

ALENA SHISHELIAKINA

Being a Woman and Being Tatar:
Intersectional Perspectives on Identity and
Tradition in the Post-Soviet Context



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Department of Ethnology, Institute of Cultural Research, University of Tartu,
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	7
INTRODUCTION	8
Aim of the Study and Research Questions	9
Theoretical Setting	10
Analysis of Academic Literature	18
Structure of the Thesis	20
CHAPTER 1. ESTABLISHING THE SCENE	22
1.1. Methodology	22
1.1.1. Ethnographic Fieldwork Description, Relationship with the Field, and Positionality	22
1.1.2. Methodology of Interviews	27
1.1.3. Methodology of Newspaper Analysis	28
1.1.4. Ethical Considerations	31
1.1.5. A Note on Translation and Transliteration	31
1.2. Background of the Field Sites	33
1.3. Historical Background of Tatars	34
1.3.1. Who Tatars Are	34
1.3.2. Tatars in Estonia	34
1.3.3. Tatars in Siberia	36
1.3.4. A Few Words About Siberian Tatars	38
CHAPTER 2. REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN VERNACULAR NEWSPAPERS	40
2.1. Introduction	40
2.2. Discourses of Female Role Naturalization	41
2.2.1. Being a Mother and Being a Wife in Contested Discourses ...	41
2.2.2. Blood and Heritage; Making Mother's and Wife's Roles Ethnic	45
2.3. Women as Keepers of Traditions	50
2.3.1. Female Roles at the Intersection of Discourses	50
2.3.2. Mother Tongue and Tradition	52
2.3.3. Cultural Identity and Endogamy	55
2.4. Discourses of Veiling	60
2.4.1. Veiling and Gender Identity in Media	60
2.4.2. Tradition and Its Contestation in Discourses of Veiling	62
2.5. Conclusion	67
CHAPTER 3. GENDER EXPRESSION OF TRADITION	70
3.1. Introduction	70
3.2. Searching for Tatar Women's Identity	71
3.2.1. Women's Aspirations as an Expression of Their Subjectivity	71
3.2.2. Female Modesty and Tradition	73
3.2.3. Intersectionality of Gender and Ethnic Identity	79

3.2.4. Notion of Pure Tradition in Stories about Grandmothers	81
3.3. Women and Traditions in Family Relationships	85
3.3.1. Girl as a Future Bride, Wife, and Mother	85
3.3.2. Virginity, Abduction, and Tradition	89
3.3.3. Islamic Marriage (<i>Nikah</i>) in Women’s Narratives	92
3.3.4. Giving Care in Family Relationships	94
3.3.5. Domestic Labor Distribution in Women’s Stories	99
3.3.6. Food identity, Feeding, and Exchange	101
3.4. Kinship, Social Order and Hierarchy	106
3.4.1. Women in Kinship Relations	106
3.4.2. Daughters-in-Law and Mothers-in-Law in Power Relations ..	110
3.4.3. Feminine Empowerment: Sisterhood, Friendship, and Collaboration	115
3.5. Veil, Femininity Construction, and Tradition	118
3.5.1. Veiling in Contested Narratives	118
3.5.2. Veiling as Tatar and Islamic Tradition	122
3.5.3. Other Meanings of Veiling	125
3.5.4. Women’s Narratives About Men’s Headgear	127
3.6. Conclusion	128
CHAPTER 4. STATE AND THE POLITICS OF TATAR HERITAGE	130
4.1. Introduction	130
4.2. State And Gender Identity Politics	131
4.2.1. Soviet Working Mother and Its Transformation	131
4.2.2. State Politics Toward “Other” Women	136
4.3. State and Ethnic Identity	147
4.3.1. Tatar Identity in Discourse of State Bureaucracy	147
4.3.2. Tatar Language Meanings	152
4.3.3. State and Contested Heritage	157
4.3.4. Tatar Communities and Their Structure	162
4.4. State and Religious Politics	169
4.4.1. Soviet State and Atheism	169
4.4.2. “Traditional Islam” in The Discourse of State	174
4.4.3. Muslim Communities and Their Structure	176
4.5. Conclusion	180
CONCLUSION	182
REFERENCES	187
SUMMARY	206
SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN	207
CURRICULUM VITAE	208
ELULOOKIRJELDUS	209
SELECTED PUBLICATIONS/ VALITUD PUBLIKATSIOONID	210

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INTRODUCTION

A few years ago, when I became a Ph.D. student at the University of Tartu, I returned to the theme of women in the Tatar community in the post-Soviet context. I had worked with that subject in my thesis (*kandidatskaya*) in Russia. My current doctoral thesis is built on the *kandidatskaya*, but it is substantially different. This dissertation is partly based on empirical materials collected for that previous work, but there has been significant new material added, and the current research poses new questions, employs new analytical perspectives, and gives new interpretations. In the eight years of time between one thesis and another, I have encountered sets of theory that I bring to this new work. The current doctoral thesis has an anthropological approach, while my *kandidatskaya* is historical. Additionally, they are different in language expression – changing from Russian to English has not been just a linguistic switch. It has required me to engage with anglophonic academic epistemologies, which have caused my thinking to evolve.

Due to my new academic position at the University of Tartu, I could not figure out how to talk about my field experience or the topics discussed with women during the course of interviews, how to represent women in general, and their intersection with ethnicity and religiosity particularly. I could not even find words to describe my anxiety surrounding this topic, to ask the right questions to more experienced colleagues. Only at the end of my Ph.D. studies did it become evident to me that the anxiety that haunted me originated from an Orientalization of the images of women, women of the so-called “Third World”, and postcolonialism.

A recent collective work, *Postcolonial and Postsocialist Dialogues: Intersections, Opacities, Challenges in Feminist Theorizing and Practices*, explores the connection between postcolonial and postsocialist discourses in conjunction with a gender dimension. This work explores the possibility of theoretical discussion for socialist/soviet experiences in postcolonial categories. Chandra Mohanty, Gayatri Spivak, and other post-colonial feminists speak about women in “Third World” countries through these theory lenses. Redi Koobak, Madina Tlostanova, and Suruchi Thapar-Björkert argue that “postcolonialism and postsocialism are more closely connected than is generally imagined” (2021: 1). As such, these lenses have more to offer one another than might be obvious because, “[a]s analytical terms, both postcolonialism and postsocialism are concerned with legacies of imperial power, dependence, resistance, and hybridity, therefore pointing to multiple productive convergences between the two” (Koobak *et al.* 2021: 3).

Chandra Mohanty writes that while feminism in the United States remains a marginal research framework when applied elsewhere, it becomes an instrument for Orientalization that forms hierarchies among women.

“While feminist writing in the United States is still marginalized (except from the point of view of women of color addressing privileged white women),

Western feminist writing on women in the Third World must be considered in the context of the global hegemony of Western scholarship – that is, the production, publication, distribution, and consumption of information and ideas. Marginal or not, this writing has political effects and implications beyond the immediate feminist or disciplinary audience. One such significant effect of the dominant “representations” of Western feminism is its conflation with imperialism in the eyes of particular Third World women” (Mohanty 2004: 258).

It was not easy for my research participants to find words to describe their own female experience, and to tell the stories related to traditions without belittling or celebrating the past. The research itself turned out to be a challenging task, to talk about women and traditions, finding ways to try to speak about it without self-Orientalization. I, too, did not escape the trap of Orientalist discourse. Subsequently, I asked myself how it happened that I ended up with such the Orientalist theme. Reflecting on this, I realized that a bit more than ten years ago, my academic curiosity was directed towards ethnic and religious diversity. I am writing here about the 2010s, when there was a wave of ethnic and religious revitalization in the Tyumen region, especially visible in the urban setting where I lived. But since I wrote final projects in women and gender studies in my combined BA and MA studies in History and Education at Tyumen State University, I was advised to keep studying gender in my *kandidatskaya*. Women’s studies had already been established by that time in Russia, yet gender still was a new area, especially in History (Rossman 2021: 420). At the individual level my own experiences of gender dynamics indeed bothered me, and reflecting on topics of power, gender hierarchy, and gender dynamics really helped me with my own questions, which turned out to be, in many ways, a therapeutic experience. Therefore, my academic and personal curiosity intertwined, which conjoined neatly with my academic interest in the subject of Tatar women and tradition.

Aim of the Study and Research Questions

The aim of the study in the core of my doctoral thesis is to analyze how, in the post-Soviet situation, women with intersectional identities as Tatar and Muslim negotiate their identity and tradition. The formulated theme has academic significance because the identity of Tatar women, as with the identity of many other ethnic minority women, is not well explored. With particular focus on Estonia and Russia, especially the Tyumen region, I achieve this aim, concentrating on the following questions.

First of all, I examine how gender and ethnic identity are constituted by discourses in the vernacular press of Tatar communities. Understanding how identity is constituted in the Tatar and Muslim press sheds light on how women are seen in the Tatar national project by a plurality of community actors. Press materials represent images of women, as well as the context with which women engage and have to negotiate their identity.

Negotiation of identity is a relational process within which one has to understand who they are, who they were, and who they want to be, individually and collectively and taking into account their positional power, having to explain and justify their own way of living with external ways of viewing. Tradition often serves as a vehicle for identities, including ethnic identity. Therefore, my second research question is how women express and negotiate their identity in Tatar communities through stories about tradition. The research of this question allows us to see the women's subjectivity and agency, how they explain and justify their world in their own words, in their own categories, with their power setting, in short, their epistemology. The women's stories make it possible to understand how they understand the tradition, which traditions are meaningful to them, and how and why traditions are contested. Moreover, talking about tradition, we can see related topics are raised by women, and see that some themes are similar to vernacular press of the communities and others different.

The third research question is how identity and tradition are shaped by state politics. The state is undoubtedly an important player in heritage politics and in gender, ethnic, and religious identity. The appearance of the state in women's stories, and encounters with the state in the course of my ethnographic fieldwork and newspapers both allow us to see how the state works on an everyday level. Many women's stories deal with different chronological periods – pre-Soviet, Soviet and post-Soviet – drawing a picture of post-Soviet-ness.

I approach this subject and set of research questions from a primarily anthropological point of view. Despite my rooting and inspiration in anthropology, my research carries several “betwixt and between” entities (Turner 1995: 95), because I bring to the doctoral thesis theories and concepts from gender studies, heritage, and folklore studies. The integration of these multiple disciplines is the core of my dissertation.

Theoretical Setting

One of the theoretical frameworks for my research is postcolonial theories, where I follow the lead of Homi Bhabha, Edward Said, and others. Specifically on gender, I have been chiefly inspired by the writing of Chandra Mohanty (2004), Gayatri Spivak (1988), Lila Abu-Lughod (2013), and in the post-Soviet space Madina Tlostanova (2009, 2012, 2020), Yulia Gradszkova (2019a, 2019b, 2020), and collaborative works by Raili Marling and Redi Koobak (2014, 2017). One of the key ideas which could be found in the theoretical writings of the mentioned scholars is the distinction between the categories “woman” and “women”. Mohanty explains that the “relationship between “Woman” (a cultural and ideological composite other constructed through diverse representational discourses – scientific, literary, juridical, linguistic, cinematic, etc.) and “women” (real, material subjects of their collective histories) is one of the central questions the practice of feminist scholarship seeks to address” (Mohanty 2004: 256). The plurality and diversity of women's experiences

studied in the context of their own culture oppose any tendencies to explain them with universal categories. Instead, I engage with the explanatory potential of the meaning making processes of the studied community, without a comparison of the studied group with dominating post-colonial cultural contexts. In my writing, this engagement appears as an avoidance of comparison between Tatar women's experience with Russian women and with the gender history of European countries. No one's culture is solely a historical past of another and, therefore, should not be compared in that way. Sometimes, however, I make references to a Bedouin community in Egypt to engage with Lila Abu-Lughod's writing (1986), or to a Spanish community in the US (Ahearn 2010), and some others. I try to do so as carefully as I can, and as far as I am aware of those references or comparison, they do not carry any painful colonial historical meanings for the Tatar community.

A second theory set that inspires my analysis is intersectionality. In that regard, I rely on Kimberlé Crenshaw, Leslie McCall, and Patricia Collins. Intersectionality is not a neutral term (McCall 2005: 1771). Even understandings of the origin of intersectionality are highly discussed. Some scholars, such as Jennifer Nash, write that the term intersectionality refers to Crenshaw's work (2008: 2), but the single origin story is not the only etiology (Ferguson 2012: 91). One of Crenshaw's main points is that people carry a complex set of identities, and those identities intersect one another, rather than simply existing in parallel. "[I]ntersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism", and therefore she says, "[b]lack women are sometimes excluded from feminist theory and antiracist policy discourse because both are predicated on a discrete set of experiences that often does not accurately reflect the interaction of race and gender" (Crenshaw 1989: 140). Ann Phoenix and Pamela Pattynama, in contrast, write that the concept of intersectionality "had been employed in feminist work on how women are simultaneously positioned as women and, for example, as black, working-class, lesbian or colonial subjects [...]" much earlier, emphasizing the rich and complex theoretical context of intersectionality, which makes visible the power and positionality that is always present in people's lives (Phoenix and Pattynama 2006: 187).

Studies of intersectionality tend to focus heavily, sometimes exclusively, on analysis of the intersection of gender and race. In her analysis Julia S. Jordan-Zachery asks, "When you look at me, what do you see: a woman who is black or a black woman?" (2007: 261). She explains in her own understanding her perceived racial and gender identities are not separate from one another. And she does not want to them to be separated. "Sometimes my identity is like a "marble" cake, in that my blackness is mixed intricately with my womaness and therefore cannot be separated or unlocked" (Jordan-Zachery 2007: 261). Jordan-Zachery emphasizes the need for the retention of a multiplicity of identity elements. For Tatar women too, their womaness is not separated from Tatar-ness, which is why the combination is in the title of my doctoral thesis.

Scholars pay attention to the intersectionality of gender and nation, too. For example Nira Yuval-Davis, analyzing nationalist projects and gender relations,

demonstrates that women have been perceived as biological, cultural, and symbolic reproducers of national collectivities (Yuval-Davis 2003). Those and other discourses are similar in some ways for Tatar communities, as I analyze them in chapter 2. Maria Rodo-Zarate, studying gender-nation intersectionality in Catalonia, makes an important point about the necessity of keeping in mind the relationship of text and context of analysis. She notes that Catalanian identity may simultaneously be seen as oppressed in relation to Spanish domination and privileged in relation to colonialism and imperialism to Latin America. Depending on the situation and set of power relations, an oppressed position may be reconfigured as a position of oppressor (2020: 630). Eleonore Lepinard examines an issue of the concept of intersectionality in a French context. She says, “politics of intersectionality must always be contextualized” (2014: 127). A feminist project of emancipation in France has been embedded into secularism and liberalism and linked with Second Wave of Feminism, and therefore a religious dimension of intersectionality has a particular challenge there (2014: 128–129).

Leslie McCall discusses approaches to studying intersectionality, identifying three main methods. The first approach she calls anticategorical complexity, which is “based on a methodology that deconstructs analytical categories”, because “[s]ocial life is considered too irreducibly complex – overflowing with multiple and fluid determinations of both subjects and structures – to make fixed categories anything but simplifying social fictions that produce inequalities in the process of producing differences” (2005: 1773). The second approach in her classification is intracategorical complexity, which puts the emphasis on boundaries and the material within them. This approach “acknowledges the stable and even durable relationships that social categories represent at any given point in time” (2005: 1774). As McCall makes clear, intracategorical complexity focuses on lesser-represented social groups that often fall into areas of invisibility in some scholars’ epistemologies. The third approach, intercategorical complexity, “requires that scholars provisionally adopt existing analytical categories to document relationships of inequality among social groups and changing configurations of inequality along multiple and conflicting dimensions” (2005: 1773).

Critiques of intersectionality in academic discourse are usually directed to “the lack of a clearly defined intersectional methodology, the use of black women as prototypical intersectional subjects, the ambiguity inherent to the definition of intersectionality, and the coherence between intersectionality and lived experiences of multiple identities” (Nash 2008: 4). The obvious critique of Crenshaw is her understanding of identity. Yet, I would keep in mind the legal context of her writing. She reflects on experiences of black women, especially those challenging US anti-discrimination law in the last quarter of the 20th century (Nash 2008: 7).

Jennifer Nash asks the insightful question, “who is intersectional?” – “whether *all* identities are intersectional or whether only multiply marginalized subjects have an intersectional identity”, explaining that some feminist scholars

refer to all subject positions, whereas other (and a majority of) feminist scholars refer to positions of marginalized subjects (Nash 2008: 9–10).

Rogers Brubaker in his writing about identity and groupness, criticizes intersectionality, at least how it has entrenched in American academia in the 1990s, for operating with categories borne of a universalistic epistemology: “‘intersection’ of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and perhaps one or two other categories generates a set of all-purpose conceptual boxes” (2004: 58). He explains,

“Yet to subsume further under the generic category of ‘identity’ the historical experiences and allegedly common cultures of other ‘groups’ as disparate as women and the elderly, Native Americans and gay men, poor people and the disabled is not in any obvious way more respectful of the pain of particular histories than are the universalist rhetorics of justice or human rights. And the assignment of individuals to such “identities” leaves many people – who have experienced the uneven trajectories of ancestry and the variety of innovations and adaptations that constitute culture – caught between a hard identity that does not quite fit and a soft rhetoric of hybridity, multiplicity, and fluidity that offers neither understanding nor solace” (2004: 57).

In the post-Communist/post-Soviet space, intersectionality can be viewed widely. Following Crenshaw, in *Postcolonial and Postsocialist Dialogues: Intersections, Opacities, Challenges in Feminist Theorizing and Practices*, Redi Koobak, Madina Tlostanova, and Suruchi Thapar-Björkert explain their understanding of the intersectionality of postsocialism and postcolonialism by using a metaphor of “a busy and unregulated intersection with traffic going in all directions and allowing for race, class, language, religion, ethnicity, ideology, geopolitics, gender, sexuality, indigeneity, and other vehicles to enter the scene” (Koobak *et al.* 2021: 12). They pay attention to the inequality of positions at those intersections, and timing is a meaningful idea for the authors as well – “several traffic systems are merging together and at times, clashing against each other: one consisting of cars, another trams and trolleys” (*ibid.*).

Keeping in mind the salient critiques of intersectionality, I would like to emphasize its contributions as well, including that “[t]he women-of-colour critique of conventional feminism’s essentialism emphasized the disconnect between feminism’s claims to speak for all women and feminism’s perennial inattention to racial, ethnic, class, and sexual difference(s)” (Nash 2008: 3). Intersectionality makes clear that women are not a monolithic category, any more than members of any racial or ethnic category are a monolith. As Nash states further, “[m]yriad feminist scholars have destabilized the notion of a universal ‘woman’ without explicitly mobilizing the term ‘intersectionality’, arguing that ‘woman’ itself is contested and fractured terrain, and that the experience of ‘woman’ is always constituted by subjects with vastly different interests. To that end, intersectionality has provided a name to a pre-existing theoretical and political commitment” (*ibid.*).

In this doctoral thesis, I apply the idea of intersectionality primarily to articulate a set of women's identities, that being a woman and being Tatar are intertwined and intersect with each other, as well as with age, economic background, and religiosity. Because they intersect with one another, they are performed together and simultaneously. I explore how the categories I use for the analysis are constructed in the cultural context I work with. Thus, based on McCall's classification, I approach intersectionality as "anticategorical complexity".

In the body of the doctoral thesis, I refer to the experience of culturally "Other" women. I use "Other" contextually to describe marked identity categories like being women, being Tatar and/or Muslim, or belonging to the East, as opposed to unmarked identity categories such as maleness, whiteness, and belonging to the West. Anna Tsing's concepts of frontier and friction help me to explain these points. Because identities are complex, real people with real everyday experiences may be pushed to an epistemological frontier, "an edge of space and time: a zone of not yet – not yet mapped, not yet regulated" (2005: 28). The frontier is a place of friction, "the awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference" (Tsing 2005: 4). According to Tsing, the frontier is a space where friction happens, an interaction between global and local, universal and culturally specific, colonial and local epistemologies, the "West" and "Other". In the context of my work, one of the bright examples of frontier and friction is Islamic marriage, which has two forms – *nikah* and civic marriage. In the eyes of the state, *nikah* is not considered an appropriately registered marriage therefore, Muslim women's matrimonial experience is "not yet mapped, not yet regulated" (2005: 28) by the civic authorities. *Nikah* falls into what Tsing calls a gap (2005: 172), thus becoming uninteresting, invisible, or illegitimate to the state. I expand on this topic in chapter 4.

These theories that I draw on are connected by the themes of identity and power, a connection which brings the next theoretical layer. In my writing, I perceive identity as an analytical concept, a fluid and constructed category, a category that should not be a noun but a verb (Brubaker 2004: 41), meaning that identity is a relational category (ibid). Here the classic works of thinkers such as Erving Goffman (1973), Roger Abrahams (2003), and Rogers Brubaker (2004) help me, as well as reflections on Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (1992), and Martin Sökefeld (1999). Homi Bhabha's work on hybrid identity (1994) informs my approach as well.

Working specifically on ethnicity, the ideas of Rogers Brubaker (2004, 2006) and Eric Hobsbawm (1992) provide insights. Following Brubaker, "[e]thnicity is embodied and expressed not only in political projects and nationalist rhetoric but in everyday encounters, practical categories, commonsense knowledge, cultural idioms, cognitive schemas, interactional cues, discursive frames, organizational routines, social networks, and institutional forms" (2004: 2).

When I talk particularly about gender identity, I further refer to the works of Deborah Kapchan (1996, 2003), Lila Abu-Lughod (1986, 2013), and Saba Mahmood (2005). Alexandre Baril, who examines gender identity in Anglophonic and Francophonic modes in conjunction with an intersectional perspective, facilitates my thinking about the cultural translation of categories. Baril asks the question in the title of an article, “Intersectionality, Lost in Translation?” The author addresses “the absence of problematization of Anglo-normativity and language issues in feminist intersectional analyses in English”, reflecting on Francophone feminist discourses which “disregard trans issues, currently a central topic in many intersectional analyses in English”, and based on an auto-ethnographic experience “sketches a possible future for those ‘brave’ trans Francophones at the crossroads of these inter-sections” (2017: 126). Baril’s article makes me think about my ethnographic research conducted in Russian, and the writing of my current thesis in English. The Russian language, as in French, is grammatically gendered. For example, if one says, “I am a Tatar”, the speaker would be grammatically gendered in Russian. The Tatar language, however, is not grammatically gendered, nor is the Estonian language. That highlights once again that any identity, including gender, is culturally structured, very evidently by the language used to express it.

Identity inevitably connects with authenticity, heritage and tradition, and there are dozens of works elaborating that connection (for example, see Graham and Howard 2008, Waterton and Watson 2015). A clear explanation of the connection between identity and heritage is provided by Laurajane Smith. She says, [h]eritage is about negotiation – about using the past, and collective or individual memories, to negotiate new ways of being and expressing identity” (2006: 4). So, Smith engages identity and heritage through performance, making meaning, and as an act of negotiation. I draw inspiration from her and other authors working in a similar vein, such as Dorothy Noyes (2016), Regina Bendix (1997, 2002), Kristin Kuutma (2013, 2014, 2015), and others who approach those concepts anthropologically, meaning that they focus on how they are expressed and negotiated.

In her book, Regina Bendix asks who needs authenticity, why, and how it is used? (1997: 20). Following Bendix’s lead, I focus in my thesis more on who does need tradition and heritage, and why and how are they used, rather than what tradition or heritage is about. Tradition and heritage are two main concepts I deal with in the dissertation. The terms tradition and heritage are often used interchangeably, but there are important nuances that separate the two ideas. Both are socially constructed categories that deal with a temporal collapse with the past, the present, and the future, lacking any “linear, progressive temporality” (Kuutma 2014: 318). Rather than being related as chronological moments, the categories serve more as nodes around which people can build their understandings.

Simultaneously, tradition and heritage each carry their own particular meanings. Kristin Kuutma distinguishes the categories in this way: “[t]he concept of tradition expresses in essence temporal continuity, to mark a

phenomenon or hereditary custom that is transmitted from generation to generation” (Kuutma 2014: 319). As such, “tradition should be considered a social phenomenon, particularly if we proceed from an understanding that it has no formal existence outside human interpretation, where it is in essence a symbolic construction – not a given or defined organic entity, but an interpretation of the past in the present” (ibid). Cultural heritage is a more politicized category. In contrast to tradition, cultural heritage is purposeful and used, it “is a project of ideology involving an ambiguous ambivalent implementation of the category of time, where the alluded preservation and celebration of past elements of reified culture are implemented by cultural politics to address the concerns of the present, with a particular perspective to the future”, and it is employed in evocations of power and possession (Kuutma 2014: 323). Thus, cultural heritage is not a neutral term; it is interconnected with state, ideology, and possession. However, that interdependence is not without its own power dynamics and imbalances, requiring a “[...] critical reflection on power and ideology that builds on the ambiguous character of heritage. Such an approach does not take the concept of power or ideology as its starting point in order to then account for their reflection in heritage. Rather, it implies the need to follow their mutual entanglement and various articulations in practices” (Schramm 2015: 422–433).

Moreover, following Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, tradition can be based on ancient materials (whether real or imagined) and is often invented for novel purposes (1983: 6). Henry Glassie defines tradition as “[a] continuous process situated in the nothingness of the present, linking the vanished with the unknown, tradition is stopped, parceled, and codified by thinkers who fix upon this aspect or that, in accord with their needs or preoccupations, and leave us with a scatter of apparently contradictory yet cogent definition” (2003:176). That process of reassembling of tradition for novel purposes is selective, interpretative, and creative, and is always constituted in the present. That an interpretative approach to tradition is based on the study of expressive interactions, communications, and ways of negotiation among and beyond community members (Kuutma 2015: 49) allows me to perceive and analyze tradition in my dissertation as a constructed, selective and contested category situated in the present but claimed to be rooted in the past.

Different actors and groups, based on their positions of power, interpret tradition in different ways, including what needs to be preserved and why. With the understanding that power is unequally dispersed in society, the works of Michel Foucault provide a valuable lens. Akhil Gupta, with his understanding of the state through encounters with it and the imagination of it in media, gives a meaningful approach to the concept of state (2006), as well as Foucault’s concept of governmentality (2006) and Anannya Bhattacharjee’s negotiation of private and public spaces (2006).

Among the multiple concepts of understanding the state available in scholarly literature (Max Weber, Michel Foucault, Akhil Gupta, Giorgio Agamben, Stuart Hall, etc.), I first of all turn to Gupta’s anthropological approach. In his

article “Blurred Boundaries: The Discourse of Corruption, the Culture of Politics, and the Imagined State”, wherein Gupta explores the Indian village, he talks about “everyday encounters” through various offices with the state and about its imagination.

“At the local level it becomes difficult to experience the state as an ontically coherent entity: what one confronts instead is much more discrete and fragmentary – land records officials, village development workers, the Electricity Board, headmen, the police, and the Block Development Office. Yet (and it is this seemingly contradictory fact that we must always keep in mind) it is precisely through the practices of such local institutions that a translocal institution such as the state comes to be imagined” (Gupta 2006: 220).

Another way of “experiencing” the state, according to Gupta, is its representation in media, such as print and television, where such representations are formed and contested. “Popular understandings of the state therefore are constituted in a discursive field where the mass media play a critical role” (2006: 228). Inspired by his analysis of the state, I talk about the state in this vein. I explore how narratives of the state appear in the imaginations of my research participants and the vernacular press. One more significant theory for my research is Michel Foucault’s understanding of the state, uncovered through the concept of governmentality, the governance of a population. In his essay “Governmentality”, Foucault illustrates a shift from the governance of the territory to the governance of the population through statistics, demography, reproduction, and a variety of other practices, all of which make the population known and visible in the eyes of the state. He does not have a gender dimension in his text, but the governmentality of the population, people, and their bodies are inevitably gendered (2006: 131–143).

Another concept I bring to the thesis, particularly in chapter 4, is the sense of “private” and “public”. Anannya Bhattacharjee in “The Public/Private Mirage: Mapping Homes and Undomesticating Violence Work in the South Asian Immigrant Community”, argues those categories may negotiate differently in different communities from those in Western feminist discourse. Basing her analysis of fieldwork with South Asian immigrant women, she demonstrates that the private (domestic) may become public, and the public may become private. For example, “[t]he “private” home is the domestic worker’s workplace (that which is considered “public”): her “public” workplace is her “home” (that which is considered “private”) (2006: 343). I refer to that idea of blurred boundaries when I try to describe the practice of religion and traditions by interlocutors in a private family setting in the Soviet period.

Even though knowledge could be co-produced, as an outsider to the studied community, I have to always work with internal and external, emic and etic perspectives. I try to acknowledge my etic position while working with interviews, explaining thoughts and ideas of research participants in the cultural context where they are situated, but with outside frames and tools. This analysis

is going to differ from the interpretations of the Tatar women themselves, their emic perspective, because I can never have all of their knowledge, insight, and frames of reference (their *habitus*) to fully understand their interpretations. Surely, the complexities of those multiple ways of knowing could be watered down, but they are present in the dissertation to make it clear whose voice is explained in the text, and to capture the fluidity of the process of co-producing knowledge.

Analysis of Academic Literature

Many academic studies are dedicated to the intersectionality of gender and ethnic or religious identities. Extensive studies on female identity among different ethnic communities have been around for many years (Abu-Lughod 1986, Mahmood 2005), including the post-Soviet and post-Communist spaces (Northrop 2004, Kamp 2006, Corcoran 2005). However, among extensive contemporary studies of the Tatar community (Kefeli 2014, Geraci 1999, Faller 2011, Ross 2020), only a few works are devoted to women. In the historical context of the pre-Soviet period, there are writings about women and education (Gabdrafikova 2019, Biktimirova 2011, Makhmutova 2006), about the involvement of women in political life (Ross 2017), and about religious belonging (Rorlich 2004, Garipova 2017). I pay special attention also to the works of Yulia Gradskova, who writes about the Orientalisation of Muslim women of the Volga-Ural region in Bolshevik discourses (Gradskova 2019a, 2019b, 2020).

As for the anthropological perspective, few works are directly devoted to the subject of Tatar women's identity in the post-Soviet context. For instance, a sequence of articles by Lilya Karimova is dedicated to the question of Tatar religiosity. The article "'Islam as a Pillar': Muslim Tatar Women's Narratives on Tatars' Identity and the Future" explores the identity of Tatar and Muslim women belonging to different generations in Tatarstan. Karimova's main argument in the article is that the understanding of Islam for an older generation of women "reflected the need for a moral 'pillar' and a source of agency in Russia's post-Soviet society. [...] It is at once rooted in Tatar historical and cultural legacy, yet guided by the moral principles of Islam. [...] A younger generation, in contrast, does not share that understanding of Islam, or its role in "preserving Tatar ethnicity and language" (2014: 9). In another article, "(Re)constructing Muslim Identities from the Soviet Past: Muslim Tatar Women's Stories of Soviet Moral Selves", based on stories of older women and their path in Islam, Karimova explores women's narration of their Muslim identities and argues that older Tatar women validate their piety as Muslims by rooting their identities in their experiences in the Soviet era (2018: 118). By drawing on that past, and narrating a continuity from that past to their present, the women's status as proper Muslim believers is bolstered. "In this strategy, the (Soviet) past serves as a valuable resource that the women utilize to construct the kind of selves they have always been or wanted to be: highly moral and, thus, always pious" (Karimova 2018: 118). In another article,

“Muslim Revival in Tatarstan: Tatar Women’s Narratives as Indicators of Competing Islamic Traditions”, Karimova studies how women make sense of the post-Soviet Islamic revival on a personal level. She argues that the center of religious revival is ethnic, including the “Tatars’ debate over the extent and nature of Islam that should be part of Tatar identity” (2013: 38). She demonstrates that veiling links with reviving and renegotiating Tatar identity in Tatarstan, explaining contested practices of veiling, that “the Tatars’ struggles over the kind of Islam they should practice – thus what should or should not be a religious norm – is often focused on the personal level of outward (bodily) practices and religious rituals, as opposed to more abstract theological underpinnings of a certain Islamic tradition” (2013: 40).

In his article “Muslim Women’s Organizations in Tatarstan: Between Traditionalization and Modernization”, Danis Garaev discusses the development of women’s Muslim organizations in Tatarstan in the post-Soviet period. He explores the interweaving of traditional and modern values of organizations, which he explains by the coexistence of a secularized context, i.e. the secular “pre-Islamic” experience of activists and an appeal to the assessment of the past, to the first pre-revolutionary women’s Islamic organizations in the Tatarstan (2019: 985).

Suzanne Wertheim in “Gender, nationalism and the attempted reconfiguration of sociolinguistic norms” focuses on “Tatar political and nationalist expression through code choices made by ethnic Tatars in post-Soviet Tatarstan, and the role that gender plays in these code choices” (2012: 262). She concludes that in contrast with Tatar nationalist men, “female counterparts index their pro-Tatar ideological stances more diplomatically and only within the Tatar community, with discreet and non-confrontational standards-keeping and critiques” (2012: 261). Gender lines are drawn between an outward-facing masculine discourse, which focuses on nationalism, and in inward-facing feminine discourse, which focuses on, and is relegated to, the home and other domestic spaces “behind the scenes” (ibid).

Guzel Sabirova in “Young Muslim-Tatar Girls of the Big City: Narrative Identities and Discourses on Islam in Post-soviet Russia”, bases her analysis on observations and interviews among young women attending Quran courses in Moscow. Sabirova tries to explain “how new images of ‘devout’ young Muslim women are incorporated into the overall picture of Islam in modern Russia, and how they are received and adapted by the young women themselves” (2011: 329). The key argument in the article is that young women draw on the images and tropes of proper Islam that are closest to them, those found within their own families and communities. [...] By understanding those families and communities as part of a larger historical identity, the local and the larger scales support one another through the “reconstruction of the past and the construction of the memory of the significance of the Muslim tradition for Tatars. This reconstructed memory is reproduced as part of the personal and collective ‘ethnic’ history, and is transmitted to the younger generations in this way” (Sabirova 2011: 342). She says that the young generation of Muslim people

tries to find a new image of a young Muslim woman, “one that is modern, fashionable, socially active, highly intellectual [...]”. In order to stress this fact, women wear headscarves in ways which are uncharacteristic of Tatars, or introduce new labels for themselves [...]” (ibid).

So, the religiosity of Tatar women’s identity has been investigated in ample detail. However, stories of women’s aspirations, sexuality, and representation, women’s role in the family and their network of relatives, power relations, and hierarchies in the circle of female relatives have all not been sufficiently researched yet. The representation of women in vernacular materials, as well as in Tatar literature and art, has been little studied as well. Also, as previous studies are mainly based in Tatarstan, it is not clear how the identity of those who live outside this Tatar cultural anchor is formed. Taking Karimova’s and Wertheim’s argument, based on their studies of Tatars in Tatarstan, and Sabirova’s work based in Moscow, I would like to continue the dialog and discussion about Tatar women. In my doctoral thesis, based on materials collected among Tatars of the Tyumen region and Estonia, where gender is understudied¹, I put women’s subjectivity, women’s voices and stories, and women’s epistemologies right in the center of my narrative, and explore how women negotiate different parts of identity, referring to different pasts and tradition, as well as different experiences in the post-Soviet situation. The stories told by someone from intersecting positions reveal the plot of an under-told, undervalued experience, which is different from those of someone with dominant positions.

Structure of the Thesis

The thesis consists of an introduction, four analytical chapters, and a conclusion. In the introduction, I provide the theoretical background of the research and a review of the pertinent literature, I establish the aim of the study, the research questions of the dissertation, and I describe the contribution of the thesis to the academic field.

¹ Islam among Tatar population is studied in the Tyumen Region, by Игорь Бобров, Максим Черепанов, «Исламский ландшафт Тюменской области: места, численность и социально-демографический состав городских молитвенных собраний» [“The Islamic Landscape of the Tyumen Region: Location, Size and Socio-demographic Composition of the City Prayer Meetings”], *Исламоведение [Islamic Studies]* 10/4 (42) (2019), 46–58. Александр Ярков (ред.), *Ислам на краю света. История ислама в Западной Сибири [Islam at the Edge of the World. History of Islam in Western Siberia, author's translation]* (Тюмень: Колесо, 2007). In Estonia, see Harry Norris, *Islam in the Baltic: Europe’s Early Muslim Community* (London: Tauris Academic Press, 2009). Aysha Özkan, “Estonia” in *Islam in Nordic and Baltic countries* ed. by Göran Larsson. (New York: Routledge, 2009), 90–101. Ege Lepa, “The ‘Tatar Way’ of Understanding and Practicing Islam in Estonia”, *Studia Orientalia Electronica* 8(2) (2020), 70–81. Toomas Abiline & Ringo Ringvee, “Estonia” in *Muslim Tatar Minorities in the Baltic Sea Region* / ed. by Ingvar Svanberg and David Westerlund (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2015), 105–127.

The first chapter, “Establishing the Scene”, provides the necessary context of my research, including where, when, and how I conducted my ethnographic fieldwork. I reflect there on my own identity as a researcher, the position from which I came to the fieldwork. I explain in this chapter the methodology of working with vernacular press materials as well, and also describe the essential historical background of the groups I worked with.

In the second chapter, “Representation of Women in Vernacular Newspapers”, I begin the core of my narrative, which is built primarily on materials of the vernacular press, but interspersed with bits from my interviews to contrast women’s perspective. I explain in this chapter how women of different social roles, statuses, and ages are represented in the analyzed media, and I try to describe the main contexts present when representations of women appear. This chapter introduces gender as a context, exploring how journalists, writers, and editors perceive women in the Tatar communities and outside the communities. I attempt to maintain the variety of perceptions that can be found in these sources. In many ways, this chapter gives the background of the gender dynamic in the Tatar communities, therefore it allows us to see the contestation of the imagination of women by women themselves in the third chapter that follows.

Chapter three is “Gender Expression of Tradition”, narrated by women’s voices. It is based on the materials gathered during observations and interviews with my research participants. I discuss here the topics that the research participants raised in the course of ethnographic work. Their questions are centered on what it means to be a woman and how their identity performs together with heritage, what it means to be a Tatar, and what it means to be a Muslim. I analyze how they communicate their identity and compete with other voices in the community, such as those that are expressed in the vernacular press.

The fourth chapter, “State and Politics of Tatar Heritage”, deals with the relationship between the state and identity politics in different dimensions, including gender, ethnic, and religious identities, through the research participants’ and my own encounters of the state, as well as through the representation of the state in the press. I pay particular attention there to state approaches to ethnic/national and religious minorities and how the Tatar and Muslim communities are structured in the places where I conducted field research.

In the conclusion, I summarize the key arguments of the doctoral thesis and discuss them in relation to previous studies, and I outline some possibilities for future research.

Structuring the dissertation this way allows me to put female subjectivity and agency at the core of my narration, to have a close view to women’s stories and identity. Even though the state is an important player in women’s lives, the theme of the state is purposely left to the end of the thesis. This is a choice made in the process of writing to emphasize that state politics serve to provide a necessary background for women’s stories, rather than women’s stories providing a background for the state.

CHAPTER 1. ESTABLISHING THE SCENE

1.1. Methodology

1.1.1. Ethnographic Fieldwork Description, Relationship with the Field, and Positionality

My ethnographic fieldwork among Tatar communities was conducted in the Tyumen region of Siberia, Russia, and in the capital city of Estonia, Tallinn in 2010–2013 and 2019, accordingly.

Firstly, I collected observations, newspaper materials, and interviews in the largest cities of the Tyumen region (*Tyumenskaya oblast*) – Tyumen, Tobolsk, and Yalutorovsk in 2010–2013 – in Tyumen from June to December 2010 and during spring 2013, in Yalutorovsk in January and in June 2011, and in Tobolsk in February 2011.

Donna Haraway challenges the “view from above, from nowhere”, or “God’s eye” (1988: 589). She argues that scientific and scholarly knowledge should be understood in the context of production. Since ethnographic fieldwork is based on relations between a researcher and research participants, I would like to describe here the dynamics of those relations and my positionality in relation to the communities I worked with in both field sites.

I came to the ethnographic field of the Tatar community in the Tyumen region by following a few different paths. First, I have a friend, S., whom I have known since my late teens. She does not identify herself as Tatar, but her parents and grandmother do. We grew up together, shared life’s events, and spent time visiting each other. Once when we were in university together as undergraduates, I unwisely wished her “Happy New Year and Merry Christmas” and got a response from her that “we don’t celebrate it [Christmas]”. This event was probably one of my first sudden realizations of the cultural plurality of humans that I can recall. Later on, when I started a research project on Tatars, her mother and grandmother turned out to be a valuable treasury of stories for me about traditions, and they were two early guides to the world of the Tatar community. Among my circle of colleagues in an academic institution where I worked, there were a lot of people who identified themselves as Tatars as well; they, as well as a wide range of their relatives and friends, were happy to share their stories with me. Another path that led me to the present work flowed through places and events that are meaningful for Tatar people, like the offices of Tatar ethnic organizations or gatherings of Tatar youth, like the women’s space of mosques or Tatar festivals, which were also great opportunities where I could meet people and start cultivating contacts at the beginning of the fieldwork.

To my research participants, I was a young female researcher originating from and living in the same region where I carried out my fieldwork. I had an outsider position – I was Russian and agnostic in eyes of my research participants. I was culturally Other for my interviewees. As such, I was not

included in kin relations of the Tatar community, which provided them an opportunity to explain and extol to me what it means to be Tatar and to be Muslim. At the same time, the research participants and I shared the female experience and a physical location, which created a shared identity, as, for many of them, their identity is closely linked with their geographic place. Having the privilege of having a network of social contacts with people in a place where I grew up, went to school, and worked allowed me in 2019 to return to a few of the research participants from the Tyumen region, whom I had known by then for an extended time, and carry out interviews by video-call.

Secondly, as part of my Ph.D. studies at the University of Tartu, I had the chance to update and expand these earlier ethnographic materials in Estonia, mainly in Tallinn, from August to December 2019. My experience of starting fieldwork with the Tatar community in Estonia was slightly different from the work I had done in Tyumen. I had the opportunity to do such things as engage with the community as a whole during community events. I went to *Sabantuy*, a Tatar festival held in Tallinn, for example. Attending events like this, when the community comes together to celebrate who they are, gave me the sort of immersive experience that provides texture and nuance within which to interpret interviewees' comments.

Approaching the place of the *Sabantuy* festival in downtown Tallinn, I heard music that was familiar to me from my earlier fieldwork. This music helped me to navigate the urban space, with its streets unfamiliar to me, and aided the search for the entrance to the park where the festival would take place. Moving further, I found myself in a stream of people moving towards the park, I heard snatches of Russian and Tatar speech, sometimes separately, sometimes mixed; following groups of strangers helped me to understand where to go. Soon I could smell food; I had remembered the familiar smells of Tatar food that I had tasted in the Tyumen region, and to me, it was the smell of Tatar hospitality and generosity. This approach to the park where *Sabantuy* took place, as I realized later, would be an important entry point for working in the field with the Tatar community in Estonia. It was here that I first met and got to know my research participants, told them about my academic and personal interests, asked for their contacts and the opportunity to find time to talk to me and my work.

I was perceived to be a scholar by the Estonian Tatar community. In contrast with my experience in the Tyumen region, where my Russianness was not meaningful to me, not marked, and therefore privileged, in Estonia, in the eyes of my research participants, I was Russian with a more varied cultural background and experiences. But the research participants in Estonia treated me as almost “theirs” because all my relatives and I originate from Siberia, and as one of the people I spoke with put it, “Siberia is a mixed [population] place, and everyone there is Tatar”². I do appreciate the welcome I received from the Tatar community, and I did feel like a part of them, but I do want to stress that I do

² «В Сибири все перемешаны и все – татары» (G., August 25, 2019).

not claim any genetic or cultural ties with the Tatar community beyond my fieldwork.

I consider the ethnographic materials I collected in the Tyumen region and Estonia in a complementary manner. Mary Bateson writes that women's autobiographies are often discontinued and interrupted, "crafted from odds and ends, like a patchwork quilt" (1989: 15). The choice of those field sites, interrupted in time, reflects the circumstances and discontinuity of my own personal and professional path. Nevertheless, I studied gender in both sites, intersecting with other identifications in Tatar communities, where they are ethnic minorities. Overall, I gathered over fifty interviews with women from 20 to 70 years old. I collected as well over a dozen interviews with community leaders, imams, and local authorities involved in heritage, ethnic, and religious policy. I made extensive notes from the participant and non-participant observations from the Tatar festivals *Sabantuy*³ and *Isker-Jien*⁴, Friday prayers and other activities in the women's spaces of mosques, attendance of courses of Islam for women, and participation in Muslim holidays. During the course of fieldwork, I started collecting newspaper materials published by the communities. I was interested in the gender expression of tradition in private family settings, but not limited by it.

In addition to interviews and observations in these various places, another source for my research is the vernacular press of Tatar and Muslim communities. I was inspired by Akhil Gupta's analysis of representation and imagination of the state in the vernacular press in "Blurred Boundaries: The Discourse of Corruption, the Culture of Politics, and the Imagined State" (2006). For anthropological analysis, media sources are useful as well as personal interview, as both capture a discursive repertoire of the imagination. As my ethnography was interrupted in time, my work with newspapers was interrupted, too. Firstly, I analyzed materials from the newspapers "*Yanarysh*" ("Revival"), "*Ak-Kalfak*" ("Women's headgear"), "*Muslim-Info*", "*Napomnianie*" ("Remainder"), "*Istina*" ("Verity"), and "*Mysylmane Sibiri*" ("Muslims of Siberia") published in the Tyumen region, mostly from 2000 to 2010⁵ (however there are a couple of exceptions of materials from the 1990s). Secondly, I included more contemporary materials from 2010–2020s from news stories taken from the website of the "*Vsemirnyy kongress tatar*" ("World Congress of the Tatars"), "*Islam.ru*", and the newspaper "*Hikmet*" ("Gist"), and the Baltic Muslim Bulletin "*As-Salam*" ("Peace"). I selected news stories related to women by paying attention to the most important gendered topics of authors, journalists, editors, etc. As a result, I collected over a hundred publications and then examined them as a complement to my interview

³ From a Tatar word meaning "plow" / "plough", it is one of the most significant holidays for Tatars.

⁴ It also could be spelled, "Isker-zhyen". *Jien* is meeting; *Isker* is a putative capital of the Siberian Khanate. *Isker-Jien* is a festival in honor of Isker.

⁵ Among the listed newspapers, only "*Yanarysh*" is currently published.

material. Ethnography conducted in both field sites support contextualization and interpretation some of the ideas and conclusions from the vernacular press.

When Gupta writes about vernacular press and magazines, he states that they have “special sections devoted to local news” [...], are “distributed only in the region to which the news applies” [...], and “can only be obtained within ‘the field’” (2006: 222). Keeping that in mind, I would say that the newspapers and magazines I worked with are vernacular because they are dedicated to the life of Tatar and Muslim communities in certain areas. Stories in “*Yanarysh*”, “*Ak kalfak*”, and “*Hikmet*” cover the life of Tatar people in the Tyumen region; materials of “*Muslim-Info*”, “*Napominanie*”, “*Istina*”, and “*Mysylmane Sibiri*” represent Muslim communities of the same area. The newspaper “*As-Salam*” is devoted to the life of the Muslim community in the Baltic region. Only two sources would be an exception from my argumentation – the website of the “*Vsemirnyy kongress tatar*”, and another online resource is “*Islam.ru*”. Nonetheless, I would consider them vernacular, too, since they have focused on life in a particular community. Most of those newspapers and magazines I discovered for myself only through conducting fieldwork. Moreover, some of those materials I collected by myself during the fieldwork, and some of them, like “*Yanarysh*” I borrowed from a relative of one of the research participants. Of course, it is a different situation with digital materials, which are accessible for everyone via the web. Regardless, I still learned about their existence during my ethnographic work.

The sociologist Michael Burawoy brings light to the sociological perspective on fieldwork and a reflexive ethnography. His primary focus is to study the revisiting / returning to the site of a previous study (2003: 645–679). He pays attention to the relationships between a researcher and research participants, the theories that a researcher brings to the fieldwork, the process in the field place itself, and “external” forces of the field. This article gives me rich insight to reflect on my own returning to the field because my fieldwork is fragmented. One part was done in 2010–2013, and another part was done in 2019, so almost a decade between one and another. From my point of view, Burawoy misses the valuable moment that not only a situation in the field could have changed, but the identity of the researcher is also changed. Clifford Geertz writes in *After the Facts. Two countries, Four Decades, One Anthropologist* about changes in the cities and counties where he worked, as well as about changes in his identity, changes in the discipline, and changes in the global world. “When everything changes, from the small and immediate to the vast and abstract – the object of study, the world immediate around it, the student, the world immediately around him, and the wider world around them both – there seems to be no place to stand so as to locate just what has altered and how” (1995: 2). “To form my accounts of change [...] It calls for showing how particular events and unique occasions, an encounter here, a development there, can be woven together with a variety of facts and a battery of interpretations to produce a sense of how things go, have been going, and are likely to go” (1995: 3). Following the lead of those and other scholars, I try to approach changes in my field sites and

myself. Returning to, and updating of, the fieldwork has brought, I hope, a better and deeper understanding of the performing and changing of identities, my own and the research participants' both. I also was able to understand the research participants' position better because I was more mature and had more social and cultural experience. And of course, it had been a long time between when I started collecting materials and when I finished collecting them. The most significant geopolitical change during that span, in my understanding, is the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula⁶ and the situation around the Crimean Tatars there. Although this is not a primary focus of my research, I nevertheless consider it important to at least mention that before 2014, the status of Crimean Tatars was not a part of the political discourse as much as it has become after.

Examining my ethnographic fieldwork across time and place allows a more detailed analysis of the complexity, fluidity, and performativity of identity contextualized in post-Soviet spaces. Recently Martin Müller has questioned the category of “postsocialist” in his article “Goodbye, Postsocialism!” (2019). But Koobak, Tlostanova, and Thapar-Björkert consider that it should not be rejected because “[p]ostsocialism is not only about a certain time after socialism and not just about people living in former state socialist spaces. It is also a characteristic of the world in its globality after the end of the Cold War” (2021: 1). Moreover, Soviet politics has strongly shaped gender (Zdravomyslova and Temkina 2003, Annuk 2019, Pushkareva 2012), ethnic (Hirsch 2005) and religious identities (Luehrmann 2011) of numerous people. In my discussion, I also illustrate my observations with an example from Malmö (Sweden), where I studied gender and migration among the Muslim community⁷. This example provides a useful comparative analysis to my thesis about post-Soviet contexts. I was there from August 2014 to February 2015 and did observations in the mosques and collected interviews among women of immigrant communities.

Being able to communicate with research participants only in Russian shaped the results of the research. In my experience, this is more typical for Estonia, where the Tatar community is highly fragmented. The Tatars who arrived in Estonia before the Soviet regime mastered the Estonian language and integrated into Estonian society, whereas the Tatars who arrived in Estonia during the Soviet era use the Russian language and are considered a part of the so-called “Russian minority” (Abiline and Ringvee 2016: 122). It is something to take into account for comparing my materials with materials collected in the Estonian language among Tatar people. In contrast, almost all Tatars in the Tyumen region have perfectly mastered the Russian language. For some research participants, Russian is their first language.

⁶ The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 obviously adds more layers to the situation, and it will demand theorizing and analysis in the future.

⁷ I was in Sweden with support from the *Sverker Aström Foundation*.

1.1.2. Methodology of Interviews

Interviews were conducted with people identifying themselves as women and as Tatar. Instead of selecting research participants by age, religiosity, or any other variable categories, I rather followed the development of my relationships with the fieldwork community. Interviews were conducted randomly at first but became more orderly later as my social networks became established.

I conducted fieldwork with people from 20 to 70 years old, but with a predominance of those who are 25–50, and with people living in cities and rural areas, but with a predominance of urban residents. My interviewees had a range of educational levels, from those who graduated from high school to those who received an academic degree, and a variety of income levels, from those who live in extremely modest conditions to those who are engaged in entrepreneurship and have a fairly good income by local standards. In my fieldwork, I did not focus on specific issues or differentiate or select research participants, based on whether they consider themselves Volga Tatars, Siberian Tatars, Astrakhan Tatars etc. I write a bit more about that division below, in part 1.3. Historical Background of Tatars. Among all collected interviews, Volga Tatar identity and Siberian Tatar identity appeared in a few situations, usually when research participants mentioned their ancestors moving from one place to another or originating from a particular place. However, most of the research participants with whom I talked identified themselves simply as Tatars. I did not differentiate research participants in terms of the subset of Islam they espouse as well. However, mostly I got materials from people who follow the Sunni branch of Islam (Hanafi and Shafi'i madhhab).

Usually, I asked people to talk about what it means to be a woman, what it means to be Tatar, what it means to be a Muslim; about traditions that are meaningful to them; about holidays and events that matter in their life, and the life of their family; about their understanding of the family and kin relations, and ideas about the role of women there. In general, I tried to let the conversation flow, to let it happen. In general, an interview is a situational, often spontaneous process, a process of relations between the researcher and a research participant. With some of the research participants, the conversation went easily and smoothly, and with the use of many details and descriptions, we could talk for hours, while in other cases, the conversation was more brief and superficial.

Interviews were conducted in the Russian language (sometimes including Tatar and Arabic words), a second or sometimes first language of research participants. The interviews were conducted in comfortable places for the research participants: at their home, at my study and workplace, or in some public place like a mosque or a cafe. Most of my interviews were audio-recorded, with a few exceptions when research participants did not want to talk with a recorder. In this case, I made extensive notes. Overall, I collected over fifty interviews with women, and for additional context, I gathered over a dozen interviews with community leaders.

I use the words “research participants”, “interviewees”, and “interlocutors” interchangeably to refer to the people with whom I talked. Tim Ingold says that in the anthropological approach, “[...] we observe not by objectifying others but by paying attention to them, watching what they do and listening to what they say. We study *with* people, rather than making studies of them” (Ingold 2018: 9–10). Following his lead, I approached the work with the research participants as people with whom I can learn together, can comprehend the world around us. I am grateful to all the research participants with whom I had the opportunity to meet, talk, and learn. This experience was transformative for me. I learned from all of them many pearls of wisdom, but the main one is that even though we have only one life, we all have multiple ways of navigating life and explaining the world around us, and further, all those explanations matter.

1.1.3. Methodology of Newspaper Analysis

Firstly, I examine press materials published in the Tyumen region, where I had conducted ethnographic fieldwork in 2010–2013. At that point, many television and radio broadcasts, newspapers, and magazines in the Tatar and Russian languages about the Tatar people and for the Tatar community were published in the Tyumen region. The most regularly published newspapers were, for example, “*Yanarysh*”, “*Ak kalfak*”, “*Muslim-Info*”, “*Napominanie*”, “*Istina*”, and “*Mysylmane Sibiri*”. “*Yanarysh*” (which means “revival” in the Tatar language) is a weekly Tatar and Russian language newspaper that has been produced in the region since 1990. It covers politically and socially important events taking place in the life of the Tatar community in the Tyumen region and beyond, including news from Tatarstan and other places of residence of the Tatar population. Another newspaper, “*Ak kalfak*”, has been published since 1996 by the head of an organization with the same title, which means “women’s headgear” in the Tatar language. In the 2000s, the newspaper became a magazine and then switched to an electronic format. Some of the stories there are published in Russian, some in Tatar, but not both; stories are not duplicated across the two languages. “*Ak kalfak*” is one of the main sources for the analysis of discourses because it is focused on women and is published by a woman; with discussing socio-political topics, there is a place for the manifestation of women’s voices: women’s biographies, women’s prose, and women’s poems. Newspapers with religious themes have begun publishing in the Tyumen region since the early 2000s, since the revival of Islam there. For my analysis, I have used “*Muslim-Info*”, “*Napominanie*” (“remainder” in Russian), and “*Istina*” (“verity” in Russian), and “*Mysylmane Sibiri*” (“Muslims of Siberia”), which are entirely Russian-language newspapers published by spiritual organizations that cover Islamic news in the region and beyond, as well as news from the global Islamic Ummah.

Secondly, my analysis includes more contemporary material from other collected sources. These include news stories taken from the website of the “*Vsemirnyy kongress tatar*” (“World Congress of the Tatars”), which

aggregates news, events, and information concerning the Tatars living in Tatarstan and different parts of the world – the Baltic States, Siberia, the US, Australia, etc., and written in Tatar, Russian and English. Another online resource is “*Islam.ru*”, which collects and publishes Russian-language news of the Muslim world. Additionally, my research includes the newspaper “*Hikmet*” (meaning “gist” in Tatar), which is published by one of the regional organizations, *Dukhovnoye upravleniye musul'man Tyumenskoy oblasti* (“Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Tyumen Region”), with a strong and dominant voice in the local community. As is to be expected, the newspaper has a religious presentation of the material; some of the materials are published in Tatar, and some of them in Russian. The Tatar and Muslim community of Estonia produces the radio program “*Duslyk*”, meaning “friendship” from Tatar, and the Baltic Muslim newspaper “*As-Salam*”, the title translated from Arabic as “peace”. I did not take the radio program for my analysis, but I would mention here that it is a part of the one and only Estonian state-funded Russian-language channel and thus a part of Estonian Public Broadcasting (ERR). It broadcasts in the Tatar language, and Estonian Public Broadcasting has programs in other minority languages, too. The newspaper “*As-Salam*” is in Russian and raises questions of belief, hygiene, learning the Arabic language, the issue of converting to Islam, and Muslim holidays.

It is not entirely clear how broadly those paper and digital newspapers and magazines are consumed. I have fragmented awareness about the numbers of copies distributed by some of them. In the territory of the Tyumen region in the period from 2000 to 2010, more or less regularly, the Muslim newspapers “*Mysylmane Sibiri*”, “*Istina*” “*Muslim-info*” and “*Napominanie*” were published, with a circulation of one thousand to two thousand copies. The circulation of some issues of the newspaper “*Mysylmane Sibiri*” reached fifteen to twenty thousand copies.

For analysis of the numerous stories from newspapers and magazines, I use an ethnographic approach. As in verbal communication with people, while reading or observing stories, I was paying attention to main ideas brought for representation, to the context of the story, by whom, and to whom it is told. “According to Ricoeur”, writes Edward Said, “speech and circumstantial reality exist in a state of presence, whereas writing and text exist in a state of suspension – that is, outside circumstantial reality – until they are ‘actualized’ and made present by the reader-critic” (1983: 34). That circumstantial reality of Ricoeur is what Said calls worldliness. The worldliness makes reading the newspapers ethnographic. My own reactions and questions to those stories are meaningful, too, as they are meaningful in the interviews with people. In the process of reading stories from newspapers and magazines, I was focused on the most important and repetitive gendered topics of authors, journalists, editors, etc., that came forth in their public representation. Then, I selected (if we talk about paper materials) and searched by key words (digital sources) only for those topics.

The different frequency of the newspapers' publishing schedule demanded different tactics for selecting stories for my analysis. The newspapers "*Ak kalfak*", "*Muslim-Info*", "*Napominanie*", "*Istina*", and "*Mysylmane Sibiri*", "*Hikmet*", and "*As-Salam*" published irregularly, some of them once a month over a period of a few years. As such, I was able to select all the stories related to women for my analysis. "*Yanarysh*", in contrast, has been publishing much more frequently over 30 years, so I needed another way to work with it. After reading "*Yanarysh*", I noted that stories about women would definitely appear for March 8th, for example, therefore later I selected stories particularly from issues published near that holiday. Following a similar approach for other important dates where I could expect a concentration of stories about women allowed me to search more efficiently within the larger corpus of "*Yanarysh*". Digital sources aggregating news – "*Vsemirnyy kongress tatar*" ("World Congress of the Tatars"), and "*Islam.ru*" – asked for a third approach. After reading them, I could see the most repetitive topics representing women in family and kin settings, like wives and mothers, women in the community, as a figure maintain tradition to next generation. I selected those stories for my analysis by key words like "woman", "tradition", "family", etc. I paid attention to stories about distinguished women in the community, too, to explore how they are shown.

As a result, all together I have selected over a hundred publications and then have analyzed them. I sometimes write of those stories as discourse, meaning a form of communication that is used in a particular cultural group.

Gupta says about press sources, "[o]bviously, perceiving them as having a privileged relation to the truth of social life is naive; they have much to offer us, however, when seen as a major discursive form through which daily life is narrativized and collectivities imagined" (2006: 222). I took Gupta's approach to work with the press materials and applied it for analyzing the representation and imagination of women and femininity in Tatar and Muslim communities. I do not perceive them as a reflection of real women and real gender relations but rather as a representation of those. Another idea in his writing is that "[t]he narratives presented in newspapers are sifted through a set of institutional filters, but their representations are not, for that reason alone, more deeply compromised" (2006: 222). It is meaningful for my analysis to keep in mind that thought because the aforementioned media are partly funded by the state (except "*Napominanie*", which was published by donated money) and, accordingly, the editors and authors of materials are in complicated dialogue with the state funding their platforms.

During my fieldwork, I had a chance to learn some basics of the Tatar language. Later, I refreshed my grasp of the Tatar language with the course "Tatar language in the Baltic Sea Region" at the University of Tartu in 2021. For learning the Tatar language, I took private one-to-one classes with a woman who belongs to the Tatar community and professionally teaches literary Tatar language. Those Tatar language skills helped me work with vernacular newspaper materials and translate some bits of stories written there. Quite often,

however, I have returned to the Tatar language teacher or to the Tatar community to confirm that I have gotten a clear understanding of the meanings of the stories, emphasizing that all ethnographic work is a continuous co-production. Moreover, the Tatar language is influenced by Arabic and Persian (Wertheim 2012: 267).

1.1.4. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations of my research are based on a few documents. Firstly, I follow the Estonian Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (2017). Secondly, I respect the guidance of the American Anthropological Association Statement on Ethics (“Principles of Professional Responsibility” *AAA Statement on Ethics*). Thirdly, I take into account the SIEF Statement on Data Management (“SIEF Statement...” *International Society...*) and the European Union General Data Protection Regulations (*General...*). I tried to follow the documents in the best way I could while doing my research.

In my work, one of the main principles is being safe and avoiding any possible harming of the research participants. The research participants have participated voluntarily in the research. I have informed the research participants with my thesis project and research interests, and they have given me oral consent to use the materials for academic purposes. They have been informed they could stop the interview at any point, and/or ask to turn off the recorder at any point. Indeed, in a couple of cases an interlocutor did not want to continue a conversation, and in a few cases a research participant asked me to turn off the recorder or asked me to have a conversation without a recorder at all.

People with whom I spoke are anonymized. I made all interviews anonymous, using a letter of their name and the date when the interview took place. I do not identify where the meeting took place because the community is small, and many may know each other. I only mention places in the text if it is appropriate and does not threaten the anonymity of the research participants.

The collected interviews are numbered and cataloged, transcribed in whole or in part, and stored on an external memory storage drive. Only I am in charge of the materials, no third parties have access to the field notes, transcribed interviews, photos, and audio files. Collected materials will be kept during my professional life and will be disposed after.

1.1.5. A Note on Translation and Transliteration

An interview is, first of all, a performance. But “[p]erformance is not a text – or, rather, not merely a text. Performance is so intricately bound up with the nonverbal attributes of sound, taste, shape, color, and weight that it cannot be verbally mapped – only alluded to, only invoked” (Kapchan 2003: 121–122). Such invocation inevitably involves layers of translation. “Transforming a performance into a text available for analysis involves its objectification” (ibid), says Kapchan, which is therefore the first layer of translation. Moreover,

transforming oral speech into written speech entails some correction since the text does not fully convey pauses, laughter, pondering the answer, etc. Additionally, interviews were conducted in the Russian language. Therefore, the translation from Russian into English, which is a second language for me, is the second layer of translation. I have tried to translate the quoted interview excerpts into written English as best I can. I tried to keep the speakers' words, ideas, and meanings intact, but in some cases, it was not always possible to find a suitable equivalent in English. I tried to convey the meaning of what the interlocutors said. Sometimes it was necessary to rearrange the sentences a little because the grammar of the English language does not allow doing what the Russian grammar does with the language. A simple example is that the Russian language is grammatically gendered, where English is not. But since translation from one language to another leads to an inevitable shift in emphasis and sometimes meanings, I made a decision to leave the Russian-language original quotations in the footnotes, allowing a reader with that linguistic competence to see the shifts themselves. In the body of the thesis there are quotes from academic literature, written in the Russian language. All such translations are mine, except where otherwise noted. I also refer in several cases to quotes from newspapers in the Tatar language, which is one more transformation of the text, from Tatar to English. Whenever possible, I left the original text in Tatar in footnotes for the same reason as the Russian-language interviews. I should also note that there are borrowings of Arabic and Persian words in the Tatar language, so sometimes, you can also find that vocabulary in interview quotations. In addition to Russian and Tatar, I also use the Estonian language in my dissertation. This primarily concerns the research of the Tatar community in Estonia, and in the text of the dissertation, Estonian is usually found in the names of organizations.

Since several languages are used in the doctoral thesis, one of the inevitable questions is transliteration. Among various transliteration systems, I choose BGN/PCGN system to Romanize the Russian Cyrillic characters into the Latin alphabet. The Tatar language (in Russia) is based on the Cyrillic alphabet⁸; therefore, I also transliterate some Tatar words. However, some exceptions exist with the transliteration of some words I encounter through English-written academic texts related to the Tatar community. For example, in the spelling of a word like *Sabantuy*, like *Quran*, like *Inorodtsy*, I follow the lead of established academic customs. I keep the original word in the Cyrillic system in footnotes in ambiguous cases. The Estonian language is based on the Latin script; it therefore does not require transliteration.

⁸ It is probably important to note that for some Tatars, the use of the Latin alphabet in the Tatar language would be more appropriate. "The [contemporary Russian] policies targeting ethnic non-Russian population (and Tatars and Tatarstan, specifically) include the prohibition on the use of the Latin alphabet for republics' state languages" (Shaykhtudinov 2019: 327).

1.2. Background of the Field Sites

The Tyumen region is a Russian region located in Western Siberia, in a corner between the Ural Mountains and Kazakhstan. It has a complex administrative structure. It contains three units – Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous Okrug (Yugra), Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug, and the Southern part of Tyumen region, which is more specifically where I did ethnography (Agapov and Korandey 2015, 2016). In the text of the thesis, I use the categories “Siberia”, “Western Siberia”, and “Tyumen region” interchangeably when referring to the territory where I conducted ethnographic research. Whenever possible, I try not to use the category of “Russia”, because this is a large and diverse country in terms of territory and population. When I use this category, I usually mean the Russian state, the political regime.

The population of the Tyumen region is multi-ethnic and multi-religious. Over 150 ethnicities represent the ethnic landscape: Russians, Tatars, Ukrainians, Kazakhs, Germans, Chuvashs, Azerbaijanis, Armenians, Belarusians, etc. (Russian Census 2010. “Population by Nationality, Sex and Regions...” *Demoscop Weekly*). In religious terms, the most numerous groups are Orthodox, Islam, and Protestantism (“Atlas of Religions and Nationalities...” *Research Service ‘Sreda’*). Tatar identity is quite diverse there. According to the last available census, in the Tyumen region (with Yamalo-Nenets and Khanty-Mansky districts), 239 995 people identify themselves as Tatars, including 73 Kryashens, 4 Mishar Tatars, 6 676 Siberian Tatars, and 89 Crimean Tatars (Russian Census 2010. “Population by Nationality, Sex and Regions...” *Demoscop Weekly*). Islam came to this territory in the Middle Ages (Seleznyov and Seleznyova 2004: 17). According to research in the Tyumen region, up to eight thousand people gather for the main Muslim holidays in all four mosques of Tyumen city (Poplavsky and Cherepanov 2012: 153–158), which is up to 1% of the city’s population (Russian Census 2010, “Population of Urban Settlements” *Demoscope Weekly*). These numbers do not specify the number of people who do not attend mosques but identify themselves as Muslims (especially women). Even including them, it demonstrates that Muslims are a minority there, and taking into account migration from Central Asia and Northern Caucasus, the picture is diverse and complex (Laruelle and Hohman 2020, Yarlykapov 2020).

Estonia is a European Union country located in Northern Europe and the Baltic Sea area. The majority of the population is Estonian. Even though Estonia has a diverse population represented by ethnic diasporas of Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians, etc., they are rather invisible in the public sphere (Seljamaa 2013: 186). Religiously, Lutheranism and Orthodox Christianity are dominant (“Demographic and ethno-cultural characteristics...” *Statistics Estonia*). The Tatar community is tiny, only 1 993 in number (Abiline and Ringvee 2016: 125). Within that small number, however, there is a variety of specific identity. Tatars in Estonia can be sorted into two groups: “Tatars who have their roots in the pre-Soviet period, and [...] the group that came to Estonia during Soviet times” (Abiline and Ringvee 2016: 122). The Muslim community is

extremely small, though it is quite varied, and it is concentrated mainly in Tallinn (Lepa 2020: 70). Friday prayers are conducted in English, Turkish and Tatar languages, and sometimes Estonian and Russian are used⁹.

1.3. Historical Background of Tatars

1.3.1. Who Tatars Are

Tatars are an ethnic minority living in high concentrations in Tatarstan and Bashkortostan and dispersed in several other Russian regions, such as the Tyumen region. A smaller number of Tatars live among majority populations in the Baltic countries of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, as well as in Finland and the Scandinavian countries. Diasporas of Tatars also exist in North America, Australia, and European countries. Tatar is a Turkic language. With few exceptions, Tatars follow Sunni Islam.

According to the latest available census of Russia, the Tatars were divided into Crimean Tatars and Volga Tatars; Volga Tatars included the Kazan Tatars, Siberian Tatars, Astrakhan Tatars, Mishar Tatars¹⁰, and Kryashens¹¹. In 2010 there were 2 449 Crimean Tatars and 5 310 649 Volga Tatars. According to the available census in Estonia in 2011, there were 1 993 Tatars.

The word “Tatar” was used ambiguously and inconsistently in the Russian Empire and the Ottoman Empire, applied to diverse groups of Turkic-speaking populations following Islam (Svanberg and Westerlund 2016: VII), and the history of the Tatars is quite complex and contradictory due to the complex situation with historical sources and their interpretations (Geraci 1999: 4).

1.3.2. Tatars in Estonia

The first Tatars in Estonia were known in the 16th century.

The very first Tatar community appearing in Estonia was formed of soldiers who served in the Russian army. After the end of the Great Northern War in 1721 with the Swedish Empire, Estonia became a part of the Russian Empire. The number of these soldiers who remained here after the war was large enough to establish a small mosque in the garrison town of Neustadt (Uuslinn), which nowadays is a part of Tallinn (Abiline and Ringvee 2016: 106). These and other servicemen who arrived later settled in certain districts of Tallinn. Abiline and Ringvee write that “[t]he oldest one became known as the Tatars’ neighborhood (Tatar Sloboda) [...] The retired soldiers started to buy land and build houses in the area. Even today, the main street of that area is Tatari tänav (the Tatar Street)” (Abiline, and Ringvee 2016: 107).

⁹ Observations, Tallinn, July 7, 2019.

¹⁰ A group of Tatars.

¹¹ Ethnic and confessional group of Tatars, converted to Orthodoxy in the processes of colonization of Volga region.

With the abolition of serfdom in Russia in 1861, many Tatar peasants became merchants, and some of them arrived in Estonia. This was a new wave of immigration to Estonia from the Russian Empire (ibid). “One of the main places from where the newcomers came was the village of Kuj-Su in Sergach County in Nizhny Novgorod” (ibid). After moving to Estonia, they kept maintaining their contacts with their homeland in the Volga region (Abiline and Ringvee 2016: 108).

Many Tatars left Estonia during the First World War (1914–1918) and the Estonian War of Independence (1918–1920). Some of them moved to Finland, while some of them returned to the Volga region. With the establishment of the Soviet Union, the Tatar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic was formed in 1920, which led to the loss of ties between the Tatars of Estonia and the Tatars in Tatarstan (Abiline and Ringvee 2016: 108–109). The period of the first Estonian Independence from 1918 to 1940, before the Second World War, “is still considered by Tatars as a ‘golden time’ since life was peaceful and it was possible to develop Tatar national societies and cultural life” (ibid). During this period, the Tatars of Estonia maintained close contact with the Tatars of Finland. The “*Tatari Kultuuriselts*” (“Tatar Cultural Society”) was formed in Tallinn and organized various events and trips to Finland. A choir was established that sang Tatar songs, one of which was active in Narva. With the spread of radio and gramophones, dances began to be held (Abiline and Ringvee 2016: 112). In Tallinn, there was a Tatar Sunday school for children in the house of Sigbatulla Magdejev at Raua Street 57, teaching the basics of Tatar religion, history, culture, geography, and language, as well as an evening school for children operated by the Tatar congregation in Narva, at Kiriku Street 2 (ibid). During this period, the Tatar community’s religious life in Tallinn and Narva was active. *Narva Muhamedi Kogudus* (“Narva Mohammedan Congregation”), the first Muslim religious organization, was registered in Narva in 1928, and it was re-registered in 1937 as *Narva Muhamedi Usuihing* (“Narva Mohammedan Religious Society”) (Abiline and Ringvee 2016: 113). The first mosque in Narva was opened in 1935 at Kiriku Street 2, where the Muslim community bought a house (Abiline and Ringvee 2016: 113–114). “In Tallinn, Friday prayers in the 1930s took place in the Mulla’s flat at Raua Street 57” (ibid), and another community gathered in the prayer room at Sube Street 4. Legally, the religious community of Tallinn was registered in 1940 (ibid).

With the beginning of the Winter War between the Soviet Union and Finland (1939–1940), and then the Soviet occupation of Estonia (first in 1940–1941 and again in 1944 until the end of the 1980s), relations between the Tatars in Estonia and Tatars in Finland were interrupted. The activities of Tatar societies and Muslim associations in Estonia during that period were interrupted as well, and graveyards of Muslim communities were municipalized (Abiline and Ringvee 2016: 117–118). With the Soviet occupation, many Tatars left Estonia, settling in Finland, Sweden, Germany, Canada, and Australia (ibid).

During the Soviet period, the Tatar population emerged quickly due to Soviet immigration policy. “There was a considerable immigration to Estonia

from other parts of Soviet Union” (Abiline and Ringvee 2016: 117–118). Tatars came to the construction of a chemical factory in Maardu (1947), to the construction of a hydroelectric plant in Narva (the 1950s), and to build sailing regatta sites (1970s) for the Moscow Olympics in 1980. Tatars also arrived as servicemen in the army, as railroad workers, seamen, and other occupations (ibid). Religious traditions at this time were practiced in a domestic setting. “The prayers were said at home, marriages, the naming of the newborn and funerals were conducted according to Muslim traditions [...]. When there was no official mulla during Soviet period, rituals were led by the elderly men of the community” (Abiline and Ringvee 2016: 119).

1.3.3. Tatars in Siberia

The first mentions of the Tatars in Siberia are found in the pre-colonial period.

With the annexation of Siberia to the Moscow Rus’ (second half of the 16th century to the end of the 17th century) and the beginning of its colonization, and then the establishment of Russian cities, several waves of migrations of the Volga Tatars to Siberia followed, where they interacted with local Tatars who called themselves Siberian Tatars. Siberian Tatars claim to be the indigenous population of Siberia, and I will say a few words about them later. Resettlements of the Volga Tatars to Siberia occurred in the pre-colonial period, but until the turn of the 18th-19th centuries, these migrations were episodic and low in number (Korusenko and Tomilov 2011: 180). The number of migrants gradually increased, primarily in the Tobolsk governorate¹², an administrative unit located in the Urals and Western Siberia, with the center in the city of Tobolsk (Bakieva and Kvashnin 2013: 159).

With the abolition of serfdom in the Russian Empire in 1861, a more active process of resettlement of Volga Tatars to Western Siberia began (ibid). Many newcomer Tatars settled in the villages of local Tatars or in the neighborhood, creating their own settlements. Over the last third of the 19th century, there was a significant increase in the number of Tatars who arrived there (Korusenko and Tomilov 2011: 180–182). One of the reasons for the resettlement was landlessness. Tatars from the Volga region settled on the sparsely populated and undeveloped lands of Siberia. They also ended up there as exiles (Bakieva and Kvashnin 2013: 159–160). By the end of the 19th century, Volga Tatars lived mainly in the Tobolsk district and the city of Tobolsk (ibid). The Tatar population of that time belonged mainly to the peasant class, but there were also merchants and petty bourgeois among the Tatars and a small group of noblemen from Tatars who formerly served in the military (Khakimov *et al.* 2015: 308). The number of urban Tatars significantly increased during that time (Khakimov *et al.* 2015: 294). In 1841, a madrasah well-known throughout Siberia was opened in the *Yurty Embayevskiye* (“village of Embaev”). In the 19th century,

¹² An administrative division in the Russian Empire in the 18th and 19th century.

mosques were actively opened in Siberia, and often there were *mektebs*¹³ operating under them. Islamic literature from Kazan and the ideas of *Jadidism* were spread there as well. *Jadidism* (“a new method”) initially spread among the Crimean Tatars thanks to the intellectual Ismail bey Gasprinsky¹⁴. The “new method” was not just a new way of teaching but involved a radical transformation of the Muslim school’s education system (Cherepanov and Kabdulvakhitov 2021: 11). “Among the Siberian supporters of the ideas of Jadidism, the most famous were the merchant families of Gabelniyazov’s, Saudukov’s (Saydukovs) from Embaevo, and Abaidullin’s from Tyumen” (Cherepanov 2009: 132)¹⁵.

At the beginning of the 20th century, a new wave of immigrants to Siberia followed, which, on the one hand, was facilitated by the Stolypin agrarian reform (about from 1906 to 1917), and, on the other hand, by land shortages and famine that occurred in the Volga region in 1920–1921 (Bakieva and Kvashnin 2013: 160–162). The Stolypin reform was a combination of various measures for the withdrawal of peasants from the rural community and the acquisition of a land allotment into personal ownership. This period of the first quarter of the 20th century was associated with political upheavals that affected the Tatar population as well. These were the revolution of 1905–1907, the revolution of 1917, the First World War (1914–1918), the civil war (1917–1922), as well as the West Siberian rebellion (1920–1921). With the establishment of Soviet power and until 1927, Muslim communities and mosques continued their activities. “There were mosques and prayer houses in the region; there were 70 of them in the Tyumen district, 90 in the Tobolsk district, and 5 mosques in the Ishim district”¹⁶ (Cherepanov and Kabdulvakhitov 2021: 12). In 1927, the law “On Religious Cults” was associated with the beginning of the anti-religious policy of the Soviet state. Since that time, mosques were closed, believers were persecuted, and mullahs were subjected to repression and exile. Many believers and clergy immigrated outside of the Soviet Union. However, many performed the rituals at home, and in some families, religious education was not interrupted (Cherepanov 2009: 133).

In the first decade after World War II, attitudes toward believers began to change. “Muslims were allowed to celebrate the main religious holidays [...] and conduct religious rituals. Since 1946, a mosque in the village Chikcha of the Tyumen region officially began to operate. Yet, since the mid-1950s, the

¹³ From Arabic, it means school, “place for writing”.

¹⁴ Ismail bey Gasprinsky (also spelled as Gaspirali and Gasprinski), (1851–1914).

¹⁵ «Среди сибирских сторонников идей джадидизма наиболее известны купеческие семьи Габдельниязовых, Саудуковых (Сайдуковых) из юрт Ембаевских и Абайдуллиных из г. Тюмени». Translated from Russian to English by Alena Shisheliakina.

¹⁶ «В регионе до конца 1920-х гг. действовали мечети и молитвенные дома: в Тюменском округе их насчитывалось 70, в Тобольском округе – 90, в Ишимском округе – 5 мечетей». Translated by the author.

authorities launched a new attack on religion”¹⁷ (*Muslim associations...* 2021: 13). A new wave of activation of religious life began in the second half of the 1970s in Tobolsk and Tyumen (Cherepanov 2009: 133). In that decade, the Zareki neighborhood and the Novy Yurt neighborhood served as gathering centers for the Muslim community in Tyumen, whereas the Cathedral Mosque played that role in Tobolsk, after it was returned to the ownership of the Muslim community in 1988 (Cherepanov 2009: 134). The imam in Tobolsk – Ibrahim Sukhov – graduated from the Mir-Arab madrasah in Bukhara (contemporary Uzbekistan), the only madrasah that operated in the Soviet years. At that time, there were also Muslim communities in Tyumen, Tobolsk, the villages of Embaevo, Chikcha, and Baishevo. The first imams appeared who received a religious education, such as Galimzyan Bikmullin, who later headed the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Tyumen region (ibid).

1.3.4. A Few Words About Siberian Tatars

Several groups of Tatars live in the territory of Siberia. There are Volga Tatars, Mishar Tatars, and Siberian Tatars. “The idea of Tatarstan as the spiritual homeland of all Tatars does meet some resistance. For example, the Astrakhan and Siberian Tatars have presented themselves as ethnic groups distinct from the Volga Tatars. These groups both claim that historical and linguistic peculiarities differentiate them from Volga Tatars to such an extent that they should be considered separate groups (Graney 1998: 155–156)” (Klaas 2015: 4–5). So, some Tatars living in Siberia identify themselves as Siberian Tatars and perceive themselves as distinct from Volga Tatars, understanding themselves as a separate ethnic group, demonstrating the layered complexity of Tatar identity in Siberia.

The complex negotiation of the identity of the Siberian Tatars as a separate ethnic group exists on the periphery of my research. As I mentioned above, I did not select the research participants based on their belonging or not belonging to Siberian Tatars. However, in the course of my fieldwork, several research participants emphasized that they are Siberian Tatars, while the dominant portion of the research participants identified themselves simply as Tatars. Based on the materials of collected interviews, I can say that the Siberian-Tatar identity appears as a connection with the territory and a connection with ancestors whose life relates to Siberia. Here is an example of dialogue on this topic.

Z: *“If we are to speak according to the ethnic belonging, then we consider ourselves to be Siberian Tatars. And my parents were born: my mother is in the Tobolsk region, my father is in the Tobolsk region. But after the war, in*

¹⁷ «Мусульманам разрешили отмечать главные религиозные праздники [...] и проводить религиозные обряды. С 1946 г. начала официально действовать мечеть в с. Чикча Тюменского района. Однако с середины 1950-х гг. власти предприняли новое наступление на религию».

1946–1947, they were transported to Salekhard, where they lived almost their entire life until retirement. And, accordingly, my sister and I grew up there”.

A: *“You live together: dad, mom, you, and your sister”.*

Z: *“Yes, we have a full family”.*

A: *“What about grandmothers, grandfathers”?*

Z: *“One grandmother, on my father’s side, lived in Salekhard. They both lived in Salekhard. After the war, a sufficient number of Tatars lived in Salekhard. Even before the [oil and gas] development, the Tatars and Bashkirs went there from the Volga region. Then my grandmother, one of our mothers, moved to Kazakhstan, then to Tobolsk. And I, while studying in Tobolsk, lived with my grandmother”¹⁸.*

Contemporary processes of negotiation of the Siberian Tatar identity deserve dedicated and detailed research on their own. To a large extent, the academic literature about the Siberian Tatars is complicated by the inheritance of the Soviet ethnographic tradition, which was in interconnection with political and cultural ideology, and therefore needs to be reconsidered from contemporary approaches of ethnology and cultural anthropology.

¹⁸ З: «Если говорить по этническому принципу, то мы себя причисляем к сибирским татарам. И родители у меня родились: мама в Тобольском районе, папа в Тобольском районе. Но после войны в 1946–1947 гг. их перевезли в Салехард, там они прожили практически всю свою жизнь до пенсии. И, соответственно, я и моя сестра выросли там».

A: «А вы жили вместе: папа, мама, вы и ваша сестра?»

Z: «Да, у нас полная семья».

A: «А бабушки, дедушки?»

Z: «Одна бабушка, по папиной линии, она жила в Салехарде. Они обе проживали в Салехарде. После войны достаточное количество татар в Салехарде проживало. Еще даже до освоения туда поехали с Поволжья татары и башкиры. Потом бабушка одна у нас по маминой линии переехала у в Казахстан, потом в Тобольск. И я, обучаясь в Тобольске, жила у своей бабушки» (Z., 12 Nov 2010).

CHAPTER 2. REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN VERNACULAR NEWSPAPERS

*“I often hear that she is obedient.
Of course, she is not like that, a Tatar woman”¹⁹.*

*“When a person grows up, a craving for national roots awakens in him.
This is at the genetic level. The foundation is laid in the family;
if it is not laid in the family, then it cannot be instilled”²⁰.*

2.1. Introduction

The main question of this chapter is how gender and ethnic identity are constituted by discourses in the press of Tatar communities. My analysis is built mainly on materials drawn from the vernacular Tatar and Muslim press, and sometimes interwoven with ethnographic observations and interviews for contrast or to support some ideas. Discourses of femininity and traditions intertwine in themes related to the naturalization of female roles as mother and wife, the interpretation of women as keepers of tradition through mother tongue and endogamy, and female veiling. Those discourses interconnect one with another, which brings to light the complexity of Tatar women’s identity – being a woman and being Tatar together.

Newspaper stories are a form of communication within and from a community; their materials are aimed both for the external and for the internal reader, for the representation of Tatars outside and inside of the Tatar community. Paulla Ebron and Anna Tsing describe the outside and inside reading strategies of contemporary minority literature in the US in the following way, “outsiders read these works to learn about the group described and to pick out universal ‘American’ or human items. Insiders trace an allegorical narrative of identity with which to reimagine the specificity of their own racial challenges. They chart the protagonist’s story, not so much to emulate it as to see how it highlights and addresses group dilemmas” (1995: 393). Vernacular press materials illustrate the views of the most significant figures in the Tatar community, those who have the authority and power to speak or to write in the community and beyond. But this is in a written performance of not one but several actors because press materials are discussed and, in some cases, censored in the process of production and publishing. Therefore, as an outside reader, I look at the published news stories as materials performing a con-

¹⁹ «Я часто слышу, что она послушная. Конечно, она не такая татарская женщина» (S., Sept. 20, 2019).

²⁰ «Когда человек вырастает, в нем просыпается тяга к национальным корням. Это на геномном уровне. Основа закладывается в семье, если в семье не закладывается, потом это не привить» (B., March 11, 2011).

ventional agreement of multiple actors in the community about what to talk about, and how to do so, as a normative way of speaking, as constituted identities and as the cultural context for the research participants.

As Deborah Cameron and Don Kulick write, the confusing term “discourse” is used in two different ways by two main groups of scholars.

“For linguists, ‘discourse’ is ‘language in use’ – a discourse analyst differs from a syntactician or a formal semanticist in studying not the internal workings of some language system (e.g. ‘English’ or ‘Arabic’) but the way meaning is produced when a language is used in particular contexts for particular purposes. For critical theorists, on the other hand, ‘discourses’ are sets of propositions in circulation about a particular phenomenon, which constitute what people take to be the reality of that phenomenon. The critical theorist Michel Foucault defined ‘discourses’ as ‘practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak’” (2003: 16).

Cameron and Kulick continue that although the two definitions of “discourse” are different, there is a connection between them. They are mutually implicated in the processes of the construction and contestation of the “reality” of identities.

“On one hand, the critical theorist’s ‘discourses’ clearly involve the linguist’s ‘discourse’: the practices that form the objects of which they speak (or write) are to a significant extent language-dependent practices of definition, classification, explanation and justification. On the other hand, the instances of language-use studied by linguists under the heading of ‘discourse’ are socially situated, and must be interpreted in relation to ‘discourses’ in the critical theorist’s sense” (ibid).

Following the lead of Cameron’s and Kulick’s explanation of the connection between the two understandings of discourse, I understand the term in a complementary manner as well. To me discourse, as used in English, means a form of communication that is used in a particular cultural group.

2.2. Discourses of Female Role Naturalization

2.2.1. Being a Mother and Being a Wife in Contested Discourses

In the stories I selected from the sources and analyzed, women are represented in a broad context of various themes, and a plurality of female images is demonstrated. There are both women who fully devote themselves to caring for the family (“Happy Family” *Yanarysh*; “Letter About Mom” *Yanarysh*), and women who achieve outstanding success in the professional field (“Our Candidate” *Yanarysh*; “Rural Seller”, *Yanarysh*; “To Serve a Person”, *Yanarysh*; “What Is Needed for Friendship?”, *Yanarysh*), women who take care of mosques, win various competitions (“School for Her Is Not Just a Word...”

Yanarysh; “The Most Important Thing in Our Work...” *Yanarysh*), and more. However, even the most outstanding professional women’s achievements are framed by women’s inclusion in family and kinship relations, maintaining traditions, and following religious norms and values.

One of the most common discourses is the discourse of naturalizing female roles, constructing the social roles of women through a reference to the biological nature of women’s bodies. Female identity is discursively associated with motherhood, which is considered as essential, as a biological woman’s duty (“Protecting the Life of Children...” *Hikmet*). A quote from a story in the “*Hikmet*” newspaper demonstrates this discursive linking of biology and essentiality:

*“Pregnancy is a great blessing given to women by Allah Almighty. Being pregnant is worship in itself. When a woman does namaz²¹, she only performs worship during namaz. When the prayer is over, the act of worship is over. It is the same with the remembrance of Allah: this act of worship is limited to the time you give it. When you finish reading the Quran or Zikr²², then this type of worship also ends. However, worship during pregnancy is of a different kind. A pregnant woman carries a baby in the womb and overcomes the difficulties that arise during pregnancy: nausea, hormonal changes, mood swings, a special diet – and all this will be worship for a pregnant woman²³ (“Pregnancy Is Worship”, *Hikmet*).*

As you can see from the quote, from the emic interpretation, bearing a child is the most valuable female mission, a form of worship of Allah that lasts throughout pregnancy. It can be noted as well that the nature of a woman is “given by Allah Almighty”, which means that the female biological nature is determined by a religious meaning, a religious epistemology. Perhaps, not all the Tatar people share that religious justification of pregnancy. Yet, the idea of motherhood, which is the result of women’s reproductive function, is seen as the highest manifestation of women’s femininity. That emic interpretation is more coherent and is spread wider in the Tatar communities I worked with. For example, “[...] a man and a woman in this world have their own mission [...]. A

²¹ Prayers.

²² It is a type of prayers, and can also be spelled, “dhikr”.

²³ «Беременность – это великое благо, данное женщинам Всевышним Аллахом. Быть беременной – само по себе поклонение. Когда женщина читает намаз, она совершает поклонение только на протяжении намаза. Когда намаз закончен, закончен и акт поклонения. То же самое и с поминанием Аллаха: этот акт поклонения ограничен временем, которое вы ему отводите. Когда вы заканчиваете читать Коран или зикр, то этот вид поклонения также оканчивается. Однако поклонение во время беременности – иного рода. Беременная женщина вынашивает ребенка в матке и преодолевает трудности, которые возникают во время беременности: тошноту, гормональные изменения, перепады настроения, особую диету – и все это будет поклонением для беременной женщины».

woman is, first of all, a mother, a person's educator"²⁴ ("Islam, Family, Parents" *Istina*); the highest words and epithets are dedicated to such female roles in news stories.

Etic interpretation, however, questions the biological nature of women's roles. From the scholarly perspective, female roles and gender identity are socially constituted rather than biologically determined (Moore 1988, Butler 1990). Judith Butler, interpreting Clifford Geertz, draws attention to his ideas about "nature", that "nature" – and in our case, "feminine nature" – has cultural significance.

"Critics of structuralism such as Clifford Geertz have argued that its [the system which assumes sex is a natural category] universalizing framework discounts the multiplicity of cultural configurations of 'nature'. The analysis that assumes nature to be singular and prediscursive cannot ask, what qualifies as 'nature' within a given context, and for what purposes? Is the dualism necessary at all? How are the sex/gender and nature/culture dualisms constructed and naturalized in and through one another? What gender hierarchies do they serve, and what relations of subordination do they reify?" (Butler 1990: 37).

Lila Abu-Lughod points out as well that "females are defined by their association with reproduction, not so much in its social aspect of motherhood, but in its natural aspects of menstruation, procreation, and sexuality" (1986: 124).

It should be noted that the press materials abound with various articles about women as educators, as teachers, and as professors; these are professions related to the upbringing and education of children, adolescents, and youth ("Khalida Is the Best Teacher..." *Ak kalfak*). Even in the most conservative Islamic stories, female educators and teachers are presented in the best possible light. Conversely, a woman's neglect of upbringing and refusal to raise children is viewed as unworthy behavior. One of the press stories tells us,

*"Unfortunately, in contemporary society, the main problem is that modern Muslim women study, work, build a career, but forget about the most important achievement of a woman – about their children. A woman is responsible for raising her child from the first moments of his/her birth. The punishment for failing to fulfill one's duties in worldly life will be the negligence of one's own children and a terrible punishment in eternal life"*²⁵ ("What Are the Sharia Responsibilities..." *Hikmet*).

²⁴ «[...] у мужчины и женщины в этом мире своя миссия [...]. Женщина – в первую очередь мать, воспитательница человека [...]».

²⁵ «К сожалению, в современном обществе основной проблемой является то, что современные мусульманки учатся, трудятся, строят карьеру, но забывают о самом главном достижении женщины – о своих детях. Женщина ответственна за воспитание своего ребёнка с первых моментов его появления на свет. Наказанием за невыполнение своих обязанностей в мирской жизни станет небрежное отношение собственных детей и страшное наказание в вечной жизни».

Nancy Chodorow elegantly explains, arguing that “[b]eing a mother, then, is not only bearing a child – it is being a person who socializes and nurtures. It is being a primary parent or caretaker” (Chodorow 1978: 11). Due to the layering of the other voices – the heteroglossia, in Bakhtin’s terms (1981: 324) – this is a fascinating case because women’s narratives about tradition (as I show in chapter 3) say that raising children used to be a matter of the mother-in-law, grandmother and the extended family in general, and not only women who carried and gave birth to a child²⁶. Moreover, I have faced an idea expressed by one of the Muslim leaders in Tyumen, who occupies a high position in the religious hierarchy, that children belong to men (husband), and in the case of divorce, children should stay with him and be further raised by his next wife²⁷. Returning to the above quote, in the context of “other” voices, we can notice that its actors proceed from the concept of the nuclear family, where the responsibility of raising children is vested in a woman.

The cultivation of the image of being a mother in the community is defined by events, competitions, and press coverage, all of which extol motherhood. The Tatar communities of Tatarstan, in different parts of Russia and abroad, hold contests competitions related to the demonstration of skills like cooking, sewing, etc., which are perceived as women’s skills (“The Most Resourceful and Successful Mother...” *World Congress of the Tatars*; “Tatar Kyzy-2019...” *World Congress of the Tatars*; “The Tatar Community of the Kaliningrad region...” *World Congress of the Tatars*). Together with the role of the mother, the role of the wife is also presented, which is cultivated in the community through the given contests as well as in the media. The most common and most significant are the images of the mother and wife; as expected, they are described as complementary to male images and roles, as here: “[...] F.[...] is the best tractor driver, a mechanic in the village, spent his whole life in the fields of the collective farm. His wife [...] at first worked with her husband. Strong and tall, she brought water and fuel to the tractor drivers. Growing up, the children helped her, gradually replaced her completely and moved closer to their father, to technology” (“Happy Family”, *Yanarysh*)²⁸. Or “[...] His wife [...] was the assistant to her husband. She went with other women to the harvest, reaped the sickle, sheaf. Later, when the family had nine children, it was difficult for her to go to the field. She took care of the children, ran the household [...]”²⁹ (“Ordinary Biography”, *Yanarysh*). Along with depicting women as mothers and wives, the Tatar press portrays women as sisters,

²⁶ A., Oct. 5, 2019.

²⁷ Participant observ., Tyumen, fall 2013.

²⁸ «[...] Ф[...] – первый на селе тракторист, механик, всю жизнь провел на полях колхоза. Его жена [...] в первое время работала около мужа. Сильная, рослая она подвозила то воду, то горячее трактористам. Подрастая, дети помогали ей, постепенно заменили ее полностью и переходили ближе к отцу, к технике».

²⁹ «[...] Помощницей мужу была его жена [...]. Ходила с женщинами на жатву, жала серпом, вязала снопы за жаткой. Попозже, когда в семье стало девять детей, ей было трудно ходить на поле. Она ухаживала за детьми, вела домашнее хозяйство...».

daughters-in-law, aunts, etc., roles which position women in the context of broad family and kin relations. It means that Tatar women's identity is discursively constituted through family and kin relations.

Yet it is misleading to focus exclusively on the discourse constructing women as mothers and as wives. Along with it, the female identity can also appear as a working mother. A working mother is a woman focusing on motherhood and a paid job. This combined identity had been shaped by Soviet policy, as I will show in chapter 4. By following the texts published in the media, we can see that changes to a working mother identity are not painless. One journalist, and a leader of a Tatar women's organization in Tyumen, commented on the pain. She said on the *Syezd zhenshchin Tatarstana* ("Congress of Women of Tatarstan") in 1996, that,

"At the beginning of the century [20th], women were given the same rights as men, and women were given the same burden as men, although women are of the weaker sex. Women cannot stand the load and begin to drink, use drugs, and give birth to imperfect children [...] Tatar women, despite everything, try to keep their families together. To preserve the health of the nation [Tatar ethnicity], it is necessary to preserve the language, national [ethnic] motives, the wealth of faith, the orders of grandparents, and the traditions of the family [...] However, women's problems cannot be solved without men. Women need to return to their families, raise children [...]"³⁰ ("A Woman Is Half the Planet", *Ak kalfak*).

The Soviet state had given women rights not to equalize men and women, but to involve women in the Soviet industrial economy (Rivkin-Fish 2010: 706); therefore, the involvement of women in the professional field was not voluntary. The quote tells us that Tatar women tried to preserve their families in spite of everything, in spite of the demands of the Soviet state to work. Therefore, in the post-Soviet period, when the need to work is no longer a requirement of the state, women should return to their families and take care of them. I write more about state and gender politics in section 4.2.

2.2.2. Blood and Heritage; Making Mother's and Wife's Roles Ethnic

Another aspect of the naturalization of female roles is its intersection with the ethnic meanings given to female roles when a woman is represented not only as

³⁰ «[...] в начале века женщинам были предоставлены те же права, что и мужчинам и на женщин свалилась та же тяжесть, что и на мужчин, хотя женщины слабый пол. Женщины не выдерживают нагрузки и начинают пить, употреблять наркотики и рожают неполноценных детей [...]. Татарские женщины несмотря ни на что пытаются сохранить семью. Чтобы сохранить здоровье нации нужно сохранять язык, национальные мотивы, богатство веры, наказания бабушек и дедушек и традиции семьи [...]. Однако проблемы женщин нельзя решить без мужчин. Женщинам нужно вернуться в семью, воспитывать детей [...]».

a mother of a person, but as a mother of the Tatar people. For instance, one of the Tatar leaders in Tyumen, a man who congratulates women with International Women’s Day on March 8th – which in modern Russia is reinterpreted and presented not as a day of celebrating women’s rights, but as a holiday celebrating femininity (Ruthchild 2017) – noted,

“Our smart and talented, hardworking and educated women cannot say that life is wonderful. In our region, one out of five of our fellow tribesmen does not consider the Tatar language to be their mother tongue. Now both marriages and nikahs³¹ do not benefit national development. Among married women, only 42% have Tatar husbands; therefore, in newborns, only one out of three has a father from our nationality. In conclusion, I would like to say that it is time for us to embark on the path of fulfilling traditions and customs, to return to our roots. The time has come to do this so as not to lose the ‘face of the people’. And the role of women is very important in this. No wonder it is said that a woman gives birth to a nation and destroys it. Be happy, women, grandmothers, aunts from March 8!”³² (Garifullin, “Tyumen Tsarinas Syuyumbike” Yanarysh).

I would like to draw your attention to the sentence “a woman gives birth to a nation and destroys it” (ibid). This is a proverb, and its meaning is crucial; the narrator suggests that the birth of the Tatar ethnic community and its collapse are biological, naturalized actions, and he puts the responsibility for Tatar ethnic reproduction onto the Tatar women. In a similar vein, Nira Yuval-Davis points out that in the national-building discourse, “the symbolic heritage provided by language and/or religion and/or other customs and traditions are constructed as the ‘essence’ of ‘the nation’” (2003: 11), and “as the biological ‘producers’ of children/people, women are also, therefore, ‘bearers of the collective’ within these [nation constructing] boundaries“ (2003: 12). The nation-building agenda is relevant for the Tatar community in Tatarstan (Wertheim 2003), and for the Tatar community in the Tyumen region. I would mention, however, that a nation-building discourse is also a response to complex, unequal relations between the conceptual landscapes of center and periphery, involving the complexity of colonial and post-colonial relationships in the Russian Empire

³¹ *Nikah*, or *nikkah*, is a marriage contracted according to Islamic norms.

³² “Акыллы һәм талантлы, хезмәтчел һәм мәгърифәтле хатын-кызларыбыз дәнъясы ал да гөл генә дип әйтеп булмый. Өлкәбездәге милләтәшләребезнен биштән бере татар телен ана теле дип санамаганлыкларын белдерделәр. Хәзер өйләнешү мөнәсәбәтләре, милләтара никахлар да милләтебез файдасына түгел. Кияүгә чыккан хатын-кызларның ирләре арасында татарлар 42 процент кына тәшкил итә. Шунтың өчен яна туган балаларның өчтән беренә генә аталары үз милләтебез кешеләре. Йомгак ясап шуны әйтәсе килә: барлык яктан асылыбызга кайту, милләтебезнең үз йөзен, горелгадәтләрен торгызу юлына басарга вакыт житкәндер. Әлбәттә, бу эштә хатын-кызлар роле зур. Милләтне яшәткән дә, аны юк иткән дә ханын-кыз дип тиккә әйтелми. Бәхетле булыгыз, хәрмәтле хатын-кызларыбыз, әбиләр, аналар, ханымнар, сөнелләр, яшь киленнәр, чибәр кызлар! Жаннарыбызга яз яктысы индерүче гүзәл бәйрәмеgez 8 Март котлы булсын!”.

and the Soviet state. To me, a nationalist discourse of ethnic minorities, then, is a way of utilizing the frustration from those unequal relations. For instance, Homi Bhabha suggests instead of focusing on nationalism, we should concentrate on studies of representation of marginalized identities (1994: 28–56).

It is important to note that the construction of the Tatar identity, like many other ethnic and national identities, especially in the post-Soviet space, is based on the idea of blood. “Blood both links people to the past and binds them in the present. As a link to the past, through genealogy, blood is essential to the definition of cultural identity”, writes Lila Abu-Lughod about Bedouin people in Egypt (1986: 41). This connection between the idea of blood and Tatar identity, the notion of Tatar heritage, it must be said, is assumed in press materials and in personal narratives as well. That connection, then, is performed as natural, as biological. Hints and traces of this connection can be found, as in the example of the quote above. Another example is where the idea of blood intertwines with sex and the notion of heritage, ethnicity, and religion as in the following: “I am from birth in religion. Any Tatar living in Siberia from childhood knows about his adherence to Islam; this is passed on to us with mother’s milk. Ask any of my fellow tribesmen if he is a Muslim, everyone will answer in the affirmative”³³ (“Interview with the Mufti of the Tyumen Region...”, *Hikmet*), says one Muslim leader in the Tyumen region, who is one of the most authoritative people in the Islamic and Tatar world. He clearly explains that belonging to Islam and belonging to the Tatar community is transmitted with mother’s milk. From the etic point of view, mother’s milk, lactation, is an essential category because it builds the connection between ethnic and religious identity and women’s reproduction. In this case, that is why the female Tatar Muslim identity is endowed with political meanings in the community, and that is why it is so important in terms of the reproduction of the Tatar and Muslim communities, the reproduction of cultural identity, and the heritage of the community.

The press materials show the Tatar woman as the mother of the Tatar people, as the keeper of the Tatar tradition, which I discuss in greater detail below. In the most hyperbolized sense, the role of the mother is performed in the images of female semi-folkloric characters like the Kazan Tsarina *Syuyumbike/Sujumbike*³⁴ (Gabrafiikova 2020) and the Siberian Tsarina *Suzge*. In some stories, the narrators refer to Tatar women as “Tyumen *Syuyumbike*” or “*Suzge*”. As I noted earlier, the discourse predetermines a woman as a future mother and therefore as a future wife or bride because these culturally meaningful roles are derived from the role as mother. Stories about competitions for talented youth, such as “*Seber Yoldyzy*”³⁵ and “*Tatar egete*”³⁶, aim to cultivate not only gender roles but

³³ «Я с рождения в религии. Любо́й татарин, проживающий в Сибири с детства знает о своей приверженности к исламу, это передается нам с молоком матери. Спросите любого моего соплеменника мусульманин ли он, каждый ответит утвердительно».

³⁴ *Сөембикә* in Cyrillic Tatar.

³⁵ *Себер Йолдызы*, translated as “Star of Siberia”.

³⁶ *Tatar egete*, transl. as “Tatar man”.

also ethnic identity to the same extent (“Beauty Contest in Tubal”, *Yanarysh*). “A modern young Tatar woman³⁷ is one who is proud of her nationality [ethnicity], is not ashamed to speak her native language [...] She is not only a keeper of the home hearth and knows how to cook *chak chak*³⁸, but also leads an active lifestyle, practices sports, is interested in culture, history, traditions of her people [...] She is talented and intelligent, has good manners in behavior and is pleasant in communication”³⁹ (“Albina Abdulvaleevna. What Is She Like a Modern Tatar Woman?” *Siberia*). This image of a young Tatar woman has crystallized in the media since 2010. It is not unique to the Tatar nationalist discourse: “[a] figure of a woman, often a mother, symbolizes in many cultures the spirit of the collectivity, whether it is Mother Russia, Mother Ireland or Mother India” (Yuval-Davis 2003: 18).

Since the female identity is performed as a mother, as an educator, and as a teacher, there is a significant number of stories that articulate the importance of women’s education. From the emic point of view, education for a woman is not necessary by itself for the development of her personality or her professional path, but it is necessary for the education of members of the Tatar group and the Muslim ummah. Two clear examples support this argument:

*“The idea of creating a Muslim school for girls with the Tatar language of instruction belongs to the Mufti of Tatarstan Kamil Hazrat Samigullin. The role of women in preserving the true values of Islam and national [ethnic] traditions is difficult to overestimate. A woman is the face of the nation. A woman is the soul, pillar, light, and warmth of the family. She is a mother. Any nation draws its vitality from the family; from there, a spring originates, leading to the future. The project of the ‘Muzaffariya school’ is aimed specifically at educating girls – educated and highly moral expectant mothers and keepers of Tatar national traditions”⁴⁰ (“The Implementation of the Project...” *World Congress of the Tatars*).*

³⁷ Originally, the narrator is using the word “*devushka*”, which usually applies for young unmarried woman.

³⁸ *Чак-чак* is a dessert, part of Tatar cuisine.

³⁹ «Современная татарская девушка – эта та, которая гордится своей национальностью, не стыдится говорить на своем родном языке [...]. Она не только является хранительницей очага и умеет готовить чак-чак, но и ведет активный образ жизни, занимается спортом, интересуются культурой, историей, традициями своего народа [...]. Она талантлива и умна, культурна в поведении и приятна в общении».

⁴⁰ «Идея создания мусульманской школы для девочек с татарским языком обучения принадлежит муфтию Татарстана Камилу хазрату Самигуллину: роль женщины в сохранении истинных ценностей ислама и национальных традиций сложно переоценить. Женщина – лицо нации. Женщина есть душа, опора, свет и тепло семьи. Она – мать. Любая нация черпает жизненные силы из семьи, отсюда берет начало родник, ведущий в будущее. Проект школы «Музаффария» нацелен именно на воспитание девочек – образованных и высоконравственных будущих мам и хранительниц татарских национальных традиций».

And a second example.

*“Whatever the role of a woman, be it a wife, mother, or an entrepreneur working outside of the home (and even more if she performs these roles at the same time), she needs knowledge. The pursuit of knowledge is not even a right but the duty of every Muslim, a man or a woman. Even the Prophet Muhammad himself (peace and blessings be upon him) devoted his time to educating women and girls and encouraged them to strive for this. And who brings up men? Woman. ‘The future of the nation is in the hands of mothers’, Balzac said. One poet also said: ‘Mother is a school that prepares a noble people for life’. But it is impossible to bring up a strong, multifaceted personality without education. Any mother should be ready to give her child an appropriate upbringing and education. In this connection, Muslim scholars say, ‘you teach a man – you teach one person, you teach a woman – you teach a nation’. So, a modern woman should be literate, erudite; always ready to help her husband, relatives, and especially children”⁴¹ (“Education of a Muslim Woman...”, *Islam.ru*).*

We can see that the authors of this discourse view women as a tool for the education of Tatars and for the cultivation of the Tatar cultural identity because “you teach a man – you teach one person, you teach a woman – you teach a nation” (ibid). I would point out here the diverse range of authority figures mentioned as support for this point of view – not only the Prophet, but Balzac and an unnamed poet. The interpretation of those texts gives us an understanding that woman is perceived as a cultivator of Tatar identity. Nira Yuval-Davis explains the argument in the following way, “[i]n this culturalized discourse, gendered bodies and sexuality play pivotal roles, as territories, markers and reproducers of the narratives of nations and other collectivities. Gender relations are at the heart of cultural constructions of social identities and collectivities as well as in most cultural conflicts and contestations” (2003:16).

⁴¹ «Какой бы ни была роль женщины, будь то жены, матери или предпринимателя, работающего вне дома (а тем более, если она выполняет эти функции одновременно), ей необходимы знания. Стремление к знаниям – это даже не право, а обязанность каждого мусульманина, будь то мужчина или женщина. Даже сам Пророк Мухаммад (мир ему и благословение) уделял своё время для обучения женщин и девушек и поощрял их стремление к этому. А кто воспитывает мужчин? Женщина. «Будущее нации – в руках матерей», – говорил Бальзак. Один поэт также сказал: «Мать – это школа, которая готовит к жизни благородный народ». Но невозможно воспитать сильную, многосторонне развитую личность, не имея образования. Любая мать должна быть готова дать своему ребёнку соответственное воспитание и образование. Мусульманские ученые в этой связи говорят: учишь мужчину – учишь одного человека, учишь женщину – учишь нацию. Итак, современная женщина должна быть грамотной, эрудированной; всегда готова оказать помощь мужу, родственникам и особенно детям».

2.3. Women as Keepers of Traditions

2.3.1. Female Roles at the Intersection of Discourses

In the materials of the vernacular press and public discourses, there are stories about distinguished women of the Tatar community. They are presented in a more personified and individualistic way (Sabirova “Our Valima” *Ak kalfak*). In contrast, one of the common discourses in the community is a description of a woman as the keeper of the Tatar tradition through the care of grandmothers, mothers, and daughters, according to one of my research participants⁴². Another research participant from Tallinn advances that idea in the following way,

“The most important role falls to the woman. If the mother is Tatar, if the marriages are mixed [cross-culturally], the woman is the bulwark of everything – raising children, transmitting the native language, and passing on traditions and customs. The main role belongs to the woman. Men take on the role of a father, but it is difficult for them because they are earners – although a woman is on equal rights to us. But when both of [them are of] our nation [ethnicity] – then [it is] God ordered. But there are families who do not pay attention to this, to our great regret, but this, like everywhere else [...] It depends on how someone was brought up, how our ancestors were able to invest in us, this is also a lot – a genetic connection”⁴³.

Emphatically “[a] woman is the bulwark of everything – raising children, and the transmitting the native language, and passing on traditions and customs” (ibid), which presents a woman in the role of the keeper of traditions. Woman, then, is seen as the central figure of the family institution and therefore as the central figure for the transmission of Tatar heritage. “It is true that a family is supported by a woman; everything that concerns the transmission of traditions is held by a woman”⁴⁴. Some exploration of the wider context of those statements is in order, to help understand what shapes these interviewees’ statements in their current situation. In Russia, there are not many options for the cultivation of ethnic cultural identity. In the past few years, the amount of time available for learning the Tatar language in schools for children has been decreasing (Khanolainen *et al.* 2020); therefore, the family space remains one of the few places for providing Tatar identity. Since the central figure of a family

⁴² S., Sept. 20, 2019.

⁴³ «Самая главная роль выпадает женщине. Если мама – татарка, если браки смешанные, женщина – это оплот всего: и воспитания детей, и передачи родного языка, и передача традиций и обычаев. Главная роль принадлежит женщине. Мужчины берут на себя роль отца, но им сложно, потому что они добытчики – хотя женщина на равных правах у нас. А когда оба нашей национальности – тогда Бог велел. Но есть семьи, которые на это не обращают внимания, к великому нашему сожалению, но это, как и везде [...]. Это смотря кто-как воспитывался, как наши предки смогли вложить в нас, это тоже много – генетическая связь» (F., Nov 26, 2019).

⁴⁴ «Это правда, что на женщине держится семья. Все, что касается передачи традиций – держится на женщине» (S., Sept 20, 2019).

is a woman, who is primarily a mother, an image of a woman as the keeper of traditions is created; a man is present in the image of the family, but he is a secondary character there. That role was also typical of the Soviet era, but it is still relevant in modern discourse as well. This is also overlaid with the attempts of the Russian state to stimulate the birth rate and promote so-called “traditional family values” (Stoeckl 2020, Doğangün 2019). So, the discourse of a woman as a keeper of traditions is multivocal – a result of the simultaneous meeting, intersecting, and layering of several meanings, originating in several sources.

As keepers of tradition, not only mothers are performers, but also grandmothers and young women appear as recipients of traditional knowledge and crafts. The founder of an organization “*Ebiem*”⁴⁵ (which means “grandmother” in Tatar), which manufactures ethnic textiles, says, “[o]ur grandmothers believe that it is very important to pass on to young people the skills of sewing traditional Tatar clothes and our other national crafts, customs and cultural traditions”⁴⁶ (“A Social Project ‘Ebiem’...”, *World Congress of the Tatars*). In a broader sense, the woman as a keeper is depicted in workers in Tatar museums, in heads of Tatar organizations, and in teachers of the Tatar language. I show in the third chapter some female narratives about tradition, as well as the contestation of that discourse. Here I would only mention that one of the research participants, a journalist covering the life of the Tatar community, in a personal conversation raises the question that it is not entirely clear what “tradition” is. In her reflection below, tradition links to the past, but it is not clear to her how to organically combine tradition with the present moment and the future.

“Today tradition is going through a turning point. Many young women want to return – a fashion for ethnicity has gone, perhaps – they want to return to these traditional things, and the Tatar movement⁴⁷ played a certain role. But at the same time, this traditional image is undergoing a change. This is well shown by the festival in Kazan (the forum of the World Tatar Youth) it demonstrates where everything is moving. There is Tatar music without Tatar motives at all, it is a Tatar alternative. It is not losing; it is changing, and how – it is not yet clear. But the fact that it requires change is absolutely true, and for many young women, this is important; they sincerely want to live this way. And I know from myself that this is also important for me”⁴⁸.

⁴⁵ It is spelled *Әбием* in Tatar.

⁴⁶ «Наши бабушки считают, что очень важно передать молодежи навыки шитья традиционной татарской одежды и другие наши национальные ремесла, обычаи и культурные традиции».

⁴⁷ She means here a Tatar revival.

⁴⁸ «Сегодня традиционность переживает какой-то перелом. Много девушек хотят вернуться – такая мода что ли пошла – хотят вернуться к этим традиционным вещам, мода на этнику, и татарское движение сыграло определенную роль. Но при этом этот традиционный образ переживает изменение. Это хорошо показывает фестиваль в Казани (форум Всемирной татарской молодежи), демонстрирует куда все движется: татарская музыка вообще без татарских мотивов – альтернатива татарская. То есть он

But as she continues,

“The image of a Tatar woman is strong, it will not go away, it will change a little. The ‘Ak kalfak’⁴⁹ festival’ is taking place in Kazan, much is said about the preservation of the language, traditions, and the preservation of moral qualities there. But even my friends living in Kazan, activists of the Tatar movement, they refuse to put on this kalfak – tyubeteika⁵⁰ – a hat that women used to wear, they wore it on a scarf. And here it became fashionable to wear it without a scarf, because not everyone wears a scarf. And they refuse to wear it because they consider it a relic of the past, and it looks ridiculous in modern times”⁵¹.

It is interesting that a young woman discusses the content, the feeling of the “tradition”, about what it is, and how to bring it into everyday life. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger write about “the use of ancient materials to construct invented traditions of a novel type for quite novel purposes” (1983: 6). Because tradition is interpretative (Kuutma, 2015: 49), those two quotes of the interlocuter suggest that in the Tatar community, the process of discussion and negotiation of what Tatar tradition means and how best to cultivate tradition in contemporary life is ongoing, as well as discussion of who validates or justifies the meaning of tradition.

2.3.2. Mother Tongue and Tradition

Identity is a “contradictory idea that can be perceived in diachronic and synchronic perspectives simultaneously as fixed and vague, a core of one’s self-understanding and an endless play of meanings, existential and stereotypical. Identity is related to a certain substantial sense of constancy but is seen in the course of an analytical effort as a fluid complex of discourses” (Leete 2012: 7). At the core of the Tatar self-understanding, along with Islam, is the Tatar language (Klaas 2015). Leaders of Tatar associations in Estonia and in Siberia worry about the potential vanishing of their mother tongue. In recent years the organization of the study of the Tatar language in public schools in Russia has

не утрачивается, он меняется и куда – пока не понятно. Но то, что он требует изменения – это совершенно верно и много молодых девушек – это важно, они искренне так хотят жить. И по себе знаю, для меня это тоже важно» (S., Sept. 20, 2019).

⁴⁹ *Ak kalfak* is a Tatar women’s headgear.

⁵⁰ It is a skullcap.

⁵¹ «Образ татарской женщины силен, он не уйдет, изменится немного. Проходит фестиваль «Ак-калфак» в Казани, много говорится о сохранении языка, традиций, что на ней сохранение нравственных качеств. Но даже мои подруги, живущие в Казани, активисты татарского движения, они отказываются надевать этот калфак – тубетейка – шапочка, которую носили раньше женщины, носили ее на платок. И здесь стало модно носить его без платка, потому что не все носят платок. И они отказываются его носить, потому что считают это пережитком прошлых времен и это в современности выглядит смешно» (S., Sept. 20, 2019).

become problematic, due to the possibilities of teaching Tatar language being limited by the state (“Mandatory Tatar-Language Classes...” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*). In Estonia, there are no prohibitions on the study of native languages, but it is highly challenging to organize the process of studying itself. It is not easy to find and distribute the textbooks, find a qualified teacher, pay him/her, or organize the students because there is not a very large number of Tatars living here, and because of weak student motivation, as research participants told me⁵². I talk a bit more about Tatar language and state politics in 4.3.2. Tatar Language Meanings. Here I would like to focus on the language and gender interpretations.

It is fascinating that knowledge of the Tatar language, it would seem, should not be gendered. However, knowledge of the native language, as well as teaching it to their children, is expected in the Tatar community primarily from women. Here is what one of my research participants says, “[t]he preservation of tradition, everything related to language, culture, also seems to come from a woman. A man may not know the language, and often lately it happens that his wife speaks Tatar, but the husband does not speak, and this is perceived normally like the wife is such a keeper”⁵³. In the “*Ak kalfak*” magazine, we can find another example; the magazine positions itself as a Tatar women’s magazine therefore, the materials are addressed primarily to women. This is a quotation of a story in the Tatar language: “[n]owadays, the state has adopted laws on teaching and protecting the language. In order to implement this legislation, the Ministry has developed curricula for schools, and the curriculum includes a contribution to the teaching of native languages. However, the family is primarily responsible for ensuring that the child knows the language... then school”⁵⁴ (“It Is Very Important to Determine...” *Ak kalfak*). The fragment demonstrates that the main social space for teaching the Tatar language is not the school, not the state, but the family, where the central figure is the woman, as I explain earlier. Another example that the family is considered as a place of Tatar language preservation (although not the only one) is a piece of an interview with Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Tatarstan Vasil Gayazovich, published on the website of the World Congress of the Tatars.

“Do you think that the family is still the main institution for preserving the native language and national [ethnic] traditions?”

⁵² G., Aug. 25, 2019, for example.

⁵³ «Традиция по сохранению, все что связано с языком, культурой, тоже вроде бы как должно идти от женщины. Мужчина может не знать языка, и часто в последнее время бывает, что жена разговаривает по-татарски, а муж не разговаривает и это воспринимается нормально, типа жена она вот такой хранитель» (G., Oct 20, 2019).

⁵⁴ «Бүгенге көндә дәүләтебез тарафыннан телне укыту һәм яклау буенча законнар кабул ителгән. Ул законнарны тормышка ашыру максатыннан министрлык тарафыннан мәктәпләр өчен уку планнары эшләнгән һәм ул уку планнарында туган телләрне укыту дигән өлеш бар. Шулай да, бала телне белсен өчен беренче чиратта гаилә жаваплы. Аннан соң мәктәп».

“Everyone has their own share of responsibility – the state, society, and the family. If we assign the main responsibility only to the family [people] will immediately begin to say that Tatar is a kitchen language. And this is wrong! The Tatar language is one of the state languages of the Republic of Tatarstan; therefore, the role of the state in its preservation is also very high. And when does the state get involved in the preservation and development of the language? There are several stages. For example, a guy and a girl decided to get married. Nikah, the wedding, the naming of the child, we carry out ourselves, and the state only gives conditions – premises, lighting, etc. Even today the registry office⁵⁵ gives information about which names are in fashion. But the choice of the name remains with the parents, the state has no right to dictate. And when the child begins to speak, the first word is also pronounced by himself, and only then the system of preschool and school education deals with its development”⁵⁶ (“Vasil Shaikhraziev: ‘If You Know the Tatar Language,...’ World Congress of the Tatars).

In this case, it may seem that a highly authoritative person, who holds a position of power, speaks about the Tatar language mechanically and brings an unsuccessful comparison of relations between the state and citizens and of the responsibility between them in terms of teaching and learning the language. The logic of his reasoning is based on the idea that the child himself (herself) begins to speak, and the school system only supports her (him) to master the complexity of the language. But the problem is that in order for a child to begin to speak, she (he) must hear the speech of the people around him (her) and learn the language through interactions with the surroundings because language learning is a process of social communication (Ahearn 2012:115). In the situation when men are (discursively) excluded from a concept of a family, when the burden of keeping traditions is put on women’s shoulders, this process of communication with a child, teaching a child the Tatar language, becomes invisible ethnic educational labor of women. That labor only becomes visible through its absence. The speaker omits this essential detail consciously or

⁵⁵ Originally, it is ZAGS (орган записи актов гражданского состояния), which refers to a civil registry office.

⁵⁶ «Как вы считаете, семья – это все-таки главный институт для сохранения родного языка и национальных традиций?»

«У каждого есть своя доля ответственности – и у государства, и у общества, и у семьи. Если главную ответственность возложим только на семью, сразу начнут говорить, что татарский – это кухонный язык. А это неправильно! Татарский язык – один из государственных языков Республики Татарстан, поэтому роль государства в его сохранении тоже очень высока. А когда государство подключается к сохранению и развитию языка? Есть несколько этапов. Например, парень и девушка, решили заключить брак. Никах, свадьбу, имянаречение ребенка мы же проводим сами, а государство только дает условия – помещение, освещение и т. п. Еще сегодня ЗАГС дает информацию, какие имена в моде. Но выбор имени остается за родителями, государство не имеет права диктовать. И когда ребенок начинает говорить, первое слово тоже произносит сам, а уж потом его развитием занимается система дошкольного и школьного образования».

unconsciously, thus evading crucial details and subtleties in his answer to the journalist's question of whether the family is the main institution for the preservation of the Tatar language and Tatar traditions. Nevertheless, in order not to oversimplify the picture, I should emphasize that in the materials of the press, the necessity of knowing the Tatar language is addressed to both women and men ("If You Do Not Speak Tatar...", *World Congress of the Tatars*; "Do You Speak Tatar with Your Family?" *World Congress of the Tatars*), and therefore it is not straightforwardly a message exclusively to women.

The picture could not be full without mentioning that learning the Tatar language is one of the most sensitive questions in the Tatar communities in Tallinn, as well as in Tyumen, although there are different reasons why that question is sensitive in the two places. The following quotes bring light to this issue in the Tyumen region: "[w]e didn't hear a purely Russian speech before the institute [university], usually when you go to the district [center] only. There were Tatar villages around us and some kind of mixed families or any other kind of relations we didn't have. Our world was monotonous"⁵⁷. That monotonous reality was interrupted by urban life. "You know, I faced this when I arrived in Tobolsk [...] I had never felt that it had been necessary to preserve the language"⁵⁸. Urban, cosmopolitan spaces, such as city centers and universities, with their more heterogenous mix of people and backgrounds, make questions of language and identity more evident.

2.3.3. Cultural Identity and Endogamy

In light of the fact that Tatar identity is based on a notion of blood, a notion of absorbing the culture through lactation, and a notion that the mother is the central figure in family relations, I would like to draw attention to the concept of the family in Tatar discourse. This discourse describes the family as the basis of the state (Sabirova "Marriages Are Made in Heaven? *Ak kalfak*; "Protecting Children's Lives..." *Hikmet*), as an institution for the socialization of children, for cultivation of the language and traditions, and as the cornerstone of cultural identity. "The family is responsible for the health and spiritual and moral education of children, the preservation of the native language and the formation of national [ethnic] identity, customs, traditions, for raising children in the spirit of a respectful attitude towards representatives of other nationalities, towards their cultural values [...]"⁵⁹ (Sabirova "National Identity and Family" *Ak-kalfak*).

⁵⁷ «Мы чисто русской речи до института и не слышали, обычно, когда едешь в район только. Вокруг нас были все татарские деревни и каких-то смешанных семей, каких-то других отношений у нас не было. У нас мир был однотонным [...]» (F., Jan. 6, 2011).

⁵⁸ «Вот знаете с этим я столкнулась, приехав в Тобольск [...]. Я никогда не ощущала, что нужно сохранять язык [...]» (L., Aug. 6, 2010).

⁵⁹ «Семья несет ответственность за здоровье и духовно-нравственное воспитание детей, сохранение родного языка и формирование национального самосознания у подрастающего поколения, сохранения национальной самобытности, обычаев,

Here “family” primarily refers to a heteronormative understanding of the nuclear family, built into broad kin relations; that being said, I must make a note that there are also publications discussing the issue of polygamy (“Tatar Matchmaker: Making People...” *World Congress of the Tatars*), which is another form of organizing family relations.

Yet without leaving behind stories about people who grew up in multicultural families (“Renat Salavatov: I Am a Child of...” *World Congress of the Tatars*), exogamic marriages and families are narratively constructed as a problem of the modern time. Because the cultivation of Tatar identity is discursively entrusted to the family, then: “[m]any social problems in society arise from family problems. The problems are different. One of them is mixed marriages, regardless of whether we want to notice this factor or not”⁶⁰ (Sabirova “Marriages Are Made in Heaven?” *Ak kalfak*). One of the research participants, a community leader in Estonia, noted that cross-cultural marriages are both a problem and are not. This ambiguous position is related to the understanding that, on the one hand, as the head of the organization, she worries about the preservation of Tatar identity and believes that the family has great potential for the cultivation of Tatar identity. But, on the other hand, at the individual level, it becomes unimportant to her, as one of her relatives is married to a Russian. The research participant says her Russian relative has perfectly integrated into their extended Tatar family⁶¹.

For the older generation, an understanding of cultural endogamy, perhaps, links with their experience of Soviet national policy. I will write about the state and its identity politics in chapter 4 in greater detail, but here I just want to articulate that “[w]hile the official Soviet attitude toward mixed marriages was celebratory, the Soviet nationality system in fact placed the offspring of these unions in an awkward position” (Edgar 2019: 209). Since Soviet national policy demanded national (ethnic) identity be reflected in the internal passport held by each Soviet person, “children of mixed marriages were faced with a ‘dilemma of belonging’” (Rainbow 2019: 17), about which they had to choose based on the nationality of the mother or the father (Edgar 2019: 209). “The result in many cases was for people to select a nationality based on factors other than what they thought about themselves” (Rainbow 2019: 17). Being familiar with those problems concerning marriage endogamy, the older generation of Tatars probably tends to avoid the “dilemma of belonging” (ibid) that faces the future generations, despite the fact that nationality (ethnicity) is no longer included in identification documents. We could see how that “dilemma of belonging” is manifest today; as one research participant says:

традиций, за воспитание детей в духе уважительного отношения к представителям других национальностей, к их культурным ценностям [...]».

⁶⁰ «Многие социальные проблемы общества возникают из проблем семьи. Проблемы разные. Одна из них – смешанные браки, независимо от того, желаем мы замечать этот фактор или нет».

⁶¹ G., Aug. 25, 2019.

“This is not a bias! This is from the practice of my life. Mixed marriages, grandparents begin to exert influence, and this disturbs the young family. Traditions and customs have taken shape, for example, baptism is not because you are a Christian, but because they want to protect you. [With] different nations of parents– the choice [comes] in front of the child, at school, in old age is how to bury. It’s hard to observe from the outside”⁶².

In women’s narratives, one can see references to a parent’s opinions on mixing marriages: “I was brought up in a very strict family, and my father told me that either my husband was Tatar, else I had no daughter. I had no other options”⁶³, said one young woman in a private conversation. And this is a fairly common narrative when women say that their parents are categorical in their opinion. One of the women, in the interview below, speaks about “Tatar spirit”, “Tatar atmosphere”, and Tatar identity.

“When I was younger, I had thoughts of how to find a spouse. For me, it was an important priority that my spouse and I grow old together and cook the same meals when we see our [adult] children. If I had married an Arab, I would have given up my cuisine, I would have had to cook not Tatar cuisine, but his Arabic. If I would cook [Tatar], but that would be rare, for a variety. I would have lost the Tatar spirit. You understand this ‘spirit’? I don’t even know the word how to translate the word ‘spirit’, the atmosphere itself”⁶⁴.

Toomas Abiline and Ringo Ringvee note as well that “[...] although many young Tatars say that they would prefer to have a spouse from the Tatar community, the practice is often different” (2016: 126). Based on my experience in the field, the most problematized discourse is directed toward Tatar-Russian marriages. Marriages with other Turkic people, or at least people who have converted to Islam, typically meet more tolerant reactions.

Even though it is a dominant narrative, this is only not the one. It is no surprise that the dominance of an endogamic marriage discourse causes understandable protest in women’s stories, especially among younger women. I

⁶² «Это не предубеждение! Это из практики моей жизни. Смешанные браки, дедушки-бабушки начинают оказывать влияние, и это мешает молодой семье. Традиции и обычаи сложились, например, крещение – это не потому, что вы христианка, а потому что хотят оберечь вас. Разные нации родителей – выбор перед ребенком, в школе, в старости – как хоронить. Это тяжело со стороны наблюдать» (L., Aug. 10, 2010).

⁶³ «Я воспитана в очень строгой семье, и мне отец говорил, что либо муж татарин, либо все – дочери у меня нет. У меня других вариантов не было» (G., July 10, 2010).

⁶⁴ «Когда я была моложе, у меня были мысли как найти себе супруга. Для меня был важный приоритет, чтобы мы с супругом вместе встретили старость и готовили одинаковые блюда, и чтобы встречали детей с одинаковыми блюдами. Вышла бы я замуж за араба, я бы отказалась от своей кухни, я должна была бы готовить не татарскую кухню, но его арабскую. Если я бы готовила [татарское], но это было бы редко, для разнообразия. Я бы уже дух татарский потеряла. Вот это вот понимаете, дух, я даже не знаю слова как его перевести дух – атмосфера сама» (I., Oct. 7, 2019).

had a conversation with a single woman in her early twenties in Tyumen. During our talk, she reflected on an idea of what marriage is to her, including endogamy. She explains it in this way,

“Who came up with the idea of living as a family? Now women also earn [money], and now there are a lot of examples when a woman with a child is much more successful without a husband [...]. And therefore, I think times are changing, public opinion is not so strong, and there is no need to force oneself to get married. At the same time, I want society to perceive me as normal and not as garbage [without a man]. Anyway, it is still deep in us [...]. I even think sometimes that in order to look normal you have to get married and if something goes wrong, then get a divorce, and after that then I think it is such nonsense [...].”⁶⁵

Women try to resist endogamy differently, but the statement above is probably the most straightforward response I have experienced while doing my field-work.

In contrast, from the etic perspective, the meaning of endogamy is exaggerated in the case of preserving the Tatar language. Adrienne Edgar writes about Central Asian populations,

“Use of Russian as the primary language was especially common among those mixed families with one Russian-speaking parent, and throughout the Soviet period that parent was almost always a woman. This is one major reason for the frequent discrepancy between official and subjective identity among mixed individuals. Children adopted their Central Asian father’s official nationality but identified more with the culture and language of their mother” (2016: 213).

Edgar is speaking of mixed marriages among Central Asian and Russian people, but in many ways, her interpretation may be applied to such marriages in Tatar communities in Estonia and Siberia as well.

At the same time, Laura Ahearn comments on the results of the United States 2000 census among the Spanish-language population (2010: 124). Because of the many layers and textures that vary, and the particularities of the historical contexts involved, it is too simple to draw complete parallels between conditions in the United States, Russia, and Estonia; nor is it wise to do so between Spanish and Tatar speakers and between immigrant populations and locals. Yet one may still find analogies because all are cases of relationships

⁶⁵ «Кто придумал, что нужно жить семьей? Сейчас женщины также зарабатывают и сейчас очень много примеров, когда женщина с ребенком намного успешнее и без мужа [...] И потому, я думаю, времена меняются и общественное мнение не такое сильное, и не надо заставлять себя замуж выходить. При этом хочется, чтобы общество воспринимало тебя как нормальную, а не как отброс. Все равно у нас это все еще глубоко лежит [...]. Вот даже думаешь, чтобы нормально со стороны выглядеть надо выйти замуж и если что не так, то можно и развестись, а потом думаю, что за бред [...]» (V., Dec. 10, 2010).

between dominant languages, non-dominant languages, and bilingualism. Ahearn writes,

“[a]mong Spanish-speaking immigrant groups, the rate appears to be somewhat slower, but this is largely dependent upon whether a second-generation bilingual person marries another person in Spanish and English (an example of ‘endogamy,’ or marrying within one’s social group) and whether they reside in a community in which Spanish is commonly spoken. Endogamy alone is not enough to ensure that third-generation individual will be able to speak Spanish, but endogamy alone with residence in a community in which Spanish is supported can increase the chances that third-generation individual will be able to speak at least some Spanish” (2010: 125).

Thus, she explains that, in a community, any interaction among its members has a crucial influence on the ability to learn and speak a native language and, therefore, to use language as a means cultivate ethnic identity.

If ethnic exogamy is discussed ambiguously in the press, then religious exogamy is problematized unambiguously. The imam of the mosque and the caretaker of the Muslim cemetery says, “[t]here is a requirement of the Sharia⁶⁶ to marry only Muslims, even if he is of any nationality”⁶⁷ (“People Live without Thinking about...” *Muslim-Info*). This publication is written in Russian, and there are two verbs “to marry” in the Russian language; if a woman gets married, you would say “*vykhodit’ zamuzh*” (where the root “*muzh*” means a husband, a man), if a man gets married you would use another verb “*zhenit’sya*” (the root of that word comes from “*zhena*”, and translates as a wife). The narrator of the story chooses to use the verb “*vykhodit’ zamuzh*”, which means he is addressing his thought to women, and this is important to note for further analysis. He explains the Sharia requirements, bringing an example from his own experience:

*“Spouses in age, he is a Tatar, she is Russian, died in a car accident. They loved each other very much during their lifetime and said that they should be buried together. After the death, the question of burial arose, and a dispute broke out among the relatives, which escalated into a conflict. As a result, the husband’s relatives gave in, the spouses were buried in coffins at the Christian cemetery, but after the funeral, enmity flared up with renewed vigor, relatives became sworn enemies”*⁶⁸ (“People Live without Thinking about...” *Muslim-Info*).

⁶⁶ Islamic law.

⁶⁷ «Есть требование шариата выходить замуж только за мусульман, будь он хоть кто по национальности».

⁶⁸ «Супруги в возрасте, он татарин, она – русская, погибли в автокатастрофе. Очень любили друг друга при жизни и говорили, чтобы их похоронили вместе. После гибели встал вопрос о захоронении, и среди родственников разгорелся спор, который перерос в конфликт. В итоге родня мужа уступила, супругов похоронили в гробах на христианском кладбище, но после похорон вражда вспыхнула с новой силой, сваты стали заклятыми врагами».

Regarding marriages where one of the spouses converts to Islam and follows some religious practices, such as *nikah*, there is a fairly tolerant discourse (“Wish the Wedding Would Be Happy...!”), *Yanarysh*). According to this source, it would seem the issue of exogamy, like the issue of the Tatar language, should not be gendered. However, the previous quote suggests that exogamic marriage is problematic primarily for women. This becomes understandable in light of the other discourses of women as the central figures in family and kinship relations and as the keepers of the Tatar tradition and Tatar cultural identity. Elaborating on this thought, Lila Abu-Lughod says, “[a] daughter who marries outside the camp can only come to visit when her husband or his kin allow it, and she can rarely be spared from her own household for any length of time. The social distance between her children and her natal group varies, depending on numerous factors, but despite fondness for maternal relatives, the jural and political distance cannot be surmounted” (1986: 123). It might also mean that marriage outside of the group waters down the cultural identity and cultural heritage of a woman and her children, which creates a cultural distance between her children and her natal group.

2.4. Discourses of Veiling

2.4.1. Veiling and Gender Identity in Media

There are “many forms of covering, which themselves have different meanings in the communities where they are used”, writes Lila Abu-Lughod (2013: 38). One of those examples is the theme of veiling in the Tatar community, the discussion about which takes a significant place in the press and, above all, in the religiously oriented press, such as “*Hikmet*” or “*As-Salam*”. Islam, in many respects, is the core of Tatar identity; for many, being a Tatar means being a Muslim and vice versa (Puppo and Schmoller 2018). In this way, “Tatar” and “Muslim” are nested identities – they rest within and depend on one another for definition. Identities become defined with respect to other categories of identity while they all function as dependent variables. Neither the ethnic category of Tatar nor the religious category of Muslim is seen as primary; instead, they are dependent on each other for their very definition. “I always knew that I was Muslim. When I studied, even, I knew, such thoughts came, that I was Tatar, I was Muslim”⁶⁹, as one of my interviewees put it. One Muslim leader makes the connection even more explicit: “[w]e are here trying to revive our religious traditions. The morality of the Tatar people is intertwined with Muslim

⁶⁹ «Я всегда знала, что я мусульманка. Даже когда я училась, такие мысли появлялись, что я – татарка, я – мусульманка» (G., July 2011).

morality. Therefore, they must go hand in hand” (“Rustam Minnikhanov Promised Support...” *Hikmet*)⁷⁰.

A woman’s headscarf is depicted in the press materials as the greatest manifestation of female religious identity – as the worship of Allah. This is an example from the newspaper “*As-Salam*”, published in Estonia,

*“The only valid excuse for a Muslim woman who is free in choosing clothes and does not comply with the requirements of Sharia is her lack of understanding of this issue, connected, for example, with her recent arrival in Islam. All other excuses are nothing less than self-deception and an attempt to pass them off as valid reasons. If a person, after being convinced of the evidence of the obligatory observance of the hijab, continues to deny it, then they leave Islam. And it does not matter if this is a woman or a man. Denying one element of the religion of Allah, he denies it entirely”*⁷¹ (“To Wear or Not to Wear the Hijab?”, *As-Salam*).

However, there is another opinion in the Tatar community,

*“The renowned theologian Shamil’ Alyatudinov, the author of many books on Islam, said that wearing the niqab is not the duty of Muslim women. One of the hadiths says that there is no monasticism in Islam. The tradition of covering was originally associated with the desire of especially religious women not to show themselves to strangers [men]; it was associated precisely with the modesty bashfulness of Muslim women. Today, many women who post their photos in black on the Internet see the meaning of the niqab; on the contrary, in showing themselves off so that others will talk about them. I believe that if you are modest and shy, try to stay at home, and do not show yourself to others or on the Internet”*⁷², as is said in the story “What Is the Meaning of Niqab?” in “*Muslim-Info*” newspaper.

⁷⁰ «Мы здесь стараемся возродить наши религиозные традиции. Нравственность татарского народа переплетена с мусульманской нравственностью. Поэтому они должны идти рука об руку».

⁷¹ «Единственным уважительным оправданием мусульманки, свободной в выборе одежды и не исполняющей при этом требований шариата, может выступить её непонимание данного вопроса, связанное, к примеру, с недавним приходом в ислам. Все остальные отговорки являются ни больше ни меньше, чем самообманом и попыткой выдать их за уважительные причины. Если же человек, убедившись в доказательствах обязательности соблюдения хиджаба, продолжает его отрицать, то он выходит из ислама. Причём неважно, женщина это или мужчина. Отрицая один элемент религии Аллаха, он отрицает её целиком».

⁷² «Известный богослов Шамиль Алятудинов, автор многих книг об исламе, сказал, что ношение никаба не является обязанностью мусульманок. В одном из хадисов говорится, что в исламе нет монашества. Традиция ношения закрытой одежды изначально была связана с желанием особенно религиозных женщин не показывать себя посторонним мужчинам, была связана именно со скромностью, стыдливостью мусульманок. Сегодня же многие женщины, выставляющие свои фото в черном в интернет, видят смысл никаба, наоборот, в выпячивании себя, чтобы другие говорили

It is interesting that the position about female covering in Tyumen is more or less coherent, compared to Estonia. The Muslim Umma in Tyumen demands appropriate dress from women. During my fieldwork there, I encountered in the women's part of mosques conversations and comments on how to properly tie a headscarf. These strict requirements extended to me as well, as a researcher who did not belong to the Muslim community. This contrasted with my experience in Malmö (Sweden) later, when a youth organization leader, originally from the former Yugoslavia, commented on my headscarf, which had slipped from my head. At the time of my interview with her in the mosque, she said, "if you did not want to wear a headscarf, you did not need to do this"⁷³.

Moreover, in the class meetings of the courses of Islam in Estonia, which I attended as part of my ethnographic fieldwork, it was surprising to learn that women's veiling is a controversial issue. In one of these classes, a teacher asked us whether it was necessary to cover our heads while reading the Quran and praying. She further explained that when she studied in one of Middle Eastern countries, in accordance with the local norms, she covered her head, as well as other women there; but when she began to study in another Middle Eastern country, it was no longer required there, it was possible not to cover the head. She also adds that there is no hadith that requires a head covering. The idea behind it is that, while reading the Quran, a person communicates with the Prophet through the sacred text, and therefore it is desirable for a woman to cover her head⁷⁴. Yet observations such as those above indicate that the veiling issue is extremely interpretative and negotiative among participants of Muslim and Tatar communities.

2.4.2. Tradition and Its Contestation in Discourses of Veiling

Because the Tatar communities in Tallinn and Tyumen are in the process of negotiating their own identity and discussing what a Tatar tradition is and what is not, and because the Tatar identity is linked with Islam tightly and female Islamic modesty is linked with covering, then the topic of female veiling as a Tatar tradition or not tradition rings loudly in such conversations.

In the fall of 2016, in Tyumen, I spoke with one of the women who organize leisure activities for older women in the Tatar environment. That conversation was not an interview with a recorder but rather an informal conversation with an acquaintance, sharing stories about each other and what each of us does. As such, the conversation went quite freely for a while, but then it changed in one moment. Somehow, I started talking about working on an article on the female practices of wearing a religious headscarf. Upon hearing this, my interlocutor interjected that this was not a Tatar tradition⁷⁵. I must emphasize here we did

о них. Я считаю, если ты скромна и стыдлива, старайся сидеть дома, а не демонстрируй себя окружающим или в интернет».

⁷³ Participant observations, Malmö, Sept. 20, 2014.

⁷⁴ Participant observations, Tallinn, Sept. 21, 2019.

⁷⁵ Participant observations, Tyumen, fall 2016.

not touch upon the topic of traditions at all, I did not mention the Muslim headscarf in the context of the Tatar tradition or non-tradition. I tend to think that her spontaneous response, instead, was not a reaction to my narrative but a reaction to a discourse prevalent in the environment, a discourse with which she took exception.

Aysha Özkan brings a part of an interview where a research participant compares a situation in Estonia with Russia.

“When asking Muslims in Estonia whether it is difficult to be a Muslim in Estonia, the answer is mostly no. Women wearing the hijab say that some people stare and some might comment but that is as far it goes. Iman said that compared to Russia, living in Estonia as a Muslim is actually easier, as “there is no discrimination here, but Russia is terrible” (interview with Iman 2007). Some of the women wear the hijab to work, but wearing the hijab is still a rare phenomenon. According to my experience, most Tatar women do not wear a veil and thus do not stand out in their surroundings” (2009: 97).

Muslim Tatars living in Russia navigate a set of complex, politicized discourses about veiling (Shisheliakina and Bobrov 2017: 146). As young Muslim girls leave the comparatively isolated comfort of the home and enter into a larger public context, and therefore larger and more complex public discourses, veiling moves to the fore. Schools, where many children first move from primarily inhabiting the home to taking part in a more mixed community, create a situation where girls’ religious and ethnic identities become public discourse, and therefore become politicized. I write more extensively about that in part 4.2.2.

In that political context, at least two discourses appear in the press. One claims to veil as a Tatar tradition, the other rejects veiling as a Tatar tradition. An example of the first discourse is from the newspaper *“Hikmet”*, in the story “Headscarves in schools: through constructive dialogue to solve the problem”. It says that Russia is a multicultural country and, according to current legislation, there is no direct ban on wearing religious headscarves. And further:

*“[...] School No. 9. A large number of Muslim schoolgirls study here, following the precepts of Islam in matters of wearing clothes. We can say that this school is a vivid example of the multiculturalism inherent in the Tyumen region. A large percentage of students of the Muslim religion at school No 9 is associated with its territorial location. The educational institution is located in the ‘Parfenovo’ area – this is the territory of the former Tatar village of Yanaul. Many Tatars have been living here for a long time. Nearby is the ‘Kazarovo’ neighborhood – the former Tatar village of Кырынкул”⁷⁶ (“Headscarves in Schools...” *Hikmet*).*

⁷⁶ «[...] школа N 9. Здесь обучается большое количество школьников-мусульманок, соблюдающих предписания ислама в вопросах ношения одежды. Можно сказать, что данная школа является ярким примером мультикультурализма, присущего Тюменской области. Большой процент учащихся мусульманского вероисповедания в школе N 9

As you can see from this example, the narrator justifies the right of modern girls to wear a headscarf by the situation in the past, by the fact that the modern school is located on the territory of a former Tatar village. This is playing with time; a reference to the past justifies the current situation. In this piece, you can also see the interweaving of religious and ethnic meanings and their hybridization. Usually, this is typical for stories and statements of journalists (both women and men). Most often, the Tatar tradition of covering the head and women are spoken of in the context of *kalfak* – women’s headgear. “In pre-revolutionary Russia, *kalfak* was an integral part of the classic national [ethnic] female Tatar costume; therefore it was richly decorated with various embroidery and beads and was also embroidered with gold and silver threads”⁷⁷, says the story about a master class on *kalfak* creation (“A Master Class on Making the Tatar Headdress...” *World Congress of the Tatars*). References to the works of ethnographers of the 19th and 20th centuries in newspaper stories also become a weighty argument for justifying the Tatar tradition (“*Kalfak* Is Tatar women’s headdress” *Islam.ru*), like materials of the ethnographer Gustave Theodor Pauly with “*Narody Rossii...*” (“Peoples of Russia...” 1862)⁷⁸, or the monograph of the Soviet ethnographer Nikolay Vorobiev “*Kazanskie tatory...*” (“Kazan Tatars...” 1953). This is one such example,

“In recent times, they have often said that the hijab is an alien custom to the Tatar people. Say, this is an exclusively Arab form of clothing, and our Tatar women in the past always dressed differently: they wore kalfaks that only partially covered their hair or a scarf tied back. Is it so?”

Anyone who is not too lazy to reach the public library and study the academic works of ethnographers on the national costume of the Tatars can easily be convinced of the opposite, namely that our great-grandmothers always wore a hijab, a hijab in the strictest sense of the word, which implies tying a scarf in front and covering the neck. Such outfits were widespread among the Tatars everywhere: in Kazan, in Astrakhan, in Kasimov, and in Ufa, and in the settlements of Siberia. There were also kerchiefs tied back, which was typical for some of the Tatar women from the peasant class, who worked a lot in the field. And, over time, kalfaks also began to appear in the secularized urban environment, i.e., miniature hats that do not completely cover the woman’s hair. The famous Tatar historian of the 19th century Sh.Marjani, in

связан с её территориальным расположением. Учебное заведение находится в районе «Парфёново» – это территория бывшей татарской деревни Янаул. Здесь издавна проживает много татар. Недалеко находится микрорайон «Казарово» также бывшая татарская деревня «Кырынкуль».

⁷⁷ «В дореволюционной России калфак был неотъемлемой частью классического национального женского татарского костюма, поэтому богато украшался разнообразной вышивкой и бисером, а также расшивался золотыми и серебряными нитями».

⁷⁸ The original title is Pauly, T. de “Description ethnographique des peuples de la Russie” Saint Petersburg, Russia: Imprimerie de F.Bellizard, 1862.

*his famous work 'Mustafa al-Akhbar'*⁷⁹, wrote on this occasion: 'Now, unfortunately, women have begun to wear *kalfaks*, they wear them even after they get married'. In other words, *kalfaks*, which are now perceived by some as the only possible national headdress for Tartars, are in fact a relatively recent custom in the centuries-old history of our people'⁸⁰ ("About Hijabs and Not Only" *Islamic portal*).

In this fragment, referring to the "father of the Tatar nation" – Shihabetdin Marjani⁸¹, we see the response of that part of the Tatar community, which believes that the hijab is an alien tradition for the Tatars. The discourse contesting the female headscarf as a Tatar tradition puts onto the veil an alien, "other" cultural meaning, a sentiment echoed in the press materials I examined: "[m]any do not approve that Muslim Tatar women, trying to be like Arab women, dress in black clothes. Religion does not forbid wearing beautiful clothes. Beautiful clothes, made according to modern fashion, suit young women very much, making them even more beautiful"⁸², according to a story written in the Tatar language in the Tatar women's magazine "*Ak kalfak*" ("Muslim Girls Are More Likely..." *Ak kalfak*). From the emic point of view, these controversial discourses about women's clothing are part of the discussion

⁷⁹ It is a reference to a book Марджани, Шихабуддин/Шигабутдин [Marjani/ Mardzhani]. *Мустафад аль-ахбар фи ахваль Казан ва Булгар* ["The Mine of Information about Events in Kazan and Bulghar", author's transl.] (Казань: Типография Б.Л. Домбровского в Казани), 1897.

⁸⁰ «В последнее время часто говорят о том, что хиджаб – чуждый для татарского народа обычай. Дескать, это исключительно арабская форма одежды, а наши татарки в прошлом всегда одевались по-другому: носили калфаки, лишь отчасти покрывающие волосы или платочек-косынку, повязываемую назад. Так ли это?

Всякий, кто не поленится дойти до общественной библиотеки и изучить научные труды этнографов по национальному костюму татар, легко сможет убедиться в обратном, а именно в том, что наши прабабушки всегда носили хиджаб, хиджаб в самом строгом смысле этого слова, подразумевающий повязывание платка спереди и закрывающий шею. Такие наряды были распространены у татар повсеместно: и в Казани, и в Астрахани, и в Касимове, и в Уфе и в поселениях Сибири. Встречались и косынки, повязываемые назад, что было характерно для части татарок из крестьянского сословия, которые много работали в поле. А со временем в секуляризирующейся городской среде стали появляться также калфаки, т.е. миниатюрные шапочки, не покрывающие волосы женщины полностью. Прославленный татарский историк XIX века Ш.Марджани в своей знаменитой работе «Мустафад аль-ахбар» по этому поводу писал: «Сейчас, к большому сожалению, женщины начали носить калфаки, они их носят даже после того, как выйдут замуж». Другими словами, калфаки, которые ныне некоторыми воспринимаются как единственно возможный для татарок национальный головной убор, в действительности являются относительно недавним обычаем в многовековой истории нашего народа».

⁸¹ In Tatar Шихабетдин Мәржани, in English, it is also spelled Shigabuddin Mardzhani.

⁸² «Мөселман татар кызларының гарәп хатын-кызларына охшарга тырышып карадан гына киенеп йөрүләрен күп кеше хупламый, Дин матур киём киеп йөрүне тыймый, Заманча тегелгән матур киёмнәр бигрәк тә килешә кызларга, аларны тагын да сөйкемләрәк итеп күрсәтә».

about “Otherness” in Islam. “The thing is that wearing a hijab in our country is an act that requires a certain amount of bravery because a Muslim woman in a headscarf often faces misunderstanding of others, sometimes public censure, and even open pressure. In Russia, only strong-minded women dare to wear a headscarf. If someone thinks otherwise, let him [her] verify this for himself [herself]”⁸³ (“About Hijabs and Not Only” *Islamic portal*).

Both of those narratives try to construct and root female veiling in one tradition or another. Why, nevertheless, is it publicly meaningful at the current time? Who and why does need tradition? As far as I understand it, the interpretation of the women’s headscarf as a Tatar tradition allows the overcoming of Islamic cultural alienation; after all, news stories are aimed not only at the Tatar community but also beyond it. The Islamic women’s headscarf, and Islam in general, in the post-Soviet space, has been re-vitalized not so long ago, only since the 2000s, and in some dimensions, it is perceived as foreign in a cultural sense. Marking Islam and the women’s headscarf, in particular, as a Tatar tradition, allows reinterpreting its otherness and foreignness. In support of this interpretation, I introduce the following text, which describes the issue of fragmentation among women in the Muslim community.

*“This is especially common among Muslim sisters. The most important disagreement is the dress. Recently, some of the sisters began to cover their chins. I do not argue and have nothing against it. But, unfortunately, this became another reason for controversy, gossip, and division into groups. Once on social media, under a picture of one Muslim sister, whose chin was covered, another girl wrote: ‘Covering her chin, well done, [she is] ours’. And [she] who does not cover, she is a stranger?! Isn’t that absurd? Is this not a reason for divisions and disputes? There are often cases when sisters, dressed in long skirts, simply do not greet Muslim women, who are in trousers and tunics. Hijab is certainly very important for a Muslim woman, but no matter how rude it sounds, it does not measure the depth of her faith”⁸⁴ (“Where Did the Light...” *Muslim-Info*).*

⁸³ «Все дело в том, что ношение хиджаба в нашей стране – это поступок, требующий определенного мужества, ведь мусульманка в платке часто сталкивается с непониманием окружающих, порой, общественным порицанием и даже открытым давлением. В России только сильные духом женщины решаются носить платок. Если кто-то полагает иначе, пусть проверит это на себе».

⁸⁴ «Особенно это часто встречается среди сестер-мусульманок. Самое главное разногласие – в одежде. Недавно некоторые сестры стали прикрывать подбородок. Не спорю и ничего против не имею. Но, к сожалению, это стало еще одним поводом для споров, сплетен и разделений на группы. Однажды в социальных сетях под фотографией одной сестры-мусульманки, у которой был прикрыт подбородок, другая девушка написала: «Прикрыла подбородок, молодец, наша». А кто не прикрывает, тот кто, чужой?! Это ли не абсурд? Это ли не причина для разделений и для споров? Часто бывают случаи, когда сестры, одетые в длинные юбки, просто не здороваются с мусульманками, которые в брюках и в туниках. Хиджаб, безусловно, очень важен для мусульманки, но, как бы это грубо ни звучало, не измеряет глубины ее веры».

Another point that should be mentioned is the marketing of the veil. Along with the commercialization of Tatar heritage like jewelry, embroidery, and pillows, one of the most commercialized products is headgear – women’s *kalfaks*, *hijabs*, and men’s *tyubeteikas* (skullcaps)⁸⁵.

“Young women in hijabs from ‘Fashion of Islam’ took to the podium for the second time. For the first time, they demonstrated the clothes of piety in the city Sabantuy⁸⁶, which aroused noticeable interest among the fair sex⁸⁷. ‘Desert Wind’ is a creative work of A. in her final year at the Academy of Arts. The designer says that she turned to Islamic themes, since she is a Muslim herself, and the mysterious East has always attracted her, she especially likes Eastern music [and] Muslim traditions of venerating elders”⁸⁸ (“The Desert Wind Has Reached...” Muslim-Info).

Indeed Islamic clothes, and particularly women’s *hijabs*, have become the subject of marketing. “[T]he past is being commodified. History is becoming business; money is being made out of memory” (Macdonald 2013: 109).

2.5. Conclusion

There is a variety of discourses related to women that appear in the vernacular press. They represent women as mothers and wives, but they are not only biological reproducers of the Tatars, but they are also viewed as those who reproduce the Tatar identity through family and kinship relations because the female Tatar identity in many ways is defined through family and kinship roles. This conclusion, furthermore, resonates with the argument of Janet Carsten. She illustrates constructing relatedness through everyday practices, where women play a significant role; based on the case of Malay relatedness, she argues that “relatedness is created both by ties of procreation and though everyday acts of feeding and living together in the house” (2000:18) and “[w]omen and houses may be said to be central both to the ‘domestic’ process of creating relatedness inside houses, and to the larger ‘political’ process of integrating newcomers and establishment and reproduction of whole communities” (ibid).

Moreover, vernacular press represents that being a Tatar woman means to be a woman and be Tatar and be Muslim. Yet these are not three different

⁸⁵ Participant observations, Tallinn, summer 2019.

⁸⁶ Tatar Festival, a celebration of harvesting.

⁸⁷ Euphemism referring to women.

⁸⁸ «Девушки в хиджабах от «Моды Ислама» во второй раз вышли на подиум. Впервые они демонстрировали одеяния благочестия на городском сабантуе, чем вызвали заметный интерес у прекрасного пола. «Ветер пустыни» - творческая работа А. на последнем курсе Академии искусств. Дизайнер говорит, что к исламской тематике обратилась, поскольку сама является мусульманкой, и загадочный восток всегда манил ее, особенно ей нравятся восточная музыка, мусульманские традиции почитания старших».

identities; they are three in one that are connected and dependent on each other. Relying on the notion of blood, on the metaphor of lactation and absorbing Tatar identity and Tatar culture (and Muslim identity) with mother's milk, this is the brightest example of naturalization and intersection of the identities, their interdependence. None of them are major or minor. They are all intertwined with each other and performed together.

Because femininity is a marked category, defined through the masculine, women find themselves on the edge of depicted discourses. Since the content of the traditions and the nation-building project is not clear, but rather is discussed and negotiated, and tries to find answers in the selected past, then different groups of Tatars draw "tradition" from different sources, and for different groups of Tatars, there are different supports and different answers – language, religion, handicrafts, etc. Different actors refer to different authority figures, variety of which impressive – poets, Tatar writers and Tatar scholars, imams. Women, finding themselves on the edge of these fragmentary epistemological interpretations but in the center of the processes of Tatar culture and identity reproduction, therefore encounter criticism from different sides. One such striking manifestation is the discussion about female headscarves, which is why it is so critical to view from different emic perspectives.

It is meaningful to mention that women are not just receivers of those discourses, they are their co-producers, even though women have limited access to co-production processes. Some stories I analyzed were written by female journalists and authors, and the editors of the sources "*Ak kalfak*" and "*Yanarysh*" are women. Access to co-production is based on the amount of power of each person and the distribution of power in the community. As I will show in the chapter 3, women's power in the Tatar community increases with age and with the cultivation of ties with kin and family.

I want to finish this chapter with a quote of Nira Yuval-Davis, who writes,

"Women usually have an ambivalent position within the collectivity. On the one hand, as mentioned above, they often symbolize the collectivity unity, honour and the raison d'être of specific national and ethnic projects, like going to war. On the other hand, however, they are often excluded from the collective 'we' of the body politic, and retain an object rather than a subject position. In this sense the construction of womanhood has a property of Otherness. Strict cultural codes of what it is to be a 'proper woman' are often developed to keep women in this inferior power position. At the same time there is a close link between notions of sexuality and other forms of construction of 'otherness' such as racism" (2003: 19).

Based on the chapter materials, I agree with Yuval-Davis in the part that women cultivate a sense of "collective unity", a sense of the collective "we", at least on the discursive level. However, I disagree with her that women "retain an object rather than a subject position" (ibid). Women's identity is peripheral and marked, as I show earlier, but women are often the vehicles of this political discourse. They are not entirely powerless because power is distributed

differently in the different communities and, depending on age and social position, women have different power. They have agency. Even in a situation of imbalance and limited power for women, there remain opportunities for the performance of that power and for women's subjectivity. I try to expand this argument in greater detail through women's expression of tradition in chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3. GENDER EXPRESSION OF TRADITION

“I have always dreamed of devoting my life to children, so that I have a husband that I can rely on, that I have support in my life [...] Now I would like to devote my life entirely to children, but if I suddenly need to work, I will go to work, and maybe I can make a good career. But I would like to realize myself through my family, through children”⁸⁹.

3.1. Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to both the process of negotiation of tradition in the Tatar community via women’s voices and Tatar women’s identity performances through narrating tradition. The chapter is based on women’s interviews collected during ethnographic fieldwork. Women’s interviews about tradition bring a wide range of themes, both highly personal and intimate stories related to ideas about femininity, girlhood, sexuality, and less personal ones like the involvement of women in the family, kinship, and social relations. I begin the chapter with a narration of traditional images of Tatar women and continue it with the descriptions of women’s roles in the space of family and kinship relations, hierarchies, and power dynamics there. Through women’s voices, I illustrate the complexity and multilayering of Tatar women’s identity, shaped with reference to an incoherent and selected past.

Tradition, told by the voices of women, sheds light on the story being outside the dominant discourse. One of the research participants noted she could not write by herself or tell a journalist the details she brought to me, because figuratively, she “would have been stoned”⁹⁰. In this regard, Dorothy Noyes writes of,

“[...] the presence of gendered traditions, women in same sex gatherings telling stories distinct from those of men. These separate traditions can display quite a different evaluation of women’s roles from the male discourse formerly taken as normative, and low-status women’s folktales may even demonstrate a rejection of dominant ethical and cosmological understandings” (2016: 108).

Moreover, I try to bring the diversity of women’s voices that I have experienced due to the ethnographic fieldwork to the text of the chapter, because each of the interlocutors is in unique circumstances and, therefore, speaks from a unique

⁸⁹ «Я всегда мечтала посвятить жизнь детям, чтобы у меня был муж, на которого можно положиться, чтобы была опора в жизни [...]. Сейчас целиком я бы хотела посвятить жизнь детям, но если вдруг нужно будет работать, я пойду работать и может быть смогу сделать неплохую карьеру. Но хотелось бы реализовать себя через семью, через детей» (А., July 23, 2010).

⁹⁰ «Меня бы закидали камнями» (А., Sept 15, 2019).

position. Speaking from a unique position refers us to the concept of subjectivity, which is understood by Sherry Ortner as “modes of perception, affect, thought, desire, fear, and so forth that animate acting subjects” (2005: 31), and “the cultural and social formations that shape, organize, and provoke those modes of affect, thought and so on” (ibid).

A narration of tradition as a process of expressive interaction allows performing the appearance of identity – gender, ethnicity, religion, and others. Identity is a complex category, fluid and performative, capturing markers of difference between self and others, and “emerges from the stories one tells oneself or one’s community. The sum of those stories constitutes the life-history of the individual or the group”, Roger Abrahams tells us (2003: 201). According to performance theory, identities are performed, as a piece played by an actor on a stage (Goffman 1973).

“One performs something, a theater piece (a drama, a comedy, a farce, a tragedy), a musical score, a ritual, a critique, a sales spiel. And this piece, this work, is performed by someone – an actor, a man, a woman, an herbalist, a hermaphrodite, a queen, a slave. Relating subject to object, to perform is also to facilitate transition. There is an agentive quality to performance, a force, a playing out of identities and histories” (Kapchan 2003: 121).

Since identity is performative, it is meaningful to keep in mind that collected ethnographic materials inevitably depend on sets of my identities as a researcher, which I tried to explain in the first chapter.

3.2. Searching for Tatar Women’s Identity

3.2.1. Women’s Aspirations as an Expression of Their Subjectivity

Before moving on to stories about ethnicity, tradition, the involvement of women in family and kin relationships, etc., I would like to show a bit more of the interlocutors with whom I worked, that their personalities are much more profound and broader, and are not limited only to these aspects of life. I would like to start this chapter by expressing female subjectivity through the stories of their own aspirations. It seems that this is important in light of the stories about the culturally Other as a multifaceted human being.

Sometimes women’s dreams are narrated as unfulfilled, and sometimes they are filled with drive and desire to bring something new into their lives. Women’s dreams affect various aspects of life, like work-life, as in this piece of interview: “My dreams do not relate to the intimate sphere. I would like to move further in terms of my career because I begin to feel that I am moving away from everything that I have been going toward for a long time. My dream

is to go abroad for an internship”⁹¹. But sometimes aspirations hurt because they could not be fulfilled in the current circumstances. For example, this is a story of another research participant who had had professional ambitions, but she had to let them go. “I entered the Faculty of Electrical Engineering [...] My desire remained unfulfilled. [I] traveled between Sverdlovsk and Tyumen. And I think, what if I apply for to study law? While I am on maternity leave, I will learn. My husband was furious. And I decided that since my husband is against it, it’s better not to rebel”⁹². A story like that, perhaps, illustrates that due to some restrictions, women in particular situations could not pursue their aspirations.

At the same time, women dream of creating a hearth and home; they dream of realizing themselves as a supportive partner, as one says, whose quote is included in the epigraph of this chapter. She explains why this role of keeper and house and family is important to her and how her priorities have shifted.

“I [...] worked conscientiously, thought to climb the hierarchical ladder, take a leadership position, study. And then this rearrangement took place literally in a short period. I realized: yes, I will have a big house, money, and power, but [I will have] no maternal happiness, children’s laughter”⁹³.

Some women dream of moving to another city or another country, improving the material side of life. “[I would change matters on] the domestic side. I would change the house. Perhaps even a country [in which I live]”⁹⁴. Improving the material side of life also manifests itself as a dream. “My whole life is pressed. I wore everything after my sisters and passed it on to the fourth sister”⁹⁵.

“Having traveled around the world, having worked, I would consider moving to the capital. That is, Moscow did not attract me before, but now, having been there already at a conscious age, I have realized that it was not in vain that half of my classmates from school and university went there [...] Moscow is the

⁹¹ «Мои мечты касаются сферы не интимной. Я хотела бы дальше двигаться дальше в плане карьеры, потому что начинаю чувствовать, что отхожу от всего того, к чему шла долго. Моя мечта – съездить на стажировку за границу» (G., June 5, 2010).

⁹² «Я поступила на электротехнический факультет [...]. Мое желание осталось нереализованным. Ездилa между Свердловском и Тюменью. И думаю, дай поступлю на юридический. Пока в декретном сижу – выучусь. Муж мой разъярился. И решила, что раз муж против, то лучше не брыкаться» (G., July 9, 2011).

⁹³ «Я [...] добросовестно работала, думала подняться по иерархической лестнице, занять руководящую должность, учиться. А потом эта перестановка произошла буквально за короткий период. Я поняла: да, будет у меня большой дом, деньги и власть, а не будет – материнского счастья, детского смеха» (A., July 23, 2010).

⁹⁴ «[Я бы поменяла] бытовую сторону. Дом поменяла бы. Возможно даже страну» (a. K. July 3, 2010).

⁹⁵ «У меня вся жизнь зажатая. Все донашивала от сестер и передавала четвертой сестре» (V., Jan. 15, 2011).

*center of our country, the most advanced place, there are more opportunities for self-realization, prospects*⁹⁶.

In contrast, some women dream of spiritual, religious piety, “Dreams! Dreams are one [of one nature] – the satisfaction of Allah!”⁹⁷.

Of course, this is not the whole palette of desires and dreams, but it is easy to see even from these passages, women’s aspirations are diverse. The personalities of women themselves help us touch their ideas and attitudes, their ways of living, and most importantly, their epistemologies.

3.2.2. Female Modesty and Tradition

When I was talking with women, I usually began the conversation by asking what it meant to be a woman, what it meant to be a Tatar and a Muslim woman. Many of them told me about patience, restraint, and modesty – *sabyrlyk*⁹⁸ in the Tatar language. “A traditional Tatar woman is distinguished by restraint and modesty”⁹⁹, says one of the interlocutors, who teaches the Tatar language in Estonia. Usually, female modesty is described as self-restraint, as control over strong emotions, “[s]he always restrains herself, a Tatar woman. She shows her emotions openly a little, she shows temper a little, no matter how rebellious and courageous it is. If she is already married, she restrains herself in the sense of some kind of independence, expression of strong emotions”¹⁰⁰. This is strongly supported by Islam, stresses another research participant, a teacher of Islam in Estonia. She says that “[r]eligion can curb a woman because you remember that the husband has great rights, and you have to hold yourself back”¹⁰¹. One of the ways of performing *sabyrlyk* is a proper way of interaction with a husband and especially his relatives. “It is not acceptable for girls and women to scandal and swear”¹⁰², says an interlocutor. “There is no space for female aggression in Tatar culture”¹⁰³, says another; “Great-grandmother always taught me patience – this is the main thing. God will give everything for patience. And she always

⁹⁶ «Поездив по миру, поработав, я бы рассматривала вопрос переезда в столицу. То есть меня раньше Москва не привлекала, а сейчас, побывав там, уже в осознанном возрасте, поняла, что не зря туда половина моих одноклассников и однокурсников уехало [...] Москва – это центр нашей страны, самое продвинутое место, там больше возможностей для самореализации, перспектив» (Z., Dec. 1, 2010).

⁹⁷ «Мечты! Мечты – одно – довольство Аллаха» (w. D., Jan. 17, 2011).

⁹⁸ *Сабырлык* in Tatar.

⁹⁹ «Традиционная татарская женщина отличается сдержанностью и скромностью» (K., Oct. 13, 2019).

¹⁰⁰ «Она всегда себя сдерживает, татарская женщина. Она мало открыто показывает свои эмоции, мало показывает характер, какой бы он бунтарский и смелый не был. Если она уже замужем, то она себя сдерживает в смысле какой-то самостоятельности, выражения сильных эмоций» (K., Oct. 13, 2019).

¹⁰¹ «Религия может обуздать женщину, потому что вспоминаешь, что у мужа большие права и ты должна сдерживать себя» (I., Oct. 7, 2019).

¹⁰² «Девочкам и женщинам не принято скандалить и ругаться» (G., Oct. 20, 2019).

¹⁰³ «В татарской культуре нет места женской агрессии» (A., Sept. 15, 2019).

said that man was the main one in the house. It doesn't matter if you respect him, do not respect him [...], he is the main one in the house. I grew up on these principles"¹⁰⁴, explains to me a young woman from Tyumen. From an etic perspective, "cultural understandings of emotion is that of the culturally constituted self, positioned at the nexus of personal and social worlds [...] Concepts of emotion emerge as a kind of language of the self – a code for statements about intentions, actions, and social relations.", write Catherine Lutz and Geoffrey M. White (1986: 417). If so, then according to the quotes of women's narratives about femininity and tradition, the point is that modesty and restraint emerge in a language about self-restraint, control over one's own emotions in communication, especially with people higher in the social hierarchy – the husband, the mother-in-law, the husband's relatives. This is a way of narration of the traditional integrity of a Tatar woman.

Emotional control is performed as well in communicating with children, both for women and men, "[m]y mother-in-law said 'don't take your son in your arms, this is not your business'"¹⁰⁵, "Tatar men generally caress their child very rarely, a rare man takes [a child]"¹⁰⁶. In the balance, the opportunity for the expression of emotions and feelings appears only with age, with a decrease in the sexual burden on a woman. A particularly legitimate way of performing warmth, affection, care, and love is the relationship between grandmothers and grandchildren, "[a]ll love and care pour out on them [grandchildren]"¹⁰⁷. Regularly, women's interviews appeal to the role of grandmothers. The warm relationships between grandmothers and grandchildren may explain the connection of the notion of pure Tatar traditions with grandmothers. Another exception for the expression of emotions and feelings is in song. "Singing was a vent [...]. Everybody sang, my grandmother sang. In Tatar music, Tatar female singing, there are complex vocal elements that are difficult to express, and it takes a lot of training to sing it"¹⁰⁸. Another woman continues that thought,

"In the old days, we put children to bed, we sang lullabies. These are not just some songs, in my opinion, these are some unrealizable dreams about one's destiny [...] Women, singing lullabies, complained about their fate, probably, dreamed that their children would become better, would become someone [...] And if she could not tell that to someone, then the lullaby expressed all of that because it is a monotonous melody and there is no need for rhyme, nothing –

¹⁰⁴ «Прабабушка всегда учила терпению – это главное. За терпение все Бог даст. И всегда говорила, что мужчина – он главный в доме. Не важно, уважаешь ты его, не уважаешь, он – главный в доме. По таким принципам я выросла» (А., July 23, 2010).

¹⁰⁵ «У меня свекровь говорила: «не бери на руки сына, это не твои дела» (G., Nov 12., 2019).

¹⁰⁶ «Татарские мужчины своего ребенка, вообще, очень редко ласкают, редкий мужчина на руки возьмет [ребенка]» (А., Oct. 5, 2019).

¹⁰⁷ «На них [внуков] это все выливается [любовь и забота]» (А., Oct. 5, 2019).

¹⁰⁸ «Пение было отдушиной [...]. Пели все, моя бабушка пела. В татарской музыке, татарском женском пении сложные вокальные элементы, которые сложно воспроизвести, и чтобы спеть это нужно много тренироваться» (А., Sept. 15, 2019).

*you hum whatever goes into your head, you hum and it becomes easier for you*¹⁰⁹.

However, female restraint appears in the women's stories not only for describing emotional space and interactions with family members but is also manifested in proper clothing. "I remembered for my whole life [the words of] my grandmother. We were five-six years old, playing, jumping on the bed, skirt lifting – she said, 'what are you [doing]? You're a girl! You can't behave that way'"¹¹⁰. From an emic position, modest clothes are required not only for girls, but they are also required for women, including in the contemporary period. The same interlocuter recalled the following story, which happened to her recently while participating in a religious ceremony with the mullah.

*"If there is a man in the room, then you need to be as covered as possible, all your indecencies should not be seen [...] My sister invited the mullah for reading prayers – we are quite free at such events because there is no longer a generation of elderly women, and we do not restrain ourselves so much in clothes. So, the mullah sat down and said, 'did you come to seduce me? What is it? Why are your necks exposed? Why are the arms exposed?' Indeed, we got too loose. We quickly covered up: both elbows and necks. It's good that we were in skirts, not in trousers! Because then he told us about the trousers as well, that a woman should not behave like that. At such events with a mullah, it is not good to be in trousers, a woman should be in a skirt. Legs should not be bare, ideally, there should not be a bare neckline, arms and elbows should be covered [...] If we used to try to follow [those rules], then we had already gotten loose, but after this incident, we have begun to control ourselves [again]"*¹¹¹.

¹⁰⁹ «В старые времена мы укладывали детей, мы пели колыбельные. Это же не просто какие-то песни, по моему мнению, это какие-то несбыточные мечты о своей судьбе [...]. Женщины, напевая колыбельные, на судьбу свою сетовали, наверное, мечтали, чтобы их дети стали лучше, кем-то [...]. И вот если она не могла это кому-то сказать, то колыбельная все это выражала, потому что это монотонная мелодия, и там не нужна ни рифма, ничего – что идет в голову то и напеваешь, напеваешь и тебе становится легче» (К., Oct. 13, 2019).

¹¹⁰ «Я на всю жизнь запомнила [слова] бабушки. Мы были еще лет пяти-шести, бесячились, прыгали на кровати, юбка задирается, она говорит: «ты что? ты же девочка! так же себя вести нельзя [...].» (G., Nov. 2, 2019).

¹¹¹ «Если в помещении мужчина, то нужно быть максимально прикрытой, все твои неприличности не должно быть видно: не того, не сего [...]. Сестра пригласила муллу почитать молитвы – а мы достаточно свободно [себя] ведем на таких мероприятиях, потому что уже нет поколения старых бабушек, и мы в одежде не так себя сильно сдерживаем. И вот мулла нас посадил и говорит, «вы что пришли меня соблазнять? Что такое? Почему у вас шеи открыты? Почему руки открыты?» Правда, мы распоясались что-то совсем. Быстро по-прикрывались: и локти, и шеи. Хорошо, что мы были в юбках, а не брюках! А то он нам и про брюки тоже сказал, что женщина так себя вести не должна. На таких мероприятиях при мулле это не хорошо быть в брюках, женщина должна быть в юбке. Голых ног быть не должно, в идеале не должно быть голой зона декольте, руки, локти должны быть закрыты. Понятно, что

From this fragment, we could see that not only bare legs and neckline but also neck, arms, and elbows are labeled as female “indecentcies”. That leads us to interpret that female physicality and sexuality should be hidden especially by young women in childbearing age. Stories like that are not exceptional, and another middle-aged person was sharing with me,

“School uniform, for example. My mother never made a skirt above the knee for me. It is unclear why it always had to be tweaked. Here, the school uniform was below the knee. Precisely returning to modesty because above the knee – this was considered a mini-skirt. T-shirts and shirts with long sleeves, which is how it should be done and how it should be rightly”¹¹².

All that means that women’s sexuality is a space for negotiation between the woman herself and her husband, relatives, community, and therefore control over women’s sexuality, physicality, and proper clothing is provided by them. I would like to point out that when I talked with women, they usually spoke about the tradition, about the past, but the story of the past is connected with the present, with the story of how these traditions of the “past” are woven into stories about women’s modernity. As one research participant brings into the interview, “there is no longer a generation of old grandmothers, and we do not restrain ourselves so much in clothes”¹¹³, the control of a generation of elderly women is replaced by the supervision and edification of the mullah “the mullah sat down and said ‘did you come to seduce me?’”¹¹⁴; we could see that the role of elderly women in the past is taken by the role of mullah in the present. I would explain that with, firstly, the older generation passing away naturally, and secondly, the authority being replaced with the revival of religion in a post-Soviet context.

The ability to follow the appropriate modesty and restraint builds the understanding of women’s honor and dignity – another essential category from the inside perspective of the Tatar community. “A woman should be able to keep her dignity. Grandmothers and mothers taught us this protected us. By the example of my family, I was not allowed to go somewhere once again. For example, I was not allowed to go to the pioneer camp¹¹⁵, there were outrageous

голой же не придешь, даже летом. Если раньше пытались придерживаться, то сейчас уже расслабились, но после этого случая, мы стали себя контролировать» (G., Nov. 2, 2019).

¹¹² «Школьную форму, например, мама юбку мне выше колена не делала никогда. Непонятно, почему ее всегда нужно было подстрачивать. Вот, школьная форма была ниже колена. Именно возвращаясь к скромности, потому что выше колена – это считалась мини-юбкой. Футболки и рубашки с длинными рукавами, что так положено и так правильно» (I., Oct. 7, 2019).

¹¹³ G., Nov. 2, 2019.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ An equivalent to the US boy scouts and girl scouts or UK scouts.

things were going on there. I never went to discos”¹¹⁶. As expected, the understanding of women’s honor narratively links with opposite-sex relationships, like marriage, and builds the border with women who perform differently. One young married woman reflects about it,

“I’m not ashamed of my body, no. I have a good beautiful body, but anyway, a young Tatar woman, even non-Muslim”¹¹⁷, should have such a trait as modesty. First of all, and in general, any young woman should have modesty. If there is no modesty, I do not know how her life will turn out: will she go from hand to hand, or will she marry successfully? As a rule, such young women are popular [I’m not talking about guys], it is more difficult for girls to maintain their chastity, there are many temptations, many factors, guys promise to marry”¹¹⁸.

Together with feminine modesty, the idea of feminine purity is woven into the text of women’s stories. In the stories, the purity of a Tatar woman means her manifestation in the purity of thoughts, purity in appearance, and purity in the home¹¹⁹. Purity of thoughts can be expressed as “purity of the soul”¹²⁰, in “[...] loyalty to her choice, her husband, it is about the core that allows a woman to make a decision”¹²¹. External purity presupposes external neatness, both in clothes and in terms of hygiene standards. “At home, a modern Tatar woman – this is how I feel”, says one of the women, an active participant in the Tatar community in Estonia, “the Tatar woman is cleanliness. We are all clean, but this is our distinguishing feature, especially. We saw when we were growing up that our grandmothers performed ablution before each namaz. And when you sit down at the table your hands [are washed]. Everyone has it, but our grandmothers drove it home for us”¹²². At the same time, the idea of feminine

¹¹⁶ «Женщина свое достоинство должна уметь держать. Бабушки и мамы учили нас этому, оберегали. На примере своей семьи – мне лишний раз не давали куда-то пойти. Например, в пионерский лагерь меня не пускали, там безобразия творились. На дискотеки я никогда не ходила» (I., Oct 7, 2019).

¹¹⁷ Here it means, not following Islamic practices. I write about it more in 4.4.2. “Traditional Islam” in The Discourse of State.

¹¹⁸ «Я не стыжусь своего тела, нет. У меня тело хорошее красивое, но, все-равно, у девушки-татарки, даже этнической, даже не-мусульманки должны быть такая черта как скромность. В первую очередь, и, вообще, у любой девушки, должна быть скромность. Если скромности нет, не знаю, как сложится ее жизнь: пойдет ли она по рукам или замуж удачно выйдет. Как правило, такие девушки, пользуются спросом (про парней не говорю), девушкам сложнее сохранить целомудрие, много соблазнов, много факторов, парни обещают жениться» (A., July 23, 2010).

¹¹⁹ K., Oct 13, 2019.

¹²⁰ «Чистота душевная» (K., Oct 13, 2019).

¹²¹ «[...] верности своему выбору, своему мужу, про стержень, который позволяет женщине принимать решение» (S., Sept. 20, 2019).

¹²² «Дома современная татарская женщина – это то, как чувствую – татарская женщина – чистоплотная. Мы все чистоплотные, но эта наша отличительная черта, особо. Мы видели, когда росли, что наши бабушки перед каждым намазом совершали

purity manifests itself in the purity of the space at home, which, as the respondents said, should be watched by a woman. “The Tatar home is very beautiful and very clean, and everything is tidy, and there are flowers on the windows, almost a greenhouse of flowers. The windows were distinguished by beautiful shutters. And there was cleanliness around the house”¹²³.

It would be misleading to present the Tatar women only as modest, reserved women. Without belittling the Tatar female virtue, I draw attention to the reality that women, especially young women, bring a different description of understanding who Tatar women are, different voices and opinions. They loudly emphasize that for them, a Tatar woman is strong and independent. This is how a young female journalist reflects on the Tatar women’s identity,

“In the Tatar family, the main person is a woman, not a man. [It is] a myth that men rule, but [that] nothing happens without the woman’s permission. For me today, this [main person] is primarily a self-confident woman; she is free, she knows her traditions. This is such a way of life, and it organically fits into everyday realities”¹²⁴.

Additionally, Tatar women are depicted as highly educated, “many do not even imagine that there is another layer of Tatars – mirzas¹²⁵, nobility, educated people, companions of their husbands, who kept their traditions at home, but did not forget the language, culture, dress, and faith”¹²⁶, says another interlocutor. Women’s education was primarily religious, “The Tatar woman was always very educated. Only Tatars have an *abystay*¹²⁷ institute”¹²⁸.

The *abystay* is the wife of the imam or an educated woman to “[w]hom you can come and pour out your soul, a mentor”¹²⁹, explains an interviewee. “When a husband studied, the wife also received an education and she who helped the female part, because a woman rarely comes to a man and does not open her

омовение. И когда садишься за стол руки [моешь]. У всех это есть, но наши бабушки нам так отчеканили» (F., Nov. 26, 2019).

¹²³ «Татарский дом очень красивый и очень чистый и все прибрано и на окнах цветы, чуть ли не оранжерея. Окна отличались красивыми наличниками. И вокруг дома была чистота» (A., Oct. 5, 2019).

¹²⁴ «В татарской семье главная как раз-таки женщина, а не мужчина. Миф, что мужчины управляют, но без разрешения женщины ничего не происходит. Для меня сегодня – это, прежде всего, уверенная в себе женщина, она свободная, она знает свои традиции. Это такой образ жизни, и он органично вписывается в реалии повседневные» (S. Sept. 20, 2019).

¹²⁵ High social class.

¹²⁶ «Многие даже не представляют, что есть и другой слой татар – мурз, князей, образованных людей, соратниц своих мужей, которые блюли свои традиции в доме, но не забывали языка, культуру, одеяния и веру» (G., Nov. 12, 2019).

¹²⁷ Alternative spellings include “*abystaj*”, “*abistay*”.

¹²⁸ «Татарская женщина была всегда очень образована. Только у татар есть институт абыстай» (I., Oct. 7, 2019).

¹²⁹ «К которой можно прийти и излить душу, наставница» (I., Oct. 7, 2019).

heart, she hesitates. She was getting an education, it was encouraged”¹³⁰. Rozaliya Garipova, argues that *abystay*, to which one woman refers in a bit of a story above, is a phenomenon particular to the Soviet circumstances after the Second World War and the antireligious Soviet policy. Because of that historical moment, *abystay* were women who contributed to the transmission of Islam in the absence of men to be imams (2022: 35).

The same interlocuter continues her thought, “Our grandmothers graduated from madrasahs¹³¹; pre-revolutionary madrasah was considered very strong. In Tatar villages education was with the religious focus, i.e. to read, write and not only that”¹³². Indeed, Danis Garaev notes that before the revolution of the 1917, religious education among Muslims, especially *Jadid* madrasahs, produced a generation of women actively participating in public life and became part of nation-building in the Volga region (2019: 997).

3.2.3. Intersectionality of Gender and Ethnic Identity

According to women’s narratives, being a woman and being a Tatar interconnect with and permeate each other. The following is a reflection of a woman living in Estonia comprehending her own understanding on that matter.

“People look anyway, I’m different. They look, keep me in mind because I am of a different nationality [ethnicity]. In what [sense]? In everything! How you work, how you walk, how you dress, how you talk. Or am I in such a work team [...]? and I want to stand firm, and this is an internal responsibility; if I do something wrong, they will talk about us [Tatars] all like that. Every step [...] and from there it goes? It is a huge responsibility to be a Tatar; [the same is true] in a foreign land. European Tatars as well... we have traveled a lot, when I got to know them better, they had the same situation. They are very restrained, very intelligent, friendly [...] Being a Tatar is not easy. If my children or I do something wrong, we seem to return to the wilderness [in the sense] that I betray my grandmothers and grandfathers who taught us. They didn’t say, ‘you, daughter, should not do that.’ They said: ‘you, daughter, begin dressing with your right foot’ (they told that to all of us– with a prayer). This is a small little thing. If I sit like this [shaking a leg], it’s you who call Shaitan. It all starts with the little things. My children and I are exactly the same. I also tell the little one [her granddaughter], ‘well, sit down like this’. All this is passed from generation to generation. As with bed linen, how it should be washed; got up in the morning and all this needs to be taken out and shaken off. How to cook, all with prayer. When a woman is cooking, a scarf and an

¹³⁰ «Когда учился муж или супруг рядом жена тоже получала образование, и именно она помогала женской части, потому что, женщина редко придёт к мужчине и не откроет сердце, постесняется. Она получает образование, это поощрялось» (I., Oct 7, 2019).

¹³¹ Islamic educational institution.

¹³² Наши бабушки заканчивали медресе, дореволюционное медресе оно считалось очень сильным. В татарских деревнях с религиозным уклоном образование [было], то есть читать, писать и не только» (I., Oct 7, 2019).

apron are a must [to wear]. This is a hygienic consideration when starting with prayer. It works whether we like it or not. Probably faith is the core. I am always proud. I am a Tatar»¹³³.

That reflection expresses that being a woman and being a Tatar permeates the whole of everyday life, and performs in “how you work, how you walk, how you dress, how you talk”¹³⁴. It is a brilliant example of the appearing of identity, as understood by Roger Abrahams as an “encompassing term for cultural, social, and spiritual wholeness” (2003: 198). Moreover, in Tatar identity there are supports in the form of Islam, the Tatar language, and a sense of kinship. But none of those identifications is primary or secondary.

Remember, as I write in chapter 2, for many people, to be a Tatar means to be a Muslim, and to be a Muslim means to be a Tatar (Puppo and Schmoller 2018: 84–87); this is one more example of the intertwining of those identifications:

“We, as religious people, believe that nationality [ethnicity] is linked with religion. He is Tatar, how religious he is. In the first place is religiosity, in the second is the language. There are examples of this, like the Polish Tatars and the Lithuanian Tatars, they have lost their [Tatar] language, but they consider themselves as Muslims. For them, it is an equal sign. They survived as a nation thanks to religion. And we have the Quran in Arabic, and writing is very important for us, at least something. At least reading the Quran”¹³⁵.

¹³³ «Люди все-равно смотрят, я отличаюсь. Они смотрят, я на примете, потому что я другой национальности. Это в чем? Во всем. Как ты работаешь, как ты ходишь, как ты одеваешься, как ты разговариваешь. Или я в такой коллектив попала [...]? И самой хочется держаться и такое внутри, ответственность, про себя, если я что-то не то сделаю, будут говорить о нас всех так. Каждый шаг [...] и вот оттуда идет? Это огромная ответственность быть татаркой, еще и на чужбине. Так же европейские татары, мы много объездили [...] когда я с ними ближе познакомилась, то у них такая же ситуация. Они очень сдержанные, очень интеллигентные, дружные [...]. Быть татаркой непросто. Если я или мои дети, что-то не так сделают, мы как будто возвращаемся к глубинке, что я предаю своих бабушек, дедушек, которые нас обучали. Они не говорили, что ты, доченька, так не должна делать. Они говорили, что, доченька, одеваешься, начинай с правой ноги – нам всем так говорили – с молитвой. Это маленькая мелочь. Если сажу вот так [качаю ногой] – это ты зовешь шайтана. С мелочей все начинается. Мы же с детьми точно так же. Я вот маленькой тоже говорю: «ну ка сядь вот так». Это все передается из поколения в поколение. Как постельное белье, как оно должно быть постирано, утром встали и все это нужно вынести и отряхнуть. Как готовить – все с молитвой. Когда женщина готовит, то платок и передник – это обязательно. Это гигиенические соображение, когда начинаешь с молитвы. Оно работает, хотим мы этого или нет. Наверно вера – это стержень. Я всегда горжусь, я татарка» (F., Nov. 26, 2019).

¹³⁴ F., Nov. 26, 2019.

¹³⁵ «Мы, как религиозные люди считаем, что национальность связана с религией. Он татарин насколько он религиозен. На первом месте религиозность, на втором – язык. Есть примеры этому – польские татары и литовские татары – они потеряли язык, но они считают себя мусульманами. Для них это знак равенства. Они сохранились как

The piece of the interview suggests that Islam takes a significant part in Tatar identity. And its role, in a sense, turns out to be even more important than knowledge of the Tatar language. Julia S. Jordan-Zachery writes about intersectionality of gender identity and identity of a person of color, “[...] my blackness cannot be separated from my womaness. In fact, I am not sure if I want them to be separated [...]. Sometimes my identity is like a “marble” cake, in that my blackness is mixed intricately with my womaness and therefore cannot be separated or unlocked” (2007: 261). Tatar women as well are in a situation when those identities are interlocking (Jordan-Zachery 2007: 260) or “mixing and blending” (Kapchan 1996: 7), and depending on the situation, one or the other is performed more.

Tatar female identity is complementary and peripheral to male. Male-ness is at the center of Tatar-ness. In order to be a Tatar woman, they need to define themselves through family and related categories, through the relation of husbands, children, families, in the images of wives, mothers, grandmothers, and daughters. Since female identity is peripheral to male, then women are at the edges of these diverse relations. Therefore, women have different, often opposite, and often contesting interpretations of Tatar female identity. As I point out at the beginning of this chapter, Tatar women talk about themselves as both modest and restrained and rebellious and unrestrained, both women wearing a headscarf and those who are categorically against it, both women for whom the family is central in epistemology, and those who question the institution of the family. But those interpretations are not in dichotomic opposition or polarization; they are just carrying on different meanings of being a woman and being Tatar. However, in a specific political context, they could be polarized, as narratives about female veiling, for example.

3.2.4. Notion of Pure Tradition in Stories about Grandmothers

The notion of Tatar identity ties with a remote place, a village, where grandparents lived. That remote place, the village, is often narrated as “pure Tatar-ness” and “pure Tatar tradition” from the emic point of view. In order to support that idea, I am bringing the story of another woman, in this case, living in the Siberian city of Yalutorovsk.

“Every summer, when I was still at school, we went to the village [to visit] my grandmother – my father’s mother. We spent most of our time [there]. Generally, she was a very intelligent, smart woman. She worked as a chairman, worked at a school as a teacher, and she had such good knowledge – I only began to think about it later. Many thanks to her [for the fact that] she began to instill [it] in us from childhood. She constantly told us how to behave with parents, not to contradict them, to express gratitude. She taught how to behave correctly at the table, to say some prayers before meals. We begin to do

нация благодаря религии. И у нас Коран на арабском языке и письменность очень важна для нас, хотя бы минимум что-то. Хотя бы чтение Корана» (I., Oct. 7, 2019).

something: [to say] 'Bismillah', to thank the Almighty [...]. How to read [a prayer] before going to bed. All of this she gave us. She herself read the Quran as well; she was a believer. She tried to keep to [the diet], even, [as] at that time she did not eat pork. [She] ate halal¹³⁶ and poured all of this [knowledge] into us...poured it softly”¹³⁷.

This fragment refers us to women’s identity performed via the role of grandmother in connection with Tatar and Muslim identity, where a grandmother followed and taught Islam. And this kind of plot is ubiquitous in the collected ethnographic materials. For instance, one interlocutor says, “In my childhood, I remember my grandmother, who constantly prayed, she gave us written prayers, they had to be worn as a talisman”¹³⁸, and another one presents a similar idea, “We were taught prayers in childhood; that is, our grandmother read to us, she taught us; that is, I already in childhood knew some simple prayers”¹³⁹. As I already mentioned above, relationships between grandmothers and grandchildren are narrated by women as special, as warm and affectionate. Recalling their childhood in late Soviet time, many say that in the summer, they were sent to the village to stay with their grandparents, where traditions and experiences of being included in family relations were absorbed. “Parents always have no time. They sent us to a village for a month or two, where there was only Tatar language and not just Tatar, but such an interesting Tatar language inherent only to this village”¹⁴⁰. In this and many other interviews, Tatar identity, Islam, and femininity – presented in the image of a native grandmother – are organically intertwined with each other, forming a sense of a pure but vanishing tradition. That is why “grandmothers are our everything, they are our heritage”¹⁴¹, as says one of the interlocutors. Through fragmentary childhood memories of relation-

¹³⁶ It means to be in accordance with Islamic rules, law.

¹³⁷ «Мы каждое лето, когда еще в школе училась, мы ездили в деревню к бабушке – отцовская мама. Большую часть времени проводили [там]. Она вообще, сама по себе очень грамотная умная женщина была. Она работала председателем, работала в школе учителем, и знания у неё хорошие были, и я позже только стала задумываться. Большое ей спасибо, она ещё с детства потихонечку начала в нас закладывать. Она постоянно нам говорила, как надо вести себя с родителями, что нельзя им перечить, что надо благодарность говорить. Учила как вообще правильно вести себя за столом, перед едой какие-то молитвы говорить. Что-то начинаем делать – «Бисмилля» – благодарить Всевышнего [...]. Как перед сном [молитвы] читать. Вот все это она нам давала, она и сама читала Коран, была верующая. Старалась придерживаться, еще, в то время она и свинину не ела. Халяльно питалась и в нас все это вливала-вливала потихоньку» (R., Jan. 20, 2011).

¹³⁸ «В своем детстве я помню свою бабушку, которая постоянно молилась. Она нам раздавала написанные молитвы, их надо было носить как оберег» (G., June 5, 2010).

¹³⁹ «Молитвы нас учили в детстве, то есть бабушка у нас читала, она нас учила, то есть я уже в детстве некоторые молитвы знала простые» (G., July 10, 2010).

¹⁴⁰ «У родителей никогда не было времени, они отправляли нас в деревню на месяц или два, где был только татарский язык, причем не просто татарский, а такой интересный татарский, присущий только этой деревне» (K., Oct. 13, 2019).

¹⁴¹ «Бабушки наше все, они наше наследие» (K., Oct. 13, 2019).

ships with their own grandparents (and often specifically grandmothers), women reassemble notions of tradition and of their identities. That interconnects with some of Lilia Karimova's conclusions, that "[...] while Soviet-era policies and realities may often be denounced locally by religious people as "atheist," in fact, the personal Soviet past serves as a resource that can be tapped into in order to (re)construct Muslim identities and explain what appears to others to be a relatively recent turn to piety" (2016: 120).

Stories about grandmothers and Islam are inevitably connected with stories about fasting, prayer, reading in Arabic and the Quran, and celebrating Muslim holidays, accompanied by long expectations and preparation. It should be remembered that the grandmothers of the interlocutors lived in Soviet times and tried to follow some Muslim practices, despite the Soviet approach to religion. Soviet policy was not uniform throughout the entire Soviet era, as I will explain in chapter 4, but at the beginning of its state building, the Soviet government treated Islam, like religion in general, repressively. However, in the second half of the 20th century, after World War II, some indulgences were made, and some educational institutions and mosques were opened. Thanks to elderly women living in remote small towns and villages, women like the grandmothers of the respondents, as we can see from the above pieces of interviews, Islam has survived in some practices. For example,

"When we were little, on Thursdays and Fridays, (Fridays especially) [...] [she would] sit us at a round table [...], and she herself read an Arabic book; I still remember that she also knew the translation very well. [She would] read a line, paragraph and tells now what is happening at that [contemporary] time, [that] this was already written in the Quran, [and so] now this is not news to us. And what is said there, what [one] is not supposed [to do]: not to lie, not to speak ill of strangers, not to steal, not to take someone else's [belongings], not to quarrel, not to raise your hand against an elder... here is everything"¹⁴².

Thus, the memories of grandmothers are not only Tatar and Islamic related but also gendered. Memories of grandmothers, experiences of living with grandmothers, grandmothers' stories, they are all very performative, not only of ethnic and religious identity, but of women's roles in the maintenance of those identities. Henry Glassie gives an example of the performativity of stories told to him by his grandmother.

¹⁴² «Мы когда маленькие были, в четверг и пятницу (пятницу, особенно) в эти дни [...], посадит нас за круглый стол [...] и сама читает арабскую книгу – это я до сих пор помню и она очень хорошо перевод знала. Строчку, абзац прочитает и рассказывает, что происходит в то время, что это в Коране уже написано было, нам сейчас это не новость. И о чем там говорится, что не положено: врать нельзя, о чужих говорить плохо нельзя, воровать нельзя, чужое брать нельзя, ссориться нельзя, руку поднимать на старшего нельзя – вот это все» (М., March 15, 2011).

“Once I had become a folklorist, I realized those tales had Aarne-Thompson numbers, and I asked her to put them on tape. She remembered that she had learned them in her own childhood, and she might still know them, she told me, but she could not tell them to an adult. It was not until my children were old enough to listen that she could lie back, close her eyes, and let the stories roll out, faultlessly, one after another” (Glassie 2003: 185–186).

Because the Tatar identity is based on recalling grandparents and a village, a childhood, they are therefore distinguished physically and temporally – many of the respondents do not live in a village anymore and not in the past, in childhood. But what does it mean to be Tatar today? How does the epistemology of the local – a village – relate with the global – a city? Henrietta Moore reflects on the complexity of a concept of global and local as an opposition of global, as well as relation and interrelation between them. She asks what the global is, who studies the global anthropologically and how to distinguish the global apart from the local. “On the one hand, there is the persistent question: ‘is an ethnography of the global possible? And on the other, a clear recognition that the question does not make much sense since it is no longer feasible to fully separate the local from the global” (2004: 72).

Looking at the categories of local and global not as taxonomic realities but as epistemologies, ordering mechanisms for human thought, she talks about ‘the global’ as a concept-metaphor, as a theoretical abstraction. “Concept-metaphors are examples of catachresis, i.e., they are metaphors that have no adequate referent. Their exact meanings can never be specified in advance – although they can be defined in practice and in context – and there is a part of them that remains outside or exceeds representation” (Moore 2004: 73). And she explains that the global is theoretically abstract as well as concepts of the gendered body.

Moore says that usually, the notion of local is based on ethnographic fieldwork, “the empirical and concrete”, whereas the notion of the global is impossible to experience from people’s interaction and therefore, is more abstract (2004: 75). From her perspective, the picture is more complex; because “the world we live is fragmented; that our lives, and even our selves, are fragmented: this holographic imagery suggests that our selves are now modeled on our world” (2004: 76). So, the local and global relations are relations between the part and the whole. “The notion of fragmentation [...] is intrinsically connected to pre-theoretical assumption about wholism and the associated notion of the local” (ibid), whereas what “globalization has done is break the whole down into parts” (ibid). That line of thought is highly fascinating for me and could bring some clarity into reflections about tradition and modernity in opposition. Soviet modernity has done the breaking and fragmenting of the world, lives, and ourselves in many ways.

3.3. Women and Traditions in Family Relationships

3.3.1. Girl as a Future Bride, Wife, and Mother

In women's narratives about tradition, the idea of raising girls and daughters in accordance with the Tatar tradition is clearly traced; the skills cultivated in girls are largely pre-determined by the subsequent roles of the bride, wife, and mother. However, those narratives are highly diverse and varied. On the one hand, the idea of developing skills like knitting, embroidery, cooking, and cleaning appears in the stories; "we tell our girls that they are future mothers, that they are future housewives, first of all. Career is career, but if you don't cook deliciously, if you don't have a clean house, there will be no order in the family"¹⁴³, a woman of about 50 years old tells me. The quote illustrates that the constructed gender role of the girl is interpreted as the cultivation and development of housekeeping skills in the child (girl), as an investment in the girl's future. Because "[m]arriage is always an exchange; one exchanges a solitary status for a shared one, or a life in one's parental family for a life outside of it" (Kapchan 1996: 175); those skills should be exchanged in the marriage market someday. The other major investment in the future of a girl, as might be expected, is skills of taking care of their physical appearance and attractiveness; "[s]he [speaking of her daughter] dresses differently every day. She always does a neat hairstyle. She will never go to school in something disheveled, in something unpatched, not ironed. She has a posture. She never speaks loudly. She never laughs out loudly. She never imposes herself"¹⁴⁴. It shows that understanding of tradition is embodied from the emic epistemology, cultivated, passed on to the next generation of girls, embodied in girlish appearance, manners, communication – in habitus, to put it briefly.

Another research participant, at her age of 60, explains to me about the upbringing of girls, "[o]f course, there is no such thing nowadays"¹⁴⁵, meaning that in the contemporary situation, these skills may not have the same symbolic weight as before. So, there is a constant contradiction among narratives. Yet, being the mother of a boy is still more valuable than being the mother of a girl. "They say that you raise girls not for yourself, you raise girls for another family. Raised a girl, she goes to her husband's family, and that's it. But the boy's parents have additional obligations [...] you are raising the future head of the

¹⁴³ «Мы говорим своим девочкам, что они будущие матери, что они будущие хозяйки, в первую очередь. Карьера-карьерой, но если ты не будешь вкусно готовить, если у тебя не будет чисто в доме, то порядка в семье не будет» (К., Oct. 13, 2019).

¹⁴⁴ «Она [говоря о своей дочери] одевается каждый день, по-разному. Она делает всегда аккуратную прическу. Она никогда в чем-то растрепанном, в чем-то не заштопанном не пойдет в школу, не отглаженном. У нее осанка. Она никогда громко не разговаривает. Она никогда громко не смеётся. Она никогда не навязывается» (К., Oct. 13, 2019).

¹⁴⁵ «Конечно, сейчас такого нет» (К., Oct. 13, 2019).

family”¹⁴⁶; “of course, if he is a boy, of course, he is an assistant, he will stay in the house, and this is better than a girl because you raise her and she leaves”¹⁴⁷. According to the quotes, the epistemology of being a girl or raising a girl brings the understanding that being a boy is valuable by itself; being a girl is valuable in the context of skills she will get and will exchange in the future. In terms of women’s skills and their exchange, there is a temporal aspect; there is an idea of becoming – the skills will be exchanged in the future, the temporal distance between the present moment and the future is liminal in that case.

One more idea that should be noted here is female sexuality. One of the interlocutors in the conversation says about her pregnancies and raising children, “I never thought that I would have a boy because to give birth to a boy, you need to be chosen. And then when I have had two boys, that was all. It is more responsible; they need to be raised to be worthy people. At least they won’t bring a baby in the hem”¹⁴⁸, “I won’t have this trouble”¹⁴⁹, meaning that if her son gets a girl pregnant, she does not have to deal with. Girlish sexuality, or rather its consequences like an unplanned pregnancy, then, is the subject of close attention, the scrutiny of parents, relatives, village, community, etc. Girlish premarital sexuality is one of the central elements of a girl’s upbringing. “It was not customary for us to date; we were dating passingly”¹⁵⁰, “I even caught it”, says one of the research participants about the late Soviet era, at the age of 50–55,

“It was impossible for girls¹⁵¹ in front of the whole to walk hand in hand with a boy, and in general, do not let those around you know what kind of relations you have, sympathy [what level of intimacy you have]. From this, the whole village will be on the ears¹⁵². And what did we do? It has always been this way! We are not pioneers! You pretend you go to the cinema or club¹⁵³ in the evening, and you talk there, you do whatever you want with whoever you want,

¹⁴⁶ «У нас говорят, что девочек ты растишь не для себя, девочек ты растишь для другой семьи. Выростила девочку, она уходит в семью мужа и все. А родители мальчика – это дополнительные обязательства [...] ты растишь будущего главу семьи» (G., Nov. 2, 2019).

¹⁴⁷ «Конечно если мальчик он, конечно, помощник, он останется в доме, и это лучше, чем девочка, потому что девочку ее растила, и она уходит» (K., Oct. 13, 2019).

¹⁴⁸ This is an idiom, which means having a baby unplanned, unexpectedly, usually it applies to young women with single marital status.

¹⁴⁹ «Я никогда не думала, что у меня родится мальчик, потому что, чтобы родить мальчика, нужно быть избранным, а потом, когда два – это вообще. Больше ответственности, их нужно воспитать достойными людьми. Они хотя бы в подоле не принесут, у меня этой беды не будет» (G., Nov. 2, 2019).

¹⁵⁰ «У нас ведь не принято было встречаться, встречались мы мимоходом» (A., Oct. 5, 2019).

¹⁵¹ She means here young unmarried women.

¹⁵² That idiom could mean many things. But here the idea is to be nosy, curious, to discuss it.

¹⁵³ A club in a village had a particular meaning. It was a center of village life like school for example. It was a place for gathering people, having leisure activities, dancing, watching movies, performances, etc.

even until the morning. It is youth life; it is under cover of night and as if nothing had happened [...] And everyone turned a blind eye to it”¹⁵⁴.

It means, then, that “modest women mask sexual or romantic attachments” (Abu-Lughod 1986: 154), however, it is hidden rather than denied. An emic explanation tells us the manifestation of female sexuality is acceptable, but it has to be hidden, and the border between the open and the hidden in accordance with the narrative above is the regulation of time for day and night. During the day “[y]ou don’t show that you like someone, or you can have something to connect with some boy. You cannot enter into their house, into their gate, come closer”¹⁵⁵, but at night not “[a]nything limits you, except for your inner idea of how far everything can go”¹⁵⁶. However, it did not mean nightly connivance at all because “[a]t night no one controls you, but during the day you will be responsible for what happened at night because gossip could creep if you crossed some border, or, God forbid, got pregnant”¹⁵⁷. Another border between the open and the hidden is the notion of space. Everything that happened “in a cinema, in a club”¹⁵⁸ was acceptable, but it was forbidden “to enter into their house, enter into their gates, to come closer”¹⁵⁹. The epistemology of the female body is also narrated in categories of opened and hidden, acceptable and unacceptable. “You know this place [ankle] is considered the sexiest [in female body]. It’s not just that, there is wisdom in this. The same with the neck [...] there are women who tie a scarf, and the neck is open, but these places are also the sexiest for women. This is all thoughtful. The wrist is the same, if you have a slightly shorter dress, it already attracts [...]. Unfortunately, this is male physiology”¹⁶⁰. The female body, or rather the parts of the woman’s body as

¹⁵⁴ «Нельзя было девушкам на глазах у всей деревни с каким-нибудь мальчиком за руку идти, и вообще, тип не дай знать окружающим, что какие-то отношения, симпатия [...] от этого вся деревня на ушах стоять будет. И что мы делали? Так было всегда! Мы не первооткрыватели! Идешь вечером типа в кино, типа в клуб, и общаешься там, гуливанишь, с кем хочешь, хоть до утра – жизнь молодёжная, она под покровом ночи, и вот как ни в чем не бывало... Все закрывали на это глаза» (А., Sept. 15, 2019).

¹⁵⁵ «Вообще виду не подаешь, что тебе кто-то нравится, или тебя может что-то связывать с каким-то мальчиком – не можешь зайти в их дом, за ворота, приблизится» (А., Sept. 15, 2019).

¹⁵⁶ «Тебя ничто не ограничивает, кроме твоего внутреннего представления о том, как далеко все может зайти» (А., Sept. 15, 2019).

¹⁵⁷ «Ночью тебя никто не контролирует, но днем ты будешь отвечать за то, что было ночью, потому что сплетни могли поползти, если ты перешла какую-то границу, или, не дай Бог, забеременела» (А., Sept. 15, 2019).

¹⁵⁸ А., Sept. 15, 2019.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ «Вы знаете, что вот это место [лодыжка], считается самым сексуальным. Это же не просто так, в этом же есть мудрость. Та же шея [...], есть женщины, которые завязывают платок, а шея открыта, но эти места они тоже самые сексуальные у женщин. Это все продуманно. Запястье – то же самое, если у тебя чуть покорооче

notions of space and time, become divided into separate elements. During some courses of Islam I attended in Estonia as part of my ethnographic fieldwork there, the narrative of one young woman drew my attention. She said she had read the Quran in bed, before sleeping time, and, of course, she had not covered her hair or head – in some interpretations of Islam, it is believed that a woman should cover her head while reading the Quran, communicating with the sacred text, and in some, it is believed that this is not required. But, nevertheless, she had covered her “shameful body parts” such as hips, belly, and chest while reading, while communicating with the sacred text¹⁶¹.

According to an interlocutor, the understanding of what is allowed or what is not allowed is formed through judging “the behavior of other people; for example, she is idle [...] she was with one man; [then] she was with another man. She did not wait for someone from the military service, [but rather] she married another”¹⁶². Or that “she is a *blyad*” – which is Russian obscene vocabulary and means literary “slut”; or “*zhylbezek*”¹⁶³ in Tatar language, which translates as “frivolous person”. Judgments of other people’s behavior are shaped through parental as well as grandparental comments, even though everyone shared this understanding. “I rebelled [...], they imposed upon me. Both of my grandparents took an active part in my upbringing. My grandfather tried to tell me about it with feeling – plainly, deliberately, about why it is so. But I rebelled anyway, but I had to accept these rules”¹⁶⁴.

Another case of rebelling was carried by a research participant having connection with a local LGBTQ+ community. Her simultaneous relations with the Tatar community through immediate relatives and the LGBTQ+ community was challenging for her. These complex identity arrangements are manifested primarily through the choice of a partner and the acceptance of this choice by members of the related family. In her critical understanding of sexuality and sex in human lives, a choice of a partner is based on shared intimacy as a foundation of relationships, whereas in the Tatar community, as she explained to me, relationships lay on a notion how people suit to each other socially and economically. In her perception, “since marriages are without love, then sexual life is for reproduction”¹⁶⁵ in the Tatar community, as she told me. That clash of

платье, это уже [...] притягивает. К сожалению, физиология такая мужская» (К., Oct. 13, 2019).

¹⁶¹ Participant observations, Tallinn, fall 2019.

¹⁶² «[...] оценку поведения других людей, например, она же такая, гулящая [...] Она с этим была, с тем была, вот она его из армии не дождалась, вышла за другого» (G., Nov. 2, 2019).

¹⁶³ *Жылбэзек* in Tatar.

¹⁶⁴ «Я бунтовала [...] мне так внушали. Бабушка и дедушка, то есть они оба принимали активное участие в моем воспитании. Дедушка старался вообще рассказать об этом с чувством, толком, расстановкой, почему так. Но я все-равно бунтовала, но мне приходилось принимать эти правила» (A., Sept. 15, 2019).

¹⁶⁵ «Поскольку браки без любви, то и половая жизнь – для размножения» (S., October 15, 2010).

opposite meanings results in her not even introducing her partner to extended family, and she did not want to maintain contacts with them.

3.3.2. Virginity, Abduction, and Tradition

Attending private Tatar language classes, I have found that the category of virginity is associated with the word “*kyz*”. A topic like virginity, considered inappropriate for public discourse, can appear more easily in such an intimate setting as private instruction. Here is an example of a reflection on this topic by one of the women.

“Honor is more social, and virginity is physical. This is a physical condition. Virginity is definitely the beginning of female sexual... Honor is a more social thing. Virginity has to do with modesty, I think. Virginity is modesty, these are characteristics in the Tatar female culture. Virginity and modesty... She does not go out to men, especially when there are many men, she goes out only with her mother, [she does not go out to men] with her head uncovered”¹⁶⁶.

From this conversation, it is clear that it is difficult for the research participant to choose words when talking about the intimate sphere, but we see, nevertheless, that she connects virginity with modesty. Losing of virginity in the Tatar language literally means “to be in a husband”, “to be in a husband’s family”, “[s]ince you are a girl, you do not have the right to cross the threshold [of a young man’s parents’ house]. If you crossed [the threshold], it means [you entered the man’s family, became part of the man’s family]”¹⁶⁷.

The Tatar language class, as well as my interviews, were held in Russian, but from my point of view, Russian and English do not convey the idea of the Tatar language. For example, in Russian, as in English, “virginity” is primarily physiological, characterizing the state of absence of sexual relations. In contrast, virginity in the Tatar language is, first of all, a part of social relations. “As soon as she crossed the threshold of the groom’s house, she is already obliged to marry him”¹⁶⁸, says another Tatar language teacher in Estonia. “As soon as she crossed the threshold of the groom’s house” means that she, at the moment of crossing the threshold of the house, loses her virginity, and therefore “she is

¹⁶⁶ «Честь – это более социальное, а целомудрие – это физическое. Это физическое состояние. Целомудрие – это однозначно, это начало начал женского полового... Честь – это более социальная вещь. Целомудрие связано со скромностью, я думаю. Целомудрие – это скромность, это черты в татарской женской культуре. Целомудрие и скромность... Она не выходит к мужчинам, когда много мужчин особенно, она выходит только с матерью, [она не выходит к мужчинам] с непокрытой головой» (G., Nov. 12, 2019).

¹⁶⁷ «Раз ты девушка, ты не имеешь права переступить порог [дома родителей молодого человека, мужчины]. Если ты переступила, это значит [ты вошла в семью мужчины, стала частью семьи мужчины]» (A., Oct 5, 2019).

¹⁶⁸ «Как только она переступила порог дома жениха, она уже обязана выйти за него замуж» (K., Nov. 13, 2019).

already obliged to marry him”, otherwise she is “not a girl anymore. She is a woman, means hardly a young man will take you, so you have fate – only a widower of some kind”¹⁶⁹. “*Crossing the threshold*” is a liminal statement, then, as Victor Turner writes, the moment of her transformation from girl to woman, the moment of being “betwixt and between” (1995: 95).

“The attributes of liminality of liminal personae (“threshold people”) are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classification that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there: they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial” (ibid).

“Naturally, it was necessary to marry only strictly being a girl. Although we were Komsomol and Communists, we strictly adhered to these rules”¹⁷⁰, because marrying a non-virgin was considered a shame that could fall on the rest of the family. From that perspective, it means that female virginity and, more broadly, female modesty, included in social relations, in family and kin relations, is the honor of her family, which explains the strict control over the sexual behavior of a young woman. In the above fragment, it is necessary to clarify the phrase “although we were Komsomol and Communists”¹⁷¹. The research participant means here that despite the struggle of the Soviet state with traditions that were considered relics of the past, nevertheless, the idea of female modesty was much more important than Soviet ideological attitudes and prohibitions. This hybridization is not surprising because other ceremonies, for example, the wedding ceremonies (Abashin 2014: 357), as I show later, were also hybrid in the Soviet period.

Once I asked why control over the young woman’s sexual behavior was needed. “[T]hey could have easily kidnapped her”¹⁷², one of the respondents answered me. She continued: “[m]y mother was kidnapped; my older sister was kidnapped. Mom got married in ‘47, she didn’t get married, she was abducted. They even abducted a Communist, she had already been a Communist [...]”¹⁷³.

The usual description of kidnapping a young woman looks like this,

¹⁶⁹ «[...] она уже обязана выйти за него замуж», в противном случае «не-девочка, женщина, значит вряд ли тебя парень возьмет, значит у тебя судьба – только вдовец какой-нибудь» (А., Oct. 5, 2019).

¹⁷⁰ «Естественно, замуж нужно было выходить только строго девочкой. Мы хоть и комсомольцами, и коммунистами были, мы этих правил строго придерживались» (А., Oct. 5, 2019).

¹⁷¹ А., Oct. 5, 2019.

¹⁷² «[...] запросто могли украсть» (А., Oct. 5, 2019).

¹⁷³ «Мою маму украли, сестру старшую украли. Мама в ‘47 году замуж вышла, не вышла – украли. Даже коммунистом украли, она уже коммунистом была [...]» (А., Oct. 5, 2019).

“In our villages, they said, in most cases, it was like this. It was very unexpected, sometimes it happened between people who liked each other. In the evening, several people on a cart with a horse come, whistling to call the girl to just talk. She comes out, if it’s winter, then they take a sheepskin coat with them. They just wrap her in an armful and take her away, bring her to the groom’s house”¹⁷⁴.

The interlocutor, a woman in her 60s, says that her mother was kidnapped. When talking about her mother’s kidnapper, she talks about her own father. And as if explaining all this to me, a person who grew up in a different context, she drew attention to the fact that “[f]ew men returned from the war, it was still necessary to marry someone. And let’s say he was not the worst guy who kidnapped her”¹⁷⁵. That is, we could see that in the post-Second World War historical context, in the context of a difficult, ruined life, the story of abduction becomes more understandable.

In narratives about abduction and, accordingly, virginity, virginity, being a part of social relations, leaves the young woman the opportunity of being agent, because in some cases she could fight back, return home, and then “[d]isgrace him to the whole village”¹⁷⁶. In a very narrow permissible frame, nevertheless, there remained some opportunities for female subjectivity in that situation. “In my mother’s village, one girl was kidnapped three times, she simply didn’t agree. She said ‘my feet would not be in your house’. And after the third time, she agreed [...]”¹⁷⁷.

It should be noted that speaking about the more contemporary period, their own youth, and their own life, the research participant of about 60 years old comments that “[i]n our time there was no longer a thing, that no one got married [if not a virgin]. It was unpleasant [if she was kidnapped and she came back], but, normally, you could live through”¹⁷⁸. Having overpowered themselves, they did not live anymore; women left husbands after *nikah*, did not agree to the state registration of marriage. Or “[i]t happens that they [future groom and bride] just agree. It happens that the parents protest, usually from the

¹⁷⁴ «В наших деревнях рассказывали, в большинстве случаев дело было так. Это было очень неожиданно, иногда бывало между людьми, которые нравились друг другу. Вечером, несколько человек на телеге с лошадей приезжают, со свистом вызывают девушку просто поговорить. Она выходит, если зима, то они тулуп с собой берут. Они просто заворачивают ее в охапку и увозят, привозят в дом жениха» (К., Oct. 13, 2019).

¹⁷⁵ «С войны то мужчин мало вернулось, замуж за кого-то все-равно надо было выходить. А скажем, он был не самый последний парень, ее выкрал то» (А., Oct. 5, 2019).

¹⁷⁶ «Позорить его на всю деревню» (К., Nov. 13, 2019).

¹⁷⁷ «В маминой деревне, одну девушку крали три раза, она просто не соглашалась. Она говорила «ноги моей в твоём доме не будет». И в третий раз она все-таки согласилась [...]» (А., Oct. 5, 2019).

¹⁷⁸ «В наше время такого прям, что никто замуж не возьмет [если не-девушка] уже не было. Неприятно было [если крали, и она возвращалась], но, нормально, можно было пережить» (А., Oct. 5, 2019).

girl's side, but they [groom and bride] want to get married, then they go to this trick"¹⁷⁹. We could see that virginity and abduction in the context of tradition are delimited temporally. Speaking about the tradition of kidnapping and premarital virginity, the respondents usually refer to the youth of their mothers, to the Second World War, and the post-War period. The respondents' own lives were already interpreted as a kind of deviation from the tradition that is no longer so strict, and therefore that it was already possible to be more flexible.

3.3.3. Islamic Marriage (*Nikah*) in Women's Narratives

One of the traditions related to women repeated in narratives is *nikah*, an Islamic marriage ceremony. *Nikah* is a moment of liminality for women, a socially legitimate transition from the state of a girl to the state of a woman. As one of the respondents explains, *nikah* is one of those traditions, together with naming and funeral rites, that had survived the Soviet era. "Those elites that we [Tatars] had, have been destroyed, and religion has been limited to rituals. Namely, the child was born – naming, marriage – *nikah*, dies – funeral prayer. This is mostly it, nothing else is left"¹⁸⁰. She means here that during the decades of the Soviet regime, religion was reduced to the enacting of certain rituals.

Nikah has been and has remained an extremely important tradition for the Tatar community. *Nikah* is meaningful even for women who identify themselves as non-believers. This is a story of a young, married woman, about 30 years old, recalling her own *nikah*.

"To him [to husband] it was necessary. He said that 'I need you to be my wife according to Muslim customs, and secular, and in every possible way'. In general, for my grandmothers and grandfathers, that was also very important, that was supported. Therefore, I, proceeding from the fact that I am not a Muslim, but if others are pleased, but I do not care, then why not. The only thing I said, 'I didn't want it to be in the mosque, if I do not carry faith in myself, then I will not be comfortable there'"¹⁸¹.

¹⁷⁹ «Бывает, что просто договариваются. Бывает, что родители воспротивились, обычно со стороны девушки, а им хочется пожениться, тогда они шли на эту хитрость...» (А., Oct. 5, 2019).

¹⁸⁰ «Ту элиту, которая была у нас, ее уничтожили, и религия ограничилась ритуалами. То есть ребенок родился – имянаречение, бракосочетание – никах, умирает – погребальная молитва. Ну все практически, больше ничего не осталось» (I., Oct. 7, 2019).

¹⁸¹ «Ему [супругу] было необходимо. Он говорил, что мне надо чтобы ты была моей женой и по мусульманским обычаям, и по светским, и по всем возможным [...]. В принципе для моих бабушек и дедушек это тоже было очень важно, это приветствовалось. Поэтому я, исходя из того, что я хоть и не мусульманка, но вот если другим приятно, а мне все равно, то – почему бы нет. Единственное, что я сказала, что не хочу, чтобы это было в мечети, то есть если я не несу в себе веру, то мне будет там не комфортно [...].» (Z., Dec. 1, 2010).

According to the collected interviews with women, narratives about *nikah* as tradition are the most hybrid ones. “In the beginning is *nikah*, it is more important than civil marriage”¹⁸². They are hybrid in terms of the plurality of meanings packed into the concept, at this point, the Islamic norms of marriage meet with the state norms of marriage, but in the women’s stories *nikah* legitimizes the initiation of sexual relations (“before *nikah*, of course, we did not sleep, because for me this is such a terrible sin”¹⁸³), and it legitimizes the birth of a child who culturally belongs to the Tatar and Muslim community. One of the young women recalled her *nikah* like this: “We were dating for a year, then there was *nikah*, and then after two months we got married. We hoped that the wedding would be later, but my mother insisted, she said, ‘what if you get pregnant’ and offered to legitimize [in the registry office] our relationship earlier”¹⁸⁴. Additionally, this is another example of an elderly woman talking about her mother’s *nikah* and state official documentation, “My mother. I see her marriage certificate, I see a registration was [dated] ‘54”¹⁸⁵, and I was born in ‘49, a brother at ‘48, and a sister at ‘52. I was stunned! I ask, ‘Did you give birth while unmarried?’. She answers: ‘Well? We made an engagement. The mullah honored *nikah*, and everything; and how would he [her father] refused it?”¹⁸⁶.

From the external view, post-Soviet modernity brings an interesting, creative approach to *nikah*, often with new and opposite meanings. Anna Tsing points out that “[c]ultures are continually co-produced in the interactions I call friction: the awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference” (2005:4). On the one hand, many adult women said that “[n]ow they [young people] also do *nikah*, but they can drift apart. In my opinion, it became such a phenomenon to sleep with a girl. I’ve heard such things”¹⁸⁷. On the other hand, some young women, especially those for whom Islam plays a significant role in shaping their epistemology, shared with me that *nikah* was the only way to get married. And that raises other issues; because the Islamic marriage, *nikah*, is not recognized by the Russian state as lawful matrimony. That creates some confused and awkward friction between the state bureaucratic epistemology and

¹⁸² «Никах вначале – это главное, чем гражданский брак» (G., Nov. 12, 2019).

¹⁸³ «До никаха мы, конечно, не спали, потому что для меня это такой страшный грех» (A., Jul. 23, 2010).

¹⁸⁴ «Мы встречались год, потом был никах и потом через два месяца мы поженились. Надеялись, что свадьба будет попозже, но мама настояла, сказала, «вдруг ты забеременеешь» и предложила пораньше узаконить [в загсе – прим. Автора] наши отношения» (A., July 23, 2010).

¹⁸⁵ It means here, that the marriage certificate is dated 1954.

¹⁸⁶ «Моя мама. Вижу свидетельство о браке, вижу регистрация ‘54 год, а я родилась в ‘49, брат в ‘48, а сестра в ‘52. Я обалдела. Спрашиваю, «ты что в не брака родила?» [Она отвечает:] «Ну ты что? Помолвку сделали, мулла никах почитал и все, и как бы он [отец] отказался от этого» (G., Nov. 12, 2019).

¹⁸⁷ «Сейчас тоже никах делают, но могут разбежаться. По-моему, это стало каким-то таким явлением, чтобы с девушкой переспать. Я слышала такие вещи» (G., Nov. 12, 2019).

Islamic followers. In that case, Islamic marriage and all matrimonial relations are not transparent and not regulated by state law. One of the interlocuters complained to me that her husband had married and brought a woman outside of Russia only because they did not register their relations in the state's official institution¹⁸⁸. I will talk about that moment more in chapter 4.

3.3.4. Giving Care in Family Relationships

As I show in chapter 2, the discourses of being a wife and a mother are extremely common in the press and media materials. In this part, I turn to the women's own narratives, their own description, their own understanding of their female roles in family relationships. According to the women's narratives, women often identify themselves through relations with husbands, children, and taking care of homes. "For women, the main thing is the family, that you are a good mother, that you are a good wife [...]. A woman is the focus of the family hearth, and she is responsible if something happens [in the family]"¹⁸⁹. It should be noted that marriage changes women's status in the community, "[m]arried women are allowed a lot. It is allowed to them sit with men"¹⁹⁰, for example.

Because the care of the family is vested on women, in accordance with an internal perspective, the space of home and skills are divided along the boundary between "female" and "male". A research participant of 70 years old shared with me a story: "Once my mother came to me, and my husband spilled something, he ran to take a rag and wipe it off. She said, 'this would not happen anymore, this is not his business, this is not a man's business. You go and wipe it off'. I have memorized these words for the rest of my life. There are men's things and women's things"¹⁹¹. That piece of the story tells us that there is a notion of "female" and "male" business, and it is extremely important to follow the distribution of domestic work. Moreover, the distribution of the domestic work is formed not only in relations between a woman and a man but also in relations between a woman and relatives (often female relatives) – in the case of the quoted interview, in relation with the mother of the interlocutor. Although, it is worth noting that a close reading of different narratives indicates that there are different ways of defining "female" labor and "male" (Ortner 1974). Exceptions from the strict distribution of domestic work are situations related to women's health. But interestingly, painful menstruation is not such an

¹⁸⁸ I., Nov. 2, 2010.

¹⁸⁹ «Для женщин главное – это семья, что ты хорошая мать, что ты хорошая жена [...]. Женщина – сосредоточение семейного очага и на ней лежит все ответственность если что-то случается» (G., Oct. 20, 2019).

¹⁹⁰ «Замужним женщинам разрешается многое. Разрешается с мужчинами сидеть, но и то» (G., Nov. 12, 2019).

¹⁹¹ «Однажды ко мне приехала мама, и что-то у меня муж разлил, он побежал брать тряпку и вытирать. Она сказала, [...] «больше, чтобы этого не было, это не его дело, это не мужское дело. Ты пойд и вытри». Я на всю жизнь запомнила эти слова. Есть вещи мужские и вещи женские» (G., Nov. 12, 2019).

exceptional situation, as one of the elderly women about 70 years old commented. “When they have their period, they say, ‘oh I cannot [do this]’. I say ‘we all went through it. You are not the first; you are not the last. This is a woman’s burden’. Try to muffle yourself with something, but this should not be at the forefront of your family’s life. This is not good; this is the female burden. From these sufferings, a woman learns everything else”¹⁹². I have never heard the same comments from younger women. In some way, it illustrates the status hierarchy among younger and older women, and a generational difference, an absence of empathy to women of reproductive age.

But this power relationship would be simplistic if there was not another storyline. “By default [a man] should be [in the family], without him it is not a family, but if he is, then he plays a role [decorative]. Moreover, this is accepted by several generations – in the generation of my parents, [and] in our generation as well this can be traced – that a man is another child, he does not understand what he is doing, what he knows”¹⁹³. Significantly, such a narrative is widespread in Siberian material. In Estonian material, I did not notice such strong rhetoric. In general, those narratives, of course, are a great simplification of reality because power relations and power dynamics are distributed in family relations in a much more complex manner.

The role of being a mother, is expressed in the community as the most meaningful aspect of a woman’s life and, in general, is embedded in the meaning of being a woman. For example, “[b]eing a woman is important. It means to be a mother, a wife, to carry creative qualities in oneself”¹⁹⁴. The naturalization of the maternal role is entrusted to the woman by nature or by God. “Nature created us that way”¹⁹⁵ tells me a research participant. This idea is diffused in the Tatar community and is present as a meta-narrative, with some exceptions among young women. It is strongly supported by a generation of older women. During one of the interviews, I found myself in a rather tricky situation. At the time I interviewed one woman, I had already been studying in Estonia for one year, but I had no relatives there. Because my contacts with them were weaker, I therefore forgot what it meant to be a young woman among older female relatives. One of the interlocutors, a woman about 70 years old, refreshed this in my memory. She returned to me my question about what it

¹⁹² «У них, когда месячные они говорят, «ой я не могу». Я говорю, «мы все это прошли. Не ты первая, не ты последняя – это женская доля». Пытайся себя приглушить чем-то, но это не должно стать во главу угла житья твоей семьи. Это не есть хорошо, это женская доля. Вот женщина с этих страданий и познает и все остальное» (G., Nov. 12, 2019).

¹⁹³ «По умолчанию [мужчина] должен быть [в семье], без него это не семья, а если он есть, то он играет роль [декоративную]. Причем это принимается несколькими поколениями – в поколении моих родителей это прослеживается и у нашего поколения, что мужчина – это еще один ребенок, он же не понимает, что он делает, что он там знает» (G., Oct. 20, 2019).

¹⁹⁴ «Быть женщиной важно. Это значит быть матерью, женой, нести в себе созидательные качества» (I., Oct. 7, 2019).

¹⁹⁵ «Природа нас так создала» (G. Nov. 12, 2019).

meant to be a woman¹⁹⁶, which could be perceived as an element of reverse anthropology (Guss 1986). At that point, my husband and I lived in different countries, maintaining our relationship at a distance. In that interview, the interlocuter let me know that I should be a better wife and a better woman, “[...] not one of your academic degrees, not one of your achievements [...] you must bear children, you must bear beautiful children. This is your destiny”¹⁹⁷. From this sentence, we could see that education and career aspirations for a woman are secondary in contrast to the biologically predetermined role of a mother. And further, “[y]ou must come to him and serve breakfast, cook porridge... to be occupied by this. You should take care of him. This is your greatest welfare”¹⁹⁸. From an etic position, it makes it clear that women’s care for a husband and wider, their care for a family is a non-altruistic act, it is a structured exchange. Moreover, I have connection with the Tatar community only through my research. But a woman with whom I talked projected her values onto me and my family. That probably means that for her, these values represent a generalized desirable pattern of women’s behavior that applies to all women, not just Tatars.

On balance to this meta-narrative, however, there are appearances of another narrative questioning women’s biological role. This is spread widely among the stories of young women. “I think that the meaning of life is not only to give birth to children. It’s like half of the deal. Of course, you need to give birth to them, [but] you need to raise them somehow, to make of them not simply people but personalities...to help your children [come into] form; but without your own development, this will not come about. It turns out that you yourself have to constantly stay in development”¹⁹⁹.

With a birth of a child, especially with the birth of a boy, women’s positions in family relations are transformed.

“...I dreamed of a son. This is, firstly, prestige, to some extent in front of a husband, when a woman gives birth, although men love their girls, [their] daughters. And my older friends said that when you give birth to a son, [they] will carry you in their arms. But attitudes toward a daughter are warmer

¹⁹⁶ Participant observation, Nov. 12, 2019.

¹⁹⁷ «[...] ни одни твои ученые степени, ни одни достижения [...], ты должна рожать детей, вы должны красивых детей родить. Это твое предназначение» (G., Nov. 12, 2019).

¹⁹⁸ «[...] ты должна приехать к нему и подавать завтраки, варить каши, заниматься им. Это ты должна о нем заботиться. Это дальнейшее твое благосостояние [...]» (G., Nov. 12, 2019).

¹⁹⁹ «Я думаю, что смысл жизни не только детей родить. Это как бы пол дела, нужно, конечно, их родить, и нужно воспитать как-то, суметь из них не просто людей, а каких-то личностей сформировать. Помочь своим детям сформироваться, но без собственного развития этого не получится. Получается, что самому надо постоянно пребывать в развитии» (C., Feb. 14, 2011).

*among Dads, men, my Dad; there are many such examples... Yes, it really is [the case that], when a woman gives birth to a son, it is a pride*²⁰⁰.

It is quite fascinating that the birth of a boy is narrated as preferable. She continues, and she keeps explaining it like this,

“This is historically connected, when there was serfdom, the land was given to men. I think that the roots come from there, if there are three men and a dad, then these are four plots, but if a woman gives birth only to girls, sorry, they are left without a piece of land. It seems to me that this is how it goes materially even. In many Muslim [countries], [...] their sons are in the first place – he is the supporter of the father, the son gets the house, he is the keeper of the home. It is he who stays in the house, it is he who gets a family, children. I think this is very related. The girl gets married, flies away from her penates^{201,202}.

An etic explanation emphasizes that the preferences for sons are founded on economic and inherent systems of relation. Lila Abu-Lughod, writing about Bedouin society, clarifies it in the following way, “[t]here is a good sociological reason to prefer sons. The tribal system is organized around the principles of patrilineality and agnatic solidarity and is based on relations between men. However important affines and cognatic kin are economically, socially, and affectively, tribal segments can grow through the addition of males” (1986: 122). Despite that, contemporary post-Soviet society is changing rapidly, and nowadays, women play a significant role economically and in inheritance. Nevertheless, the notion that a son is more preferable is still powerful.

Despite that role of a mother being romanticized in the community, as the interlocutors explain to me, in accordance with women’s stories, traditionally, mothers-in-law take care of children. And even though the expressions of strong emotions for women are limited, as I mentioned earlier, the performing of affection and warmth by elderly women, by grandmothers, is normative. I have already brought a piece of the following quote “[t]he attitude to grandchildren is different, all this [all love] pours out on them. And once I told my mother about

²⁰⁰ «Я мечтала о сыне. Это, во-первых, престиж, в какой-то мере перед мужем, когда женщина рождает, хотя мужчины любят своих девочек, дочерей. И мои старшие подруги говорили, что, когда ты родишь сына, тебя на руках будут носить. Но отношение к дочери более теплое у пап, у мужчин, у моего папы, и много таких примеров. Да, это действительно, когда женщина рождает сына то – это гордость» (F., Nov. 26, 2019).

²⁰¹ It means here her native land.

²⁰² «Это исторически связано: когда было крепостное право, земли давали мужчинам. Я думаю, что корни идут туда, если трое мужчин и папа, то это четыре участка, а если женщина рождает одних девочек, извините, они остаются без куска земли. Мне кажется, этим оно и уходит материально даже. Во многих мусульманских [странах] [...] сыновья на первом месте – это опора отца, сыну достается дом, он как хранитель очага. Это он остается в доме, это он заводит семью, детей. Я думаю, это связано очень. А девочка выходит замуж, улетает из родных пенатов» (F. Nov. 26, 2019).

this, it turned out [about her mother], ‘you know how to play with your granddaughters, and the words are found, and you know lullabies’²⁰³. It is here again in order to prove that the relationship between mothers and daughters and grandmothers and granddaughters are narrated differently, with much more warmth, attachment, and care. When marriages used to be early in people’s lives, the mother-in-law was young enough to look after the children of her son and daughter-in-law, that is, the family, consisting of several generations, was actively involved in childcare. “Her mother-in-law took care of her grandchild. And she took care of [a child] very well. It was considered the duty of the grandmother to look after her grandchildren. She just didn’t breastfeed, yet everything else was on her, even to the point that she was bathing the child in the *banya*^{204,205}. Grandmothers spent a lot of time with grandchildren, took care of them, and poured their love on them, which explains the close relationship between grandchildren and grandmothers/mothers-in-law, and the cross-generational transmission of values. With diminishing the roles of grandmothers/mothers-in-law in childcare, the transmission of values is lessening as well. I talk about this phenomenon more in part 4.2.1.

The narration of childcare by many women is the sphere of the contribution of everyone in the extended family.

“When I returned to school, my daughter was one year old, then my dad was with her, when I left for an internship [at her] two years old, my mom, my dad, my brother, i.e., not my husband, but my parents, were with her. Later, when I was finishing my thesis, her [other] grandmother was with her, they had been staying together for two months. Until now, this help is felt because the child is supervised by my mother and my father, she is now studying at school. And parents-in-law come at the [school] break, somehow try to take her to them, spend time with her, so in this respect it is very supportive”²⁰⁶.

Since childcare is the concern of an extended family from the emic position, the man becomes excluded from it. He participates in childcare “[...] only by his

²⁰³ «К внукам отношение другое, на них это все [вся любовь] выливается. Как-то я об этом сказала маме «оказывается, с внучками ты знаешь, как играть, и слова находятя, и колыбельные ты знаешь» (А., Oct. 5, 2019).

²⁰⁴ Bathhouse, sauna.

²⁰⁵ «За ее ребенком смотрела свекровь. И смотрела очень хорошо. Это считалось обязанностью бабушки, смотреть за своими внуками. Она только грудью не кормила, а все остальное было на ней, вплоть до того, что в бане ребенка мыла она» (А., Oct. 5, 2019).

²⁰⁶ «Когда я вышла на учебу – дочери исполнился год, – то водился с ней мой папа, когда я уезжала на стажировку в два года, водилась с ней моя мама, мой папа, мой брат, то есть не муж, а именно мои родители. Потом, когда я дописывала диссертацию, водилась с дочерью ее [другая] бабушка [...], два месяца они пробыли вместе. До сих пор эта помощь ощущается, потому что ребенка курирует моя мама и мой папа, она сейчас в школе учится. А на каникулы приезжают те родители, как-то стараются забрать к себе, провести с ней время, поэтому в этом отношении очень ощущается» (G., June 5, 2010).

authority, that he is, that we complain to the dad, by [his] authoritarian, bossy look. To wash diapers, help [with a child], there is no such thing [from him]”²⁰⁷. But still, women’s stories desire clearly “[...] for the person who is next to me to have a closer relationship with the child. In my view, the father should have a greater impact on the child. We don’t have that yet”²⁰⁸, says one of the research participants. As expected, those norms have begun slowly shifting recently in the post-Soviet space, and fathers are willing to spend more time taking care of children (Lipasova 2016). However, women’s narratives do not reflect this shift, at least not as a meta-narrative. Many women talk about supporting extended families in the past tense because extended relations are undergoing changes, “[w]e do not live with them, but we live next to our parents”²⁰⁹. Many young families do not live with their parents anymore. It means that the transformation of kin relations has effects both on the distribution of childcare responsibility and on notions of tradition linked with the elderly generation.

3.3.5. Domestic Labor Distribution in Women’s Stories

One of the common topics about women and family space relations is the distribution of housework between spouses. One person says that all household chores were entrusted to her. “this is how it should be with us, Tatars; a woman, should be near the stove, only in the house. I was for a man and a woman, roughly speaking. I [for my part as a woman] did all, and I did all [that belongs to a man’s part]”²¹⁰. Moreover, she says that “this is how it should be with us, Tatars,” meaning that this is a proper state of affairs in her mind. Quite often, women repeat this kind of narrative, that all household chores are entrusted to her shoulders, and we can also see its manifestation in the vernacular press. Here’s another example of a similar story.

G: *“Until recently, I forced him to take out the trash, because I thought it was none of my business. There is no distribution as such, although we would like it to be”.*

A: *“So, you want to say that all responsibilities are on you?”*

G: *“In fact, yes. Raising a child, cooking, cleaning the house, renovating – I do all this. The husband is working. I also work”*²¹¹.

²⁰⁷ «[...] только своим авторитетом, что он есть, что папе пожалуемся, авторитарным начальственным видом. Чтобы пеленки стирал, помогал – такого нет» (D., Sept. 29, 2010).

²⁰⁸ «[...] чтобы человек, который рядом со мной, чтобы у него были более близкие отношения с ребенком. В моем представлении отец должен оказывать большее воздействие на ребенка. Пока у нас этого нет» (G., June 5, 2010).

²⁰⁹ «Мы не живем с ними, но мы живем рядом с родителями» (G., June 5, 2010).

²¹⁰ «У нас у татар как положено, женщина должна быть возле плиты, только в доме. Я была и за мужика, и за бабу, грубо говоря. Все делала и все мужское делала» (V., Jan. 15, 2011).

²¹¹ Г: «До недавнего времени, я заставляла выносить мусор, потому что считала, что это не мое дело. Как такового распределения нет, хотя хотелось бы, чтобы было».

At the same time, women construct full involvement in the domestic economy, domestic work, and caring for family members as a space for their own power. “But you know, that was when the woman in the family was a secret cardinal. Anyway, there were some questions, my mother put the last point”²¹². Or another example, “Despite the fact that my father was such a tough person. Mom always made decisions herself because she could not hope for him and had to earn money on her own to raise her children on her own, i.e., in fact, she did everything herself. Father, of course, helped, but from time to time”²¹³.

However, I would like to note that in women’s stories, there is also a different way of negotiation with a spouse, and a possible way of negotiation on the distribution of domestic work, such that they are more a partnership. That returns us once again to the question of power, of the power dynamic in family relations.

“Mom did women’s household chores; Dad was busy with cars, dachas. These were such unshakable obligations; [still], that is, if Dad wanted, he could take to standing and cook if Mom didn’t have time [as, for example, at those times] when I was little [and she had] to wash some diapers...because she had a priority, before all else, to deal with my mental development. She raised me from a book, for example, the first year. And naturally, if she did not have time to do these little things, then Dad came home from work and did it all. There was a division, but there was no such thing that a man would never touch the laundry or the kitchen”²¹⁴.

In this example, we see that the distribution of household work exists and is likely related to the convenience of running the household. Nevertheless, I also encountered the story of a woman in whose family the household errands do not have a rigid distribution, but are fluid and performed by her or her spouse or children interchangeably.

А: «То есть вы хотите сказать, что все обязанности на Вас?»

Г: «Фактически да. Растить ребенка, готовка пищи, уборка в доме, ремонт – всем этим занимаюсь я. Муж работает. Я тоже работаю» (G., June 5, 2010).

²¹² «Но знаете, это было, когда женщина в семье тайный кардинал. Все-равно в каких-то вопросах, последнюю точку ставила мама» (Z., Nov. 12, 2010).

²¹³ «Несмотря на то, что отец был такой жесткий человек, мама всегда принимала решения сама, потому что не могла надеяться на него и приходилось самостоятельно зарабатывать, самостоятельно воспитывать детей, т.е. фактически все сама делала. Отец, конечно, помогал, но время от времени» (A. Jul. 23, 2010).

²¹⁴ «Мама делала женские дела домашние; папа занимался машинами, дачами. Это были незыблемые такие обязанности, т.е. если папа хотел, он мог взять встать и приготовить, если мама не успевала, когда я была маленькая, стирать какие-то пеленки, потому что у неё было в приоритете, прежде всего, моим умственным развитием заниматься. Она меня растила по книжке, например, первый год. И естественно, если она не успевала вот эти вот мелочи хозяйские делать, приходил папа с работы и все это делал. Это было разделение, но не было такого, что мужчина никогда там не притронется к белью или к кухне» (Z., Dec. 1, 2010).

“I came home in the evening [and] I already had guests (neighbors came [...] as well as my brother) ... I came home, and he [my husband] immediately said ‘I worked for 20 days at my job, [now] 10 days at home’. Yesterday he said: ‘I have accepted the post [assume your position]. Now I will cook and clean myself’. Nobody ever gives orders to us. Even now, my children and I do not have [particular] responsibilities that we assume that I [either one of us alone] must do, i.e., to cook, wash, clean, or tidy up. Well, of course, I think that washing is still a woman’s work. I have the wash; only I wash. But the rest: to cook, to bake... I have a son who does [these things]. He cooks cakes and, in general, everything, pancakes. Everything else is the same with my husband”²¹⁵.

3.3.6. Food identity, Feeding, and Exchange

One form of manifestation of taking care of family members is cooking; it takes quite an important place in women’s narratives about traditions.

“There are women who don’t cook, but if you look at the traditions, she cooks. She does not limit herself just to the home. The center of the village is a mosque with male and female halves. The women came to the female half – I remember Ramadan, I was little. We lived in the city; however, even in Soviet times, we were dressed in Muslim dresses. I was proud that I was wearing a long dress, [that] a headscarf was tied. And in the evening, we went to break the fast together; there were grandmothers and women. We were so proud that they also take us, that we also participate, that we all do the prayer (dua²¹⁶) together. And there were always traditional meals [...] Cooked, brought from home – it was not permissible that way. Yes, maybe you cook something simpler every day, but when there are such holidays, it should be only traditional and only homemade [meals]. To buy at a grocery store was impossible! Now they do it. And there are Tatar cafes where you can buy food, and now even in the cafe they buy a collection [of food items]; they buy everything prepared. [But] it was important that the housewife prepared and brought it”²¹⁷.

²¹⁵ «Я вечером домой пришла, у меня уже гости были: соседи пришли [...], еще и брат приехал. Я домой пришла, он [муж] сразу сказал: «я 20 дней проработал на работе, 10 дней – дома». Вчера он сказал: «Я пост принял. Теперь буду сам варить и прибирать». Никто у нас никогда не распоряжается. У нас и сейчас, и у моих детей нету тех обязанностей, которые допустим, что я должна обязательно варить, стирать, убирать, прибирать. Ну, конечно, стирка считаю я что это, все равно, как бы женское. У меня стирка, только я стираю. А остальное: варить, стряпать у меня даже сын [делает]. Он стряпает и торты и вообще все, оладьи. Все прочее-прочее и так же, как и муж» (А., March 15, 2011).

²¹⁶ Special prayer.

²¹⁷ «Есть женщины, которые не готовят, но если посмотреть традиции, то она готовит. Она не ограничивает себя только дома. Центр деревни – это мечеть, в ней есть мужская и женская половина. В женскую половину женщины приходили туда – я была маленькой, и я помню Рамазан. Мы жили в городе, однако, даже в советское время, нас одевали по-мусульмански в платья, я гордая была, что я длинное платье надевала, платочек повязывала. И вечером мы шли совместное разговение делать, там

From this interview, we can notice that cooking, preparing, and serving food was not limited only to the home; the preparation of food for the end of the fast in the mosque or for another occasion was also women's responsibility. From the etic perspective, it demonstrates that women are included and are contributing meaningful roles in the life of the mosque, community, and village. One of the interlocutors is saying, "[w]omen do it all – it used to be my grandmother, now there are aunts, sisters and me"²¹⁸. Once I was at one of those occasions with a male colleague; he tried to serve a cup of tea for himself which made angry a hostess of the reception, because from her point of view he tried to break the rules²¹⁹, wherein the hostess is supposed not only to cook but to serve the food for guests. Cooking and serving is a way of performing respect in the Tatar community.

Via organizing family and kin gatherings, cooking, serving, and cleaning, women maintain social contacts, as well as shape the sense of community. One of those family and kin gathering examples is *khatym*, or it is called "*ash*" as well. *Ash* means special meal, food, "a Tatar religious dinner with the purpose of prayer and Qur'an recitation accompanied by a sit-down meal" (Karimova 2013: 50), an event where the mullah is invited, as well as many guests. *Ash* is meaningful for research participants, and one of them recalls it "[...] it is left what was laid down in deep childhood – when you invite the mullah home, all the relatives. Now it persists rarely, but we still do it. My mom often organizes it, I sometimes do it too. For me, probably, this is not so much a religious holiday [event], but a kind of opportunity to bring our big, big family together"²²⁰.

Following emic knowledge, cooking is traditionally a woman's responsibility "[u]sually women cook, men don't cook so openly here. But let's just say, men cook nowadays, but this is non-traditional"²²¹. Food, cooking, the transfer of recipes from mothers to daughters and daughters-in-law are also a complex set of relationships in the female space, where a woman is perceived as

были бабушки, женщины. Мы такие гордые были, что нас тоже берут, что мы тоже участвуем, что мы все вместе делаем молитву (дуа) и всегда были традиционные блюда [...] Приготовил, принес из дома – так было нельзя. Да, может быть, на каждый день что-то попроще готовишь, но, когда какие-то праздники, должны быть только традиционные и только домашние [блюда]. Купить в магазине, вообще, было нельзя! Сейчас так делают. Есть татарские кафе, где можно купить еду и сейчас даже в кафе собрание проводят, все готовое покупают. Это было важно, что хозяйка приготовила и принесла» (I., Oct. 7, 2019).

²¹⁸ «Этим всем занимаются женщины – раньше бабушка, теперь тети, сестры и я» (S., Sept. 20, 2019).

²¹⁹ Participant observations, Tyumen region, summer 2013.

²²⁰ «[...] осталось, то, что было заложено еще в глубоком детстве, то есть, когда приглашаешь домой муллу, всех родственников. Сейчас это сохраняется, редко, но мы тоже проводим такое. Мама у меня чаще проводит, я иногда провожу. Для меня, наверное, это не столько религиозный праздник, а некая возможность собрать нашу большую-большую семью вместе» (G., June 5, 2010).

²²¹ «Обычно женщины готовят, мужчины так открыто не готовят у нас. Но скажем так, мужчины готовят сейчас, но это нетрадиционно» (I. Oct. 7, 2019).

the keeper of traditions. Tatar cuisine is an important part of the Tatar female identity since girls “[...] were taught from childhood to cook”²²², because the skill of cooking is an embodied skill. Moreover, usually, women organize, invite, and provide gatherings like *khatym*, or *ash*.

“...[T]hose who do cook also know that recipe can go beyond the formulaic in both content and form; those of us who enjoy cooking take pleasure in the novel possibilities proposed by new combinations of sweet and sour, of foods previously assumed incompatible, of new techniques for mixing, cooking, and presenting a dish. And beyond that content level, we also savor the style of a recipe: it can make us laugh, give us a sense of the world from which it originates, incorporate some history or an inkling of the personality of its writer” (Bower 1997: 7–8).

Thus, food, cooking, and recipes are part of Tatar ethnic identity, and they have similar meanings with language or even religion. “The cuisine is very important. The cuisine will disappear, self-identification will disappear. Language and cuisine are the most powerful things for me”²²³. Talking about food and identity, Michael Lange demonstrates that food carries many meanings, bringing the notion of a food item being “more ‘ours’ than ‘yours’” (Lange 2017: 170). “When I see a *chak chak* of another nationality [ethnicity], and they say, ‘this is ours’, I say ‘well, this is ours’. It’s like, what’s the difference? It is dough and honey, but for me, it is connected with the holiday. The holiday is coming, we are preparing it in advance, we are waiting for it. This is the very spirit of the holiday”²²⁴. We could see here as well a social meaning of food, how it gathers everyone, creates the notion of closeness and belonging. Ingvar Svanberg, Sabira Ståhlberg, and Renat Bekkin writing about horsemeat and Tatar pastry with meat *peremech* among Mishar Tatars in the Baltic Sea region, point out,

“Still, Tatars consider horsemeat and especially sausages part of their tradition. Horsemeat products bring back pleasant memories and a feeling of belonging. Peremech, the fried or baked Tatar pastry usually prepared with minced meat, has a similar emotional and connecting effect. Just mentioning peremech can immediately create a bond between Tatars who meet for the first time” (Svanberg et al. 2020: 9).

Moreover, in the women’s narratives about food, we could see the interconnection between female and ethnic identities; they depend on one another.

²²² «[...] с детства учили готовить кушать» (А., Oct. 5, 2019).

²²³ «Кухня – это очень важно. Исчезнет кухня, исчезнет самоопределение. Язык и кухня – это самые сильные вещи для меня» (I., Oct. 7, 2019).

²²⁴ «Когда я вижу чак-чак у другой национальности, и они говорят «это наше», я говорю «так, это наше». Кажется бы, какая разница? Это тесто и мед, но для меня это связано с праздником. Праздник наступает, мы готовим это заранее, мы ждем это. Это сам дух праздника» (I., Oct. 7, 2019).

Interestingly, in contrast to the Siberian part of my interviews, the narratives about food and tradition strongly appear in women's narratives and interviews that were taken in Estonia. One of the possible explanations of that difference is the greater involvement of Estonia in neoliberal economies and the marketing of gastronomic taste (Yotova 2018, Blumberg and Mincyte 2019).

Food stories bring religious and domestic meaning as well. In the narratives, we could often find the concepts of *halal* food; since women often run a household, and the home economy, then in their stories, there are explanations of the complexity of finding proper *halal* food, especially during the Soviet period. "It was all connected with the time. We didn't really stick to it all. If someone said, 'Halal', I tried to allow it into [my] home somehow²²⁵. Earlier [outside of these occasions], we did not really stick to all of this. And where could we get that [Halal]? We worked until 9 pm. We didn't keep livestock; we bought everything at a store. Well, we tried, of course, to do without pork as far as possible"²²⁶. From the etic point of view, in the Soviet period, when Islam, like other religions, was repressed, women's practices of-cooking *halal* food at home shaped the belonging of family members to the Muslim community and resistance to Soviet ideology.

In the contemporary context, it is often still not easy to find proper *halal* food. Aysha Özkan refers to research participants' stories in Estonia and explains that,

"According to some of the converts, frozen halal meat can be found at the big Finnish-owned department store Stockmann's in Tallinn, which must be a recent or at least a little-known phenomenon, since most of the other Muslims I spoke to said that finding halal meat in Estonia is impossible and that they ate vegetarian food or just said "bismillah" before eating and avoided eating swine products. Ildar and his family bought an animal in the countryside and conducted the slaughter themselves" (2009: 97–98).

That quote is from 2009. Unfortunately, I am not aware if the situation has changed since.

In Tyumen city, Muslim followers could find *halal* food in a couple of stores and a few cafes, marking a difference in people's narrated experiences. Stories about food bring the theme of food insecurity; therefore, I would like to weave here a thread of economic context into the fabric of my narrative. During the interviews, some research participants recall or mention economic contexts from their childhood. The interview below provides an economic context of the time post-Second World War.

²²⁵ Bring it to the home.

²²⁶ «Это было со временем все связано. Мы не очень-то всего этого придерживались. Если кто-то говорил: «Халяль», я старалась как-то домой пропускать. Раньше не очень-то всего этого придерживались. И где же нам было брать то? Мы до девяти работали, скотину не держали. Все покупали в магазине. Ну старались, конечно, без свинины обойтись по возможности» (F., March 3, 2011).

“I was walking home from school and thinking: ‘if only there was bread today...’ This is what a child cannot even imagine now. Now you will call them to the table, [and] they will come out and frown. I often speak to my granddaughter, ‘we lived as it was – [when] we were glad to have a little piece of black bread’. But they do not know; this will scarcely reach them [grandchildren] because they have not experienced it”²²⁷.

That fragment of the interview shows us poverty and the food insecurity in childhood of research participants, the scale of their and their families’ struggles in daily life. On the other hand, it describes the economic and cultural changes between generations – grandmothers and grandchildren – the gap is so large that as the interlocutor says, “it will scarcely reach them”²²⁸. That economic context gives an understanding of women’s challenges, like what to cook, how to cook, how to feed the family. With that understanding, now it is possible to explain the concept of exchange and emphasize a different angle of exchange theory. Marcel Mauss, referring to Malinowski, writes, “[...] in our opinion Malinowski has made a very great discovery that sheds light upon all the economic and juridical relationships between the sexes within marriage: the services of all kinds rendered to the wife by her husband are considered as a remuneration-cum-gift for the service rendered by the wife when she lends what the Koran still calls ‘the field’” (Mauss 2002: 39). Mauss and Malinowski focus on exchange relations between husband and wife. In contrast to that interpretation, from my point of view, the relation of husband and wife – as all my field materials demonstrate – exists in wider contexts of relations with children and members of extended family; therefore, the relations of man and woman are relations of people in a small group, the family. Despite the complexity of gender power dynamics in family relations, via feeding and cooking practices, women have contributed their skills into family economies; women’s skills then have been highly valuable in daily struggles with poverty, and women have allowed all members of a family to survive as a group. That brings a slightly different emphasis than Mauss and Malinowski describe. It also explains why taking care of family members, food preparation and preservation, and feeding are so important for women’s narratives. This is an example from a research participant who is talking about her mother and father’s relationship, about her mother’s caring for her father.

“Mom did her best to safeguard what is called home, to maintain it constantly. She very sensitively treated (and still treats) father in the sense that he was always fed, was always dressed, shod. She pays not so much attention to the

²²⁷ «Я шла со школы и думала, хоть бы хлеб был сегодня. Это что ребенку сейчас, они даже представить себе не могут. Сейчас их позовешь к столу, они выйдут и морщатся. Я внучке часто говорю, «мы жили как было, рады были черному кусочку хлеба». Но они не знают, до них это навряд ли дойдет, потому что они этого не испытывали» (F., March 3, 2011).

²²⁸ F., March 3, 2011.

spiritual sphere but rather to the material sense in that he is not in need of anything. This is very good for their relationship. Because [at] night, [even] after midnight – whenever Dad has arrived – she has gotten up, has warmed up a meal for him, has fed him; that is, she quite carefully attends to this”²²⁹.

3.4. Kinship, Social Order and Hierarchy

3.4.1. Women in Kinship Relations

As I have already noted, being involved in family relationships and maintaining contact with an extended family occupies an important place in women’s stories.

“Mutual assistance, I always understand that this huge family is behind your back [and one] to which you can always turn and count on their help. Maintaining contacts, maintaining connections, even with those relatives who are the seventh water on kisse²³⁰, but all the same [...] I compare [my own relatives with] with the relatives of my husband, who also has Russians in his family; (his sister, for example, is married to a Russian). They have no such thing, [whereas] to me it seems that we are constantly in touch”²³¹.

The notion of maintaining contact and connection creates a sense of support and security. In women’s narratives, we could see that women are woven into the fabric of family and kinship relationships quite firmly; indeed, women are the central figure there.

“Politics inside the house, communication with relatives, traditionally depends entirely on the woman. If someone does not communicate with their relatives, then this was his wife who set him up that way. If [...], for example, R., began visiting his relatives very often – I have nothing to do with this – his aunt says ‘thank you for letting R. go to us’. It was a shock for me, of course, I

²²⁹ «Мама всеми силами пыталась обеспечить то, что называется домашний очаг, поддерживать его постоянно. Она очень трепетно относилась и относится сейчас к отцу в плане того, чтоб он был всегда накормлен, всегда был одет, обут. Не столько внимания на духовную сферу обращает она, а сколько на то, чтобы в материальном плане он ни в чем не нуждался. Это очень хорошо сказывается на их взаимоотношениях. Потому что ночь за полночь, когда бы папа ни приходил, она вставала, разогревала ему еду, кормила его, то есть она достаточно трепетно к этому относится» (G., June 5, 2010).

²³⁰ It is an idiom, it means distant relatives.

²³¹ «Взаимопомощь и взаимовыручка, я всегда понимаю, что эта огромная семья за твоей спиной, к которой ты всегда можешь обратиться и рассчитывать на их помощь. Поддержка контактов, поддержка связей, даже с теми родными, кто седьмая вода на киселе, но все равно [...]. Я сравниваю с родней своего мужа, у которого в родне есть русские, (его сестра, например, замужем за русским), то есть у них такого нет. Мне кажется, что мы постоянно на связи, постоянно на контакте» (G., Nov. 2, 2019).

*understood where the legs grow from*²³². And it is a tradition that a woman keeps track of all social connections in the house. How and with whom your children and your husband communicate; for some reason, it has always been assigned to women. I've always tried to get away from this, but that's how it is considered²³³.

Janet Carsten reflects kinship as constructed category, questions its biological “nature”, and tries to separate its biological and social characteristics (2000:4). From an emic position, the sense of kinship is built around the idea of blood-relatedness. If we look at the categories the Tatar language uses for naming relatives, we could see that “sister” and “aunt” is one-word “*apa*”²³⁴, and “uncle” and “brother” is “*abyi*”²³⁵, there are no the words like “nieces” and “cousins” in the Tatar language as well. So, it means that conceptually everyone is brothers and sisters. Family relations, however, are permeated with hierarchy, especially with respect to older relatives.

*“I begin to instill, to cultivate respect for seniority unobtrusively. When they [children] start to breed [the idea of] democracy strongly, I tell them that ‘if grandma R. heard you speak, it would be nonsense!’ They will quiet down because grandma R. is everything. It is exactly the same, the hierarchy of relations with elders – it was immutable, not brought in but [rather] taken for granted. This is what these traditions are, [and] I try to preserve this”*²³⁶.

As we could see in the quoted interview, hierarchy and subordination are meant to be “immutable, not brought, but taken for granted. This is what these traditions are”²³⁷. This widely spread idea is a dominant meta-narrative. Usually, this is about the relationship between the younger and older, about parents and children, older brothers and sisters and younger ones, and this is spoken of as a Tatar tradition.

²³² An idiom, meaning here “what is the reason”.

²³³ «Политика внутри дома, общение с родственниками, традиционно, полностью зависит от женщины. Если кто-то не общается со своими родственниками, то это жена его так настроила. Если [...], например, Р. начал ездить к своим родственникам очень часто – я к этому никакого отношения не имела – и его тетя говорит, «спасибо, что ты Р. отпускаешь к нам». Для меня это был шок, я, конечно, понимала откуда ноги растут. И это традиция, что женщина отслеживает все социальные связи в доме. И то как и с кем общаются твои дети, твой муж, почему-то это всегда возлагалось на женщин. Я всегда старалась уйти от этого, но вот считается так» (G., Oct. 20, 2019).

²³⁴ It is spelled as “*apa*” in Cyrillic Tatar.

²³⁵ *Абый*.

²³⁶ «Я ненавязчиво уважение к старшинству начинаю прививать, воспитывать. Когда они начинают демократию сильную разводить, я им говорю, что, если бы бабушка Р. услышала, как вы разговариваете, это было бы нонсенс. Они притухнут, потому что баба Р. – это все. Она точно также, иерархия отношений к старшим – это было непреложное, не принесённое, а само собой разумеющееся. Это и есть эти традиции, я пытаюсь это сохранить» (G., Dec. 11, 2019).

²³⁷ Ibid.

“My brothers and I grew up on equal footing, but there is seniority. The eldest in the family and those who were before me, I must address them (and this was not discussed), I addressed my sisters and added the word ‘apa’. Just calling her by name is disrespectful. To address my brother, it is just the same, adding ‘aby’. I can’t even imagine [to do so] in another way [...] As my sister said, her word was law, [just as] my brother said his word was law. It was possible to be a little mischievous, to be capricious, but it came out sideways [didn’t work out]”²³⁸.

During my fieldwork, I also addressed some research participants by their first name and added *apa*. It was most relevant with addressing women older than me; with women of my age, using only first names was well received. The hierarchy is always about power and its distribution. Michel Foucault perceives power as dispersed and distributed unequally in society (1978: 36–49). A woman’s power increases with age in the traditional social order of kinship in a Tatar community, and it is expected that at the top of this order are the older members like grandmothers and great-grandmothers. An example is apparent in this story about a great-grandmother, one of the interlocutors.

“I remember my great-grandmothers, whom no one could disobey at all. As she said, so it was. They are of such a firm character, [having experienced] a very difficult lot [life]. Even when our parents gave us names, my mother told me ‘[we] wanted to name you G.’, but my great-grandmother said ‘you wouldn’t name a child that’; because she said that, that was all. They named me, as the great-grandmother wanted, because they could not contradict her, and you could not even think about it, though this is your own child. Try this nowadays”²³⁹.

Another female figure who has the right to perform power is a mother. According to interviews, mothers also have power in family relations, especially mothers in relation to their children. “My children know that mom is in charge, mom is mom. There are boundaries that my children will never cross. For

²³⁸ «Мы с братьями росли наравне, но есть старшинство. Самые старшие в семье и те, которые до меня, я к ним обязательно (это и не обсуждалось) я обращалась к своей сестре и добавляла слово «апа». Просто по имени назвать – это неуважение. К брату – точно также, добавляя «абый». По-другому я даже представить себе не могу [...]. Сестра как сказала – ее слово закон, как брат сказал – его слово закон. Можно было немного повредничать, покапризничать, но боком выходило» (А., Oct. 5, 2019).

²³⁹ «Я помню своих прабабушек, которых послушаться вообще никто не мог. Она сказала, так и будет. Они характерные такие, с очень тяжелой судьбой. Даже когда родители давали нам имена, мне мама говорила «тебя хотели назвать Г.», а прабабушка сказала «вы ребенка так не назовете», потому что так сказала, и все. Назвали, вот как назвали, как хотела прабабушка, потому что прекословить ей не могли и даже в мыслях этого не было, хотя это твой ребенок. Сейчас попробуй так» (G., Nov. 2, 2019).

example, the last word is mine”²⁴⁰. To illustrate the apogee of the manifestation of female power in the family, I give the following example. It is one of the most radical but allows us to imagine the scale of female power in family and kin-relations.

“They agreed, it was in winter, to kidnap A. [...] Instead of A., K. was slipped in! And he stole K., but he didn’t look at her face! These are his buddies who kidnapped [her]! He brought [her] home, took off the sack from [her] head, and it was K.! He wanted to take her back, but his mother did not let him. She said, “since you stole her, then live with her”! Although no one would have noticed anything – put her where she stood – no one knew this except his friends, and his friends would not betray him”²⁴¹.

So, as we could see from that fragment, women are not powerless at all. Power is performative, and power can be performed in an appropriate situation, for example, to the youngest relatives like children and grandchildren or to other female relatives like a daughter-in-law. This hierarchical power also explains the woman with whom I talked in section 3.3.4. Giving Care in Family Relationships, who felt like it was an appropriate moment to perform power to me as a young female.

One of the manifestations of domination, according to the narratives, belongs to men – men who are in the position of father, husband, or brother. According to narratives of tradition, one of the powerful figures in the family is the father. One of the respondents recalled: “[...] if my father is sleeping (I don’t remember that my mother slept) she always told us ‘father is asleep – grandmother reads namaz – this is the same’. This means being very quiet, it is better to leave the house altogether in order not to disturb the rest of the father. With all this, I do not remember that my father once swore or raised his voice at us, that is, it was not fear, I think it was a respect”²⁴². From the etic perspective, we could see that power intertwining with respect; accepting rules – “being very quiet”, “leave the house altogether”, it means performing respect. Another note from that fragment is that the father’s power is vocalized here via the voice of a

²⁴⁰ «Мои дети знают, что мама главенствует, мама – есть мама. Есть грани, которые мои дети никогда не переступят. Например, последнее мое слово за мной» (G., Nov. 12, 2019).

²⁴¹ «Договорились, дело было зимой, украсть А. [...] Вместо А. подсунули К.! И он украл К., а лицо-то не посмотрел! Это же дружки его крадут! Привел домой, мешок с головы снял, а это К.! И он хотел ее обратно увезти, мать его не дала. И сказала, «раз украл, вот и живи же с ней!»! Хотя никто ничего не заметил бы: поставь там, где она стояла, никто же этого не знает кроме его друзей, а его друзья же не выдадут» (A., Oct. 5, 2019).

²⁴² «[...] если отец спит (я не помню, чтобы мама спала), она всегда говорила нам, «отец спит – бабушка намаз читает – это равносильно». Это значит вести себя очень тихо, лучше вообще из дома удалиться, чтобы не мешать покою отца. При всем при этом я не помню, чтобы отец, когда-то ругался или повышал голос на нас, то есть, это был не страх и не боязнь. Я думаю, что это было уважение» (F., Feb. 6, 2011).

woman – a mother of the interlocutor. It is quite a fascinating moment because that pattern is repeated often in women’s interviews. For example,

“I was brought up by my grandmother, I did not go to kindergarten, the grandmother said, “I wouldn’t give her”. I grew up according to some of these traditions and customs. A word against – you can’t tell him [a father]. You can’t interrupt him the same way. It means to be respectful. And even if the father hits you, and even if he is not a very big person in life, he is still your father, he gave you life, and you must be grateful.”²⁴³.

When I reflect on vocalizing patriarchy through women’s voices, in these present examples by a mother and grandmother of interlocutors, I think about one of the research participants who said to me, “[t]his is not exactly slavish obedience, this was the way it was, there was no another way to survive”²⁴⁴.

3.4.2. Daughters-in-Law and Mothers-in-Law in Power Relations

One of the most interesting lines of power relations is the line of relations between the daughters-in-law and the mothers-in-law. “Mother-in-law relations are never simple” (Kapchan 1996: 213) because the daughter-in-law is a woman who is at the lowest level of the social order in family relations, and the mother-in-law is at its top.

I want to mention that with age, women become free from reproductive stress and sexual meanings of their bodies; their power increases with age. This is a way how a research participant explains the process of getting older and gaining power by women. She comments,

“For me, the difficulty in communicating with the Tatars is that there is a dual background²⁴⁵, and you cannot know what is there. But at the same time, I communicate with grandmothers, and they do not have a double bottom because they grew up in a tradition, the most real. I think this is because they no longer have to ‘pretend’. They are very outspoken. They become free from sexual burdens, cease to be closed, [have] finished this story about sexuality; then, yes, it turns out that she is free. I think so because sexuality is always under control and restrictions in Tatar culture. And here this topic is closed, and, as a matter of fact, there is nothing to hide. Probably...yes, now I recall my grandmother, [and] I also don’t remember that she had a double bottom. Adult women had a double bottom; we were compelled to. I rebelled, and why

²⁴³ «Я воспитывалась бабушкой, я в садик не ходила, бабушка говорила: «не отдам». Я выросла по каким-то таким традициям и обычаям. Слово против – нельзя ему [отцу] говорить. Нельзя так же перебивать его, то есть уважительно относиться. И даже если отец бьет, и даже если он не очень большой человек в жизни – все равно он твой отец. Он дал тебе жизнь, и ты обязана быть благодарной» (А., July 23, 2010).

²⁴⁴ «Это не совсем рабская покорность, это уклад такой был, по-другому нельзя было выжить» (А., Oct. 5, 2019).

²⁴⁵ It means that she has multiple identities in play, neither of which she can completely show in the situation.

was this so? [Because] they so inspired in me [an influence] – both my grandmother and my grandfather, that is; they both took an active part in my upbringing»²⁴⁶.

That power dynamic is interwoven into relationships with younger women.

Returning to relations of mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, the bride, on the one hand, was welcomed. “When the bride enters the house, a snow-white pillow is placed on the threshold, and she steps on the pillow with her feet. That’s how they welcome her. The wedding took place. Her mother-in-law wakes her up at 4 am says, ‘go milk the cow’. These were the traditions of the Tatars»²⁴⁷. “A pillow means that you are respected and honored”²⁴⁸, but at the same time, “[w]hen the daughter-in-law comes to someone’s family, everything that the mother-in-law did automatically falls on her [the daughter-in-law’s] shoulders. They took a worker into the house, as it was in Russian families as well”²⁴⁹. But this is a description of a relation in the past; another woman talks about the current situation.

“My colleague and I were talking – she is Russian with a part of Tatar blood, and her husband is a Tatar, just a Tatar-Tatar from a big family. The other day their father-in-law had an anniversary from the date of his death. And my colleague is outraged, ‘why were all these big events?’ We invite a mullah, he reads prayers; relatives and friends are invited, there are always a lot of people, a huge table is being prepared, a lot of treats. All this is stretching, this is great preparation for this event. And my colleague says, ‘why is this all? Why are these two hundred people? These are people who may not even know him at all, this is for a narrow circle of people’. To which I say ‘you shouldn’t have such a question at all, you should come to your mother-in-law at 6 o’clock in the morning and help. A real Tatar wife will go and will stand to the

²⁴⁶ «Для меня сложность в общении с татарами в том, что есть двойное дно и ты не можешь знать, что там. Но при этом я общаюсь с бабушками и у них нет двойного дна, потому что они выросли в традиции, самой настоящей. Я думаю, это потому, что им уже не надо «делать вид». Они очень откровенны. Они становятся свободными от сексуальной нагрузки, перестают быть закрытыми – закончили эту историю про сексуальность, тогда, да, получается, что она свободна. Я так полагаю, потому что сексуальность же все время под контролем и ограничениями в татарской культуре. А здесь эта тема закрыта, и, собственно, прятать уже нечего. Наверно, да, и вот я вспоминаю свою бабушку я тоже не помню, чтобы у нее было двойное дно. Двойное дно было у взрослых женщин, нас вынуждали к этому. Я бунтовала, и почему это так это так и мне так внушали, причем и бабушка, и дедушка, то есть они оба принимали активное участие в моем воспитании» (А., Sept. 15, 2019).

²⁴⁷ «Когда невеста входит в дом, на порог кладут белоснежную подушку, и она ногами вступает на подушку. Вот так принимают ее. Прошла свадьба. Ее свекровь поднимает в четыре утра, говорит «иди доить корову». Вот такие традиции были у татар» (G., Nov. 12., 2019).

²⁴⁸ «Подушка означает, что ты уважаема и чтима» (G., Nov. 12, 2019).

²⁴⁹ «И когда сноха приходит в чужую семью, все что делала свекровь автоматически на ее плечи, ложится. В дом брали работницу, так было и в русских семьях» (А., Oct. 5, 2019).

*end and wash the dishes, and she will not have a question where so many people come from*²⁵⁰.

It is thought-provoking, the mentioning of “a real Tatar wife” in this quote. The research participant is Tatar, but she is talking about her friend who is “Russian with a part of Tatar blood”, and who has married a Tatar. So, from the research participant’s perspective, questioning the necessity of gathering of a big family and friends, and taking care of that amount of people, puts her friend (about whom she is talking) in a position of not a real Tatar wife.

A particular burden typically falls on the shoulders of the daughter-in-law of the youngest son, as well, so that he was obliged to stay in the parents’ house until their death and take care of them.

“You know, it used to be for a long time. They [sons] did not separate at all, they stayed there, and even often, there were many cases of two daughters-in-law in one house, of three daughters-in-law were in one house. If he is only one, then he is already until the end [of the life of the parents], they [he and his family] were already there. There is such a word ‘tepchek malay’²⁵¹ the very last son, who is obliged to stay in his parents’ house, must watch them until they die, and must stay in this house as the owner”²⁵².

“The presence of the mother-in-law in the conjugal home maintains the son’s role as son and the daughter-in-law’s as daughter. Children remain children in the eyes of their parents, but also in the hierarchy of deference rules. The son is often torn between his allegiance to his mother and to his wife [...] Because social convention has privileged the role of the mother-in-law, the son is out of his mother’s favor, and possibly outside of the social canon, if he sides with his wife during domestic disputes. This no-win situation for the bride meant she was simply to be patient, obedient, and subservient to both mother-in-law and husband until she became a mother-in-law herself” (Kapchan 1996: 214).

²⁵⁰ «Мы с коллегой разговаривали – она русская с частью татарской крови, а муж у нее татарин, прямо татарин-татарин из большой семьи. На днях у них, у свекра была годовщина со дня смерти. И моя коллега возмущается «зачем все эти большие мероприятия?». У нас же приглашается мулла, он читает молитвы, приглашаются родные, друзья, куча всегда народу, готовится огромный стол, больше количество угощения. Все это растягивается, это большая подготовка для этого мероприятия. И коллега говорит «зачем это все, зачем эти двести человек? Это же идут люди, которые и может и не знали его совсем, это же для узкого круга людей». На что я говорю, «у тебя вообще не должно возникать такого вопроса, ты утром должна в 6 часов прийти к свекрови и помогать. Настоящая татарская жена пойдет и будет стоять до конца, и посуду мыть и у нее вопроса не возникнет откуда столько народу» (G., Nov. 2, 2019).

²⁵¹ It is *тәпчәк малай* in Tatar.

²⁵² «Вы знаете, раньше, конечно, это было надолго. Они [сыновья] не отделялись вообще, они оставались там и даже часто было много случаев по две невестки было в одном доме, по три невестки было в одном доме. Если он один, то это уже до конца [жизни родителей] они уже там оставались. Есть такое слово «тәпчәк малай» сын самый последний, который обязан остаться в доме родителей, должен смотреть пока они не умрут, и должен остаться в этом доме как хозяин» (K., Oct. 13, 2019).

It is this story, it is this relationship between the daughter-in-law and the elderly mother-in-law that is described in the novel *Zuleikha* by Guzel Yakhina²⁵³, a Tatar writer writing about a Tatar woman in Soviet times. The book was published in 2015, originally in Russian, and then produced into a TV series based on the novel. The novel has been translated into many languages, including Tatar, English, and Estonian. The TV series has been released in Estonian as well. I should note that it turned out that during interviews, women often referred to this novel when we talked about women and tradition. From my point of view, talking about literature allowed interlocutors to reflect their experience and traditions from a safe distance, not through examples from their own life, but metaphorical literary representations, creating a distance between themselves and experiences, possibly difficult experiences, of day-to-day relationships. This is an example of bringing the novel into such a conversation by a research participant.

“Last year, my colleagues and I discussed the book Zuleikha. And G. says, ‘this is horror, horror, how is it possible?! This is terrible as she describes the life of this Zuleikha in the family’. And R. and I took it as if that were normal because we observed this life, we saw it when the mother-in-law was such a dictator, very tough, and when the wife was there nobody. And G. did not understand how it was possible, but for us, it was normal. We were sitting and talking that it was so in our villages that a mother-in-law was such a head [especially] if she did not have a husband, but this young wife was like a servant. It’s okay for us”²⁵⁴.

Although, for balance, I should note that some women said that the model of relations between Zuleikha and her mother-in-law in this novel is represented as too dramatic. From my point of view, the dramatic nature of the representation of Zuleikha’s life is possible because she is shown outside the context of relations with her own parental family, which may protect her. In this social order, there have historically been ways to balance power. The daughter-in-law has been limited in power, but she has not been powerless, as the women’s stories above illustrate. In the balance, the daughter-in-law could complain to her father, and he could intercede for his daughter. Once, I asked how young women have acted under challenging situations and received the following answer, “[o]f course, I got up in the morning, [they] went to cut hay early in the morning, and my father said that ‘she was not born to milk a cow’. The elders

²⁵³ «Зулейха открывает глаза» in the Russian version of the title of the novel.

²⁵⁴ «Мы в прошлом году с коллегой обсуждали книгу «Зулейха открывает глаза». Г. говорит, что «это ужас, ужас как же это возможно. Это же страх как она описывает жизнь этой Зулейхи в семье». А мы с В., восприняли это как бы нормально, потому что мы-то эту жизнь наблюдали, мы ее видели, когда свекровь вот такая диктатор, жесткая очень. И когда жена там никто. А Р. то этого не понимала, как это возможно, а для нас – это нормально. Мы сидели и разговаривали, что в наших деревнях так и было, что свекровь – это такая глава, если мужа нет у нее, а вот эта молодая жена как обслуживающий персонал. Для нас это нормально» (G., Nov. 2, 2019).

intervene”²⁵⁵. Furthermore, women’s power increases with marriage, with the birth of a child, further introducing balance into the power dynamic. “When a daughter-in-law gives birth to a son, then she is respected. Now it’s erased, they love girls, but before [...]”²⁵⁶. Remarkably, the mother-in-law herself could also act as a mediator in power relations between her son and her daughter-in-law, his wife, where the wife takes, at least officially, a dependent position. “My mom said that her mother-in-law was very good. On the contrary, her husband still got it if he drank and something like that. Especially, if he drank, she punished him; she didn’t allow him to be close to her, and he, as [was the case with] his mother, could not contradict her. She told him: ‘Go out from here. Do not approach your wife!’ That’s all. Morals were so strict, but it was right”²⁵⁷.

Saba Mahmood writes, “[a] study that focuses on ‘Muslim women’ carries the burden” of Orientalism. Further, Mahmood says,

“[...] colonialism rationalized itself on the basis of the ‘inferiority’ of non-Western cultures, most manifest in their patriarchal customs and practices, from which indigenous women had to be rescued through the agency of colonial rule [...]. Western Europeans were not the only ones to deploy this trope within a colonial context; the Soviet Union also foregrounded a similar set of arguments in executing its civilizing mission among Muslim populations in Central Asia” (Mahmood 2005:189–190).

Mahmood’s thought about the colonialism and Orientalism of Muslim women’s representation brings light to the image of Zuleikha in the novel and TV series. At the beginning of the TV series, Zuleikha, the main character who does not speak at all, is devoid of voice and subjectivity, which create a subaltern identity – when “[w]hite men are saving brown women from brown men” (Spivak 1988: 92). Even though she gets her voice and agency later as the story develops, it is an interesting representation of a young Tatar woman. If, as Mahmood says, the Orientalization of Muslim culture is extensively spread in the Soviet and post-Soviet space, then the image of the main character is made through the previously created colonial apparatus, negotiated by a team of filmmakers, directors of a federal television channel, the author of the novel, and others (Said 2004).

“The Orient [...] features in the Western mind ‘as a sort of surrogate and even underground self’ [...]. This means, in effect, that the East becomes the

²⁵⁵ «Конечно, я встала утром, рано на сенокос, и мой отец сказал, что «она не родилась для того, чтобы доить корову». Старшие вступаются» (G., Nov. 12, 2019).

²⁵⁶ «Когда невестка рождает сына, тогда она уважаема. Сейчас уже стерто, девочек любят, а раньше [...]» (G., Nov. 12, 2019).

²⁵⁷ «Мама говорила, что свекровь очень хорошая была. Наоборот, там мужу еще доставалось, если он выпил и что-то такое. Особенно если выпил, она его наказывала, она его к ней допускала, а он как своей маме будет перечить. Она ему говорила, «а ну пошел отсюда, не приближаться к жене!». И все, такие нравы были строгие, но ведь правильно было» (A., Oct. 5, 2019).

repository or projection of those aspects of themselves which Westerners do not choose to acknowledge (cruelty, sensuality, decadence, laziness, and so on). At the same time, and paradoxically, the East is seen as a fascinating realm of the exotic, the mystical and the seductive. It also tends to be seen as homogeneous, the people there being anonymous masses rather than individuals, their actions determined by instinctive emotions (lust, terror, fury, etc.) rather than by conscious choices or decisions. Their emotions and reactions are always determined by racial considerations (they are like this because they are asiatics or blacks or orientals) rather than by aspects of individual status or circumstance (for instance, because they happen to be sister, or an uncle, or a collector of antique pottery)” (Barry 1995: 195–196).

Talking about the modern period, women note that the relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law is more neutral and less hierarchical today. “Nowadays, I think there are a lot of such families, I know from myself. My eldest son got married, and now I have many relatives, like examples, many mothers-in-law with daughters-in-law in ideal relationships, they are happy to call them moms”²⁵⁸. That sort of transformation goes on in both places, in Estonia, and in Siberia.

3.4.3. Feminine Empowerment: Sisterhood, Friendship, and Collaboration

As I show earlier, the space of kinship is quite hierarchical, and women themselves are the central figures there. The women, however, do not lose their agency in this hierarchical space. There are several less hierarchical spaces in which women can experience unity, solidarity, and empowerment.

Firstly, this is the space of the mosque, which is a space for uniting women. And the space of the mosque is also a space for sisterhood, support, and warmth. I felt it when I attended courses on Islam in the mosque, coming every Sunday. I especially felt the unity in Estonia, where women could study Islam and share discussions on bringing Islam into their lives, teaching children, discussing issues about family care and daily life, looking after each other’s children, and having tea together. At one of these sessions, in the context of the hygienic requirements of Islam, women discussed issues such as, is it possible to fast during menstruation, or is it possible to visit a mosque or pray during menstruation. There is “a religious position that during menstruation one cannot be in the mosque, ablution can be invalidated due to the discharge that women [periodically] have”²⁵⁹. But what to do if menstruation lasts ten days, not to

²⁵⁸ «Сейчас я думаю много таких семей, я по себе знаю. У меня старший сын женился, и у меня родственники сейчас многие для этого показатели, очень многие свекрови с невестками в идеальных отношениях, они их с удовольствием называют мамами» (К., Oct. 13, 2019).

²⁵⁹ «Это религиозное положение, что во время менструации нельзя быть в мечети, омовение из-за выделений может испортиться, которые у женщин происходят» (I., Oct. 7, 2019).

pray? Needless to say, a completely free conversation about the female body and physiology in the mosque, in contrast with the collected interviews (especially with interviews collected in Siberia), surprised me. I am not sure if the possibility of such a conversation is an appearance of new Islamic modernity or is an appearance of hybridity, a cultural closeness of Estonia to the Nordic countries and their comparatively egalitarian norms toward gender, or is an appearance of something else. My attempts to talk about it with the respondents were not successful, I must say. First, I realized that it was difficult for me as well. Secondly, for my respondents, it also turned out to be challenging. “I once learned about monthlies from a friend, about that happens. When [that] started, I came to my mother and said that ‘my monthlies have started’, and she replied, ‘do you [already] know what it is?’”²⁶⁰. As I understand it, the topic of menstruation is covered with silence for both younger and older generations of women. Mothers and daughters do not talk about it. My respondents said they learned about menstruation from friends or sisters, or aunts. “About monthlies, there were no conversations in our family either. My mom had surgery and did not have her monthlies after 30 years, so I did not see what pads or tampons are. And the first conversation about monthlies was when my monthlies began when I ran to my mom with the words, “mom, I am having my monthlies”²⁶¹. It is hard to say if these topics were discussed among Tatars in the late Soviet era more than they were discussed generally.

Yet, even if the topic of menstruation is unacceptable for discussion with mothers or with immediate relatives, that does not mean that the topic is not discussed at all. Sisters and aunts turn out to be meaningful persons in the network of female relationships in female space. “I can discuss everything with my aunts”²⁶² – in the frame of the extended family; it is normative and acceptable. Perhaps the difficulty of my conversation with women was related to me not being a part of their extended family circle, where it is normative to discuss such intimate issues. Here, it seems to me, the ties with the extended family turn out to be decisive: “[...] grandmothers are involved. For example, my mother... She [my daughter] was the first to tell my mother about her period. It turned out to be confidential for her [my daughter]. She [my daughter] is interested in some intimate things, [and] she [my mother] tells some stories that they had in their youth”²⁶³.

²⁶⁰ «Я в свое время узнала о месячных от подруги, что бывает такое. Когда у меня начались, я пришла к маме и сказала, что «у меня начались месячные», и она «а ты что знаешь, что это такое?» (G. Oct. 20, 2019).

²⁶¹ «Если месячные, то у нас в семье разговоров тоже не было. У моей мамы была операция, и у нее не было месячных после 30 лет, поэтому я не видела, что такое прокладки или тампоны, тем более. И первый разговор о месячных у нас был, когда у меня месячные начались, когда я прибежала к маме со словами, «мама у меня месячные» (G., Nov. 2, 2019).

²⁶² «С моими тетками я могу обсудить все» (G., Nov. 2, 2019).

²⁶³ «[...] бабушки участвуют. Например, у меня мама, она [дочь] ей первой рассказала о месячных, для нее [дочери] это доверительно оказалось. Она [дочь] какими-то

One more example of empowerment, also incidentally related to the space of a mosque, is a social project *Ebiem* (translated as “grandmother” from the Tatar language). A social project for older women who get together and engage in manufacturing traditional national products. They share their skills between themselves and their granddaughters, and it allows them to feel needed socially, to validate their experience and skills. It is also an opportunity for socialization for elderly women. The manufactured products are then sold. “Here they are sewing skull-caps. They are unique, so no one [else] in Russia sews [them as they are]. With this product we come to different cities and people who have already forgotten what a real skullcap looks like – not a plastic one with roses. They see our skull-caps, [and] they have such surprised eyes and say that ‘it is one and the same as my grandfather had’. This is it! And this was done by the grandmothers who have this skullcap; they studied it and made it as well! This is about heritage, about the transfer of traditions”²⁶⁴. During the COVID pandemic, the social project *Ebiem* reoriented itself to the production of masks (“Yalutorovsk’s Grandmothers...” *Vslukh.ru*) – a colossal social contribution not only for the Tatar-Muslim community but also much broader beyond its borders.

Another example of women’s collaboration is brought by a research participant, who told me about the tradition of plucking geese. As I understand from the collected interviews, this tradition has recently come into greater demand.

“The women were also plucking geese. In November-December, there were geese in each household, and women were invited to clean the geese. During the day [...] they went to the river, washed [the geese] and [later, in the evening] made blini²⁶⁵ with goose fat. Here they were gathering, [they have] blini, jam, sour cream, and in the evening, they came to visit [someone] with their husbands, couples. And then they pulled out these feathers of geese – the snow should already be laid down, because in order to clean, giblets are taken out [and they] are laid on the snow [...] They threw feathers in the snow so that next year there would be a lot of geese”²⁶⁶.

сокровенными вещами у нее [моей мамы] интересуется, она [моя мама] ей рассказывает какие-то истории, какие у них были по молодости» (К., Oct. 13, 2019).

²⁶⁴ «Вот они шьют тюбетейки. Они уникальные, так никто не шьет в России. Вот с этой продукцией мы приезжаем в разные города и люди, которые уже забыли, как выглядит настоящая тюбетейка – не пластиковая с розами. Они видят наши тюбетейки у них такие вот глаза [удивленные] и говорят, что «это один в один как было у моего дедушки». Это оно! И это сделали бабушки, у которых есть эта тюбетейка, они изучили ее и сделали также. Это про наследие, про передачу традиций» (А., Sept. 15, 2019).

²⁶⁵ Pancakes.

²⁶⁶ «Женщины еще гусей щипали. В ноябре-декабре, в каждом хозяйстве были гуси и приглашали женщин очищать гусей. Днем ходили [...] на речку, мыли [гусей] и [вечером] на гусяном жиру пекли блины. Вот они собирались: блины, варенье, сметана – а вечером приходили в гости с мужьями, парами. А потом они выгаскивали эти перышки гусей – обязательно снег лежал, потому что чтобы очищать,

It should be noted that I learned about that tradition only from my updated interviews in Estonia in 2019. My earlier interviews did not touch the subject, maybe because it was not important in those conversations, or maybe because that tradition has been reinvented recently. At the very least, I am not aware that Tatar people in Tyumen have that tradition of geese plucking. Whether new or old, those traditions extend female spaces and establish and support horizontal connections and relationships between and among women, which is valuable from my point of view.

3.5. Veil, Femininity Construction, and Tradition

3.5.1. Veiling in Contested Narratives

In women's stories about tradition, the veil or headscarf gets a significant meaning.²⁶⁷ When women talk about veiling, they recall their parents' families' Islamic practices and refer to family photographs. Let me bring two examples, fragments of interviews where we talk about the representation of Muslim-Tatar women. Both research participants identify themselves as Muslims and as Tatars. The first fragment belongs to a woman who does not wear a headscarf every day:

“My great-grandfather was an imam, I come from a family that was once very religious. And they, women, wore headscarves, and there were restrictions on how to live [...] But I saw photographs of the 19th and early 20th centuries – my family was rich, women from our family went to a mineral spring, to a resort without headgear. This is the imam's family! [...] there was nothing such that they looked religious. Women somewhere in a scarf, somewhere without a scarf with a beautiful hairstyle [...]”²⁶⁸.

For comparison, the second fragment belongs to a woman who wears a hijab and longer clothes in her everyday life,

“If you watch films, the theater performances, the girls were hidden from the guys there. But they are shown in their family circle! Yes, you don't have to wear a scarf with your family members, but when they got married, they veiled their braids, and that's it – a covering on their heads and having no right to

внутренности снимают [и они] на снегу лежат [...] Бросали перья на снег, чтобы в следующем году было много гусей» (F., Nov. 26, 2019).

²⁶⁷ These ideas have been developed in a separate article in Shisheliakina 2022.

²⁶⁸ «У меня прадед был имамом, я происхожу из той семьи, которая когда-то была очень религиозной. И они (женщины) ходили в платках, и были ограничения в том, как надо жить [...] Но я видела фотографии 19 – начала 20 века, семья-то богатая была, женщины из нашей семьи ездили на минеральные воды, на курорт без головных уборов. Это семья имама! [...] Не было такого чтобы они религиозно выглядели. Женщины где-то в платке, где-то без платка с красивой прической...» (A., Sept. 15, 2019).

*show their hair, because the hair of Muslims, of women, is the most precious*²⁶⁹.

As we have seen, two research participants talk about the same phenomenon – women’s images in photographs, in films in the family circle, but their interpretation of those images in the contemporary situation is endowed with directly contradictory meanings. From an etic perspective, “as both word and concept tradition is inescapably ambiguous”, says Dorothy Noyes (2016: 95). Those ambiguities allow multiple interpretations. Making opposite meanings of the same phenomenon demonstrates that understandings of the Tatar traditions are ambiguous and in the process of negotiation at any given moment in time and space.

As can be expected, then, research participants come to various analyses about what Tatar-Muslim women wore and how. Women’s narratives often describe that, according to Tatar tradition, the hair was braided in two braids, and the scarf was tied with the ends back, or a *kalfak* was put on. “Kalfaks? I don’t remember my [relatives] worn kalfaks. When I got to the theater in Kazan for the first time – I am from the village. There the city people wore. It was worn by city people, but in villages they wore headscarves, if they went to visit, they wore more elegant ones”²⁷⁰. As we can see from this story, mostly urban women wore *kalfaks*, while rural women wore headscarves. Yet there is another interpretation of when women started wearing headscarves:

R: “*For centuries, our [Tatar] elderly women wore a scarf*”.

A: “*You know, I heard that Tatar women wore a headscarf in a different manner, tied back*”.

R: “*They started to wear in a different manner in the time of Gabdulla Tuqay*²⁷¹ *when the progressive, rebellious youth began to develop, and they began to tie traditionally (the ends back) and caps. And if you take how it was before? Those were headscarves*”²⁷².

²⁶⁹ «Если смотреть те же фильмы, те же спектакли, там же девушки закрывались от парней. Но они же показаны в кругу их семьи! Да, в кругу семьи можно не одевать платок, но когда они выходили замуж, то закрывали косы и все – колпак на голову и не имели права показывать волосы, потому что волосы у мусульман, у женщин – самое драгоценное» (К., Sept. 29, 2019).

²⁷⁰ «Калфаки? Я не помню, чтобы мои носили калфаки. Когда я попала первый раз в театр в Казани – я из деревни. Там городские носили. Это городские носили, а в деревнях носили платки. Если в гости шли, то носили более нарядные» (Ф., Nov. 26, 2019).

²⁷¹ Tatar poet, literary critic, public figure (1886–1913).

²⁷² P: «У нас испокон веков бабушки завязывали платок».

A: «Знаете, я встречала, что татарки носили платок иначе, завязывая назад».

P: «Они же начали носить не так во времена Губдалы Тукая, когда передовая бунтарская молодежь начала развиваться, начали завязывать традиционно (концами назад) и калпаки. А если до этого если взять? То это были платки» (К., Sept. 29, 2019).

The narratives about the Tatar traditions and female veiling are constructed as an opposition to the modern Muslim dress, as opposed to such variations as the black hijab, veiling of the face, use of an underscarf, or longer more modest clothing. For example, “Women never went with hidden faces. We [the Tatars] didn’t have this...”²⁷³ and so on.

The respondents comprehend these “alien” practices for the Tatar population in the category of Arab tradition. I do not know why it is marked as an Arab tradition in the post-Soviet space. It may depend on the hijab clothing industry; women deal with what the market offers them. Since my observations were related to the mosque’s space and not being a Muslim, I regularly had to decide what to wear in the mosque – finding the appropriate clothes in a regular store can be difficult. That self-observation helped me understand the situation that Muslim women face too. One of the ways to manage this is to order clothes in an online store and bring clothes from countries where Islam is institutionalized more fully. The research participant above confirms this observation: “I buy it in Tatarstan, I have a husband from there, every year he comes and brings it. They are sewn in Tatarstan, but there are many online stores. Our Muslim sisters often travel to Saudi Arabia and to Turkey, there are relatives there; you can order. Now they are bringing scarves and underscarves as a gift; now it is much easier with that”²⁷⁴. Another research participant says, “Last year I wanted to open a sewing business [...] Clothes that are brought from Muslim countries are not suitable for our environment”²⁷⁵. Thus, *hijabs* made for another market are perceived as foreign to someone in a post-Soviet context. Regardless of the size and diversity that exists across Arab countries, where there is no uniform approach in female dress, there is a perception of a singular, “Arabic” manner of proper dressing for women in post-Soviet spaces such as Tyumen or Tallinn.

Narratives of headscarves link with the idea of cultural difference. Talking about their own otherness, women describe that in the eyes of the surrounding community, they do not feel acceptance or the state of normality and that they are too noticeable for those around them. In their narration, vexation can be heard that even close relatives and friends are not able to accept them as they are. “There are some relatives who don’t like the hijab in terms of that it is such

²⁷³ «Никогда с закрытыми лицами не ходили. Этого не было у нас [татар]» (А., Sept. 15, 2019).

²⁷⁴ «Я лично покупаю в Татарстане, у меня муж оттуда, каждый год приезжает и привозит. Они шьются именно в Татарстане, но много интернет-магазинов. Наши сестры часто ездят в Саудовскую Аравию, и в Турцию и есть родственники, то можно заказать. Сейчас уже в качестве подарка привозят платки и подплатки, сейчас с этим намного легче» (К., Oct. 13, 2019).

²⁷⁵ «Я хотела в прошлом году швейное дело открыть [...] Те вещи, которые привозят из мусульманских стран, не подходят для нашей среды» (D. Sept. 29, 2010).

‘other’ clothing, normal people don’t dress like that”²⁷⁶, according to one of my research participants.

Ega Lepa refers to attitudes to a cultural difference of her research participants in Estonia. We could see there how femininity, foreignness, and Muslimness get together in one piece of interview. “According to the Muslims interviewed, public interest became focused on the growing Islamic community through the women, both converts and immigrants, who were wearing ‘Islamic’ clothing: ‘These scandals started before everything with those clowns. There was this maiden [...], who used to walk about in a headscarf’ (Interview with T.S-n 2017)” (2020: 77–78).

The Otherness of other Muslims is connected primarily with the black color of the hijab. Here is a fragment of an interview that is particularly difficult for interpretation but key in constructing images of the Other in the Muslim community.

“[...] it was one time when I put on black [a black hijab].[...] immediately questions arose from the administration, and strangers began to speak out [...] mom asked me to put on a light [colored hijab]. Unfortunately, extremist trends relate to black [...] With black, they want to show that they are more God-fearing[...] To be honest, we ourselves are scared, and we ourselves are afraid of women in black. But we understand why they wear black”²⁷⁷.

The reflection of this Muslim woman, who wears a hijab and once tried to wear a black hijab, is sincere and honest. I tend to think that the nature of her fears is connected with the internalization of the represented negative images of Muslims in the media (Bowen 2010, Sabirova 2011), because “[t]he alien, on the one hand, is so over-represented in popular culture that it becomes quite recognizable [...]. On the other hand, the absence and presence of the alien pushes us to recognize the limits of representation as that which exceeds ‘our’ knowledge” (Ahmed 2000: 1). Another vital idea in this fragment is that the hijab, especially its color, is negotiated between the woman herself and her environment, including close relatives and strangers. Experiments with the color palette are an attempt to be more acceptable in the current surroundings. Thus, it illustrates that the hijab is part of the negotiation of Muslim women’s identity in the post-Soviet space.

²⁷⁶ «Есть часть родственников, которым хиджаб не нравится с точки зрения того, что слишком «не такая» одежда, которую носят все люди. Что нормальные люди так не одеваются» (К., April 18, 2013).

²⁷⁷ «[...] Это было один раз, когда я надела черное [черный хиджаб]. [...] Сразу же возникли у начальства вопросы и просто посторонние люди начинали высказываться [...]. Мама просила надевать светлое [светлый хиджаб]. К сожалению, экстремистские направления связаны с черным [...]. Через черное они хотят показать, что они более богобоязненные [...]. Если честно, нам самим страшно, и мы сами боимся женщин в черном. Но мы понимаем, почему они носят черное» (N., April 19, 2013).

“What is at stake in the ambivalence of such relationships between human and alien is not whether aliens are represented as good or bad, or as ‘beyond’ or ‘within’ the human, but how they function to establish and define the boundaries of who ‘we’ are in their very proximity, in the very intimacy of the relationship between (alien) slime and (human) skin” (Ahmed 2000: 2–3).

So, again it is a question about identity; through discussion of “alien” practices, women construct their own Tatar identity. An attempt to give a woman’s headscarf one or another meaning meets an ambiguous reaction in the community. There is a line of contested narratives, discussed privately or in the Tatar language in the press, as I write in chapter 2. It is contested by the Tatars, mostly women, for whom Islam is in the background of their life.

3.5.2. Veiling as Tatar and Islamic Tradition

It is fascinating to meet different interpretations of the origin of this tradition in women’s speaking. Some women speak of the female veiling as a religious headscarf, a religious tradition, but some put only ethnic, non-religious meaning to it. I try to unravel that complex discussion here.

I begin here from the position of a woman, who explains why head covering and even face covering is Muslim tradition.

“We certainly do not have a tradition of covering a face, but if you dig in the old sources of Tatar theologians, then there was no obligation to completely cover-up, but you could also cover-up, because there was such a tradition, when a woman was talking, she covered her face. Where is it from? We can say that no, this is not our tradition, but the Tatar theologians themselves, of course not modern, say it was better to cover up. There is a duty, and there is even more. Those who call that, this is not at all, they do not start from a religious point of view. There has always been a scarf by itself, this is my opinion”²⁷⁸.

Another interpretation of women themselves is related to the interpretation that a woman’s veil is not a religious tradition, but an ethnic or national one.

“My grandmother wore a headscarf; she covered her hair. If we talk about the Tatar tradition of wearing a headscarf – this is not a religious tradition of wearing a headscarf. It is national [ethnic] because we, women, could be without a headscarf [...] they were mainly rural people. A scarf was worn [...]

²⁷⁸ «У нас, конечно, нет традиции покрывать лицо, но если покапать в старых источниках татарских богословов, то обязанности полностью закрываться не было, но можно и прикрыть, потому что традиция такая была, когда женщина разговаривала, то прикрывала лицо. Это откуда? Можно говорить, что нет это не наша традиция, но сами богословы татарские, несовременные, конечно, говорят лучше прикрыть. Есть обязанность и есть сверх этого. Те, кто призывает, что этого совсем нет, то они отталкиваются не от религиозной точки зрения. Платок сам по себе был всегда, это мое личное мнение» (I., Oct. 7, 2019).

In general, you know, it was put on with its ends back, and here [in front] there are braids. But these religious versions say: you need to hide your hair so that, in general, nothing is seen. What the hell! That is, the Tatars wore such a scarf to gather their hair together for hygienic reasons. The banya was once a week²⁷⁹.

As those two pieces of interviews show, there is internal discussion in the community, with contested narratives around the meanings of veiling. Yet from an external perspective, there is another critical question – why was it essential to state this as a national tradition and not a religious one. Why was it essential for the female narrative to separate one from the other? Once I asked a research participant about it, and she replied to me the following,

“Traditional is more in the villages, as our grandfathers did. How was it before? Based on the book [...] We had no way, there was no literature from scholars. How our grandmothers taught us, how our grandparents spoke to us. If in Islam we sit at the Majlis, a meeting, for example, for the deceased, then it is customary for the Tatars to distribute sadaqah²⁸⁰. This is not the case in real Islam. Now we have begun to encounter people who really came from Saudi Arabia – this is alien to them; they don’t have it. This is already a Tatar tradition. It may be wrong, but our grandmothers taught us this way²⁸¹.

So, from an etic point of view, the segregation of non-religious (“traditional”) and religious (“real Islam”) meanings of veiling come together with authority. So, who has the right to vocalize what is “traditional” and what “is real Islam”? The interview above describes the opposition of the authority of grandparents and the authority of religious figures who have gotten religious education in the Middle East. I should note that Tatar identity links with the memories of grandparents, grandmothers, and remote villages, as I demonstrate at the beginning of

²⁷⁹ «Моя бабушка носила платок, она повязывала волосы. То если говорить о татарской традиции ношения платка, это не религиозная традиция ношения платка, она национальная, потому что мы женщины могли быть без платка [...] в основном сельские были, деревенским народом. Платок носился [...] Он же вообще, вы знаете, надевался хвостами назад, а тут [вперед] косы. А вот эти религиозные варианты говорят, надо волосы убрать, чтобы вообще ничего не видно. Что за фигня, вообще! То есть у татар носили вот такой платок, чтобы собрать волосы, из гигиенических соображений. Баня же была раз в неделю» (А., Sept. 15, 2019).

²⁸⁰ In English, it is spelled as well “*sadaka*”, *сэдака* in Tatar, meaning voluntary alms (Weir and Zysow, “*Şadaqa*” *Encyclopaedia of Islam*).

²⁸¹ «Традиционное – это больше в деревнях, наши деды так делали. Раньше мы как? По книге [...] У нас не было выхода, не было литературы от ученых. Как наши бабушки учили, как наши бабушки и дедушки говорили. Если в исламе мы сидим на меджлисе, собрании, например, по умершему, то у татар принято раздавать садака. В настоящем исламе этого нет. Сейчас начали сталкиваться с людьми, которые, действительно, приехали из Саудовской Аравии – это им чуждо, этого нету. Это уже татарская традиция. Может быть это и неправильно, но наши бабушки нас так учили» (К., Oct. 13, 2019).

the current chapter. The critique and contest of the grandparents' epistemology hit right at the core of Tatar identity and notions of pure Tatar tradition. Therefore, behind the conversation about female headscarves, the notion of the uniqueness of Tatar culture among other Muslim people is hidden, and even Tatar nationalism as an attempt to find its own identity in the Islamic world, as well in the Estonian (Lepa 2020) and Russian post-Soviet situations. Thus, we are witnesses to the painful process of identity negotiation. A Tatar language teacher, a member of the Islamic community in Estonia, was trying to explain to me the complexity of that negotiation process, which she put like this:

A: "How do modern Islam and the Tatar tradition co-exist?"

K: "The older generation is a bit in conflict. This is my subjective opinion".

A: "With youth?"

K: "Yes, because young people know more. They boldly say that there is no need to be afraid that [things] can be done. There was such a line in the Tatar traditions, they were afraid to do something wrong, they were afraid to make a mistake [...]. Because we are watching performances about clergy (mullah, as we say). They, of course, appear in an ignorant light, [...] who appropriate sadaqah for themselves, polygamy and all that. It seems to me that this struggle is still going on. Of course, there is rebuilding, but as long as the older generation is alive, they try to play it safe, anyway. They try, for example, to start the fast a day earlier, although according to Islam, our Prophet said that fasting should be started with everyone together. If it was said [to start] fasting from today, then do so"²⁸².

That fragment of the conversation gives us an understanding that the negotiation of tradition in the Tatar and Muslim community connects with the power position of the speaker. It shapes who has the power to define and validate what is "traditional" and what is "non-traditional".

Thus, the meanings of veiling are contested. On the one hand, there is an attempt to fill veiling with ethnic (traditional) meanings, but on the other, there is an attempt to put religious (Islamic) meanings into it. That idea has been wonderfully expressed by one of the interlocutors; she says, "There is some

²⁸² A: «Как уживаются современный ислам и татарская традиция?»

K: «Старшее поколение немного в конфликте. Это мое субъективное мнение».

A: «С молодежью?»

K: «Да, потому что молодежь больше знает. Она смело говорит, что не надо бояться, что так можно делать. В татарских традициях была такая грань – они боялись что-то сделать не так, они боялись ошибиться [...]. Потому что мы смотрим спектакли про священнослужителей (мулла, как у нас говорят). Они, конечно, в невежественном свете предстают, которые [...] садака себе присваивают, и многоженство, и все такое. Мне кажется, эта борьба еще идет. Конечно, идет перестроение, но пока старшее поколение живо, они нет-нет стараются перестраховаться. Тот же пост они стараются на день раньше начать, хотя по исламу наш Пророк говорил, что пост нужно начинать со всеми вместе. Если сказали, что с сегодняшнего дня пост, то так и делать» (К., Oct. 13, 2019).

kind of confrontation within the Tatar community: someone puts pressure on religiosity and passes off even national things as religiosity, while others resist and try to protect themselves from this pressure”²⁸³.

3.5.3. Other Meanings of Veiling

Since Islamic revival is part of, and a direct result of, post-Soviet changes, female veiling has been discussed in political arenas, as seen in chapter 2. Because Muslim dress is intensely politicized, a civic right to manifest one’s religiosity appeared strongly in women’s narratives. Here is a fragment of one of the interviews with a young woman who studied in a training school in Tyumen:

“[...] In everyday life, I wear a hijab all the time [...] I work as well. I study full-time and part-time. When I came to study after a summer vacation in a headscarf [...] I met with the head of the [educational institution], she tried to explain to me that this was a secular educational institution [meaning where the manifestation of religiosity is unacceptable]. I printed out what is said in the legislation of the Russian Federation on this subject. But I didn’t have to show it, because there were no more questions”²⁸⁴.

From her perspective, wearing a hijab becomes a requirement to manifest her identity, her civil right to be herself, to be a citizen of her country. From the outside, I see, firstly, the women’s agency in the desire to follow her religious choice, and, secondly, a connection with the argument of Northrop, who interprets the practice of veiling in Soviet Uzbekistan as a political action, where the “women’s veil [...] became far more than a simple piece of cloth” (Northrop 2004: 13).

In the Tyumen region, and then in Estonia, I saw several variations of female veiling: *hijab*, *chadra* / *chador*, *niqab*. However, one of the most common forms is a headscarf – a hijab that does not hide the face but covers the neck and hair. Its color also varied – white or black, colored, patterned or not, etc., combined with longer, modest clothing.

For Muslim women themselves, following religious norms regarding veiling is a significant core of religiosity, a manifestation of female piety. This idea was clearly formulated by one woman, who said: “[i]f I am a Muslim, if I believe, then I should wear a hijab; this is the only argument because the Quran says so”²⁸⁵. That means that, in her own evaluation, without the *hijab*, she would not be a pious Muslim. We could find a similar explanation in press materials.

²⁸³ «Внутри татарского общества какое-то противостояние: кто-то давит на религиозность и выдает за религиозность даже национальные вещи, а другие сопротивляются и пытаются защититься от этого давления» (А., Sept. 15, 2019).

²⁸⁴ О., April 19, 2013.

²⁸⁵ I., spring 2013.

A significant part of women's epistemology about headscarves links sexuality and body in categories of open and hidden, acceptable and unacceptable. Women themselves voice that hair, neck, wrists, and ankles are the sexiest parts of the female body and therefore necessary to hide. "Taking off my headscarf, I will have the feeling that I will be completely naked"²⁸⁶, according to one research participant. A woman's sexuality, in this understanding, should be hidden from public view. A headscarf serves to hide the hair, which is paradigmatic of female sexuality.

Saba Mahmood describes the concept of hidden female sexuality in the Muslim community in the following way,

"[...] Islamic tradition assumes that women are the objects of sexual desire and men the desiring subjects, an assumption that has come to justify the injunction that women should "hide their charms" when in public so as not to excite the libidinal energies of men who are not their immediate kin [...] In this moral worldview, illicit sexual relationships are understood to create social discord and sedition (fitna) in a community and are regarded as signs of its moral degeneracy. The injunctions for women to veil, dress modestly, avoid eye contact with men, and so on, all constitute the practical strategies through which the danger women's sexuality poses to the sanctity of the Muslim community is deterred" (2005: 110–111).

During my fieldwork experience, I often found a tight interweaving of hidden sexuality, gender identity, and religiosity. As one woman explained:

*"I remember one ride on a minibus in summer, in June. I sat next to a young woman who wore a very short skirt, and I noticed a birthmark on her leg. And I was there thinking: this is your private birthmark, it happens to be in a place where nobody else is supposed to see it, why do you need to show it off, why to show off your body [...]. You know, it is the same as you are in the bathroom watching yourself, but all the others see you as well there"*²⁸⁷.

Religious dress is not only external but also internal. It is an internalized, embodied experience, understanding female chastity and piety, and even another version of (hidden) female beauty²⁸⁸. A headscarf is a form of bodily extension that can also be seen in the embodied experience of the religious scarf because the headscarf becomes a continuation of the female body and habitus.

Women's sexuality and physicality and proper clothing are a space for negotiation between the woman herself and her husband, relatives, and community. In the contemporary post-Soviet situation, veiling as one of the paradigmatic markers of female sexuality has been revised and renegotiated. Such negotiations happen in other ways, too. Some young women break up their relationships with partners, friends, and even parents because their new,

²⁸⁶ N., April 19, 2013.

²⁸⁷ I., spring 2013.

²⁸⁸ A., April 18, 2013; N., April 19, 2013; K., April 18, 2013.

scarved image is not accepted. In this case, a scarf is a female choice, contrary to the expectations of the close relatives. One young woman broke up with her boyfriend because of her headscarf: “It so happened that when I put on the hijab, my boyfriend did not support it, he said that I was beautiful without it. And after a while, he left me”²⁸⁹. Through a headscarf, some women perform their agency, even if that contradicts the opinion of loved ones and even if they sacrifice their relationships with them.

It should be emphasized that veil practices are not static. Some women narrate that they wear a scarf only in a mosque or religious occasions. Some women wear headscarves regularly in any public spaces but go without in private spaces. For some, veiling matters earlier in life and then becomes less meaningful later. Muslim women’s dress is part of an existential search, the search for oneself and the choices they make are suited to, and only understandable in, the current moment of their life.

3.5.4. Women’s Narratives About Men’s Headgear

Unexpectedly, in the narratives about female veiling, there appears a story about the skullcap, a man’s headdress. It is extremely curious and tells us not so much about the skullcap itself but about the construction of Tatar masculinity. In one of the interviews, an interlocuter talked about the skullcap and that it was represented not as a Tatar or Islamic symbol, rather, it was more about the skullcap as a masculine symbol of reliability, protection, and support²⁹⁰.

“The Tatars have a historical memory about skullcaps. Men collect them in general. [...] And they are also made by the women’s hands, and this is a symbol of masculinity, created by the hands of a woman. The boy’s masculinity develops thanks to his relationship with his mother when his mother says, ‘you are my hero’, ‘you are my protector’, ‘you are my pride’, ‘I love you so much’. The little boy is filled with pride, but he feels this strength and masculinity, because this woman sang an ode to his masculinity. And here are our women who sew skullcaps; they participate in the development of masculinity”²⁹¹.

In women’s narratives about the skullcap, we see the construction of masculinity and its connection with the notion of authenticity. A woman appears as the keeper of the memory of relatives in the male line, where many fought and

²⁸⁹ N., April 19, 2013.

²⁹⁰ A., Sept. 15, 2019.

²⁹¹ «У татар есть историческая память по поводу тюбетейки, мужчины их коллекционируют вообще [...]. И они же сделаны руками женщин, это такой символ мужественности, созданный руками женщины. Мужественность мальчика развивается благодаря отношению с матерью, когда мама говорит «ты мой герой», «ты мой защитник», «ты моя гордость», «я тебя так люблю». Маленький мальчик наполняется гордостью, но чувствует эту силу и мужественность, потому что эта женщина спела оду его мужественности. И вот наши женщины, которые шьют тюбетейки, они участвуют в становлении мужественности» (A., Sept. 15, 2019).

died in military exploits. Interestingly, I have not met any disputing interpretations of the skullcap, the man's headdress. Here, I must clarify that this is in the interpretation of women. I did not ask men what this means for them.

3.6. Conclusion

The thread of all women's narratives about tradition is the dichotomous opposition of the past to the present. "Time – in anthropological perspective – is a culturally specific construct that combines ways of structuring daily activities with broader meanings about the past, present, and future", writes Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov (2017: 3). Tatar women negotiate the complexities of their world by referring to the past, both the 18th century and the 19th century, as well as the pre-Soviet period, and by skillfully using understandings of the past and the present, by playing with time. Women narrate reference to the Soviet past as an opposition of Tatar tradition to the Soviet regime. "Soviet power has watered down a lot in us. The Soviet regime strongly Russified us"²⁹², but at the same time, "we have not gone that far yet. Our grandparents, their parents, lived in traditional Tatar families, they studied not in schools but in madrasahs. They received religious education four generations ago"²⁹³. As we can see here, the references to memories and stories of grandparents, fragments of their lives in remote rural places linked chronologically with the pre-Soviet period, become a "pure", non-Soviet Tatar tradition and identity. That point relates to an argument of Kristin Kuutma, that "[d]ue to sociopolitical circumstances [Soviet censorship of folklore] peasant cultural expression, its current residues, and archived collections became idealized as a haven of non-Soviet Estonian identity" (2015: 46). However, the relations of past and presents are not unidirectional, they are multidirectional, as Sharon Macdonald points out (2013: 52).

Another thread of opposition in the women's stories is the dichotomy of Tatar tradition and Soviet modernity. The relationship between tradition and modernity is quite complex there. On the one hand, Soviet modernity has brought notions of tradition, especially in the narratives about the abduction of brides, female virginity, and Islamic marriage. But on the other hand, tradition and modernity not only co-exist with one another but also interconnect in many ways. That argument contributes to an extension of Arjun Appadurai's idea that "the break between tradition and modernity" (1996: 3) could be interpreted as fragmentation and plurality of notions of tradition and modernity, which interconnect one with another (ibid). Anna Tsing refers to the interaction of these fragments as friction, "the awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across differences" (2005: 4). The current negotia-

²⁹² «В нас многое размыла советская власть. Советская власть нас сильно обрусил» (G., Nov. 12, 2019).

²⁹³ «Мы еще не так далеко ушли. Наши дедушки и бабушки, их родители жили в традиционных татарских семьях, они учились не в школах, а медресе, они получали религиозное образование еще четыре поколения назад» (S., Sept. 20, 2019).

tion of the meanings of Tatar tradition in the community is contested by reference to multiple resources. For validation of the tradition, women appeal to their own experiences, family stories, and memories of grandparents. Photographs and tangible heritage become not only a family story but also an argumentation, justification, and contestation in the negotiation process of Tatar tradition. Another source in the negotiation process is a reference to the authority of imams, Tatar leaders, and elderly people, who may have different interpretations and understandings of Tatar-ness, what tradition is and what is not. Appealing to scholars, mostly ethnographers, and their different positions brings one more layer of plurality and fragmentation of the notion of Tatar tradition.

Since the notion of Tatar tradition is fragmented, Tatar identity is fragmented as well. To overcome the fragmentation, women narrate an imaginative Tatarstan and/or, Turkey, and/or the Middle East and/or other places as the heart, the center of their identities. That means that for Tatars who live in Estonia or in Siberia, the notion of peripherality in their identities is very familiar; the center is not here, it is somewhere else. Simultaneously, women's stories about tradition strongly connect to family and kin relations, food, and taking care of family members, to social and religious occasions. Such connections demonstrate that Tatar women's identity is built by inclusion in family relations as daughters, brides, and wives, mothers and grandmothers, sisters and aunts. Tatar women's identity is performed as peripheral and complementary to males (Kapchan 1996, Abu-Lughod 1986). Since Tatar identity is peripheral to imaginative centers, and Tatar women's identity is peripheral to males as well, then Tatar women's identity is constructed as a periphery of a periphery.

CHAPTER 4. STATE AND THE POLITICS OF TATAR HERITAGE

“I think [...] in the case that you were born, excuse me, for some reason [in some respect] a Tatar, and not a Russian, you should know what you need to know. It is elementary, as is respect for everything of ours, and not just for the nation. I want our people [...] to never forget their ancestors [...], I want everyone to take care of their families. If we take from there, from antiquity, what our parents brought us, we can pass it on and respect each other better than we have”²⁹⁴.

4.1. Introduction

I begin this chapter with a description of some of the approaches of the Soviet state to gender policy. One of the most meaningful themes within this section is the intersection of gender, ethnic, religious, class, and age identities that shape diverse women’s experiences, life trajectories, and circumstances. The intersectionality of these identities may lead the female experience to the edge of the epistemology of the state’s bureaucracy, another layer of the peripherality seen in the previous chapter. In the next section, I draw attention to the state approaches to the ethnic/national policy of the state in different chronological periods, the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, modern Estonia, and Russia, and I refer there to the historical contexts of the state in order to explain the contemporary situation. I pay special attention to how the Tatar communities in Siberia and Estonia were structured when I conducted fieldwork there, which sheds some light on how the state operates through ethnic organizations. In the last part, I write about the state’s religious policy, primarily in the policy towards Muslims in the Russian Empire and in Estonia after independence and in Russia after 1991. Describing the Soviet period (which for Estonia is from the 1940s to 1991), I focus on the policy of atheism and its coexistence with religion in the family circle. To illustrate the state’s appearance in the Muslim community, I refer to the activities of various Muslim organizations in Estonia and Siberia.

Turning to the interpretation of field materials in the previous chapters, I purposefully omitted the subject of the state. This chapter would like to fill in that gap and elaborate on the state as an actor in heritage politics. I provide enough background to allow proper contextualization of my research and topic: women’s narratives about traditions and the representation of women in the

²⁹⁴ «Я считаю, [...] раз ты родился, извини меня, почему-то татаринном, а не русским, ты должен знать то, что тебе нужно знать. Элементарно, как и уважение ко всему нашему, а не просто к нации. Я хочу, чтобы наши люди [...] никогда не забывали своих предков [...], хочется, чтобы каждый свою семью берег. Если мы будем брать оттуда, из старины то, что наши родители нам несли, мы это можем передать дальше и уважать друг друга лучше, чем есть» (А., March 3, 2011).

vernacular materials. In this chapter, I often refer to the quotes used already in previous chapters, risking an appearance of redundancy; however, the repetition is an attempt to explain those same stories from another angle, to show additional layers of meanings.

Working with the Tatar community in Siberia, I experienced that the term “heritage” is used, but not often. Despite the rare usage of the term, its idea is constantly present (Deschepper 2018, Kuryanova 2011). During the course of my ethnographic fieldwork, I encountered the usage of the word “heritage” in the name of an ethnic organization, on the agenda of ethnic organizations, at round tables, at discussions, and in general, the activities of these organizations, which are aimed at preserving and developing traditions and heritage. It means that the term heritage serves for political purposes, as the rights of an ethnic group. Moreover, in the Russian language, the word heritage (*nasledie*) is related to the word inheritance (*nasledstvo*), as in English, but it has a strong legal meaning, as a legal procedure for obtaining ownership of something in connection with the death of a relative, where the state regulates entry into the right to inherit. The word “heritage” in Tatar is “*miras*”, which comes from the Arab language, from Islamic law.

4.2. State And Gender Identity Politics

4.2.1. Soviet Working Mother and Its Transformation

Many of the newspaper stories and my research interviews referred to gender in the late Soviet era. The Soviet gender order for a long time has determined the relations of power and hierarchies between men and women, the distribution of gender roles, family relations, etc., even after into the post-Soviet period. The main characteristic of gender politics was distinguished by the involvement of the state in relations between a man and a woman. Sarah Ashwin describes this complex as “a triangular set of relations in which the primary relationship of individual men and women was to the state rather than to each other” (Ashwin 2000: 2). Elena Zdravomyslova and Anna Temkina call a set of those relations “etacratic” gender order (2003: 299). Gender politics throughout the Soviet period was not homogeneous, Zdravomyslova and Temkina divide gender politics into three periods: 1) from 1918 to the early 1930s as a time of institutionalization of that etacratic gender order; 2) from the 1930s to the 1950s when that politics begins to weaken; and 3) from the 1950s to the end of the 1980s when the role of the state in regulating social and gender relations is changing significantly (2003: 304). Research participants with whom I worked mostly experienced the late Soviet period, and some of them did not experience Soviet regime at all because they were children when the USSR collapsed.

“The Bolsheviks’ gender politics was based on a view that gender difference was ‘natural,’ and the domestic sphere was seen as a woman’s responsibility; this view persisted throughout the Soviet era, since the regime had an interest in

both men and women serving the state [...]” (Annuk 2019: 408–409). But from the perspective of feminist ideologists of the beginning of the 20th century, like Alexandra Kollontai, in order to liberate women from patriarchal families, women would need to participate in social labor, but in turn, the state would care for their children by creating a system of daycare centers, schools, cafeterias, and laundries for reducing housework (Walters 2005: 134). So the state took a paternalistic role toward women, and Soviet women were involved in the social, political, and economic life of the state, in combination with the reproductive burden they were expected to carry (Goldman 1993: 1–29). Moreover, with the separation of church from state, the state became the main actor in the regulation of marriage, family relations, and more widely, all private life: the registration of marriages and divorces, registration of births and deaths, and many other bureaucratic procedures for the governmentality of the lives of its inhabitants (Pushkareva 2012).

“Although gender equality was an inseparable part of the communist ideology, it was not implemented in reality. Hiding behind the official equality rhetoric, patriarchal understandings and traditional gender roles were maintained in the private sphere”, writes Eve Annuk (2019: 409). In reality, the state did not care about women as individuals or their relationships with spouses and children (Pushkareva 2012). This reality is reflected in the experiences of many of the women I spoke with. As one of my research participants says, “[b]oth of them [the parents] worked. We are children of the state, that is, women used to have little maternity leave; that is, [we attended both] a kindergarten and a school. Housework was on mom. In Salekhard there were wooden houses, stove heating, imported water²⁹⁵. Harder work – bringing firewood, bringing water – my father did. At home, naturally, my mother [worked] and taught us [what] to do in this way²⁹⁶. From this fragment, the period is not very clear, but we can see that women worked, were engaged in domestic life, and gave birth to children, whose upbringing was carried out by the state through the kindergartens and schools. Taking this context into account, we can see in the interview, “we are children of the state”, rather than the parents, according to the interlocutor. Anna Rotkirch who carried out her research in St. Petersburg in 1990s, writes about the Soviet care system: “In Russia, [...] it is usual and completely acceptable to let even very young children spend weeks or months away from both of their biological parents, for instance, during summer vacations. Similarly, it was not unusual to have small children in kindergartens during the whole working week, to be taken home only during weekends” (2000: 119). Eva Annuk shows in a similar way the experience in Soviet Estonia, “There were also kindergartens/nurseries for very

²⁹⁵ i.e., there was no indoor plumbing.

²⁹⁶ «Оба они [родителя] работали. Мы дети государственные, то есть раньше женщины мало сидели в декретном отпуске, то есть – детский садик и школа. По хозяйству – мама. В Салехарде деревянные дома, печное отопление, привозная вода. Более тяжелые работы: занести дрова, привезти воду – отец занимался. По дому, естественно, - мама и нас приучали вот в таком плане» (Z., Nov 12, 2010).

small children (babies from two months of age) and kindergartens for longer periods, where children were left for the whole week since their mothers had to work” (Annuk 2019: 410). As far as I am aware, that Soviet kindergarten system is not relevant anymore. In Russia today, parents generally bring children to the kindergarten before the workday and pick them up right after it.

Another way of taking care of children was (and is in some cases) by grandmothers. People with whom I talked often mentioned that when they were kids, they spent the entire summer school break with their grandparents (usually grandmothers) in the village. In the late Soviet time, women retired at the age of 55. That gave retired women an opportunity and obligation to take care of older parents and grandchildren. Thus, a grandmother’s care of grandchildren was a structured part of the Soviet caretaking system. Anna Rotkirch called this system “extended mothering” as opposed to the intensive mothering that dominated in the US in the 1990s (Rotkirch 2000: 116), “not of fathering or parenting” (Rotkirch 2000: 117). “Extended mothering was sustained by the women-centered, cross-generational ties of the Soviet family” (Rotkirch 2000: 115). In chapter 3, I write of the care that grandmothers took of the children. In that case, the relations between children and grandmothers held a very particular meaning. Children raised by grandmothers had close ties with them, and the stories of grandmothers about how it was before, stories from their childhood and life, in some measure about old ways and religion, perhaps, therefore, form a notion of “tradition”. The notion of tradition in connection with grandmothers is shaped by people through the romanticizing of their own childhood and their relationships with grandmothers, with nostalgia about the past, and by memories about warm relationships, because, as one person tells us in chapter 3, “[...] all this [love] pours out on them [grandchildren]”²⁹⁷. The studies of the role of grandmothers in the religious socialization of young adults in post-socialist Russia and Poland emphasize that “(great) grandmothers continue to play a particularly central role in introducing their grandchildren to religious beliefs, values, and practices” (Vrublevskaya *et al.* 2019: 202). To put it another way, there is a strong link between cross-generational care connections and the transmitting of cultural heritage. It allows cultural transmission without a state ideological system.

In some ways, a grandmother’s care of grandchildren is still a part of contemporary realities, at least in Russia in single-mother families (Utrata 2011: 616). Thinking about what it means for how one imagines one’s culture and gender roles therein and what happens to the generation of mothers that do not fit this image made me recall an interview with one person who was brought up by her grandmother. The interviewee is a 30-year-old woman, for whom it is meaningful to follow grandma’s ‘old-fashioned’ values and shape her life in accordance with them. As she explained to me, she chose to do that because her

²⁹⁷ «На них это все [вся любовь] выливается» (А., Oct 5, 2019).

mother's emancipation aspirations led to the dysfunctional relationship of her parents in her own childhood, as she observed²⁹⁸.

With the establishment of Soviet power in Estonia in the 1940s, “almost all grassroots organizations, that had existed in the 1920s and 1930s were closed; this included women's organizations [...]” (Annuk 2019: 408), and they were replaced “with Soviet content and gender politics” (ibid). Eva Annuk criticizes the Soviet care system in the following way,

“Likewise, the opportunities the Soviet state granted women, such as access to kindergartens (since the 1960s), also had their hidden side. Although the state helped women in raising children, ‘it drastically diminished parents’ private influence over them’ (Miroiu 2007, 199). Ideological instruction in the spirit of Soviet ideology already began in kindergarten. There were also kindergartens/nurseries for very small children (babies from two months of age) and kindergartens for longer periods, where children were left for the whole week since their mothers had to work [...] Working outside the home was not so much a personal choice (it was hardly possible to become a housewife) but a state-imposed obligation” (2019: 410).

Towards the end of the Soviet period, both Estonia and Russia began a period of “back to home” movements in gender politics (Engel 2004: 253). Such movements sat well with nationalist worldviews, whose “voices grew increasingly insistent in Russia as well as the other states of the Soviet Union. In their view, women's primary mission was to preserve and transmit to her children the culture of their people” (Engel 2004: 254). By the time that I conducted ethnographic research in the Tyumen region in 2010–2013 and Estonia in 2019, the Soviet models of gender relations had changed dramatically. The changes have been associated with an abandoning of the private sphere by the state; negative meanings of the Soviet understanding of gender equality; and a different gender order – for many women having a chance to work is understood as their right. This idea of a new understanding of gender was mainly understood as a clash between older versions of femininity as seen in mothers and housewives, and newer feminist ideas of individual womanhood, although these were extremely marginalized, more so in Russia than in Estonia (Annuk 2019: 412, Pushkareva 2012).

In the rhetoric of contemporary Estonia, as Raili Marling and Redi Koobak write, “‘catching up with the West’ has dominated Estonian society since the 1990s” (2017: 4). On the one hand, this means that the Soviet period is perceived as an interruption. On another, not all Western ideas were embraced by Estonian politics, like ideas related to gender equality or sexual minorities' rights (Annuk 2019: 413). Raili Marling defines the presence of academic feminism in Estonia, state feminism, and third sector feminism. Eve Annuk adds a fourth one, “cultural feminism, which encompasses everything that remains outside of narrow academic research and teaching activities while tying

²⁹⁸ A., July 23, 2010.

in the meaning of gender through critique, such as through practices of art and social media” (2019: 418).

In Russia in the 2010s, conservative discourses have emerged that appeal to “traditional family values” and the contestation of a feminist understanding of gender equality. Conservative discourses are aimed at the return of women to the family, to validate women through motherhood and marriage, the private sphere, and emotional services, as well as to try to limit women’s reproductive rights to abortion while simultaneously strengthening the discourse of reproduction to stimulate the birth rate (the “maternity (family) capital program”) (Rivkin-Fish 2010). Representations of women are defined by the instruments of the state’s conservative pro-natalist policy. We can find these representations of working mothers both in interviews and in the vernacular press – this is a frequently encountered concept for both Soviet and post-Soviet periods. Since the “working mother” was not a voluntary choice of women during the Soviet period, we meet its criticism, as I pointed out in chapter 2. The rhetoric of “traditional family values”, understood exclusively as the union of a man and a woman and their children, is filled with patriarchal, paternalistic, and homophobic content. Interestingly, in a certain sense, “traditional family values” are close in understanding for the Tatar and Muslim communities, but only in part. The fact is that, while sharing the notion of the family as a nuclear one, in the religious and ethnic press, there are also other forms and different notions of the family available. In the Islamic press, one could find stories discussing polygamy and the difficulties associated with this form of organizing relations and opportunities. Some examples of titles of news stories demonstrate the variety: “[It was decided] in Barnaul that polygamy should solve the problem of women’s happiness” (*Istina*; 2008), “Why did the prophet Muhammad have 9 wives?” (*Istina*; 2008), “Husband is getting married...” (*Muslim-Info* 2008). And in the ethnic press, the nuclear family often included a wide net of relatives. In women’s narratives, we also find a different understanding of family and kinship.

“[They] loved children. Families had many children; we had 6 children with us together [with] Mom, Dad, and grandfather, grandmother, cousins about 70 people. We all communicate closely. They took care of each other [...]. Apparently, Tatars are brought up in such a way that we value family relations very much [...] I have always been proud of my relatives. Grandpa had two wives. The second wife was my grandmother – a Kazan Tatar woman, [and] my father has the same situation. The grandfathers [were] mullahs. [They] adhered to all the [Islamic] canons. My grandfather instilled in us that we should know not only the language but also family ties and family trees”²⁹⁹.

²⁹⁹ «Любили детей, семьи были многодетными, у нас было 6 детей с нами вместе мама, папа и дедушка, бабушка – двоюродные около 70 человек. Все мы общаемся близко. Заботились друг о друге [...] Видимо, так воспитаны татары, мы очень ценим родственные отношения [...] Я всегда гордилась своими родственниками. Дедушка имел двух жен. Второй женой была моя бабушка – Казанская татарка, у отца такая же

4.2.2. State Politics Toward “Other” Women

Kimberlé Crenshaw introduced the term intersectionality in the article “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics”. There she reflects on the intersectionality of identities – women and “Other”, meaning being women of color. She says,

“I will discuss how it contributes to the marginalization of Black women in feminist theory and in antiracist politics. I argue that Black women are sometimes excluded from feminist theory and antiracist policy discourse because both are predicated on a discrete set of experiences that often does not accurately reflect the interaction of race and gender. These problems of exclusion cannot be solved simply by including Black women within an already established analytical structure. Because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated. Thus, for feminist theory and antiracist policy discourse to embrace the experiences and concerns of Black women, the entire framework that has been used as a basis for translating “women’s experience” or “the Black experience” into concrete policy demands must be rethought and recast” (1989: 140).

Once again, “intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism” (ibid). Applying her theory to the Tatar women’s experience (as I attempt to show in chapter 2 and chapter 3) allows us to demonstrate that being a Tatar (or/and Muslim) woman is greater than the sum of being a woman and being Tatar (or/and Muslim). These identities are interconnected with each other and appear together. I would like to point out here that working with women, I recognize that gender and ethnic identities also intersect with age, economic background, and religion as well. The women who spoke with me narrated their belonging and the belonging of their families to different economic strata. I could not talk about class belonging in the way that term used in the US, for example. Yet, in chapter 3 I quote bits of interviews that show: “I was walking home from school and thinking if only there was bread today [...]”³⁰⁰ and in contrast, “My great-grandfather was an imam, I come from a family that was once very religious [...] my family was rich, women from our family went to a mineral spring, to a resort [...]”³⁰¹. Belonging to different economic classes means different expressions of the past and of heritage. The

ситуация. Дедушки – муллы и придерживались всем канонам. Дедушка прививал нам, что мы должны знать не только язык, но и родственные связи и древа рода» (L., Aug. 10, 2010).

³⁰⁰ «Я шла со школы и думала, хоть бы хлеб был сегодня [...]» (F., March 3, 2011).

³⁰¹ «У меня прадед был имамом, я происхожу из той семьи, которая когда-то была очень религиозной [...] семья-то богатая была, женщины из нашей семьи ездили на минеральные воды, на курорт [...]» (A., Sept. 15, 2019).

variety of power positions among women also depends on age. According to the collected interviews, young women and senior women often narrate their life circumstances in different ways. As I show in chapter 3 in section 3.4. Kinship, Social Order and Hierarchy, power relations in the community are gendered; the amount of a woman's power grows with age, which comes together with maternal status and bringing up children. For example, "Married women are allowed a lot. It is allowed to sit with men, but even then [...]"³⁰², tells one of my interviewees. So, at some point in life, women in the community may sit together with men, or they may even start acting like men, meaning acting from the position of power toward younger women. Therefore, power is not only gendered but also differentiated based on age. Older women may have strong opinions about the role of women in the community, about what and how traditions should be maintained, and how the younger generation of Tatars should look or dress or arrange their lives. So, older women may overturn power and act like men in some situations. Thus, it is crucial to remember that so-called "Other" women are different, sometimes having different positions and different power.

In the next subsection of this chapter, I discuss the fact that in the eyes of the state, the Tatars were "Other", they were *inorodtsy*. Here I want only to dwell in more detail on the experience of "Other" women in imperial and Soviet times, as they were represented as secondary. Yulia Gradskova writes that the Bolsheviks presented themselves as those who gave women rights and educated them on how to take care of health, hygiene, preparing meals, etc. This ideology was extended to "Other" women, as the Soviet state declared that Soviet modernity freed women from the oppression of the traditions of the past.

"Those women were declared to be victims not only of the imperial economic exploitation and Russification of educational institutions, but also, to no lesser extent, of 'backward national traditions', despotic husbands, and the Muslim religion. Bolshevik propaganda conveyed that Bashkir and Tatar women were subordinated to their men much more than were Russian women" (Gradskova 2019a: 116).

The Soviet discourse ignored that before the revolution, women participated in the creation of schools, libraries, the reform movement *Jadidism* in late 19th beginning 20th century (Jadidist. *Britannica*), and congresses of Muslim women (Gradskova 2019a: 113). For example, in her article, Diliara Brileva argues that in the discourses of the Tatar press in the Volga region at the turn of the 19th–20th centuries, women were represented not only as mothers, on whose education the future of the new generation of Muslims will depend (2018: 22), but also as those who must gain financial, physical, and in some cases marital freedom (2018: 27). Lilia Gabdrafikova, too, based on materials of the Volga region, illustrates that in the beginning of the 20th century (before the revolution

³⁰² «Замужним женщинами разрешается многое. Разрешается с мужчинами сидеть, но и то [...]» (G., Nov. 12, 2019).

of 1917), there appeared a new social group within the Tatar secular intelligentsia – female teachers. These were not *abystay*, who was a wife of an imam who taught girls the basics of Islam, but a female teacher (*mugallima*) of the national primary school who taught reading, literacy, and other civic subjects to all students who wanted to study (Gabrafiikova 2019: 305). These Soviet state discourses neglected the grass-rooted activity and formed hierarchies of women between “Other” women and women of the “center” (Gradszkova 2020: 678). In the Soviet context, this hierarchy meant that women had to master Soviet ideology, master the Russian language, and become like women of the “center”, which meant losing their connections with traditions and native languages (Tlostanova, 2009: 232, 239). Madina Tlostanova writes,

*“Like other colonialist discourses, the Russian/Soviet one was based on the erasure and devaluation of previous local histories, cosmologies, cultural models, the imposition of constructed and handed down national identities, the prohibition on other forms and variants of writing, in addition to those based on the Cyrillic alphabet, the destruction of local economic and trade systems and, more broadly, lifestyles, for the planting of collective farms and industrialization of the Soviet model, the introduction of certain forms of gender emancipation, education and other well-known signs of the Soviet regime, which were often served under the sauce of liberation and empowerment both for the subjects of national politics themselves and in the propaganda of the Soviet system for export”*³⁰³ (2020: 111–112).

However, postcolonial feminists Chandra Mohanty and Trinh Minh-ha, criticizing policies of “First World” women towards the “Third World”, warn us of a generalizing view of “Third World” women (Eagleton 2011: 382). Within the framework of this chapter, I do not have the opportunity to reflect on the dichotomous relations between the West and the East, and on the peripheral position of the Russian state and its previous state formations, but such a discussion exists, which can be seen in more detail (Tlostanova 2020: 192). Tlostanova calls it “secondary orientalism” (2020: 111–112). For more details on whether the Baltic States and Siberia could be considered as a former colony, see Epp Annus 2012 and 2018, Steven Sabol 2017, and *A Region in the History of the Empire*, 2013 in Russian, and others.

³⁰³ «Как и другие колониалистские дискурсы, российский / советский был замешан на стирании и обесценивании предыдущих местных историй, космологий, культурных моделей, навязывании сконструированных и спущенных сверху национальных идентичностей, запрете на иные формы и варианты письменности, помимо основанных на кириллице, уничтожении местных экономических и торговых систем и шире, жизненных укладов, для насаждения колхозов и индустриализации советского образца, внедрении определенных форм гендерной эмансипации, образования и других всем известных признаков советского режима, которые нередко подавались под соусом освобождения и наделяния правами как для самих субъектов национальной политики, так и в пропаганде советского строя на экспорт».

Redi Koobak and Raili Marling, following Madina Tlostanova, argue that we should be careful with applying Western theories to post-Soviet spaces.

“We thus need to be careful with merely applying yet another Western theory to yet another terrain, recreating the old imbalance of the Western theorists and the non-Western raw material (Suchland, 2011: 854). In this spirit, Madina Tlostanova (2012: 131) suggests that instead of arguing about how well Western theories of postcolonialism can be applied to the post-socialist context, we need ‘true intersectionality’ for opening up a real dialogue, ‘not a comparative, but ... rather an “imparative” – from the Latin imparare (to learn in the atmosphere of plurality) – approach’. According to Tlostanova (2012: 132), this would shift the emphasis from using ready-made discourses and theories that are always based on Western ideals to a mutual learning process, attending to ‘various local histories marked by colonial and imperial differences (or their combination) within modernity/coloniality’. This approach opens up to the complexity of intersectional differences between and within CEE countries. In addition, it has the potential to expand the theoretical toolkit of feminism that has thus far been built on the experience of Western gender and political traditions” (Koobak and Marling 2014: 336–337).

The theory of intersectionality and postcolonial feminist theory approach the description of the same concepts, such as power and identity, from different angles. Below I would like to give a few examples of women who, due to their positions, find themselves at the intersection of gender and ethnic (national) identity, who find themselves at the frontier of the state’s language. Frontier is a place where friction – the “awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interactions across difference” – happens (Tsing 2005: 4). It is a space that is “not yet mapped, not yet regulated” (Tsing 2005: 28). Women at the frontier of state language are “not yet regulated” by the bureaucratic taxonomies because bureaucratic taxonomies are based on blunt xenophobic and sexist universal categories, which are not sensitive for capturing the plurality of human identities, acts, and circumstances. Indeed, the state needs to taxonomize with universal categories, as doing so allows it to implement its governmentality more efficiently and coherently.

The first story was told to me by one of my interlocutors who is about 70 years old, living in Estonia. The story is about religious marriage *nikah* and the state epistemology of the Soviet period. I already quoted this story in chapter 3, but another viewing here through this chapter’s state lenses is enlightening. The interlocutor says that her mother received a marriage certificate later, after the birth certificates of her children, which is not logical from the point of view of the interlocutor. And she explains that *nikah*, which she translates as “engagement”, was a completely legitimate way of marrying her parents, from their point of view and their relatives and the community. As I noted at the beginning of this chapter, with the establishment of the Soviet regime, the Soviet state, as any other state, arrogated to itself the right to govern the life of the population (Foucault 2006), in forms such as the registration of marriages, dissolution of

marriage, the issuance of certificates of birth, death, and others of life's moments. Yet the story of the research participant demonstrates that the state bureaucratic epistemology coexisted with the logic and ideas of the Tatar population in Soviet times.

Another modern example is when women find themselves outside the bureaucratic language, outside the bureaucratic categories and taxonomies, which is also linked with religious marriage – *nikah*. This story was told to me in Tyumen.

A: “When a woman gets married according to Sharia law, is this marriage officially registered?”

T: “At the state level, no. A seal is put in the spiritual administration. For Muslims, it is a document, but for the state, this marriage is not legal”³⁰⁴.

I referred to this episode in chapter 3, saying that from the point of view of the state *nikah* is not recognized as a legitimate marriage. Therefore one of the interlocutors, having only *nikah*, could not protest the illegitimacy of the marriage registered by her spouse outside Russia, and his ability to bring a “second” wife there. This all illustrates the complexity of relations between the state, as well as Tatar, Muslim, and female identities. Because those identities, as Kimberlé Crenshaw argues, are not simply their sum, the intersection of those identities creates an entirely other experience, a frontier of recognition for the governmental taxonomies. Thus, Muslim women's experiences with marriage are not fully mapped, not fully regulated, in women's reality. The state leaves women in spaces between epistemologies that are contradictory to each other because marriage is the regulation of relations between spouses and relations in contexts such as ownership or inheritance. Instead, the Russian state, for example, problematizes only the hijab and tries to regulate Muslim women's dress. Partially, there is a similar situation in Estonia, where “Muslims are permitted by law to conduct marriages in mosques, and the marriage is then registered with a municipal civil registry office” [...]. But “An imam wishing to serve as a state registrar has to obtain official certification after attending special training. No Estonian imam is yet certified to serve as a state registrar” (Ringvee, and Račius 2012: 198). The website of the *Kultuurikeskus Turath* and mosque says, however, that “If one of the spouses is not a resident of Estonia, he/she must provide a certificate that at the moment he/she is not married [...] At the *nikah* ceremony, [it is] imperative to have with you the originals of the identity documents of the marrying couple”³⁰⁵ (“Islamic Cultural Center”).

³⁰⁴ A: «Когда женщина выходит замуж по шариату, этот брак регистрируется официально?»

T: «На государственном уровне нет. В духовном управлении ставится печать. Для мусульман – это документ, а для государства этот брак не является законным» (T., Jul 03, 2010).

³⁰⁵ “Если один из брачующихся не житель Эстонии, он/она должен/на предоставить справку о том, что на данный момент он/она не состоит в браке [...]. На церемонии

To widen the texture of my narrative, I would like to draw attention to the fact that being on an edge, on a frontier, is common not only for Muslim women in Siberia and Estonia. Tatar female identity finds itself on the cultural edge of a frontier like immigrant identity. While working with the immigrant community in Sweden, I found that, as a rule, many narratives revolve around themes related to paperwork and the difficulties of moving or escaping (when it comes to refugees), and also with the issue of traditions, intangible heritage, and the search for their own identity in a new situation and new environment. This is an excerpt from an interview with a woman, about 40 years old, who came to Sweden two years before the time of the interview from a country in the Middle East. She starts by talking about herself in Sweden, her new home,

“About myself, I feel okay. I don’t have any problem. I am wearing my hijab on the Islamic way, and I don’t find any contradiction between my way of wearing and my way of living, but on the contrary, I think that they go together. [...] Now in Sweden, I am getting to learn a little about the social system and how it’s working. I believe that the way it works it’s so much the same as it should be in Islam, in Islamic way. Because how, like the social network, the safety network, this is the Islamic way, it should be. Unfortunately, it doesn’t exist in most of Islamic countries [...]. To be honest, when started certain things happen like burning mosques, and after what happened in France, honestly speaking, I started feeling a little bit worried about myself and about my kids. About myself, sometimes I come from university at night, it’s dark. So, I remember a few days, I was a little bit worried what if someone who hates Muslims and sees me and tries to attack me. I had this idea. Nobody did anything bad; on the contrary, all Sweden people who I have met are very nice to me. Or at least, if they are not very nice, at least they are respectful. So, I didn’t face any bad situation, but I started just feeling a little bit worried”³⁰⁶.

So, she explains that on the one hand, that she feels okay, that Sweden's social system provides significant support. But on the other hand, she talks about a feeling of anxiety that some people there, as in France, might hate Muslims. Then she moves from a story about herself to a story about her children:

“The other thing is that when I look at my children, how they will be grown up. They will grow up as Swedish. I like them to be integrated into society, I don’t want them to be thrown, but at the same time, also I want them to be proud of their culture, heritage, religion, and language of course, Arabic. So this is a big challenge for me. Because there are certain things in the culture of Swedish society I don’t like, I don’t accept. But at the same time, I respect other people doing it. I am afraid that how I could tell my children that they not do it without imposing it on them. I will give an example like this sam-bo³⁰⁷ thing, the boyfriend-girlfriend, we don’t have it in our culture, and I can not

заклучения никаха обязательно иметь с собой оригиналы документов, удостоверяющих личности брачующихся”.

³⁰⁶ This interview was conducted in English (B., Nov 24, 2014).

³⁰⁷ From Swedish, to live together.

say to their friends, my children 'you will not have girlfriend, boyfriend', I want to make it for them that they choose. So this is a challenge for me. At the same time, I know that it is very good for them to grow in Sweden because [...] it's general that people are honest, they don't lie, they don't cheat, no corruption. Unlike, unfortunately, our country, that's why people went for revolution [...]"³⁰⁸.

So, she talks about integrating her children into Swedish society. She talks about how to pass on her cultural identity to her children, the negotiation of intangible heritage, but without imposing it. She gives an example of *sam-bo* (cohabitation) that differs significantly from what she is used to in terms of gender and family relations.

"Even this sam-bo thing, boyfriend-girlfriend thing, within the Swedish society it has to do with a basic meaning of marriage because in our Islam, in the beginning, in Islam, marriage didn't have to do with writing papers. It had to do like everybody knows that this couple are together. Also, in this sam-bo in Sweden, everybody knows that they are together and they have children, and so it doesn't have to be written. So when you look at it like this, you can, not accept, but at least you can understand, I can understand what it means for them. But again when it comes to my own children. It is something different [...]"³⁰⁹.

In the next part, she continues to talk about her observations of how Muslims living in Sweden deal with such issues of integration. She reflects about two widely separate approaches that she would like to avoid. One is associated with the strong imposition of the native language and culture on children. And the other, with a disregard for the transfer of their heritage to children.

"Muslims in the societies, they have maybe two opposite attitude. One of them is they are very much afraid for their children to lose their religion, to lose culture or language. So they are doing like this, too much clothing and they say 'you should speak Arabic, only Arabic'. And then the children will not speak Arabic; they will speak Swedish, they hate it, you know. There is very much a cut between the society and the family, it becomes very much complicated when the children grow up because they have to choose. And it's a tough choice – to be with the family or go to the society – family separations etc.

Or the other way around is like when families want to show Swedish people that we are very much Swedish, so we don't care about our language, our culture – just go into integration. But it's not only integration [...]. I know that, for example, even my grandchildren will be not 100% Swedish; this is a fact. My daughter is blond [...], but maybe her children, they will take after me, because my daughter takes after my mother, but her children maybe they will take after me so and they will not look Swedish [...]. And unfortunately, these are the two choices I can see here [...].

³⁰⁸ (B., Nov 24, 2014).

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

This is my own interpretation from what I'm seeing, this what makes it for me a big, huge challenge because I really want to have my children somewhere in the middle. And I do believe that our religion Islam is a middle, always a person should choose the middle place”³¹⁰.

As can be seen from the interview, the research participant is searching for her self-identification and is worrying about her children's future. She says that some cultural characteristics like Swedish *sam-bo*, or living together, and marriage are very different from what is accepted in her home country. This and other interviews with immigrants often raise the question of what language to speak at home and with children, what holidays to celebrate, what food to cook (*halal*) and where to buy it, whether to wear a veil, if not, what to wear, and many more. This suggests that the identity of the immigrant is in the process of change, in a state of liminality. In the above interview, we see that the research participant would like her or her children to overcome this notion of peripherality and move to the “center of Swedish identity”.

It is important to note that Tatar women also speak of their changing identity in a similar way. Tatars in Estonia, especially those who moved there during the Soviet era, have an immigrant experience. Tatar population with whom I worked in Siberia were local, not immigrant, by which I mean they did not move from one state to another. But they are nevertheless a cultural minority, and in this sense, they find themselves on an edge, on the frontier, culturally peripheral. The fact that women's experiences put them on the frontier of state governmentality means that they are less visible and recognizable in the eyes of the state. Women mention that some other places could be perceived as their cultural mooring, a cultural “center” like Tatarstan, or Turkey, or Saudi Arabia. I would also like to mention one language complexity in the quote. In the Russian language, there is no category of common law marriage, although there is a category of “cohabitation”; therefore, often speaking about cohabitation – usually common among the younger generation of people – the category “civil marriage” is used. This leads to linguistic confusion because “civil marriage” in the Soviet period was the term for a marriage legitimized by a state body, i.e., not a church, not a religious marriage. Here is an example of this linguistic confusion in an interview.

“Traditional marriages strengthen the family. All the same, a traditional marriage, no matter what they say – stamp or no stamp – it means a lot. Because if a person gets married, he has a sense of responsibility. He approaches it in a completely different way. When [it is] a civil marriage, as they say ... [Look] here: I have a woman at work. She has two daughters, both in a civil marriage. They both said: ‘We will try.’ The eldest lived for 5 years [in marriage], parted 3 times and, in the end, she said: ‘We are not interested in each other now. We are no longer united by anything’. So, I think this is an indicator of a civil marriage. Young people who live in a civil marriage are not

³¹⁰ B., Nov 24, 2014.

connected by anything. It is a rare case when they are living in a civil marriage [that he] feels like the father of a family»³¹¹.

From this fragment, we see several layers of meanings at once. First, the research participant contrasts cohabitation, which she calls “civil marriage”, to marriage registered in the registry office and calls it “traditional”. “[...] [T]raditional marriage, no matter what they say, a stamp or a stamp – it means a lot”³¹². Second, there is clearly a gender dimension in this story. She says, “[...] if a person gets married, he has a sense of responsibility, he approaches it in a completely different way”³¹³. Although this sentence can be understood as gender-neutral in Russian, it is written with a masculine form and is subordinated to the masculine noun “person”. However, the verb “to marry” can not be gender-neutral in Russian. It is possible to say “*vstupit’ v brak*”, which would be gender-neutral, but this speaker uses the verb “*zhenit’sya*”, meaning “to marry a woman”. Another indication of gender non-neutrality is “it is a rare case when they are living in a civil marriage, feel like the father of a family”. An interesting glitch occurs here, the first part of the sentence talks about a couple, i.e. “they”, and the second part of the sentence, which according to grammar, should be completed in agreement with the first part of the sentence, the pronoun “they”, suddenly ends “feels like the father of the family”, implying the pronoun “he”. This means that during cohabitation, this is the man who does not feel like the father of the family and does not take it seriously, which is what the interlocutor is talking about.

Another point that I would like to at least mention in the context of postcoloniality and feminism is that in current conditions, the possibility of a woman not changing her surname upon marriage is presented as an achievement of Western feminism. But, interestingly, the women I worked with said that according to Islam, women need to keep their maiden name, keep the last name of their ancestors, which is a small example of how Western feminism and cultural diversity meet each other. In the Islamic epistemology seen here, keeping a surname means maintaining the woman’s family’s lineage because

³¹¹ «Традиционные браки укрепляют семью. Все равно традиционный брак, чтобы там не говорили, штамп ни штамп – это много значит. Потому что, если человек женился, чувство ответственности у него, он подходит к этому совсем по-другому. Когда гражданский брак, как они говорят... вот у меня по работе есть женщина, у нее две дочери, обе в гражданском браке. Они обе говорили: «Мы попробуем». Старшая – жили 5 лет, 3 раза расставались и в итоге она сказала: «Мы теперь не интересны друг другу, нас больше ничего не объединяет». Вот я считаю, это показатель гражданского брака. Молодых людей, которые живут в гражданским браке, ничего не связывает. Редкий случай, когда они, живя гражданским браком, чувствует себя отцом семейства» (G., Jul 9, 2011).

³¹² «[...] Традиционный брак, чтобы там не говорили, штамп ни штамп – это много значит» (G., Jul 9, 2011).

³¹³ «[...] если человек женился, чувство ответственности у него, он подходит к этому совсем по-другому» (G., Jul 9, 2011).

“the surname refers to your grandparent”³¹⁴, whereas, in a feminist understanding, the maiden name symbolizes retaining the woman’s separate identity after getting married. The cross-cutting theme of my collected interviews is the coexistence of tradition related to women and Soviet modernity, about how tradition, on the one hand, was in conflict with modernity, and on the other hand, about how traditions associated with women were outside the accessibility of this modernity. “For my grandmother, being without a headscarf was not haram³¹⁵. They were all teachers. They all grew up during the Soviet era”³¹⁶. “Mom got married in ‘47, didn’t get married – [she was] stolen. [They] even stole a communist; she was already a communist”³¹⁷. These examples illustrate how the Soviet state created women’s ethnic and religious identities, and even with a totalitarian approach to fighting traditions (“relicts” in the Soviet epistemology, some of which were even criminalized), some spaces remained untouched by state regulation.

In Russia, there are some difficulties for women wearing hijabs in educational institutions, both students and teachers. After Islam experienced a revival in Russia, starting in the 2000s, veiling became increasingly visible in society, with schools becoming an arena for the negotiation of state power and individual ethnic and religious identity. One early incident occurred in 2012 in the Stavropol Kray, which is the Northern Caucasus, at a school in the village of Kara-Tyube, in the Neftekumsky district (Shisheliakina and Bobrov 2017). The local school banned girls in *hijabs* from attending classes, which caused their parents to bring legal action against the school administration. However, their lawsuit was unsuccessful. Moving the discourse beyond the school administration, the government of Stavropol Kray prohibited the wearing of religious clothing, attributes, and symbols in educational institutions. The parents also fought this prohibition in court, pursuing their suit through layers of appeals but losing at each instance until reaching the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation. Lastly, the Supreme Court also rejected the parents’ lawsuit (“The Court Confirmed the Bans...” *BBC*) (Shisheliakina and Bobrov 2017: 146).

Another situation of administrative and state power reacting against Muslim veiling in schools occurred in 2014–2015, in the village of Belozerye, in the Republic of Mordovia, in the Volga region. The Russian Supreme Court again supported the ban on wearing *hijabs* in schools. Further, in the same village of Belozerye two years later, the ban on veiling was imposed on teachers, in addition to school girls, with teachers who wore religious veils threatened with dismissal. Yet again, the courts rejected the teachers’ lawsuit, upholding the legality of the ban on veiling in schools (Lunkin “The Case of Hijabs in Mordovia” *Sova*) (Shisheliakina and Bobrov 2017: 147).

³¹⁴ «Фамилия указывает на твоего прародителя» (R. Jul. 7, 2010).

³¹⁵ From Arabic, meaning “forbidden”.

³¹⁶ «Для моей бабушки быть без платка – это было не-харам. Они все были учительницами. Они все выросли во время советской власти» (G., Oct 20, 2019).

³¹⁷ «Мама в ‘47 году замуж вышла, не вышла – украли. Даже коммунистом украли, она уже коммунистом была» (A., Oct 5, 2019).

A new round of conflict arose in 2017, when the Russian Minister of Education, Olga Vasilyeva, said, “I do not think that true believers try to emphasize their faith’s attitude by attributes. We have a secular approach to education”³¹⁸ (“Kadyrov Reacted Sharply to...” *BBC*). To this, the head of the Chechnya Republic, Ramzan Kadyrov, replied that “the headscarf is not an attribute, but an essential part of the clothes of a Muslim woman. It is surprising that the Minister... imposes her ‘personal conviction’ to millions of citizens”³¹⁹ (*ibid*), and Kadyrov continues: “[M]y three daughters attend schools, wear a hijab, and have excellent grades. Does Olga Vasilieva demand they take off the hijab?”³²⁰ (*ibid*). Russia is not exceptional in these widespread sentiments against veiling in schools; earlier France debated on and banned the wearing of headscarves in public schools (Bowen 2010).

Another layer of complexity in the discussion about female veiling is made by voices of leaders of Islamic organizations, which are involved and depend on political relations with the state. For example, Bekkin argues, one of the policy directions of the *Tsentralkoye Dukhovnoye Upravleniye Musulman* (Central Spiritual Administration of Muslims)³²¹ is complete loyalty to the state on a number of issues, such as “permissibility not to wear the hijab by Muslim women, approval of the participation of the Russian armed forces in the civil war in Syria, etc.” (2020: 276). That loyalty “provides the service of curbing the religious activity of Muslims to the political regime in Russia in exchange for certain preferences from the state” (*ibid*).

In contrast, in Estonia, I have not seen any mention of such restrictions. “There are no rules restricting Muslim dress in public or for pupils in schools. However, only a handful of Muslim women wear hijab, mainly on Fridays while attending communal prayer [...]” (Ringvee and Račius 2012: 197). Yet, there are no difficulties with documents, where women are photographed in a headdress (headscarf), nor in Russia (“The Supreme Court recognized the right of Muslim women to be photographed in a headscarf”), nor in Estonia (Ringvee and Račius 2012: 197).

³¹⁸ «Я не думаю, что истинно верующие люди атрибутикой стараются свое отношение к вере подчеркнуть. У нас светский характер образования».

³¹⁹ «Платок не атрибутика, а важная часть одежды мусульманки. Вызывает удивление, что министр ... свое «личное убеждение» навязывает миллионам граждан».

³²⁰ «Мои три дочери учатся в школе, носят хиджаб, имеют отличные оценки. Ольга Васильева требует, чтобы они сняли платки?».

³²¹ An Islamic organization with central governing bodies in Ufa, Republic of Bashkortostan. Its chairman is Mufti Talgat Tadzhuddin.

4.3. State and Ethnic Identity

4.3.1. Tatar Identity in Discourse of State Bureaucracy

Like other ethnic identities, Tatar identity is and has been regulated by the bureaucratic language of the state. I will try to explain here some of the features of the bureaucratic discourses of the state through contemporary materials of observations, interviews, and press materials. To a large extent, I will be referring to the Soviet past because it was that which turned out to be most noticeable in field materials.

In the language of the Soviet state, group cultural identity existed in the taxonomic system of nationality. According to the Soviet national policy, which took shape in dialogue with ethnographers, statisticians, and representatives of the authorities (Hirsch 1997: 277), each nationality should have had its own national republic, history, cuisine, costume, dance. Thus, each nationality was associated with a territory, and the quantitatively dominant nationality in the autonomous republics formed the so-called “*titulnaya natsiya*” (“titular nation”). Many Soviet people associated their future with the future of their autonomous republic and its political status (Shnirelman 2002: 129). During the Soviet period, nationality was incorporated into the administrative structure, the bureaucratic system, official documents of the Soviet citizens, to the point that nationality “became a mark that accompanied a person throughout his/her life”³²² (Shnirelman 2002: 128). That fact leads us to Foucault’s concept of governmentality, governing a population. With the introduction of the passport system in 1932, a column for nationality appeared in internal national identity papers, referred to as passports. “From 1939, birth certificates also included the nationality of the parents (or one of the parents) without the right to change it”³²³ (ibid). “Each Soviet citizen had to define his or her territorial belonging in reference to nationality. Restrictive registration (“propiska”) regulations further contributed to the spatial disciplining of Soviet citizens” (Mühlfried 2010: 12). Therefore, nationality had begun transforming into a fixed, static aspect of identity. “In certain cases, Soviet nations were punished collectively. The most prominent (and saddest) example of this policy is the collective deportation of Chechens, Meskhetians, Crimean Tatars and others to Central Asia and Siberia in the 1940s” (ibid).

In one of my interviews, an interlocutor who identifies herself as Tatar told me about and even showed me her birth certificate, in which her nationality is recorded by the nationality of her parents. As she said, they were mistakenly recorded as Bashkirs. She explains this bureaucratic mistake in such a way that when the Soviet state was created, national republics were designed; it was

³²² «[Национальность] становилась пожизненной меткой и сопровождала человека в течение всей его жизни». Transl. by the author.

³²³ «[Н]ачиная с 1939 года, национальность вписывалась в свидетельство о рождении и в паспорт по национальности родителей (или одного из родителей) без права ее смены». Transl. by the author.

necessary to show that the national majority of Bashkiria were Bashkirs. In order to preserve the national majority in autonomous republics, local authorities distorted official data, including documents. In Bashkiria, even today, this data is being manipulated. My interlocutor tried to correct this bureaucratic “mistake”, but to no avail. In the registry office, she was told that her parents are Bashkirs, which means that she is also a Bashkir. Even though Soviet nationality policy is no longer relevant in many ways, nevertheless, in personal stories, we may see its peculiar reflection and peculiar relationship between individuals and the state. Dmitry Gorenburg discusses the complex interweaving of Tatar and Bashkir identities. Relying on the statistical data of 1897–1989, he tries to understand frequent re-identification among Bashkirs and Tatars and the role of language in that process of re-identification (1999: 558). From his point of view, changes in ethnic identity were a result of changes in governmental policy in this region.

“Before the 1917 revolution the elimination of estate-based restrictions on land-ownership led many Tatars and Mishars who had identified as Bashkirs in order to gain the right to own land to return to their previous identities. In the 1920s the establishment of ethnic republics which were allowed to favour titular ethnic groups led many Bashkirs who found themselves in Tatarstan after the division of Ufa province to re-identify as Tatars. At the same time, government policies on the creation of a Bashkir literary language led many Bashkirs to declare Tatar as their native language. Throughout the post-war period, preferences for members of the titular ethnic group led many Tatars in Bashkortostan to declare themselves Bashkir in official documents. The end of such privileges in the mid-1980s led many of these individuals to reclaim the Tatar identity in the 1989 Census. Finally, the forced conversion of Tatar-language schools in Bashkir villages to literary Bashkir persuaded many Tatar-speaking Bashkirs to re-identify as Tatars in order to allow their children to attend Tatar-language schools” (1999: 575).

In contemporary Estonia, Bashkirs and Tatar organizations structured themselves independently from each other, in contrast, for instance, to Latvia or Germany, where Tatar-Bashkir organizations are united (Cwiklikski 2016: 14). Today’s Estonian state has inherited some pre-and post-Soviet statehood discourses toward ethnicity/nationality: “we have the integration policy with regard to Estonian citizenship and language as the bases for the common core or state identity shared by all permanent residents” (Seljamaa 2013: 187), but combined with the integration policy of neoliberal discourses of multiculturalism: “Estonia is described as an ethnically diverse multicultural society supportive of the preservation and development of cultures and identities of different national groups living in Estonia” (ibid), argues Elo-Hanna Seljamaa. She points out that,

“Though the integration policy envisions a public sphere common to all permanent residents, the territorialized definition of ethnicity/nationality gives

Estonians privileged access to this space, while reducing minority actors to guests who lack the authority to participate in the shaping of the Estonian society as minorities. The state attempts to reestablish and naturalize continuity between pre- and post-Soviet statehood through the creation of national holidays and other objectifications of the 'Estonian cultural space' (Seljamaa 2012: iii).

In the language of the modern Russian state, there is also a combination of different categories from different time periods. For instance, the category “*narod*” (“people”) can be used in both national and ethnic contexts. The terms formed with the idea of “*narod*” (“people”), such as “*mnogonatsional'nyy narod*” (“multinational people”), “*malochislenny korennoy narod*” (“indigenous people”), “*natsional'noye men'shinstvo*” (“national minority”), “*malochislennaya etnicheskaya obshchnost*” (“ethnic community”) are poorly differentiated in the Russian bureaucracy (Sokolovskiy 2001: 236). Sokolovskiy writes that new words “cannot but change the meaning of old concepts, building up in new associative rows, introducing new shades of meanings, etc.” [...] “Putting into new contexts old meanings creates a particular situation of heterochronism of production and consumption of the text and generates many errors of interpretation since it mixes concepts from chronologically different discursive formations”³²⁴ (2001: 251).

Increasing centralization and authoritarianism during a last decade in Russia continues to shape ethnic identities. With the building of “vertical power” along with state centralization, “ethnic minorities in Russia have contended with a new political drive by the president towards the cultural homogenisation of Russian citizens, instigated by his national state agenda [...]” (Yusupova 2018: 624).

Since national/ethnic identity, as I pointed out earlier, has been understood as primordial in the discourse of the state, it can also be the basis for racial differentiation. From the state perspective, group cultural experiences are perceived as static and cultural differences are attributed to biological differences. The pain of racial differentiation manifests itself in my collected interviews in various everyday forms. Here is just one example, where the interlocutor is talking about herself and her daughter.

A: “*Did you feel the difference with those children with whom you studied at school?*”

H: “*Yes, very strong and very sharp, because I don't know how L. will go through the process of socialization, but it was a painful subject for us. There were a lot of children who teased; the more so [because] her*

³²⁴ «новые слова» «не могут не изменять смысла прежних понятий, выстраиваясь в новые ассоциативные ряды, привнося новые оттенки значений и т.п.» [...] «Вчитывание» же новые контексты прежних смыслов создает особую ситуацию гетерохронность производства и потребления текста и порождает множество ошибок интерпретации, поскольку смешивает понятия из хронологически различных дискурсивных образований» (Соколовский 2001: 251).

*complexion was different. But L.'s facial features are softer, as a result of which it [socialization] may be slightly different. For some reason, at that time, in the 80s, this topic was very painful. But now it is not so. There are many Caucasians. The classes have become more international*³²⁵.

A story from another research participant relates a similar idea, “I even heard it, just a couple of times, [...] but apparently, if it is about the nation, it stuck strongly and offensively. I heard about the “Tatar mug” and that the Tatar-Mongols captured and about the yoke [...]”³²⁶. Racial differentiations and hierarchizations on the territory of the Russian empire and the Soviet Union are a complex and understudied topic. The concept of race, however, was understood here differently compared to North America. The authors of the recent collective monograph *Ideologies of Race: Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union in Global Context* come to the conclusion that race was understood differently in different times and by different actors.

“[...] despite the fact that ‘race’ was not codified in law, the concept of race had important consequence for how human difference was understood by many imperial subjects and Soviet citizens. As it did in other empires around the world, the ‘concept of race’ in Russia and the Soviet Union evolved over time and was understood in terms of biology, inheritance, phenotype, civilization, culture, environment, geography, or some combinations of these [...]. No one consensus emerged about exactly what race was or what it meant. Its meanings were contested, multifarious, and sometimes difficult to decipher. And no dominant criteria for defining, let alone ascribing, race gave coherence to the concept” (Rainbow 2019: 3–4).

As we can see from the piece of my interview above, the static national identity in Soviet state language that linked with biology and phenotype became a racial dimension and became a part of the differentiation of self and others. “Soviet thinking about nationality was ‘racialized’. People struggled when they looked like one nationality but felt like another because they feared others would not believe their claim to national belonging” (Rainbow 2019: 17). If in the Soviet period the category of nationality had meaningful significance for the state, then in the 19th century, there were other categories for imperial differentiation, like

³²⁵ А: «Вы ощущали разницу с теми детьми, с кем учились в школе?»

Г: «Да, очень сильно и очень остро, потому что не знаю как у Л. пойдет процесс социализации, но у нас это была больная тема. Было очень много детей, которые дразнили, тем более цвет лица отличался. А у Л. черты лица более мягкие, вследствие этого может быть чуть по-другому. Почему-то в то время, в 80-е годы, эта тема была очень болезненной. Но сейчас это не так, много кавказцев, классы стали более интернациональные» (G., June 5, 2010).

³²⁶ «Даже слышала, правда пару раз... но видимо, что касается нации – врезается хорошо и обидно. И слышала и про «татарскую морду» и что татаро-монголы захватили и про иго...» (Ch., Feb 14, 2011).

religious identity. “The Russian Empire’s nineteenth-century census takers asked respondents about their religious confession” (Rainbow 2019: 3).

“Many educated Russians now came to conceive of the Russian Empire as a complex set of territories consisting of a “central core” (tsentral’noe iadro or korenniaia Rossia) that “inherently belonged” to Russians, surrounded by a ring of borderlands incorporated into the empire at different times and populated largely by aliens. Both concepts, however, of aliens and Russians, remained contested notions. Nor was there a clear answer to the question of where to draw the boundaries between the Russian core and the alien borderlands. The areas that came to be viewed during the course of the nineteenth century as the core were highly diverse space in both cultural and societal terms, and so were the borderlands. The continental character of the tsarist empire helped to shape a sense of Russia’s unique relationships between the central core and the borderlands. In contrast with Western empires’ overseas colonies, the Russian imperial borderlands were often viewed by educated Russians as a “continuation of Russian territory”. The geographical continuity of the empire’s territory seemed to predetermine the future of the borderlands – they would merge with the center” (Campbell 2015: 6).

For subjects of “Other” origin, the Russian Empire had a variety of terminology like *inorodtsy*, *inovertsy*, *tuzemtsy*, *yasachthnyie*³²⁷, which were legal categories used by the state. The category “*inorodtsy*” literally means a person of “other origin”. It was a legal category that existed from 1822 to 1917. Legally, *inorodtsy* did not obey the general laws of the Empire, they retained their local customs and traditions, and they had some privileges, the most important of which was an exemption from military service³²⁸. But informal interpretations of the category were intricate. John Slocum gives evidence of slippage of the term “*inorodtsy*” in the period. According to the educational policies of the time, non-Russian inhabitants of the Volga region – Tatars, Bashkirs, Mordovians, Chuvash, Udmurts, and Mari (Cheremis) – were *inorodtsy*, but according to the law, they were not. In the “*Ustav ob upravlenii inorodtsev*” (“Charter of management of *inorodtsy*”) 1822³²⁹, Tatars were classified as “settled *inorodtsy*”. However, following John Slocum’s view, this category was applied only to the Tatars in Siberia because the Tatars of the Volga region (unlike “settled *inorodtsy*”) were subject to conscription, and the official statistics of the second half of the 19th century did not count them among *inorodtsy* (Slocum 1998: 185). Geraci disagrees with Slocum; from his perspective, it was not

³²⁷ More is written about *inorodtsy* by Slocum J. 1998; Konev A. Yu. 1995; Sokolovskiy S.V. 2001; Ssorin-Chaikov N. 2003; Geraci R. 2015.

³²⁸ After the introduction of universal military service in 1874, the rule was no longer valid for the “settled *inorodtsy*”. For other “*inorodtsy*” the liberation existed until World War I (Slocum 1998: 179).

³²⁹ “*Ustav ob upravlenii inorodtsev*” 1822, developed by M. Speransky. It was supposed to replace the existing disorder in legal terminology with a single category of “*inorodtsy*” (Slocum; 1998: 180).

slippage, it was inconsistent usage of the category, “[...] the terminology used by different ministries was not perfectly coordinated” (Geraci 1999: 31).

4.3.2. Tatar Language Meanings

Another vital representation of the state in fieldwork materials is the theme of language, which appeared in a different context.

On the one hand, to become a Soviet person and make a professional career, it was necessary to master the Russian language and abandon the national language to a certain extent. Maarja Klaas gives an example about the Tatar language of one of the interlocutors: “During the Soviet time, the Russian language was, there was so much of it. But even though when we went to Tatarstan during the Soviet period, people were surprised that we spoke Tatar. There were people there who were ashamed to speak their mother tongue” (2015: 11).

The dominant position of the Russian language appears in everyday life of Tatars in the Tyumen region, as well as in Estonia (at least so-called Russian Tatars) (Cwikliński 2016: 12). “The great majority of Russian Tatars in the Baltic Sea region probably use Russian as the main language of communication. The obvious russification of Russian Tatars in the Baltic Sea region and in the diaspora in general parallels the situation in Russia itself, where large parts of the urban Tatar population have already switched to Russian” (ibid). However, those who attended Estonian language schools know the Tatar language well, says Klaas (2015: 11).

The great tragedy is that the Soviet government engaged with the national elites and standardized the country’s various languages of non-Russian minorities. Scholars contributed to the standardization of written languages and scripts, which were then introduced into management, school education, and justice. They created a special alphabet, the *Yanalif*, for Turkic languages. For Tatars, it was a significant change from Arabic script to Latin in 1926. Yet, in the 1930s, policy toward national minorities transformed, it became Russian-nationalistic, and in 1939 a Latin alphabet was replaced by Cyrillic for ethnic minorities. As a result of the changes from the Arabic alphabet to Latin and then from Latin to Cyrillic, many Tatars were disconnected from their cultural heritage (Faller 2013: 109–141).

Despite the Soviet modernization and imposed russification, among my research participants, there were those who grew up in rural areas and until a certain time did not meet with Russian speakers and did not hear the Russian language. This is an illustration of such a case.

“[I was] born in V. Moved to the village of K., studied at the national school [...] [I] studied the Tatar language, studied until the 8th grade. Childhood was spent in Tobolsk. Grandfather and grandmother took [me] to the theater.

*There I realized that apart from the Tatar village and the Tatars, there are other nationalities*³³⁰.

She is communicating about her rural and urban life experience and that in the rural area, which was more homogenous, she did not feel the need to preserve the Tatar language because it was a part of everyday routine.

Suzanne Wertheim points out that “[t]he fall of the Soviet Union and increase in Tatarstan’s autonomy led to both top-down promotive language policies and grass-roots revitalization efforts” (2009: 254), but even at the time of her ethnographic field research in 2000, “Tatar remained generally low-prestige and Tatar usage was ‘marked’, ‘limited’, and ‘particularized’, while Russian was the ‘normal’, ‘unmarked’ language that could be used in all functional domains” (ibid). Another equally important imbalance of power between the Tatar and Russian languages is associated with the script. As I noted earlier, in the 1930s, the Tatar language based on the Latin script was switched into the Cyrillic script. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, “during the early 1990s work began on the establishment of an official Tatar Latin alphabet, which would have come into force in 2001. However, in 2002 the Russian government made an amendment to the Law on Languages of the Peoples of the Russian Federation in clause 6 of article 3 that states that the state languages of the republics of the Russian Federation are to be based on Cyrillic graphics” (Wigglesworth-Baker 2016: 22). The text of the law itself says, “In the Russian Federation, the alphabets of the state language of the Russian Federation and the state languages of the republics are built on the graphic basis of the Cyrillic alphabet. Other graphic bases of alphabets of the state language of the Russian Federation and state languages of republics may be regulated by federal law”³³¹ (“Legal status of languages ‘On the State Language of the Russian Federation’”, *KonsultantPlus*). Furthermore, with expansion of centralization and authoritarianism in contemporary Russia, the teaching of Tatar language in schools in Tatarstan has been scaled down (“Mandatory Tatar-Language Classes...” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*).

For the Tatar people themselves, language is a significant source of identification. “Culture is transmitted through language”³³², articulates one of the interlocutors. Another person says, “I was born a Tatar, I have to carry it. What I myself know, I must convey to others, so that they understand that this is still

³³⁰ «Родилась в В., переехали в деревню К., училась в национальной школе [...]. Татарский язык изучала, училась до 8 класса. Детство прошло в Тобольске. Дедушка и бабушка водили в театр. Тогда я поняла, что кроме татарской деревни и татар есть другие национальности» (L. Aug 08, 2010).

³³¹ «В Российской Федерации алфавиты государственного языка Российской Федерации и государственных языков республик строятся на графической основе кириллицы. Иные графические основы государственного языка Российской Федерации и государственных языков республик могут устанавливаться федеральными законами».

³³² «Культура передается через язык» (I., Oct 07, 2019).

their own language, and a person must know it”³³³. Yet, there is another way of negotiation. For another part of the Tatars, while retaining its significance, the Tatar language seems to be becoming secondary to their identity. As is possible to imagine, a lack of knowledge of the Tatar language is criticized in the community.

“I heard from relatives that ‘why you don’t know your language?’. But not a single woman in our family taught me the Tatar language. And without it, everything is transmitted [...] It so happened that I am a Tatar who speaks Russian, who does not speak her own language. When I find myself in an environment, the language is an atmosphere, a phrase spoken in Tatar, and not in Russian, carries such huge meaning and even an event to which adults and old people come, they speak Tatar, and for me, it is valuable. Is it possible to continue a nation without a language? No, I disagree. Without knowing the language, half of the information is lost [...] I just have such realities that I don’t speak [...], but this does not prevent the tradition from being passed on [...]”³³⁴.

As we can see, a person who does not know the Tatar language identifies herself as a Tatar. In this sense, this is what Homi Bhabha calls “hybridity”, when there is no one or other culture or identity in its pure form, but there is a place in-between (1994: 63–64). In this regard, I do not agree with Karimova’s idea that “[t]he difference was in the point that the younger generation of Tatars no longer considered the knowledge of the Tatar language and history as important components of Tatar identity” (2014: 19). Based on my field materials for this young research participant, although she does not know the Tatar language, she still understands its significance, but also defends her right to be identified as a Tatar.

The Tatar language carries valuable communicative meaning in the communities I worked with. The Tatar language is used in private, domestic settings, as we can see based on the materials of my interviews. We can also see that the use of the Tatar or Russian language is performative, often depending on the context of what is happening, who is being addressed, as well as the content of the conversation itself. This is a sample of dialogue with one interviewee.

³³³ «Я родилась татаркой, я должна это нести. То, что я сама знаю, я должна другим передать, чтоб они поняли, что это все же свой родной язык и человек должен его знать» (А., March 15, 2011).

³³⁴ «Я слышала от родственников, «почему ты не знаешь свой язык?». Но ни одна женщина в нашей семье не научила меня татарскому языку. И без него все передаётся [...] Так сложилось, что я татарка, которая говорит по-русски, которая не говорит на своем языке. Когда я оказываюсь в среде, язык – это атмосфера, фраза, сказанная по-татарски, а не по-русски несет в себе такой огромный смысл и даже мероприятие, на которое приходят люди взрослые, старики, они говорят по-татарски и для меня это ценно. Можно ли продолжать нацию без языка? Нет, я не соглашусь. Без знания языка теряется половина информации [...]. У меня просто такие реалии, что я не говорю [...], но это не мешает традиции передаваться [...]» (S., Sept 20, 2019).

G: *“The topic of the Tatar language constantly arises in our family. Because [my] Mom insists that we talk to the child in the [Tatar] language. Mom really wants L. to speak the [Tatar] language. Since my husband does not speak the language and hardly understands, it is very difficult”.*

A: *“That is, in his family, the Tatar language is not used?”*

G: *“His mother speaks the [Tatar] language very well. The aunts speak very well. But with him, for some reason, my grandfather preferred to communicate in Russian since they grew up in the north. Since they lived in the north, they were afraid that they would study badly. There were such notions that bilingual people begin to speak a second language badly. He did not have the opportunity to speak the language at home. We talked at home, so I can somehow express myself well enough and understand the speech”³³⁵.*

As we can see, the research participants and the people close to them, whom they talk about, were or are constantly facing a choice to speak in one language or another, in the Tatar language, or in Russian, even at home “I talk to my grandmother, grandfather [in Tatar], because they speak Russian badly”³³⁶. “My grandmother is in Kazan, she does not speak Russian, I understand the [Tatar] language. With his relatives, I do not understand what they say”³³⁷. It is meaningful to note as well that there is a lot of mixing languages. Especially in Estonia, “Estonian Tatars navigate between at least four languages”, says Maria Iqbal (2021: 290). She clarifies that Tatar is the language spoken at home, Russian is used in several spheres, Estonian is the language in school and an official one, English is obtained in schools (ibid). All interviews I collected in Estonia and the Tyumen region were conducted in Russian, but using Tatar words and, to a lesser extent, using Arabic words. Klass writes that several of her interlocutors use a mixture of languages as well, and one of the interviewees “explains the mixing of Tatar and Estonian as follows: I have to say with regret that our language is a home language. Well, a disappearing language. We don’t have many things. If we want to talk about art or science or whatever, then we don’t have those words” (Klass 2015: 11).

³³⁵ Г: «Тема татарского языка постоянно возникает в нашей семье. Потому что мама настаивает, чтобы мы разговаривали с ребенком на языке. Мама очень хочет, чтобы Л. разговаривала на [татарском] языке. Поскольку муж у меня не разговаривает на языке и почти не понимает, это очень сложно».

A: «То есть в его семье татарский язык не [используется]?»

Г: «У него очень хорошо говорит мама на языке, тетки очень хорошо говорят. Но с ним, почему-то дед предпочитал общаться на русском языке, поскольку они росли на севере. Раз жили на севере боялись, что учиться будут плохо, были такие представления люди-билингва плохо начинают говорить на втором языке. У него не было возможности разговаривать дома на языке. У нас разговаривали дома, поэтому кое-как я могу изъясняться ну и понимаю речь» (G., June 05, 2010).

³³⁶ «Я разговариваю с бабушкой, дедушкой, потому что они по-русски плохо разговаривают» (S., Oct 14, 2010).

³³⁷ «Бабушка у меня в Казани, она не знает по-русски, я язык понимаю. С его родственниками я не понимаю, что говорят» (D., Sept 29, 2010).

Based on ethnographic materials, the Tatar language carries an emotional meaning, and it creates emotional ties. One woman living in Tyumen but originally from one of the republics, Bashkiria, describes her experience when she comes to visit her relatives there, “you come there to visit, it is unusual. Where you do not turn around, there are the Tatars talking. And here somehow, I want to hear my ancestors, Tatar language”³³⁸. Those emotional meanings of the Tatar language intersect with gender role distribution, for example, in communication between mother and child. “The mother tongue is the basis of all languages, what is given by mother’s milk; this is superimposed on other languages. This is both literacy and general development. A child must not be deprived of his native language”³³⁹.

“The Tatar language is not officially listed among the endangered languages of the world. According to some criteria for endangered languages it would be considered very much alive, especially because of the amount of active speakers worldwide” (Ståhlberg 2021: iv). But some research participants interpret the Tatar language as a language remaining in the past. This is what one of the leaders of the Tatar organization in Tobolsk says about this.

“Naturally, the traditional culture is gone. But, nevertheless, those what is a component of culture – words, sayings, proverbs – upbringing was filled with them. And these things were axioms and, probably, a lot is transmitted through the language. And such echoes were preserved in the culture of the parents. And, unfortunately, we cannot pass on those elements of culture to children and grandchildren. Communication in the Tatar language was natural”³⁴⁰.

She notes that Tatar epistemology and Tatar identity was expressed through the Tatar language. And with the decline in communication in the Tatar language, difficulties arise with the transmission of various elements of culture as “words, proverbs, sayings”³⁴¹.

Simultaneously, “[m]any languages like Tatar are spoken, written and read in very different environments and conditions” (Ståhlberg 2021: xii), which creates a variety of forms and uses of languages. Thus, some of the research

³³⁸ «Приезжаешь туда в гости, непривычно. Куда не повернись кругом татары разговаривают. А здесь хочется услышать своих предков, татарский язык» (w. of R. Jan 20, 2011).

³³⁹ «Родной язык – это основа всех языков, то, что дано с материнским молоком, это накладывается и на другие языки. Это и грамотность, и общее развитие. Нельзя ребенка лишать родного языка» (F., Nov 26, 2019).

³⁴⁰ «Естественно, что традиционная культура ушла. Но, тем не менее, то, что является составляющей культуры – слова, поговорки, пословицы – ими было наполнено воспитание. И эти вещи были аксиомами и, наверное, многое передается через язык. И такие отголоски они сохранялись культуре родителей. И, к сожалению, эти элементы культуры мы не можем передать детям и внукам. Общение на татарском языке – это было естественным» (Z., Aug 15, 2013).

³⁴¹ Ibid.

participants notice the difference between the Siberian-Tatar and Kazan-Tatar languages.

A: *“The literary language itself and the way you speak are generally very different. There are words there that I don’t understand. I call and say: ‘I re-read this word, please, translate it for me’”.*

A.S: *“Slightly different, right?”*

A: *“Yes, the language is literary. It still differs from our Siberian one”³⁴².*

In the story of this research participant, literary Tatar is the Kazan version of the Tatar language, and Siberian-Tatar is its variation. In the perception of some, the Siberian-Tatar language is a dialect, while for others, it is an independent language. One of the Tatar philologists in Tyumen, Maxim Sagidullin, makes a significant contribution to the development of the Siberian-Tatar language. He wrote a phonetics and a grammar of the Siberian-Tatar language, and a Russian-Siberian dictionary (Sagidullin 2008, 2010, 2014). “The difference between a way of speaking that gets labeled a language and a way of speaking that gets labeled a dialect often comes down to politics, culture, and history” (Ahearn 2012: 122), “there is no universally accepted criteria for [their] distinguishing” (ibid). Moreover, the Siberian-Tatar language is included in the UNESCO list of endangered languages (*“UNESCO Atlas of the World’s languages in Danger”*).

“Language is closely connected to identity and to culture, traditions, narratives, memories and many other aspects of individuals, communities and whole societies” (Ståhlberg 2021: ix). From the external perspective, the narratives about the language are diverse and carry meanings tied with identity, heritage, and emotional connections, and they are bound with power. Language is an embodied way that people express their identity, including intersectional identities.

4.3.3. State and Contested Heritage

In this part, I am going to give two examples of the relationship between the state and the Tatar community. One case is from Tallinn, and the second one is from Tyumen.

For the Tatar population living in Estonia, the Tyumen region, or Tatarstan and other regions, *Sabantuy* (from a Tatar word meaning “plow” / “plough”) is one of the most significant holidays, around which festivals and celebrations are organized. Sebastian Cwikliki describes the modern celebration of *Sabantuy* in this way,

³⁴² A: «Сам литературный язык и то, как разговариваешь – это вообще очень разное совсем. Там есть такие слова, которые я не понимаю. Я звоню и говорю: «Вот это слово перечитала вы мне, пожалуйста, переведите».

A.Ш.: «Немного различается, да?»

A: «Да, язык литературный. От нашего сибирского он все-равно отличается» // А., March 15, 2011.

“[...] *Sabantuy* [...] has rural origins. It was first mentioned by Russian travelers in the late eighteenth century, but it did not attract much attention in later times. In Soviet times, it seems to have been tolerated by the Soviet authorities, but it is only since 1991 that *Sabantuy* acquired a semi-official status in Russia [...] The festival has become an icon of – often imagined – Tatariness, and it is celebrated not only in Tatarstan and Russia (including places as remote from the Volga-Ural region as Vladivostok and Saint Petersburg), but also at places in the diaspora like San Francisco, New York, Toronto, Prague and at several places in Germany and the Baltic Sea region” (2016: 10).

During my ethnographic fieldwork in the Tyumen region in the 2010s, *Sabantuy* was one of the primary ways of constructing and performing Tatar identity. Frequently, for the *Sabantuy*, the local *Komitet to delam natsionalnostey* (Committee for Ethnic Affairs of the Tyumen region), pursuing ethnic policy, has provided modest financial support from the regional budget.

Later in Estonia in summer 2019, I also attended the *Sabantuy* festival held in Tallinn and had the opportunity to observe the significance of this event for the Tatars living here. The 2019 *Sabantuy* in Tallinn was exceptional because it was an all-European celebration. It was organized by a Tatar organization from North-East Estonia. The festival took place in the form of a concert, with many other entertainments, such as wrestling *kurash*³⁴³, jumping in bags, and other competitions. It was attended by local government officials and officials from Tatarstan, both of whom delivered official speeches opening the festival, as well as local and visiting artists from Tatarstan with vocal, dance, and other performances. To the left of the stage, there were tents with souvenirs, jewelers, and pillowcases crafted in the Tatar style. There was a tent showing the interior of a Tatar house, then a tent with a demonstration of embroidery techniques. As the concert began, I approached the stage to listen to the officials’ opening speeches. The Mayor of Tallinn, who was the first congratulating the Tatars on this festival on the stage, said that this was an important event for Estonia and Tallinn, in particular. To host such a festival of the European level showed that Tatars have long lived in Tallinn, and there is even a quarter in the city called “*Tatari*”. That is, he drew attention to the fact that Tatar heritage is part of the Estonian culture and state, to the historical continuity (*inheritance*) that appeared itself in the center of the city of Tallinn. Another narrative was made by the Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Estonia, who spoke about the ties between the Tatars and Russia, a long joint history. From the point of view of this discourse, it means that the Tatar heritage is organically linked with the Russian state and with Russian history. Later there were a few more speakers, but a most interesting thing happened later when, after the concert, I looked in more detail at what was being sold in the tents. One of them sold pillowcases, the ornamentation of which piqued my curiosity. The salesman, probably trying to heighten my curiosity and interest, pulled two unique pillowcases out from

³⁴³ *Korəu* in Cyrillic Tatar.

under the counter: one with the image of the President of Tatarstan and the other with the image of the capital of Tatarstan – Kazan. This was a special gesture on his part because he clarified that he was not supposed to display and trade any symbols of Tatarstan. I assume that, because I spoke Russian, and my physical appearance did not reflect a clear ethnic identity to him, my interest in ornament and embroidery allowed the seller to feel the appropriate moment and offer these special pillowcases.

This case is important to me for reflection about the interpretations of Tatar heritage. As I mentioned earlier, the mayor of Tallinn connected Tatar heritage with the Estonian state, and the ambassador of the Russian Federation to Estonia did the same with the Russian state, while the Tatars themselves consider the heritage their own and are ready to perform it at the appropriate cultural moment. Brubaker and others write that “ethnicity and nationness are embodied and expressed not only in political claims and nationalist rhetoric but in everyday encounters, practical categories, commonsense knowledge, cultural idioms, cognitive schemas, mental maps, interactional cues, discursive frames, organizational routines, social networks, and institutional forms” (Brubaker *et al.* 2006: 6–7). Taking out pillowcases with the symbols of Tatarstan from under the counter, then, as “everyday encounters” of nationalism, tell us that Tatar nationalism is hidden, but it is ready to be performed itself in a certain moment, and this manifestation is contrasted to the meanings made by state officials.

To maintain the narrative about the relationship between the state and the Tatar community, I want to move now to Tyumen to analyze another case.

Since the 2010s in Tyumen and some other cities of the Tyumen region like Tobolsk³⁴⁴, Tara, etc., an attempt to raise a monument to the cult hero Yermak has been discussed. Journalists, political figures, leaders of ethnic organizations, and in some cases, scholars explore the complexity of that discussion. Their social positions and voices transform that local discussion, a local matter, into a broader context. I will try to unpack the negotiation process and identity building around this local case and emphasize the Tatar community existing in Siberia’s understanding of that discussion.

Yermak, also called Yermak Timofeevich, was a Cossack who led the beginning of the conquest of Siberia in the 16th century. His biography is not very well known (Naumov and Collins 2006: 57). About Yermak and his military expedition to Siberia, we know from the Siberian chronicles and the “The History of Siberia” written by Gerhard Müller (ch. 2), a scholar of German origin³⁴⁵. They are the primary sources on the early Russian history of Siberia, but there have not been found any archaeological remains of Yermak or his troops by contemporary studies (Belich 2015: 118). His figure, however, has been overlain with folk legends in the current situation, and that figure is

³⁴⁴ For an article about the Yermak monument in Tobolsk, see Kvashnin 2014.

³⁴⁵ Known as well as Фёдор Иванович Миллер.

endowed with different and complex meanings. In the contemporary epistemology of the Cossacks, some Orthodox leaders, and some groups of Russian nationalists, Yermak symbolizes the opening of the “gates to Siberia”, extending the Empire’s territory. Moreover, in modern discourses, one can see the commercialization of his image as attractive for the tourist industry of the region because narrated memories stimulate tourists’ desire, as Regina Bendix argues (2002).

Many Siberian cities, including Tyumen, are, from the point of view of a modern Russian-centered state epistemology, city-outposts for the advancement of the Muscovite Rus to the East. However, some of these cities, such as Tyumen, were founded nearby or on the territory of settlements that modern Tatar people consider as Tatar, for example, the city of *Chingi-Tura* (or *Chimgi-Tura*) (Forsyth 1992: 25–26), which is interpreted by the Tatar community as a part of their Tatar heritage. In 2010–2012, when I was conducting ethnographic fieldwork in Western Siberia, there were attempts to establish a monument to Yermak in the historic square of the city of Tyumen. Tatar organizations of the region, together with the World Congress of the Tatars based in Kazan (Tatarstan), opposed that attempt.

The meaning of the historic square of Tyumen, where there is a small memorial of the foundation of the city, is described by travel journalist Anthony Haywood in the following way,

“The foundation memorial stone has a plaque inscribed with the simple words: “On the site on June 25, 1586 the city of Tyumen was founded”. The square itself is planted with flowers in summer and beyond the foundation stone are views north to the academy and the golden cupolas of the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity. Next up is the paved area with an obelisk (Obelisk of Victory) and eternal flame dedicated to fallen Soviet soldiers of the Second World War and south of here Historical Square itself and a small cross surrounded by a few granite rocks that form a memorial to Yermak. The site is otherwise unmarked and rarely appears on maps, possibly due to a lingering ambivalence among local Tartar, for whom Yermak’s victories also signify defeat” (2010: 1221).

For the Tatar community, leaders of Tatar organizations, and leaders of the Muslim community, the figure of Yermak connects with the violent conquest of this territory, the territory of the Siberian khanate and its capital of *Chimgi-Tura* (Wood 2011). In Tatar people’s epistemology, that space historically connects with their own past, with their ancestors, and they want to remember that part of history. For the Tatar population in Siberia, it is extremely important to present their history in this way, as it is a fairer story from their perspective. In response to attempts to install a monument to Yermak there, Tatar public figures repeatedly held public events at which they emphasized this problem³⁴⁶. The

³⁴⁶ Observations, Oct 07, 2012.

public activity has led to a mobilization of Tatar nationalism in the region, which itself has been a reaction to Russian nationalism and imperialism.

The same attempts were made later, in 2015 and 2019–2020, in other cities of the Tyumen region, Tobolsk, Tara, and others, which I learned about from the local press. For example, the leader of the Tatar organization and city Duma deputy Abukin says that “Any historical monument should bring joy, but not a split in society. We already have many social and economic problems, so it is not yet time for a monument to Yermak [...] Moreover, the indigenous people – Siberian Tatars – generally perceive Yermak as a robber and invader”³⁴⁷ (Bastrikov, “Tyumen Is Divided by Yermak”). Sagidullin is another leader of a Tatar organization, a specialist in Turkic philology, and a docent at Tyumen State University, who says, “In our national tradition, Yermak is a negative figure [...] This is our Motherland, we do not want to endure it. Do not annoy us and show your superiority [...]”³⁴⁸ (ibid).

The main problem is that the positions of power of the contested discourses are not structurally equal. Foucault demonstrates that power is dispersed and distributed unequally in society (2012). Based on the analysis of ethnographic observations and of the representation of discourses in the press, it can be noted that some officials represent the voice of the state. For example, the mayors of the city of Tyumen (past and present) express support for the establishment of the monument to Yermak; their voices weave together with the conservative voices of Russian nationalism (Samigullina and Zavyalova. “Against Yermak...”). Gupta argues that we learn about the state through encounters with the statists in official offices and representations of the state in media (2006). Through those encounters and representations of the Russian-centered state, the refusal from the “normative” understanding of history and heritage is interpreted as a refusal to accept the heritage of Russian statehood (Samigullina and Zavyalova. “Against Yermak...”). Tatars’ rejection of Yermak and Russian-centric history shapes Tatar heritage construction in contestation to the state interpretations.

When I was presenting that part of my thesis project at the conference “The Place of Memory and the Memory of Place” in London at the Center for Interdisciplinary Research in 2021, I was asked about the communication of Tatars living in Siberia with Crimean Tatars in terms of the situation around the Crimean Peninsula. Since this topic is politically very hot, I would like to emphasize first that my thesis is not about the Tatars living in Ukraine, so I did not pay special attention to the topic of the Crimean Tatars in the course of my fieldwork. Secondly, I have come across some stories about the Crimean Tatars

³⁴⁷ «Любой исторический монумент должен приносить радость, а не раскол в общество. У нас и так много социальных и экономических проблем, так что пока не время для памятника Ермаку [...]. Тем более что коренной народ – сибирские татары – в основном, воспринимают Ермака как разбойника и захватчика».

³⁴⁸ «В нашей национальной традиции Ермак – фигура негативная [...]. Это наша Родина, мы не хотим это терпеть. Не надо нас раздражать и показывать свое превосходство [...]».

in the Siberian press materials. However, stories about the Crimean Tatars and the Crimean Peninsula are written exclusively in the Tatar language. Since the Russian press is monitored by the state, I felt that this was not a topic that Tatars living in Siberia would like to discuss openly. In the text of the thesis, I refer to some materials written in Tatar on women and femininity, but this topic is discussed in both Tatar and Russian, in contrast to the topic of the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula. Yet what is important to mention here is that the Crimean Tatars are left without representation, without the ability to speak openly publicly.

4.3.4. Tatar Communities and Their Structure

In this part, I am going to discuss the structure of the Tatar communities in the Tyumen region and Estonia in order to illustrate who speaks on behalf of the communities and what kind of mass media they have for delivering their ideas. Because cultural heritage interconnects with state thought ideology, politics, and possession (Kuutma 2014, Schramm 2015), leaders of Tatar organizations represent a voice of the Tatar communities for their states at national levels. As Seljamaa fairly points out, there is a gap between the representers and those whom representers claimed to represent (2013: 193). This subdivision bridges with chapter 2, where I focus on the representation of women's images in vernacular newspapers.

According to the current legislation in Russia, ethnic organizations should be registered with the Ministry of Justice as national-cultural autonomies (*natsionalno-kulturnaya avtonomiya, NKA*). The main documents regulating the activities of the organizations are “On National and Cultural Autonomy” (*KonsultantPlus*), “On Public Associations” (*ibid*), and others. National-cultural Autonomy is defined in the law as

*“a form of national and cultural self-determination, which is an association of citizens of the Russian Federation who identify themselves as belonging to a certain ethnic community in the situation of a national minority in the relevant territory, on the basis of their voluntary self-organization in order to independently resolve issues of preserving identity, developing the language, education, national culture, strengthening the unity of the Russian nation, harmonizing interethnic relations, promoting interreligious dialogue, as well as carrying out activities aimed at social and cultural adaptation and integration of migrants”*³⁴⁹ (“On National and Cultural Autonomy” *KonsultantPlus*).

³⁴⁹ «форма национально-культурного самоопределения, представляющая собой объединение граждан Российской Федерации, относящих себя к определенной этнической общности, находящейся в ситуации национального меньшинства на соответствующей территории, на основе их добровольной самоорганизации в целях самостоятельного решения вопросов сохранения самобытности, развития языка, образования, национальной культуры, укрепления единства российской нации, гармонизации межэтнических отношений, содействия межрелигиозному диалогу, а

According to this legislation, “the state authorities of the constituent entity of the Russian Federation, in accordance with the law of the constituent entity of the Russian Federation, provide support to regional and local national-cultural autonomies at the expense of the budget of the constituent entity of the Russian Federation”³⁵⁰ (“On National and Cultural Autonomy” *Konsultant-Plus*). The implementation of this law and a number of others at the local level is carried out primarily through the executive authority – the *Komitet po delam natsionalnostey Tyumenskoy oblasti* (Committee for Nationalities of the Tyumen region), which is subordinate to the vice-governor of the region (“Regulations on the Committee...”).

At the point of the ethnographic fieldwork in the Tyumen region, the Tatar community was rather heterogeneous, and therefore various ethnic organizations have operated, representing the interests of various strata and groups within the Tatar community – youth, women, Siberian Tatars, etc. Organizations have included the *Kongress tatar Tyumenskoy oblasti* (“Congress of the Tatars of the Tyumen region”), the organization of *Sibirskikh tatar i tatar, zhivushchikh v Tyumenskoy oblasti* (“Siberian Tatars and Tatars living in the Tyumen region”), *Naslediye* (“Heritage”), as well as Tatar youth organizations like *Soyuz tatarskoy molodezhi* (“The Union of Tatar Youth”), *Yash' buyn* (from the Tatar language, it means “young generation”), and others. They have been the most active actors of the community, and were often those who spoke on behalf of the Tatar community and population.

One of the most active organizations is the *Kongress tatar Tyumenskoy oblasti* (“Congress of Tatars of the Tyumen Region”) which arose in 2007. According to the goals of the organization, the Congress consolidates the Tatar people and their public and cultural-educational organizations to preserve the historical and cultural heritage of the Tatars; further, it promotes the revival, preservation, and development of the Tatar culture (“About Organization...”). As one of the leaders of the Congress noted, its activity is aimed primarily at children and youth, at the formation of a new cohort of Tatar intelligentsia who are “proud of their nationality [ethnicity]”³⁵¹.

The organization *Sibirskikh tatar i tatar, zhivushchikh v Tyumenskoy oblasti* (“Siberian Tatars and Tatars Living in the Territory of the Tyumen Region”) was focusing, mainly, on the extension of networking among Tatar people, the organization of festivals and events, and the facilitation of Tatar language preservation (Khairullina *et al.* 2011: 248). The main purpose of the *Nasledie* organization (“Heritage”) is the revival and preservation of the culture of the Siberian Tatars. For this, the organization is building a historical and memorial

также осуществления деятельности, направленной на социальную и культурную адаптацию и интеграцию мигрантов».

³⁵⁰ «органы государственной власти субъекта Российской Федерации в соответствии с законом субъекта Российской Федерации оказывают поддержку региональным и местным национально-культурным автономиям за счет средств бюджета субъекта Российской Федерации».

³⁵¹ «[...] гордится своей национальностью» (R., Nov 08, 2011).

complex “*Isker*”, on the banks of the Irtysh River, at the location of an archaeological site – “*Kuchumovo Goroditche*” (“The Kutchum fortified settlement”). Festivals and conferences are held there annually. The organization issues its eponymous newspaper occasionally (“Festival of historical and cultural heritage...”).

The women’s organization *Ak kalfak*, which emerged in the early 1990s, is focused on women’s needs and the woman’s role in a family. The organization considers the family as an institution to maintain the language, culture and traditions, the religion of the Tatars, and women’s roles as the most important in this institution³⁵². In the early 1990s, the organization was both parts of the Tyumen branch of the Union of Women of Russia on the one hand, and on the other, it was supported by the World Tatars Congress (with a center in Kazan). Since 1996, the organization has been publishing a magazine, which later became an online resource. Garaev writes that the organization in Tatarstan, the Association of Tatar women *Ak kalfak*³⁵³, in their purposes said, “On the one hand, Tatar women should preserve the national gene pool and revive national family and folk traditions, and on the other hand, they should strive for state and political activities”³⁵⁴, which demonstrates a duality and interconnection of traditional and modern values in the Tatar organization (2019: 987).

Since 2016, the project *Ebiem* has been implemented in the mosque of Yalutorovsk by elderly Tatar women. This is the project on social entrepreneurship I mentioned previously, involving older women in social activity and the sewing of items such as skullcaps, slippers, brooches, and other textiles. In addition, *Ebiem* conducts workshops called “Grandmothers – granddaughters” to transfer to the younger generation the skills of sewing traditional Tatar clothes (“The social project ‘Ebiem’...”).

Youth organizations such as the *Soyuz tatarskoy molodezhi* (“Union of Tatar Youth”) and *Yash’ buyn* (“Yash-buyn”) arose in the early 2000s. They seek to unite Tatar youth in the cities of the region and beyond, to support youth initiatives (“Union of Tatar Youth...”), and to foster a sense of love for their native traditions, history, and language (“Tatar Youth Forum...”).

The life of the Tatar population in the Tyumen region is covered in the newspapers “*Yanarysh*”, “*Hikmet*”, and “*Ak kalfak*” magazine, published in Tatar and Russian. In the Muslim newspaper “*Muslim-Info*”, the life of the Tatars is covered episodically as well. The *Kongress tatar Tyumenskoy oblasti* (“Congress of Tatars of Tyumen region”) contributes to Tatar media in the region – a branch of the Tatarstan television channel “*Tatarstan. Noviy vek*” (“Tatarstan. New Century”) has been established in the Tyumen region, as well

³⁵² (B., Dec 20, 2012).

³⁵³ I am not aware about relation between Tatar women organization *Ak kalfak* in Tyumen and Association of Tatar women *Ak kalfak* in Tatarstan, but both are supported by the World Tatar Congress.

³⁵⁴ «С одной стороны, татарские женщины должны сохранять национальный генофонд и возрождать национальные семейные и народные традиции, а с другой, должны стремиться к государственной и политической деятельности».

as the radio station “*Tatar radios Tyumen*”. It includes the Tatars of the Tyumen region in the Tatar national information space, what Appadurai would term the mediascape (1990). The programs “*Ochrashchlar*” (“Meetings”), “*Duslarga sukmak*”³⁵⁵ (“Path to friends”), “*Yana Sulysh*” (“New Breath”³⁵⁶), “*Seber Yoldyzy*” (“Star of Siberia”) are broadcast on local television. After the 2010s, the organizations all extended their presence in internet spaces and social media. For example, the *Kongress tatar Tyumenskoy oblasti* (“Congress of Tatars of the Tyumen region”) has its own regularly updated website (<http://www.ktto.ru/>). Some newspapers “*Yanarysh*” (<http://janar.ucoz.ru/>), “*Sibiria*” (<http://www.seber-ile.ru/>), “*Ak kalfak*” (<http://ak-kalfak.ru/>) also have their own websites.

There are numerous folklore and leisure activities in the region, such as the annual *Sabantuy*, regional competitions for children *Tan Yoldyzy* (“Morning Star”³⁵⁷) and *Skvorets* (“Starling”), for youth *Seber Yoldyzy* (“Star of Siberia”) and *Tatar egete* (“Tatar man”), for Tatar families *Yash Tatar Gailese* (“Young Tatar Family”). Topics common to the public agenda at that time were resistance to the erection of a monument to Yermak in the historical part of the city of Tyumen (as I described above), attempts to improve the quality of life of Siberian Tatars, especially in the region of Zabolot’e, located in the northern part of the Tyumen region, and the closure of the departments of Tatar philology at Tyumen State University and the Tobolsk State Socio-Pedagogical Academy due to the lack of recruitment of applicants for this specialty (Oskolova *et al.* 2015: 870).

Tatar organizations, especially the Congress of Tatars of the Tyumen Region, contributed to the collaboration with Tatarstan at different levels, as I mentioned earlier. For example, they established a cable TV station with Tatarstan, and there were attempts to publish an attachment from Kazan in the newspaper “*Yanarysh*”. However, along with the process of rapprochement with Tatarstan, there are processes of realizing their own local uniqueness of the Tatars of Siberia like language or some traditions. Therefore, that organization also supports projects of Siberian Tatars, on, for example, the standardization of the Siberian-Tatar language. They facilitate the development of relations and ties with Muslim organizations in the region and beyond as well (Oskolova *et al.* 2015: 869).

The Tatar community in Estonia is extremely fragmented due to historical and political circumstances. According to Abiline and Ringvee, the Tatar community in Estonia consists of two main groups. “One group is made up of Tatars who have their roots in the pre-Soviet period, and the other one is the group that came to Estonia during Soviet times” (Abiline and Ringvee 2016: 122). Here we could definitely see the role of a state as an important player in identity building. The authors describe the difference between those groups:

³⁵⁵ *Дусларга сукмак*, in Tatar.

³⁵⁶ *Яңа сулыш*, in Tatar. The idea here is to breathe a fresh air.

³⁵⁷ Spelled *Таң Йолдызы* in Tatar.

“Tatars with roots in the pre-Soviet community are fully integrated into Estonian society. They speak Estonian and identify themselves as part of Estonia. However, Tatars who have their roots in Soviet times have been educated in the Russian language and have more features in common with the so-called Russian minority in Estonia [...] Thus Tatars in Estonia consider themselves as part of the Estonian or the Russian community here” (ibid).

For the Estonian context, “pre-Soviet” means before the Soviet occupation of 1944. This split of the Tatar community is perhaps the biggest difference between the Tatar community in the Tyumen region and Estonia. Moreover, the fragmentation between the “Estonian part” and the “Russian part” of the Tatar community deepens due to, on the one hand, linguistic differences – only half of the community knows the Tatar language at a high level, and the Tatar community has not yet managed to create education in the Tatar language (ibid). On the other hand, the political context and the related position of the Russian community in Estonia are likely to have an impact. I felt this strong contrast once when, after the *Sabantuy* festival in Tallinn, I was returning through the central part of the city, where another festival was taking place. What struck me is that the *Sabantuy* festival was held mainly in Russian and Tatar, with only a little use of Estonian, while another festival that I happened to see was in English and Estonian. Elo-Hannah Seljamaa writes about the weak interaction of these two “worlds” and explains her observations in a hair-dressing salon in Tallinn as its example.

“The hairdresser’s question [“How did you get here?”] conjured up the borders that divide Tallinn into Estonian and Russian places and zones. Language serves as the most obvious, visible and audible, dividing line and while it can be crossed relatively easily, it almost never comes alone. Linguistic segregation becomes physical once it is mapped onto buildings and people’s daily routes and, moreover, structural once it is linked with greater mobility, entitlement to belonging or, as during the Soviet era, with distinct spheres of economy. The capital’s inhabitants also sustain these distinctions by replicating particular trajectories and ways of doing things on a day-to-day basis” (2012: 241).

Tatar identity in Estonia is at the edges of these two worlds. The fragmentation of the Tatar community in Estonia and my position toward the community, signified by things like my knowledge of the Russian language and connection with Russian culture, which predetermined the sampling bias, may serve as one of the possible explanations why, for the Tatars in Estonia with whom I worked, I was almost culturally “theirs”.

In balance, I should note that there are some connections between those fragmented parts. It is not a break, as Appadurai writes (1996). On one of my first visits to the *Kultuurikeskus Turath* Islamic cultural center acting as a mosque in Tallinn, the Friday prayer was in English, Tatar and Arabic, and

sometimes it can also be translated into Estonian and Russian³⁵⁸. Also, translations of meaningful books for the Tatar community could be perceived as an attempt to bridge the gap between the parts of the community. Thus, the Tatar epic *Idegei* has been recently translated into the Estonian language by the Estonian poet Peeter Ilus (“The translation of the Tatar heroic epos...” *World Congress of the Tatars*), and the novel *Zuleikha*, originally written in Russian, has been translated into Estonian as well by Jüri Ojamaa (“*Zuleihha avab silmad*”).

Via the Ministry of Culture, the Estonian state supports activities of cultural associations financially (Seljamaa 2013: 187). In order to be recognized as a national minority by the state, their representatives must follow certain criteria and “be registered as a non-profit organization affiliated with an umbrella association” (Seljamaa 2013: 193). Such as status provides and organization a legitimacy within the state apparatus. “These non-profit organizations stand in for ethnic communities and cultures metonymically [...], reinforcing the notion of people as culture and the latter as a static and bounded unit [...]” (ibid), which creates a gap between representatives and people whom they claim to represent (ibid).

Currently, there are several Tatar organizations in Estonia. One of the largest is perhaps the *Tatari Kultuuriselts Idel* (“Tatar Cultural Society ‘Idel’”). From Tatar, “*Idel*” means Volga (river). “The objectives of the association are to foster contact between the peoples of Estonia and Tatar people and to promote Tatar language and culture,” says the *Integratsiooni Sihtasutus* website (“‘Idel’ Tatar Cultural Association...”). Its leader is Gulbstan Nugumanova, another active member of the organization is Favziya Khadiullina, who hosts the radio program “*Duslyk*” (“Friendship”) in Tatar on Estonian radio³⁵⁹. This organization is located in Tallinn. Another Tatar organization based in Tallinn is *Tatari Kultuurikeskus Yoldõz* (“the Tatar Cultural Center Yoldõz”). Other organizations are located in Maardu, Sillamäe, Narva, and Pärnu – the Tatar Culture Society in Narva (Maryam Malysheva), Ida-Virumaa Culture Society (Renat Garifullinn) and the Tatar Society of Estonia in (Miadut Prokhyrorov) (Abiline and Ringvee 2016: 122, Ahmetov and Nisametdinov 1999: 449–452).

As in Tyumen, one of the main agenda items for the Tatar organizations in Estonia is the preservation of Tatar culture, Muslim traditions, and language, as well as extension and support of cultural contacts with Tatars of Estonia and other countries (“Tatars of Ida-Virumaa...” *World Congress of the Tatars*). The organizations arrange festivals and evenings dedicated to the memory of Tatar writers (“Memorial evening held in Estonia...” *World Congress of the Tatars*), poetry, and music. In order to popularize the Tatar language, it provides Tatar dictation (“In the northeast of Estonia...” *World Congress of the Tatars*). In that context, “dictation” means an event where someone reads aloud a piece of well-known literature to be written down. Usually, one person dictates slowly

³⁵⁸ Observations, June 7, 2019.

³⁵⁹ “Duslyk” Radio 4 (once a month – every third Wednesday at 19.35).

sentence by sentence, and a group of people writes them down. Artistic groups existing in societies organize performances in the Tatar language, as well as performances of Tatar songs and dances (“Festival took place in Estonia...” *World Congress of the Tatars*). Sporadically Tatar societies hold forums, conferences, and seminars for discussing relevant issues to Tatars living in Estonia and Europe. For example, in 2010 in Tallinn, the event “Tatars of Estonia: history, culture, religion” was held, devoted to Tatar identity and heritage. In 2013, the “Forum of Tatar Youth of Europe” was held (“Tatar youth will meet in Tallinn” *World Congress of the Tatars*), in 2015, it was a round table “Tatars in multinational Estonia” (“Tatar society ‘Idel’ in Tallinn...” *World Congress of the Tatars*), and so on. Yearly, Tatar organizations in Estonia hold the *Sabantuy* festival, usually in Narva and Maardu, which represents Tatar culture, celebrations of Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha Muslim holidays allow members of the Tatar community to meet and share Tatar identity and cultural background (“Tatars of Estonia discussed...” *World Congress of the Tatars*). In 2019, Tallinn hosted the European *Sabantuy*, while the first European *Sabantuy* was held just south of Estonia, in Riga, Latvia, in 2014 (“First European Sabantuy...” *World Congress of the Tatars*).

Tatars of Estonia are increasing their collaboration with Tatars across the Baltic region; however, it could look a bit challenging due to the language differences of Tatar people belonging to those different states (Cwikliński 2016: 16). Connections with Tatars living in Finland have been re-established, as well as with Tatars living in Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Belarus. They organize together “several events like concerts, exhibitions, conferences and sporting activities” (Abiline and Ringvee 2016: 122). “There the idea to establish an Association of Tatars in the Baltics was proposed by a representative of Lithuanian Tatars, Adas Jakubauskas” (Abiline and Ringvee 2016: 126). Representatives of Tatar organizations of Estonia became a part of the Tatar Alliance of Europe, established in 2013 (“The Alliance of Tatars of Europe...” *Idel.Realii*).

Tatars of Estonia have close connections with Tatarstan, which is for many considered a historical homeland (Abiline and Ringvee: 2016: 122). Some of them have family roots there or in “other regions of the former Soviet Union” (Norris 2009: 95). “The Tatar societies have organized several trips to Tatarstan and established modes of cultural exchange” (Abiline and Ringvee 2016: 122). Tatar societies are part of “World Congress of the Tatars” and take an active part in its events. Sebastian Cwikliński describes the Congress as,

“an umbrella organization uniting Tatars all over the world. This organization evolved from conferences held every five years, gathering representatives of Tatar communities mainly from successor states of the Soviet Union, but also from Europe, North America and Australia. The presence of leading politicians both from Tatarstan and Federal Russia at the congress indicates the importance that official structures attribute to the work of the congress. The work of the World Congress of Tatars consists mainly of coordinating the

policy directed at Tatar communities outside Tatarstan and addresses communities and their organizations both inside and outside of Russia” (Cwiklikski: 2016: 8–9).

Because Islam is a meaningful part of Tatar identity, I would like to say a few words about the connections of Tatar societies with Islamic organizations in Estonia. “[T]he activities of the Islamic Cultural Center give members the occasion to express their Tatar identity”, writes Klaas (2015: 15–16). The center provides classes in the Tatar language for children and teens, and it facilitates everyday communication in the Tatar language and eating Tatar food together (ibid).

4.4. State and Religious Politics

4.4.1. Soviet State and Atheism

In Soviet times, at the official level, religion was banned generally. Yet Soviet policy toward religion, including Islam, varied in different periods. While at the beginning of its establishment (1920–30), the Soviet government led an offensive on religion, repressing the religious intelligentsia and closing and destroying mosques, also some religious institutions were opened, and some religious practices were allowed after World War II (Northrop 2004). That was relevant for the Tyumen region in many ways (Kluyeva 2015), but for Estonia, the situation was different. Since Estonia was a part of the Soviet Union from 1945 to 1988, the ban on religions relates only to that particular time, which Aysha Özkan describes in the following way,

“In 1945 Estonia became part of the Soviet Union again and Marxist atheist propaganda became more intense. The Commissioner of the Council for Religious Affairs was established with the mission to diminish the importance of religious organizations. Between 1946 and 1982 all religious publications were banned [...] [N]ew Soviet rites of passage were introduced such as Soviet marriage rites as an alternative to the religious ones [...] The Commissioner’s office was dissolved in 1990” (2009: 92).

The offensive of the Soviet state is clearly seen in the interviews. Talking about the life of parents and grandparents, the interlocutors constantly returned to the fact that they lived in an atheistic state and did not follow or did not have the opportunity to follow Islam. For example, this is how two research participants narrate it.

“This is exactly the generation that grew up on atheism, then scientific [atheism]: my mother was a party worker, she was generally very active, honest, decent, just super, and she did not believe in God. And her father was exactly the same. Grandpa – he went through the war³⁶⁰, took part in defense

³⁶⁰ World War II.

of Leningrad. And he generally says: "I do not believe in God or in the devil". He saw such events, [and] he says [that] if God existed, he would not have allowed it. Well, in general, he was disillusioned. Well, my father also did not believe [in God]"³⁶¹.

Or another story in which the interlocutor reflects not only on the religious context of her relatives but also on herself.

"They raised me purely in atheistic traditions, like most children in Soviet times. But at the same time, some external traditions, such as Ash [...] in general, all inherent in Islam, were followed, but no religious ideas were put into the [my] head. This is like tradition; it is supposed to be in this way. Parents during the Soviet era were communists with all the consequences [...]"³⁶².

As I wrote earlier, for the Tatars, their ethnicity is strongly associated with religion, as well as the sense of tradition being linked with Islam. I have already quoted earlier a bit of the interview "Tatar [traditions], you know, are generally associated with Islam"³⁶³, but I am returning to that again to demonstrate the connection of the notion of tradition and religion in the epistemology of the Tatars. Maarja Klaas writes about that connection for Tatars in Estonia as well (2015: 16). Because religion and traditionality were so closely connected for Tatars, the Soviet state's offensive on Islam was also an offensive on Tatar heritage. Once I came to one of my interlocutors at home. We talked for a long time about Tatar traditions and heritage; she said that her mother and grandmother were Tatar and followed Islam. In contrast, she grew up under communism and did not have the opportunity to express her sense of belonging to her religion. She gave me an example that when she was a child, she went home with her friend and classmate, and she prayed before meals, as she did at home. For this, she was reprimanded at a school meeting. Later, another incident happened to her, set later at the end of the Soviet era, when colleagues took the

³⁶¹ «Это как раз то поколение, которое росло на атеизме, притом научном: мама – партийный работник, такая вообще была очень активная честная, порядочная, супер просто, и вот в Бога она не верила. И отец у неё был такой же. Дедушка, он прошел войну, на обороне Ленинграда принимал участие. И он вообще говорит: «Я ни в Бога, ни в черта не верю». Такие события он видел, говорит, если Бог бы был, он не допустил. Ну в общем разочарован. Ну и отец тоже не верил [в Бога]» (С., Feb. 14, 2011).

³⁶² «Растили они меня чисто в атеистических традициях, как большинство детей в советское время. Но при этом какие-то внешние традиции, такие как Аш [...] в общем, все присущие мусульманству они соблюдались, но при этом в голову никакие религиозные идеи не закладывались. Просто это как традиция положено так. Родители в то советское время были коммунистами со всеми вытекающими...» (Z., Dec. 1, 2010).

³⁶³ «Татарские [традиции], знаете, вообще связаны с исламом» (Zh., Jan. 17, 2011).

pendant hanging on her neck for a cross. This issue was also discussed publicly at her work³⁶⁴.

Despite the totality of Soviet policy on religion, some religious practices were maintained in family, private settings. For instance, in Estonia, “During the Soviet period, religious traditions were followed in domestic surroundings. The prayers were said at home, marriages, the naming of the newborn and funerals were conducted according to Muslim traditions. Also, circumcision was practiced. When there was no official mulla during the Soviet period, rituals were led by the elderly men of the community” (Abiline and Ringvee 2016: 119). Anannya Bhattacharjee demonstrates that the understanding of private and public spaces are negotiated, and borders between them are blurred. Based on the ethnography of South Asian immigrant women in the US, she reveals that the meaning of “home” appears in three different contexts. “One definition is the (conventional) domestic sphere of the heterosexual and patriarchal family [...]. A second definition is as an extended ethnic community separate and distinct from other ethnic communities [...]. The third reference of “home” for many immigrant communities is to their nations of origin, often shaped by nationalist movements and histories of colonialism” (2006: 341). Those meanings of “home” help us to see those religious practices in domestic surroundings were not limited of the circle of direct relatives in the nuclear family. In that context, domestic surroundings perhaps relate more with an understanding of community rather than with a notion of a nuclear family. As I pointed out earlier, in chapter 3, women often talk about themselves as being a part of extended family relationships, which Anannya Bhattacharjee called “ethnic community separate and distinct from other ethnic communities” (ibid). Since the boundaries between the domestic and the public are blurred, this also means that people are required to have constant self-control over when, where, and with whom they could manifest their religious affiliation.

Moreover, many Islamic practices have survived more in rural areas than in urban, where Soviet modernity and Soviet governmentality did not reach as deeply.

“My grandmother raised us more in the spiritual sphere, of course: what we are never to do, what we are to do, how to behave. That is, in terms of religion, she taught [us] all the time. All my life, as far as I remember, prayer did not stop in the house. First, there was my grandmother, then my mother, then my sister. Our namazlik³⁶⁵ was never empty. It was always in a place of honor in the hall [...] the most honorable place was always for my grandmother, as well as for my mother. The elder sister also lives in the village, [and] after the death of her mother-in-law, she takes this place; because in every family there should be a person who carries out this service of the keeper of the hearth (let’s say as an educator of children, an educator of morality), and when

³⁶⁴ G., Aug 25, 2019.

³⁶⁵ Prayer rug.

grandmother read namaz³⁶⁶ ([and] perhaps this was never said openly) we yet knew that if a grandmother reads namaz, you need to either sit quietly or leave the house altogether so as not to interfere, not to distract her from this work, from this action; because it is very important; it is very sacred. And therefore it is still [the case that] today already the grandchildren, great-grandchildren of my mother, all know this, and this is followed constantly at the present time³⁶⁷.

From that excerpt, we can see the meaning of the roles of women, especially elderly women, for preserving Tatar religious heritage. In the Estonian context, Ege Lepa comes to the same conclusions. She writes,

“The most prominent and repetitive narrative defining Tatar religiosity, independently of gender or age group, is the story of the religious example of grandparents or placing first religious experiences within a family context. In nearly all interviews, descriptions of a grandfather performing or teaching prayers and a grandmother praying or reciting the Qur’ān were present. Religiousness of parents and grandparents is relevant on both personal and communal levels” (2020: 74).

This again brings us back to the understanding of the meaning of family, and especially the role of elderly women, in notions of Tatar heritage.

Soviet modernity, the Soviet approach to religion, has an impact on the meanings of Islam at the present time. Religion, in many ways, turns out to be a part of domestic surroundings, and even if the religious meanings of some traditions are lost, they are still perceived as part of the Tatar identity. Thus, one of the interlocutors says that she is an atheist, but she follows some practices because this is the way things are done.

“This is the Soviet-school³⁶⁸ [...] I grew up in the most Stagnant times³⁶⁹. The upbringing is hammered in. Therefore, I consider it from there. Plus, at the

³⁶⁶ Prayers.

³⁶⁷ «Вот бабушка растила нас больше в духовной сфере, конечно: что нельзя делать, что можно делать, как вести себя. То есть в плане религиозном она все время учила. Всю жизнь, насколько я помню, в доме не прекращалась молитва, сначала была бабушка, потом мама, потом сестра. У нас никогда не пустовал намазлык, всегда был на почетном месте в зале [...]. Самое почетное место это было всегда для бабушки, как и для моей мамы. Сестра старшая тоже в деревне живет, после смерти свекрови она занимает это место, потому что в каждой семье должен быть человек, который несет эту службу хранителя очага, скажем так, воспитателя детей, воспитателя нравственности и когда бабушка читала намаз – это было может быть не сказано никогда открыто, но мы знали, если бабушка читает намаз нужно либо тихонько сидеть, либо вообще выйти из дома дабы не мешать, не отвлекать её от этой работы, от этого действия, потому что это очень важно, это очень свято и поэтому это по сегодняшний день уже внуки, правнуки моей мамы все это знают, и это соблюдается постоянно на сегодняшнее время» (F., Feb. 6, 2011).

³⁶⁸ She uses the word “quenching”, but in this context it means “old-school”.

³⁶⁹ This is a reference to the Era of Stagnation, 1960–1980s.

*institute – scientific communism - we passed the exam. And also [...] I read a lot [...] Believe in the otherworldly? [...] But I do not refuse. I attend all religious events. I do not refuse. The same khatym is in memory of the dead, so I think that it is necessary to remember [them] [...] I do not refuse, but for now I am an atheist [...]*³⁷⁰.

In this section, I talk about Islam as one of the significant components of Tatar identity. However, it should be noted that not all Tatars share that idea; there are some exceptions. Klaas writes the following about Estonian Tatars,

“Yet some Estonian Tatars do not see Islam as an aspect of their national identity. Khaidar (31) states that “the fact that I am a Tatar and the religion I profess have no connection. Most Tatars are Muslims, but there are Christians as well. It cannot be connected.” Thus, for him both Islam and nationality are important parts of his identity, although he does not want to see one as an expression of the other. Ilkhan (65), on the other hand, finds that “Islam is a religion that came here quite recently. I have never been interested in this question” (2015: 15).

Among my collected materials in Estonia and Siberia, I have found for some Tatar people, especially young people, ethnic and religious identities are not perceived as interconnected. A few interlocutors mentioned that they are not Muslims; they are secular people – agnostic or atheist. One of the research participants, talking about the religiosity of her husband, explained to me that from her point of view, he is not Muslim at all because he does not pray, he drinks alcohol, and his lifestyle generally is far away from what she considers to be Muslim³⁷¹. So, I wanted to emphasize in this paragraph that there is another way of negotiating what it means to be Muslim in the Tatar community. Lilia Karimova writes, too, “[t]he generation of Tatar women under thirty years old exhibit a more pronounced interest in Islam as a defining element of their identity. This tendency is exemplified in the younger generation’s belief that to be a Tatar and to be a Muslim are two different things” (2014: 12). From my perspective, that way of negotiation is a response to the contemporary discussion of “traditional” and “foreign” Islam in the Tatar community, which I am going to discuss in the next part.

³⁷⁰ «Это советская закалка [...], я росла в самые застойные времена, воспитание заложено, вбитое, поэтому, я считаю это оттуда. Плюс в институте – научный коммунизм – мы сдавали экзамен. И еще [...], я читаю много [...]. Верить в потустороннее? Но, я не отказываюсь. Я посещаю все религиозные мероприятия, я не отказываюсь. Тот же катым – это в память умершим, поэтому считаю, что помянуть надо [...]. Я не отказываюсь, но, пока, я – атеистка [...]

³⁷¹ (С., Jan 14, 2011).
(Z., Dec. 1, 2010).

4.4.2. “Traditional Islam” in The Discourse of State

While working with Tatar communities, I regularly heard references to “traditional Islam” from my interlocutors. In women’s narratives, the theme of traditional Islam is refracted, primarily through the female veil, with the multiplicity of meanings of which I wrote earlier. Here I would like to reflect on the notion of “traditional Islam” in greater detail.

“Traditional Islam” is a construct that Puppo and Schmoller explain in the following way,

“The study of Islam in Russia is confronted with normative dichotomies that have been established on an official level, in particular that between ‘traditional Islam’, understood as a ‘local Islam’, and ‘non-traditional Islam’, perceived as a ‘foreign Islam’. The existence of these normative discourses on Islam can be brought in relation to state attempts to domesticate and govern Islam from above in European countries [...] In contrast to European attempts to create a national Muslim clergy, however, the presence of official Muslim representation has a significant legacy in Russia that traces back to Catherine the Great” (2020: 655).

They continue that, “[N]ormative discourses and everyday life do not correspond to separate realms but are rather interwoven in the way Muslims constantly negotiate between the ambiguities contained in their lives and both religious and secular normative expectations” (Puppo and Schmoller 2020: 657). This argument that normative discourses and everyday life are interwoven, and their boundaries are blurred is the key one, and a whole issue of the journal *Ethnicities* is dedicated to it. While agreeing in many respects with the explanations of the authors, I would nevertheless like to emphasize that despite the fact that “traditional Islam” is a product of the official discourse, it has long been an embodied part of the vernacular life of Muslims themselves. Moreover, this vernacular understanding of “traditional” Islam manifested itself in the course of fieldwork not only in the Tyumen region but also in Estonia, where Ringo Ringvee and Egdunas Račius point out “[a]ll faiths are deemed equal (there is no formal distinction between ‘traditional’ and ‘non-traditional’ faiths) in the eyes of the state” (2012: 194). Yet in everyday life, Ege Lepa says, “the members of the Tatar Islamic community [in Estonia] emphasize a strong connection to their family and the past” (2020: 76).

One of the interlocutors told me, “[t]here are a lot of contradictions in some books, [...] some [Islamic] scholars seem to speak correctly, of course, but some of their words make one think that the words of the Prophet in the Quran or in Suras are unreliable. Each hadith can be interpreted differently, completely. Someone understands one meaning [someone has another]³⁷²”. This

³⁷² «Противоречий очень много в некоторых книгах [...] некоторые ученые конечно вроде правильно говорят, но некоторые их слова заставляют задуматься, что в Коране или в сурас слова Пророка недостоверны. Каждый хадис можно трактовать вообще

quote tells us that Muslims are faced with the question of what kind of Islam to follow, which scholars to follow, and which Islamic tradition to rely on. In this sense, I agree with Karimova and her research on Islam in Tatarstan, who argues that the Muslim Ummah is challenging which Islam to follow (2013: 45). Moreover, since the discourse of “traditional” and “non-traditional” Islam is so embodied, Muslims are forced to position themselves in relation to one or the other, which leads to polarization within the Ummah itself.

From my point of view, heritage studies and folkloristics offer meaningful concepts for explaining “traditional Islam” from the bottom, from a vernacular perspective. First of all, making something traditional means putting a special meaning, some particular emphasis, on something. About tradition, Dorothy Noyes writes, “[i]n Roman property law, *traditio* referred to a mode of transferring ownership through the intentional hand-to-hand transfer of the property itself, a part of it, or a symbol of it” (2016: 95–96). This means to make something traditional is to establish or claim continuity, partial or symbolic. In this sense, to be non-traditional means not being able to justify this connection and claim continuity. Second of all, Regina Bendix’s key questions in her book are not what authenticity is, but who needs authenticity and why? And how is authenticity used? (1997: 20). I would ask in the context of this dialogue, not what is tradition or traditional, but who needs tradition? Who needs to point out the continuity of succession of Islam in Russia, and why?

“This is as our grandmothers taught us”³⁷³, says one of the interlocutors, who refers to the past to validate and justify something as traditional. “The past validates the present attitudes and actions by affirming their resemblance to former ones. Previous usage seals with approval what is now done. Historical precedent legitimates what exist today; we justify current practice by referring to ‘immutable’ tradition” (Lowenthal 1985: 40). In *Time and Narrative* (1988), Paul Ricoeur discusses opposing and complementary relations between history and fiction. He talks about historical time, which he understands as a hybrid form of time (“Mythic Time”), not lived time or universal time, constructed based on an idea of the calendar, on an idea of the succession of generations, and on historical documents, on traces. In the same way that my interlocutor refers to grandmothers and grandparents, Ricoeur develops his idea about the succession of generations, a mediation between lived time and universal time (1988: 229). The differences between these two types of, or perceptions of, time led to several conclusions about how time unfolds not along one line, but simultaneously through multiple channels of interpretation. The idea of a generation is based on birth, aging, and death of human beings. The regular calendar measures the duration of our lives in days, months, and years. The death in history has an ambiguous meaning “that mixes together the intimacy of each person’s death and a reference to the public character of the replacement of

по-разному, совершенно. Кто-то понимает одно значение [кто-то другое]» (А., Jul. 23, 2010).

³⁷³ «Как наши бабушки учили» (К., Oct. 13, 2019).

the dead by the living” (Ricoeur 1988: 115). They meet at the point of anonymous death. Anonymous death is the central moment here and “includes the notions of contemporaries, predecessors, successors, and, as a background to them, a succession of generations” [...]. “Ancestors and successors are others” [...], “whose figure occupies the place of an Other, wholly Other to mortals” (ibid). The temporary remoteness of the past and the exoticization of the other, such as previous generations of Muslims during the pre-Soviet period, forms a notion of tradition “as shadows haunting the historical present” (ibid). For some Tatars, referring to the voice of older relatives and their way of following Islam helps them to figure out which Islam to follow. It forms a cultural mooring, while at the same time shaping ‘other’, alien Islam, not associated with the continuity of generations (Ahmed 2000: 1–3).

Noyes writes, “American conservative populism makes much of ‘traditional values’ and the ‘traditional family’ as regulatory mechanisms, but tradition has a liberation valence in many decolonizing, indigenous, and post-Soviet societies subjected to disruptive modernizing regimes and the stigma of backwardness” (2016: 104). Is it possible, based on her idea, to say that turning to traditional Islam for the Muslims themselves, then, is in a sense a de-colonial process, an attempt to overcome marginalization that the Russian state and Christian Orthodox Church “that becomes the national one” leaves Muslims (Puzon and other 2021: 3)? The difficulty, however, is that “[h]istory and heritage are still arenas – controlled by the state, by academic disciplines and by a deep and overarching sense of the nation – for the deployment of a collective ‘us’ [...]” (Gnecco 2015: 268). But “[i]n order to have a voice that will be heard, one needs to express oneself through an idiom that somehow gels with the official discourse, or there must at least be the implicit acknowledgment of a shared ‘conduct of conduct’” (Schramm 2015: 449, quoting Foucault 1994: 237). Intertwining with the voices of the state, a structural inequality of power positions among the speakers is formed. So, the problem is not that the idea of traditional Islam exists at the vernacular level, but the problem is that the state operates it, and officials use this category uncritically, filling this category with their own meanings. The state appropriates it, for example, to claim state security. However, this is not a special case for Russia or for Islam. Egdūnas Račius explains the difficulties of interpreting Islam as traditional in Lithuania, for example (2013: 115–116).

4.4.3. Muslim Communities and Their Structure

The Muslim community in the Tyumen region is highly diverse. On the one hand, Islam in this region is historically represented in the culture of the local population. On the other hand, intensive migration from Central Asia, Azerbaijan, and the North Caucasus have a significant impact on the diversity of Islamic expression here. Most Muslims in the region follow Sunnism, among which there are followers of the Hanafi and Shafii madhhab. There is a tiny

community of immigrants from Azerbaijan who usually follows Shia Islam (Bobrov and Cherepanov 2019: 49).

Muslim religious organizations are located mainly in the urban areas of Tyumen, Tobolsk, and Yalutorovsk, where the Muslim population lives in large numbers, as well as in rural territories (ibid). Muslim religious organizations are structured and are part of the Spiritual Administrations. Spiritual Administrations of Muslims are a state-regulated structure inherited by contemporary Russia from the time of Catherine the Great (18th century), proclaiming a policy of tolerance towards Muslims and laying the foundations of governance towards Muslim subjects (Geraci 1999: 22). However, the governmentality of Muslim subjects, “the “Muslim Question”, emerged only in the second half of the nineteenth century [...] (Campbell 2015: 1) when, after the defeat in the Crimean War, and then the annexation of the Caucasus and Central Asia, Muslims turn out to be the largest non-Orthodox group (Campbell 2015: 8). When I conducted fieldwork in the region, there were three Spiritual Administrations. At that time, the *Dukhovnoye Ypravleniye Musulman Tyumenskoy oblasti* (“Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Tyumen Region”) operated under the leadership of mufti Galimzyan Bikmulin (currently chairman is Zinnat Sadykov), the *Dukhovnoye Ypravleniye Musulman Aziatskoy chasti Rossii* (“Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Asian Part of Russia”) under the leadership of mufti Fatykh Garifullin and the *Tsentrалnoye Dukhovnoye Upravleniye Musulman Rossii* (“Central Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Russia”) under the leadership of mufti Ildar Ziganshin. In turn, the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Tyumen Region and The Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Asian Part of Russia are members of the Council of Muftis of Russia with the center in Moscow. The main administration of the Central Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Russia is in Ufa city (Cherepanov 2009: 135).

The relations between religious organizations and the state are regulated mainly by law “*Zakon o svobode sovesti i o religioznykh obyedineniyakh*” (“Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations”). In accordance with Russian law, religious organizations have to be registered in the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation. This legal status, on the one hand, allows the state to govern the religious life of the population; that refers us to Michel Foucault’s concept of governmentality. This legal status of religious organizations, on the other hand, opens to the organizations themselves access to political capital, like “tax and other benefits” [...] “financial, material and other support in the restoration, maintenance, and protection of buildings and objects that are monuments of history and culture”, [...] “ensuring the teaching of general education disciplines in educational organizations created by religious organizations”³⁷⁴ (“State and Religious Associations...” *KonsultantPlus*). The

³⁷⁴ «Государство регулирует предоставление [...] налоговых и иных льгот, оказывает финансовую, материальную и иную помощь [...] в реставрации, содержании и охране зданий и объектов, являющихся памятниками истории и культуры, а также в

state as well “provides assistance and support to the charitable activities of religious organizations”, [...] and implementation of socially meaningful cultural and educational programs and events”³⁷⁵ (“Charitable and Cultural...” *KonsultantPlus*). In his dissertation, Renat Bekkin explores formal and informal relationships between Islamic organizations, local religious authorities, and the Russian state. Following Douglass North’s theory, he analyses religious Islamic organizations as firms selling religious products to consumers. In the case of the contemporary Russian government, Bekkin argues the main consumer is the state, not the faithful or groups of believers. The state is the entity that needs Spiritual Administrations (*muftiats*) and their goods and services like diplomacy, ideology, sociality, etc., while at the same time Spiritual Administrations act as “firms competing against each other to sell religious product (including both religious and non-religious goods and services) to the consumers” (2020: 358). The state regulates the religious market, discouraging pluralism in the market, and “creates conditions allowing the muftiates to maintain their position as oligopolistic firms” (*ibid*).

There are five mosques in Tyumen and its suburbs, there are two mosques in Tobolsk, and there is one mosque in Yalutorovsk. Until recently, there was a women’s madrasah *Nur* (from the Arabic for “light”) located on the territory of the cathedral mosque in Tyumen; training of students was carried out in the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Tyumen Region’s madrasah in the village Embaevo in the Tyumen region. Religious organizations are primarily focused on religious activities like Friday prayers teaching courses on the basics of Islam and the Arabic language in the largest communities. Friday prayers are usually conducted in the Russian language, with the exception of the Prayer House on Melnikayte St., where prayers are conducted in Tatar. This is one of the strongest contrasts that I have observed in comparison with my observations in Estonia and Sweden. The *Kultuurikeskus Turath* (Islamic Cultural Center “Turath”) “serv[ing] as the main Tallinn Mosque” (Ringvee and Račius 2012: 195), provides prayers in different languages; they are conducted in English, Turkish, and Tatar languages, and sometimes Estonian and Russian are used³⁷⁶. I experienced the same extensive language diversity in Malmö. Mosques also organized leisure activities for children and gatherings for women from time to time. The imam’s wife at the Prayer House on Melnikayte St. in Tyumen has established *Fond dykhovno-kylyrnogo naslediya “Sabyr”* (“Foundation for Spiritual and Cultural Heritage “Sabyr”) for the unity of women. The imam of the mosque in Yalutorovsk supports the social project *Ebiem* (“Grandmother”), providing the mosque with space for cultural and leisure activities for elderly women.

обеспечении преподавания общеобразовательных дисциплин в образовательных организациях, созданных религиозными организациями [...]». Author’s transl.

³⁷⁵ «Государство оказывает содействие и поддержку благотворительной деятельности религиозных организаций, а также реализации ими общественно значимых культурно-просветительских программ и мероприятий». Author’s transl.

³⁷⁶ Observations, July 7, 2019.

In the 2010s, a few newspapers and magazines were published and distributed in the region like “*Mysylmane Sibiri*” (“Muslims of Siberia”), “*Istina*” (“Verity”), “*Muslim-Info*” and “*Napominanie*” (“Reminder”), “*Hikmet*” (“Gist”) and others. “*Hikmet*” is published in Tatar and Russian languages. Websites like www.islamrf.ru, www.islam.ru, www.islamnews.ru, www.islam-info.ru regularly publish stories.

As with the Muslim community in the Tyumen region, the Muslim community in Estonia is diverse and, in some way, fragmented. There are a few segments of the community. Firstly, there is a group of Muslims who identify themselves as Tatars, and secondly, there are Estonians and Russians who have recently converted to Islam. Migration adds another layer of diversity: “immigrants arriving in Estonia as students, businessmen or refugees”, “more often using English for communication” (Lepa 2020: 72) constitute another dimension of cultural variability in the Muslim community of Estonia.

Kirikute ja koguduste seadus (the Churches and Congregations Act) regulates the relationship between the state and religious organizations in Estonia, where Ringve and Račius note that “[r]eligious communities are required to register formally with the state through local courts [...]. Registered religious organizations acquire tax exempt status, possibility to apply for the right to their clergy to conduct marriages with civil validity and right to establish private schools” (2012: 194). However, the state does not provide any financial support for any religious activities of religious organizations, unless in the form of cultural activities as ethnic minority groups (Ringve and Račius 195).

Currently, there are some Muslim organizations in Estonia, mostly located in Tallinn and Maardu, which is located 15 kilometers from Tallinn. *Eesti islami kogudus* (Estonian Islamic Congregation) has re-established itself in 1989. The restoration of the organization was based on the initiative of Tatars, among others (Seifullen 1999: 195–196). Presently the leader of the Estonian Islamic Congregation is mufti Ildar Muhamedshin (Abiline and Ringvee 2016: 124). Another religious organization *Eesti Muhameedlaste Sunniitide Kogudus* (the Estonian Mohammedian Sunnite Congregation) appeared in 1995 as a splinter group from the Estonian Islamic Congregation and has been led by Ali Harrasov (ibid).

Muslims in Estonia do not have their own mosque building, and sharp debates surround that issue (Norris 2009: 97). However, the center *Kultuurikeskus Turath* (the Cultural Centre Turath, (*turath* means heritage in Arabic) has been opened in Tallinn, and since 2009 it has been situated in a building at Keevise Street in Tallinn (Abiline and Ringvee 2016: 124). Since that time, the building of the *Kultuurikeskus Turath* has been working as a main Tallinn Mosque (Ringvee and Račius 2012: 195).

The major Islamic holidays, like Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha celebrations in Tallinn, Maardu, and Narva, gather Muslims of Estonia (Ringvee and Račius 2012: 197). *Kultuurikeskus Turath* offers different activities to adults and children, like courses on the basics of Islam and Arabic language classes (Abiline and Ringvee 2016: 124). On Sundays, Iman Makhmutova, who is the

wife of the mufti Ildar Muhhamedshin gives classes for women about “basic Islamic knowledge, Arabic and how to read the Koran [...] After the classes the women have tea or coffee” (Özkan 2009: 95). Some activities are organized for children in Maardu, including a mix of studies of Islam with sports activities (Özkan 2009: 96). On a regular basis, the Department of Theology of the University of Tartu gives some academic courses on Islam and Middle East studies, as well as the Arabic language. A course on the Tatar language has been recently offered by the Department of Finno-Ugric Studies at the University of Tartu. Tallinn University has provided some courses in Arabic and Turkish languages as well (Ringvee and Račius 2012: 196).

Ringo Ringvee and Egdunas Račius write that “there are no Muslim printed media in Estonia” (2012: 198). *Eesti islami kogudus* produces an electronic newspaper “*As-Salam*” (“*As-Salam – Baltiyskiy Musulmanskiy Vestnik*”), in Russian about the lives of Muslims in the Baltic region. The last issue of “*As-Salam*” is dated February 2011. The same organization published from 2009 to 2014 an electronic Islamic magazine “*Iqra*”, in Estonian. The active websites www.islam.pri.ee/ and www.azeri.ee (*Eesti Aserbaidžaaani kultuurikeskus*) periodically update information about Estonian Muslims (ibid). In 2007, the first translation of the whole Quran into Estonian was published, done by the Estonian Orientalist Haljand Udam (1936–2005) (Abiline and Ringvee 2016: 125).

4.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, the state is shown as one of the key players in the politics of heritage through identity politics and ideology. Speaking particularly about the Tatar community (or, more correctly, communities), its fragmentation is based on those different parts of the Tatar community belonging to different states and, accordingly, slightly differently created identities.

As I illustrate, the Tatars of Estonia consist of Tatars who came to Estonia during the pre-Soviet era and almost completely became part of Estonia, and Tatars who moved during the Soviet period, who are perceived as a “Russian minority”. In turn, the heterogeneity of the Tatar community in the Tyumen region is also connected, on the one hand, with those who came to this region and, on the other, with those who associate their genealogy with this place. Relations with Tatarstan play a certain role. Both communities of the Tatars of Estonia and the Tatars living in the Tyumen region maintain contact with Tatarstan, which serves them in some way as a cultural mooring. The studied Tatar communities are very fragmented linguistically – newspapers are published in several languages, and religiously – there are different ideas about forms of Islam to follow. The diversity of Tatar and Muslim organizations in Estonia and Siberia also speaks to the diversity of the community. Based on my observations of the Russian-speaking Tatar community in Estonia and the Tatar community in the Tyumen region, similar elements among those Tatar communities are the previous Soviet experience and ethnic and religious

elements that persist within the family or extended family. So, Soviet state ideology shaped Tatar identity and Tatar heritage in many ways. However, “[t]hey are not products, period. They are the producers of their lives, responding at every moment to the conditions they encounter – conditions cumulatively shaped by their own and other’s actions in the past”, as Tim Ingold writes about relations of human with the environment, “between exterior and interior causes” (Ingold 2018: 20). Tatar people, then, are not products of the Soviet ideology. They are producers of their own identity in the conditions that have been shaped.

Despite the fact that the state is not a ‘thing’, it manifests itself only through encounters with it and appears through representations in media, it nevertheless cannot easily be changed. And with its policies, it can create real wounds and injustice for its citizens. When Tatar women’s experience appears on the frontier of state taxonomies, it means that their experience is not fully visible and recognizable by the state. That reality shapes real difficulties for real people. Because the state actively affects the lives of its citizens, and citizens cannot help but respond to the conditions they encounter, those conditions limit and shape the possibilities available to them.

CONCLUSION

The aim of my doctoral research is to analyze how, in the post-Soviet situation (with particular focus on Estonia, and on the Tyumen region in Russia), women with intersectional identities as Tatar and Muslim negotiate their identity and tradition. For doing that, I rely on ethnography, conducted primarily in two field sites, and I reflect on the many ways women are represented in vernacular press materials. I unfold women's stories about what it means to be a woman and to be a Tatar in a post-Soviet situation through narrations of their aspirations, their sexuality, their relationship with relatives, and the dynamics of power and hierarchy they feel themselves within.

Following to established academic literature on Tatar women in the post-Soviet context, Tatar women's religiosity and its transformation in the post-Soviet transition is investigated in greater detail. However, other aspects of their identity, like family roles and power dynamics, professional aspirations, sexuality, etc. have not been explored well. That lack confirms that Tatar women's cultural Otherness is overrepresented as one-dimensional, and the fluidity and flexibility of their identities is underrepresented. This doctoral thesis' ambition is to contribute to fill in those gaps. Moreover, Tatar women's identity is explored in existing academic literature, primarily based on materials from Tatarstan and Moscow. Bringing attention toward new geographical areas, including the Tyumen region and Estonia, is another contribution to the academic field.

Based on ethnographic field work conducted in the Tyumen region in 2010–2013 and Estonia in 2019, I examine how gender and ethnic identity are constituted by discourses in the vernacular press of Tatar communities. Women are represented primarily through the voices of men and women who have power to speak publicly, and they are consistently (with few exceptions) shown as reproducers of tradition – as wives and mothers of the Tatar people who cultivate the Tatar language, cultivate Tatar identity both literally and metaphorically with lactation, and accordingly follow to endogamy and an idea of female modesty. A later version of representation that ties to the Soviet experience and the Soviet gender order is women as working mothers. Those representations create the imagination of a Tatar woman, in Arjun Appadurai's understanding of imagination as collective, as “a group that begins to imagine and feel things together” (Appadurai 1996: 8). Moreover, since the press is published for an internal and external reader, the representation of women is aimed at an internal and external audience as well, “[...] offer[ing] new resources and new disciplines for the construction of imagined selves and imagined worlds” (Appadurai 1996: 3). Following Janet Carsten, women have an ambiguous position in the community (Carsten 2000: 18). According to the analyzed vernacular materials, women, on the one hand, are represented as the core of the Tatar identity, because women reproduce Tatar-ness literally and metaphorically. On the other hand, they are relegated to its periphery, as they

are represented as complementary to male-ness which is placed in the center, in roles as wives, as mothers, as grandmothers, aunts and sisters (Wertheim 2012: 277–279).

Next, I analyze how women express and negotiate their own identity in Tatar communities by their own voices through stories about tradition. In contrast to the vernacular materials, women talk about themselves in an extremely diverse way, and it is impossible to single out one dominant narrative. In among narratives in which women talk about themselves as complementary to male-ness are mixed stories about themselves as a central identity (Abu-Lughod 1986, Mahmood 2005, Kapchan 1996). The home space, family, and kin-related setting is narrated as a true area of female power, where women hold everything, and all power belongs to them. Simultaneously, especially among the younger generation of women, there is questioning of the meaning of concepts of family, of tradition and of religion. They reflect critically on the experience of their parents and their ancestors in modern conditions. For the younger generation of women, Islam plays a more significant role in understanding themselves, than for the older generation of women. This argument is consonant with the conclusions of the scholars Lilia Karimova (2013, 2014, 2016) and Guzel Sabirova (2011).

Conversation about Tatar tradition is a form of Tatar identity expression. Main themes in relation to tradition for women are interwoven with texture of bodily threads like female modesty, including veiling and virginity, abduction, and Islamic marriage (*nikah*). Beyond sexuality, women's stories interconnect with a fabric of family relations and family space, like the distribution of domestic labor, hierarchy, relations with mothers-in-law, and memories of grandmothers. Women's voices tie tradition with language, as well as ethnic and some religious practices, too. Those, themes, however, are separated analytically in order to capture them and explain them to the reader, in reality in women's narratives they are interconnected, smoothly intertwined with each other, forming a variety of patterns of fluid and multifaceted women's identity.

Next, I explore how identity and tradition are shaped by state politics. The state as an actor of identity politics plays a significant role in the shaping of ethnic, religious and gender identity, and therefore in the formation of the notion of tradition and heritage. Soviet gender politics produced a particular gender role of working mothers. That political regime fought with ethnic traditions, calling them “relicts” and criminalizing some of them; it put similar controls on religion, too. Based on ethnography in Estonia and the Tyumen region, people from both Tatar communities still continue to reflect on and process that Soviet experience. Contemporary Russia, which is claimed to be a successor of the Soviet heritage, with increasing centralization and authoritarianism, pursues a policy of homogenization (Yusupova 2018, 2019), curbing cultural diversity by limiting the study of native languages, using the Cyrillic script for ethnic minority languages (Wigglesworth-Baker 2016), and enticing ethnic and religious organizations into acting in its interests (Bekkin 2020). State epistemologies rest on universalist categories that push people with

intersectional identities to the edge, to the frontier. Intersectional identities turn out to be the opposite of universal, global experience (Tsing 2005). The main clash seems to happen with Islamic marriages – *nikah* – and veiling.

Based on Tatar women’s narratives the Soviet experience is shown to be stressful for the Tatar community. The notion of “pure”, “unspoiled” tradition is claimed to be rooted in a pre-Soviet period, the 18th and 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century for the Tatar community in the Tyumen region, and the first half of the 20th century for the Tatar community in Estonia. Women’s narratives about tradition are the dichotomous opposition of the past to the present, however their relations are not linear. Kristin Kuutma comes to similar conclusions about Estonian identity (2015: 46). Yulia Gradskova explains that memories about being ignored and dismissed by Soviet state women’s activism in the Volga region before the revolution of 1917, could be perceived as a colonial wound. What was meaningful about that period is that “[...] in this period women’s education formed an important part of local programs for developing national culture and education. [...] [M]any Muslim women in the Volga-Ural region [...] were making any effort to acquire an education [...] and were ready to work for the education of their people and girls in particular” (2019a: 113).

Since “as both word and concept tradition is inescapably ambiguous” (Noyes 2016: 95), different actors and voices refer to different sources. I noticed in vernacular press materials consistent references to authorities – community leaders, figures of imams, writers and poets, or academic literature. In my interviews, however, women referred to family photos, family stories, and family memories. All those sources belong to different chronological periods; therefore, they bring heterogeneous interpretations of tradition into the community. Because the Soviet regime pushed tradition and religion out of the public sphere, the private family space became a setting where ideas about tradition were preserved during Soviet times. As was explained above, the private family setting is predominantly women’s space, therefore women became some of the main actors in preserving and transmitting tradition. Since in one of the powerful discourses, the vernacular press, women are represented as the keepers of tradition, and the tradition itself is narrated heterogeneously, the question of which traditions to preserve and which not is politicized, and therefore so are women’s epistemologies about tradition. It is by virtue of this politicization that the negotiation on the veil, for example, as tradition or as non-tradition is so poignant (Karimova 2013), as well as negotiations of the Tatar language, endogamy, and female modesty. This leads to a contestation of different epistemologies, different understandings of what tradition in Tatar community is about, and inevitably depends on power dynamics. Heritage is mutually entangled with power, too (Schramm 2015). Based on the research, it becomes clear that, research participants themselves often operate with the category of tradition, whereas people who represent the Tatar or Muslim communities for the state appeal to the word heritage, meaning to have a right to inherit, a right to possess.

This doctoral thesis contributes in problematizing gender and ethnic identities from the standpoint of local, rather than universal, positions; it puts women's identity, subjectivity, and agency into its core, and explores how women negotiate different parts of their identity, referring to different pasts and traditions, different experiences, and different authorities in the post-Soviet situation. In women's narratives and partly in vernacular press, women's identities appear simultaneously as women, Tatar, and Muslim, but their identities also intersect along axes of age, economic background, and other forms of power. That is a key theoretical and analytical idea in the doctoral thesis, which is why both 'woman' and 'Tatar' are given prominent place in this dissertation's title. Returning to Crenshaw, who focuses on women of color, I would point out that an analysis of belonging to two different groups, such as women and Tatars, seems insufficient for the interpretation of my collected field materials. I have always needed to bring some other dimensions like age, economic background, and more to narrate the bigger picture. That demand for other dimensions for intersectional analysis, from my point of view, pushes the boundaries of the theory of intersectionality, meaning that power, including women's power, is structured differently in different cultural settings. That makes me think about the duality of oppression explained by Maria Rodó-Zarate. Based on her analysis of Catalonian identity, she says that it may be seen as oppressed in relation to Spanish domination, but it may be perceived as oppressor in relation to Latin America, as Catalonia is a part of Europe. Thus, a multiplicity of axes gives a multiplicity of configurations for power relations and inequalities (2020: 630).

Because Tatar identities are narrated as fragmented as well, the Tatar communities I worked with refer to their imaginary cultural centers differently. For the Tatar community in Estonia and in the Tyumen region, Tatarstan is one of the main cultural moorings. However, Tatars living in Siberia are under the strong cultural, linguistic, and religious domination of Tatarstan, and not everyone shares and agrees with that domination. Another imaginary cultural mooring is Europe, which is primarily a characteristic of the Tatar community in Estonia. Many narratives are focused on collaboration with Tatars in the Baltic countries, as well as in the Scandinavian countries. Primarily, this is manifested through stories about work and communication with Tatars from European countries, and through annual European festivals such as *Sabantuy*. For many Tatars, Turkey is another imaginary cultural center. For another part of the narratives, the imagined Arab region (the Middle East) is a center for education, a place of the "true Islam". The imaginary cultural "centers" are somewhere "there", not "here", creating another notional "periphery". The notion of "center" and "periphery" refers us to classic post-colonial theories.

Homi Bhabha points out that there is no culture in any pure way, as they are all hybrid (1994). As Kapchan explains hybridity, "produc[ing] new forms in the expressive economy which inherit certain 'traditions' from their progenitors yet are unique unto themselves" (1996: 7–8). The hybridity or being "in-between" is quite creative and appears in a variety of ways, like being Tatars

but being Russified, being Muslims and being creative with religion, following tradition and applying it with varying purposes. Bhabha explores this space in between binary categories like East – West, Orient – Occident, or Coloniser – Colonised. For Bhabha, the subject is a space of post-colonial negotiation (1994: 28–45). In the notion of the binary categories of “center” and “periphery” of Tatar communities, there is a similar power dynamic in the liminal space between “center” and “periphery”. The different narrations of “center” and “periphery” prove that Tatar identity is fragmented, and the space between them is hybrid. Therefore, pre-Soviet ‘pure’ ideas of tradition dissolve in a plurality of other imaginary cultural moorings.

But how does intersectionality cross with hybridity? Sumi Cho comments about intersectionality and hybridity, “to say that identity is theorized as a negative unity, relational, and in flux, not fixed in time or space” (2013: 394). From my point of view interconnection of intersectionality and hybridity requires further exploration because, on the one hand, as Sumi Cho says they become “a negative unity”, i.e. they bring people carrying those identities into even more vulnerable positions. Yet on the another, being a person with hybrid and intersected identities bring all sorts of creativity for identity performances and interpretations of tradition. From that standpoint I see a great possibility for developing and pushing boundaries of intersectional theory.

I did not have a chance to pay proper attention to the literature and art of the Tatar community and the representations of women in it. Several of my interviews referred me to certain literary works and films, like the novel *Belyye Tsvety* (White Flowers) by Abdurakhman Absalamov and the movie *Mulla* directed by Ramil Fazliyev and Amir Galiaskarov, but I only had the opportunity to include some bits in chapter 3 of one interviewee’s impressions about the novel *Zuleikha* by Guzel Yakhina. I think the references of the interlocutors to representations of women in literature, film, and art could enrich the women’s perspectives laid out here. Another valuable extension for the thesis could be a close exploration of the role of public spaces like beauty salons, grocery stores, online clothes shops; they indeed may play in constructing an identity among Tatar women, and therefore could provide an interesting insight into the future development of the thesis. This is what I would like to bring to this study in the future, as I convert the current thesis into a book.

My doctoral thesis bridges gaps between a few disciplines, including but not limited to anthropology, gender studies, heritage, and folklore studies. By drawing from such areas and integrating new knowledge at their intersections, this dissertation attempts to make connections between and among those complementary academic fields.

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SUMMARY

Based on ethnographic materials collected among Tatar communities in Siberia in 2010-2013 and Estonia in 2019, and vernacular press collected in both sites, I discuss how in the post-Soviet situation, people with intersectional identities, like women, Tatar and Muslim, negotiate their identity and tradition.

In vernacular press materials, women are represented as the core of Tatar identity, as producers of Tatar-ness literally and metaphorically. However, they are relegated to its periphery, as complementary to maleness, which is in the center. In contrast to press materials, women narrate themselves in diverse ways. Together with stories of complementarity to maleness, women talk about themselves as a central identity that is mixed and hybrid. The home, family, and kin-related settings are narrated as areas of female power. Simultaneously, especially among the younger generation of women, there is a questioning of concepts of family, tradition, and religion. They reflect critically on the experience of their parents and their ancestors in modern conditions. Islam plays a more significant role in understanding themselves for the younger generation of women.

The state as an actor of identity politics plays a significant role in the shaping of ethnic, religious, and gender identity, and therefore in the formation of notions of tradition and heritage. State epistemology rests on universalist categories that push people with intersectional identities to the edge, to the frontier. Intersectional identities turn out to be the opposite of universal, global experiences. Based on Tatar women's narratives, the Soviet experience is shown as stressful for the Tatar community. The notion of "pure", "unspoiled" tradition is claimed to be rooted in a pre-Soviet period, the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century for the Tatar community in the Tyumen region, and the first half of the 20th century for the Tatar community in Estonia. For validation of tradition, different actors refer to a variety of heterogeneous sources like family photos, family stories, memories, academic research, etc., of different chronological periods. This leads to a contestation of different epistemologies, different understandings of what tradition in the Tatar communities is about, and inevitably depends on power dynamics there.

SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN

Olla naine ja tatarlane: identiteedi ja traditsiooni interseksionaalne perspektiiv postsovetlikus kontekstis

Töös uuritakse, kuidas interseksionaalse identiteediga inimesed, nagu naised, tatarlased ja moslemid, postsovetlikus ühiskonnas oma identiteedist ning traditsioonidest räägivad. Uurimistöö põhineb 2010.–2013. aastal Siberi ja 2019. aastal Eesti tatari kogukonnast kogutud materjalil ja kohalikust ajakirjandusest pärit tekstidel.

Kohalikus ajakirjanduses kujutatakse naisi tatari identiteedi tuumana – tatarluse loojatena nii otseselt kui ka metafoorselt. Sellest hoolimata on nad tõrjutud selle perifeeriasse, kus neid nähakse keskmis paiknevat meessugu täiendavas rollis. Erinevalt ajakirjandusest näevad naised ise end väga erisugustel viisidel. Ühelt poolt räägitakse endast kui meessoos täiendajast, teisalt aga kui keskest identiteedist, mis on segatud ja hübriidne. Kodust, perekonnast ja sugulaskonnaga seotud teemadest jutustatakse kui aladest, kus valitseb naise võim. Samal ajal seatakse arusaam perekonnast, traditsioonist ja religioonist küsimuse alla, seda eriti noorema põlvkonna naiste seas. Tänapäevastes tingimustes suhtuvad nad kriitiliselt oma vanemate ja esivanemate kogemusse. Noorema põlvkonna naiste jaoks mängib islam iseenda mõistmisel suuremat rolli.

Riigil kui identiteedipoliitika loojal on tähtis osa etnilise, usulise ja soolise identiteedi kujundamisel ning seega ka arusaama loomisel traditsioonist ja pärandist. Riigi epistemoloogia rajaneb universalistlikele kategooriatele, mis tõrjuvad interseksionaalse identiteediga inimesed ühiskonna äärealadele, piirile. Tuleb välja, et interseksionaalsed identiteedid vastanduvad universaalsetele, ülemaailmsetele kogemustele. Tatari naiste lugudest selgub, et nõukogude aja kogemus on tatarlaste kogukonnas pingeid tekitanud. Ettekujutus „puhtast” ja „rikkumata” traditsioonist arvatakse pärinevat nõukogude-eelsest ajast, 19. sajandi lõpust ja 20. sajandi algusest Tjumeni piirkonna tatarlaste jaoks ja 20. sajandi esimesest poolest Eesti tatarlaste jaoks. Traditsioonide kinnitamiseks viidatakse paljudele heterogeensetele eri kronoloogilistest perioodidest pärinevatele allikatele, sealhulgas perepildid, perede jutustused, mälestused, teaduslikud uurimused jne. See seab küsimuse alla erinevad epistemoloogiad ja arusaamad sellest, milles tatari kogukondade traditsioonid seisnevad, sõltudes paratamatult kohalikest võimusuhetest.

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