Acta Slavica Iaponica, Tomus 33, pp. 1–25

Articles

The Tension of Memory: Reclaiming the Kazan Kremlin[1]

Matthew Derrick

Introduction: Day of Memory, October 2009

On a Sunday morning in mid-October of 2009, a few hundred Tatar national activists converge on Kazan to take part in the twentieth annual Day of Memory in honor of their ancestors who perished while defending the city in their ultimate defeat by the Muscovite troops of Ivan IV ("the Terrible") in 1552. As in years past, the public spectacle begins on Freedom Square with a *namaz* led by an imam. The Muslim prayer is followed by fiery speeches delivered, in Tatar, by nationalist leaders who address a crowd brandishing a motley array of flags, among them the official green-white-red tricolor of Tatarstan and the solid green banner of Islam. Many of those gathered clutch placards bearing slogans such as "I Remember 1552," "Tatars Return to Your Homeland," and "Holocaust of the Tatar People—1552." The series of speeches is followed by a recitation, now in Russian, of this year's Day of Memory declaration, decrying centuries of "uninterrupted Russification and Christianization" that, as those gathered agree, continues today with federal laws rolling back and revoking freedoms previously granted to Russia's ethnic republics such as Tatarstan.[2] The document also includes a laundry list of demands, including two that have appeared in almost every declaration of the past twenty years: the erection of a monument to the Tatars' ancestors who died defending Kazan in 1552 and Moscow's recognition of Tatarstan as a the Tatars' sovereign homeland.[3]

With the 2009 declaration unanimously accepted, the activists unfurl a banner proclaiming, in Tatar, "Our Goal is Independence!" (see Figure 1). A phalanx of mostly young men carries the banner while the flag carriers, placard bearers, and other participants file in behind. They commence a boisterous march through the city center, first heading south down Pushkin Street. A veteran activist wields a megaphone and leads the marchers in shouts of

1 Research contributing this article was conducted with the generous support of the Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Fellowship and Social Science Research Council International Dissertation Research Fellowship.

2 Quoted in Iana Amelina, "V obide na Ivana Groznogo," *Zvezda Povolzh'ia* (October 15–21, 2009), p. 3. In addition to newspaper accounts, other print materials, and interviews, this article also draws on the author's participant observation of the annual Day of Memory in 2008 and 2009.

3 Ibid.

Figure 1: Day of Memory activists unfurl a banner proclaiming, in Tatar, "Our Goal is Independence!" before commencing a march on the Kazan Kremlin (photo by author).

Azatlyk ("Freedom"). The chants intensify as the crowd turns right and snakes its way westward down Kremlin Street, a stretch of little more than a kilometer that leads them to a team of Muslim clergy. The imams greet the marchers outside the thick white walls of the Kazan Kremlin. One of the robed clergy commandeers the megaphone, starts up an incantation of *Allahu Akbar* ("Allah is Great"), and leads the group through the gates of Spasskaia Tower and into the confines of the fortress, site to what the activists term "the tragic events of 1552." We are now on hallowed ground, several participants remind me, this kremlin built atop the ruins of what once was an Islamic citadel, the seat of the vanquished Kazan Khanate and, for those marching today, the enduring symbol of lost statehood.

The throngs of flags and placards, mixed with loosely coordinated cries of *Allahu Akbar* and *Azatlyk*, startle tourists who have arrived to experience firsthand the landscape they have seen numerous times in ubiquitous panoramic representations—in regional and local newscasts, on souvenirs and bric-a-brac, in magazines and newspapers, in advertisements of virtually anything connected to Kazan and Tatarstan—that prominently feature the signature onion domes of the sixteenth-century Annunciation Cathedral and the minarets of the grand Kul-Sharif Mosque, officially opened in 2005 after a decade of planning and construction. These two monuments, dominating the landscape, stand side by side within the grounds of the Kazan Kremlin (see Figure 2), their proximity most often narrated as a symbol of the harmony between Islam and Orthodoxy, Russia's two main religions, and material evidence of the peaceful

relations between the Sunni Muslim Tatars and Orthodox Christian Russians who inhabit the city and region in roughly equal numbers. Today, however, the intended harmony of the landscape is pierced, disrupted by the nationalists who stream past the tourists and move decisively toward the fortress' westernmost reaches on their way to the seven-tiered Siuiumbike Tower, standing fifty-eight meters tall and crowned with the golden crescent of Islam. The imams assume central positions at the base of the tower as the crowd forms a semicircle around them. This year's Day of Memory, as has been done at this same place on a Sunday morning every mid-October since 1989, culminates with a public *namaz* in remembrance of the Tatars' ancestors who perished while defending these grounds in 1552.

The landscape of the Kazan Kremlin presents a compelling case study because, in piquing questions of historical memory, it reflects how ideas about religious and national identity have shifted along with changing notions of homeland in post-socialist Tatarstan. Although the current dominant meaning of the Kazan Kremlin, with its skyline today graced in tandem by the domes of the Annunciation Cathedral and the minarets of the recently constructed Kul-Sharif Mosque, is one of interfaith harmony, this landscape as it has developed in the post-Soviet period in fact is a product of *tension* between competing, conflicting political-territorial visions. Specifically, this landscape is a result of the tension between how the national activists who organize and partake in the annual Day of Memory understand what Tatarstan should be as a political-territorial space and how those who hold power view the region and its place within the Russian Federation. This central tension has shaped the meaning of the Kazan Kremlin and how the relationship between religion and national identity is

Figure 2: A view from the west of the Kazan Kremlin as it is today. Far left is the Annunciation Cathedral. Far right is the Kul-Sharif Mosque. The Siuiumbike Tower stands between them (photo by author).

encoded in the landscape. This tension is far from static. Indeed, as examined in this paper, the dominant meaning of the Kazan Kremlin has changed drastically over the past two decades, influenced by the dramatic political-territorial transformation of post-Soviet Russia and, by extension, Tatarstan.

Because of their brute materiality, landscapes such as the Kazan Kremlin may appear as fixed, objective reflections of collective memory and social relations. Yet, as geographers and other spatially attuned researchers have shown, landscapes are active participants in the structuring of social relations, vessels that communicate and reinforce notions of ideal community. As Daniels writes, "Landscapes, whether focusing on single monuments or framing sketches of scenery, provide visible shape; *they picture the nation* [although] there is seldom a secure or enduring consensus as to which, or rather whose, legends and landscapes epitomize the nation."[4] For Daniels and Cosgrove[5] landscape is a historically contingent "way of seeing," a "representation" that structures society in a manner that legitimates the state and reifies favored images of the nation. Duncan and Duncan liken landscape to a "text" that "transforms ideologies into concrete form," reflecting, shaping, and reproducing group identity.[6] Landscape as text or discourse is read and internalized, thereby naturalizing dominant ideas of national community. While representational and textual approaches have been criticized for neglecting the materiality of landscape[7] and the realm of practice,[8] contemporary studies continue to investigate landscape as a transmitter of national ideology.[9] Common to these studies is the understanding that landscape "encapsulates a dominant image of how elites view

4 Stephen Daniels, *Fields of Vision: Landscape Imagery and National Identity in England and the United States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 5, emphasis added.

5 Denis Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998).

6 James S. Duncan and Nancy Duncan, "(Re)reading the Landscape," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 6 (1988), p. 117.

7 See e.g. Don Mitchell, "Review of *Writing Worlds: Discourse, Text, and Metaphor in the Representation of Landscape*, by Trevor Barnes and James S. Duncan," *Professional Geographer* 45 (1993), pp. 474–475; Don Mitchell, "Cultural Landscapes: Just Landscapes or Landscapes of Justice?" *Progress in Human Geography* 27 (2003), pp. 787–796.

8 See e.g. Tim Cresswell, "Landscape and the Obliteration of Practice," in Kay Anderson et al., eds., *Handbook of Cultural Geography* (London: Sage Publications, 2003), pp. 269–281; Hayden Lorimer, "Cultural Geography: The Busyness of Being 'More Than Representational'," *Progress in Human Geography* 29 (2005), pp. 83–94.

9 See e.g. Richard Shein, "The Place of Landscape: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting the American Scene," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 87 (1997), pp. 660–680; Kenneth Olwig, *Landscape, Nature, and the Body Politic: From Britain's Renaissance to America's New World* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002); Amy Mills, *Streets of Memory: Landscape, Tolerance, and National Identity in Istanbul* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2010).

'a nation,' and perhaps even how 'a people' see themselves."[10] In sum, landscapes—especially monumental landscapes such as the Kazan Kremlin—are employed by nation- and state-builders in the social construction of peoplehood; elite conceptualizations of nationhood that are embedded in landscapes are internalized by their readers, but they are also often contested and resisted and therefore the meaning of a landscape can be altered and shift over time.

Informed by this scholarly tradition, this paper examines how dominant views of ideal community are reflected and reproduced in the landscape of the Kazan Kremlin, in particular its most prominent structures, and how those understandings have changed under the influence of the political-territorial restructuring of post-Soviet Russia. As illustrated in this paper, when Tatarstan was aggressively pursuing its sovereignty campaign in the 1990s, the "re-Islamization" of the Kazan Kremlin, most vividly embodied by the construction of the Kul-Sharif Mosque that began in the latter part of the decade, was discursively framed foremost as a symbol of the Tatars' resurrected statehood; indeed, the republic's sovereignty drive in large measure was justified by the memory of 1552 as it was revived and nurtured by the national activists partaking in the Day of Memory spectacle. However, by the time construction on the behemoth mosque was completed in 2005 the new political-territorial context of a rapidly recentralized Russian Federation, one in which Tatarstan's aspirations for sovereignty have been severely curtailed, had altered the dominant meaning of the Kazan Kremlin. Kul-Sharif, once its doors officially opened, was no longer framed by political elites as a symbol of the Tatars' revived statehood. Instead, its relative proximity to the Annunciation Cathedral became more emphasized, its dominant meaning shifting foremost to one of tolerance and even commonality between Islam and Orthodoxy, between Tatars and Russians, in the Middle Volga region. This more recent narration of the Kazan Kremlin is in line with a larger Russia-wide nation-building that stresses the harmony between the now unified country's main traditional religions. Yet the much-trumpeted interfaith accord discursively embedded in the landscape belies the tension upon which the Kazan Kremlin is founded.

Background: 1552 and the Transformation of Landscape

While the Russian word *kreml'* ("kremlin") denotes a fortress,[11] historical-cultural connotations of the word run much deeper than the defensive function served by a stone-walled fortification. Ancient Russian kremlins historically hosted the seat of regional political power—the Russian prince or,

10 Karen E. Till, "Political Landscapes," in James S. Duncan, Nuala C. Johnson, and Richard H. Schein, eds., *A Companion to Cultural Geography* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), p. 350.

11 Most people associate the word "kremlin" with *the* Kremlin in Moscow, but many historic Russian cities were (and still are) site to such fortresses.

later, the Moscow-appointed governor—and the city's main monasteries and cathedrals.[12] Thus, a kremlin both embodies and protects, literally and figuratively, the Orthodox theory of *simfoniia* ("symphony"), an idealized expression of harmony between the state and the church, the corporal and heavenly powers complementing each other in ruling the people of *Rus'*.[13] In light of the historical-cultural attachments to the ideas behind the word *kreml'*, the Kazan Kremlin as it has been transformed over the past two decades, today housing what is touted as Europe's largest mosque[14] and a crescent-topped tower that shadows over a historic Russian Orthodox cathedral, challenges the core of a centuries-old national-architectural trope. Subsequent sections of this paper examine the changes to the Kazan Kremlin in the post-Soviet era, showing how the "re-Islamization" of this symbolic landscape has been posited on a critical reexamination of Russia's imperial legacy and potentially puts forth a new formulation of the concept of symphony, one that accentuates the harmony between peoples and faiths within a shared homeland, not the domination of a single state-backed religion over others. However, first it is necessary briefly to explore the context under which this landscape came to be a kremlin.

Until the mid-sixteenth century, the space currently occupied by the Kazan Kremlin was an Islamic citadel, seat of the Kazan Khanate, the most powerful of the khanates that emerged a century earlier following the dissolution

---

12 See Galina Aidarova, "Tri perioda iz istorii razvitiia ansamblia Kazanskogo kremlia," in G. G. Nugmanova, ed., *Regional'noe Mnogoobrazie Arkhitektury Rossii* (Kazan: Pluton, 2007), pp. 43–52.

13 The Byzantine theory of symphony, or harmony, between the church (*sacerdotium*) and the monarchy (*imperium*) regulated church-state relations in Russia from the acceptance of Orthodoxy by the Russian Prince Vladimir in 988 until the mid-fifteenth century. After the fall of Constantinople, when the Russian Orthodox Church became an independent (*autocephalous*) national church and Moscow began self-identifying as the Third Rome, the principle of symphony continued to guide relations between the state and church in Russia until the rule of Peter I ("the Great"), who eliminated the role of the Patriarch as head of the Russian Orthodox Church and put in its place the Holy Synod, a group of bishops who thenceforth were selected or dismissed by the emperor. From this point in history until 1917, with the church effectively a state institution, the theory of symphony was eclipsed by a form of *caesaropapism*, i.e. the domination of the church by the state. Since the fall of the atheist Soviet regime, Orthodox leaders as well as some politicians have revived the concept of symphony as an ideal—if not a fully functioning practice—that has informed church-state relations throughout the centuries and, they contend, an ideal that should continue to guide their relations in the contemporary post-communist context. See Alexey Krindatch, "Changing Relationships between Religion, the State, and Society in Russia," *GeoJournal* 67 (2006), pp. 267–282; Daniela Kalkandjieva, "A Comparative Analysis on Church-State Relations in Eastern Orthodoxy: Concepts, Models, and Principles," *Journal of Church and State* 53 (2011), pp. 587–614.

14 See M. A. Siraeva, *Fotoletopis' stroitel'stva mecheti Kul Sharif* (Kazan: Fond Mecheti Kul Sharif, 2006).

of the Golden Horde.[15] The transformation of the Islamic citadel into a Russian Orthodox fortress began after October 15, 1552 (new calendar), when, following a two-month siege, Muscovite troops captured Kazan. Leading the battle against Moscow, according to legend, were Kazan's top imam, Said Kul-Sharif, and his *shakirds* (religious students), who were among the last to die—"with a prayer on their lips"—defending the city.[16] After Moscow's victory, non-combatant Muslims were driven from the citadel out into the countryside[17] and, on the orders of Tsar Ivan, the first steps of the new Russian administration were taken toward remaking the space as a Russian Orthodox landscape. Mosques and other structures of the khanate were razed or repurposed, and the city was cleansed and sacralized by an Orthodox prayer procession.[18] In the first days after the capture of Kazan, temporary wooden churches were erected. By 1562 construction of the Annunciation Cathedral—the first stone church to appear in the Middle Volga region—was completed.[19] By 1568, eight separate Orthodox temples had been erected within the rebuilt walls of the fortress. If the building of Russian Orthodox churches as well as monasteries, reflective of the central role played by Orthodox Christianity as an imperial ideology, represented the most immediate transformation of the landscape, the construction of a governor's palace—next to the Annunciation Cathedral, site to the former khan's palace—did not take place until the middle of the nineteenth century,[20] a period in which space within the fortress became increasingly populated by the structures of bureaucratic administration.

The significance of the events of October 1552, along with the subsequent transformation of Kazan from an Islamic citadel to a Russian Orthodox land-

---

15 See Charles J. Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde: The Mongol Impact on Medieval Russian History* (Bloominton: Indiana University Press, 1987).

16 Nikolai Sorokin, "Kazanskii kreml': ot proshlogo k budushchemu," *Respublika Tatarstan* (July 4, 1998), p. 5.

17 Helen M. Faller, "Repossessing Kazan as a Form of Nation-building in Tatarstan, Russia," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 22 (2002), p. 82.

18 Galina Aidarova-Volkova, "Kak ischesli kazanskie mecheti," *Vecherniaia Kazan'* (June 4, 1996), p. 3.

19 The siting of the Annunciation Cathedral is subject to controversy. A belief popularly held in some quarters, particularly among some Tatar national activists, is that the church was constructed atop of the foundation of what was formerly the Kazan Khanate's main temple, remembered today as the original Kul-Sharif Mosque. However, archeological research has shown that the territory beneath the Annunciation Cathedral was site to gravestones bearing the Arabic script that was used by the Tatars' ancestors; it is unlikely, some have argued, that the khans would have permitted the construction of a holy structure over the top of their own cemetery. Aidarova, "Tri perioda," p. 48; see also A. G. Sitdikov and F. Sh. Khuzin, "Some Results of Archeological Study of the Kazan Khanate's Kremlin," *Anthropology and Archeology of Eurasia* 48 (2009), pp. 51–72.

20 See "Kompleks Presidentskogo dvortsa," [www.kazan-kremlin.ru/kremlin/architecture/2/], accessed February 28, 2013.

scape, should not be underestimated. Whereas previously Muscovy was a princedom that almost exclusively ruled over Orthodox Christian Slavs, the conquest of Kazan represented the beginning of Russia as a rapidly expanding multiethnic, poly-confessional empire.[21] The single most recognizable and enduring symbol of Russia, St. Basil's Cathedral, was erected (by the decree of Ivan IV) in honor of Moscow's victory over Kazan.[22] Yet one should be critical of the contemporary historical imagination that interprets Muscovy's 1552 victory over Kazan as "signal[ing] the beginning of the Russian *reconquista*,"[23] implying as it does a single-minded anti-Islamic campaign carried out by the imperial center. While Orthodox Christianity indeed provided an ideological foundation for Moscow's control of Kazan and the broader Middle Volga region, actual imperial practice in the area was characterized by pragmatic "local accommodations and limited acceptance of cultural pluralism."[24]

In turn, one should be equally critical of assertions that the Kazan Kremlin after 1552, denuded as it was of virtually any visible trace of a Muslim historical-cultural legacy, was "[t]raditionally perceived by many Tatars as a symbol of colonization"[25] while the region was under Tsarist and Soviet rule. The Kazan Kremlin prior to its post-Soviet transformation, with the memory of 1552 as a backdrop, indeed was taken up as a symbol of colonization by those partaking in the early Day of Memory rallies. Yet, as explored in the remainder of this paper, the dominant meaning of the landscape and the manner in which it has been perceived more broadly by Tatars, as well as Russians and others in the region, has been in a state of flux over the past two decades, its dominant meaning conditioned by the broader political-territorial transformation of the Russian Federation.

---

21 Andreas Kappeler, *The Russian Empire: A Multiethnic History* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2001), p. 14.

22 It is instructive that, while the Soviets destroyed thousands of Christian sites, including the largest and third-largest cathedrals in Moscow and Irkutsk respectively, they left the Annunciation Cathedral in Kazan and St. Basil's Cathedral in Moscow intact. These symbols of Muscovy's defeat of Kazan were deemed untouchable by Soviet authorities.

23 Allen Frank and Ronald Wixman, "The Middle Volga: Exploring the Limits of Sovereignty," in Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras, eds., *New States, New Politics: Building the Post-Soviet Nations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 140.

24 Matthew P. Romaniello, *The Elusive Empire: Kazan and the Creation of Russia, 1552–1671* (Madison: University of Washington Press, 2012), p. 214. For related handlings on imperial religious politics in the Middle Volga region, see e.g. Robert D. Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar: Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006); Robert P. Geraci, *Window on the East: National and Imperial Identities in Late Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Robert P. Geraci and Michael Khodarkovsky, eds., *Of Religion and Empire: Missions, Conversion, and Tolerance in Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

25 Nadir V. Kinossian, "The Politics of the City Image: The Resurrection of the Kul-Sharif Mosque in the Kazan Kremlin (1995–2005)," *Architectural Theory Review* 13 (2008), p. 194.

Reclaiming and Transforming the Kazan Kremlin

The first instance of Tatars re-staking a claim to the Kazan Kremlin occurred on October 15, 1989, when a handful of national activists gathered beneath the Siuiumbike Tower for a public *namaz* in observance of the first-ever Day of Memory.[26] They rallied around the tower because it was the only element on the landscape that could reasonably be claimed as Tatar. While most of the structure uncontestably had been built in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—and many argue that the entire structure was built by Russians—enough archeological evidence (and legend)[27] existed to suggest that at least the first level in some form had existed before the mid-sixteenth century, forming the entrance to the khan's palace; furthermore, archeological evidence indicated that the physical remains of khans were buried beneath the tower.[28] The activists at the inaugural Day of Memory were the first to demand the construction of a monument that would "perpetuate memories of the defenders of Kazan who fell in 1552."[29] They saw this request as just, considering that the remains of the Muscovite soldiers who died in the same battle were honorably housed in a pyramid-like memorial church located on an islet at the confluence of the Kazanka and Volga rivers, in clear sight from the kremlin's southwestern walls. A local planner presented the idea to the authorities,[30] but at the time, with Tatarstan negotiating an elevation of its status within the USSR and the political leadership wanting to avoid conflict with Moscow, the idea of constructing a monument to the defenders of Kazan gained no traction. However,

---

26 According to reports, more KGB agents were in attendance at the first Day of Memory event than actual participants. Venera Iakupova, *100 Istorii o Suverenitete* (Kazan: Idel-Press, 2001), p. 28.

27 The tower is named in honor of the last Tatar princess who, according to legend, preferred to die by her own hands rather than be taken to Moscow to marry a Russian nobleman. Beneath the tower, some archeologists believe, was the burial site of khans. It is said that Tatars had surreptitiously prayed for their ancestors at the tower for centuries. Ibid.

28 See M. I. Akhmetzianov, "O bashne Siuiumbike," in G. F. Valeeva-Suleimanova, ed., *Iskusstvo i Etnos* (Kazan: History Institute of the Academy of Sciences of Tatarstan, 2002), pp. 32–38. The origins of the Siuiumbike Tower are subject to an inordinate amount of scholarly debate among Kazan-based academic community. Some researchers argue that no tower existed before the mid-sixteenth century, i.e. it was fully constructed under Russian rule, while others argue that a tower existed at the same site during the Kazan Khanate. See e.g. N. G. Khanzafarov, *Simvoly Tatarstana (Mify i Real'nost')* (Kazan: Academy of Sciences of Tatarstan, 2001); Niiaz Khalit, "Bashnia Siuiumbike v Kazanskom kremle," *RusArkh* (2006) [www.rusarch.ru/halitov1.htm], accessed February 28, 2013; N. G. Nabiullin, "Okhranno-spasitel'nye raboty na territorii byvshego khanskogo dvora," *RusArch* (2007) [www.Rusarch.ru/nabiullin3.htm], accessed February 24, 2013; and Sitdikov and Khuzin, "Some Results."

29 Sergei Sanachin, "Gradostroitel'naia politika: litsom k liudiam," *Vecherniaia Kazan'* (May 11, 1990), p. 2.

30 Ibid.

another of the activists' demands issued that year—placing a crescent moon of Islam atop the Siuiumbike Tower—was met by the political authorities in time for the following year's Day of Memory, thereby marking the first instance of the "re-Islamization" of the landscape.[31]

Following Kazan's declaration of sovereignty on August 30, 1990, the Day of Memory spectacle, with the social-national groups organizing the event allied with the Tatar political elite, began attracting thousands of Tatars to the grounds of the Kazan Kremlin to reclaim, if only through an hours-long performance, the landscape as Muslim Tatar.[32] The annual event decisively transcended ancestor worship, assuming an explicitly political character that linked this landscape to the revived memory of 1552 and Tatarstan's elevated territorial aspirations. For example, at the 1992 Day of Memory Marat Muliukov, director of the Tatar Public Center, then the region's most influential social-national organization and closely allied with the Tatar political leadership, proclaimed, "This date for us is not only a day of mourning, today we avow our decisiveness to fight for the full independence of our republic."[33] Activists carrying placards bearing slogans such as "Judge and Disassociate Yourself from Ivan IV and His Executioners like the Germans Did with Hitler" and "Give *Milli Mejlis*[34] Power in the Fight to Get Rid of the Colonial Yoke" marched into the kremlin and paraded at the base of the Siuiumbike Tower.[35] Following that year's Day of Memory, leaders of the national movement issued a public letter addressed to Tatarstan's President Mintimer Shaimiev reminding him that the churches in the Kazan Kremlin had been "built on top of the graves of Tatars and their mosques" and demanding the city be given a "national face" by constructing mosques within the grounds of the fortress; Tatarizing the landscape—giving it a "national face"—was equated by the Day of Memory activists with the landscape's "re-Islamization." They also repeated the demand for a monument to their ancestors who died defending the Kazan Kremlin in 1552.[36]

---

31 Damir Iskhakov, *Problemy stanovleniia i transformatsii Tatarskoi Natsii* (Kazan: Academy of Sciences of Tatarstan, 1997), p. 102.

32 The Day of Memory organizers also played a key role in organizing the April 1991 public *namaz* in honor of Uraza Bairam, a holiday celebrating the end of Ramadan, which was held for the first time at the Siuiumbike Tower within the grounds of the Kazan Kremlin. Tens of thousands of participants were reported to have been in attendance. Rozalinda Musina, "Islam i musul'mane v sovremennom Tatarstane," in Rafael' Khakimov, ed., *Islam v Tatarskom Mire: Istoriia i Sovremennost'* (Kazan: History Institute of the Academy of Sciences of Tatarstan, 1997), p. 213.

33 Quoted in Radik Batyrshin, "Vziatie Kazani otmechaetsia v respublike kak traurnyi den'," *Nezavisimaia Gazeta* (October 15, 1992), p. 2.

34 *Milli Mejlis* was an umbrella group for the various Tatar national organizations that claimed it would take responsibility for achieving Tatarstan's independence if the official Kazan-based government failed to do so.

35 Quoted in Anonymous, "Otmetili Den' pamiati," *Izvestiia Tatarstana* (October 16, 1992), p. 1.

36 "Otkrytoe pis'mo M. Sh. Shaimievu," *Izvestiia TOTs* (November 1992), p. 1.

The early Day of Memory performances helped framed the primary justification discourse employed by the Tatar political elite in defending the republic's sovereignty claim. The year 1552, in this narration, marked the loss of Tatar statehood and the subsequent transformation of the Muslim citadel into an Orthodox Russian kremlin that symbolized centuries of policies resulting in the decimation of Tatar culture. The return of Tatar statehood, embedded in the promise of sovereignty, meant the repossession of the Kazan Kremlin. Nonetheless, Shaimiev was hesitant in responding to the nationalists' demands. Although the memory of 1552 had become central to Kazan's discourse justifying its claim to sovereignty,[37] the political elite did not want to risk inflaming local Russian sentiment by erecting a monument to the defenders of the Kazan Kremlin; maintaining interethnic peace was of paramount importance while engaged with Moscow in negotiations over Tatarstan's sovereignty status. The national activists had succeeded in pointing out to the Tatar president and his advisors the symbolic importance of the Kazan Kremlin, yet discussions of undertaking any major changes to the landscape would have to be tabled until after the 1994 bilateral treaty with Moscow, which ambiguously recognized Tatarstan's as a "State ... united with the Russia Federation," was sealed.

Having secured the bilateral treaty with Moscow, the political elite of Tatarstan committed itself to a fundamental transformation of the Kazan Kremlin with the explicit goal of shaping a landscape deserving of, and serving, a new sovereign state. In August 1994, Shaimiev decreed the "museumification" of the entire landscape with the stated goal of "preserving" and "restoring" the "ensemble of the Kazan Kremlin."[38] The presidential decree immediately brought to the fore the tension laden in the memory of 1552. What parts of the ensemble should be *preserved*? What should be *restored*? On the one hand, the kremlin had traditionally been considered a Russian landscape, its architectural elements of various epochs—those lost and those remaining—seen as unified by Orthodox ideals. On the other hand, beyond the basic footprint of the Kazan Khanate, not a trace of the citadel's Muslim architectural legacy remained; no material existed to preserve or restore. From this situation, as Niiaz Khalit, the deputy director of the Kazan Kremlin, explained, two ideas clashed: "'Russian' restoration and 'Tatar' reconstruction."[39] According to the

37 For an examination of how Tatarstan's political elite justified its sovereignty claim, see Matthew Derrick, "Revisiting 'Sovereign' Tatarstan," *Journal of Central Asian and Caucasian Studies* 3 (2008), pp. 75–103.

38 Postanovlenie Kabineta Ministrov Republiki Tatarstan, "Ob utverzhdenii Osnovnykh napravlenii nauchnoi kontseptsii sokhraneniia, restavratsii i ispol'zovaniia ansamblia Kazanskogo kremlia i pervoocherednykh meropriiatiiakh po ee realizatsii" (August, 4, 1994) [docs.pravo.ru/document/view/3353620/], accessed February 28, 2013.

39 Niiaz Khalit, "Polemika vokrug rekonstruktsii mecheti Kul-Sharifa v Kazanskom kremle: politicheskie aspekty zashchity tatarskogo arkhitekturnogo naslediia," in Khakimov, ed., *Islam v Tatarskom Mire*, p. 236.

first, restoring the landscape meant rebuilding the Tsarist-era churches and monasteries that were destroyed by Soviet authorities.[40] This approach, Khalit insisted, was unacceptable on political and moral grounds because the restoration of Orthodox churches in the Kazan Kremlin would represent "monuments to the barbaric destruction of the parts of Kazan that are holy to the Muslim segments of Kazan: mosques, tombs of khans and saints."[41] Considering that Khalit was appointed by Shaimiev to oversee the transformation of the Kazan Kremlin, now officially a state—which was understood as Tatarstan, not Russia, in the post-1994 treaty environment—museum, the content and tone of this statement provide insight into the degree to which the political establishment, in its bid to bolster its case for sovereignty, had internalized the discourse initiated years earlier by the Day of Memory activists.

After a year of re-conceptualizing the kremlin's transformation, Shaimiev issued a second presidential decree in November 1995 titled "On the concept of the preservation, development, and use of the ensemble of the Kazan Kremlin."[42] The use of the words "preservation" and "development" were carefully chosen. The former meant the "preservation" of cultural legacy, not simply the protection and restoration of existing elements on the landscape, while "development" implied newness, a wholesale rethinking of the meaning of the word *kreml'*. Seemingly in line with the Tatar president's post-treaty propagation of state nationalism—his advocacy of a "multinational Tatarstani people" (*mnogonatsional'nyi tatarstanskii narod*) that included both Tatars and ethnic Russians in the region[43]—the envisioned overhaul of the Kazan Kremlin included the preservation of both Tatar and Russian cultural legacies. This included the complete "restoration and reconstruction" of the Annunciation Cathedral and the promise "to reconstruct the Kul-Sharif Mosque" for the purpose of "preserving historical succession."[44] While the decree appeared to be calibrated to complement Shaimiev's propagation of state nationalism in the post-1994 treaty context, the resurrection of the Kul-Sharif Mosque, named after the legendary imam who died alongside his *shakirds* defending Kazan for the purpose of "preserving historical succession," was a direct allusion to 1552—explicitly drawing on the grievances first expressed by the Day of Memory activists and

40 For instance, one architect publicly questioned, "if the mosque is being constructed while the only thing known about it is the number of minarets, why not restore the ancient sixteenth-century Savior Transfiguration Cathedral, which has a perfectly preserved basement as well as a necessary archival data?" Quoted in A. Zhuravskii, "O tainakh kremlevskogo dvora," *Vecherniaia Kazan'* (December 13, 1995), p. 2.

41 Khalit, "Polemika vokrug," 237.

42 Ukaz Prezidenta Respubliki Tatarstan, "O kontsepsii sokhraneniia, razvitiia, i ispol'zovaniia ansamblia Kazanskogo kremlia" (November, 13, 1995) [www.archive.gov.tatarstan.ru/magazine/go/anonymous/main/?path=mg:/numbers/1996_1_2/02/1/], accessed February 28, 2013.

43 See Derrick, "Revisiting 'Sovereign' Tatarstan," pp. 81–83.

44 Ukaz Prezidenta, "O kontseptsii," points 1 and 4.

thereby affirming the primacy of the Tatars' claims to the landscape. In an official document issued alongside Shaimiev's 1995 decree, the Kazan Kremlin, with the resurrection of the Kul-Sharif Mosque, was envisioned to be a "symbol of the statehood" of the Republic of Tatarstan.[45]

Subsequent decisions on the location and design of the Kul-Sharif Mosque, along with the political discourse surrounding its resurrection, provide further indication that the mosque was expressly intended as a symbol of the Tatars' revived statehood, not necessarily a reflection of an inclusive "multinational Tatarstani people." Dismissing out of hand the demands of some of the more vociferous nationalists to resurrect Kul-Sharif on its original foundation,[46] which they believed was the current location of the Annunciation Cathedral and therefore entailing the destruction of the sixteenth-century Orthodox structure, a commission formed by Shaimiev to oversee the transformation of the kremlin chose a space occupied by the Tsarist-era military barracks along the fortress' southern wall. This location was formally justified on two accounts. First, the military quarters were viewed as an especially grievous symbol of colonialism and the Tatars' alienation from the kremlin; and, second, only that space, it was contended, was geologically sound enough to support a large structure.[47] While these justifications indeed may have been important factors, above all the space was chosen because of its central, dominating position that overlooked the city and could be seen far out in the Volga River. Kul-Sharif, envisioned as a grand mosque, was to be the unambiguous central element of the ensemble of the Kazan Kremlin, *the* symbol of Kazan and sovereign Tatarstan, *the* symbol of the Tatar nation.

Discussions about the design of the mosque provide more insight into the function Kul-Sharif was intended by the Tatar political elite to fulfill. An important and highly revealing article authored by Khalit, the deputy director of the Kazan Kremlin, a government appointee at the forefront of the project, provides illustration. In discussing the future shape of the mosque, Khalit said the new mosque must incorporate semantic elements of Tatar culture, such as the tulip (a symbol traditionally associated with Tatar culture), and reference the few known architectural features of the original Kul-Sharif Mosque (e.g. eight minarets) and other ancient temples belonging to the Tatars' ancestors. However, because the mosque would embody the Tatars' cultural revival and the rebirth of their statehood, it therefore must represent a fundamental break with the colonial past:

> The idea of resurrecting a mosque in the kremlin has signified a fundamental break in the consciousness of our people, who bore the heavy cross of 450

45 **"Osnovnye proektnye resheniia," in Siraeva,** *Fotoletopis' stroitel'stva*, p. 109.

46 **Author's interview with Rafael' Khakimov, Kazan, April 14, 2009. A high profile nation**al leader and perhaps Tatarstan's best-known public intellectual, Khakimov served as Shaimiev's top political advisor.

47 **Timur Latypov, "Mechet' iz vekov v veka,"** *Vremia i Den'gi* (June 24, 2005), p. 3.

> years of a slave's existence in an Orthodox empire. Almost half a century after the fall of the Kazan Khanate, which fought to the death with the Moscow predator for its freedom, the ancient citadel of Kazan has become the center of a reviving state ... And, as if visibly marking this historical event, [the kremlin's] architecture, tightly bound in our consciousness with the Russian colonial and ecclesiastical administration, once again is obtaining a Tatar image. As such, Kul-Sharif is not just a mosque and not even the main mosque of Kazan and the state. It is the main center for the entire Tatar diaspora. It is a vector from the past that passes through today to tomorrow.[48]

This representation, issued from the person appointed by Shaimiev to guide the remaking of the Kazan Kremlin, provides additional evidence of the degree to which the political elite of Tatarstan had internalized the anticolonial discourse that was introduced by the Day of Memory activists. Here it is clear the understanding that the principle of "balancing cultures" in the makeover of the Kazan Kremlin was trumped by the overriding idea of Tatar statehood. The mosque, to occupy a dominating central position in the fortress, was to be *the* symbol of a sovereign state that was understood foremost as the Tatars' historical homeland.

The balance of cultures idea embedded in the landscape, however, was not only secondary to the idea of a resurrected Tatar state to be reflected in the Kul-Sharif Mosque. The image of a brilliant mosque in close proximity to a refurbished Orthodox Christian church was intended to strengthen Tatarstan's image on the international arena. The international arena, the Tatar political elite clearly understood as it crafted its "sovereignty project,"[49] was where the question of independent statehood is ultimately decided:

> The mosque will represent us before world civilization. Tatarstan today is not a backwater province of Russia, where a fading culture trickles through the marshy mouth of a filthy stream. A new state is being born, by the intellect of its people providing a positive example in resolving the most complex of political problems—international [i.e. interethnic]. Today, as wars rage in Bosnia and Chechnya, Eretria and Somalia, conflicts simmer in Quebec and the Basque Country, the "Tatarstani Model" of political-cultural development puts us in a company of nations that, by their intellectual level, are advanced.[50]

The "advanced nation," the "people of intellect"—the "us"—discussed by Khalit clearly is not the "multinational people of Tatarstan," but rather the ethnic Tatar nation. The mosque's relative location to the church would provide material evidence of the religious tolerance of the Tatar nation, a powerful counter example to other ethno-territorial conflicts involving other Muslim peoples, a

48 Khalit, "Polemika vokrug," pp. 242–243.

49 The concept of a Tatarstan's "sovereignty project" is developed in Katherine E. Graney, *Of Khans and Kremlins: Tatarstan and the Future of Ethnofederalism in Russia* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2009).

50 Khalit, "Polemika vokrug," p. 247.

counter example intended to positively influence the opinion of the international sovereignty regime. Indeed, with the beginning of construction on the Kul-Sharif Mosque, Kazan began lobbying UNESCO for the inclusion of the Kazan Kremlin in its list of World Heritage sites, the close proximity of temples of two different religions serving as concrete proof of the historical exchange of cultural values between the Tatars and the Russians.[51]

For the remainder of the decade, as the Kul-Sharif Mosque began to take shape, the transformation of the Kazan Kremlin was discursively linked to Tatarstan's aspirations to statehood. A 1998 article appearing in *Respublika Tatarstan* (*Republic of Tatarstan*), the official newspaper of the Kazan-based government and therefore reflecting the opinions of the Tatar political elite, discussed the "radical reconstruction" of the kremlin as a project of "state significance": "The kremlin has always been the center of state power, the resident of the Bolgar prince, the Tatar khan, the Kazan governor, and now the president of sovereign Tatarstan."[52] However, by the latter part of the 1990s, as seen in this article's discussion of the historical significance of the Kul-Sharif Mosque, the political elite had toned down its anticolonial rhetoric:

> The Kul-Sharif Mosque, now being resurrected, is the main object of the kremlin's reconstruction. ... Kul-Sharif, imam of the city's main mosque, was a leading political figure. In the name of the Kazan Khanate he conducted persistent negotiations with Moscow, traveling several times with a delegation to the capital of Muscovy. But Tsar Ivan the Terrible and those around him, having long before set the goal of expanding the borders of *Rus'* to Siberia and the Far East, did not want to hear about peace.[53]

This passage, in providing an official explanation of the significance of the new mosque arising in the Kazan Kremlin, refocuses attention away from Kul-Sharif as the legendary warrior who was killed by Muscovite troops—a representation introduced and favored by the Day of Memory activists—and directs it instead to Kul-Sharif the diplomat whose message of peace the Tsar refused to hear. On one level, the change of rhetoric evident in this biographical sketch, along with the new mosque approaching completion, represented an attempt to counter the previous anticolonial discourse associated with the kremlin's "re-Islamization" or "re-Tatarization." On another level, it was reflective of Kazan's relationship with Moscow at the time. Like imam Kul-Sharif, the journalist employed by the government-supported newspaper implied that the current political elites in Kazan were in favor of negotiations and peaceful relations with Moscow, belying anxieties about the status of Tatarstan's sovereignty claim and presaging the aggressive Putin-era of political-territorial recentralization.

---

51 After several years of lobbying by Kazan, UNESCO officially recognized the Kazan Kremlin as a World Heritage site in December 2000. Irina Demina, "Kazanskii kreml' v spiske znachitsia...," *Respublika Tatarstan* (December 15, 2000), p. 3.

52 Sorokin, "Kazanskii kreml'," p. 5.

53 Ibid.

While the Kazan Kremlin in its entirety remained a symbol of Tatarstan's sovereignty, in addition to the "embodiment of peace and tolerance of different religions,"[54] by the latter part of the decade the Kul-Sharif Mosque in itself was no longer publicly cast as a symbol of Tatar statehood. The mosque's more narrowly cultural-religious purposes became emphasized, as seen in another article appearing in *Respublika Tatarstan*, the official state newspaper, which claimed that Kul-Sharif was destined to be the "unifying, main mosque ... not only for the residents of Tatarstan, but also for Tatars of the whole world."[55] The discursive shift, along with the Kul-Sharif Mosque, was framed to coincide with Shaimiev's more intense propagation of state nationalism, his cultivation of a "multinational Tatarstani people."[56] It is notable, however, that even with Shaimiev retreating from the Tatar national movement and its continued demands for unambiguous sovereignty—understood as independence, in line with norms of the international state system—the annual Day of Memory in the final years of the decade was attended only by a handful of the more radical nationalists and no longer attracted any significant press coverage.

The Post-Sovereign Landscape of the Kazan Kremlin

By the close of the 1990s, the landscape of the Kazan Kremlin in its entirety—the Annunciation Cathedral and the resurrecting Kul-Sharif Mosque together—had become the symbol of *Tatarstani* statehood. The meaning of the under-construction mosque, earlier conceived as a symbol of Tatar statehood, had been eclipsed by the directive to cultivate state nationalism. Nonetheless, while Tatarstan still maintained its claim to sovereignty, amid Moscow's weakened position, the tension of the historical memory of 1552 that existed between the two temples came to be subsumed by the idea of a greater inter-confessional and interethnic harmony, and the annual Day of Memory spectacle ceased to attract any significant attention in both the state-sponsored and independent media. The tension in the landscape, however, suddenly flared up when Vladimir Putin reversed the previous decade's process of political-territorial decentralization, and began rapidly recentralizing the Russian Federation anew.

Already by the fall of 2000, Moscow had made clear its intention to mold what Putin termed a "unified legal space" out of a politically and culturally fragmented Russian Federation, meaning an end to the ethnic republics' pretensions to sovereignty. As a response to Moscow's campaign to bring all regional legislation into line with federal law, the Day of Memory was suddenly

54 Ibid.

55 Liliia Valeeva, "Vozvrashchenie Kul Sharif," *Respublika Tatarstan* (November 26, 1999), p. 5.

56 For a highly insightful discussion on the origin and evolution state nationalism in Tatarstan in the 1990s, see Iskhakov, *Problemy Stanovleniia*, pp. 108–113.

revived as a mass public protest. Whereas only a handful of activists took part in the previous years' events, the 2000 Day of Memory was reported to have drawn more than a thousand participants[57] and even more each of the following two years,[58] when central attacks on Tatarstan's sovereignty claim became increasingly explicit. The tension of the landscape of the Kazan Kremlin came into the open when the Day of Memory protestors, after concluding *namaz* at the Siuiumbike Tower in 2000, addressed their grievances directly at the Annunciation Cathedral that stood next to the tower. As reported in an independent Kazan-based newspaper, "It was announced [among the Day of Memory activists] that the Annunciation Cathedral used to be a mosque and it is once again necessary to demand that the Orthodox clergy return the mosque to Muslims."[59] Thus, in repeating the belief that the Annunciation Cathedral had been built atop the original Kul-Sharif Mosque, the activists protested not only against central attacks on Tatarstan's sovereignty; they also targeted Shaimiev's promotion of state nationalism—implying parity between Islam and Orthodoxy, between Tatar and Russian communities of Tatarstan—that was being inscribed in the landscape of the Kazan Kremlin. The Day of Memory activists were demanding that the "national face" of the fortress be remade into a solely Muslim Tatar landscape, returned to its pre-1552 form, corresponding to their demands for the republic's unambiguous independence.

The political authorities gave symbolic support to the revival of the Day of Memory spectacle, at least while the possibility of preserving Tatarstan's sovereignty seemed to exist. At the 2001 event, Shaimiev's handpicked Supreme Mufti, Gusman Iskhakov, accompanied the marchers into the kremlin and led the ritual *namaz* at the tower. The mufti, a *de facto* representative of Tatarstan's political establishment and thereby voicing state concerns, explained his participation:

> This has already become a tradition. On the Day of Memory believers gather in the kremlin to pray for the souls of those who gave their lives to preserve our religion, our statehood. A variety of people came to honor the memory of the defenders of Kazan ... but a deep honor and gratefulness to the national heroes unified everybody in prayer.[60]

In discussing past "national heroes" who died in the defense of "our religion, our statehood," Mufti Iskhakov calibrated his message to support the primary demand of the Day of Memory activists that Moscow "stop its revisions of the Constitution and laws of Tatarstan."[61] Two other demands put forth by the national activists, and the response of the political elite, were notable. As in every

57 Anonymous, "Den' pamiati," *Zvezda Povolzh'ia* (October 19–25, 2000), p. 2.

58 Rinat Bilalov, "Shaimiev predlagaet ekonomit'," *Vostochnyi Ekspress* (May 25, 2001), p. 2; Rashit Akhmetov, "Poslednii parad," *Zvezda Povolzh'ia* (October 17–23, 2002), p. 1.

59 Anonymous, "Den' pamiati," p. 2.

60 Quoted in Bilalov, "Shaimiev predlagaet," p. 2.

61 Ibid.

year past, the protesters demanded the erection of a monument to the defenders of the Kazan Kremlin; they also demanded that October 15 be recognized as an official annual day of mourning in recognition of the events of 1552.[62]

Figure 3: This stone was laid outside the southern wall of the Kazan Kremlin to mark the future place of a monument to the defenders of Kazan. It remained here for nearly a decade before being removed. The monument was never erected (photo by author).

The activists' demands were taken under consideration. In 2001 Shaimiev declared that the government would indeed erect a monument to the defenders of the Kazan Kremlin.[63] However, he made it clear that the monument would not appear within the grounds of the Kazan Kremlin, an act that would have disrupted his ideology of harmony between the main confessions and ethnonational groups of Tatarstan and that was expressed in the landscape of the Kazan Kremlin. Instead, a large white stone was laid in a square at the base of the kremlin's external southern wall, marking the spot where a future monument to the defenders of the Kazan Kremlin would be placed (see Figure 3). Tatarstan's parliament also took under consideration legislation that would officially recognize October 15 as a "Day of Memory of Those Who Fell in the Conquest of Kazan in 1552."[64] These overtures, made at the peak of Putin's campaign against Tatarstan's pretensions to sovereign statehood, amounted to a temporary tactic intended, first, to appease the Day of Memory protesters who had once again become important political allies and, second, to display a degree of resistance as a warning to Moscow. Although the stone would rest outside the southern wall of the kremlin for the next decade[65] and the government held a contest for the design of the monument, an official memorial to the defenders of the Kazan Kremlin has never materialized. Draft legislation that would have made October 15 an annual day of mourning was removed soon after it was introduced.[66] As in the past at critical moments in Russia's political-territorial transformation, the Kazan-based gov-

62 Anonymous, "Obrashchenie uchastnikov Dnia pamiati k tatarskomu narodu, naseleniiu i rukovoditeliam Respubliki Tatarstan," *Zvezda Povolzh'ia* (October 18, 2001), p. 2.

63 Galina Grigorenko, "Osennee obostrenie," *Vremia i Den'gi* (October 9, 2001), p. 1.

64 Il'shat Rakipov, "Novye pamiatnye daty," *Respublika Tatarstan* (October 15, 2002), p. 1.

65 The stone was unceremoniously removed before the 2011 Day of Memory march.

66 Anonymous, "Poteri i priobreteniia tatarskogo naroda," *Respublika Tatarstan* (October 5, 2002), p. 4.

ernment once again was engaged in negotiations with Moscow, this time over its post-sovereign status, and did not want to run the risk up upsetting either the local Russian population—a key component of the "multinational Tatarstani people"—or the federal center.

Figure 4: The Architects of the Kazan Kremlin was unveiled in November 2003 (photo by author).

By the fall of 2002 it had become clear to Tatar political elites that they had little power to reverse the formal revocation of Tatarstan's sovereignty and have since dedicated themselves to informally retaining the republic's status as a powerful region. The campaign to retain a significant amount of informal autonomy, as Rafael Khakimov, formerly the top political adviser to Shaimiev and a prime player in crafting and executing Tatarstan's sovereignty campaign, told me (with no small hint of irony), has meant being the "good Muslims of Russia"—a counterexample to the quagmire of Chechnya and the surrounding regions of the North Caucasus.[67] The landscape of the Kazan Kremlin has reflected and served as a stage for this new, post-sovereign relationship. Being "good Muslims" has meant that, beginning with the 2002 Day of Memory, the region's political "authorities have completely distanced themselves from the [Day of Memory] march and have even attempted to ban the meeting."[68] Although the 2002 meeting managed to attract an estimated 1,500 activists,[69] the number of attendees has dropped off to only a few hundred

67 Author's interview with Rafael' Khakimov, Kazan, April 14, 2009.

68 Akhmetov, "Poslednii parad," p. 1. In spite of early overtures, the Kazan-based government has not attempted to make an all-out ban on the Day of Memory march. However, as news reports and interview subjects indicate, police have stopped buses carrying national activists from Naberezhnye Chelny (traditionally a stronghold of Tatar nationalism) and other cities from entering Kazan on the appointed Day of Memory. See e.g. Galina Grigorenko, "Data—dal'she. Pominaiushchikh—men'she," *Vremia i Den'gi* (October 15, 2002), p. 4; Arslan Minvaleev, "Rekviem pamiati," *Vostochnyi Ekspress* (October 19, 2004), p. 1.

69 Akhmetov, "Poslednii parad," p. 1.

each year and only "dissident imams" lead the participants in prayers at the Siuiumbike Tower; top official, state-supported clergy, unlike Mufti Iskhakov amid early central attacks on Tatarstan's sovereignty, now distance themselves from the spectacle, reflecting the retreat taken by Kazan's political elite.

Second, instead of erecting a monument to the defenders of the Kazan Kremlin, with the Kul-Sharif Mosque still under construction, Shaimiev unveiled a new monument titled *The Architects of the Kazan Kremlin* in November 2003 (see Figure 4). The sculpture composition depicts two anonymous sixteenth-century architects, a standing Tatar and a seated Russian, each grasping in his hands blueprints of the Kazan Kremlin. The would-be builders gaze out at the crescent moons that rest atop the minarets of the Kul-Sharif Mosque, which, at that point, had become visible from most any point in the city center. And to their right, perched atop the blue and gold onion domes of the Annunciation Cathedral, arise Orthodox crosses. Shaimiev elucidated the meaning of the imagery:

> This monument embodies the unification of the aspirations and cultures of the Tatar and Russian peoples. The Annunciation Cathedral and the Kul-Sharif Mosque are now being revived. And is this not our position and pay homage to the long and strong friendship of the two peoples? This monument brings us closer to creative and spiritual unification.[70]

Erecting *The Architects of the Kazan Kremlin* represented a material effort to diffuse the tension that had arisen between the mosque and the church with the recentralization of the Russian Federation. The bronze side-by-side Tatar and Russian architects, an attempt to humanize the space and neutralize the renewed antagonism, tied together the two places of worship. Yet, with Tatarstan's claim to statehood by that point having been dismantled, this monument could only tenuously be viewed as a representation of a "multinational Tatarstani people"—it now had become Kazan's contribution to Putin's conceptualization of a "multinational Russian people" (*mnogonatsional'nyi rossiiskii narod*).[71]

The official opening of Kul-Sharif Mosque in June 2005 revealed the change in dominant meaning of the Kazan Kremlin and highlighted the function the landscape has played since. In his speech at the ceremonial opening of the mosque, Shaimiev said the new mosque represented the restoration of "historical justice and harmony between religions."[72] The Tatar president did

---

70 Quoted in Svetlana Arsent'eva, "Posviashaetsia zodchim Kazanskogo kremlia," *Respublika Tatarstan* (November 20, 2003), p. 1.

71 For a relevant discussion on Putin's discursive construction of a "multinational Russian people," see Matthew Derrick, "Contested Autonomy: Tatarstan under Putin (2000–2004)," *Journal of Central Asian and Caucasian Studies* 4 (2009), pp. 62–67.

72 Mintimer Shaimiev, "Vystuplenie Prezidenta Respublika Tatarstan Mintimera Shaimieva" (2005) [shaimiev.tatar.ru/pub/view/961], accessed February 28, 2013.

not articulate exactly what injustice was being rectified with the resurrection of Kul-Sharif; he did not mention the year 1552, thereby eluding the question of the colonial legacy that had been so touted by Day of Memory national activists in their early efforts to give the Kazan Kremlin a "national face." The mosque had become a "new symbol of Kazan and Tatarstan," in Shaimiev's reading, and an "attractive center for the entire Tatar world." It was no longer framed as a symbol of the Tatar nation or one of statehood. However, Shaimiev pointed out the role the mosque plays in challenging and potentially redefining the historical meaning of the word *kreml'*:

> With its appearance this building has changed not only the city-planning composition of the kremlin and the artistic image of the entire center of Kazan, but it represents a change in the consciousness of the residents of Tatarstan. The appearance of this structure, unique in its meaning, allows us to focus on our history in a new way, to more thoughtfully look at our history, our spiritual and material legacy.[73]

Whereas Kul-Sharif, in itself, earlier had been intended to represent a change in the consciousness of the Tatar nation and embody Tatar statehood, the appearance of a mosque in the context of a kremlin now represented a change in thinking for all people of Tatarstan. The republic had become an example for the rest of Russia, its primary symbol—the kremlin's landscape and in particular its two dominant structures—"a symbol of the mutual understanding of the two main confessions of the country." That the Kul-Sharif Mosque stands close to the Annunciation Cathedral, according to Shaimiev, "does not only show the history of Islam in the republic, but [shows] its peaceful, tolerant character."[74]

Since the opening of the Kul-Sharif Mosque, the landscape of the Kazan Kremlin has safeguarded Kazan's place as Russia's "Muslim capital."[75] The mosque, standing next to the cathedral, ensures that Tatarstan plays an important role in developing and strengthening Russia's diplomatic and economic ties with Muslim countries. It is notable that the head of the Organization for the Islamic Conference—a club in which Russia had become an observing member in 2003 in no small part thanks to Kazan's assistance[76]—was in attendance at the opening of Kul-Sharif, as were top diplomats from Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and other notable Muslim countries.[77] As Khakimov points out,

---

73 Ibid.

74 Ibid.

75 Danis Garaev, "Esli my khatim byt' musul'manskim tsentrom—nado aktivnee rabotat'," *IslamInfo* 4 (2009), p. 3.

76 Author's interview with Rafael' Khakimov, Kazan, April 14, 2009.

77 Siraeva, *Fotoletopis' stroitel'stva.*

> Tatarstan, which is seen as a *Muslim republic*, has become an intermediary in Russia's international politics. The advantage of Tatarstan is that Muslims and Christians live peacefully together here.[78]

Khakimov here gives voice to the reality acknowledged by the region's political elite in a recentralized political-territorial context: For Tatarstan to maintain a degree of autonomy *vis-à-vis* the federal central, however informal, it is necessary to emphasize and represent the republic as a peaceful Muslim space, a narration that infuses the meaning of the Kazan Kremlin today.

During my fieldwork (October 2008 – February 2010) in Tatarstan, Kazan welcomed a number high-profile guests, including Mahmoud Abbas of Palestine, delegations from Iran and Malaysia, among others, before they visited Moscow. The Kazan Kremlin was central in staging these visits, with Shaimiev giving his guests a tour, first, of the Kul-Sharif Mosque and then the Annunciation Cathedral. In this manner, the materiality of the carefully constructed landscape becomes a performative space for prominent guests from the Middle East and other parts of the Muslim world, safeguarding Kazan's place as Russia's foremost *Muslim* city, not the capital of the Tatars' sovereign homeland, as originally intended by the Day of Memory activists. But the Kazan Kremlin is not only staging grounds for Russia's relations with the Muslim world. In October 2009 Kazan received its highest profile guest, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who went through the same paces as Abbas and other representatives of the Muslim world, first visiting Kul-Sharif Mosque and then the Annunciation Cathedral. Afterwards Clinton praised Tatarstan for "foster[ing] religious tolerance."[79] Thus, peaceful, poly-confessional Tatarstan, as expressed in the landscape of the Kazan Kremlin, now positions itself as a bridge between the East and West.

Conclusion: The Missing Monument

The Kazan Kremlin, as examined in this paper, has undergone a dramatic transformation in its morphology and meaning over the past twenty years. The appearance of the Kul-Sharif Mosque within the confines of the fortress represents a significant reclamation of a landscape that for centuries was understood as an exclusively Orthodox Russian space, and thereby it fundamentally challenges ideas long associated with the word *kreml'*. The grand mosque, in its planning and early stages of construction, was represented by political elites as the physical embodiment of revived Tatar statehood, the symbol of

78 Rafael' Khakimov, "Islamskii faktor vo vneshnei politike Rossii: istoricheskii shans," *Agenstvo Politichesikh Novostei* (June 3, 2008) [www.apn.ru/publications/article20014.htm], accessed February 28, 2013, emphasis in original.

79 Quoted in Anonymous, "Clinton Lauds Religious Tolerance in Russian Republic," *Russia Today* (October 14, 2009) [rt.com/usa/news/clinton-visit-russia-kazan/], accessed February 28, 2013.

the Tatar nation, but by the latter part of the 1990s the kremlin in its entirety—with Kul-Sharif standing in close proximity to the Annunciation Cathedral—became cast as a symbol of a multicultural Tatarstani statehood and a multinational Tatarstani people. Today the dominant meaning of the Kazan Kremlin has shifted to one of harmony between the Muslim Tatars and Orthodox Christian Russians of the city as well as the surrounding region and, more broadly, the peaceful relations between Islam and Orthodoxy within the Russian Federation.

This most recent reading of the Kazan Kremlin clearly resonates with an increasing flow of tourists, both domestic and international, who are drawn to the message of interfaith harmony that is materially embedded in its landscape, a counter example to civilizational "clashes" in other parts of the world. More importantly, though, this most recent reading has been internalized by a large proportion of Kazanians and other Tatarstanis, Tatar and Russian alike. They display an open pride in parading visitors through the landscape, almost invariably walking them through roughly the same paces taken by Abbas and Clinton, first approaching the behemoth mosque towering over the fortress' southern walls, entering the temple to gaze upon the brilliant marble floors and intricate chandeliers of its spacious reception room, then ascending two flights of stairs to a deck from which to view—if it is time for *namaz*—the faithful below. Exiting Kul-Sharif, they guide their guests northwestward toward the Siuiumbike Tower, momentarily looking up at the crescent-topped spire before making their way toward and stepping inside the cathedral, its vivid frescoes reminders of the structure's recent refurbishment. Leisurely downtown strolls taken by local families and couples often wind up at the kremlin, and once within the confines of the fortress the follow a now familiar, well-worn path past both places of worship, taking in the significance of their surroundings. In the space between the two religious structures, groups of teenagers occupy benches that encircle *The Architects of the Kazan Kremlin*, glancing up and considering the sculpture composition amid their youthful ramblings. On summer evenings, wedding parties, often armed with bottles of champagne, pose for joyful photograph sessions with the temple of their choice forming a backdrop—generally Kul-Sharif for Tatar couples, the Annunciation Cathedral for Russians, and for mixed marriages, as is not infrequently the case,[80] separate photograph sessions take place in front of both structures.

---

80 About one-third of all marriages in Tatarstan are mixed. Aleksandr Frolov, "V Tatarstane ispoveduiut Evroislam," *Rossiiskie Vesti* (December 26, 2001) [1997-2011.tatarstan.ru/?DNSID=f0d4a49fb408a38d9161597b448e462f&node_id=418], accessed February 28, 2013. Even with the reported rise in ethno-national consciousness in Tatarstan in the post-Soviet era, the percentage of "Tatar" children born into mixed marriages has increased, rising from about fourteen percent in 1990 to twenty-four percent in 2005. Damir Iskhakov, *Tatary i Tatarstan v XX – Nachale XXI Vekov (Etnostatistika)* (Kazan: History Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tatarstan, 2007), p. 30.

Figure 5: The model of the monument the defenders of Kazan unveiled by Day of Memory activists in 2009 (photo by author).

The inter-confessional, interethnic harmony communicated and reinforced—and, indeed, practiced—in the landscape of the Kazan Kremlin, however, belies the tension on which it is founded, a tension that is brought to the surface at least once a year with the Day of Memory spectacle. It is notable that the sole demand issued by the activists who organized the first Day of Memory more than two decades ago was the erection of a monument to the Muslims who died defending Kazan in 1552, a monument that would recognize that the beginning of the Russian Empire began with the defeat of their ancestors. The activists of the 2009 Day of Memory unveiled a model of a monument to Kul-Sharif and his *shakirds* who died "with a prayer on the lips" (see Figure 5). Unlike the legendary imam's namesake mosque within the Kazan Kremlin as it is represented by political elites today, the monument presented by the activists is not a symbol of harmony; the activists' monument communicates active resistance. In the model monument, the legendary imam Kul-Sharif expresses his resistance with a Koran in his grasp. Like this image, many of the activists—today led by a new, younger generation of Tatars—now express their grievances in quasi-Islamist terms. Newspapers remark on the "Islamicized youth"[81] wearing green headbands, whereas reports in the 1990s discussed the Day of Memory activists as "Tatar nationalists." As reported of the 2012 event, the "conspicuous 'Islamization' of the Tatar national movement" gains with each successive Day of Memory.[82]

Yet it would be misleading to attribute the activists' motivations to strict religious convictions. Although the refrain *Allahu Akbar* has become increasingly pronounced in recent years' Day of Memory protests, actual grievances are not centered on Islam *per se*, but rather focus more so on the protection and development of Tatar ethno-national culture. The most concrete grievances expressed in the 2009 event concerned the right to study the Tatar language in schools of Tatarstan, previously recognized as one of two state languages—alongside Russian—and a required subject in all public schools while the region still entertained the notion of its sovereignty, but one that has been

81 Amelina, "V obide," p. 3.

82 Sultan Galeev, "Den' pamiati," *Zvezda Povolzh'ia* (October 18–24, 2012), p. 2.

steadily rolled back under legislation that followed the recentralization of the Russian Federation.[83] Similar grievances over cultural issues were prominent in the 2012 Day of Memory event, with the activists protesting the recent decision at the Kazan Federal University to close its faculty of Tatar philology and history.[84]

The "Islamization" of the Day of Memory event in recent years represents a changing register in which the national activists issue their demands, the core of which have remained unchanged over the past two decades. Illustrative are the sentiments expressed by Nail Nabiullin, leader of the main Tatar nationalist youth movement and an increasingly prominent figure in the Day of Memory event. At the 2009 march, donning a green headband inscribed with Koranic verse and military fatigues, he visually positioned himself as a militant Islamist. Yet, as Nabiullin reveals, his concerns are ethno-national in nature: "Islam must serve the nation. Islam in the past saved us from complete assimilation, from becoming Russians. If it pacifies us, detracts us from our goal, that type of Islam is not useful. Tatarstan must be independent, and Islam must help us reach that goal."[85] He is derisive of "official Islam," the type of state-sponsored faith that, as expressed in the current narration of the Kazan Kremlin, stresses the harmony between Muslim Tatars and Orthodox Russians. While Nabiullin recognizes that he and the few hundred other Tatar national activists who participate in the annual Day of Memory protest currently form a small minority, resisting the current reading of the Kazan Kremlin, he is quick to point out that those participating in the first Day of Memory event formed an even smaller minority.

---

83 Dilyara Suleymanova, "International Language Rights Norms in Dispute over Latinization Reform in the Republic of Tatarstan," *Caucasian Review of International Affairs* 4 (2010), pp. 43–56.

84 Galeev, "Den' pamiati," p. 2.

85 Author's interview with Nail Nabiullin, Kazan, October 28, 2009.