. Rather than the assimilation of the Chuvash into Russian culture, it was in the context of the Il'minskii movement, therefore, that there was the greatest awareness of the need to record and preserve indigenous culture.

Nikol'skii and Komissarov's works present an ambivalent picture of the missionary experience. Their frank criticism of the church's missionary work was undoubtedly encouraged by the self-

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. 404

¹⁷⁸ Ibid. 327, 405-409

¹⁷⁹ Ibid. 327

¹⁸⁰ Nikol'skii 2007 Vol. 2, 138

¹⁸¹ Komissarov 1911, 328

¹⁸² Nikol'skii 2004 Vol. 1, 412

critical post-1905 atmosphere, the influence of the church reform movement and the 1910 Kazan Conference. Nevertheless, both see Il'minskii as having rescued the Chuvash from the past errors of church and state, and Komissarov attributes the current cultural revival among the Chuvash to the educational and religious movement that has arisen out of Il'minskii's work. Several texts of the time help us to see how these Chuvash authors conceptualized this impact of Christianization on Chuvash culture.

In Nikol'skii's *Notes on the history of popular music among the peoples of the Volga* he shows his concern to preserve ancient Chuvash musical traditions by promoting the training of indigenous musicians who could collect musical ethnographic material in the villages with the understanding that 'you must not look on music of different peoples from the point of view of the (Western) system of harmony, and you must not view deviations from this system as lacking in taste and development, and therefore barbaric.'¹⁸³ Just as the native language was being used in schools, he considered that 'the experienced musician will not shun popular music but, on the contrary, will base the future development of a particular people on it.'¹⁸⁴ He therefore saw a place for the development of a people's musical tradition from its ancient forms without necessarily losing its national features. He quotes the example of Chopin 'that most brilliant of the musicians of all times and nations, could only have appeared in the conditions created by the situation of his homeland.'¹⁸⁵ The national spirit is expressed in music despite development due to contact with other cultures, as a people have the capacity to adopt elements of other cultures and indigenize them. He refers to how the Russian *gusli* has been adopted into Chuvash culture.

Each people who have received the *gusli* from the Russians, have altered it according to personal tastes and understanding. The shape, material, inner construction, the arrangement and number of

¹⁸³ Nikol'skii 2008 Vol.3, 257

¹⁸⁴ Ibid. 296

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

the strings change. In the end the *gusli* becomes a national instrument, but with a Russian name.¹⁸⁶

He adds that the *gusli* is now the favourite Chuvash instrument, played by both men and women, and made indigenously in Koz`modem`iansk and Iadrin districts.¹⁸⁷

In accordance with this principle, he did not see the church choirs and instrumental playing that had developed out of the Il`minskii system as russification, but as a development of the Chuvash inherent love of song and music, and in 1920 he still envisaged church choir directors' courses as a feature of village Music and Singing Circles.¹⁸⁸ Numerical notation had enabled the Volga peoples to write down their folk-songs and develop part-singing, and Nikol'skii proposed that the training of ethnographer-musicians should include learning to rearrange folk-songs for choir with piano or orchestral accompaniment, composing works in the national spirit and translating them into Russian while preserving national features.¹⁸⁹ Nikol'skii was concerned therefore to record and preserve Chuvash national musical traditions, but he nevertheless envisioned their development through contact with other cultures, including Russian culture, and saw their capacity to provide the conditions for the appearance of the national genius who would be recognized by all times and nations.

A similar vision is also expressed in another Chuvash evaluation of missionary work among the Volga peoples written by Fr Mikhail Petrov who from 1914 studied at the Kazan Theological Academy. In his introductory essay to a 1916 anthology marking 25 years since Il`minskii's death, Petrov presents a similar critical picture as Nikol'skii and Komissarov of pre-19<sup>th</sup> century missionary work which left the natives only outwardly Christian due to the use of material incentives and coercion.<sup>190</sup> It is in this context that Petrov portrays Il`minskii as 'in the full

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. 264

¹⁸⁷ Ibid. 290

¹⁸⁸ Ibid. 301

¹⁸⁹ Ibid. 297

¹⁹⁰ Petrov M. 1916, 5-12, 16-17, 21, 29-40

meaning of the word the Russian apostle to the Gentiles'¹⁹¹ whose ideas were rooted in several interconnected principles. Firstly

he believed that a person (...) must not refuse to acknowledge and respect the human dignity of another person, as all people of whatever tribe and people, as children of God, are gifted in their inner being with a spirit which possesses an inexhaustible wealth of truth, good and possible perfection.

Therefore

in the semi-savage natives there must be and are unshakeable features of humanity, ineradicable sources of good, truth and beauty.¹⁹²

Yet despite these convictions on *obshchechelovechnost'* Il'minskii considered that

the spiritual edification of the natives must be carried out in the eternal forms of Orthodoxy and the Russian national spirit, Russian *narodnost'*

And Petrov comments 'here the political and cultural side of the native question is concealed.'¹⁹³

He does not, however, draw the conclusion that the natives have therefore inevitably been russified by the Il'minskii system as he continues

Orthodoxy must be reincarnated in the native peoples as creatively and religiously as it has been incarnated in the great Russian people. (...) This was Il'minskii's concern, and here is the centre of gravity of his entire system.¹⁹⁴

Drawing on Il'minskii's incarnational language, Petrov considers that according to Il'minskii's principles Orthodoxy is not just to be passed on by the Russian people in its Russian form, but can be equally creatively incarnated among the Volga peoples as it has been incarnated among

¹⁹¹ Ibid. 42

¹⁹² Ibid. 53, 55-56

¹⁹³ Ibid. 57

¹⁹⁴ Ibid. 59

the Russians. However, this process can only take place in the mother tongue, and for this reason Jesus gave the gift of tongues to the apostles who

profoundly valued the language of each people, as every language in its essence is a gift of God's Spirit Who makes people verbal beings and as such, worthy of every respect.¹⁹⁵

Petrov's understanding of the translation process flows out of this incarnational principle

the translator must know how to penetrate into the meaning of what he translates, as into an organic nucleus and then, on the basis of this, survey the native language's means to reproduce this meaning. It is true, native languages are foreign to Christianity, but even they, as European languages hundreds of years ago, are capable of making Christian content their own, as they have the capacity to deliberate over a word arising in the soil of a foreign language and reproduce it in the spirit of their own genius and in accordance with their own traditions.¹⁹⁶

Petrov here describes the translation process using the same basic idea as Nikol'skii's description of the *gusli* becoming an indigenous Chuvash instrument.

Petrov considers that this same process has occurred in the sphere of church music.

Russian church melodies are an expression of the spirit of the entire people. They are the result of the power of the lofty religious thought and profound feeling of the Russian people.

Yet owing to the religious feeling, the creative talents and extraordinary devotion to his task of Petrov's uncle, Fr. Andrei Petrov, the Orthodox liturgy and its music have been transposed into the Chuvash idiom. 'Chuvash church singing owes its existence entirely to him' as not only did he translate the main church hymns into Chuvash but 'created his own compositions of outstanding merit in his native tongue.'¹⁹⁷ Petrov thus attributes the native peoples' capacity to indigenize the Orthodox faith to their common humanity, their *obshchechelovechnost`* with the transmitting Russian people, and their own creative God-given talents which have enabled them

¹⁹⁵ Ibid. 72

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. 76

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. 97

to take the words and music of the Russian Church and reincarnate them as a creative expression of their own national genius, their *narodnost`*.

Petrov's text is a remarkable example of Il'minskii's ideas being creatively reworked by a second generation disciple. Il'minskii wrote in 1870 of the inner process of spiritual rebirth, that it would take place,

at first through the Christian education of a few chosen people, gifted, receptive, sincere, religious, energetic, committed, (...) the spiritual thinking power in a person has in itself a certain organic, life-giving action (...) capable of producing a series of new concepts and creating a system which the person did not know before. (...) These advanced personalities can bring Christianity into their consciousness and into their heart as whole and effective teaching. Christianity as a living principle, like leaven, will itself act on their thinking and feeling. And having been imbibed into these personalities, it will be passed on from them and through them to others. Only during this process you must not lose sight of the only effective weapon, the native language. The native language forms the essence of the spiritual nature of a person and a people. (...) We believe that the evangelical word of the Saviour Jesus Christ, having become incarnate in the living, natural Tatar language and, through it, communing most sincerely with the most profound thinking and religious conscience of the Tatars, will create and bring about the Christian rebirth of this people.¹⁹⁸

As we read Petrov's and Nikol'skii's texts, and those of the first generation of native Chuvash priests in these pre-revolutionary years, we see that they had become that first generation of gifted personalities who had imbibed the Christian faith and were passing it on to others. Petrov attributed this process to the influence of Il'minskii, and he echoes Bukharev's incarnational theology in his description of Il'minskii as reflecting Christ's kenosis.

¹⁹⁸ Il'minskii 1870, 44-45

The greatness of his endeavour was that he was the first to extend the borders of his compassion out of a world in which people of his own circle live, into the world of the unfortunate and wild natives of eastern Russia. Motivated by true compassion, he did not hesitate to descend into this dark world to bring the light of understanding, faith and love, and for the sake of this, renounced the wonderful career, power and high position which awaited him.¹⁹⁹

We should not doubt the sincerity of Petrov's words, as though Chuvash veneration of Il'minskii prevented him from seeing Il'minskii's real russifying motives. Il'minskii and his system were under attack in many circles at this time and the outspoken Petrov could have simply joined the critics. Petrov's commitment to the Chuvash language and culture are also not to be doubted. In early 1921 he took responsibility for the Department of Archaeology and Ethnography at the new Central Chuvash Museum, collecting many of the Museum's earliest ethnographic artifacts and written texts by Ivan Iakovlev, A.Rekeev and D.Filimonov, and becoming the Museum's Director in June 1926.²⁰⁰

CONCLUSION

In the first two decades of the 20th century the Chuvash language became firmly established as a literary language and this developed organically out of the educational movement Il'minskii and Iakovlev's missionary work had triggered. Alongside its use to translate scriptural and liturgical texts which were being read by the masses, original texts in both prose and poetry were being written and published, secular texts were being translated, the first Chuvash newspaper appeared, and the Chuvash language and culture became increasingly subjects of scholarly study in their own right. If there had been any doubt before this as to whether the Chuvash language would survive as a literary language, these doubts were clearly dispelled at this time despite the continuing struggle to defend its use in schools and the church.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. 3

²⁰⁰ Today the Chuvash National Museum

It is surely no coincidence that the Chuvash *New Testament*, Ashmarin's *Dictionary*, Ivanov's epic *Narspi*, the first Chuvash-language newspaper *Khypar* and the first attempts to write original sermons and a Sacred History in Chuvash all appeared within the space of a few years towards the end of the first decade of the 20th century, a decade that also witnessed the revolutionary events of 1905-7. The Chuvash philologist A.P.Khuzangai, despite a certain antagonism towards Iakovlev as a russifier, writes of this time as

a period when the spiritual capacity of the Chuvash language itself for regeneration and development was an outburst of power and might, and the Chuvash language established the aims and influenced the spiritual activity of the people.²⁰¹

The foundations had been laid in previous decades in the collective translation process that arose in the context of increasing popular literacy, Orthodox liturgical life in the Chuvash language, and mass distribution of Chuvash-language literature, especially the distribution of Holy Scripture made possible through Iakovlev's collaboration with the BFBS.

The continuing trend among scholars of labeling Il'minskii as a russifier has prevented this outburst of power and might being seen as something that arose organically and logically out of the movement Il'minskii's principles created among the Chuvash, as was perceived by the Chuvash intelligentsia who lived through this period such as Fr M.Petrov, N.V.Nikol'skii and G.Komissarov whose positive evaluations of Il'minskii's impact on Chuvash culture we have read above.

Echoing Khuzangai's assessment of the Chuvash language in the early 20th century, Rowan Williams speaks of

the recurrent pattern in the history of mission and biblical translation whereby cultures and languages seem to reach a new level of energy and individuality as the biblical story is uncovered in their own words (...) the translation of scripture prompted unprecedented levels of

²⁰¹ Quoted in Ashmarin 2012, 143

sophistication in the study and analysis of a language, and helped to create utterly new possibilities for literature and thought.²⁰²

Lamin Sanneh has illustrated this pattern among the Zulu, Akan and Ugandan peoples, and concludes that the ‘pattern of the correlation between indigenous cultural revitalization and Christian renewal is a consistent one in Africa.’²⁰³ Echoing Iakovlev’s New Testament Preface with its acknowledgement of the contribution scriptural translation had made to Chuvash national identity, Sanneh quotes an African holding a native-language Gospel for the first time and saying ‘Here is a document which proves that we also are human.’²⁰⁴

Despite the hostility to BFBS colporteurs in some Orthodox circles, we have seen that not only did the BFBS enable the publication of Scriptures among the non-Russian peoples of Russia, but their distribution method of colportage was also gradually adopted, thus vastly increasing the distribution of religious scriptural texts in the final decades before the Revolution. Batalden argues that the BFBS was a ‘critical catalyst’ in the awakening of modern Russian religious culture as it was

in the engagement with modern biblical translation (...) and the open circulation of such sacred texts that 19th century Russian religious culture entered, however tentatively, into (...) that print-mediated realm that began to function with a measure of independence from narrow state, autocratic authority in the last decades of the Russian Empire.²⁰⁵

We have seen above how, not only did the establishment of the Chuvash literary language make a significant contribution to the awakening of Chuvash national identity, but how it was the very organization of this print-mediated realm by leading figures such as Iakovlev, Nikol’skii and Filimonov which paved the way for Chuvash desires for autonomy in both the political and

²⁰² Batalden, Cann, Dean 2006, Foreword, xi

²⁰³ Sanneh 2009, 227, 202-208, 217, 226

²⁰⁴ Ibid. 246

²⁰⁵ Batalden 2006, 173-175

ecclesial spheres. Sanneh also illustrates this phenomenon in the African context concluding that there are internal contradictions between mission and colonialism as

mission furnished nationalism with the resources necessary to its rise and appeal, whereas colonialism came upon nationalism as a conspiracy. At the heart of the nationalist awakening was the cultural ferment that missionary translations and the attendant linguistic research stimulated. We might say with justice that mission begot cultural nationalism.²⁰⁶

In this chapter we have seen the cultural ferment among the Chuvash that missionary translations and the attendant linguistic research stimulated, and the consequent cultural nationalism which sought to express itself in political and ecclesial nationalism in the wake of the 1917 Revolution. This cultural ferment flowed organically out of the centre of gravity of the Il'minskii system as understood by Fr Mikhail Petrov that 'Orthodoxy must be reincarnated in the native peoples as creatively and religiously as it has been incarnated in the great Russian people.' There are therefore also internal contradictions between Il'minskii's missionary principles and the claims of russification with which they have often been identified.

²⁰⁶ Sanneh 2009, 144

Conclusion to Thesis

Znamenski identifies the intensification of Russian missionary efforts in the 1820s with the conservative backlash associated with the theory of official nationality in Nicholas 1st's reign when 'not satisfied with superficial conversion, the state became interested in genuine Christianization of the Russian colonial periphery.'²⁰⁷ Although this may be true concerning the state's development of the Alaskan and Altai missions, those who were willing to go to work at these missions, Makarii and Innokentii, were products of the more cosmopolitan, pietist atmosphere of Alexander 1st's reign, a period associated with the Russian Bible Society and translations into the Russian vernacular led by Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow.

The freedom with which Makarii and Innokentii developed use of local vernaculars on the extreme fringes of the Russian Empire can be compared with Sts Cyril and Methodius' situation in Moravia. Vlasto points out that despite the Byzantine policy of the most rapid hellenization of the vast numbers of Slavs within the Imperial frontiers 'Moravia was outside the Empire; in this respect Constantine (Cyril) could be allowed considerable freedom.'²⁰⁸ Il'minskii's renewed emphasis on the vernacular tradition around Kazan has parallels in the transmission of Cyril and Methodius' Slavonic texts to Bulgaria. Vlasto continues 'When it came to the possibility of a Slav language church in Bulgaria, much nearer home, the Byzantine authorities appear to have hesitated at first, then accepted it, then repudiated it again in favour of hellenization when they conquered the country'²⁰⁹ a sentence which sums up also the contradictory attitudes towards the Il'minskii system's application closer to the heart of the Russian Empire. It was this context, where use of native languages involved the potential threat of separatism, which led to Il'minskii's defence of the use of native language and clergy in bold formulations which distinguish his writings from those of Makarii and Innokentii.

²⁰⁷ Znamenski 1999, 57-58

²⁰⁸ Vlasto 1970, 45

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

We have seen how Makarii, Innokentii and the young Il'minskii did not refer to Cyril and Methodius as models for their missionary approach which they adopted more for practical means of communication, undergirded by a sense of the Pentecostal sanctification of all the languages. If Il'minskii adopted Cyril and Methodius' approach in the Volga region, it was more due to him being in a similar situation to them in Moravia which in the 860s was caught between the Byzantine and Frankish empires, both of which were vying for the political and ecclesial allegiance of the Slavs, just as the peoples of the Mid-Volga were caught between allegiance to the Orthodox and Islamic worlds.²¹⁰ This also accounts for parallels between Il'minskii's work and the situation in the mirror image of the Mid-Volga at the far western end of Europe, 13th century Spain, where the idea of mission to Islam prompted the opening of a training college where prospective missionaries could study Arabic.²¹¹

Cyril and Methodius went to Moravia at imperial command, and yet to identify their missionary work with purely imperial expansionist motives is not to do justice to their missionary calling, just as it does not do justice to Makarii, Innokentii and Il'minskii's motives. 'One possible clue to the roots of (Cyril and Methodius') vocation could lie in the spiritual preoccupations of the monastic community to which Methodius belonged and to which Cyril had for a time been attached' as monks from Mount Olympus had been actively evangelizing the Alans in the early 9th century.²¹² So the Thessalonian brothers worked within the context of empire yet created an alphabet and Slavonic literary tradition which have long outlived the downfall of empires. In his book on the cultural impact of Christian mission in Africa, Lamin Sanneh argues that mission

is the logical opposite of colonial subjugation, for the means and methods of mission, though perhaps not the motives, conspired together with the consequences to establish a vernacular destiny for the cause. That this took place while India or Japan or wherever was at the same time being drawn into the hegemony of the West suggests that

²¹⁰ Fletcher 1999, 333, 351

²¹¹ Ibid. 325 and Fletcher 1992, 155

²¹² Fletcher 1999, 353

indigenous renewal is a condition for effective and meaningful participation in the family of nations.²¹³

This situation finds parallels in the flowering of Bulgarian culture under Boris and Symeon made possible by Cyril and Methodius' work, when Greek culture was assimilated into Bulgarian culture, but the Slavonic literary tradition prevented the country being entirely Hellenized.²¹⁴

The same can be said of Il'minskii as, while operating within the context of empire, his missionary methods led to indigenous renewal, and provided the means to resist cultural assimilation, while enabling the Chuvash to meaningfully participate in the family of nations, to discover their *obshchechelovechnost`*.

The identification of the Il'minskii system, and the Russian missionary enterprise as a whole, with the Cyrillo-Methodian heritage only began from the 1870s-80s in the wake of the 1863 1000th anniversary and Philaret's verses emphasizing the creation of Slavonic as a means to spread the word of God among the people. Il'minskii's own discovery of their alphabet and translations as a missionary heritage led to his enormous contribution to the introduction of that heritage into Russian schools in the 1880s. It was in defending the traditional character of the Il'minskii system from attack that his collaborators and supporters used Cyril and Methodius' names, among others, to appeal to Il'minskii's patriotic opponents.

The role of the Bible Society in both the initiation and continuation of the Il'minskii system must be acknowledged although Khondzinskii points out that the scholastic theology of the 18th century Russian seminaries prepared the ground for the rapid success of the Bible Society in Russia. 'The Bible Society's texts said the same thing as the Russian bishops had been teaching their flock for half a century.'²¹⁵ The key figures surrounding Il'minskii in the 1840s-1850s, Grigorii Postnikov, Kazem-Bek, Alexei Bobrovnikov, had all been influenced in their youth by

²¹³ Sanneh 2009, 142

²¹⁴ Vlasto 1970, 175

²¹⁵ Khondzinskii 2010, 200-201

the translations and missions of the Bible Society era, while those who most of all inspired Il'minskii's missionary vision, Makarii and Innokentii, also illustrate this trend. The Kazem-Bek Translation Committee in which Postnikov and Il'minskii participated can thus be viewed as an indigenous consequence of the Bible Society's work. Both Makarii and Innokentii called for a Russian variant of the English Missionary Society, and the Brotherhood of St Gurii Translation Committee which Il'minskii directed and which was adopted by the Orthodox Missionary Society, can thus be interpreted as seeking to provide an Orthodox alternative to fulfil this perceived need. This would explain Il'minskii's antagonism towards collaboration with the British and Foreign Bible Society in the late 1870s and 1880s, whereas several of his disciples, with Iakovlev as the supremely fruitful example, turned to collaboration realizing that the Brotherhood of St Gurii did not have the financial means or the commercial know-how to supply the demand for native scriptural texts.

This perception of Il'minskii's work as an indigenous alternative to and consequence of the Bible Society's work in early 19th century Russia, accounts for remarkable thematic and chronological parallels between Il'minskii's work and the indigenous impact of mission in Africa. Lamin Sanneh's account of 'the foremost African churchman of the nineteenth century' Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther, echoes uncannily Il'minskii's understanding of language and culture. Crowther was appointed bishop as part of the CMS's attempts to promote an indigenous African pastorate at the Niger mission in 1861, at almost exactly the same time that Il'minskii's work took its practical turn with the creation of the Baptised Tatar School. Crowther's defence of attacks on the native pastorate scheme left him a broken, yet defiant man, who died in exactly the same week in 1891 as Il'minskii who also died broken, yet defending the consequences of native language use to the last.²¹⁶ Crowther considered language

a dynamic cultural resource, reflecting the spirit of the people and illuminating their sense of values. As such it should be imaginatively approached ... The translator should be

²¹⁶ Sanneh 2009, 164, 175-6

prepared to dig underneath the layers of half-conscious notions and dim memories to reclaim the accumulated treasure. (...) Crowther made a point of befriending ordinary people without regard to their religious affiliation, going on to pay close attention to the speech of the elders in order to get behind new inventions of the language and the colloquialisms that break the line of continuity with the original. (...) Precisely because Crowther envisaged long-term Christian engagement with these materials, he felt it imperative to strive for accuracy, naturalness, and dynamism at the same time. (...) He wrote in 1844 that his linguistic investigation encouraged him to dig deeper into other aspects of traditional African life, suggesting how the coming of Christianity could be a second wind for threatened cultures.²¹⁷

Il'minskii's home was also constantly full of ordinary Tatars and Chuvash, and he emphasized the need to use the very language of the people, to tap into its hidden riches, seeking both accuracy and dynamism. Il'minskii taught Ivan Iakovlev

A thought has appeared in a human mind. It can be expressed in different languages on condition that the thought itself is understood by all, and that all its nuances, its artistic form are captured. (...) Every language can express any concept belonging to all the peoples of mankind. (...) Don't be self-confident! Learn and go on learning! Don't be ashamed to learn from an old storyteller from among the ordinary people. You must believe that if some thought has entered the head of a Russian, or Frenchman or a German, then it must also be in the head of some African savage. God has give to each people the means to understand all kinds of ideas. (...) Why can the truths of the Gospel be understood by every people? It's because these truths also exist among the savage peoples who have never heard of the Gospel. You just need to be able to find them, draw them out and express them in the language of the given people.²¹⁸

²¹⁷ Ibid. 200

²¹⁸ Iakovlev 1997, 272-273

Would Crowther and Il'minskii have known of each other's work? While Il'minskii certainly did not know Crowther personally, in his defence of the ordination of native clergy he cites the example of native personnel at British missions which he knew of from an 1866 article in *Pravoslavnoe Obozrenie*, just five years after CMS's creation of the Native Pastorate in Sierra Leone in 1861.²¹⁹ The astounding parallels between Il'minskii and Crowther, living on different continents and in very different circumstances, are most likely due to the long-term indigenous impact of the Bible Society's work. The Society's work in Russia can thus be perceived as the Western European inheritors of the Cyrillo-Methodian tradition providing a catalyst for the renewal of the vernacular tradition in Russia.²²⁰

Both Il'minskii and Crowther's digging deeper into traditional life spawned movements characterized by ethnographic and linguistic research and we have seen how the Il'minskii system, rather than annihilating, provided a second wind to the Chuvash culture and language. This pattern has also been observed by Mousalimas and Znamenski in the Alaskan and Altaian adoption of Orthodoxy with Znamenski concluding that 'Christianity penetrated Altaian society through the prism of indigenous tradition. At first, it was a formal affiliation with Russian spiritual and political power. Later, elements of Orthodoxy became part of indigenous tradition.'²²¹

On the one hand the absorption of Orthodoxy into Chuvash indigenous tradition before the Il'minskii movement accounts for the speed and success with which the native-language movement progressed. On the other hand, Il'minskii and Iakovlev's appreciation of the correspondences between the traditional religious worldview and rites and Orthodoxy led to a continuation of the transformation of traditional rites which had characterized the Old Chuvash Faith for several centuries, and possibly since the time the ancestors of the Chuvash lived in the Caucasus region. Sanneh comments

²¹⁹ Il'minskii 1885, 10; Sanneh 2009, 164

²²⁰ Ibid. 86-89

²²¹ Znamenski 1999, 227-228

The contention of critics that mission is an unwarranted interference in other cultures is a sensitive charge and deserves careful consideration. It seems, nevertheless, to be based on a set attitude, which drains culture of its religious impulse. It denies the possibility of intercultural exchange, and it seals culture against change altogether. It is too extreme a position to adopt, recognizing neither the principle of religious teleology nor the role of internal and external forces in generating new forms of culture. (...) even when it was blatant interference, mission triggered sufficient vernacular initiative to commence a critical appropriation process. No living culture is a historical cul de sac.²²²

The Marxist view of Christianity as a crust on some pristine version of an ancient culture, or of Christianity annihilating that culture, has hindered research into how indigenous traditions have absorbed and accommodated elements of Orthodoxy, and vice versa, and this would be a fruitful area for further research.²²³

We have traced the direct line between Metropolitan Philaret's influence on the 1820s missions, and the desire for an improved relationship between Orthodoxy and the life of contemporary society in the 1860s, epitomized by the journal *Pravoslavnoe Obozrenie*. Il'minskii's ideas and their initial application found their inspiration in the context of this movement for renewal and reform. This line can be traced further to the close link between Il'minskii's followers such as Andrei Ukhtomskii and aspirations for reform in the Russian Church which led to the 1917-1918 Church Council. The perception of the Il'minskii movement as conservative, colonialist and russificatory has prevented this link between the missionary movement and reform within the Russian Church from being seen, and it is similarly an area where further research is needed.

Il'minskii's convictions sprang from Russia's increasing sense of *narodnost`* in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century which enabled him to value the languages and cultures, the *narodnost`* of the non-Russian peoples of the Mid-Volga. His view of the Christian tradition being transmitted through

²²² Sanneh 2009, 243

²²³ See Ablazhei 2005, 134

a people's own cultural specificity logically led to a flowering of these cultures' own *narodnost*. The more extreme form of *narodnost*, the desire for ecclesial autocephaly in the context of the renovationist movement, can be viewed as the logical response to Russia's own heightened patriotic sense of *narodnost* on the eve of the Revolution, which prompted fears of Chuvash separatism and attempts to curb use of the Chuvash language.

Il'minskii and his collaborators' vision of a multi-lingual and multi-national Church, challenging the identification of the Church with one language or culture, has been prophetic of the Orthodox Church's scattering among the nations in the 20th century. On the one hand the Orthodox Church has found itself in a situation of greater universality, rediscovering its *obshchechelovechnost* in relationship to a myriad cultures, on the other hand the diaspora communities have clung to their national roots to avoid losing their own sense of *narodnost*.²²⁴ Il'minskii and his collaborators' rich experience of relating to, and sharing the Christian tradition with the 'other', whether of language, nationality, faith or culture, provides much food for thought in the contemporary, pluralist world.

It is to this pluralist world that Lesslie Newbigin's challenge to true contextualization of the Christian Gospel is addressed

True contextualization accords to the gospel its rightful primacy, its power to penetrate every culture and to speak within each culture, in its own speech and symbol, the word which is both No and Yes, both judgement and grace. And that happens when the word is not a disembodied word, but comes from a community which embodies the true story, God's story, in a style of life which communicates both the grace and the judgment. In order that it may do this, it must be both truly local and truly ecumenical. Truly local in that it embodies God's particular word of grace and judgement for that people. Truly ecumenical in being open to the witness of churches in all other places, and thus saved from absorption into the culture of that place and enabled to

²²⁴ See Ruffieux 2015; Stamooolis 1986, 129

represent to that place the universality, the catholicity of God's purpose of grace and judgment for all humanity.²²⁵

These words sum up and echo many of the strands of this thesis: the place of each culture within the universality and catholicity of God's purposes, Iakovlev's community both translating and embodying God's word in their local context yet with an increasing desire to find their place among the nations, the role played by churches in other places, both Russia, the surrounding Volga-Kama peoples and the Bible Society in their Christianization, God's word bringing both grace and judgement, and so arousing the desire for reform and renewal. We can therefore suggest that Il'minskii's writings and practices and the missionary movement they triggered, up to this time little studied both within and outside Russia, have much to say in current debates over the nature of true contextualization and indigenization of the Christian faith.

²²⁵ Newbiggin 1989, 152

Appendix 1

Russian missionary work in the Volga region before the mid-19th century

Introduction

Many scholars have summarized the general history of Russian state and church policies towards the peoples of the Volga-Kama region before the mid-19th century¹ so this Appendix will briefly outline the history of contact between the Chuvash people and the Russian church before the time of Il'minskii. We will focus in particular on native schools, clergy and translations in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, in order to assess to what extent Il'minskii's ideas were being practised among the Chuvash before his time, but will also indicate how the Christian faith was being communicated by non-verbal means at this time. We will also summarize some of the first significant early 19th century descriptions of Chuvash religious beliefs and assess missionary attitudes towards them.

The Mid-Volga region before the 18th century

After the creation of an independent Kazan Khanate in 1438, the native inhabitants of the area, the Finnic Cheremys, Mordva and Votiak, and the Turkic Chuvash, became tribute-paying peoples subordinate to Kazan, and their lands were fought over continuously as Russian and Tatar raiding parties went back and forth. After Ivan IV's final offensive on Kazan began in 1545, emissaries of the Chuvash and Highland Cheremys went to Moscow to petition for accession of their lands to the Russian state.² It was with these new allies that Russian troops conquered Kazan in October 1552, although even before this time there is evidence of contact between the Volga native peoples and the Russian church. Abbot Makarii baptized near his

¹ For the most recent see Taimasov 2004, 55-87; Kolcherin 2014, 13-77; Geraci 2001, 15-46; Werth 2002, 17-43; Johnson 2005, 61-85

² Ivanov V. 2005, 100, 117-120; Nikol'skii 2007, Vol 2, 357-8

Monastery of the Yellow Waters Lake in the early 15th century,³ and the Charter granting lands along the river Sura to the Spaso-Evfimiev monastery in Suzdal` in 1393, speaks of Russians who came to work the monastery lands, as well as the *tutoshnikh starozhil`tsev* (the local indigenous inhabitants) who lived in close contact with Russians after this time.⁴

In the course of the 16th and 17th centuries, a series of fortified lines was built to defend the newly-won territories, with Russian forts at Alatyr` (1552), Kokshaisk (1574), Koz`modem`iansk (1583), Tsivil`sk (1589) and Iadrin (1590).⁵ Monasteries were also founded to which the Tsar granted forests, lakes, and lands on which Russian peasants settled.⁶ In 1555 the diocese of Kazan was created, and the Lives of Gurii, the first archbishop, German, founder of Sviiazhsk monastery, and Varsonofii, founder of Kazan Transfiguration monastery, say that they set up schools and taught native children.⁷ The monasteries also had a strong influence on the ethnic settlement patterns and economy of the Kazan region as they were given land close to towns and along the banks of rivers, where previously the native inhabitants had been settled. The resentment caused by relocation meant that in Kazan in 1574 the Zilantov monastery was attacked and looted, with the churches burnt down and the monastery peasants taken captive.⁸ Cheremys resentment at the appropriation of their lands near the Spaso-Iunginskii Monastery in Koz`modem`iansk motivated them to join Stepan Razin`s Cossacks during the 1670 peasant revolt when they captured the monastery, destroying land deeds and plundering church plate.⁹

Several monasteries were founded more deeply into native lands in the course of the 17th century: Holy Trinity Monastery in Alatyr` (1612), Raifa Pustyn` (1613) and Sedmiozernaia Pustyn` (1628), both near Kazan, Mironositskaia Pustyn` (1647) in Tsarevokokshaisk. The name

³ Khersonskii (1888) Vyp. 1, 1-2

⁴ Nurminskii (1864), Part 1, 24

⁵ Ivanov Ibid. 121-122

⁶ See Kochetkov, Chibis (2013) 10-24 concerning this process in Alatyr`, and Borisov, Kikin (1909), XI concerning Sviiazhsk.

⁷ Kharlampovich (1905), 3-4; Zhitie GV 1782, 26

⁸ Nurminskii (1864) Part 2, 198

⁹ Aiplatov, Ivanov (2000), 31, 127, 23-26, 73, 96

of the Tsivil'sk Tikhvin monastery (1675) is a reminder of how it was founded in the midst of conflict. An icon of the Tikhvin Theotokos appeared to a widow when Tsivil'sk was threatened by natives who had joined Razin's revolt in 1671. According to local tradition, after a two week siege the town was miraculously saved when the insurgents began fighting among themselves. The monastery was built in 1675 to house the icon, and as a place of refuge from further attacks.¹⁰

Although the history of the Volga region in the 16th and 17th centuries shows the often aggressive resistance of the local population, there were also small numbers who were baptized and began more peaceful collaboration with the Russian settlers, moving to work or protect the land alongside them. The village of Vladimirscoe was originally a settlement for such Cheremys who kept an armed watchpoint east of Koz'modem'iansk, and whose village was burnt down by unbaptised Cheremys in about 1690.¹¹ Tsar Alexei's Law Code of 1649 gave incentives to the landowning native nobility to be baptized as it said that 'whoever of the princes, murz, Tatars, Mordva, Chuvash, Cheremys and Votyak is baptized into the Orthodox Christian faith, from these Newly Baptised, their lands are not be taken away, and are not be given to Tatars.' Those who were not baptised were not allowed to keep Russian baptized serfs.¹² Of the Tatar nobility, some died in uprisings, some converted to Christianity to retain their noble status and the right to own serfs, while some remained faithful to Islam and so renounced their right to landownership, turning instead to commerce, and forming eventually a powerful merchant class.¹³

18th century policies towards the Volga peoples

After 1696 Peter the Great continued measures which enticed natives to baptism, as well as opening schools.¹⁴ In 1731 Fr Alexei of Raifa was put in charge of a *Commission for the*

¹⁰ Chudotvornye (1872) 393; Nurminskii (1864) Part 2, 217

¹¹ Vishnevskii (1872) 25; Mikhailov (1972) 220, 239

¹² Arapov (2001), 40-41;

¹³ Khodarkovsky (2001), 122-126

¹⁴ See Arapov (2001) 42 and O sposobakh obrashcheniia (1858), 476

Baptism of the Kazan, Nizhnii Novgorod and other natives based at the Sviiazhsk monastery where he founded a school to train native clergy. Fr Alexei's reports say that 20 children were studying in 1733, 18 in 1738, 27 in 1739 and 42 in 1740.¹⁵ There was similar missionary and educational activity in the Nizhnii Novgorod diocese under Archbishop Pitirim (1719-1738) who encouraged the monasteries to preach among the native population and founded 13 preparatory schools around the diocese, including in Alatyř, Poretskoe and Kurmysh which were situated close to native villages.¹⁶

A decree of 11th September 1740 set up the *Office for the Affairs of the Newly-Baptised* (Kontora) and provided for 'four schools to teach newly-baptised children to read in Russian (...) however it should be made sure that they do not forget their native languages' so that 'they could give some teaching from the Divine Scriptures in their native languages to people of other faiths.'¹⁷ From 1740-1764 the Kontora aroused great resentment among the Volga native peoples for its aggressive style of missionary work. Encouraged by promised material incentives, and the sometimes violent reprisals carried out among those who resisted, almost the entire Chuvash population of Nizhnii Novgorod province was baptized in 1743-44, and of the Sviiazhsk, Kazan, Cheboksary, Koz`modem`iansk and Tsivil`sk districts of Kazan Province in 1746-49. By 1763 almost 95% of the Mari, Mordva, Chuvash and Udmurts were registered as baptized.¹⁸ The 1740 Decree said that the Newly-baptised should be resettled on land in Russian villages and encouraged to take Russian godparents, but the resistance of the Chuvash to leaving their native villages meant that by 1743 this policy had been replaced by moving those who resisted baptism out of villages where the majority had been baptized, leading to large-scale resettlement of Chuvash in Samara and Orenburg provinces.¹⁹

¹⁵ Nikol'skii Ibid, 52-53

¹⁶ Ibid. 160, 164

¹⁷ Kharlampovich (1905), 22-24

¹⁸ Nikol'skii Ibid., 367-368

¹⁹ Ivanov (2005), 133-136, 129

By 1764 churches had been built in 39 Chuvash villages of the Kazan diocese, and 23 villages of the Nizhnii Novgorod diocese.²⁰ The parishes were set up on the Russian model whereby the clergy were maintained by parishioners giving *ruga*, a percentage of their harvest, as well as payment for compulsory rites such as baptism, marriage and funerals. As the native population could not understand the Slavonic services, had little contact with the almost entirely Russian clergy, and had their own traditional rites for weddings and burial of the dead, they saw little reason for giving *ruga* and resented paying for other rites.²¹

State policy towards the Volga peoples changed during the reign of Catherine the Great who personally encouraged religious tolerance due to contact with the philosophy of the Enlightenment as well as needing to ensure the loyalty of her Muslim subjects during the Russo-Turkish wars which led to Russia's annexation of the Crimea in 1783.²² In 1788 Catherine created the Muslim Ecclesiastical Administration (Muftiate) which was responsible for overseeing all Muslim communities, the appointment of mullahs, and Islamic schools.²³ She also vigorously pursued educational projects which were to have repercussions in the Volga region.

Missionary work in the Nizhnii Novgorod and Kazan dioceses in the late 18th century

In April 1764 the *Kontora* was replaced by a Missionary Commission and a system of preachers who were to be responsible to the diocesan bishops. There were to be three such preachers in Kazan diocese, and one in Nizhnii Novgorod diocese²⁴ where Fr Ermei Rozhanskii, a Chuvash who also spoke Tatar, was appointed in 1765 at the request of the Chuvash themselves 'for the reason that we have known him for a long time as he lived formerly in Kurmysh, he is reliable, not a drunkard, of humble character and honest life. Moreover, he knows our native language.'²⁵

²⁰ Nikol'skii Ibid., 182

²¹ Nurminskii 1863, 249-250

²² Arapov 2001, 45

²³ Arapov 2001, 50-51

²⁴ Mozharovskii 1880, 99; Kharlampovich 1905, 79; Nikol'skii Ibid, 210

²⁵ Rodionov 2012, 128-9

Fr Ermei nevertheless was resented both by local clergy for his role of reporting on the state of parishes, and by many of the Chuvash who were still practising their traditional rites, forcing him to resort to police coercion in order to carry out his job.²⁶

The changes in missionary policy were not able to prevent an outpouring of hostility to the state expressed through native support of Pugachev's rebellion in 1773-74. Pugachev and his men crossed the Volga on 17th July 1774 into the Chuvash lands where support for his cause spread through the villages of the Cheboksary, Koz'modem'iansk, Iadrin and Kurmysh districts. Churches were desecrated and in some cases burnt down, and many of the local clergy and state officials were mercilessly beaten and hung, with 83 clergy killed altogether in the Iadrin, Kurmysh and Alatyr' districts.²⁷

This violent revolt would have encouraged the first attempts at creating a written Chuvash language at Nizhnii Novgorod Seminary. In 1769 the first Grammar of the Chuvash language²⁸ had been published, the first Grammar of any of the Turkic peoples of Russia, and it was followed by the publication of Grammars of Cheremys and Udmurt in 1775.²⁹ The Chuvash Grammar is considered to be the collective work of Nizhnii seminarians under the supervision of Fr Ermei.³⁰ Translation work gained momentum under Bishop Damaskin who had studied from 1766-72 at Gottingen University, and whose commitment to literacy and learning is seen in his *Biblioteka Rossiiskaia* which opens with the words 'The history of learning of any people begins with the introduction of letters. Where there are no letters, they cannot read nor write. And where they cannot read nor write, there is no means for the study of learning.'³¹ In 1785 an ethnographical essay attributed to Damaskin *On the Chuvash living in the Nizhnii Novgorod*

²⁶ Rodionov Ibid. 47, 130-134

²⁷ Nikol'skii Ibid., 221; Dubrovin 1884, 112-116; Anan'ev, Terent'ev 2002, 22

²⁸ *Sochineniia, prinadlezhashchie k grammatike chuvashkogo iazyka* (Compositions belonging to the Grammar of the Chuvash language 1769) See Rodionov 2012, 52-58

²⁹ Pavlova 2004, 1.1

³⁰ Rodionov 2012, 52-58; Petrov 1999, 112; Sergeev 1969, 228-238

³¹ Damaskin 1881, 1

*diocese*³² was sent to Catherine as part of a dictionary of the native peoples of the Nizhnii diocese.³³ Having worked on both the 1769 Grammar and the 1785 dictionary, Fr Ermei translated in 1788 what is considered the first published text in the Chuvash language, a Short Catechism.³⁴ The Catechism is remarkable for its first attempts at forging Chuvash Christian theological terminology, and many Russian words are used in a chuvashicized form. No attempt has been made to adapt the Russian alphabet to Chuvash phonetics, making the words unrecognizable for a Chuvash speaker.

Training of clergy from non-Russian backgrounds also took place at the Kazan and Sviiashsk schools for the Newly-Baptised where the curriculum covered reading, writing and the singing of liturgical texts in Slavonic while instruction took place in Russian, and native languages were not taught. Although pupils were expected to use their native languages outside of lessons, Tatar tended to become the lingua franca. A total of 32 Chuvash were appointed as readers in the Kazan Diocese from 1765-1772. During the period 1785-1800, 65 pupils of the School in total became minor clergy, with a few also becoming deacons and priests.³⁵ Although these figures would seem to indicate a reasonable native presence among the clergy, in practice the long years of education in Kazan appear to have russified the native pupils. In the 1850s the Chuvash clerk

³² Nikol'skii Ibid, 354-356 contains the text. Damaskin's text is one of a group of ethnographic essays written and published in Catherine's reign by scholars, explorers and state officials. Those containing significant descriptions of the Chuvash are *Byt i verovaniia Chuvash Simbirskoi gubernii (Iz zapisok iezdnogo zemliemera Mil'kovicha 1783g.* (The lifestyle and beliefs of the Chuvash of Simbirsk province (From the notes of the district surveyor Mil'kovich 1783) published by N.V.Nikol'skii in Kazan in 1906 and republished in Nikol'skii, 2004 Vol.1, 481-505. Miller G.F. *Opisanie zhivushchikh v Kazanskoi gubernii iazycheskikh narodov* (Description of the pagan peoples living in the Kazan province).

³³ *Slovar' (1785) iazykov raznykh narodov v Nizhegorodskoi eparkhii obitaiushchikh, imenno: rossiian, tatar, chuvashai, mordvy i cheremys. V Nizhegorodskoi seminarii ot znaiushchikh onyia iazyki sviashchennikov i seminaristov pod prismotrom preosviashchennogo Damaskina episkopa Nizhegorodskogo i Alatyrskogo sochinennyi 1785 goda* (Dictionary of the languages of the various peoples living in the Nizhnii Novgorod diocese: Russians, Tatars, Chuvash, Mordva and Cheremys. Compiled at Nizhnii Novgorod Seminary by priests and seminarians who know these languages under the supervision of the Very-Reverend Bishop Damaskin of Nizhnii Novgorod and Alatyr in 1785) See Rodionov 2012, 60, 138

³⁴ *Kratkii katekhizis, perevedennyi na chuvashskii iazyk s sobliudeniem rossiiskogo i chuvashskogo prostorechiia radi udobneishego onago posnaniia vospriniavshikh sviatoe kreshchenie, 1788 goda* (Short Catechism, translated into the Chuvash language using Russian and Chuvash vernacular speech to enable easier understanding by those receiving holy baptism, 1788) See Rodionov Ibid. 44; The text of the Catechism is in Rodionov 74-85

³⁵ Nikol'skii Ibid, 84, 218, 323-348; Kharlampovich 1905, 85-86

Spiridon Mikhailov wrote of the alienation the Chuvash felt from the 'Russian' clergy who usually lived separately

There are individual Russian families who live together with the clergy in almost all the Cheremys and Chuvash parishes, but they are (...) those of native origin who have married Russians, (...) Moreover, it must be said that the clergy themselves in many villages are those of native origin who were educated under former hierarchs in the Seminary at the Zilantov monastery, and in the schools which existed at the beginning of the 18th century.³⁶

Nikol'skii, admittedly writing to defend Il'minskii, concluded 'The fruit of the Schools' efforts was that (...) a pupil learnt to speak Russian but was of no use for missionary work among his own people. He (...) was drawn to the Russian lifestyle, and scorned the lifestyle of his own people.'³⁷

The Kazan School improved significantly under Archbishop Amvrosii (Podobedov 1785-99, from 1801 Metropolitan of St Petersburg) who in a 1787 report to Catherine justified combining the School with the Seminary as the native pupils could give sermons in native languages as priests in their villages, could assist in setting up elementary schools, and the most successful would be adequate for teaching posts not only in village schools but 'also at the Seminary which will be extremely flattering for those very peoples.'³⁸ Even the critical Nikol'skii praised Amvrosii for 'the extraordinary breadth of his views on native education as he sought, through the Seminary students, to achieve the rise of the natives through Christian culture.'³⁹ In a 1787 Report Amvrosii wrote of 15 native students at the Kazan Seminary 'as an experiment'.⁴⁰ One of the Chuvash seminarians that year was Iakinf Bichurin, Head of the Russian Spiritual Mission in Peking from 1808-1822 and the founding father of Russian sinology,⁴¹ another was Piotr

³⁶ Mikhailov 1972, 245

³⁷ Nikol'skii 2007 Vol. 2, 89

³⁸ Quoted in Kharlampovich 1905, 74; Chistovich 1860, 160-161

³⁹ Nikol'skii Ibid, 71

⁴⁰ Kharlampovich 1905, 74

⁴¹ On Bichurin's vast contribution to Oriental scholarship see Denisov 2007, Adoratskii 1886, Schimmelpenninck 2010, 139-150

Stefanov, the father of the priests Viktor and Matfei Vishnevskii, another was Piotr Taliev, all of whom later as priests made significant contributions to translation and scholarly work in the Volga region, and in the case of Bichurin, even further afield in China.

At Amvrosii's initiative Catechisms in native languages were published in 1804 after a wave of petitions to adopt Islam from baptized Tatars in Nizhnii Novgorod diocese.⁴² 2400 copies were published of a Chuvash Catechism translated by Kazan Theological Academy students under the supervision of Fr Piotr Taliev, a native Chuvash from Koz'modem'iansk district. Prokop'ev later described the language as 'murderous, entirely incomprehensible' with too many Russian words and turns of phrase, and unknown and inappropriate words.⁴³ Other later scholars have also condemned the poor quality of the late 18th century Chuvash translations,⁴⁴ attributing this to poor education, or the russification of the Chuvash clergy. However, Stella Rock's comments on poor translations from Greek into Slavonic in mediaeval Russia may be apt here

it is possible too that the medieval belief in the spiritual efficacy of words correctly repeated made translators particularly anxious to literally reproduce the Greek content and form, often at the expense of style, and sometimes, clarity. Monastic humility (...) and the fear of inadvertently committing a heresy to paper by misrepresenting the sacred original, was also an incentive to reproduce a holy work as exactly as possible.⁴⁵

Translations into the languages of the Volga peoples at the time of the Russian Bible Society

In Chapter One we have seen Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow's involvement in the translations of the Russian Bible Society which existed from 1812-1826. One reason for receptivity among the Orthodox hierarchy to the Russian Bible Society's aim of printing and distributing the Scriptures in the Empire's non-Russian languages was Amvrosii Podobedov's experience of

⁴² Il'minskii 1883d, 24, 32-33, 55-57, 81, 111, 124

⁴³ Prokop'ev 1904, 1107-1110; Il'minskii Ibid. 220

⁴⁴ See also Petrov 1999, 114

⁴⁵ Rock 2007, 48

native parishes and seminarians in the Kazan diocese, and his supervision of the publication of the 1804 native-language Catechisms.

There was already an active RBS affiliate in Kurmysh in 1817, and its members were translating the Gospels into Chuvash.⁴⁶ During 1818 more than 100 Chuvash were reported as joining the Kurmysh affiliate while Fr Nikolai Bazilevskii of Krasny Chetai wrote ‘the translation of the Holy Gospel of Matthew from Slavonic to Chuvash after being edited three times, is being rewritten for the last time, and the Chuvash, listening to this translation, have an entirely different understanding of (the Gospel), and rejoice that the Holy Gospel is being translated into their language.’⁴⁷ Kazan and Simbirsk divisions of the RBS were founded in January 1818, with affiliates among the Chuvash and Cheremys in Koz`modem`iansk, Tsivil`sk, Iadrin and Ishaki, and among the Mordva in Alaty` and Ardatov.⁴⁸ After being translated by clergy in Kurmysh, Iadrin and Krasny Chetai, the Chuvash Four Gospels were edited by Fr Piotr Taliev who by 1820 was a Director of the Kazan Bible Society division.⁴⁹ Only 40 miles to the north-east of Kurmysh, all of the New Testament, apart from Revelation, was translated into Cheremys by priests in Koz`modem`iansk district, while 40 miles to the south-east, the Four Gospels were translated into Mordvinian in Alaty` district.⁵⁰

Scholars have scorned the Bible Society’s reports for their overenthusiastic presentation of interest in the Society’s work⁵¹ but Krasny Chetai was Fr Ermei’s birthplace and he served as priest in Kurmysh, so the interest among the Kurmysh Chuvash in translations of the Scriptures is plausible. Sboev in the 1840s commented that the translations were ‘literal with little attention to the spirit of the language and its inner mechanism.’⁵² In 1840 Archimandrite Samuil of the Cheboksary monastery wrote that as the translation was in the upper Chuvash dialect, it was

⁴⁶ RBS Otchet 1817, 41, 209, 213

⁴⁷ RBS Otchet 1818, 66, 89

⁴⁸ Ibid. 9

⁴⁹ RBS Otchet 1821, 112

⁵⁰ Prokop`ev 1904, 1111

⁵¹ See Smirnov 1910, 349

⁵² Sboev 1856, 123-124

difficult for parishioners in the Tsivil'sk and Cheboksary districts to understand.⁵³ Prokop'ev lamented that he had only ever seen the books unused on library shelves, and they never became loved by the people and kept in the icon-corners as with the late 19th century translations. He saw the failure as the result of poor translation.⁵⁴

One reason the 1820 translations were little read was widespread illiteracy. According to the 1804 Regulation, district schools had been set up in Cheboksary in 1816, in Tsivil'sk, Iadrin, Koz'modem'iansk and Tetiushi in 1818, in Kurmysh in 1826, and every parish was expected to have at least one school where it was allowed, and even seen as necessary, to use native languages until pupils mastered Russian.⁵⁵ But as the Chuvash were state peasants, they were expected to fund the schools themselves. Most of the native population saw no reason for having schools as they drew children away from work in the fields, or young people into the army or work as canton clerks, so they were unwilling to help fund them. According to Taimasov, there were only 3 parish schools among the Chuvash before the 1840s.⁵⁶

Although the 1820s translations may have been little read, there is evidence they were not entirely without impact. On 25th November 1818 Archbishop Amvrosii of Kazan wrote to the Synod about Fr Alexei Almazov who was translating the Gospel of Mark into Chuvash in the village of Chemeievo. 'Seeing the uselessness of his labours, he decided to give them teaching and sermons in the Chuvash language, presuming that in this way he could explain Christian duties in a fuller and more correct way, and it really was so, that his parishioners, listening to teaching and sermons in their language, began to understand more correctly what was taught.'⁵⁷ Fr Alexei, a graduate of Kazan Seminary in 1802, published a collection of sermons in Chuvash under the title *A sermon about the Christian upbringing of children* in 1820, the same year as the

⁵³ GIA CR f.298, op.1, d.76, l.9-14

⁵⁴ Prokop'ev 1904, 1114-1117

⁵⁵ Prokop'ev 1905b, 172

⁵⁶ Taimasov 1992, 75-76

⁵⁷ NA CGIGN otd. 1, t.255, l.132

publication of the Chuvash Gospel.⁵⁸ One year later, Spiridon Mikhailov (1821-1861) was born in the Chemeievo parish. Mikhailov became famous for his articles about Chuvash and Cheremys history and culture in the Kazan Provincial News in the 1850s, for which he is considered the first native Chuvash writer and ethnographer. That the printed word aroused curiosity and awe is seen in Mikhailov's description of how at the age of five he developed a great desire to learn to read as he saw the liturgical books brought by the priest when he came to carry out religious rites.

Books appeared to me divine, and the letters in them like jewels. (...) As I had no books I loved to draw with chalk on the walls in imitation of the clerks. (...) At that time the Chuvash saw literacy as a great science which was inaccessible to their children as there were almost no literate people among the Chuvash.⁵⁹

In his writings Mikhailov clearly attributes Chuvash and Cheremys interest in the Christian faith to preaching in the native language.

How is it that the Cheremys have become so close to the church? I can say impartially that it is because at every service (their priest Fr Mikhail Krovovskii) teaches about the dogmas of the Orthodox faith in their native language, wherever the service takes place, inside or outside the church. But among the Chuvash, unfortunately, there are very few such priests, and for this reason the Chuvash do not give up their superstitions and suicides.⁶⁰

He nevertheless mentions approvingly Frs Vasilii Gromov of Ishaki and Fr Alexander Krechetnikov of whom he writes that he is famous here as 'an instructive Chuvash preacher towards whom the Chuvash have already begun to feel close.'⁶¹ P.V. Znamenskii also attributed the awakening of a Christian movement among the Cheremys to the priests who translated the Gospels and Orthodox Liturgy at the time of the Bible Society, and preached in Cheremys, Frs

⁵⁸ Ievdokimova 2004, 242; Sboev 1856, 123

⁵⁹ Mikhailov 1972, 350

⁶⁰ Mikhailov 2004, 177

⁶¹ Ibid. 180, 183

A. Al`binskii and M.Krokovskii.⁶² Despite the 1820 Four Gospels being in a different dialect, at least one priest in the Cheboksary district, Fr Ioann Zolotnitskii, made use of the translations in his parish school in the 1840s. ‘In his teaching he made them read the Chuvash Gospel, the Chuvash Catechism, the Chuvash Sacred History, even though they were badly translated (in the 1821 and 1832 editions), explaining or translating what they read into Russian.’⁶³

Missionary work among the Chuvash from the 1820s-1850s

In 1827 a further wave of petitions from Baptised Tatar villagers asking to be recognized as Muslims, and a return to traditional religious rites among the Cheremys of Viatka province, led to a synodal decree instructing Archbishop Philaret of Kazan to draw up plans for mission in the dioceses of European Russia with a non-Russian population.⁶⁴ Philaret and Bishop Kirill of Viatka drew up *Rules for teaching and affirming the Newly-Baptised in the Christian faith* which emphasized that clergy should know local languages, that the Epistle, Gospel, Creed and Lord’s Prayer should be read in the local language during the Liturgy, and that sermons for Sundays and Feast days and the Catechism were to be translated into native languages. All priests were to set up schools where their parishioners would learn to read and write in their own language with the help of Primer and Catechism.⁶⁵ The *Rules* also provided for three missionary archimandrites whose task was the observation of priests and deacons to make sure they were doing enough to teach their parishioners the Orthodox faith.⁶⁶

Philaret’s letters and reports show that he actively visited native parishes and was convinced that Orthodox rites should be emphasized as a way to replace traditional rites. In an 1829 letter to Kirill of Viatka he wrote

⁶² Znamenskii 1866, 63

⁶³ Quoted in Prokop`ev 1905a, 601

⁶⁴ See Werth 2002, 45-56, 60; Taimasov 1992, 83-85; Malov 1870, 233-236

⁶⁵ Malov Ibid. 246-247

⁶⁶ Malov Ibid. 251-255

I have instructed the priests to act in the following way: that instead of their superstitious rites, they should try in every way possible to teach them the sacred, sanctifying and instructive rites of our Church, and even, where possible, not to change either the time or the place of these sacred rites. For example, they make sacrifices at the beginning of sowing. Why should a priest not serve a moleben with the holy icons in the open field and so on?⁶⁷

Philaret's attitude to traditional rites is seen in an 1831 Pastoral Letter.

Stricken by this curse, the devil has not ceased enticing people and drawing them into all kind of sin. At his inspiration, very many peoples, abandoning worship of the Lord God, Creator and Provider, began to worship idols and bring them cattle and birds in sacrifice (...) many of you after holy baptism continue even now to bring sacrifices to the kiremet.⁶⁸

One of the missionary monks appointed to carry out Philaret's *Rules* was Archimandrite Samuil of the Holy Trinity Monastery in Cheboksary who in 1838 visited 48 villages in the Koz'modem'iansk and Cheboksary districts. In his report to the Synod on how few Chuvash attended church, he identified the main reason as the use of Slavonic. In January 1840 the Kazan Consistory asked Samuil 'regarding the translation of Vespers, Mattins, the Liturgy and Thanksgiving Molebens from Slavonic to Chuvash, to send the Consistory his opinion as to whether and how this suggestion could be implemented.' Samuil recommended that services should be held in Chuvash in mixed Chuvash/Tatar and Chuvash/Mari villages where Chuvash was understood by all. As some words had no equivalents in Chuvash he recommended translating not the whole service, but only important prayers, as well as the texts for Sundays, feast days and funerals, and the Epistles. In order that liturgical and scriptural translations should be clear and comprehensible, the clergy of Chuvash parishes had suggested that translations should be entrusted to a committee of two or three priests who knew Chuvash well

⁶⁷ Vasil'evskii 1888, Vol.2, 43-44

⁶⁸ Amfiteatrov 1865, 307, 310

from each district, including Fr Afanasii Palenin as supervisor, Fr Ioann Zolotnitskii, Fr Vasilii Gromov of Ishaki and five other priests.⁶⁹

The encouragement of translations meant that Fr Matfei Vishnevskii received an archiepiscopal award in 1845 for his translation of Dmitrii of Rostov's *Questions and Answers about the faith* and in 1854 he was appointed a censor of Chuvash writings.⁷⁰ Fr Stefan Elpidin translated the Psalter which was published in Kazan in 1858. These translations obviously aroused discussion about the manner of translating and the problem of creating theological terminology. V. Sboev remarked 'but what is the problem here? Use paraphrase: you will lengthen the text, but on the other hand will make it comprehensible and consequently will get closer to your aim. For the most part, the structure of speech is not Chuvash.'⁷¹

On 22nd March 1840 Archimandrite Samuil was asked by the Ministry of State Domains to put forward the names of educated priests capable of teaching Chuvash and Tatar boys who would be future canton clerks and officials.⁷² From 1840-45, 21 parish schools were opened in Chuvash villages, and by 1860 there were about 60 schools in total.⁷³ In the 1840s schools, priests were to teach Russian reading and writing, arithmetic and Catechism, but there were some priests who began to use Chuvash, such as the priests Zolotnitskii in Koshki, Farmakovskii in Ubeevo, Andreianov in Toisi, and Soloviev in Tarkhanov.⁷⁴ Evdokimova also mentions other priests active in schools, Fr I.V. Korshunov in Sundyr (Mariinskii Posad) from 1843, Fr M.I.Kedrov in Iandashevo from 1845-50 and in Sundyr from 1850, although she does not indicate use of Chuvash. She does, however, give very high statistics about knowledge of Chuvash among the clergy by the mid-19th century, saying that in Iadrin district 98% of priests, 93% of deacons, and

⁶⁹ NA CGIGN otd.1, ed.khr.222, l.290; GIA CR f.298, op.1, d.76, l.9-14

⁷⁰ GIA CR f.225, op.1, d.286, l.483

⁷¹ Sboev 1856, 123-124

⁷² GIA CR f.298, op.1, d.76, l.29

⁷³ Pavlova 2004, 1.1

⁷⁴ Prokop'ev 1905a, 601-3

77% of readers were fluent Chuvash speakers, with the figures being 92%, 68% and 65% in Cheboksary district, and 66%, 43% and 46% in Tsivil'sk district.⁷⁵

Despite all this educational activity Spiridon Mikhailov lamented the abuses he saw in schools, saying of the Ministry of State Domains' aim to educate native children

A truly well-intentioned aim, but in practice things work very differently: the majority of teachers do not study as they should with their pupils, some do not attend classes for months on end, and there are even schools which are always locked (...) clerks, village elders and some of the clergy, (...) try as much as possible to keep (the Chuvash) in deep-rooted ignorance so that as they become educated, they can't block the path (of the above officials) to idleness.⁷⁶

Mikhailov made his own proposals about schools

It would be better to educate Chuvash children religiously and morally, (...) so they would better understand the Christian religion, and teach them how to read and sing in church. It is necessary (...) to open central schools in the villages to which people come on pilgrimage, Ishaki and Chemeievo, to which all the natives flock to venerate the wonderworking icon of St Nicholas, (...) in these central schools more subjects could be taught than are now being taught in parish schools.⁷⁷

Mikhailov saw education as needed so that the Chuvash would be able to defend themselves against exploitation. He particularly stressed this in relation to the destruction of the Chuvash traditional livelihood and the forests as

the local Chuvash watched on with indifference, fearing to cut down the spoilt oak trees in order not to bring disaster on themselves. It is well known that this people understands in its own way any innovations and orders, either from ignorance or from incorrect explanation by those around

⁷⁵ Evdokimova 2009, 154

⁷⁶ Mikhailov 2004, 181-2

⁷⁷ Mikhailov 1972, 191

them. (...) We mustn't look with indifference on people's glaring ignorance and not think about posterity.⁷⁸

Spiridon Mikhailov's writings show us how knowledge of the Christian faith was also being transmitted in non-verbal forms at this time, through icons, and through pilgrimages associated with fairs on their feast days. So many pilgrims came to venerate the icon of St Nicholas at Ishaki that a fair had begun to take place on his feast day. Pilgrims flocked to Ishaki again around 26th June on their way to the Tikhvin fair in Tsivil'sk. At the beginning of the 19th century repair work was carried out on Ishaki church, and icons depicting the history of the Old and New Testament were painted on the walls, funded by the gifts of pilgrims.

It can be said without exaggeration that Ishaki in the eyes of the native peoples, especially the Chuvash, is a "metropolis" in the direct sense of the word and they come here to pray more than to their parish churches. Here there have been, and there are now, worthy pastors to evangelize the native people, preaching the true God in the native Chuvash language.⁷⁹

Both Russians and natives would also bring their wares to the Pokrov fair in Pokrovskoe near Koz'modem'iansk.

Apart from benefitting the church, the clergy and local population, the Pokrov fair brings the significant benefit that, through it, the natives, coming into contact with Russians, adopt their ways and customs. (...) The mountain Mari of many nearby villages, observing such Russian habits, have adopted them, and instead of the former, semi-savage rites after the threshing of the grain, have begun to celebrate the feast of Pokrov in the same way as the inhabitants of Pokrovskoe.⁸⁰

Mikhailov was nevertheless frank in his opinions about the attitude of most Chuvash to the Orthodox Church and its clergy in the 1850s.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 233-236

⁷⁹ Ibid, 181, 187

⁸⁰ Ibid, 169

The majority of Chuvash still do not know the purpose of the Lord's churches and the clergy appointed to them, and due to the teaching of the shamans and spiritual leaders, think that churches and priests are appointed especially for their oppression. If the clergy in general tried to teach them the truths of the Gospel and refrained from treating them indecently, then the Chuvash would have forgotten their *iomzi* a long time ago, and would have stopped committing suicide.⁸¹

Fr V.P.Vishnevskii, V.A.Sboev and missionary ethnography in the mid-19th century

Two other men, apart from Mikhailov, made important contributions to the study of Chuvash traditional beliefs and rites in the mid-19th century, Fr Viktor Vishnevskii (1804-1885) and Vasilii Sboev (1810-1855). Vishnevskii was the grandson of a Chuvash peasant who attended the Kazan School for the Newly Baptized and the Seminary, serving later as a Reader in a Chuvash parish. Viktor grew up speaking Chuvash 'as though it was his mother tongue,'⁸² studied at Kazan Seminary⁸³ then from 1822 at the Moscow Academy. His obituary tells us that 'he imitated in his sermons the inimitable model sermons of (Philaret of Moscow) whose memory he revered and whose writings he constantly read.'⁸⁴ He returned to Kazan in 1826 and taught philosophy at the seminary until 1842. At Philaret Amphiteatrov's request he compiled *An outline of the rules of the Chuvash language and dictionary, compiled for the church schools of the Kazan diocese*⁸⁵ published in 1836. Despite being a textbook for church schools, the dictionary reflects the growing interest in Russian intellectual circles of the 1830s in the folklore and language of the ordinary people as Vishnevskii translates and also describes words used in everyday life, especially the rites and beliefs of the Old Chuvash faith.⁸⁶

⁸¹ Mikhailov 2004, 177

⁸² Vishnevskii 1886, 30

⁸³ Vishnevskii 2004, 3

⁸⁴ Vishnevskii 1886, 35

⁸⁵ Vishnevskii 1836

⁸⁶ Ibid. 70-216

In 1843 Vishnevskii became a missionary to the Chuvash and Cheremys of the Kazan diocese.⁸⁷

In an 1844 Report⁸⁸ and *On the religious beliefs of the Chuvash. From the notes of the missionary Protopriest V.P. Vishnevskii* published in 1846, he leaves us with the impression that the parish priests are only in rare cases implementing Philaret Amphiteatrov's 1830 proposals. Of the 60 parishes he had visited, some priests deserved praise for their attention to teaching their parishioners, whereas in many parishes only a few knew how to make the sign of the cross and even fewer knew short prayers. Vishnevskii reproached priests for not going on processions with icons in the fields after the harvest and during drought, which meant the Chuvash continued their own rites. He suggested that when priests went to villages for great feast days they should serve a *moleben* in each household 'in order to acquaint both adults and children with the rites and spirit of Christianity'. Many priests had not even heard of the Synodal Decree of 23rd May 1830 which exhorted better teaching of the Newly Baptized and prescribed the reading of the Catechism, the Gospel, the Creed and Lord's Prayer in Chuvash.⁸⁹

Vishnevskii described the unbaptised as 'stagnating in superstitions'⁹⁰ and evaluated the Chuvash faith using the language of a seminary philosophy lecturer when he writes

The religion of the Chuvash cannot contain anything spiritual or inspiring for free and reasonable beings as when there are no truthful concepts of the Almighty and where it is not known that he is the Father of humankind, no feelings of filial love, submission and reverence for him can be expected.⁹¹

Concerning the origins of the Chuvash faith he wrote

We must not presume that they thought up their religion themselves as "since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen"

⁸⁷ NA CGIGN Otd.1 ed.khr.222, l.63, 71

⁸⁸ Ibid., l.285-289

⁸⁹ Ibid, l.291-292

⁹⁰ Vishnevskii 1846, 2

⁹¹ Ibid. 8

but the Chuvash are so cold and indifferent to this school of the knowledge of God that, even in their own way, they don't reflect on the origin and aim of the world and of man (...) to the question about the origins of their faith, they all unanimously reply "we do not know where our ancestors got it from."⁹²

Vishnevskii concluded that 'they based their beliefs on what they heard of the beliefs, both true and false of the Russian people and the Tatar people.'⁹³

Despite Vishnevskii's negative view of the Chuvash 'superstitions', he translates the names of the subordinate beings in the Chuvash pantheon as though they are Christian angelic beings or saints. He translates *Pulekhse* as 'Herald', *Mun kebe* as 'great apostle and translator' and *khurban* as 'intercessor before Tora.' The baptized Chuvash have told him

the Chuvash recognize 12 good beings subordinate to the Almighty, as the Saviour had 12 apostles, that their *Pulekhse* is the same as the Archangel Michael for Christians, that *Mun ira* is the Guardian Angel; *Pikhambar* is St George on whose feast day the farm animals are let out to pasture for the first time; *Kherle sir* is St Nicholas near whose spring feast day the spring sowing ends ..., *Kebe* is an Apostle, *Khurban* a Seraphim.⁹⁴

Parish priests have complained that the Chuvash 'begin to observe Paskha in their own way, before it has started' and so come to services on that day already drunk. They observe Paskha 'in their own way with grain', bringing boiled barley grains as an offering on the evening of Holy Saturday, and in some places on one of the three days before Paskha, in order to ask the Creator for fertility during the coming summer.⁹⁵

Vishnevskii wrote model sermons *Teachings on the vanity of the Chuvash superstitions, compiled for the instruction of Newly-Baptized Chuvash of the Kazan diocese* of which the first

⁹² Ibid. 25

⁹³ Ibid. 26

⁹⁴ Ibid. 26

⁹⁵ Ibid. 14-16

sermon is entitled *How baptized Chuvash must not practice the superstitious rites which their pagan ancestors practiced*.⁹⁶ Other sermons are about the practice of animal sacrifice, the falsehood of the *iomzi*,⁹⁷ observing Sunday rather than Friday, celebrating Easter in a Christian manner, and how to pray to God during drought and bad harvest. Despite Vishnevskii's description of the Old Faith as paganism, throughout the *Teachings* he quotes largely from the Old Testament's instructions on sacrifice, sometimes using arguments showing the superiority of Christianity over Judaism.⁹⁸ In other places his attitude to the Chuvash *gods* is that they do not exist while the *Kiremet* is 'nothing more than an empty and seducing fabrication of your shamans' and

was invented by the age old enemy of the human race – a spirit, created by God, but who rebelled against His Creator, and is known as Satan, who has forced those under his sway to make gods of mortal people and birds, and has populated the seas, rivers, air, mountains, forests, groves with imaginary gods.⁹⁹

In comparison with Bichurin's and Innokentii's studies of the Chinese and Alaskan peoples which were also published in the 1840s, Vishnevskii has a more critical attitude to Old Chuvash beliefs and rites. His writings show both the Chuvash fiercely clinging to their old beliefs and rites, and resisting missionary initiatives, but also show how the Old Faith in the 1830s-40s was a syncretistic mixture, with the Chuvash themselves making correspondences between their deities and the Christian saints, and Christian terminology gradually being appropriated.

V.A. Sboev and his *Notes on the Chuvash*

Vasilii Sboev's *Research on the natives of the Kazan Province Notes on the Chuvash* gives us a picture of the Chuvash written by someone with an Orthodox theological background and

⁹⁶ Vishnevskii 2004, 208-9

⁹⁷ The *iomzi* were the Chuvash spiritual leaders or shamans.

⁹⁸ Vishnevskii 2004, 235

⁹⁹ Ibid. 219, 227-228

sympathetic to the Church, yet not the view of an official missionary. He grew up in the home of a Russian priest in a Chuvash village,¹⁰⁰ studied at Kazan Seminary in the late 1820s then at the St Petersburg Academy from 1829-33. He returned to teach at the Kazan Seminary then taught Russian Literature at Kazan University from 1841-50. During the 1840s Sboev wrote his *Notes on the Chuvash* in the form of letters to the Editor of Kazan Provincial News, A.I.Artemiev, who encouraged both his and Spiridon Mikhailov's study of native ethnography.

Sboev depicts the Chuvash in the manner of the noble savage as they are

clever, hardworking, excellent farmers (...) in this respect are far superior to local Russian peasants. (...) As people living close to nature the Chuvash, similar to American savages, understand it by instinct and feeling and often foresee changes which the educated person cannot forecast despite all the artificial means invented by him for this.¹⁰¹

Renewing his acquaintance with the Chuvash in the 1840s, Sboev emphasizes the changes which have taken place since his childhood. 'Frequent contact with Russians, the increase in trade and industrial activity, have also changed the Chuvash way of thinking in many respects'¹⁰² and this has led to the development of a Chuvash trading 'aristocracy' which has adopted the Russian language and lifestyle. A further educated 'aristocracy' is also arising among those who have studied in schools.¹⁰³ Nevertheless, Sboev perceives resistance to change among the Chuvash as 'The majority of the Chuvash adhere with a kind of servile respect to the way of life of their ancestors.'¹⁰⁴ This is accompanied among the village Chuvash by resistance to contact with Russians 'It must be said, however, that since the very subjugation of this region, in general Russians probably treated the Chuvash without any gentleness.'¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ Rodionov 2006, 242; Sboev 1856, 113

¹⁰¹ Ibid. 36

¹⁰² Sboev 1856, 9

¹⁰³ Ibid. 10, 12, 107

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. 17

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. 14-15

Rather than describing the Old Faith as paganism, Sboev discerns two layers in their pre-Christian beliefs, an original dualism which has regressed into polytheism. Their original worldview involved belief in a good God, Tora, and the evil Shaitan, a dualism ‘perhaps borrowed either from followers of ancient Zoroastrian religion or from the Khazars who once were the neighbours of the Chuvash and adhered to the Jewish religion, probably in a not entirely pure form.’¹⁰⁶ Sboev traces the names of the gods and other elements of Chuvash beliefs to Semitic, Turkic, Mongolian, Arabic and Persian words which he attributes to trading links with the Persians and Arabs, and the religious and cultural influence of the Khazars, Bulgars and other Volga peoples.¹⁰⁷ The regression into polytheism began when the Chuvash were forced to flee to the forest after the Mongol invasion, and they began to deify the forces of nature. ‘All these gods are (...) representations of the various different qualities of a single, higher being, formerly seen as the deity by the Chuvash.’¹⁰⁸ Many Christian and Judaic elements can be discerned in Sboev’s picture of Chuvash beliefs

According to the Chuvash, people were created from the earth by the supreme god himself, *Siuldi-Tora*. (...) People lived in an original state of blessedness with abundance of food obtained without hard labour, without sorrow and illness. But their wealth was the reason for their downfall (...) everyone wanted to be greater than others and rule over all (...) they gave themselves over to the influence of the *shaitan* and committed a dreadful crime, killing the firstborn of *Siuldi-Tora*. Then *Siuldi-Tora* scattered them about the face of the earth. (...) Since that time various states, tribes and languages appeared among people.¹⁰⁹

It is to the crime of killing the firstborn son of *Siuldi-Tora* that the Chuvash attribute the origin of the *kiremet*.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. 78

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. 137-140

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. 83-84, 96

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. 97

Originally *kiremet* was the name of the son of the supreme god, his firstborn. Incited by *shaitan*, people killed him when he was travelling about the earth, and in order to hide from the supreme god their terrible crime, they burnt the body of his murdered son and scattered his ashes on the wind. But where the ashes fell on the earth, trees grew, and with them the son of god returned to life, but not in person, but as a multitude of beings hostile to mankind, who became (...) tied to the earth and could no longer live in fellowship with the good, heavenly gods. In this way many *kiremits* came into being.¹¹⁰

Sboev illustrates the fusion of traditional rites with more standard Orthodox practices in the early 19th century at the autumn rite of *chuklene*.

Every Vasilii Ivanych (Chuvash) would consider himself the greatest sinner if he started to use the new grain and new beer without previously carrying out *chuklene* or prayers over the grain. (...) The head of the family says a prayer of thanksgiving for the grain harvest to the Lord God, and asks the Lord to bless their future labours with abundance, (...) and to grant to his poor people peace and quietness. Then, making the sign of the cross over the house three times with the bread, the head of the family cuts it into pieces which are offered to all present (...) They celebrate in a similar way the successful completion of any important task (...) in the prayers and invocations themselves used at *Chuklene* there are no noticeable traces of paganism.¹¹¹

Sboev comments that such Chuvash rites are comparable to Russian rites of praying over and making the sign of the cross over any first fruits before eating them for the first time and he remarks that even in the 1820s when he saw the ceremony ‘in its ancient form’ there was nevertheless an admixture of prayers addressed to the Christian God and to Christian saints.

Orgies were then part of the rite; thanksgiving was made to many pagan gods. It was the *iomzi* who said the prayers (...) which were said over the bread and food to *Siuldi Tora*. But as soon as they got to the prayers over the beer then a multitude of gods appeared.

¹¹⁰ Ibid. 85

¹¹¹ Ibid. 39-41

Sboev gives a long list of these deities, which concluded with prayers to the Russian God and making the sign of the cross before the icons.¹¹²

Conclusion

Despite Chuvash contact with monastic settlement as early as the 14th century, and the voluntary accession of the Chuvash lands to the Russian state, the vast majority of the Chuvash lived isolated from Russians, on the whole continuing their own religious rites and beliefs until the early 18th century. After being coerced into accepting baptism *en masse* through the promise of material incentives from 1743-1749, attempts were made to educate native clergy, build churches and establish parishes. Education in the 18th century seminaries where Slavonic and Latin predominated and the use of Slavonic at services with Russian clergy meant that these first native clergy were largely russified and alienated from their fellow Chuvash who had little contact with the parish churches.

Historians have on the whole portrayed an extremely negative picture of Russian missions in the Volga region in the 18th century¹¹³ although they have often relied on the historians whose defence of the Il'minskii system in the early 20th century led to general criticism of the first efforts in the areas of native education and translations, as the concern was to show the massive advance made under Il'minskii.¹¹⁴ While there is undoubtedly much truth in these historians' conclusions, even they did find some redeeming features in the 18th century church schools and at the turn of the 19th century we see small numbers of bilingual, educated clergy who to some extent had retained their Chuvash roots, but also had a seminary education. After the first stilted attempts at translating religious texts into Chuvash at Nizhnii Novgorod seminary, it was from among these russified Chuvash clergy such as Alexei Almazov, Piotr Taliev, Viktor and Matfei Vishnevskii, that improved translations of Gospels and sermons, grammars and dictionaries

¹¹² Ibid. 43

¹¹³ See Lemerrier-Quelquejay 1867, 386-391; Geraci 2001, 21; Mozharovskii 1880, 37-52; Nikol'skii Ibid, 89

¹¹⁴ See for example Kharlampovich 1905, 86-89; Nikol'skii Ibid, 89; Prokop'iev 1905a, 3

began to appear in the early 19th century, thus laying the foundation upon which Il'minskii and his followers built.

As most of the Chuvash were illiterate until the late 19th century, knowledge of the Christian faith appears to have spread through what Fletcher describes as 'seepage at the peripheries of dominant cultural systems'¹¹⁵ through trading and other contacts with Russians at fairs and in towns and by the early 19th century pilgrimages to wonder-working icons and fairs on Christian feast days were a widespread element of Chuvash popular devotion. Ethnographic descriptions at this time show that the Chuvash had accommodated some Christian elements into their own religious practices which were nevertheless characterized as pagan in contemporary descriptions.

Late 18th century and early 19th century ethnographic descriptions of Chuvash life coincide with what Peter Burke has described as 'the discovery of the people,' a process Stella Rock observes as also taking place among the Russian people at this time.¹¹⁶ She comments

It seems that an academic concept of double-belief, meaning the preservation of pagan elements within the religious faith of the Russian *narod* or "folk" (...) coincided with an increase in curiosity about the "folk" in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, and the romantic, nationalist elevation of folk culture and religion that developed as a result of the work of Herder (...) and other European intellectuals. (...) The myth that the "folk", unspoiled by modern enlightened ideas, preserved pure and unchanging cultural and religious traditions rooted in the primitive, pre-Christian past, has had the greatest impact.¹¹⁷

We see this 'discovery of the people' beginning in the first descriptions of the Chuvash in the late 18th century, carried out by or under the influence of German scholars, and continuing in Sboev and Mikhailov's articles in Kazan Provincial News in the 1850s.

¹¹⁵ Fletcher 1999, 229

¹¹⁶ Rock 2007, 88

¹¹⁷ Rock Ibid, 87-88

Viktor Vishnevskii, while sometimes equating Chuvash traditional rites with paganism and Satan, sometimes with Judaism, sometimes with poorly assimilated Russian and Tatar beliefs, continues Philaret Amphiteatrov's negative evaluation as a missionary of Chuvash popular devotion. In her analysis of double-belief Eve Levin remarks 'ecclesiastical authors (...) used the term "pagan" indiscriminately to condemn non-Christian activities, whether actually pagan, heretical, foreign, or otherwise alien'¹¹⁸ and Rock adds 'popular practices have been conceived of as pagan (or demonic, idolatrous...) by reforming clerics in diverse communities across several centuries (...) Periods of uncertainty and conflict may escalate such accusations.'¹¹⁹ Philaret Amphiteatrov and Vishnevskii epitomize such reforming clerics, with their missionary work arising in response to the uncertainty and crisis of the baptized Volga peoples adopting Islam and the resurgence of traditional rites. Their attitudes laid the groundwork for the view, largely although not indiscriminately held by Il'minskii and his late 19th century followers, of 'the superficiality of the initial Christianisation'¹²⁰ which prompted their criticism of 18th and early 19th century missionary efforts, especially in the post-1905 era. This has meant that the progress made in developing translation skills and native clergy before Il'minskii's time, although far from ideal, has been underestimated.

¹¹⁸ Levin 1993, 36

¹¹⁹ Rock Ibid. 157

¹²⁰ Rock Ibid. 89

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NA CGIGN	Nauchny Arkhiv, Chuvashskii Gosudarstvennyi Institut Gumanitarnykh Nauk (Scientific archive, Chuvash State Institute of the Humanities)
NA RT	Natsional`nyi Arkhiv Respubliki Tatarstana (National Archive of the Republic of Tatarstan)
BSA	Bible Society Archive, Cambridge University Library, United Kingdom
RGB OR	Rossiiskaia Gosudarstvennaia Biblioteka, Otdel Rukopisei (Russian State Library Manuscripts Department)

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C-ASS	Canadian-American Slavic Studies
CAS	Central Asian Survey
CMRS	Cahiers du monde russe et sovietique
CONT	Contacts
CSSH	Comparative Studies in Society and History
EW	East and West (Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente)
GOTR	Greek Orthodox Theological Review
IBMR	International Bulletin of Missionary Research
IKE	Izvestiia po Kazanskoi Eparkhii (Kazan Diocesan News)
IICCN	Issledovaniia po Istorii Chuvashii i Chuvashskogo Naroda (Research into the History of Chuvashia and the Chuvash People)
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IOAIE	Izvestiia Obshchestva arkheologii, istorii i etnografii pri Imperatorskom Kazanskom Universitate (News of the Society of Archaeology, History and Ethnography at Kazan University)
IRIS	Izvestiia po russkomu iazyku i slovesnosti (News of Russian Language and Literature)
IRM	International Review of Missions
KGv	Kazanskie Gubernskie Vedomosti (Kazan Provincial News)
KhCh	Khristianskoe Chtenie (Christian Reading)
MIS	Missioner (Missionary)
MO	Missionerskoe Obozrenie (Missionary Review)
MV	Moskovskie Vedomosti (Moscow News)
PB	Pravoslavny Blagovestnik (Orthodox Missionary)
PS	Pravoslavny Sobesednik (Orthodox Companion)
PTsV	Pribavleniia k Tserkovnym Vedomostiam (Supplements to the Church News)
RA	Russkii Arkhiv (Russian Archive)
REA	Revue des etudes armeniennes
RSP	Rukovodstvo dlia sel'skikh pastyrei (Manual for village pastors)
SmbEV	Simbirskii Eparkhial'nye Vedomosti (Simbirsk Diocesan News)
SBSG	Sotrudnik Bratstva Sviatitelia Guriia (Brotherhood of St Gurii Co-worker)
SMRN	Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History
SO	Syn Otechestva (Son of the Fatherland)
SR	Slavic Review
SSF	Studia Slavica Finlandensia
Str	Strannik (The Wanderer)
SVSQ	St Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly
SZH	Sourozh
TOZh	Tserkovno-obshchestvennaia zhizn' Ezhenedel'ny zhurnal izdavaemy pri Kazanskoi Dukhovnoi Akademii (The Life of Church and Society, Weekly journal published at Kazan Theological Academy)
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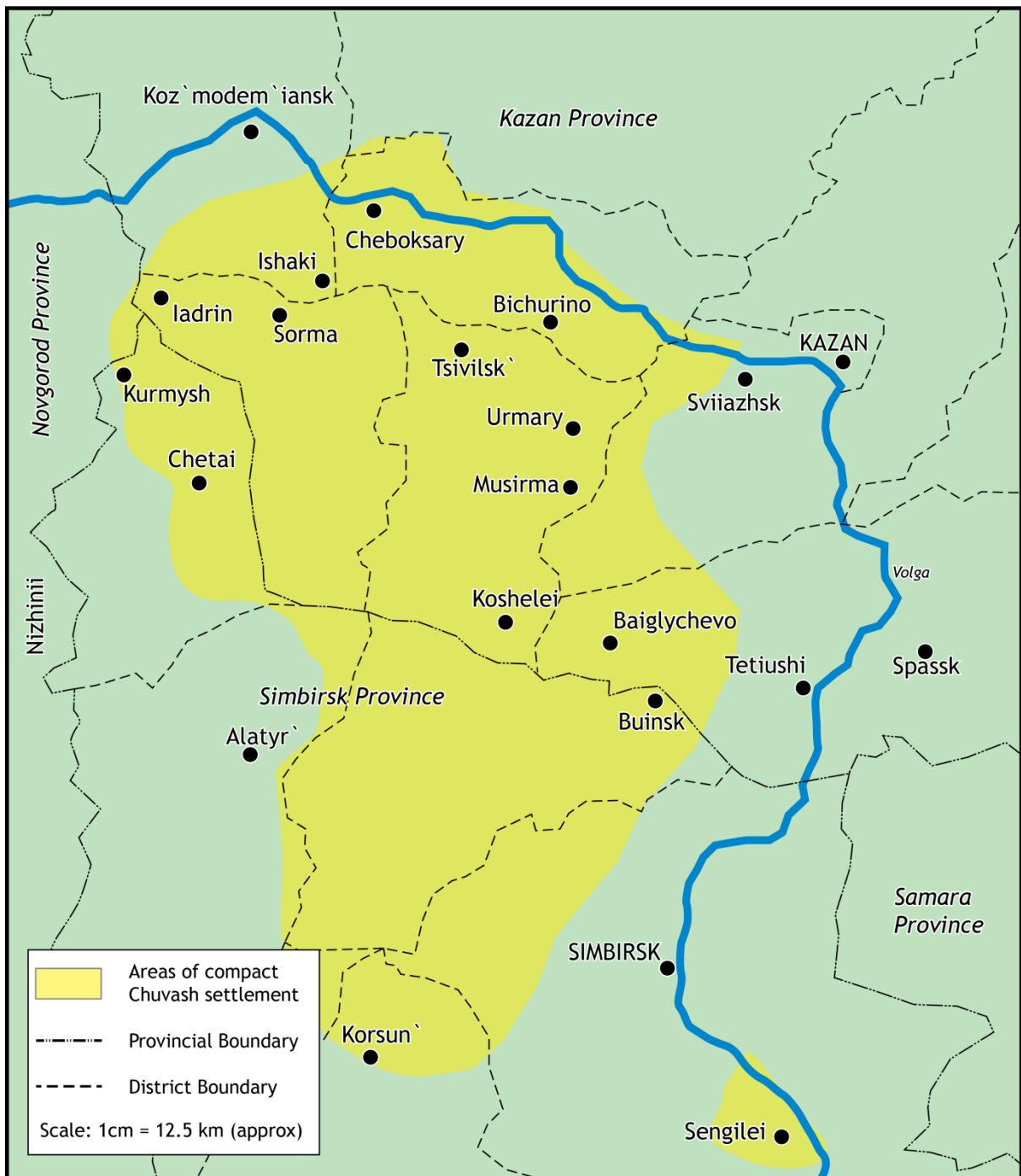
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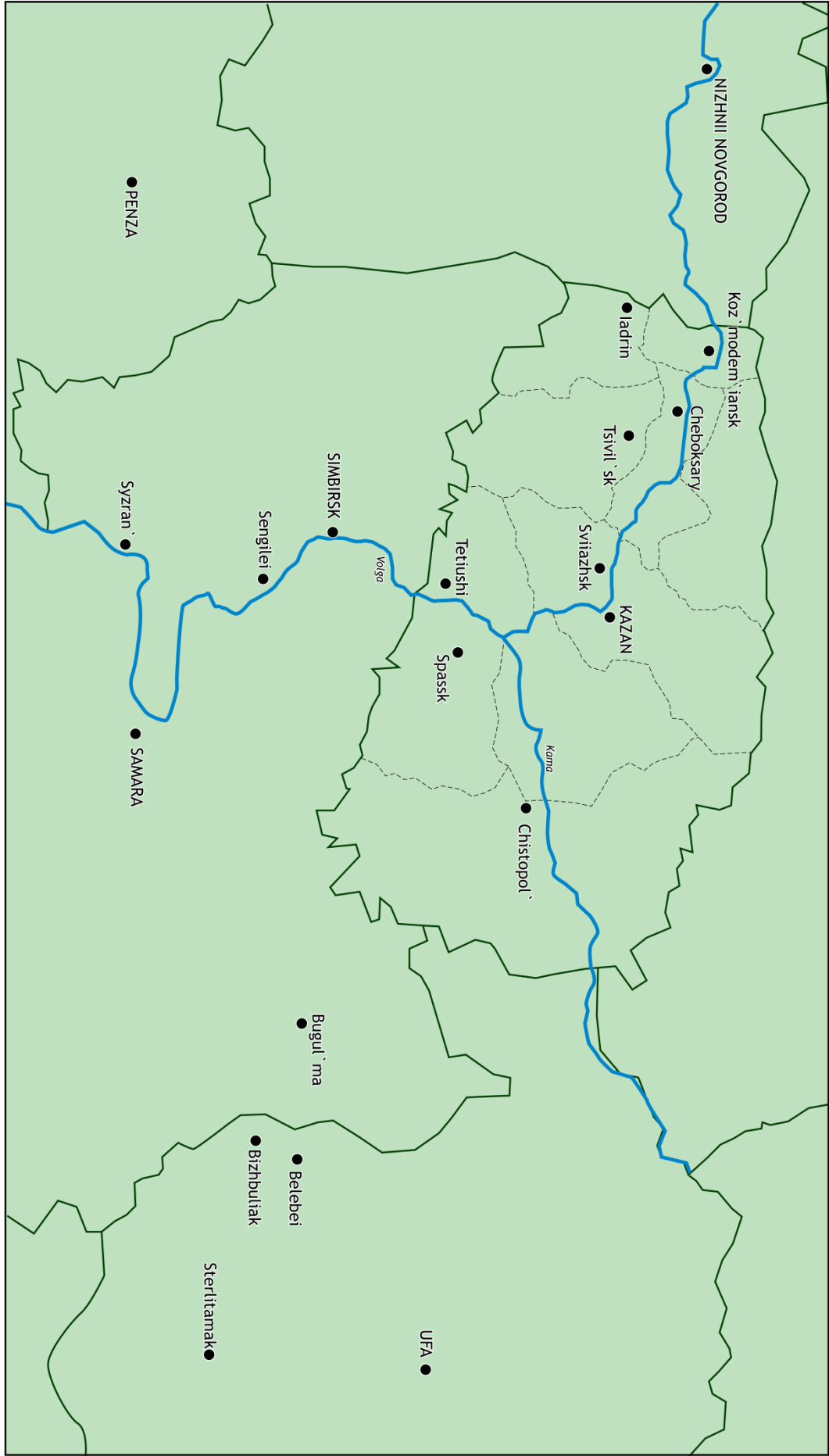
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After Ivanov, Nikolaev , Dimitriev 2000, 59

The Chuvash diaspora in the late 19th / early 20th centuries



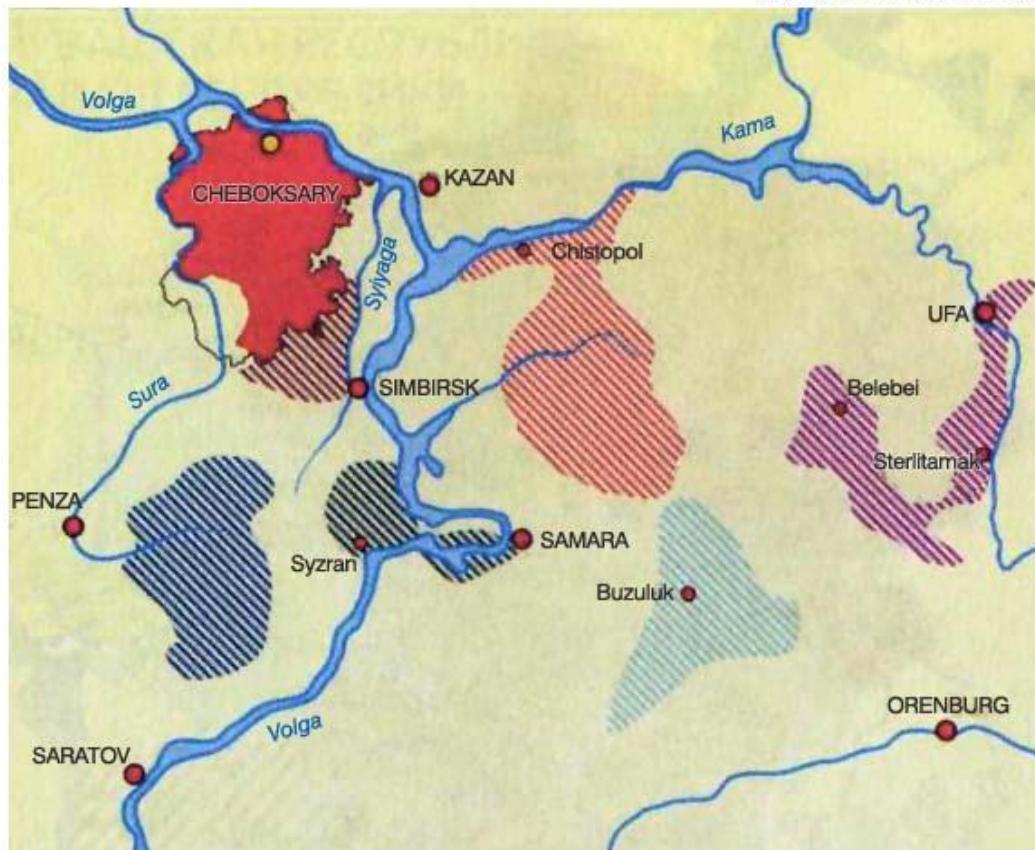
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Migration of the Bulgars and Savirs



Europe in the year 1000AD



Main settlement areas of the Chuvash

