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Representing identities in Tatarstan : a cartography of post-soviet discourses, schooling and everyday life

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Representing Identities in Tatarstan: A Cartography of
Post-Soviet Discourses, Schooling and Everyday Life

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July, 2002

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This Thesis is submitted for the degree of Ph.D of the University of Wales



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Map at end of Preface p.14

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to demonstrate the value of an approach to the study of identities as a socially embedded multidimensional process that is affected by political, economic and social conditions, institutional discourses, enunciative strategies, popular (re)presentations, specific policies and mechanisms of marking difference and exclusion, as well as dynamics of acceptance and rejection. 'Identisation' is presented as an amalgamation of factors, forces and interests that should not be analysed in isolation or reduced to a mono-causal approach. These theoretical claims are based on an in-depth and long term empirical exploration of the processes of identisation in the specific institutional context of Tatar and non-Tatar gymnásias (secondary schools) in the Republic of Tatarstan, part of the Russian Federation. Data generation consisted of semi-structured and unstructured interviewing and long-term participant observation in Kazan (the capital of Tatarstan) during a period of seven months (between 1999 and 2000) with the support of a pilot study conducted over six months during the winter of 1997-98.

Analysis of the data shows that a complex dialectic emerges between political discourse, institutional praxis and quotidian representations, a dialectic and interrelation that often has been ignored in the study of identities. In Tatarstan it is a dialectic between processes of Russification, Sovietisation and Tatarisation which show the need to devote special attention to the historical background in order to be able to analyse the current dynamics and representations.

This work aims to stimulate and open up further research and studies in the field of identities and the regions and contexts that were part of the former Soviet Union.

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PREFACE

The breakdown of the Iron Curtain has been the subject of a variety of interpretations and numerous speculations; since then both inside and outside academia scholars have predicted the possible direction or destiny of the so-called post-Soviet societies. Doubtless, after more than a decade, there can be no categorical or definitive answers to these questions, let alone generic explanations or comprehensive theories of uniting such a multitude of people into single perspective or paradigm, cultures and traditions. Moreover, the post-Soviet amalgam contains idiosyncrasies often unknown in the 'Western' world and particularly strange to many observers due to the relative absence of international research conducted within the Russian Federation.

An abundance of material has been produced since the "collapse" of Communism about political, ideological, economic or social meanings and consequences of that event. At one extreme some people perceived it as the end of an epoch (or even the end of the history), while at the other, it was welcomed as the beginning of something new and extremely positive. Many in between were sceptical, just waiting to see. However, undeniably, in my opinion, one of the main issues that symbolised the year 1989 was the simple fact that a multitude of people entered the horizons of the Western world, causing an intensification of interest and the development of a new curiosity about people, nationalities, cultures, ethnic groups, that before, were simply non-existent, silenced or ignored. In particular, it generated more awareness of diversity and showed that it is inadequate to subsume the immense diversity (in every sense) in one single concept such as the Soviet bloc or 'communist' societies.

That is the context in which I began research in the Republic of Tatarstan, part of the Russian Federation into the process of identities formation, transformation, reproduction and representation in the specific context of Tatar and non-Tatar gymnásias, centres of formal secondary education, devoting special attention to the notable ethno-Tatar cultural renaissance that Tatarstan has been experiencing in the past ten years.

It is important to note that the research is focused in the period from 1997 to 2000, the end of the 1990s, and more precisely, the last years of Boris Yeltsin's mandate. Since Vladimir Putin won the elections (26 March 2000) the panorama started to change and new tendencies have begun to emerge in the political arena between the central government and the republic, and in that

sense it is difficult to anticipate how the new government and their concrete policies will affect the national educational issues that I am addressing in this research. It is essential to bear in mind that the research was conducted before Putin's arrival to the Kremlin and without specific reference to the new politics of centre and regions.

The endeavour and main purpose of this work is an attempt to develop appropriate tools and elaborate an approach to the study of identities, specifically by attempting to operate through this work an understanding of identities as a multidimensional process, taking place within the concrete areas and social spaces of both Tatar national gymnásias and non-Tatar gymnásias in the Republic of Tatarstan.

For that purpose I will claim that it is necessary to focus attention on the dialectic and interaction between at least three different areas in the process of identities representation, transformation, reproduction and formation, namely: i) political discourse, ii) institutional praxis and iii) everyday life. The interaction and relation between these three areas that has been neglected in the study of identities because there is a tendency to present only one of these three dimensions, and not to focus attention on the interaction and dialectic between them, especially in relation to everyday life. The three areas present and represent identities in a rather different manner; nevertheless all of them are equally relevant and involved in the process.

'Integration - segregation - transgression' (explained below in Chapter 1) are the three different aspects embodied in these three co-existing areas regardless of their apparent antagonism and opposition: integration, as an expression of the political discourse; segregation, as an institutional praxis; and transgression, as manifested in everyday life. Consequently, it is not a question of which dimension or area is most relevant, because all three of them are equally involved and indispensable in a multidimensional explanation. Moreover my aim is to stress the dialectic and interrelationship between them.

It is important to underline that what I am presenting here is not only a theoretical exercise, or a mere ethnographic or descriptive work about two Tatar and two non-Tatar gymnásias, but research which makes a methodological and consequently epistemological claim for identities studies: the main claim being the need for a multidimensional approach. However, I do not propose to generalise what I am presenting here to all institutional practices in the republic, since I focused my attention on certain concrete and perhaps

marginal institutions which I call national archipelagos, and which I consider may play a very significant role in the future. In any event they are closely involved in the process of identification in the republic.

At the outset I would like to clarify my position as a researcher, something that I will be dedicating more attention to in the methodology chapter, but which I consider fundamental for this research, influencing its content as well as its form. Avoiding classical anthropological practices, and defending post-exotic or non-exotic anthropology, I consider that it is relevant to draw attention to the fact that my position is partisan, since Russian was my first language and I have maintained a close relation first of all with the Soviet Union and subsequently with the current Russian Federation, which undoubtedly has affected the process of data collection and production. Without trying to be too pretentious, it would be pertinent to locate or define my position as 'mestiza', using Anzaldúa's (1997) definition, or on the frontier, hybrid, diasporic, or in between; all of these are notions that question the classical conception and dichotomy between inside and outside. In that sense, I have been personally and emotionally involved with the area of the research, occupying a location and position that directly affected the research and consequently the final outcome. The position and location is not something to reject or hide; I consider it to be an advantage and privilege.

This work is composed and presented by way of six chapters, with an introduction and a conclusion. It begins with a theoretical chapter (Chapter 1) where the notion of identity is addressed and analysed; first of all, deconstructing the concept; secondly, defending multidimensional perspectives; thirdly, stressing the relation between identities and school systems, and finally, illustrating how the triadic relation between political discourse, institutional praxis and everyday life operates. Chapter 2 presents the historical background needed in order to understand some of the main dynamics that are taking place in the republic: those connected with the history of the republic as well as those involving the Soviet Union, its foundation and consolidation. Chapter 3 provides a historical perspective on national education in Tatarstan, the Soviet school system and some general information about the current system, including at the end of the chapter an introduction to the four gymnásias where the research was conducted. Chapter 4 is a methodological chapter, where the research process and the researcher are presented to the readers. Chapter 5 and 6 represent the main body of the thesis because both

chapters explore and analyse the original sources. They are the place where the voices of the participants in this research find expression. Both chapters follow a similar thematic structure composed of five different subsections including: attitudes to the Tatar language, the issues related to the construction of the 'Others', discourses of inclusion and exclusion, religion and the sense of patriotism.

Briefly, this is the basic structure and organisation of the thesis, which also includes pictures of the gymnásias to help to visualise some of the environments and an appendix with a list with the names of the people that are frequently visible in the work. As a whole, it aims to create a sense of sequence and continuity between all the sections, which will allow the reader to envisage the journey this researcher has made, as well as to appreciate the evidence and arguments being presented.

MAP OF TATARSTAN

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CHAPTER 1

The Making and Deconstruction of Identities ¹

‘Cultures have no intrinsic or essential identity or unity - outside history or politics - that can be reached by a “transparent” reading’ (Sayyid 1994:266).

‘(...) Identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions. They are subject to a radical historicization, and are constantly in the process of change and transformation’ (Hall 1996: 4).

The point of departure for this ‘work- journey’ ², was in 1997 when I visited Kazan for the first time. Almost immediately after I arrived, I suppose under the influence of my strong connection with the discipline of social anthropology, I still felt a certain ‘love-blindness’ that some subjects can induce with regard to ‘different’ cultures and environments. Consequently I began to experience an intense interest in Tatar people, especially because I immediately understood that they were the ‘Others’, a marginal cultural group, and one of the peripheral ‘minority’ suppressed first by the Russian empire, and then by the Soviet regime. The Tatars were the victims of a ‘despotic’ dominant culture, and this was definitely the key element that galvanised my interest in the region as a recently graduated anthropologist.

At that time I was sure that the aim of my research (or more precisely, what I defined as the aim of my research), was ‘Tatar identity’ per se, a visible category, almost an entity by itself that would define ‘Tatar people’ who live in the named Republic of Tatarstan. Naïvely enough, I was convinced that I would find the main characteristics, concrete elements and features that would define ‘Tatar people’. Even more extravagantly, it would be something common to the vast majority of the ‘Tatars’, or at least something that the majority would share.

It is necessary to admit that after two months in Kazan, I started to

¹ Some ideas presented in this chapter and in Chapter 2 were discussed and presented in Alvarez, A. (2001) *Transgresión de fronteras en la República de Tatarstán; identidades múltiples, el “universo” frente al “multiverso”*. *Política y Sociedad* 36 p.71-85.

² It is a journey not only because I have had to travel to a different country, but also in more metaphorical and figurative terms. What I would like to achieve through this work is to present everything in a processual way, not only as a theoretical claim, but also as a way of structuring this thesis.

experience a notable alteration, since I was no longer interested in ‘defining’ Tatar identity, but I was rather concerned with the way some institutions can ‘create’ or ‘reinforce’ ‘this identity’. I think this was the time when my sociological background began to re-emerge, and probably the recollections of old structuralist and functionalist theories were actively struggling with the anthropological perspective. However, I was still confident about combining ‘Tatar identity’ with the institutional contexts or concrete environments that consolidate this ‘identity’.

Finally after this long process of learning and (re)learning, (almost resembling Kafka’s metamorphosis) I am happy to admit, four years later, that I did not find such a thing as ‘Tatar identity’; I stopped in time, realising that it was a complete methodological mistake to try to discover Tatar identity as a concrete and isolated thing, a visible and palpable entity.

It is likely that more experienced scholars will claim that there was no need to go so far away to discover something that nowadays seems to be pretty obvious, (assuming that anything can be obvious in the social sciences), and almost axiomatic to the postmodernist approach.³ In addition, perhaps what is even more important, is not only that I did not find the ‘Tatar identity’, but consequently, I strongly rejected any further development and movement in that direction except via the processual dimension (Melucci 1996:85) and questions such as: why some identities are more pronounced than others; where are they constructed and why; which kind of identities are (re)produced by specific discourses; and when some identities are more relevant than others. Consequently, since identities cannot be read in ‘isolation’, I will refer throughout this work to concrete places and space, to concrete moments and circumstances which have produced fragmented and highly complex and diverse identities. Taking the above into consideration, there cannot be a transparent and concise interpretation of identization processes (Melucci 1996:77) in Tatarstan, since the past combined with the present is formulating completely ‘new’ and ‘unclassifiable’ representations for the future; representations, sometimes in an imprecise state, without previous orientations, models or points of reference.

The aim of this work is to illustrate how fluidity in the identisation

³ Nevertheless, it is always more compelling when an empirical experience, not just an ‘abstract’ reading, confirms previous theoretical assumptions.

process, is also strongly related with the structured dimension. The apparent flexibility and fluidity can adopt rather a rigid dimension, and the everyday 'multiverse' (the accumulation of different interactions and experiences) tends to be presented as a concrete 'universe' inside some institutions.

I will claim throughout this work that the Republic of Tatarstan is an example of a distinctively complex triad of 'integration-segregation-transgression' in the current process of identisation, whereby the first two elements are at the same time, 'reaction-copy' of the previous regime; not escaping from the past, but imitating paradoxically the same divisions and mechanisms of frontierisation. 'Reaction-copy' in the sense that the manifested expressions that started to take place in the Republic of Tatarstan at the beginning of the 1990s, are a response (reaction) to the previous policies and attempts of Russification and Sovietisation, which ironically, reproduce (copy) similar mechanisms of differentiation and segregation that they actually reject.⁴

1.1 Theoretical approach: deconstructing 'Identity'

A decade ago, Schlesinger stressed that 'the problem of identity has been taken up intermittently in mainstream sociology and political science, although it is difficult to find much in the way of common agreement as to how it should be conceptualised' (1991:152). Because as Melucci well indicated:

'the term 'identity' is conceptually unsatisfactory: it conveys too strongly the idea of the permanence of a subject. At this moment, however, no other designation seems in possession of the capacity to replace it in its purpose. Thus, for the time being we must continue being trapped in the usage of the term in the near-contradictory situation where in order to bring to light the *processual* dimension of collective identity as an interactive construction, we inadvertently stress the reality and the permanence of the actor' (1996:85).

This approach has also been stressed by Hall when he emphasised that:

'identity is such a concept – operating 'under erasure' in the interval between reversal and emergence; an idea which cannot be thought in the old way, but without which certain key questions cannot be thought at all' (1996: 2).

⁴ In Chapter 2 I will analyse the policies of Russification and Sovietisation, and in Chapter 3 the current ethno Tatar-national rebirth.

In that sense it is necessary to turn our attention to where, how or why some identities' representations can be generated, transformed, reproduced, created, revived or invented, but never in separation from other social components and dynamics. Because:

'Collective identity is a concept, an analytical tool and not a datum or an essence, a 'thing' with a 'real' existence. As far as concerns concepts, one should never forget that we are addressing not 'reality', but rather instruments or lenses through which we read reality' (Melucci 1996:77).

From the experience of this research, I believe it is essential to dispense with the notion of 'identity' and to operate in terms of 'identities' as one of the first axioms. Any possible approximation to the 'identity' approach is a simplification that will fail to include and represent all the different dimensions that are involved in the process. In this particular research the notion of 'identity' is not adequate because the research aims to illustrate the multidimensional character, the ongoing process, the diversity, situational and circumstantial idiosyncrasy, movement, different discourses, social actors, different social worlds, enunciative strategies, the past, the present and the future; and in that sense, 'identity' in the singular, would be deficient in representing these dynamic processes and movements. The singular implies 'one' whereas the plural, in any concept, allows more space for multiplicity and a multi factorial approach, fluidity and dynamism. For that reason, as an analytical concept I suggest replacing the singular, and operating with the plural. Since it is difficult to imagine one single identity, there are always individual and collective representations, the internal and external (Jenkins 1997: 20) a multiplicity involved. If the aim is to create a correspondance between empirical and theoretical claims, the use of identities instead of identity could be a good starting point.

More precisely, in this work I will be using the notion of identisation emphasising the idea that identities are always in movement, a process that includes all social actors and different social dimensions. In the case of Tatarstan, the processual dimension is the result of different policies and practices of Russification, Sovietisation and attempts at Tatarisation, reaction and acceptance, redefinition and renegotiation of new conditions and norms, but always in movement and influenced by different processes; 'a process in process'.

It is true that some identities are more vulnerable to being manipulated than others, while some are more central to the political arena than others; some are more socially accepted and some are in a constant state of turbulence. However, depending on the circumstances, they can all, in a concrete and specific moment, and as a result of specific interest and demands, become a question of vital importance. Like the 'sleeping beauty' they can emerge, or (re)emerge claiming their primordial character and uniqueness, but always in relation to other identities, because in the imagined world of identities the constitutive outside (Hall 1996:4) it is necessary to make those claims in order to have a representation and presentation of themselves. One identity cannot exist by itself and in isolation from other identities, since we always try to define something in relation to its opposite; we know what 'X' is because we assume that we know what it is not. Consequently the notion of 'Other', (what it is not), should be considered as constitutive in the process of identification; differentiation that is usually presented in terms of opposition and dichotomisation. Female/male, West/East, black/white, unemployed/worker, exploiter/exploited, Christian/Muslim, and so on. In most cases, each category also implies a moral connotation or implication corresponding to 'good' or 'bad' categorisation. In the history of the Western, predominant Orientalist⁵ tradition, a complex set of words with 'positive' and 'good' connotations automatically presents the 'Other' as the 'negative' and 'bad'. As Nietzsche observed, it is a bad habit to see opposites where there are but differences of degree.

'This bad habit has led us into wanting to comprehend and analyse the inner world, too, the spiritual- moral world, in terms of such opposites. An unspeakable amount of pain, arrogance, harshness, estrangement, frigidity has entered into human feelings because we think we see opposites instead of transitions' (Nietzsche, quoted in Eriksen 1993:147).

My ambition is therefore to avoid these bad habits arising from Aristotelian or ontological logic, Cartesian presuppositions and cultural binarism, as well as to resist the simplification involved in analysing identity as a unitary and an inclusive category, proclaimed as a 'reality' rather than a conceptual tool. This mistaken concept of identity may be applied to a country

⁵ About Orientalism see Said 1978.

as a whole, for example the Soviet Union is perceived as a total monolithic entity, without recognising ⁶ the internal diversity and differentiation that constitutes the claimed 'unity'. Clearly, it is also ineffective, to consider post Soviet society as a unitary body, not least because of the detachment of many parts that formed the so-called USSR. Generic notions and concepts tend to simplify and falsely reduce the complexity involved in each case. Such reduction restricts any possible approach to the phenomenon that we are trying to explore because: 'when one is thoroughly imbued with the belief that things are simple or reducible to simple components, one also believes that everything is clear or can be translated into clear terms' (Durkheim 1977: 276). In other words, it is the aim of this work to allow complexity and clarity to operate together, but to reject simplification and reduction in circumstances and contexts where complexity is predominantly manifested.

In the Republic of Tatarstan a convoluted amalgam of possibilities emerged. It is impossible to present a compact and homogeneous picture of the so-called 'Tatar population' that lives in the republic. It is possible, for example, to distinguish a pro-Soviet sector, nostalgic for the past, and usually composed of mixed marriages, 'Russified Tartars', or using Sud'in's (1999) expression, a sector contaminated by internationalism; business people, trade workers, public sector workers, and part of the rural population. There are also people close to nationalistic ideas, owners of small and medium companies, teachers and pupils of the national schools and part of the intelligentsia. Finally, there is a small minority of theorists and followers of the national Tatar movements, defenders of a total separation from the Russian Federation (Sud'in 1999: 233). If to this combination of possibilities we also add the Russian population, they are a no less heterogeneous group, because there are Russians who were born and have lived, including their families, their entire life in the republic, people that emigrated during the Soviet regime for economic reasons; some who have drawn closer to the Tatar nationalist 'cause', others who are completely alien or even hostile to it. If to all these possibilities we also include and add the diversity of the rest of the non-Tatar and non-Russian population that reside in the republic, we can observe that in relation to the symbolic-cultural level, in everyday interactions, Tatarstan presents a high

⁶ For example Schöpflin (2000) has stressed the inadequacy in the Western approach to the study of communist and post-communist East and Central Europe.

level of complexity, where different discursive waves and political and social changes are adopted and (re)interpreted in very different ways in day to day reality. The Tatarstan 'business card' has a chameleon character: on the one hand, an Islamic republic, the epicentre of Tatar culture on the other, a multiethnic space or a mere province of the Russian Federation (Davis, Hammond and Nizamova 2000). It contains a diversity of possibilities, where each characteristic, in isolation or as part of the totality, is equally pertinent.

1.2 Multidimensional perspectives and the process of identisation

'Because identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies. Moreover, they emerge within the play of specific modalities of power, and thus are more the product of the marking of difference and exclusion, than they are the sign of an identical, naturally-constituted unity- an 'identity' in its traditional meaning (that is, an all-inclusive sameness, seamless, without internal differentiation)' (Hall 1996:4).

In this quotation Hall introduced some of the key notions for a possible approximation to the identisation process, dimensions that should be carefully analysed and to which we should dedicate some attention: discourse, institutional site, specific enunciative strategies, marking difference and exclusion. In the following discussion I will show how they can be applied to the discourses of identities in Tatarstan.

1.2.1 Discourse

Without wishing to add further levels of complexity, I would like to present a working definition of the notion of discourse⁷ that I will operate with through out this work. This concept of discourse is influenced by the post-structuralist tradition, and consequently it is also an attempt to present the complex relation that emerges between discourses⁸ and institutions in the present case, the processes of identities formation, transformation, representation and production. However, it is not my purpose here to get

⁷ Being well aware of the problematic legacy, theoretical debates and different connotations that surround this term.

⁸ I use the plural discourses because I understand that in different institutions different discourses emerge.

involved in the strict and traditional understanding of discourse analysis and text representations. Furthermore it is not my aim to present structuralist analysis of discourses, conceived as a system of elements governed by an independent set of rules. In that sense I would like to introduce a definition of discourse, not as a theoretical claim, but rather as an operational category; not as a mere encapsulation, but as a helpful tool that may allow further development in empirical understanding.

Parker presented a definition of a discourse as ‘a system of statements which constructs an object’ (1992:5). However, an immediate philosophical and epistemological problem would be to present a definition of an ‘object’, and to analyse whether it is legitimate or not, to consider ‘identities’ as ‘objects’. Consequently my proposal throughout this work is to substitute the word ‘object’ in Parker’s definition by representation. Accepting then a discourse as ‘a system of statements which constructs a representation’. As Burr indicated:

‘A discourse refers to a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events. If we accept the view, that a multitude of alternative versions of events is potentially available through language, this means that, surrounding any one object, event, person etc., there may be a variety of different discourses, each with a different story to tell about the object in question, a different way of representing it to the world’ (1995:48).

In other words, and as Fairclough emphasised, ‘a discourse is the language used in representing a given social practice from a particular point of view. Discourses appertain broadly to knowledge and knowledge construction’ (1995:56). Hall also defined discourse ‘as a group of statements which provide a language for talking about - i.e. a way of representation- a particular kind of knowledge about a topic’ (1992: 291). Furthermore, ‘discourses do not faithfully reflect reality like mirrors (...). Instead they are artifacts of language through which the very reality they purport to reflect is constructed’ (Riggins 1997: 2).

In that sense, representation can offer us a wide spectrum of possibilities and flexibility since we are dealing with identities formation, reproduction, and transmission. However, we cannot detach Parker’s use of the word object from the post-structuralist perspective and it should only be positioned inside this framework. For example, discourses are, according to

Foucault 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak' (1972: 49). Assuming the present discourse as the epicentre, almost without leaving any space outside the discourses; considering that without discourses, there are not objects. There is a tendency in Foucault's work to see the functioning of discourses as largely autonomous, therefore he deliberately ignores both human agency and ordinary forms of social causality (Freundlieb 1994:175).

Jenkins (1996) indicated that it is necessary to look at the internal-external dialectic of identification. Quoting Burr who says:

'discourses are neither simply a product or side-effect of social structure nor one of individuals. They are embedded in that structure and are part of it, and at the same time serve to structure our identity and personal experience. Thus discourse can be seen as a valid focus for forces of social and personal change' (1995:11).

One should be careful not to present discourses in terms of absolute and autonomous power, and try to avoid the Marxist heritage of 'false consciousness', or the Althusser thesis that ideology 'hails' individuals as subjects. Something additional to discourses per se to produce and reproduce identities, since individuals also bring something to the process. 'Identity is always the practical of the interaction of ongoing processes of internal and external definition' (in Jenkins 1996:73).

One of Barth's key propositions is that 'it is not enough to send a message about identity; that message has to be accepted by significant others before an identity can be said to be 'taken on'' (in Jenkins 1996:23). Nevertheless, discourses should not be perceived as isolated entities; we should position them in relation and interaction to different institutional sites.

1.2.2 Institutional sites: schools and identities

In short, in order to have a discourse, firstly it is necessary to have something or someone who will produce the discourse, further to have a medium where the discourse can be transmitted, and finally, a concrete group-receptor of the specific discourse. In this study I will consider ethno-Tatar promotion and segregation reinforcement as a discourse; Tatar gymnásias as the institutional environment where this discourse is produced and transmitted (based on teachers' and parents' support) and therefore, pupils as receptors and transmitters of this concrete discourse. Everything about the discourse is

strongly related with concrete historical and contextual circumstances that are directly involved in the process.

The principal aim of this work is to illustrate how different institutions, more specifically in this case, educational institutions, can produce relatively concrete and unidirectional discourses that pupils incorporate and can reproduce and transmit. These discourses offer a 'framework' which configures and consolidates their representations. Without pretending, of course, to reduce the complex process of identities formation, transformation and production to a mono-causal relation, where schools should be perceived as the only decisive factor; these are rather presented as a decisive, but only in the context of other factors.

In this research there were two different discourses reproduced by pupils: one associated with Tatar gymnásias' pupils, and another, quite different discourse, among non-Tatar gymnásias' pupils. They are two clearly defined discourses derived from the institutional context. These two discourses should not be defined or branded as absolutely antagonistic, but as different in the sense that their signifiers are clearly dissimilar. Different backgrounds, education, expectations and approaches emerge constantly through the data. In the case of Tatar gymnásias there is a drive towards segregation rather than integration, and this discourse represents a cognitive dimension that the pupils share but also transgress.

Each discourse is a well protected 'property' in each concrete institution; a discourse that legitimises its existence and reproduction inside the institution, and which is perceived and understandable as 'correct' and 'appropriate' inside each institution-niche, and quite often alien to the members of a different institution.

On some occasions a community of institutions can have the same discourses, the same purpose and goal, in that sense they reinforce and complement each other. On other occasions, different institutions, which by definition share similar purposes (like for example the educational system), may reproduce antagonistic discourses that instead of complementing each other, disrupt any possible correspondence and communication between them. As a result, schools became actively involved in the transmission and reproduction of specific meaning generated and appropriated by concrete groups of interest, and pupils became potential 'consumers-reproducers' of the concrete discourse that each institution maintains, simultaneously finding the

fissure (or line of flight).

‘The act of institution is thus an act of communication, but of a particular kind: it signifies to someone what his identity is, but in way that both expresses it to him and imposes it on him by expressing it in front of everyone (kategorieren, meaning originally, to accuse publicly) and thus informing him in an authoritative manner of what he is and what he must be’ (Bourdieu 1991:121).

Following Fairclough ‘(...) the relationship between institutions and discursive practices is not a neat or simple relationship. Different institutions come to share common discursive practices, and a particular discursive practice may have a complex distribution across many institutions’ (1995:63). Since discourses are also located in time and space, they cannot escape modifications and transformations, they should be perceivable as vulnerable to change, adaptation and negotiation as any other social category. Schooling has a particularly important role to play because schools have the power to foment and develop some values to the detriment of others and can select which ideological, cultural or moral principles and references they want to transmit; having enough mechanisms to adapt for their interest what they want to promote and what to reject.

‘The meso-structures of society are the institutions intermediate between the individual and the state, which are sometimes independent institutions and sometimes regulated by the state. Of central importance here are educational institutions since it is through schools and universities that the cultural capital for advancement is acquired and through them that cultural identities are preserved’ (Fenton 1999: 13).

However as Bourdieu showed, schools are neither neutral nor merely reflective of broader sets of power relations, but play a complex, direct, mediating role in maintaining and enhancing them (Swartz 1997:191). This is something that we should also bear in mind, since it could be a simplification to present the schools as a perfect reflection or a simple copy of power relations.

‘It is the task of education to give each human being a national form, and so direct his opinions and tastes that he should be a patriot by inclination, by passion, by necessity. On first opening his eyes a child must see his country, and until he dies, must see nothing else’ (Rousseau, quoted in Prizel 1998:404).

Schooling is considered as one of the big achievements of 'contemporary' societies or what some would call 'developed' countries; an indispensable right that all citizens are allowed to claim and demand. Thus, schools are the institutions where children spend most of their time; including direct and indirect time. Direct time, because they physically attend, in most cases five days a week, and in some countries even six days a week, spending approximately five hours a day, for between ten and twelve years. Indirect time, because when they are outside the school, they also have to do their homework, and are indirectly still in contact with the centre. Quite often, their friends are also from the same school, and they dedicate a considerable amount of 'free time' talking about their school, their friends, teachers, and what is in general going on in the school. If to all this we add the time that pupils also have to talk about the school with their parents or other relatives, we can conclude that for almost twelve years there is not much space or time left in pupils lives which is not directly influenced by the school environment. As a result, from the age of six or seven, to the age of sixteen or eighteen, pupils are dependent on the school's biorhythms; reproduced in concrete ways of representing reality, different perspectives and approaches; characteristic discourses, usually with a strong sense of discipline and hierarchy. In the event that someone tries to rebel, there are enough mechanisms to make the students believe that 'inappropriate' behaviour will have repercussions in her or his final marks, and consequently in their prospects of entering university, and subsequently of career success; and by analogy, to 'success' in their life in general. Accordingly the 'fear' to question or to react, 'legitimise' and 'promote' some discourses instead of others; (without expecting much controversy), exploiting the option of expulsion for the 'louder voices'. As Fishman emphasised, schools are social microcosms; crucial literacy-imparting institutions; 'they legitimize or dignify or recognize that which should be, as well as that which is. Schools are moral, ideological, and idealistic institutions' (1985:372). In other words, 'the school (but also other state institutions like the church, or other apparatus like the army) teaches 'know-how', but in form which ensures subjection to the ruling ideology or the mastery of its 'practice'' (Althusser 1971:128).

Schooling is a strong mechanism of language maintenance and promotion, and consequently a reproductive apparatus and transmitter of specific and concrete cultures and identities. 'It is, in a large part, through their

schools that ethnic communities define themselves, define their past, define their future, define their goals and orient their future leaders' (Fishman 1985: 373). Education 'enables a large number of people to learn, simultaneously, which ethnic group they belong to and what are the cultural characteristics of that group' (Eriksen 1993:91).

However, a school in isolation, as an independent body is not enough for language maintenance or ethnic revival; an interaction and cooperation with the outside environment is also needed. A concrete political and institutional framework of laws and policies, as well as a social environment, including community support, are absolutely indispensable. In other words, institutional sites cannot be detached from specific enunciative strategies.

1.2.3 Enunciative strategies

It is not only a question of transmitting a message through a discourse, but rather of concrete messages which construct meaning and representations via enunciative strategies that reinforce and legitimise the existence of specific institutions and consequently their discourses.

For example in Fenton's words, describing an analogous cultural context, 'in the past the schools have been, in Wales, the instrument of enforcing the dominance of English and are now the scene of state-sponsored efforts to revive Welsh' (1999:14). Schools, and accordingly their discourses, can be separated with difficulty from the different 'discursive waves' (main discourse tendencies), a construction of meaning and representation that operates on a rather macro-level. In the context of Tatarstan, the emergence of Tatar national schools cannot be looked at or understood in isolation from the specific circumstances of communist disintegration, or more generally from the concrete dynamic of more than five hundred years of interaction and cohabitation of different people in the same territory. The historical process and circumstances do not only influence the current strategies, demands and purposes, but also present the rhetorical and theoretical justification for the current tendencies. In other words, the past not only conditions the emergence of the present, in the sense that the present is quite often a reaction to the past, but the past can also offer justification for the present. Therefore the management and exploitation of the past can be based on concrete interests and demands.

‘The different types of structure of the education system, i.e. the different historical specifications of the essential function of producing durable, transposable dispositions (*habitus*) incumbent on every educational system, do indeed only assume their full significance when brought into relation with the different types of structure of the system of functions, themselves inseparable from the different states of the balance of the power between the groups or classes by whom these functions are realized’ (Bourdieu 1990a: 179).

In the context of Tatarstan, new national gymnásias are the response and reaction to seventy years of the Soviet regime, all the previous policies of Russification, and adaptation to the dynamics and changes that are taking place at the present stage. The response takes the form of a ‘revival’: reaction in the form of ‘segregation’ and adaptation to the new conditions with strong reinforcement and justification of their ‘uniqueness’. The reaction is to a combination of, firstly, long periods of *Russification*, secondly, the strict agenda of *Sovietisation*, and finally, new attempts at *Tatarisation*; all of them, concrete and coercive political discourses, that are directly involved in the process of identisation.

Without doubt, Tatar gymnásias have had an enormously significant role in what I would call the Tatar renaissance and political expansion since the beginning of the 1990s, fomenting and supporting the ethno-cultural Tatar (re)birth. They are institutions that officially define the Tatar language and cultural revival, and the development of national culture and consciousness as their main purpose. Support for these goals is found consistently in Ministry documents and publications, conferences and seminars and the claims are shared by nationalist movements and the vast majority of the Tatar political elite. As Kharisov at the time Minister for Education indicated, ‘nowadays, national schooling appears to be a key factor in any people’s national rebirth. Only schooling can guarantee the opportunity for national cultural development, making it accessible to each person (...)’(1997: 79).

The education system, Bourdieu argues primarily performs the: ‘function of conserving, inculcating and consecrating a cultural heritage. This is its “internal” and most “essential function”. Schooling provides not just the transmission of technical knowledge and skills, but also socialisation into a particular cultural tradition’ (Swartz 1997:190-191). Hence schools, in concordance with other institutions, create and reproduce concrete and specific symbols, a cultural representation that reinforces simultaneously our sense of ‘belonging’ and ‘communality’, as well as, ‘Otherness’ and ‘differentiation’.

At the beginning of the 1990s, Tatar gymnásias represented something more than specialised elite centres, they offered concrete mechanisms for the reestablishment of the Tatar language and culture, visible and tangible institutions that represent some kind of ‘hope’ and ‘vision’ to a certain sector of the population, who had long been dreaming and waiting for it. They had enormous symbolic value at the time when they were opened.

On the other hand, the revival and adoption of Tatar culture, language and traditions, are not always perceived and considered important by everyone in Tatarstan. Happiness, indifference, rejection or passivity, were some of the people’s reactions to the introduction of Tatar gymnásias; feelings strongly related with ‘ethnic’ ascription, and social position. In some cases they represented a peripheral option, in others they were the epicentre of people’s lives.

‘The power over the group that is to be brought into existence as a group is, inseparably, a power of creating the group by imposing on it common principles of vision and division, and thus a unique vision of its identity and an identical vision of its unity’ (Bourdieu 1991: 223-224).

One of the core problems of identification should be considered the dialectic of integration-segregation, constitutive of identities construction. Different attempts at classification -categorisation and implantation of an ‘order’ for example in the context of Tatarstan, whether in the form of the Soviet concept of nationality or subsequently via the notion of *Tatarstantsy*⁹, have produced concrete practices of segregation and division. Whereas the frontier, understood as limit and division, emerges as endogenous to it, is always perceived through a mutual process of identification-differentiation.

1.2.4 Marking difference and exclusion

Identification is understood as a construction, a never ending process, conditional and located in contingency. ‘And since as a process it operates across difference, it entails discursive work, the binding and marking of symbolic boundaries, the production of ‘frontier effects’ (Hall 1996: 3). Regardless of the type of identities we are talking about, the frontier perceived

⁹ Civic notion that implies a sense of ‘citizenship’, including all the population, without ethnic distinction, that live in Tatarstan.

as limit and division is a cardinal conception to all of them. Boundaries in identities are formed through a mutual process of identification/differentiation; separating and dividing, (re) organising and (re) grouping. To talk about identities is by derivation to make reference to identification and/or differentiation, both mutually included. Frontiers, demarcations and separations that are combined and conjugated generate deliberately or unintentionally, new frontiers or barriers, whether physical or mental, real or fictitious. 'All order is based on frontier effects... and it is a metaphor of the dominant ideology to think that citizen is autonomous, and that we live in a free world' (Ibáñez 1985:35). Likewise, as stressed at the beginning of this chapter, 'for a person to develop a self-identity, he or she must generate discourses of both difference and similarity and must reject and embrace specific identities. The external Other should be considered as a range of positions within a system of difference' (Riggins 1997: 4).

In Tatar gymnásias it is possible to detect in pupils' and teachers' speech the constantly underlined dichotomy between Tatars and Russians. The 'Other' in this case is not a generic and global category that incorporates any non-Tatar population, it is rather a concrete and specific 'Other', synonymous with Russian¹⁰. For the Russian population, the 'Other' does not always have the concrete form of the 'Tatar', indicating that it is not a simple, directly-proportional correlation, even though in many circumstances to the Russian population the 'Other' is precisely the 'non-Russian', rather than a concrete 'Other'. It comprises Tatars, Jews, Uzbeks, Udmurts, Armenians, and so on. In such a context, there is potential for indentisation to be expressed in a variety of forms.

The 'Other', the 'alien', the 'hostile' or in Simmel's words the 'stranger', is:

'fixed within a certain spatial circle - or within a group whose boundaries are analogous to spatial boundaries- but his position within it is fundamentally affected by the fact that he does not belong in it initially and that he brings qualities into it that are not, and cannot be, indigenous to it' (1971: 143).

The 'Other' forms a collective or a group that may come to symbolise

¹⁰ Categorisation of the 'Other' in that sense is one of the themes in the next chapter.

danger and threat, to what we define as 'our' group or community; quite often representing a completely imaginary danger.

Simultaneously, different groups can live in 'perfect harmony' with almost absolute acceptance and understanding of each others idiosyncrasies. Sometimes different groups have to face 'historical tensions', but they cohabit in the same terrain with 'mutual understanding', according to a policy of non-aggression. On some occasions different groups are forced to live in the same land but not as a 'personal' choice, rather as an 'external' imposition, and they live in a constant state of 'struggle'. Numerous different combinations of relationships can be found if we try to analyse the way in which different groups can live together. However, what is common to most of them is the fact that there was some point in their historical life, when these groups fought with each other to establish their space and rights, to determine who was the dominant and the subordinate, the donor and the demander. Consequently this conflict does not disappear from people's memory, but often remains as a semi-unconscious state or 'collective amnesia'. Periodically, people may try to forget, but sometimes this latent past can become strongly manifested in everyday life. These tensions may be reinforced and revived in certain circumstances, especially under conditions of socio-political and economic change, by a particular interest group; and begin to operate again in terms of real 'conflict'. Collective life may oscillate between periods of peaceful cohabitation and periods of confrontation, (physical and symbolic confrontation), as the two options that dominate each position. 'Once upon a time it was easy to be German and Jewish; once upon another time it became impossible' (O'Neill 1996:299).

Identities are situational and circumstantial, which is why they cannot be detached from the idea of flexibility, because depending on the context, they can adopt one form or another; their flexibility is based on the capacity to adapt to new and different circumstances. Recent history has demonstrated that in some cases, conflicts between people who live in the same terrain tend to reappear almost in a cyclical way, a good example of this being the case of Yugoslavia. Periods of peaceful or 'pseudo- peaceful' cohabitation, have usually been followed by periods of strong confrontation; tensions that arise at specific times, usually demanding a new redefinition. The result is a perpetual state of identities negotiation and reformulation. The case of Tatarstan represents a good illustration of peaceful coexistence, as is addressed in

Chapter 2: the ‘Tatarstan model’ is frequently used as an example for other regions. Nevertheless, some uncertainty remains about its stability as a permanent reference in the future.

1.3 Fluidity and structure, triadic mechanism: Political discourse, institutional praxis, and everyday interaction

Up to this point, trying to recapitulate in order to be able to move further in this work, the assumptions that have been made can be presented in the following way. Firstly, identities are fluid and dynamic, flexible and mouldable, and consequently, they should not be approached without referring to the processual dimension. Secondly, and as a result of the processual character, different dimensions should be carefully analysed, specifically according to the four different notions of discourses, institutional sites, specific enunciative strategies, and the procedure of marking difference and exclusion, that are directly related to the process.

This is the departure point, but the ‘journey’ is far from finished, rather just starting. Subsequently, and according to what has been presented, how can we connect the apparent flexibility of identities with the apparently ‘semi-rigid’ discourse that Tatar gymnásias are reproducing? How is this presupposed fluidity related to the claimed ethno-Tatar revival and rebirth? If identities are subsequently fluid and flexible, why this constant demand of different groups that claim their ethnic, national, territorial, or local ‘uniqueness’ and ‘primordialism’?

There has been an intense debate in the last forty years in social sciences regarding primordialism and constructivism,¹¹ and many authors have made important interventions in this debate (Wicker 1997; Ericksen 1993; Cornell and Hartmann 1998). Geertz (1963) and Shils (1957) were some of the first authors to defend the primordial approach (Hartmann 1998; Eller and Caughlan 1996), whereas Cohen (1969) was the first to claim that ethnicity is basically a political phenomenon. Hobsbawm (1990), Anderson (1991) and Gellner (1983) are ‘classical’ proponents of a constructivist approach. At present there is a general consensus regarding constructivism, moreover,

¹¹ In few words, the main difference is that primordialism understands ethnicity as fixed, given and unchangeable, whereas constructivism claims that ethnicity is constructed under different circumstances, changeable and modifiable, always related to other factors.

constructed primordiality¹² becomes one of the key notions. A concept that returns us back to the formulated question: if identities are subsequently fluid and flexible, why this constant demand of different groups claiming their ethnic, national, territorial, or local 'uniqueness' and 'primordialism'?

The answer to these questions is the connection between identities' fluidity and concrete power relations. The '*universe*' and '*multiverse*' dialectic which is inseparable from the identification process. This is the dialectic of the concrete and the abstract; the single and the complex; a dynamic that combines the static and the fluid.

On the one hand, there is a rigid universe, an expression of concrete policies and power relations adopted and promoted throughout time, through different discourses and institutional practices. On the other hand, there is a flexible multiverse, composed of a complex accumulation and incorporation of different discourses and institutional praxis in everyday interaction that can be read as antagonistic and contradictory, but nevertheless as co-existing. Changes in discourses and institutional practices have happened in Tatarstan in a relatively short period of time, without necessarily leaving enough space for people to incorporate and assimilate the internal 'contradictions' between them. As a result, it is quite frequently possible to detect the symbiosis of different rigid discourses and institutional practices in everyday life, especially in ritual spheres. For example, in political discourses and institutional practices the communist period belongs to the past, and the present is defined as the post-communist era. However, people still celebrate the important Soviet festivities, the 8th of March (International Working Women's Day) and the 23rd of February, Soviet Army Day, (usually celebrated as Men's Day).

The aim of the current work is to illustrate how fluidity in the identification process, is articulated and strongly connected with the structured dimension. The apparent flexibility and fluidity can take on a rather rigid appearance in concrete circumstances when different discourses and institutional practices are incorporated in the process. However, these institutional practices and discourses will not last forever, and like a pendulum, they will tend to oscillate from one extreme to another, as the examples of the different institutional practices adopted in Tatarstan under the forms of Russification, Sovietisation and Tatarisation show. All of them 'exclusive' in

¹² See Cornell and Hartmann 1998.

their forms, but quite often simultaneously adopted and not always replaced in people's life, thereby incorporating ambiguity into the very core of the process of identification.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the purpose of this work is to illustrate how the Republic of Tatarstan became an example of a distinctively complex triad of integration-segregation-transgression in its identification process, representing different dynamics and tendencies in the political discourse, institutional practices and everyday life. The triad functions by (i) political discourse promoting integration under the notion of *Tatarstantsy*, (ii) institutional praxis, implementing segregation and the 'ethno-cultural universe' in Tatar gymnásias, and (iii) the level of everyday life, by living in a transgressive and 'cultural multiverse'¹³; which combines processes of Russification, Sovietisation, and Tatarisation. The frontiers of these discourses (Russification, Sovietisation and Tatarisation) are clearly defined and inseparable from the institutional praxis. However at the same time they are permeable and vulnerable in everyday life, both fluid and flexible. They are able to adopt quite different perspectives, forms and purposes. It would be a misunderstanding to see this triadic relation as a 'division' or 'divisible'. Using Deleuze and Guattari's (2000) notion of 'in being' or 'in development', the intention of this work is not to establish any hierarchical or order relation between the three dimensions but to consider all three of them equally relevant and constituent of the process of identification. However if, as Maffessoli (1996a) claims, sociological theory has neglected this everyday dimension, presenting it usually as a mere copy of the political and institutional dimension, it is important to ensure that it receives equal recognition.¹⁴ In the same way I will claim in this work the need to dedicate more attention to everyday or quotidian representations, because their roles have been often neglected and frequently perceived as a secondary dimension; relegated and subordinated, as Maffessoli stressed, to economic and/or ideological spheres.

In summary, I will maintain that identities are a point of unity, a point of suture of the psychic and the discursive in their constitution (Hall 1996:5) of

¹³ For example, it is possible to celebrate the first of May, to drink a glass of vodka and at the same time to present oneself as a Muslim person without much hesitation.

¹⁴ Maffessoli actually suggests the notion of '*sociality*' as distinct from 'society', where the everyday knowledge of what he also calls 'the first culture' (1996a.) characterises his notion of 'sociality'; differing to political, economic or institutional dimensions.

political discourse, institutional practice and everyday life representations, the 'we' (identification) and the 'Other' (differentiation); the past and the present; the fluid and the rigid, the flexible and the structured.

Specific ethnic and national identity discourses, should be perceived as directly involved in helping to consolidate rigid institutional ways of presenting and representing identities. And as Laclau (1990) well argued, theorico-political categories do not only exist in books but are also part of discourses actually informing institutions and social relations. They are consequently accepted and are considered as 'necessary' by many people, groups and communities.

Paradoxically, it is in the context of discontinuity, volatile relations and the unstable dynamics characteristic of rapid political and economic change, as well as lack of ideological references, or uncertainty and insecurity about the future, when ethnic and national discourses are more likely to be accepted and incorporated. They offer social cohesion and solidarity, a sense of belonging and 'being part of' a society by answering basic questions of 'who we are' and 'where do we come from'? As Calhoun indicated, national identity, in particular, can easily be seen as natural and prepolitical in our contemporary world. As he states, 'through such a sense of categorical identity people could situate themselves in relation to the enormous, distant, impersonal forces (economic above all) that shaped their lives, establishing a sense of commonality without tracing specific connecting relationships' (1995:259). Whether nationalist rhetoric presents a 'unity' which does not necessarily exist is an aspect of the argument that I will develop in the next chapter. Taking the above into consideration, and in order to be able to move on through this journey, I will develop the idea of classification and categorisation, and its relevance in the process of identification. This will involve presenting in more detail the actual national policies that were applied by the Soviet Union and their subsequent relevance to the current situation in the Republic of Tatarstan. I will show how ethnic and national identities (notions that have a particular resonance in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union which do not correspond with their meaning in Western perceptions) have been presented as 'primordial' and 'essential' ties, as an indispensable mechanism to achieve 'social integration'. This categorisation and classification has not always been a response to popular demands but is rather a political strategy designed specifically to reinforce power relations and to consolidate a strong 'sense' of

'Otherness' as well as 'complexes of inferiority' among the non-dominant groups.

CHAPTER 2

Reading Tatarstan and its History

The intention of this chapter is to present sufficient historical background in order to be able to comprehend some of the current characteristics of the Republic of Tatarstan, and to review the historical references that, in my opinion, represent some of the key accounts and interpretations of the current development of the republic. Furthermore, in this chapter and the next I will address the antagonism between the political discourse of integration and the institutional praxis of segregation both during the Soviet period and since the declaration of Tatarstan's sovereignty. The two chapters are designed to illustrate how the political discourse of integration, first expressed in terms of the Soviet people and later through the civic notion of *Tatarstantsy*, are often not in harmony or in step with actual institutional praxis where the idea of the 'Others' is promoted. Such practices reinforce difference and maintain segregation instead of the claimed plurality and diversity.

Without doubt any region, area or environment is affected by the history of the people and place which has conditioned the dynamics of present time. However, in the specific case of Tatarstan, its historical background is remarkable in the way it continues to condition and determine many of the policies that are being adopted in the present. Furthermore, in some areas the tragic past (like civil wars) endures as an active part of the society, thanks to the involvement of the intelligentsia, politicians, cultural elite and different social forces that are able to reinforce the 'collective memory'. In other circumstances, history tends to 'disappear' through various mechanisms of 'collective amnesia'. In the case of Tatarstan, the history has not disappeared, and since communism "collapsed" a permanent process of (re)writing and remembering the past has been part of the agenda. It has involved a (re)definition of the relationship between the Russian and the Tatar populations in the territory of the republic through concrete political agreements, (for example the agreement signed between Moscow and Kazan in 1994) or language policies (the recognition of Tatar language as the second official language), which indicated a concrete attitude and response to the past. Consequently, it is not adequate to draw a rigid division between the past and the present, because although the present is incorporating ways of dialogues, conditions and characteristics new to the republic, nevertheless in many ways it

is also a response to the past.

I will begin by presenting some general information about Tatarstan and what I consider the most important historical moments until the creation of the Soviet Union, including some references to language reforms. Secondly, I will devote some attention to the Soviet period and its specific national policies and language policies, and finally I will conclude this section by presenting a possible reading of the first ten years of Tatarstan “sovereignty”.

The Republic of Tatarstan is located between Europe and Asia, representing almost a strategic door between the Orient and the West ¹⁵. According to constitution of the republic ¹⁶, Tatarstan (previously known as Tataria) is defined as a multiethnic republic, with two official languages, Russian and Tatar. The biggest ethnic groups are: Tatars- 48.5 per cent of the whole population and Russians- 43.3 per cent of the population (Moustafin and Khouzeev 1994:18); consequently it makes sense to talk in terms of a “bicultural” society; with two main confessional groups, Muslim and Orthodox.

Inside the same Kremlin- wall, a mosque and a church are now sharing the same space, recurrently presented (by politicians) as an indicator and symbol of the peaceful and harmonic cohabitation between different ethnic and religious groups in the republic.¹⁷

Tatars are an ethnic group of Turkic origin, the largest ethnic minority group in Russia, and almost 75 per cent of the Tatar population live outside of the republic (Bennigsen 1990; Hanauer 1996; Löwenhardt 1997). ¹⁸ Russians

¹⁵ It is important to emphasise geographical location, which is a key element in the processes of identities formation and transformation. Tatarstan is located in the core of the Russian Federation, situated in the European part of Russia and 800 km from Moscow, at the confluence of the Volga and the Kama Rivers. Kazan is the capital of Tatarstan. The economic potential of the republic is based mainly on raw materials (including oil and gas) industry and agriculture.

Tatarstan is a republic with a population of almost four million - 3723 thousand people (01.01.93). The census of 12 January 1989 registered 107 nationalities living on the territory of Tatarstan.

¹⁶ Recognised on 6 November 1992.

¹⁷ The Kul Sharif Mosque is planned to be completely finished by 1000th jubilee of Kazan in 2005, although it is already possible to hold services there. Never before in the history of Kazan's Kremlin have a church and a mosque coexisted together because after Kazan was conquered by Ivan the Terrible everything connected with Khanate was destroyed.

¹⁸ In the Republic of Tatarstan there is a population of 3.8 millions inhabitants, with one million in Kazan; approximately there are 7 million Tatars and the majority live outside of the republic.

and Tatars are often perceived as *enemies*, and numerous historic references and interpretations can be used to justify this perception. Since the Russian conquest of Kazan, Tatars have experienced numerous attempts at Russification and Tatar cultural annihilation; repression that provoked diverse rebellions in 1556, 1669 and 1670, and a massive migration to Central Asia (Hanauer 1996).

The Tatars are a Turkic people who migrated from southern Siberia between the 10th century and the 13th centuries (Hanauer 1996). The settlement of the current territory of the Republic of Tatarstan started around 10,000 years ago. From the 4th century AD. Turkic people called Bulgars started to move into the region around the Central Volga. For more than 400 years, the Bulgars, controlled the middle Volga region, and established a powerful state, (the first Bulgar state 'Great Bulgaria' came into existence in 632), lasted up to the 13th century when the Mongol-Tatar conquest took place. The name Tatar was introduced into the Middle Volga region and the other territories of the Golden Horde with the Mongol conquests (Schamiloglu 1990). This name referred to all the various Turkic, Mongol, Uralic, and other peoples of Eurasia (ibid.); Genghis Khan ordered that all conquered people be called Tatars, a term synonymous with being conquered (Rorlich 2000: 5). However, it is important to stress that there is a remarkable debate amongst scholars about the origins of the Volga Tatars ¹⁹.

After the collapse of the Mongol State, in 1437 the Kazan Khanate was established, which represented one of the main rivals to the Muscovite Russian State until 1552, when Kazan was 'absorbed' by the Russian power.

2.1 Moscow –Kazan: Historical approach to an asymmetric relation

In order to understand the current dynamics of change in the Republic of Tatarstan, it is necessary to go back in time to analyse the relationship between Moscow and Kazan throughout history; relations that should be approached with certain caution and always analysed in perspective.

For many Tatars, 1552 marked the beginning of the decline of Tatar culture and language, a period of Russification and Christianisation; in

¹⁹ On the one hand there is the Mongol thesis, and on the other, there are the defenders of a Turkic thesis. According to the Mongol thesis, Tatars originated as a Mongol tribe conquered by Genghis Khan. However the Turkic thesis maintains that a Turkic people called Tatars existed before the Mongol conquest (Rorlich 2000). See Iskhakov 1998.

Iskhakov's words a year that 'Tatar society entered the colonial period of its history' (Iskhakov 1997b: 3)²⁰. Volga Tatars offer possibly a unique example of a Muslim nation that survived more than four centuries of foreign domination (Benningsen 1990). After the Russians conquered Kazan, different strategies were undertaken in order to eradicate Islam; Muslims were expelled from Kazan and their richest lands were distributed among the Russian nobility, the Orthodox Church, and later, the peasants (Benningsen 1990: 278).

In 1565 in the city of Kazan there remained only one thousands Tatars, which produced a thorough ruralisation of the culture. As a consequence, the society became divided into small communities with low levels of contact between them. In that context, Islam played an important role as a spiritual base for Tatar society, by becoming an ethno-confessional religion, and the main integrative force (Iskhakov 1997b).

During the 17th century, the de facto authority of the Church increased. The political theory was that the Tsar and the Patriarch were joint rulers of an autocratic and theocratic monarchy. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Orthodox Church was closely tied to the government, by personal links as well as institutionally. Before the revolution, the Orthodox Church and the State were inseparable forces, both representing the same power.

Between 1740 and 1743 alone, 418 out of 536 mosques in the Volga area were destroyed (Rorlich 2000: 41). Tatar intellectuals understood that they had to preserve Islam as the pillar of Tatar society, but simultaneously adapt to the new socio-economic circumstances characterised by liberal reforms and national equality. This provided the motivation for a national movement. Tsarist oppression removed most class differences that had existed among the Tatars by eliminating economic opportunities for Muslims. This had the effect that religion became one of the issues that politically united the Muslim people of southern Russia (Hanauer 1996:65).

In the history of Tatar national ideology according to Amirkhanov, three periods can be identified; Islamism, Turkism, and nationalism; which can be presented as different steps in the crystallisation of national ideas'. During the policies of Christianisation, Islam became a mechanism to conserve Tatar

²⁰ Damir Iskhakov is a Tatar historian who is working in the Institute For Historical Studies of Tatarstan, and lecturing at the Faculty of History, Kazan State University. He has published numerous books and papers on Tatar history, Tatar nation formation, and current issues. He is a very well known and well published scholar in Tatarstan.

culture and resist colonial oppression. Islam was able to replace the ideological vacuum, offering ideological and cultural alternatives to the policies of Russification. In the same way, the second stage of Turkism or Pan-Turkic ideology stressed the brotherhood and communality of all Turkic and Muslim people around the world. However, by the beginning of the twentieth century nationalism started to highlight specific and concrete characteristics of Tatar culture and society and it emerged in the political arena with autonomous political resources (Amirkhanov 1996:27-30). The books and essays written at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries by Tatar religious and intellectual announced secular ideas, which represented a different approach to Tatar culture, which Rorlich calls religious-secular symbiosis (2000:85).²¹

Between 1904 and 1918 Muslim communities in Russia were experiencing a very active political life, albeit with different tendencies, varying from extreme right, conservative and religious, to radical left Marxism. However all these movements, points of views and opinions had one common characteristic, the desire to maintain Islam as a foundation for a national movement (Bennigsen 1995).

The consequences of the October 1917 revolution was the creation in 1918 of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) and on 27 May 1920 the creation of the Tatar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (TASSR)²². However, the new borders of the republic left a big proportion of Tatar population outside the boundaries of their nominal republic, while in the Bashkir ASSR, Tatars represented the largest ethnic group (Bennigsen 1990:280).

In the 1920s, Tatar national movements and Muslim Communism did not follow the same direction as the central party, and from 1923 to 1928 they became an active opposition movement (Bennigsen 1990). For example, Mirsaid Sultangaliev, one of the main thinkers of Tatar national communism, maintained that in an overwhelmingly peasant and semicolonial Muslim society, the goal of national revolution represented a higher priority than the goal of social revolution (Rorlich 2000:143).

²¹ See Rorlich 2000, Chapter 7 Reformism at Work: The Emergence of a Religious-Secular Symbiosis.

²² See the following section.

In his history of this period, Bennigsen argued that Muslim incorporation into the Communist party was a politically strategic decision in order to obtain the goals that they were aiming for. Some of the main objectives were: to develop Islamic nations and defend the Muslim nation as one single community, to obtain national independence, to conserve Islam as a moral, social and philosophical pillar, to stop Western influences, and to obtain their own structures in the political arena (Bennigsen 1995). However, the attempts to achieve party autonomy and separation from the Russian Communist party, as Rorlich stressed, were tolerated for purely tactical purposes under the stress of the Civil War (2000:145). After the war, Moscow decided to embark on a strategy of control of the Muslim Communists. Muslims in the USSR subsequently experienced several stages of political isolation, political division, political genocide (as in the case of the Crimean Tatars) and political assimilation (Bennigsen 1995). Bolshevik leaders rejected the possibility of creating a dialogue between communism and Islam and thoroughly assimilated this movement through different mechanism. In 1923 the first purges against the top national communist leadership began, and almost by the mid-century the majority of Tatar intellectuals, who were defenders of Muslim communism had been executed.²³ Moreover, a variety of cultural and educational institutions of Tatarstan were likewise persecuted, and any attempt to assert national communism was eradicated.

The history of repression in the 1920s is bleak indeed but it would be a significant mistake to associate the domination of the Tatar population by the Russians solely with the Soviet period. Its foundations were laid with Kazan's occupation in 1552 and it was reinforced in the following centuries, as well as during the Soviet time. As early as in 1920, for example, the authorities of the city of Kazan organised a number of actions to stop the creation of the Tatar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (TASSR), since Russians (who were in power at the time) considered that Tatars were not ready to control their own government (Zakiev 1995: 406).

In the post-1945 period Tatarstan experienced a substantial process of industrialisation and urbanisation, characterised by massive Russian

²³ According to Rorlich in 1930 alone, 2056 Tatar Communists representing 13.4 per cent of the total membership, were expelled from the party; 2273 received the death penalty for their nationalist deviation, and 329 were fired from the post they had occupied (2000:155). See Rorlich 2000, Chapter 11 National Communism and the Tatar ASSR before World War II.

immigration. This dynamic produced a considerable division inside the society as Tatars became increasingly representative of the rural population and Russians were associated with urban centres. According to the All-Union census of 1979, the Tatars represented only 38 per cent of the urban population of Tatarstan (Bennigsen 1990: 282).

Until 1860, the language amongst Volga-Ural Tatars was old-Tatar, with Arabic and Persian influences (Iskhakov 1997b). According to Iskhakov there were two main periods of Tatar language reform, one corresponding to the second half of the 19th century, up to the beginning of the 20th (until 1905), and the second period between 1905-1917. The main purpose of this reform (in the second period) was Tatar language democratisation and Tatar literature promotion, to combine Tatar literary language with popular conversational language, and to change the Arabic alphabet to Latin. But only after the creation of the TASSR (Tatar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic) on 19 December 1920 there was an official decree ‘about alphabet and orthography’. It was in 1927 that the Latin alphabet (*Yanalif*) was officially recognised as the Tatar language alphabet (Iskhakov 1997b: 25). Consequently, in the second half of the 19th century and first decades of the 20th century the Latin alphabet was introduced and adopted for the Tatar language, replacing the Arabic alphabet.²⁴

2.2 The Soviet Union and its ‘national policies’. Discourse versus Praxis

‘The nationality of the workers is neither French, nor English, nor German; it is labour, free slavery and self-huckstering. His government is neither French, nor English, nor German; it is capital. His native air is neither French, nor German, nor English; it is factory air. The land belonging to him is neither French, nor English, nor German; it lies a few feet below the ground’ (Marx, quoted in Wicker 1997).

In the USSR, from the beginning of the twenties, ethnographers worked together with official statisticians and bureaucrats to classify and define the different national groups, ‘rationalising’ the administrative structure of the state and systematising the use of ethnic categories. According to Hirsch, it was not ‘the Soviet empire’ that made nations, but a combination of new party officials

²⁴ For discussion in English language about language policies in Tatarstan, see Davis, Hammond, and Nizamova 2000.

and old regime specialists like Petrograd ethnographers, with statisticians and administrators who worked together deciding which peoples should be included on the official lists of nationalities census and which should be 'eliminated' or consolidated with their neighbours (1997: 253).²⁵

The Soviet Union, as Brubaker (1996) indicated, was a multinational state in terms of its ethnic heterogeneity, but also in institutional terms. The Soviet Union was not conceived as a nation - state, since it promoted a codification²⁶ and institutionalisation of nationhood and nationality exclusively on a sub-state rather than a state - wide level. Paraphrasing Brubaker no other state has gone so far in sponsoring, codifying, institutionalising, even (in some cases) inventing nationhood and nationality on the sub-state level, while at the same time doing nothing to institutionalise them on the level of the state as a whole (1996:29). Thus the Soviet process of institutionalisation of nationhood and nationality has two different dimensions; one operates in terms of territorial organisation of politics and administration (ethnoterritorial federalism)²⁷ and the other involves the classification of persons (ethnocultural).²⁸

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was created in December 1922 with four founding republics: the RSFSR, (Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic, constituted in July 1918), Belorussia, Ukraine, and the Transcaucasian Federation (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia). In the following years Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Moldavia, Kirghizia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and the Baltic Republics were also incorporated (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania), a total of fifteen union republics, twenty Autonomous

²⁵ By December 1939 the specialists finalised a revised list of 59 major *natsional'nosti* made up of nations, national groups, and *narodnosti*. In the course of a year, some 31 *natsional'nosti* (nations, national groups and *narodnosti*) had disappeared. (Hirsch 1997:275). Kharisov (1998) stressed that as result of the strong cultural and linguistic assimilation 93 nations disappeared, whereas in 1926 there were 194 nationalities, by 1974 there were only 101 (ibid:56).

²⁶ 'To codify means to banish the effect of vagueness and indeterminacy, boundaries which are badly drawn and divisions which are only approximate, by producing clear classes and making clear cuts, establishing firm frontiers, even if this means eliminating people who are neither fish nor fowl' (Bourdieu 1990b:82).

²⁷ According to the 1977 Constitution (Fundamental Law) of the USSR, chapter 8 Article 70. 'The Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics is an integral, federal, multinational state formed on the principle of socialist federalism as a result of the free self-determination of nations and the voluntary association of equal Soviet Socialist Republics' (Lane 1985:359).

²⁸ Nationality as an official component of personal status was introduced in 1932, and had to be clearly specified in the internal passport.

Republics, Autonomous Regions and Autonomous Areas.

The Twenty Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics (ASSRs) belonged to one or another union republic²⁹ and were populated by national groups who gave their name to a particular ASSR and were thus known as the titular nationality in the republic. They enjoyed a degree of local self-management and were represented in the affairs of the local republic and in the Soviet of Nationalities of the USSR Supreme Soviet (Sakwa 1998: 238 -9). Autonomous Republics were subordinate to the parent Union Republic in the establishment and interpretation of their constitution and a Union Republic has the right to suspend the laws of an Autonomous Republic and it could also intervene to ensure that economic planning was in conformity with the national plan (Lane 1985:177).³⁰

Furthermore, this complex administrative classification was accompanied by a personal classification. It is important to bear in mind that in the USSR there were two different passports, the main one being the internal passport used inside the territory of the USSR. People only applied for the external passport when they were travelling abroad, something that few were able to do very easily because of the strict bureaucratic control. The system of internal passports was introduced in the 1930s, and it depended on parental ethnic nationality (*natsional'nost*). People's *natsional'nost* did not depend on

²⁹ Tatar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (TASSR) belonged to the Russian Soviet Federated Social Republic (RSFSR).

³⁰ According to the 1977 Constitution (Fundamental Law) of the USSR, chapter 10, Article 82, an Autonomous Republic is a constituent part of a Union Republic. In matters not within the jurisdiction of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Union Republic, an Autonomous Republic shall deal independently with matters within its jurisdiction.

An Autonomous Republic shall have its own Constitution conforming to the Constitution of the USSR and the Union Republic with some specific features of the Autonomous Republic being taken into account.

Article 83. An Autonomous Republic takes part in decision-making through the highest bodies of state authority and administration of the USSR and of the Union Republic respectively, in matters that come within the jurisdiction of the USSR and the Union Republic.

An Autonomous Republic shall ensure comprehensive economic and social development on its territory, facilitate the exercise of the powers of the USSR and the Union Republic on its territory, and implement decisions of the highest bodies of state authority and administration of the USSR and the Union Republic.

In matters within its jurisdiction, an Autonomous Republic shall co-ordinate and control the activity of enterprises, institutions, and organisations subordinate to the Union or the Union Republic.

Article 84. The territory of an Autonomous Republic may not be altered without its consent (Lane 1985:362).

the place where they were residing, but was based on descent. A child from a mixed family, at the age of sixteen was allowed to choose the *natsional'nost* of one of the parents for themselves; a decision that was also determined by notions of 'prestige' or 'acceptability', since not all *natsional'nost* were equally accepted.³¹

Even today, *natsional'nost* is carried by people and is not ascribed by being born or being resident in a territory. Consequently *natsional'nost* then, as now, was considered a 'given' dimension but not 'ascribed'³² (without many chances to modify), that a person kept throughout their life regardless of the place of residence or place of birth.³³ Once an official *natsional'nost* was entered in the passport, 'no subsequent change in *natsional'nost* entry is permissible'. Thus, legally, *natsional'nost* is an immutable ascriptive characteristic of every Soviet citizen (Karklins 1986:32).

Each internal passport clearly stated personal *natsional'nost*, i.e., Jewish, Tatar, or Russian, as well as the place of residence (*propiska*) in the URSS and their allegiance to the Soviet citizenship. Personal *natsional'nost* was strongly institutionalised and for each bureaucratic transaction an internal passport was demanded. It has been said that *dokumenti* are the Russians' placenta (Nabokov 1986: 274). The identification of personal *natsional'nost* was requested in almost all official papers in the USSR. The internal passport became an indispensable document during Soviet times and it was institutionalised as the maximum expression of social control, it registered criminal antecedents, working as a direct source of information or a "mirror" for each individual and on some occasions it was kept by the authorities for

³¹ One of the girls I spoke with in a non-Tatar gymnásia explained that one of her friends did not know what to do because one of her parents was Tatar and the other Russian, and she did not want to antagonise anyone, but she did not know which *natsional'nost* she should register.

³² The difference between 'given' and 'ascribed' nationality is related with the debate between primordialist and constructivist approach, also formulated in terms of *ius sanguinis* and *ius soli* nationality. See Chapter 1, footnote 11.

³³ Smith distinguished between a Western model of national identity, and what he called a non-western model and "ethnic" conception. The distinguishing feature of the East European and Asian model is its emphasis on a community of birth and native culture (Smith 1991:11). For Central and Eastern Europe, the idea that ethnic identities are contextual and not essential, that they are constructed rather than inherent, frequently are unacceptable (Schöpflin 2000:16). It is not part of this work to analyse the existing debate between primordialist and constructivist approach in East European countries. However, it is necessary to stress that nowadays there are many scholars in the former Soviet Union who are defending constructivist approach, and Tishkov, V. A. is one of the main authors.

example some agrarian cooperative (*kolkhoz*) in order to prevent movement by peasants.

Ethnic nationality [*natsional'nost*] was not only a statistical category; it was an obligatory and mainly ascriptive legal category, a key element in an individual's legal status (Brubaker 1996: 31). Ironically it represented a contradiction to the claimed aim of consolidating the new Soviet people, a-national by definition, by strongly reinforcing the differences between the groups.

The production of the demographic census created nationalism in regions where it did not previously exist (Hirsch 1997: 277). The official classification of the population by *natsional'nost* was to a large extent what made the category a highly politicised marker of identity. In this way, a double regime was created which distinguished between citizenship and nationality, a regime of dual affiliation (Giordano 1997:182). Regardless of people's *natsional'nost*, whether Russian, Tatar or Jewish; everyone was also recognised as a Soviet citizen. This model of double affiliation consolidated Soviet ethnocracy, and it helped to establish (and cement) a social hierarchy based on an ethnic dimension, where Russians played the dominant role. Inside this system of classification the Russians were without doubt, the leading nationality. Russian was imposed as a lingua franca, and Russian people had access to key positions that were banned for other nationalities. Under the Soviet regime, the public status, linguistic privilege, and cultural facilities enjoyed by Russians, meant that Russians tended to assume that the entire Union rather than just the Russian republic was 'their' territory (Brubaker 1996: 50).

As a result of the territorial and administrative organisation, a considerable proportion of the population lived outside 'their own' national territories (Brubaker 1994:55). As noted earlier almost 75 per cent of the Tatar population live outside the nominal republic. As a consequence of the arbitrary drawing of the borders of Tatarstan, (as with other administrative and political units), Tatars constituted the ethnic majority living in the neighbouring Bashkir Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (BASSR).³⁴ In the vast majority of the Soviet terrain, political and administrative borders did not coincide with ethnocultural frontiers, consequently there was almost a permanent tension

³⁴ For a comparison between the two republics, see Rorlich 2000.

between the dual system of nationhood and *natsional'nost*,³⁵ which was also accompanied by a powerful mechanism of the repression of nationalism.

Lenin was a defender of equal conditions and status for all nationalities, he defended equal opportunities and development for different languages and cultures, in 1913 in the article 'Working class and national question', he wrote: '(...) Not one privilege for any nation, or any language! Not a little favouritism or little injustice to national minorities! This is the principle of a working democracy' (Drobizheva 1981:49).

Nevertheless by the beginning of the thirties a strong tendency towards centralisation was manifested, and Lenin's theoretical claims were very distant from the concrete policies that were adopted. There were two aspects to Lenin's claims: on the one hand, the development of different nationalities their cultures and languages; and on the other, the aim to establish and reinforce the consolidation of nations' Union, that would diminish the differences between different groups. Lenin assumed that once communism was established, national demands would disappear, but to establish communism the support from the republics was needed, (especially for economic reasons). He encouraged the construction of ethnic communities by developing their language and distinctive cultural infrastructure although he was sure that once communism was achieved, national demands would disappear by themselves. Nations (and nationalism) in the Marxist-Leninist approach, are seen as a result of the capitalist period, a bourgeois manifestation destined to disappear once communism was established. Lenin's solution to the national problem was based on a rapid socio-economic development combined with inter-national and inter-regional equalisation. 'This equalization was not only supposed to have an economic effect but federalization would provide for political and juridical equality among nations, and *korenizatsiia* policies³⁶ or indigenization would provide for sociocultural equalization' (Chinn and Kaiser 1996: 25). The socialist political elites in the core were to be inter-nationalist or a-nationalist (ibid: 65). Lenin's multinational state would consist of nationally homogenous autonomous territories where indigenous people could study in

³⁵ For more details about this tension see Brubaker 1994.

³⁶ Kaiser defined *korenizatsiia* as 'the promotion of 'indigenization' of social and cultural, economic and political institutions in each homeland of the state; which was an attempt to create a local elite who would be loyal to communism. *Korenizatsiia* was seen as a dialectical facilitator of Sovietization and ultimately international integration' (Kaiser 1994:126).

their own language and be represented politically by members of their own nation; however, instruments of political socialisation (education, government, media) would be controlled by a-national communists at the centre (ibid:69).³⁷

The official *modus operandi* (introduced by Stalin) was known as ‘national in form, socialist in content’; in 1981 Brezhnev indicated very clearly, at the XXVI Party Congress meeting, the main position of the party. ‘We are against tendencies toward artificial deletion of national particularities. But at the same time we consider unbearable their artificial inflation’ (Drobizheva 1981:60). During the twenties and thirties *korenizatsiia* policies took place, which promoted and offered special conditions, (in terms of language and work conditions) for the titular nationalities in each republic and administrative unit. As Rorlich points out, in Tatarstan *korenizatsiia* became the policy of Tatarisation in the party and government apparatus, the intellectual cadres, and through the language (2000:150), which was considered as an enormous achievement in relation to the previous years. The number of books and literature published in Tatar language increased considerably, education in the vernacular was encouraged and the promotion of the Tatar population to certain administrative positions was also reinforced. Thus during the early years of *korenizatsiia* Tatar national communists held important positions in the party and government apparatus³⁸. In the years between 1921 and 1928 a *modus vivendi* was forged between communism and Islam; and between communism and nationalism. However it was fragile. *Korenizatsiia* was a mechanism to develop and increase the role of the local elite in the republic’s life, an attempt to promote local cultures and languages, and a demand for more rights and privileges within republics. However, this approach was not always welcomed in the centre and began to be perceived as a threat.

For example the support that national schools and vernacular languages achieved during the first decades of the twentieth century (as a result of *korenizatsiia* policies) began to change drastically.³⁹ Administrative units representing the nationalities within the educational bureaucracy were

³⁷ Stalin’s writing on the national question constantly identified three national problems: 1) Great-Russian chauvinism, 2) local or non-Russian nationalism and 3) inter-national and inter-regional inequality that had been inherited from the Russian empire (ibid:71).

³⁸ On *korenizatsiia* and its affect on the Tatar language see Kirillova 2000.

³⁹ Something that will be addressed in more detail in Chapter 3.

abolished, as were minority districts and minority village soviets (Dneprov, Lazarev, Sobkin 1993: 176). From the beginning of the thirties, there was a considerable oscillation in schooling policies, and from that period to the beginning of the nineties, national education was a very marginal option. Minority schools were persecuted as a 'national deviation' from socialist ideology and socialist goals (ibid.).⁴⁰

By the end of the thirties an internationalist approach replaced *korenizatsiia* policies. As Kaiser (1994) stressed, it was a reaction by the centre against separatism and national territoriality. Stalin persuaded Lenin that the only way of converting the non-Russians to orthodox Marxism and Communism was to make concessions to their national aspirations (Hans 1963: 181). According to Kaiser, '*korenizatsiia* policies, on the one hand helped to accelerate the process of international equalization, but on the other, reinforced the local sense of 'exclusiveness' regarding their homeland status' (1994: 235). The supposed attempt at unification caused the contrary effect, by promoting exclusion and discrimination throughout the territory of the USSR, underlining the distinction between Russians and the 'Others', the non-Russians. Individual nationality became synonymous with 'social stigma' that people were ashamed of and tried to hide and silence; an inferiority complex was interiorised and accepted as part of the social order.

It is necessary to bear in mind that the process of industrialisation had performed an important role consolidating and reinforcing the notion of the 'Others'. The cult of modernity in this context meant the cult of the urban Russian who was educated and skilled and operated new industries.⁴¹ 'Rural' became increasingly a synonym of 'backward', 'deficient', and those ethnic groups that were predominantly rural also came to be associated with backwardness⁴² (Kondrashov 2000: 31)⁴³.

⁴⁰ See Chapter 3.

⁴¹ During my fieldwork I have observed quite an important feature. Most of the people who managed to preserve Tatar language and Tatar traditions, during the Soviet regime were people coming from rural areas, people who grew up in rural environment, in Tatar villages, who were actually in contact with their relatives, grandmothers and grandfathers. These are the ones who today maintain the language and some of the Tatar traditions. Thus, the dichotomy *rural/urban* in the context of Tatarstan is crucial.

⁴² In 1979, 38 per cent of Tatars and 56 per cent of Russians lived in cities, and 65.2 per cent of Tatars and 23.7 cent of Russians resided in rural environments (Zakiev 1995:421).

⁴³ Sergei Kondrashov completed his Ph.D (1996) at Manchester University as part of the Soros project. He used in his research both Tatar and Russian sources.

The rapid industrialisation, (one of the main objectives of the Soviet policies, promoted by the quinquennial plans) had a considerable impact on the national composition of many cities. Indeed, it created new cities where they did not exist before; new cities that attempted to promote inter-group relations. The best examples of these processes in Tatarstan are Nizhnekamsk or Naberezhnye Chelny, where most of the population were Russian speakers who came from different areas of the USSR to build the ‘Soviet Project’⁴⁴. They were cities mainly engaged in the chemical and oil industries, and they represent a symbol of the Soviet ideology and non-national communities where Russian was the unifying language.

The inferior ethnic status was institutionalised in everyday life, not only in terms of language, but also in establishing and defining relations between Tatars and Russians. As Kondrashov indicated, it was this established cultural order that created situations where a Tatar would be insulted by Russians’ off-handedness (2000:33); but the perception of being treated as inferior was not necessarily connected with any experience of being personally victimised or insulted.⁴⁵ One of the important dimensions is that the Tatar population accepted their inferior ethnic status, an acceptance that created a vicious circle. On the one hand, this feeling of inferiority was instrumental in promoting the acceptance of the established social and cultural order, that of growing Russification and partial assimilation of urban Tatars. On the other hand, the progressing Russification and assimilation reinforced the perception of national inferiority amongst the Tatars (Kondrashov 2000:51).

According to Brubaker the Soviet regime deliberately constructed the republics as national policies “belonging” to the nations whose names they bore; they institutionalised a sense of “ownership” of the republics by ethnocultural nations (1994:66). Conversely, the Soviets limited the domain in which the republics were autonomous. The consequences of this contradiction (it must be stressed) started to re-emerge at the beginning of Perestroika and

⁴⁴ KAMAZ (one of the biggest automobiles enterprise in the USSR) had a labour force consisting of more than 70 nationalities, and more than 307 cities helped with the machinery and plants.

⁴⁵ Something that my own research also confirmed. Most of the people that I had the opportunity to talk with, underlined Tatar cultural repression, however, on a personal level, not even one person considered that they had suffered from any kind of insult or attack, or even discrimination because they were Tatars; but they all talked about Russian domination and Tatar discrimination.

Soviet disintegration. Ethnic and cultural revival of the titular groups in each republic began to claim what they considered had been taken from them (their cultural and linguistic heritage) at least for decades, and in some cases, even for centuries. Sometimes these demands took the form of revenge, although on other occasions the approach was non-violent (as was the case in Tatarstan).

Another fundamental tenet of Marxism-Leninism was that religion ultimately would disappear, so the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) was always dedicated to promoting the disappearance of religion.⁴⁶ As Anderson indicated, religious policy up to the end of the 1980s involved three elements: the creation of a new atheist man, reduction of different religious bodies, and coping with the believers' response to religious policies (1994:3). One of the main features of the communist regime was the anti-religious campaigns, and these campaigns had different degrees of intensity; oscillating from periods of relaxation to periods of intensification. 'Religious policy has been in a constant state of flux and amendment throughout the Soviet period, as governments responded to particular circumstances that might arise and the ideological needs of the moment' (Anderson 1994: 4). Between 1921 and 1928, 'anti-religious work was conceived as a long-term educative process rather than as destructive and negative' (Ramet 1993:8); however, the following decade (between 1929 and 1939) saw the most savage persecution of religion in the entire Soviet period. Taking the decade as a whole, there can be no doubt that individual believers and religious institutions of all kinds suffered more radically then, than in any other period of time during the Soviet era. During World War II the situation experienced certain relaxation and religious groups received some concessions, however, after 1945 the situation started to change again. During Khrushchev's rule, organised religion confronted a rehabilitated attack as response to the revival (and concessions) that they experienced during World War II (Anderson 1994: 8). One of the aims of this campaign was to reduce the institutional base of religious organisations, and all religious groups were affected to a greater or lesser degree. During the 1960 with Brezhnev in power the situation changed again, nonetheless, there was no real break with the past. The direct attack against the believers was reduced

⁴⁶ The first Soviet law on religious instruction was contained in article 6 of the Education Act of 1918. It declared the principle of secularisation of all schools and the prohibition of all religious instruction (Hans 1963:154).

(they were released from the camps), the closure of religious institutions decreased and direct anti-religious articles disappeared from the press (Anderson 1994: 68); nevertheless, the basic hostility towards religion remained. Brezhnev's arrival symbolised a new modification, although the aim to eradicate religion from Soviet society remained. At the beginning of the 1960s atheist education was introduced as part of political education in higher educational establishments, according to Anderson, during this period there was an attempt to improve the training of atheist cadres, the improvement of lectures and the improvement of individual work with believers (Anderson 1994: 114). With Gorbachev, at the end of the 1980s the situation changed drastically and the liberalisation of religious policies started to take place.⁴⁷

Language policies were also a clear and visible indicator of the tendencies and efforts to highlight or mitigate (depending on the era) ethno-cultural differences. A year after the creation of the Tatar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (TASSR), Tatar and Russian languages were declared official languages of the republic and incorporated in all institutions as obligatory (Zakiev 1995: 270). During that period there was enthusiastic Tatar language development, including the regions outside the republic where a considerable number of the Tatar population was living. Developments included publishing Tatar books and periodicals, the incorporation of the Tatar language into nurseries and schools, Tatar language courses, Tatar language libraries, and the opening of pedagogical departments in different regions (Zakiev 1995: 405). However, during the thirties, Stalin's policy of fusing all nationalities into one, with a common culture and one international language, meant that the Tatarisation was reversed. Between 1925 and 1938 eighteen Turkic languages were Latinised during this 'national' phase (Kaiser 1994: 127), including the Tatar language. However, as the result of the Russification policies, at the end of the thirties the use of a Latin script was replaced by the Cyrillic. Ideologists of this reform, maintained that Latin script represented an obstacle to Russian language learning (Kharisov 1998). According to Kharisov language policies during Soviet times were not really trying to preserve and develop national languages, regardless of the fact that legally all the languages

⁴⁷ For a detailed analysis of the characteristics of each period, see Anderson 1994.

had equal status⁴⁸.

As a result of language and national policies, during the Soviet period the majority of young people became uninterested in their mother tongue. Moreover, many non-Russians started to identify with Russian as their mother tongue, since it became their first language, and they declined to study their vernacular. Kharisov defined this period as 'linguistic nihilism' (1998:56), because a considerable sector of the population did not want to learn their mother tongue due to its social unpopularity, and the preference for knowing Russian increased from year to year, since the knowledge of the vernacular did not represent any practical benefits.⁴⁹ By the eighties in the urban environments Tatar language was used mainly within the home, i.e. domestic environment and had very little application outside Tatar households.⁵⁰

Paradoxically, the history of language development demonstrated that failure of the Soviet political discourse of integration and the aim of building an egalitarian society. As this chapter has emphasised, it even produced the opposite effect. The political discourse did not correspond with the institutional praxis, and instead it promoted a strong division and differentiation through the concrete application of national policies. Although some people believed in the formation of a new Soviet people (*sovetskii narod*) most of the non-Russian population became aware that in the new Soviet cartography not everyone could occupy the same position. The mechanisms of differentiation not only became visible, they were perceived as unchangeable. The differences were naturalised (people understood that there was restricted access for some people to certain jobs, faculties, holiday residences or flats) and they learned to accept these distinctions.

However, it is also important to emphasise that not everything was formulated in terms of antagonism. In everyday interaction people developed strong mechanisms of solidarity that broke through the lines of institutional

⁴⁸ However (the other side of the coin), is also relevant to bear in mind that thanks to Russian language incorporation in schools, Russian text book publications, and in general Russian culture production, many illiterate people were able to learn how to write properly. It brought the non-Russian culture into contact with Russian culture, and also with global culture and knowledge. It was an effective mechanism for mass-schooling development.

⁴⁹ If in 1959 7.9 per cent of Tatars did not know their mother tongue, in 1989 this number increased to 16.8 per cent; and whereas in 1959 92.1 per cent of Tatars considered Tatar language as their vernacular, in 1989 only 83.2 per cent of Tatarstan recognised Tatar language as their vernacular (Zakiev 1995:448).

⁵⁰ Sagitova, interviewed in March 1998.

differentiation and segregation. The vast majority often had to face similar hardships and these conditions created an underground economy and an unspoken code of solidarity which transgressed ethno-cultural or national differentiation. During periods of economic instability the boundaries were easily crossed and people established mechanisms of exchange and mutual support which did not operate at the political or institutional level, but functioned in everyday 'transactions'.

2.3 'Tatarstan sovereignty': defining relations

'Overall, promoting ethnic revival is a more significant part of the republic governments' programmes than its leaders' rhetoric would have us believe' (Gorenburg 1999: 246).

Tatarstan's sovereignty within the Russian Federation was achieved through different steps, firstly the declaration of the State Sovereignty, two years after the constitution's approval, and in 1994 a bilateral agreement that was signed between the Federation and the Republic of Tatarstan.⁵¹

Earlier- on 30 August 1990 - Tatarstan had issued its Declaration of State Sovereignty, proclaiming itself to be the sixteenth Union Republic of the USSR (Hanauer 1996:70). Tatarstan's leaders never demanded absolute independence, however because of Tatarstan's geo-political situation; it is not just that the republic is situated in the heart of Russia, but also there is a long history of strong interdependency between Kazan and Moscow.⁵²

On 15 February 1994, after three years of negotiations, Kazan and Moscow signed a bilateral treaty, an agreement granting Tatarstan more extensive autonomy, which gave the right to ownership of land, mineral wealth and other resources; and equally, the power to impose taxes and draft the republic's budget, to conclude treaties and to conduct independently foreign economic activities. According to Hanauer, Tatarstan was extremely successful

⁵¹ It is important to stress that Tatarstan had for a long time nurtured the ambition (even before Perestroika), of achieving the status of a republic.

⁵² After Tatarstan independence (1992) they claimed power over taxation and budget distribution. At the same time, we cannot underestimate the fact that almost half of the population in the Republic are Russians, a population that will never agree to an absolute independence from the Russian Federation. Tatar Independent Party 'ITTIFAK' does not recognise that Tatarstan is part of the Russian Federation, and advocates the total and complete independence of Tatarstan. Ittifak - *al Muslimin*, The Union of Muslims - was the Muslim Liberal Party which emerged in Russia after 1906.

in negotiating increased control over economic resources, and it reduced its dependence on Moscow (1996:73). However, it is necessary to emphasise as Mukhariamov ⁵³ has indicated, that the agreement signed in 1994 has a political and symbolic meaning, rather than financial or juridical one. To Mukhariamov, the treaty was an historic symbol that Moscow and Kazan were able to find a peaceful agreement. It was a symbol of compromise and commitment, rather than an agreement containing concrete decisions; a political achievement but never a juridical or financial one. Nevertheless, it became a model for different regions and republics, using it as a point of reference for future dialogues and agreements with the central government.⁵⁴

The concept of a *Tatarstan Model* was born on 3 October 1994 when President Shaimiev visited Harvard University.⁵⁵ According to his speech it is a concept that involves a peaceful relationship between Moscow and Kazan, reducing political conflict between the parties, maintaining dialogue and cooperation, and simultaneously, allowing Tatarstan a certain degree of independence in some concrete issues. The notion of a *Tatarstan Model* ⁵⁶ is usually presented as the opposite experience to other regions where the process of sovereignty is defined by violent confrontations and conflicts (like the case of Chechnya and Abkhazia). From Mukhariamov's perspective, the *Tatarstan Model* is a situational model, a model of permanent renewed compromise and balance. The Tatarstan model always represents a state of adaptation, a search for balance with Moscow. The model depends on the demands of the situation; an equilibrium that has its historical roots, since for a very long period, Russians and Tatars have lived together finding a balance.

In 1989 Tatarstan's leaders defined the points that were the main characteristic of their ideology; firstly they wanted a Union Republic status independent of Russia, secondly they wanted Tatarstan laws to be supreme in the republic, and thirdly, they wanted control over the republic's most profitable industries (Gorenburg 1999: 251). One of the main arguments that they used in order to convince the non-Tatar population of the advantages of

⁵³ Professor Mukhariamov, doctor of Politics. Interview 15.09.2000.

⁵⁴ Research conducted in 1994 indicated that almost 60 per cent of the Tatar population and 70 per cent of Russians are satisfied with the agreement, whereas 29 per cent of Russians found it difficult to give an answer (Drobizheva 1997:71).

⁵⁵ In Iskhakov 1995.

⁵⁶ On the 'Tatarstan Model' see Drobizheva 1997 and Iskhakov 1997, especially pages 123-153.

that position, was economic benefit.⁵⁷ In order to make sovereignty acceptable to non-Tatars living in Tatarstan, presidential advisers began to develop the concept of a Tatarstan nation, composed of all the inhabitants of the republic (Gorenburg 1999:252). Intelligently enough, President Shaimiev changed the ethno-national discourse that predominated during the first years of Perestroika, substituting the notion of 'Tatars', by a civic notion of citizenship of Tatarstan, making this the epicentre of his discourse. Strategically diplomatic, he opted for a considerable change in his discourse, in an attempt to non-Tatar support. However, the notion of *Tatarstantsy* (citizens of Tatarstan, without including ethnic differentiation) does not seem to exceed its appearance in official documents and speeches, whereas in opposition, ethno-national notions are deep-rooted in a number of concrete laws and policies.⁵⁸ In everyday conversations and people's self identification the civic notion of *Tatarstantsy* does not seem to play an important role, whereas national and ethnic personal identifications emerge easily when people present themselves, illustrating that Soviet *natsional'nost* continues to represent a key dimension in peoples identification. After a decade of sovereignty ethno-national categorisations are more than alive in people's discourses and representations. Furthermore, it seems that inclusive notion of *Tatarstantsy* makes reference to a political project and it needs time to be able to embrace or to become a part of everyday representations. At present, we can only speculate about the future of this concept since in real terms it does not exist outside the inclusive formal rhetoric and might never become part of something more concrete.

Officially (and according to the Tatarstan constitution) the republic represents a multiethnic society, where all the cultures and nationalities are equally supported and have the same status and recognition.⁵⁹ In other words, a discourse of ethnic and cultural integration is promoted and presented as the 'new symbol' (or slogan) of the republic. But the practice seems to illustrate that concrete measures are adopted to promote ethno-cultural Tatar revival, instead of promoting a multiethnic society where all groups and cultures are

⁵⁷ Since almost half of the population in the republic are Russians, it was important to avoid using any kind of ethno-national claim.

⁵⁸ For concrete examples see Gorenburg 1999.

⁵⁹ In Tatarstan the advertised ideology of *Tatarstantsy* and its politics are based on cultural pluralism, which is recognised in all documents. It is presented by ideologists as a diversity of nationalities, not based on any principle of exclusion (Drobizheva 1997).

equally represented. In other words, the rhetoric and the practice seem to be taking different paths. Once again, echoing what occurred during the Soviet years, the tension between the political discourse of integration and the institutional praxis of segregation has emerged as a reiterative “reality”.

For example, according to Gorenburg (1999) there are three main areas where concrete measures to encourage the revival of Tatar culture have been taken: firstly the promotion of Tatar language use in the public sphere; secondly the expansion of Tatar education (the dimension that is presented in the following chapters), and thirdly, direct propaganda for Tatar culture. Additionally, it is also necessary to highlight the features of a ‘democratic game’⁶⁰. Perestroika launched an active struggle to achieve national identity rebirth, national culture and language. One of the main goals of the government became Tatar language incorporation into everyday life, not only for Tatar people, but also for the Russian population. The purpose of the above was to create or promote bilingualism in both directions; the goal being that not merely Tatar but also Russian pupils would have to study the Tatar language as a compulsory subject, and for the same number of hours as the Russian language. National schools were re-opened, where Tatar language became the medium of teaching, classes of Tatar language were promoted again, and the main idea was to return to the same conditions as at the beginning of the twentieth century when the active Tatar culture and language development was taking place. It is also possible to observe considerable attention to Islam. However, since officially religion and government are two different institutions it is not openly manifested. But if in 1985 there were only 18 Muslim communities working in Tatarstan, by 1999 there were more than 900 (Iskhakov 1999:23).⁶¹

In July 1992 a language law was adopted, giving Tatar and Russian languages equal rights. This law made concrete references to the use of both languages at the political and administrative level; simultaneously emphasising the use of both languages in media, industrial enterprises, public transport, and in general in any activity that involved interaction with the public. Equally, it stressed the need to develop the Tatar language through concrete policies like

⁶⁰ ‘Democratic game’ in the sense that it is still difficult to be able to talk in terms of democracy in the context of Tatarstan.

⁶¹ In 1996 4349 mosques were registered in the territory of the Russian Federation, and in 1999 there were more than 6000 (Gainutdin 1999:74).

opening Tatar language schools and nurseries and promoting the Tatar language in the area of broadcasting.⁶²

As a cyclic process, a change from Cyrillic to Latin script was approved by 2001 (although in the Language law adopted in 1992 there were clear references to this change) and according to this law commencing on the 1st of September 2001 all the first year classes should be teaching Tatar language using Latin script. Some elementary books were published in Latin and teacher training has been organised, however, only a few schools in the republic adopted the change.⁶³ It is difficult to predict what will happen in the future and if a real shift to Latin script will take place again.

The idiosyncrasy of the political arena is also a dimension that should not be underestimated. Tatarstan politics is characterised by a quasi-feudal system. It could be described as an ethno-political monopoly with almost absolute Tatar domination without any opposition (Sagitova 1996:65; Löwenhardt 1997:133)⁶⁴, and a clear Tatarisation of the governmental elite (Gorenburg.1999). According to Löwenhardt it would be no exaggeration to say that legislative, executive and judicial powers in Tatarstan are in the hands of a small and tightly-knit group, the clientele of President Shaimiev (1997:133)⁶⁵ or what is known in different circles as Shaimiev's Clan. Furthermore, the vertical power structure is reinforced by the strong control of President Shaimiev in many decisions.⁶⁶ Sometimes in private conversation the word ethnocracy (ethno-Tatar domination) is used as a possible definition of

⁶² In 1994 the 'State programme for the preservation, study and development of the languages of the people of the Tatarstan Republic' was approved, and there was a recommendation to create a list of professions which will require the knowledge of both languages, a 15 per cent salary bonus was offered for workers in these professions who knew both languages, and the expansion of Tatar-language education and media (Gorenburg 1999:261).

⁶³ Some Tatar newspapers have started to print the headlines using Latin and Cyrillic scripts, and the street names have been changed into Latin, but with numerous mistakes. Some people consider that to change to Latin will not benefit Tatar culture because most of the people do not know Latin script. They also consider that first of all it is necessary to teach the younger generations the Tatar language and only after that to go ahead and change to Latin script.

⁶⁴ Sagitova showed that 70 per cent of the political elite are Tatars. Löwenhardt, indicated that by 1995 only 20 per cent of the chiefs of administration of the districts and cities and 25 per cent of the Chairmen of District Soviets were ethnic Russians.

⁶⁵ Shaimiev was elected president in 1991, and his name was the only one on the ballot paper (Löwenhardt 1997). In 1996 he was re-elected, and in 2001 he had a special extension that allowed him to stay in power for another term.

⁶⁶ A situation with which the Russian population is not very pleased, since they are beginning to experience a certain marginalisation, not only of the Russian population from certain key positions, but also Russian cultural development and diffusion.

the current political situation in Tatarstan. However, according to Mukhariamov, it is a mistake to talk about ethnocracy (which he considers an oversimplification), and better in the context of Tatarstan to make reference to what he called *agrobureaucracy*⁶⁷ hypothesis that is highly relevant to understanding the current political arena, and the process of Tatar gymnásias promotion. Mukhariamov maintains that it is not completely adequate to talk about Shaimiev's Clan, since it is more precisely a characteristic of the *agrobureaucracy* and its internal dynamics; *agrobureaucracy* that is characterised by particular codes and traditions. Members understand each other, having the same background, culture and origins; concrete and specific relations of corporativism⁶⁸; and connections which go beyond ethnic ties, which are more related to the agrarian background.

The *agrobureaucracy* is a group of people with a common culture and model of behaviour, rural emigrants who were born in the rural context and made their career during the Soviet time in rural environment. (There was much less competence required in the rural context and consequently it was easier to develop a career). Amongst this *agrobureaucracy* there is a tradition of mutual protection, almost a psychological solidarity (Mukhariamov, interview 15.09.2000). It is a very concrete form of clientship relation (patron-client) and there are different conditions for vertical mobility. Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that the majority of this *agrobureaucracy* is Tatar, therefore there is a powerful ethno-cultural component. Features of the *agrobureaucracy* are also inherited from the Soviet period, people having highly elaborate career paths and ways of climbing up the social ladder, able to call on concrete and specific support when they moved from the countryside to the city. During the communist period, the patron-client network of the new bureaucracy was not necessarily based on traditional prestige, but on newly created relationships, many of which had their origins in the quest for goods and interests (Schöpflin 2000:158).

It is relevant for this thesis to show that according to Mukhariamov,

⁶⁷ Literally translated from Russian. Interview 15.09.2000.

⁶⁸ Yavlinski, leader of the political party *Yabloko* (Apple) considers that democracy in Russia is more formal than real, furthermore, he considers that a corporate State characterises the current situation, a system where the specific groups' interests are prioritised over public interests. The system is different from a totalitarian system, since a totalitarian system destroys all democratic institutions, whereas a corporate system allocates all democratic institutions under the control of specific groups (Interview in El Pais, On 29 May 2001).

national education and the promoters of Tatar national education, (as the political elite) are also a representative fragment of this *agrobureaucracy*. Generally they come from veterinarian, pedagogical or agrarian institutes, though a lawyer could be an equally eligible member of this *agrobureaucracy*. Tatar is usually their first language, but they all speak Russian because they had to study Russian and they moved to the cities. Furthermore, they are good at developing their own careers and they are surrounded by a strong network in which they support each other and reinforce their similarities. Tatar language certainly performs a dominant role, and as we will see in the following chapters, the development and establishment of Tatar language in the republic forms one of the basic demands of these groups.

A remarkably rigid and essentialist interpretation of Tatar language was constantly reproduced inside the Tatar gymnásias by pupils, teachers and parents. It was generally presented as a primordial tie and ultimate defining characteristic of the Tatar *natsiia*. In that sense, Tatar language was a dimension that called for special attention.

Tatar language was perceived as a primordial attachment to the assumed 'givens' (Geertz, 1996: 41) of territory, ethos, kinship, religious community and particular social practices. Furthermore, in the research reported here, pupils and teachers from Tatar gymnásias perceived language, religion and homeland as distinctive markers in their understanding of 'Tatarhood'.

'The idea of language not only as means of communication but as the central source and marker of 'peoplehood' is part of the romantic nationalism discourse of those involved in language revival and of most ethnonationalism more broadly. What we might call 'heritage languages' - i.e. languages with which a person should particularly identify on account of their ethnicity, which usually would be the mother tongue are seen to lie at the heart of a deep seated identity from which individuals and peoples should not be estranged. Within this model, language use is conceptualised not so much as a pragmatic matter as an affective, symbolic and political one; and the decline in 'a people's language' is seen as evidence of alienation and perhaps even repression' (Macdonald 1997:219).

Thus generally, recovery and revival of the Tatar language was presented as one of the main purposes of the Tatar gymnásias, teachers, parents and pupils. Its renewal would allow Tatars to transform and (re)formulate their relation with their Russian neighbours, and in particular with the Russian

capital, Moscow.

However, regardless of the political effort, Russian language remains the predominant language in the political arena. The use of Tatar language in Parliament is an exception; very rarely there are translations provided from Tatar language for Russian members (Iskhakov 1995:58). Furthermore, as we will see throughout this work, what for some sectors of the population represents just the beginning of Tatar cultural and linguistic revival, for other sectors, the effort that the current government is making is perceived as unbalanced and asymmetrical; usually depending on the different conceptions of Tatarstan's national identity that each group maintains.

For example the question of a Tatar University, where all the subjects would be taught through the medium of Tatar, represents an important ambition for some of the Tatar population - not just for some sectors of the political elite and nationalist groups, but also for the teachers, parents and pupils from Tatar gymnásias. It would represent continuity with their work, and would prove that the Tatar language situation is changing, that the enormous effort is generating some results. The demand from the central government to open a Tatar University represents an enormous symbolic statement but it is something that Moscow seems very unlikely to concede. In the exchange of polemic it is unclear whether the refusal is due to the anticipation of potential 'danger' in the creation of a Tatar University, or because they just do not see it as a relevant matter to be considered at the present. If it were to be granted, the decision would have profound repercussions in the republic because it would be identified as an outstanding achievement for Tatar language and cultural capital development. Furthermore, it would signal an inclination from Moscow to establish new relations with Tatar language and culture. Simultaneously it would symbolise an incentive for the Russian population about the future possibilities and 'utility' of learning Tatar language. However, Moscow is not ready to accept such a compromise, not least because a 'university is also a significant locus of symbolic power' (Schöpflin 2000:235). Currently, despite political declarations, it seems unlikely that there will be significant moves towards a Tatar State University, federally funded.

In summary, it is difficult to imagine the context of Tatarstan without the cohabitation of Russians and Tatars, regardless of the asymmetrical relations both in the past, as well as in the present, since they have been living

together for many centuries, oscillating from periods of direct confrontation to periods of collaboration. The relationship has been influenced historically by the asymmetrical and changing relations between Moscow and Kazan, clearly manifested in the development of different national policies and language policies. A summary classification is represented in the typology offered by Davis, Hammond and Nizamova (2000) of four different (but sometimes overlapping) conceptions of Tatarstan's national identity which co-exist today. First, there is the perspective that Tatarstan should be an Islamic state; second, there is a view of Tatarstan as a centre for Tatar culture, language and religion; the third, is the idea of Tatarstan as a pluralist, multi-ethnic state; and finally there is the perspective that Tatarstan is an integral part of Russia. All four conceptions that are adopted and supported by different institutions, groups of interest and populations are included in the complex process of identification that is taking place in Tatarstan. In another sense they are representative of the relevance of the historical "luggage" that the republic is carrying in each step of every phase throughout this long voyage. The two extremes are the promotion of Russian "hegemony", understandable in linguistic, cultural and political terms, and on the other, Tatarstan represented as an Islamic state. Between these two extremes, a certain flexibility exists and identities are negotiable. But as with any typology, it remains for the researcher to give an account of the complex interpretations and ideal representations that the historical legacy and the demands of the present together allow.

We cannot overlook the fact that Tatarisation is a response to many centuries of cultural attrition leading to potential annihilation. The policies of Russification and Sovietisation, leading to marginalisation have not ceased to have an effect, although bit by bit they are being unravelled. However, the aims of internationalism are being replaced by the unavoidable tentacles of globalisation. Where are Tatars going to look for their allies? The Russian Federation has clearly positioned itself, but it is not clear what will happen with republics like Tatarstan that are part of the Russian Federation but not necessarily fully aligned with the tendencies of the Federation. It is not clear where the Tatar gymnásias are going to seek support, whether from near-by Turkey, from the Arab Emirates or farther to the West. Global influences are clearly manifested in Tatarstan. The Internet and Coca Cola are incorporated in pupils' lives and similar cultural references, in pop music and mass culture are available as they are elsewhere across the planet. In this new branded world it

is possible to see almost the same brands in Bauman Street (the main commercial street in Kazan) as in any other high street of Paris, Milan or New York. Of course, the surroundings are not the same; the early stages of growth in Kazan cannot be compared with the mature developed conditions of the world cities. Nevertheless, regardless of the differences, the same brands can be identified. Similar goods, news and dreams are consumed all around the world, different to a degree and in their intensity, but constituting a single paradigm of material culture.

Guibernau maintains that ‘the present revival of ethnicity responds to a need for identity, but an identity of local, rather than a global, character’ (1996:131) especially due to the relevance that the pair inclusion and exclusion performs in the process of identification. Is it possible to feel an attachment and a sense of belonging to the unlimited notion of the global?

In the next chapter I will dedicate special attention to the institutional dimension, more precisely to the educational system during Soviet time and after Tatarstan’s sovereignty was declared. The purpose is to present the background of national schools and to illustrate the central position that schools have in the process of identification and in the (re)production of some discourses instead of others.

CHAPTER 3

National Education in Tatarstan: The Praxis of the Past and the Present

3.1 The origin of national education

Following Sharafutdinov (1999), Tatar national educational development can be traced through five distinctive phases: the democratic tendency ⁶⁹, revolutionary-democratic ⁷⁰, Jadidist, missionary, and Marxist. The discussion in this chapter broadly follows this periodization.

Historically, the Tatar system of education was based on two different components, the elementary and the advanced. Volga Tatars maintained the Islamic pattern of organising religious schools. At the elementary level, a primary religious education was available in a *mekteb*; (where children learned the fundamentals of literacy) whereas at the advanced level, elitist education was for brighter pupils in higher education centres called *medrese* (Muslims school of higher learning). The main objective of the *medrese* was to prepare students for religious reproduction, and simultaneously to train the national elite - writers, poets, historians or politicians.

For a long period of time, the only links between Tatars and Russians in the area of education was missionary activity, government control and police surveillance of the *mektebs*, and *medreses* (Rorlich 2000). Nevertheless, in the nineteenth century, as Rorlich clearly showed, the Tatars rejected the Russian schools, but not the necessity for a secular and more advanced educational system. Peter the Great pursued missionary policies in the educational system, because education was perceived as a new mechanism of Christianisation. Followed by a relatively relaxed period for Tatars under Catherine II, missionary policies were strongly reactivated under Nicholas I (1825 - 1855). There were physical attacks on Islamic institutions and economic incentives encouraged voluntary baptism. Education was strongly promoted because it

⁶⁹ Influenced by Russian and foreign pedagogues during XIX and beginning of the XX century

⁷⁰ Gabdulla Tukai (1886-1913), Galiagar Kamal (1879-1933), Madzhid Gafuri (1880-1934) and Shakir Mukhamedov (1865-1923), were some of the key authors of this period. They were idealists who defended education in the vernacular, considering that Arabic was too difficult for the youngest children. They promoted literature production in the vernacular, and the adoption of new methodological techniques. The main objective was the development of Tatar national education. Some of their claims were to achieve a real democratisation of national education; equal conditions for all national languages and educational systems, women's incorporation in the educational system and the right of non-Russians to obtain higher education.

was perceived as an effective mechanism of Russification (Gizzatullina 1999).

At the end of the nineteenth century, N.I Il'minskii (1822- 1891)⁷¹ proposed that the main 'weapon' of the missionaries should be the school, teachers and local language; his program was introduced on the 26 of March 1870. There were three schools that used his ideas: Russian-Tatar schools, central schools for Christian Tatars, and the Kazan teachers' Seminary for *inorodtsy* (non-Russian people). Russian-Tatar schools incorporated Russian and arithmetic, as well as Muslim religion and Tatar language in their curricula. N.I Il'minskii's system was criticised by Russians and by Tatars; Tatars considered it as a Russification and Russians were worried that the emphasis on the local language would foment nationalism and separatism among *inorodtsy* (ibid.). In 1870 it was recommended that schools for Muslims Tatars used Russian for general education, and Tatar and Russian were also taught as separate subjects (ibid:86). In the same year, *mektebs*, and *medreses* opened Russian classes, because Volga - Ural Muslims resisted attending the Russo-Tatar schools. The first two Russians gymnásias were opened in Kazan in 1759, and by 1808, 13 of the 54 gymnásias that existed in the entire Russian empire were located in Kazan school district, but very few Tatars chose to enrol, even when some of them included Tatar in their curricula (ibid.). As a mechanism of attracting Muslim students, Islam was introduced into the gymnásia curricula. However, as Rorlich indicates, between 1801 and 1917 only 20 to 30 Tatar young people finished the gymnásias.

Jadidism, a reform movement that was influential at the end of the nineteenth century, demanded a more modern education, and considered the native language to be indispensable as the language of education, but also Russian should be a compulsory subject. Simultaneously, Jadidism demanded that all *medreses* should include secular science in their programmes, and that girls should be incorporated into the educational system. In general, Jadidism represented a period of transformation in Tatar society, especially in the area of political thought and education. Thus from the tenth to the end of the nineteenth century a confessional medieval system of education prevailed, Jadidism created the national schools and essentially a new ideology of

⁷¹ Professor of Turkic languages at the Kazan Theological Academy and Kazan University. The new system was named after him, and it was meant to provide a Christian education in the native languages for the Volga area (Rorlich 2000: 44, 87).

education (Enaliev 1998). During the Jadidist reform, Tatar society emerged at the European level in terms of education and cultural production, because Jadidism involved a considerable transformation in socio-economic, religious and political spheres, as well as everyday perceptions and behaviour. By 1917 the reform had created different educational and social institutions that were concerned with national issues, reinforcing the role of the vernacular and stressing the importance of national culture (ibid.) For example, *medreses*' students studied Russian from six to twelve hours every week, but they studied Tatar or Arabic only from three to four hours a week (op.cit:92). At the beginning of the twentieth century *mektebs* and *medreses* retained their religious and Islamic character, but they became more secular and developed as national schools (ibid:102). In 1916 was the opening in Kazan of the first Tatar gymnásia: *F. Aitovoi*. This gymnásia was a model of elite national education, and in many ways it survived to become a model for the contemporary Tatar gymnásias. A secular centre based on national education, it gave high priority to Tatar language, literature and Tatar history, and all the subjects were taught though the medium of Tatar (Ialalov 1996).

The gymnásia *F. Aitovoi* was closed in 1918 shortly after the Bolshevik Revolution. This was part of the strategy for the annihilation of illiteracy and the organisation of primary school education in the vernacular, during the twenties and the early thirties. The main purpose was schooling in the vernacular; but the heavy hand of the totalitarian regime characterised the decade as a whole. In 1938, when Russian was introduced as an obligatory language, the descent of the national schools began.

In post-revolutionary Russia there were three types of national (non-Russian) schools: (1) instruction in native language, with Russian studied as a separate subject. (2) instruction in Russian, with the native language studied as a separate subject; and (3) instruction in both languages, normally in the native language in the younger grades with a transition to Russian afterwards. Only Tatars and Baskhirs had type (1) schools available for the entire duration of secondary education (Kaiser 1994: 257) but, they were more common in the rural environments than in cities.

3.2 Soviet Schools and Soviet citizens

'Few things tell us so much about a country as its schools. In them we can see one of the most important processes of any nation - yesterday's

traditions and today's policies moulding and developing the citizens of tomorrow' (Grant 1965:13).

'By communist education we mean the education of an all-round developed person of a communist society. This education for all-round development includes the sum of the following: intellectual and manual education, and moral aesthetic and physical education'.⁷²

The consolidation of communist society was based on the education and formation of new people, *Soviet people*, (*sovetskii narod*) where a key role was played by Soviet schools.⁷³ Lenin perceived the school primarily as an ideological institution; hence the Soviet school was not merely a place where the younger generations would acquire formal learning, but also socio-political and moral values. Consequently, an enormous emphasis was placed on the system of education, since it was supposed that the new *sovetskii narod* would be able to emerge from an adequate and carefully elaborated educational programme, fully embracing communist ideology and beliefs. The general assumption was that the consolidation of the Soviet people, and as result, the construction of communism depended on the quality, standards and commitment of the school system. Soviet schools were an organic component of the communist society, especially in ideological terms. According to Lenin's view, all the schools' curricula had to be imbued with Marxist ideology, with the purpose of struggling for a new society (Marvenko 1982: 3).

School and family, were two institutions to which the Soviet regime dedicated close attention, and one of the main purposes was to involve parents in schools activities, and to enhance the pedagogical culture of the population. During the first stage following the Revolution many revolutionary measures were adopted and freedom for the child and experimentation were the watchwords. All examinations were abolished, for political as well as educational reasons (King 1948: 9). There were eleven elements that defined a good and adequate *vospitanie*⁷⁴ in the Soviet schools: socio-political awareness; morality and ethics; patriotism and internationalism; military-patriotic education; labour education and professional orientation; mental

⁷² Professor Kairv, director of the Academy of Pedagogical science (quoted in King 1948:6).

⁷³ Khrushchev had referred in 1961 to the emergence of a new historical community, that of *sovetskii narod*, Soviet people (Smith 1990:9).

⁷⁴ Muckle translated this term as 'good breeding', but Muckle also well stressed that it is a term that means the development of personality (1988:22).

development and the raising of general culture; atheism; knowledge of the law and of the obligations and rights of a citizen; economic; aesthetic; and finally physical education ⁷⁵ (Muckle 1988: 23). During the early years of the Soviet regime, the study of Russian language was voluntary and the medium of education was the native language. In the 1920s instruction was carried out in 70 languages, in 92 languages in 1931, and in 104 languages by 1934 (Dneprov, Lazarev, Sobkin 1993:176). Later this trend was reversed. In 1957 in Russia there were schools working in 47 languages, but by 1963, in only 18 languages. In 1990, in Kazan, remained only one school where children could study Tatar language (Lotfullin and Guryanova 1996). This was the result of an active process of educational standardisation and centralisation. During the 1960s these processes continued with the purpose of unifying all the different nationalities. Parents had a strong stimulus to choose schools with education in Russian, because higher education was only available in Russian.

In practice the political discourse of cultural integration became obsolete, and the purpose of building a 'house of difference' was no longer the main goal. Soviet schooling policies were closely geared towards cultural standardisation and therefore provided little support for cultural differentiation.

The USSR was a union of republics and one degree lower in political status were the autonomous republics; each with its own Ministry of Education. There were also the autonomous regions and national areas, which had very little capacity to decide and overall the educational system was strongly centralised. All education was state education, compulsory and atheist, ⁷⁶ whereas in old Russia religious instruction was included in every syllabus of all schools.⁷⁷ During that time unofficial and unregistered communities were the actual promoters of religious education and formation, conducting religious teaching in people's home and always in small groups. Different procedures and 'underground' methods were used to keep religion alive.

Despite the different reforms that were adopted during the seventy

⁷⁵ It is important to stress that 'not only the revolutionary movement but the Russian educational tradition had already been promoting scientific-utilitarian and anti-clerical tendencies for the previous two centuries, before Marx was born' (Hans 1963:150).

⁷⁶ About religious policies see Chapter 2.

⁷⁷ During the first years of the Soviet regime, children started the schools at age seven, but later on they introduced a reform and they started at age six, (nowadays some children start at six and some at seven). For detailed information about how the Soviet curriculum see Muckle 1988.

years of the Soviet regime (schools administration, curriculum and organisation), as Grant described, it was always a mass system and a planned system, subject to political control and closely supervised (1965:27). From the late 1950s onwards Russian was promoted as the *lingua franca* in the territory of the USSR, and Kaiser (1994) confirms that Russian was a required subject in all schools, while the other languages had become optional since 1958. Native language schools became restricted not only to the home republic, but more precisely they were confined to the rural environment. The increasingly marginal position that was assigned to native languages and cultures indicated that plurality was not a real option anymore, and political discourse was more detached than ever before from the practice of educational institutions.

In the cities instruction was in Russian and the native languages were studied as separated subject. In the autonomous republics, *oblasts* and *okrugs*, below the union republics, there were even fewer opportunities to study in the native languages (ibid.). In the twenty autonomous republics, Russian was the medium in the schools, and the vernacular (for example Tatar) was a subject. Furthermore, the 1958-59 educational reforms favoured Russian as a medium of instruction in native schools while exempting Russians from learning local languages ⁷⁸ (Smith 1990: 7).

A measure of how active the schools were as a mechanism in the ideological apparatus of the system is that, according to Marbenko, more than 70 per cent of boys and girls had already become *komsomol* members in the school (1982:82). Continuous political and organisational work was carried out through the youth organisation, which was very close to the Soviet school systems. Each level was represented firstly the *Octobrists*, children between eight and ten years old, then the *Pioneer* organisation, between the ages of ten and fifteen, and finally the *Komsomol*, the all-Union Leninist Communist League of Youth.

From one point of view they were political organisations but at the

⁷⁸ In schools during the Soviet period, Tatar language was a completely optional and almost marginal subject. It was not a compulsory subject and the pupils who wanted to study it had the opportunity to do it, only once or twice a week, at the end of the day. Some people even said to me, that it was presented almost as a kind of penalty or punishment, since no-one wanted to stay at the end of the day because there were all tired, the level was very low and not least because there was no real incentive to do it. It was not a useful language. In the cities everything was in Russian: university, schools, all kind of jobs. Economic 'development' was arriving hand in hand with Russian language and culture.

same time they performed a recreational function⁷⁹. In both senses they were centralised organisations for political and ideological control. At the beginning of the 1989/1990 school year, 9 per cent of all enrolled pupils in the RSFSR, were enrolled in national schools, (Dneprov, Lazarev, Sobkin 1993: 176), where the subjects were taught in native language. 'While retaining an isolated component of national identity teaching of (but not in) the native language, the school in reality was transformed into an instrument of destruction of minority cultures' (ibid: 177).

'Industrialisation' and 'urbanisation' became synonymous not only with Russian language domination, but also the 'imposition' of Russian culture. Moreover, 'the study of Russian is claimed to arouse patriotic feelings and to establish a dialectical-materialist attitude' (Muckle 1988: 66).

Kondrashov considered that the growing domination of Russian language in all spheres of life could not be interpreted only as forced imposition. He claims that 'certainly, Russian held sway in the cities because the very structure of urban life was based on the Russian language and patterns of Russian culture' (..) (2000:42). 'Still the majority of urban Tatars willingly accepted and, for time embraced wholeheartedly the Russian language' (ibid:43). However the Tatar population was left without choice, apart from the option of adaptation to 'contextual demands'. In the mid - 1980s about one-sixth of all the students in the republic of Tatarstan attended Tatar schools mostly in rural areas, while more than four-fifths were taught in the Russian schools. Kazan itself, the chief city had just one Tatar national school (Kondrashov 2000:4).⁸⁰

Since Tatarstan sovereignty was declared (August 1990), and the new law 'on languages of the Republic of Tatarstan peoples' was approved, the situation of the Tatar language began to change dramatically. Its marginality was swiftly exchanged for its incorporation into the main stream 'institutional discourse'. Notoriously, Tatar language became not only compulsory in school for all pupils regardless of their nationality, but the number of hours per week, was made equivalent to Russian language. For the past ten years a substantial effort had been made by the authorities to situate both languages at the 'same

⁷⁹ See Grant 1965.

⁸⁰ This estimation was confirmed by almost all the headmistress and headmasters interviewed during the fieldwork.

level'. But what is it happening in Tatarstan after ten years of sovereignty?

3.3 The current educational situation

The existing school system in Tatarstan, as in the rest of the Russian Federation, maintains the same 'top-down' structure that characterised the Soviet educational regime. Vertical lines of authority extended downward from the ministries through the regional district authorities (*ronos, goronos*) to the directors of the schools, to teachers, and ultimately to the pupils.⁸¹

The education system has a state-public, secular character, and includes all levels: pre-school education, general secondary education, secondary vocational education, specialised secondary education, higher education, post-graduate education and improvement of professional skills and courses for training, retraining and improving professional skills. General secondary education is the central part of the Russian school system and it includes: general secondary schools, schools specialising in accelerated study of selected subjects, gymnásias, lycéums, evening schools, boarding schools, schools for children with special needs (for mentally and physically disabled children) and extra-mural educational institutions⁸² (*ibid*). Schooling is organised at four different levels: pre-school, (between the age of five and six), elementary school, which includes first, second and third school years (from the age of seven to nine) or sometimes it includes a fourth year (from the age of six to nine). Middle level, from the fifth to the ninth school years (from the age of ten to fourteen) and secondary school, which includes tenth and eleventh school years (from the age of fifteen to sixteen and sometimes seventeen).⁸³

In the Article 4, of the Law of the Russian Federation on Education, specifies the secular nature of the state system of education.⁸⁴

⁸¹ The system of state management bodies supervising education in the Russian Federation has the following structure: the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation, local ministries of education (of the republics constituting the Russian Federation), local boards of education, main administrations, committees and departments of education at the *oblast* and *krai* level as well as local structures of governance for the autonomous republics, committees (departments) of education of the cities of Moscow and St. Petersburg (Dneprov 1993).

⁸² The system of pedagogical education includes pedagogical universities, teacher training (or pedagogical) institutes and their affiliates, teacher (or pedagogical) *uchilishcha* (preparing teachers for primary schools) and institutes for improving teachers' qualifications.

⁸³ A twelve years school system it is at the experimental stage and only some schools are involved in this change.

⁸⁴ Principles of State Policy in the Sphere of Education (Eklof and Dneprov 1993).

From the mid-1980s, the term national school was applied to schools with non-Russians pupils that studied Russian as a subject. At the beginning of the 1990s, an energetic cultural- national rebirth began, and the growing interest of the younger generations in national culture and traditions demanded a new system of education. In that context, an important practical role was performed by national schools and specially Tatar gymnásias, as a new type of national educational centre. These new schools were perceived as a potential tool for Tatar culture and language development, and the political elite began to pay close attention to the issue. Interest was manifested through political, financial and personal support. The number of Tatar gymnásias grew considerably during the 1990s. There was a general impetus to develop and promote these new institutions, and they became an important goal for the Tatar political elite. Most importantly, the political elite supported them both financially and personally, by sending their children to study in the Tatar gymnásias.

Today in Tatarstan, as in the Russian Federation, generally there are different types of schools. On the one hand, there are standard schools, with standard curricula and few variations; on the other, there are so-called in Russian new type centres, or innovative centres, including all sort of gymnásias⁸⁵ and lýtéums. In contrast to ordinary schools these innovative centres specialise in particular areas: languages, mathematics, teacher training, arts, ethno-cultural elements, and so forth. As such they focus strongly on one aspect of pupils' development. The main difference between gymnásias and ordinary schools is the level of specialisation, offered by the former, rather than a standard education.⁸⁶

By definition gymnásias and lýtéums are elite centres,⁸⁷ with a rigorous process of selection, including not only general knowledge but also psychological and intelligence tests. An exclusive and specific notion of 'social prestige' is associated with these centres; historically because of their high standards and good quality of education, and also because of their association

⁸⁵ A gymnásia was a secondary school of highest grade preparing for universities in pre-Revolutionary Russia.

⁸⁶ The distinction is not absolute. There are also gymnásias in Kazan where not all the classes correspond to this category and in some schools run in parallel normal and gymnásias classes, with different curricula.

⁸⁷ An idea that was constantly stressed throughout the interviews.

with a specific 'social class' and 'stratum'. Their prestige was also strongly maintained and promoted during the Soviet period.⁸⁸ Schools are typically rated according to a system of reputation and popularity. Consequently certain key schools in Kazan are regarded as 'the best' in the city.

Because of their specialisation and concentration on particular subjects, curricula in the innovative centres are modified to some extent, although basic subjects and number of compulsory hours are standard for all schools, following the Russian Federation norm. Extra classes and subjects depend on special permission granted to the school by the Ministry of Education in the Republic of Tatarstan, based on a proposal that each centre presents in order to achieve nomination to the category of gymnásia or lǵcéum. Thus, there is a general model of the syllabi offered to the schools in the Russian Federation, but local authorities have the capacity to modify it according to their own needs and demands. Some modifications, however, require permission from Moscow,⁸⁹ which has important implications for national education, because they depend on how Moscow reacts to their initiatives or aims.

National gymnásias or Tatar gymnásias, are institutions that began to emerge no earlier than 1990 in the city of Kazan, strongly linked to specific ethno-cultural Tatar demands released by the break-up of the USSR. In practice, (regardless of official claims), they are new centres basically dedicated to monocultural and monoethnic transmission. According to Ialalov, the historical establishment and development of Tatar gymnásias took place in three different periods: the first one between 1818 and 1880; the second between 1880 and 1918; and the third between 1990 and 1993. In 1993 Tatar gymnásias initiated a phase of expansion (1996:7). The clear objective of Tatar gymnásias is to achieve pupils' education based on national ethnic culture, and popular traditions. At present, Tatar gymnásias are integral to national identity development, national-cultural rebirth and the utilisation of pedagogical traditions in the education and formation of the youngest generations.

According to Ialalov there are three main features that define Tatar

⁸⁸ For example at the present time there are 'Olympics games', organised amongst gymnásias, including amongst others, mathematics, literature, Tatar language and history tests. Some are only for Kazan's gymnásias, but the most important include gymnásias from all Tatarstan. I observed, headmistresses and headmasters referring to these 'Olympics games' as an indicator of their position in relation to other centers; using their position in the 'Olympics games' as a measure of their quality and standards.

⁸⁹ Mansurovna. Expert in education. Interview 30.11.1999.

gymnásias; firstly their aim to guarantee national orientation, national consciousness and patriotism, secondly their strategies of individual development and realisation, and thirdly, the aim to educate young people in the musical, artistic and aesthetic values of the national culture (1996:13,14).

Nowadays Tatar gymnásias are effective instruments for Tatar culture and language rebirth, something that is detectable because of the strong encouragement and support that they receive from the political elite, which is publicly expressed.

This research is based on a comparative analysis of four gymnásias two Tatar and two non-Tatar, in two different districts of Kazan. It is necessary to emphasise that the so-called Tatar gymnásias are clearly acknowledged as national gymnásias, schools that explicitly consider their main objective to be the revival and preservation of Tatar language, culture and traditions; in short, Tatar national identity⁹⁰. In the words of the current Minister of Education:

‘National education centres are developed according to the principle of openness and democracy. (...) Dialogue between cultures contribute to positive and tolerant relations between people, education for citizenship. (...) We cannot forget that *natsiia* [people, nation] and the State - are geographically different notions. For example, outside Tatarstan there are living three quarter of Tatars. This is the reason why, one of the educational republic purposes is to offer them intellectual support. (...) The bases of a *natsiia* are - mother tongue, culture, the school where knowledge is embraced, moral and identity formation. (...)’ (Kharisov 2000:66).

‘Nowadays, national schooling appears as a key factor of any people’s national rebirth. Only schooling can guarantee the opportunity for national cultural development. It makes it [national culture] accessible to each person, modulates people’s identity as a carrier and transmitter of people traditions, and also transmits general human cultural - egalitarian values’ (Kharisov 1997:79).

In official definitions, national schools are presented as schools for dialogue, meeting points of culture, which educate and reinforce in pupils national and ethno-cultural tolerance.⁹¹ Nevertheless, as we will see in the following chapters, the rhetoric of tolerance and cultural respect are not always achieved inside actual institutions. More than this, it is possible detect an

⁹⁰ This objective is explicit in schools prospects, and in the documentation published by the Ministry of Education.

⁹¹ Vestnik obrazovaniia (1991: 26).

“incoherent” relationship between Tatar gymnásias discourse and the political discourse of integration. In other words, it is possible to see an attempt to reinforce segregation inside these institutions, through practices that come from the institutional side but which are also strongly promoted by pupils’ families and by their rejection of mixed marriages in particular.⁹² According to Karpenko, marriage within the group is a key mechanism for maintaining and consolidating the “Tatar clan” (1998:62)⁹³.

Tatar families perform a crucial role in pupils’ *vospitanie*, and this is detectable in how pupils accept and reproduce what families say. Tatar families encourage strong discipline, respect for adulthood, and always behave with concern for the family’s guidance and approval. According to Tatar cultural traditions, the voices and opinions of elders have to be listened to and heeded. This is manifested in the strong similarities that exist between parents and pupils’ discourses. Pupils, as well as their parents, encourage marriage inside the group as well as, for example, the need for religion that they will have in the future⁹⁴. These assumptions are produced both inside the families and inside Tatar gymnásias and then reliably (re)produced by pupils.

For that reason it would be a serious mistake to analyse Tatar gymnásias in isolation, or more specifically, to detach them from their relationships to the Tatar political elite and family influences. Tatar gymnásias, Tatar families and some sectors of the political elite are involved in the reproduction of similar discourses about Tatar-ness, mainly through the redefinition and reproduction of concrete narratives. Narratives about the past and the future can be heard inside gymnásias’ walls and in the families, with the active support of some sectors of the Tatar political elite and Tatar intelligentsia.

In that sense, Tatar gymnásias should not be perceived as separate or isolated entities. On the contrary, they receive substantial support especially from the *agrobureaucracy*⁹⁵ which is closely involved in the management of the Tatar gymnásias, and plays a key role in the (re)production of certain discourses.

⁹² Something that we will see in Chapter 5.

⁹³ Although Karpenko’s work is about Tatars that live in Sant Petersburg, the results can be applied to the context of Kazan.

⁹⁴ See Chapter 5.

⁹⁵ See Chapter 2.

Ethno-cultural segregation is not openly manifested or expressed in the wider political rhetoric, first of all because it would contradict the promotion of a multi-ethnic republic, and secondly, because the central government (Moscow) would never tolerate these discourses. Nevertheless, despite their marginal position, Tatar gymnásias receive support from abroad, especially Turkey. They have a strong connection with various Turkish educational colleges inside and outside the republic. Since Tatarstan's sovereignty was achieved, Turkey has become one of the main investors in the region and an active dialogue was established. In 1995 Tatarstan and Turkey signed an agreement in Ankara dealing with trade, economic, scientific, technical and cultural cooperation. In 1998 a Turkish delegation travelled to Tatarstan to discuss the expansion of Turkish investment in Tatarstan and bilateral trade. In relation to Tatar gymnásias, they maintain direct contacts and some pupils from Tatar gymnásias continue their higher education in Turkey.⁹⁶ Therefore, it would be inappropriate to see these schools simply as institutions in isolation, separate from the political or everyday dimensions. There is interaction (sometimes in the form of cooperation but sometimes expressed through confrontation) between the schooling and the other dimensions as well as mutual effects.

The concept 'development of national education' promoted by the Tatar Minister of Education in 1991, involved the consolidation of the Tatar Pedagogical University, which prepares teachers and cadres to teach in Tatar. The main purposes are to ensure that students can study in their mother tongue, and to introduce special courses about Tatar history, traditions and folklore,⁹⁷

Turkic history, literature and folklore.⁹⁸

According to Mingazovna⁹⁹ (a specialist in national education in the

⁹⁶ For example, when I was in Kazan, one of the Tatar gymnásias where I conducted this research, organised a trip to Turkey and pupils and teachers met with Tatar families that live in Turkey. They went for ten days, and the main purpose was to establish some relationships in Turkey.

⁹⁷ Classroom materials and textbooks for Tatar language, history and literature are published in the republic.

⁹⁸ In 1992 the Tatar philological faculty, history and oriental languages were erected at Kazan State University, in order to prepare Tatar language and literature teachers. In the same year the Tatar State college was also opened to try to accelerate the preparation of Tatar language and literature teachers, as a structural part of Kazan State University. In 1995 Kazan State Pedagogical Institute formed a faculty of Tatar language and Tatar literature and commenced the organisation of the National Tatar State University, and the creation of Tatar language departments in all institutes of higher education in the Republic. (Zagidullin 1996).

Ministry of Education), currently around 97 per cent of the students in the Republic of Tatarstan study Tatar; evidence of the recent 'boom' in Tatar education. Following Mingzovna's typology, national education development in Tatarstan can be summarised in three stages: the first was based on the opening of gymnásias, as many new centres as possible. The second stage was the preparation of staff, and the third the current stage is to achieve a high level of education in the gymnásias. At the outset all the students that wanted to participate, were allowed access, because it was a moment of expansion, but now the emphasis has shifted to the quality of the education, and students' qualifications.

According to Mingazovna, one of the first problems that Tatar gymnásias faced was lack of space, since it was very difficult to find places available for the new centres. At the beginning they began by taking one class in one school, or some sections of schools; one floor, or two rooms, where they organised Tatar gymnásias, because it was impossible to organise a complete school ¹⁰⁰. In Mingazovna's words, the first students who came to these classes were the students that believed in the 'new project' of Tatar education, and in the second place, Tatars' sons and daughters who wanted to separate their kind from Russian children. At the beginning it was impossible to teach students only in Tatar language, because there were not enough teachers and specialists. They proceeded step by step, first with one course, then two, then three; increasing gradually the number. At the beginning, the majority of pupils did not speak Tatar, and the first requirement was to learn Tatar language, and then to take a growing number of courses in Tatar. They commenced with intensive Tatar language courses, Tatar literature and music (these three classes were in Tatar) and the rest of the subjects were in Russian; and only after some time, they begin to teach some subjects in both languages, Tatar and Russian. Today, in national or Tatar gymnásias Tatar language is the sole or main medium of instruction, (whereas in non-Tatar gymnásias Tatar is taught as a second language).

99 Interview 04.02.1998.

100 It was quite common to have a normal school with two or three classes that were Tatar gymnásias.

According to a ministry-sponsored sociological research,¹⁰¹ into the question: what is main role of national schools compared with traditional schools? 75 per cent of teachers considered it was to develop people's culture and traditions; 50 per cent of teachers prioritised language development, 30 per cent of teachers saw it as formation of a particular type of identity and way of life, and 25 per cent of the teachers considered that the aim was to respond to contemporary demands for the development of society.¹⁰² These dimensions will be addressed in the analysis in Chapter 5 and 6. First I will describe some of the key features of each of the schools studied, using data from observation and interviews.

3.4 Introducing two Tatar gymnásias: 'Deconstructing ethno-cultural exclusion'

3.4.1 Gymnásia No.2

Inside the school there is a hive of activity, mainly nearby the headmistress's office, since it is quite a prestigious and famous gymnásia in Kazan. There is a constant stream of events, seminars, conferences, guests from other cities, local and foreign journalists, exhibitions and diverse performances. Gymnásia No.2 represents a model of Tatar gymnásia for the entire republic. It is a well-established school with a tradition of forty years working only with Tatar children. Before 1990 this school was a Tatar orphanage, the only place in the city where most of the education was in Tatar and where children came from all over Tatarstan. As some teachers mentioned to me, 'we always had a Tatar spirit in here'. In 1990 it was re-opened as a Tatar gymnásia. Tatar is used as the medium for teaching in the school, and Tatar cultural transmission is one of the main objectives. As this headmistress clearly stated: 'The objective of our school is the re-birth and development of national education, to educate inside these walls national intelligentsia'.¹⁰³

The curriculum is based on 'classical education' but adapted in specific ways to the circumstances. For example, instead of Logic students study chess twice per week; a compulsory subject, not a hobby or a voluntary workshop.

¹⁰¹ Tatarskii iazyk v shkolakh RT v konteskte sovremennykh sotsial'no-obrazovatel'nykh tendentsii: sostoianie, problemy, perspektivy . Kazan' 1998: Ministerstvo Obrazovaniia RT . Laboratoriia sotsiologicheskikh issledovaniï IPKRO RT.

¹⁰² Teachers had the option to select two questions.

¹⁰³ Interview 23.11.1998.

As a substitute for Latin, they study Arabic (three hours per week) because, as the headmistress stressed, all their spiritual wealth is in Arabic. In addition, they also have five hours a week of English from the first school year, and Turkish as an optional language from the fifth to the eleventh school year, plus ballroom dancing, Tatar craft workshops and Tatar wrestling.

In the school there are seven hundred pupils, and thirty classes, with twenty or twenty-one pupils in each. The majority of pupils and teachers are Tatars.¹⁰⁴

Apart from the multitude of events that take place in the school, the headmistress also organises a variety of extra-curricular events, including numerous seminars and conferences. She is a key element, in her individual as well as institutional capacity, in the process of national education revival in the republic, and she is strong and enthusiastic about what they are doing. A good example of this is the questionnaire that they distributed among two hundred parents, in preparation for a conference they were preparing on national education in the family. I observed that there were seven questions, all in Tatar, and they are worthy illustrating here: ‘How old was your child when (s)he started to feel the marvel of the mother tongue?’ (Clearly a leading question.) Or for example: ‘at what age do you think is it necessary to start to talk to children about their ancestors?’ Also, ‘in your family, which Tatar traditions do you pay attention to and value?’ and ‘which sources do you use to focus your children’s national identity education?’ (‘Sources’ here they refer to literature). The headmistress actually apologised because the conference was in Tatar, and they did not arrange any translation for my benefit. It is important to say that the conference was not only oriented to parents from gymnásia No.2, but it was more extensive, it was for all Tatar parents, and it was organised in the Theatre Kamalaba, a bastion of Tatar culture.

3.4.2 Gymnásia No.16

The first time that I visited the school was in 1998 and staff were preparing everything for the first of September, the official day for the inauguration of the centre. This school is located in a very modern and

¹⁰⁴ Interestingly enough, the headmistress stressed that there are five or six pupils coming from mixed families, where only one of the parents is Tatar, and some pupils are from converted Tatars background.

ostentatious building, decorated with marble and quite “European” furniture, such as sofas and decorative elements which are usually quite absent from any other gymnásias and schools, where the Soviet austere style still predominates. In contrast to other schools, No.16 benefits from very good equipment including a swimming pool, two sports centres, a choreography room, a sound laboratory, two computer rooms, two language laboratories, and a very large canteen. Classrooms are spacious, each designed for only twenty pupils, or a maximum twenty-five; whereas in normal schools, classrooms are for at least thirty to thirty five or, on some occasions, even more pupils. The school has 600 pupils (from all districts), but from its dimensions, one would expect it to house a much bigger number. There are massive vestibules and considerable non-functional spaces in the school, many seeming to be decorative rather than functional in purpose - as if the building were designed for aesthetic rather than educational objectives.

There is only one shift in the school, and after lunch pupils dedicate their time to complementary workshops. As in gymnásia No.2 education is free, but parents have to pay for certain specific workshops and activities. Hitherto the school has been sponsored by the Tatarstan government, something that the headmistress is very proud of, and constantly emphasises. From the evidence of the material resources that they possess the investment is very substantial, and well beyond the level available to the large majority in Kazan.¹⁰⁵

According to the headmistress they have enough specialists to teach all the subjects in Tatar, apart from computing and Russian language and literature, (which are in Russian); and they dedicate the same number of hours (six hours per week) to Tatar and Russian language and literature. They study English from the second school year,¹⁰⁶ and after the fifth year they have a second foreign language; Arabic or Turkish. Recently, however, they have been forced to stop these classes because they do not have enough teachers.¹⁰⁷

This gymnásia (as the headmistress indicated) is:

¹⁰⁵ Interestingly enough on my last trip to Kazan (October 2000) the headmistress was presenting her candidature for parliamentary elections.

¹⁰⁶ Signs on classroom and office doors (music, literature, English, headmistress,...etc) are in Tatar and English, but not in Russian.

¹⁰⁷ Normally pupils have to speak Tatar when they come to the school, because otherwise it would be quite difficult to follow all the courses.

‘for all Tatar parents who want their children to study in a national school, and we select the most qualified pupils. We organise a special committee including a psychologist and different professionals, musicians, dancing teachers, drawing teachers, amongst others’.

The implicit message in these words is that the school is not only for ‘the best pupils’ but for ‘the best Tatar pupils’. Although anyone is very welcome in the centre, it is clearly stressed that it is for all Tatar parents and Tatar pupils. She is well aware that there are few chances for non-Tatars to come to the

school.¹⁰⁸

This school was built as a special project, where different candidates were invited to submit proposals. From the architectural point of view, the building (inside and outside) corresponds to traditional Tatar canons, the Arabic style with domes, towers (like minarets) and arches. It is not a monolithic block, of the uniform Soviet type, like most of the schools in Kazan. Even from outside it looks different and ostentatious and when you approach it, it is unclear what it might be. Its presence in the setting is massive and solemn, clearly conveying something unusual.

According to the headmistress the gymnásia’s main goal is to combine general academic knowledge and national education, which she thinks is the perfect combination; all the courses and workshops are focused on national content. According to the headmistress:

‘We don’t want our school to be just a normal school, we want it to be a centre for our leaders, Tatar leaders, dedicated to Tatar culture, poets, writers... We want to organise seminars, workshops and so on, but not only once every two months, but with regularity (...)To educate our children in the spirit of our traditions, history, culture, because it is a very rich and ancestral culture. We have to study it, to study it and to study it. It isn’t only our songs or our dances, it’s something very big, and you cannot fall in love with it in one day, it is a long process. Maybe after ten or eleven years pupils will love their language, their beautiful country, and their countryside’.¹⁰⁹

In her words:

¹⁰⁸ According to the interviews, all the pupils are Tatars, however, they will accept any Russian pupils if his or her parents want them to study in Tatar.

¹⁰⁹ Interview 2.11.1998.

‘I came to this school with the purpose of working with national education, with these things that somehow were lost during Soviet times. There are so many Russians schools in Kazan, and we have to equal this number, and our parents want their children to study in our schools, without fear, knowing that one day they will go to the University. They will manage to find their way and they will not be afraid; everything will be in their mother tongue. There is a future for Tatar people. We want to transmit our national spirit, so when people come to the school they will feel that this is a Tatar school’.

3.5 Two non-Tatar gymnásias: ‘Beyond monocultural perceptions’

3.5.1 *Gymnásia No. 52*

Gymnásia No.52 ¹¹⁰ is a school with a pedagogical profile. This does not mean that all pupils have to go to pedagogical faculties when they finish the school, but the gymnásia gives special attention to pedagogical issues, and some pupils chose that option. There are 2,048 pupils in this gymnásia. It has been open for 25 years, but it only achieved the category of gymnásia in September of 1999.

There are two separate shifts in the school, one in the morning and one in the evening. For example, in the morning there are four 11th year groups ¹¹¹, each of them with a particular specialisation; for instance the so-called *mentalitetnie classes* ¹¹²; a special class concentrated in Tatar language, and instead of studying five hours a week of Tatar they have seven. ¹¹³ Each eleventh year has different specialisation, some in mathematics, others in Tatar language, and others in pedagogical formation.

Inside the school there are numerous and diverse examples of Soviet symbolica, but two in particular attracted my attention: one was the Olympic mascot Mishka from the 1980 Moscow’s Olympic games, a mascot that was very prominent in the Soviet Union, even many years after the Olympiad; and the other was a portrait of a World War II heroine ¹¹⁴, a woman who was a

¹¹⁰ See picture 1, page 83.

¹¹¹ The 11th is the last school year and pupils are fifteen or sixteen years old.

¹¹² According to Gumerova Zakiia Davleevna, emeritus teacher (interviewed in June 1999) the so-called *mentalitetnie classes* appears as a statistic notion rather than a reality. They have the name but there is no difference between these classes and ‘normal’ ones. This was also confirmed by one history teacher from this school ‘You know, in theory there should be a difference (between *mentalitetnie* classes and the rest) but to be honest, there is not’.

¹¹³ For example in one of these classes there are twenty-eight pupils: eighteen are Tatar and eight are Russians.

¹¹⁴ See picture 2, page 83.



Picture 1 (gymnasia No.52)



Picture 2 (gymnasia No.52)

pupil or even a teacher in the school. The school has a museum in memory of female pilots that participated in the World War II and were former pupils. Various documents, books, photographs, and articles from papers form the museum collection; a valuable 'treasure' that is shown to visitors.

In sharp contrast to the splendours of school No.16 the school was dark. It was a quite old and a massive building, but very badly lit, with fluorescent lights and dark walls and floors. It was noticeable that school No. 52 had less economic support than Tatar gymnásia No.16, and that the infrastructure and the material resources were worse than in gymnásia No. 16 ¹¹⁵.

The Tatar language curriculum is intense and generates different reactions amongst teachers and pupils. In years 5-6 there are seven hours per week of Tatar language; five hours a week in years 8-9 and four hours a week in years 10-11. For Tatar language study, classes are divided into two groups, Russian and Tatar; but Tatars who do not speak any or very little Tatar, are also included in the Russian group. It is more a linguistic distinction rather than an ethnic one. Nevertheless, while it is possible to find Tatar pupils in the Russian group, it is never the case the other way around, Russians in the Tatar group ¹¹⁶.

However some rumours were circulating at the time of the research that in the near future they would try to organise these two groups according to ethnic origin; all Tatars in one group and all Russians in other, independently of their linguistic competence. The apparent aim is to divide pupils from the first school year according to whether they are Tatars or Russians.

3.5.2 *Gymnásia No. 9*

In gymnásia No.9 ¹¹⁷ there are 1,077 pupils, and they are organised in two shifts. According to the deputy head there are more Russians than Tatars, but the difference is very small, (it is almost half and half). Many teachers are old pupils from the school and, according to the deputy head, many teachers come from mixed marriages and it is quite difficult to determine who is who. The deputy head suggests this indicates 'Soviet-ness' 'they [pupils and teachers] are more Soviet'. It is quite a prestigious gymnásia in Kazan specialising in French language. They have pupils from across Kazan, and

¹¹⁵ See sections 3.4.2. and 5.2.

¹¹⁶ It is quite unusual, almost 'impossible' to find Russian pupils who can speak Tatar.

¹¹⁷ This school was consolidated as a gymnásia in 1992. Before that it was an ordinary school; school No.123. See picture 3, page 85.

between 95 per cent and 100 per cent go on to the University.

Pupils in the tenth school year can specialise in: a) social sciences, b) natural sciences, or c) physics and mathematics. They have special classes on Saturdays, specialised in French, Russian, or Ecology. These classes are taught by teachers from the University. They concentrate on all the main subjects of the curriculum in five days, and on Saturdays they work with the subject that each pupil has chosen according to his or her specialised profile. They have two and a half courses in their specialisation. The most popular, is Humanities, and a good number of pupils go to the pedagogical faculty, and specialise as foreign language teachers. Although the school focuses on French language, with English as a second option run on, law and journalism are also popular options among pupils. For practical reasons the class is divided into two groups when they study French, and into three groups when they study English and Tatar. Sometimes when they study Tatar language the classes are divided into four groups, Tatar and Russians pupils in separate study groups.

In the first school year they study seven hours a week of Tatar, in the second and third year, six hours; in the fifth year, five hours; in the sixth and seventh year, four hours; and in the eighth, ninth, tenth and eleventh year, three hours a week.¹¹⁸

In the first year they have special choreography and dancing courses funded by parents, who pay into a special fund, 400 rubles per year.¹¹⁹ They also organise a summer camp with French children, and this is something that each pupil has to pay for privately.

The school is involved in a range of curriculum-linked activities. For example they produce a magazine in the school, and there is also a theatre, with the first production always being on the 14th February, Saint Valentine Day's. According to the deputy head, the reason why they selected the 14th February is because they are trying to follow French traditions. The school has two types of shows, one in French and one in Russian, and the deputy head emphasised that this activity is very popular among pupils; they have as well, a French-Soviet friendship Museum in the school. This school is mostly dedicated to French language and culture, this is something that is noticeable when you walk through the school. Many posters and illustrations with French leitmotifs

¹¹⁸ This differs from other schools because they also dedicate many hours to French language.

¹¹⁹ There are two scholarships available per group.

decorate the centre. On one occasion when I visited the school, they were celebrating the 155th anniversary of Alexander Dumas and the entire school was decorated with pictures of his books.

In summary, in Tatar gymnásias the decoration and ornaments show their interest and attachment to Tatar culture; something that does not exist in non-Tatar gymnásias. All of them are characteristics and conditions that are affecting the form and the content of each type of centres.

One of the main differences between Tatar and non-Tatar gymnásias are their ethnic composition. Tatar gymnásias are mono-ethnic and monocultural centres because almost all of their pupils and teachers are Tatars, whereas in non-Tatar gymnásias there is a very similar proportion of Tatars and Russians (almost half and half), and also some pupils and teachers from other groups. As we will see in the following chapters it is a characteristic that strongly influence non-Tatar centres. In Tatar gymnásias Tatar was the dominant language, even though occasionally you would hear some Russian. Whereas in non-Tatar gymnásias there were no signs of Tatar language. The number of pupils is quite different in both types of centres, there are fewer pupils in Tatar gymnásias, which creates a more comfortable atmosphere for pupils and teachers: they have more opportunities to get know each other better, teachers can dedicate more time to each pupil, and it helps to create a sense of ‘family’¹²⁰ and unity. In other words, it is easier to consolidate a feeling of community when the number of pupils is lower. Also in both Tatar gymnásias the infrastructure and material resources are significantly better, which also helps to construct a relaxed atmosphere in the centres. The environment was much calmer and more disciplined in Tatar centres, there were not screams or children running in the corridors as in non-Tatar gymnásias, instead I would perceive a strong feeling of order and good manners. But other explanations why pupils in Tatar gymnásias are more disciplined (not just small class sizes) should also be taken into account. In particular there are the cultural differences in relation to pupils’ *vospitanie*. This point was constantly stressed by teachers and parents in Tatar gymnásias¹²¹ and they maintained that Tatar pupils are more disciplined than

¹²⁰ The idea of ‘family’ inside Tatar gymnásias is something to which I will be dedicating some attention in Chapter 5.

¹²¹ See Chapter 5.

Russian pupils because Tatar families have different norms of *vospitanie* in the home environment. There is a well-established cultural tradition amongst Tatars of obedience to the elders and respect to what they say. It is accepted and internalised by pupils that they should not respond to or discuss what a teacher says. These cultural characteristics are reinforced inside Tatar gymnásias and in the home environment, and they become visible in the ways in which pupils behave inside the school.



Picture 3 (gymnásia No.9)

CHAPTER 4

Methodology: Understanding the Research Process

The origin of this research was the observation that for the past decade, and as a direct consequence of the communist regime disintegration, the Republic of Tatarstan has been experiencing a significant and ‘unstoppable’ ethno-Tatar cultural renaissance. This is reflected in formal procedures and public policies, as well as through informal rejections of previous cultural (Russian or Soviet-led) identifications.

The Republic of Tatarstan remains largely un-investigated in the conventional international sociological terms, thus it belongs to what we can define as the ‘unknown’ world for the western specialists. Typically it is presented as part of the Russian Federation without dedicating much attention to its idiosyncrasy and socio-political and cultural characteristics. However, as the last chapter has shown, the Republic of Tatarstan represents quite a unique case due to its cultural complexity and long term cohabitation between Russians and Tatars.

The dominant research tradition in Tatarstan, and in post-communist societies in general, is quantitative rather than qualitative. Therefore, this research can be considered relatively innovative and pioneering, both for the Western perception, as well as for the post-communist tradition in social science¹²².

The purpose of this research, as explained in Chapter One is by bringing together new paradigms, new methods and new objects of research to define and analyse one important dimension involved in the process of identities transmission and construction, namely the institutional side and discourse reproduction in the context of Tatar gymnásias¹²³ in the Republic of Tatarstan, right from the first decade after the communist disintegration. The main motivation for the research is to account for the process of ethno-cultural rebirth taking place (or not) in the specific context of Tatar gymnásias - institutions that emerged after the communist dissolution, and which represent a new opportunity to (re)establish Tatar culture and language among the younger generations.

¹²² In spite of this, the situation is changing and it is necessary to acknowledge new research developments in Russia, especially in Kazan State University, the Centre for the Sociology of Culture. See for example, Yerofeyev and Nizamova. eds. 2001.

¹²³ In the next chapter is presented a description and explanation of these institutions.

Some of the key questions in the research include the following: which types of discourses are reproducing Tatar gymnásias? How are pupils receiving and reacting to these discourses? What is the relation between the institutional discourses and pupils everyday lives? Is it possible to talk about Tatar cultural re-birth 'per se' without involving the practices of segregation? Answers to these questions call not only for a concept of identisation (Chapter 1) but also an appropriate interpretive methodology.

4.1 Setting 'the stage'

Qualitative methods and techniques have been selected as main instruments in this research, because I consider that the particular subject matter, the process of identisation, requires the use of qualitative rather than quantitative techniques. Studies which attempt to analyse social actions, behaviour, interaction, or any cultural phenomena in order to achieve certain level of understanding (and I stress the word certain because it would be quite pretentious to assume that we can obtain an absolute or complete understanding of socio-cultural realities which are different to the one that we belong to) should be supported in most of their research through qualitative data and methods of analysis. Socio-cultural realities are complex worlds which involve numerous codes of interaction, and communication, and are the result of long historical processes, customs and traditions. In a word, they are cultural complexes that cannot be reduced to mere standardisation or categorisation.

The problem of subjectivity is one the main 'phantoms' of the qualitative approach but it should not be considered as an obstacle to the research. It can be regarded as one of its necessary preconditions, because it is the subject which attributes meaning to the texts and to social objects. Subjectivity in social research is an unavoidable condition that we can readily embrace. As Alonso emphasises, researchers reconstruct reality, we do not collect it, or describe it as if it was just there, or discover it in its absolute outward appearance, as some positivist or neopositivists have claimed (1998:222). In other words, and turning the argument around, 'objectivity is not about dis-engagement, but about mutual and usually unequal structuring, about taking risks in a world where 'we' are permanently mortal, that is, not in 'final' control' (Haraway 1991: 201).

A qualitative approach examines implied practices which involve

individuals and group interactions, in order to deduce meaning and actions, including the researcher as a participant in this communicative game. Thus methods and theories are not finished tools that the researcher can apply indiscriminately, they materialise and adapt to concrete circumstances, through actual contact with the observations. In the same way, the process of observation is not pure or random. Observations are built up according to theoretical categories that incorporate world views: there is no neutral observer, only a participant in the dialogue or interaction.

As Miller and Glassner (1997) stressed, research cannot provide a mirror reflection of the social world, but it may provide access to the meanings people attribute to their experiences and social worlds. Therefore it is not the purpose of this study to claim objectivity, impartiality or 'scientific rigour', because I assume and understand that both categories are essentially hostile to interpretive social research.

Because any interview situation relies upon the interaction between participants, I also consider that it is only through this interaction that we can approximate to the social understanding and social construction or interpretation of each part. Interaction 'per se' creates and constructs meaning, so only in a real interaction context can we approach more closely the way of thinking and understanding the social world that surrounds the different actors, and approximate to the actual cognitive pluralism of social worlds.

Taking the above into consideration, the research approach is what could be defined as qualitative research with a strong emphasis on the inter-subjectivity positioning of the researcher, not as a hindrance to the research, but rather as a precondition to any kind of social interaction, including a research relationship.

4.2 Facing 'identities' drift; legitimising the role-play and 'being personally involved'

My position as a researcher could be categorised as that of an 'insider-outsider', or an 'outsider-insider', or perhaps even as a 'semi-insider' or 'semi-outsider'. It is quite difficult to define who I am in terms of ethnic or national identity. According to Cuban law I am considered to be Cuban because I was born there; at the same time I lived six years in Moscow (because my mother is 'Russian', and my father although Spanish, has lived around thirty years in Russia). Consequently a very strong Russian cultural component is present in

my own 'identities' and it was strongly emphasised during my education. However, because of the 'specific' Soviet understanding of 'ethnicity' and 'nationality'¹²⁴, things are even more complicated, because my mother is a Russian citizen who belongs to Jewish *natsional'nost*¹²⁵. Thus according to Jewish law, because my mother is Jewish I am also Jewish. And last but not least, I grew up and lived for eighteen years in Spain and I have Spanish nationality. Additionally, for the last six years I have been living in the UK (both England and Wales). Therefore my interest in the notions of identities and that part of the world is closely linked with my own background. This sense of personal engagement is given even more emphasis by my background in anthropology which has taught me the importance of the relation between the position of the researcher and the research that is produced. After this brief but relevant biographic excursion, I will return to my position as a researcher, and to the dilemma of defining myself as an outsider or an insider.

My connection with Russia does not only inform of the choice of my topic as a researcher, but also indicates the way I position myself in the research relationship. Russian was my first language, and even when I was living in Spain I used to visit Russia quite often. Russian books, films, music and cuisine, had always been part of my education and process of socialisation. Consequently I do not consider Russian culture to be 'strange' or alien to me, and every time that I visited the country I found myself in a very difficult location, always 'in between'. I am not one of 'them' but neither one of the 'others'; I am probably at the frontier between both categories. In that sense, as a researcher in the Russian Federation I can define my position, both as an 'insider-outsider' or an 'outsider-insider'. The pros and cons of both positions, from a methodological point of view, can create an intermediate point, or an inflexion point, that I define as 'semi-outsider' and 'semi-insider'. This represents a very positive orientation towards the typical problems that face a complete insider or a complete outsider; by affording the opportunity to avoid the two extremes in fieldwork of over-involvement and lack of unawareness of aliens. What I am presenting here is the meeting point between the roles of partisan and stranger- an intersection that represents a relatively rare

¹²⁴ See the discussion of nationality in the previous chapter.

¹²⁵ Notion that does not involve any religious connotations; during Soviet time people were categorised as Jews because their relatives were Jews, whereas in their private lives they were atheist or agnostic.

opportunity for researchers.

In the context of my research in Tatarstan, I quickly found that the pilot research made me understand the importance of being fluent in Russian while not being Russian; in the practice of doing the research it was the key element.¹²⁶ However I have to say that depending on the institution that I was visiting, or the people that I was talking to, I was forced to adopt different identities. Interacting within Tatar gymnásias or with some Tatar people, I had to hide my Russian connection and present myself as a Western person with an enormous interest in Russian language and culture, but avoid explaining my own background. To have presented my personal upbringing would, in many cases, have created different reactions and answers among certain people.¹²⁷ Consequently I did not present the whole picture of my own background because it would have had a detrimental effect on the research.

My experience in Tatarstan had shown that the results of my research would be strongly affected by complete disclosure of my Russian background. For that reason, I decided not to present myself openly to some of the respondents. Clearly it would make access to some people impossible and it would lead to a radically different outcome. This is why I deliberately adopted this attitude.

I should emphasise that I was aware that by not presenting the whole picture I would be having an effect on my social interactions as a researcher, and that my stance would to some extent shape the responses. However, there are no pure and unconditioned interactions. Moreover, in very few types of research is it possible to imagine full disclosure by the researcher. In that sense, I was aware of and accepted the implications of not disclosing fully my own background to respondents. From my perspective, it was not a primarily a moral or ethical matter of concealment, let alone dishonesty, but rather a matter of not presenting all the information. It is crucial for researchers to be aware and never forget that research narratives are affected by how they present themselves. But equally, it needs to be recognized that the respondents will

¹²⁶ Also the fact that I am a woman (a very young looking woman according to Russian standards) played an important role, since as a researcher I did not represent any kind of physical threat to the interviewees; it was most likely to be the other way around, because we cannot ignore the fact that the interaction was taking place in quite a patriarchal society.

¹²⁷ As we will see in the following chapters, not all Tatars have a very high opinion of the Russian people, and in that sense I realised that they would feel more comfortable perceiving me purely as a Western researcher.

present a narrative that they have decided is most appropriate in that moment. The flow of interpretation involves both directions.

According to Geertz, one characteristic of ethnographic description is that is interpretative, and ‘what it is interpretative of is the flow of social discourse; and the interpreting involved consists in trying to rescue the “said” of such discourse from its perishing occasions and fix it in pursuable terms’ (Geertz, 1975: 20).

Geertz talks in his work about moral asymmetry of the fieldwork situation, and according to him: ‘It is therefore not wholly avoidable but is part of the ethically ambiguous character of that situation as such. In a way which is in no sense adventitious, the relationship between the researcher and the informant ‘rests on a set of partial half seen-through’ (Geertz, 2000: 34). In that sense, it is not an issue of concealment but it is the practical approach that I considered to be most adequate in relation to my specific research aims and in order to get access to certain people. Coming to terms with the moral asymmetry means staying aware of how the researcher presents him- or herself and how that will have different implications for the narrative generated. Each concrete strand of discourse is produced for a specific listener in context and that is what must inform the analytical process.

4.3 Generating the data

Data generation consisted of semi-structured and unstructured interviewing, or what Merton and Kendall (1967) called focused interview, and long term participant observation supported with a personal diary. I will use the term data generation, rather than data collection, because as Mason (1996) indicated a researcher does not simply work out where to find data which already exists in a collectable state. Instead, one works out how best to generate data from chosen data sources, from which the researcher generates knowledge about the social world according to specific principles and methods derived from their epistemological point of view.

This research began as a pilot study conducted in Kazan in the winter of 1997-98 ¹²⁸. Thus most issues of entry and access and what is called ‘gatekeepers’ in sociological and anthropological circles had already been ‘negotiated’ and arranged as a product of this first phase. Consequently, the

¹²⁸ More precisely from September 1997 until April 1998.

second 'immersion' in the field (March 1999 - to June 1999) was based on the results and experiences obtained through the pilot study, which indeed facilitated the research. Previous interview experiences and interactions were used in the subsequent research as an important support and as a point of reference.

The research embarked on an in-depth, long-term exploration of processes of identification in an environment of two different types of institutions, Tatar and non-Tatar gymnásias. It is important to stress that these Tatar gymnásias represent a very small proportion of the whole spectrum of secondary education, and they could even be defined as a 'marginal option', because only certain children can get access to these schools. Their number is rapidly growing since 1991, nevertheless in relation to other schools they are not very numerous. Why then the interest in this type of school?

One of the most compelling reasons is the fact that Tatar gymnásias, though not typical or representative of Tatarstan generally, are some of the best examples of the manifest existence of processes of Tatarisation that are taking place in the republic. They are institutions specially designed to create, re-establish, reinforce and develop Tatar national culture and identities- that were a 'reality' only for a small proportion of Tatars during the Soviet period. Tatar gymnásias are '*national archipelagos*', or islands, in a sea of mainly Russian society and culture. They are centres of creation, fermentation and gestation of the future Tatar intelligentsia. In some sense, these archipelagos symbolise hope in the future, the aspiration to re-store and consolidate the Republic of Tatarstan as an ethno- cultural entity, and 'semi-autonomous' republic inside the Russian Federation. Nevertheless, in order to be able to present what is taking place in the 'national archipelagos' it is necessary to have another point of reference, in order to compare and contrast them with non-Tatar gymnásias. This is why two non-Tatar gymnásias were also selected. The research was conducted in two different districts in Kazan, one Tatar and one non-Tatar gymnásia in each district.¹²⁹ In *Moskovskii raion* (district) the educational institutions were Tatar gymnásia No.2 and a non-Tatar gymnásia No.9, and in *Privolskii raion* (district) a Tatar gymnásia No.16 and a non- Tatar gymnásia No.52.¹³⁰ Headmasters/headmistresses, teachers, parents and pupils were the

¹²⁹ See Appendix.

¹³⁰ In the next chapter more information about each gymnásia will be presented.

research participants in each of the centres.¹³¹

The justification for the selection of each of these groups was as follows:

Headmistresses/headmasters: They are the highest ranking representatives of the school hierarchy. They are teachers but at the same time they have to be aware of the broader institutional framework and administrative picture. They also represent the school to the outside world.

Teachers: I was particularly interested in Social Science and language teachers, and I conversed mainly with Tatar language teachers, history teachers, and also Russian language and literature, because these areas are closely connected and interrelated with notions of national and cultural identity.¹³² Conversations with teachers of mathematics, science or vocational skills might have produced similar results in time but the teachers selected were more likely to be articulating perspectives on nation and identity in classrooms settings as well as in private conversation. Conversations with these teachers provided some understanding of what constitutes national education and how is it actually incorporated in each subject. Questions focused on what teachers understand by this concept and how, why and for what reasons they work with it? How is national education represented and reproduced in each individual subject? What are the pupils' perceptions of the issue according to teachers?

Parents: Interactions with parents provided family members' accounts of how they perceive the school, what they think about it and how they came to the decision that they wanted their children to study in a Tatar national centre. Furthermore, this group offered some information about their background, which is a key element in the study: to what extent they are familiar with Tatar culture and traditions, and what they actually expect of a Tatar national school.

Pupils: Pupils are the direct and main recipients and 'beneficiaries' of the so-called national education. Thus any project aiming to understand this issue, will necessarily cover pupils' angles and perspectives. How do they perceive it? Do they incorporate in their everyday life what the schools are

¹³¹ The number of conversations differs from centre to centre, see Appendix.

¹³² I am assuming that these subjects are much more opened to the possibility of introducing national identity issues. History, literature, geography and language are the core components of national creation; 'our writers', 'our intelligentsia' and 'our land' are key elements in national identity formation.

transmitting? Are they reproducing the same discourses? Where do they come from, what kind of background are they from, and who are their parents?

This research was conducted during three separate periods of fieldwork in Kazan following the 1997/8 pilot study. The first one was from 29 March to 20 June 1999, the second from 26 October to 13 December 1999, and the third from the end of August to the end of September 2000.

I selected the pupils and teachers in different ways depending on the school. On some occasions the selection of pupils was based on the idea of a 'tree system', i.e. once I met someone, this person introduced me to someone else, and that person would introduce me to another classmate, and so on; a technique that has some similarities to snowball sampling. Sometimes I just asked the pupils if they wanted to be interviewed, without knowing who they were or without having any reference; trying to avoid the limitations that a pure snowball sampling can have, because 'it may lead the researcher to collect data that reflects a particular perspective and thereby omits the voices and options of others who are not part of a network of friends and acquaintances' (May 1997:120). In the two non-Tatar centres the teachers or the headmistresses usually chose the first pupil and that was the starting point. But in some centres, the teachers were introducing me to the pupils directly, therefore after two or three conversations I asked them to introduce some pupils using the alphabetical list of pupils that they have for each class, trying to avoid the preconditioning of the selection.

In order to get access to pupils I spent quite a lot of time with them in the school, and this involved a variety of settings. At the beginning I was planning to attend some lessons in order to make ethnographic observations, and in gymnasium No.2 I attended two lessons. But because they were in Tatar I saw little point in continuing. However, I spent many hours per day inside the schools and there were many chances to converse with different pupils, interact with them, and to observe the atmosphere in the school. There was a moment during the day when I liked to sit down in one of the school halls, allowing pupils to come and spend some time talking about what was going on in the school, or what they were doing later on, and so on. Pupils were always very kind and curious to talk with me.

I also spent substantial time with pupils during most of the extra-curricular activities that took place inside the school, for example concerts, plays or choreography classes. My time also included the period of exams, the

first of September (the beginning of the school's year, which is traditionally a very important day for the schools) and several different festivities.

I decided to focus on pupils who were fourteen, fifteen and sixteen years old, since I assumed that this would be the best age because they are more articulate than the younger pupils, had more practice in expressing their opinions, so their points of view would be stronger and more elaborate, and also because they were more familiar with the school. Nevertheless, I tried talking to two girls who were slightly younger, in order to see how it would work with younger pupils. I must admit that with one girl from the seventh year I engaged in a very intensive and good conversation, but on another occasion, talking to a thirteen year old girl was quite difficult. However, there was some variations as far as the individual person was concerned. Nevertheless, between the age of fourteen and sixteen, pupils usually were able to talk on a number of different topics and issues, and they had gained considerable experience in their school. All the conversations lasted between forty minutes and one and a half hours, be it with pupils, parents or teachers.

Concerning parents, I talked with two mothers and one father from the gymnásia No.16 and also spent some time with one family from gymnásia No.2. In the latter case, it is not a formal or a recorded interview, but I kept written notes from the participant observation. I was invited on two occasions to their house, and also they invited me to a Tatar concert, and to their village to celebrate *Sabantui* (a Tatar festival).¹³³

Access to parents, in general terms, is something that I found quite difficult, especially at what I call the first stage of entry, or initial access to them. I was concerned not to make the pupils feel that I was using them only for my research, and in many cases I was not sure how to organise the first contact with their parents. Therefore, I decided not access them via the pupils but to ask one of the teachers (a teacher that I did not interview but someone I had some contact with.) I met them in their own homes (with one exception), where I was very warmly received and really welcomed; they all insisted that I

¹³³ The interaction with this family was very interesting, and from my point of view, there was no need for a formal interview, since I had the opportunity to spend some time with them in their own environment and context.

have dinner with them.¹³⁴ I have to admit that (from emotional and methodological point of view) it was one of the most difficult targets. Not only because you are a foreign researcher who wants to know, but you invade their life with your questions and their home with your presence. You are not in neutral territory where you can feel 'free'; you are rather a guest in their home, and you need to make sure that under all circumstances they feel comfortable with your questions and your presence.

It should be remembered, as Alonso stressed, 'interviews can only be read in an interpretative way, the information is neither 'true' nor 'false', is a product of a person in a society and therefore unavoidably localised, contextualised and contrastive' (1998:70); the open interview is the 'art of linkage' (Halperin 1995:24), or a game of communicative strategies (Alonso 1998:71). There are different types of interviews, including the open interviews, adopted for this research. Although open-ended, it is a mistake to think that such interviews, conversations or interactions, do not have a specific or focused structure because usually there is a list of topics or areas of interest that each interview is trying to cover. Depending on the process of interaction these topics can be modified and new questions are allowed to emerge. The researcher guides the direction of the interaction through the questions, very often by way of indirect questions, questions that 'apparently' do not have any relationship to the topics that (s)he is trying to cover. However, not only the interviewer but also the interviewee determines the course and the direction of the interaction. The interviewer aims to 'participate' in the daily life of the interviewee, but the latter has the capacity to decide to what extent (s)he will allow that to happen.

From the first moment of each conversation I made it very clear to my co-respondents that if there was any question that they did not want to answer, or felt uncomfortable about they should let me know. Very often, before certain questions, I indicated that perhaps the following question was very personal, and if they did not want to answer it they were more than welcome to let me know. This reinforced the idea that they had the power to decide what they would say and when. During the research people did not decline to answer any

¹³⁴ They were very hospitable, and even if they did not have much, as happened on one occasion, they wanted to share everything they had with me. Despite the fact of being almost a 'stranger' to them, hospitality is a constant characteristic. They really wanted to feed me, they all insisted, and sometimes I also got the impression that I might offend them if I refuse.

of the questions, probably because they did not perceive any danger or threat in the information, impressions or emotions that they were sharing with me. Indeed, on some occasions certain pupils, teachers and parents seemed to enjoy the situation that somebody was devoting their attention to what they were saying and was attentively listening to them, reproducing very long 'speeches'.

On the one hand the 'atypical' situation that someone wanted to talk to them, especially a sociologist coming from the West, made them feel 'important' and 'significant' representing a 'break' and parenthesis in their 'routine'. At the same time, most of them were very curious about me and wanted to know a little bit more about me. Some pupils were curious about the nature of my work, what does a sociologist actually do? Also, they were fascinated with the fact that somebody from the 'West' (which is still perceived as 'exotic' and treated differently) was interested in their school.

I had a list of the main questions and areas that I wanted to cover, but the way in which I addressed them changed in accordance with the person I was talking to. For example, usually with pupils I started with their own background: where were you born, what do your parents do? Where do you live? What language do you use at home? In what language do you speak with your friends? What language do you prefer when watching television? Or what language do you prefer to read in? Once a general picture of their background was established I tried to focus the conversation on rather more complex questions regarding religion, their attitude to the Tatar language and Tatar culture, often using questions like: who is your favourite writer? Or which is your favourite festivity? These were the starting points. In conversations with teachers I normally began by asking general questions like: how many hours per week do you teach your subject? What language do you teach in? What kind of literature or history do you teach? Do you study Tatar or non-Tatar authors or novels? Only after some questions about the subject they teach, the school and their pupils, I would ask about their own background; how they perceived Tatar language and re-birth of the culture, the relationship between the republic and the Russian Federation, or about their past.

In conversations with parents I also tended to start the conversation by asking about the school and why they wanted their children to study in that particular school, and only after that would I ask about their own background or their views on the relationship between Tatar and Russian people in the republic, their childhood experiences or what they thought the meaning of

‘national education’ was.

However, each interview is different and has its own internal mechanisms and dynamics, making it difficult to produce a concise description that could be used as a model in all the cases. One of my main purposes was to create and construct a friendly and comfortable environment so that the interviewee could feel secure to express any thoughts or ideas, interpret their past or talk about the present. Conducting these interviews demanded heightened perception and intuition, but no strict rules on when is the right moment to ask some questions and when is it necessary to try to change the topic. For the researcher, an interview is a time of maximum concentration and attention of each movement and sigh, as well as each period of silence.

From the very beginning I was aware that an interview is never a direct sequence of questions and answers. Many questions are used as an introduction to a new topic, or as a rhetorical device to create the context for the following questions, while many questions cannot be asked directly and certain words are unsuitable.

Throughout an open-ended interview, the researcher must be reflexively aware of the questions, what they are asking and how they are asking them. In addition, the researcher cannot neglect how they approach the conversation - literally, assess the appearance of the person they are going to talk to.

In order to respect the privacy and ‘identities’ of those who participated, all the names that I use in this work are fictitious. However, I decided to apply one practical convention, that if the original name was Tatar I used a Tatar name as a substitute, and if the person had a Russian name I selected a Russian name. In the Tatar gymnásias all the pupils and teacher were Tatars. In the non-Tatar gymnásias some were Russians and some Tatars, and in some cases Tatar persons had Russian names, so the name is usually, but not always, an indication of the ethnic group.¹³⁵

In this research there are also included conversations that I had with a number of politicians, ethnographers and historians, experts in the area that I was researching.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ See appendix for a summary of sample characteristics.

¹³⁶ During the pilot study I had the opportunity to interview the Minister for education, (Faris F. Kharisov) and the State Adviser to the President on Political Affairs (Raphael S. Khakimov), as well as various other scholars. See appendix.

The practice of “expert” interviewing differed from the in-depth interviewing conducted with teachers, pupils and parents, first of all because of the atmosphere that emerged, and secondly, because of the way the responses were reproduced. The atmosphere with the “experts” was less friendly and more formal than with teachers, parents and pupils, although I felt very comfortable in most of the cases. The main difference was how the respondents answered the questions. Generally speaking, the discourses were much more elaborated and better manufactured. In other words, the respondents were more used to the context of being interviewed and the answers were often surrounded not only by nice rhetoric, but also by well-analysed and reflexive speeches. They were people who were used to talking in public, since they were politicians or scholars, and that was manifested by their high level of communicative skills (linguistic and rhetorical abilities and body language).

The pilot study illustrated that for this research the use of a tape recorder was a vital practical instrument that brought less interference with the interaction than the too-conspicuous process of taking notes. My experience taught me that when the researcher takes notes, both participants tend to be much more concerned about the process of taking notes ‘per se’ than the actual interaction. Consequently all the conversations and interactions during the fieldwork were recorded and transcribed after the fieldwork visits.

4.3.1 Elements of unpredictability, always something to learn

Diary Fragment ¹³⁷

10th April 1999: Something that I am learning since I came to Kazan is the unpredictability and unexpected elements that are influencing this research, for which it is quite difficult to plan in advance. Hence, what I am trying to stress is what I planned to do when I was at my home University, is not always applicable to everyday reality in the fieldwork. At the beginning my plans were quite ambitious. But from a realistic point of view, after a week in Kazan, I immediately understood that what I planned to do, and what was a realistic

¹³⁷ I am incorporating in this section a small fragment (illustration) of a diary (Kazan, 29 March to 20 June 1999) that I wrote throughout my time spent in Kazan and which represents an important piece of my fieldwork. In this instance the case fragment relates to methodological questions. It is presented exactly as written, unedited for style or content, to convey the immediacy and reflective process involved. The diary involved several drafts, only completed after the end of the fieldwork period.

option, were two different realities.

During this period of fieldwork, what I am doing is quite a lot of participant observation in two concrete gymnásias; the number 2, and number 16, and I managed to do several interviews in each of them, including teachers, pupils and some parents.

In total, at the end of this trip I recorded around 20 hours of interviews and I also arranged some contacts for the future. In the first trip I did all the interviews in the two Tatar gymnásias and had an interview with one Deputy Head from gymnásia No. 52, in order to prepare everything for the next trip. Although I think I managed to do quite a lot, one of my first and immediate lessons that I learned was that there are so many unpredictable things during fieldwork (external and circumstantial elements). This includes festivities and days off (that I was not taking into account), epidemics in the schools (so pupils and teachers do not attend school), meteorological inconveniences (which make your mobility quite difficult because public transport does not work properly or the library is closed because it is too cold inside the building) or terrible tragedies (for example that the person that you arranged to have the interview with, dies in a car crash). In other words, time is never as flexible as one can expect or would like it to be.

17th May 1999: In both centres I was very welcome, both by teachers and pupils who were very collaborative with my work, and dedicated some of their time to me. There is no doubt that it was a reciprocal process, a real process of interaction, since the information worked in both directions (from them to me and from me to them). The pupils were quite excited with the idea of having a 'foreign' person inside their own space- school space; the fact that I came from a Western country also played a very important role. Rather than being someone from their own environment, something that most of them are only familiar with through television or newspapers. Most of them were very talkative and very curious about Europe. Some of the questions were: what is life like in Europe, what are the people like, food, weather, living conditions and so on; sometimes, I felt quite exhausted because of the amount of questions that they were asking me.

I think it was very relevant for the research this reciprocal process because it gave pupils space to ask me some questions and it created quite a relaxing atmosphere.

20th May 1999: What I used to do after each interaction, was to offer

them the opportunity to ask me some questions if they wanted to, and I think that worked very well; especially with the pupils. After the first and second conversations in the centres, many pupils wanted to be interviewed! I think that most of them are very sociable, and at the same time curious about what I was doing in the school, in their particular school and in Kazan.

At the beginning of this research there was also an attempt to use open-ended questionnaire and 'group discussions', techniques that in the end I had to abandon. The reason why I decided to use an open ended questionnaire was because I wanted to cover a large number of pupils and the lack of time was an issue I was continually faced with, it was physically impossible and hence unthinkable to converse with a big number of pupils in each centre.

This refers to self-completing and supervised questionnaires with quite open questions that pupils answered during one of their classes. There were around ten questions, but I have to say that the answers were extremely short and concise, therefore it helped me to reaffirm the limitations of this tool.

28th May 1999: The questionnaire was trying to generate a broad picture of pupils' perspectives and perceptions of their centres. Nevertheless I was quite aware of the negative effect generated by a non face to face interaction. However, after analysing these issues, I was optimistic about the positive result that such an open-ended questionnaire would report. Nevertheless, I have to admit that I overestimated this tool, and after the first attempt, with one group in gymnásia No.2, I understood that it was not the best approach, since all the answers were too short and almost monosyllabic. Consequently I rejected this technique.

Also at the beginning of this research one of the projects was to try and organise one or two 'group discussions' in each centre. The idea consisted of the possibility of getting access to discourse production among pupils, regarding their understanding and perception of national identity and national education. The intrinsic complexities of both concepts represent an important degree of difficulty for research; people used these concepts in their speech quite often, but to ask for a definition was impossible. In the last decade it became part of their everyday vocabulary, and a general assumption of a common understanding is presupposed. Consequently the inherent difficulty of the concepts led me to try to organise a 'group discussion', a 'seminar' or a 'workshop'.

14th June 1999: The main purpose was to observe how pupils create

their discourse when they interact among themselves, nevertheless I was aware that this social context was not a 'natural social context' but rather an artificial one created from outside. Nevertheless, on specific occasions, for some girls and boys, this kind of social context, rather than a face to face interaction, made them feel much more relaxed and comfortable, and the 'noise' of the group may also be used as an excuse for bringing some ideas, that in a more personal context they would not come up with. The fact that they are also interacting in an environment that they are familiar with, and in a group where they are not complete 'stranger' may generate a quite relevant material and data.

From a methodological point of view, I understood this technique as 'workshop' or 'group interview' or 'group interaction' rather than 'focus group' or 'group discussion'; in order to make a distinction between these concrete techniques and the ones commonly used in marketing research. I wanted to try and generate a group interaction and debate on a particular topic, however, after some experimenting, conversing with two or three pupils at the same time I rejected this technique, because I realised that some pupils tended to monopolise the conversations and were conditioning other pupils opinions; simultaneously I realised that for this study one to one interaction was able to offer me much better results. I understood that experience and practice are indispensable tools!

8th June 1999: Bearing in mind the venue of where the conversations were taking place, the fact that I was working 'inside' or even from the institutional side was the key element. It was almost impossible to expect a negative or inappropriate response or even a critique of the school when I was talking to pupils inside school walls and spaces, and all the time it was indispensable to keep this point in mind. Pupils did not have many opportunities to assess critically the school or the staff. This is a relevant element to the discourse reproduction, and it was necessary to be aware of this problem when interpreting the data.

However, after some time I started to become aware that it was quite crucial for this research to conduct the interviews inside the centres, especially because I wanted to see how they articulate themselves inside the schools, how they talk about the school being in the school and how 'freely' or 'not freely' they express their opinions inside their centres. Although I also met some pupils outside the gymnásia and their behaviour or discourse did not change

much.

4.4 Interpreting the data

This research was based on 57 conversational interviews, all recorded and transcribed ¹³⁸, Russian was the language that I worked with since that was the language of the interactions, and there are many positive aspects to analysing the data in the original language.

During my first trip to Kazan I undertook some Tatar language training, but after several sessions I realised that it would be very difficult (in fact almost impossible) to try to learn Tatar language and at the same time to conduct my research. In order to achieve a serious knowledge of a language, and not just learn to speak a few token sentences, it is necessary to spend very considerable amounts of time, which unfortunately is not always possible when you have limited resources for the data gathering. (As I described previously, the lack of time is one of the worse enemies of the fieldwork).

However, my understanding of this issue is that my lack of grasp of the Tatar language did not jeopardise the results of this research. In the first place, this is because text production in Tatar language is relatively marginal, and the vast majority of the documentary sources are in Russian language. It should not be forgotten that Tatar language development is in its early stage of gestation, and cultural production through the medium of Tatar is very limited. Also, because everyone speaks Russian in Kazan, I knew that I would not experience any restrictions in communication with people. Pupils and teachers in Tatar gymnásias are absolutely fluent in Russian and consequently it did not represent a disadvantage to me or to them to interact in Russian because they are fully used to expressing themselves in Russian. My attempt to learn Tatar was inspired more by an anthropological perspective, by my genuine interest in Tatar culture and by my wish to show a receptive and respectful attitude towards Tatar people including their culture and language.

It is important to bear in mind that the process of interpreting the data was accompanied and complemented by a parallel immersion in the field as well as documentary analysis of Russian material collected along the way. Diaries from the fieldwork with many notes and various fragments were also analysed. The diaries played a very important role not only during the

¹³⁸ In addition there were fourteen interviews from the pilot study.

fieldwork, but afterwards as well, especially when it was time to reconstruct and organise my memories. Diaries are key tools in ethnographic work. In the first place, they are part of the reflexive process of observing and taking notes of what the researcher considers to be most relevant in that moment and in that place. But they play a second, crucial role when after some time, and some distance from the fieldwork, it is necessary to analyse the data. They help to reconstruct the sequences, moments and nuances that otherwise would be almost impossible to remember. Diaries are remarkably operative tools when it is necessary “return” (non-physically) to the fieldwork and analyse the data. In other words, they are very useful because they store the memories, and, they help to bring them back after some time. Therefore, the diaries provided important support for the interviews, as well as the subsequent analysis.

The process of interpreting the data involved several stages, starting with overview reading, followed by successive re-readings and exhaustive detailed analysis, where a number of thematic stands began to emerge after complete familiarisation. The main steps were as follows. I started to analyse the data by submerging myself in the interviews. First of all I read and re-read the transcribed material, underlining ideas, thoughts or just words that I found relevant - up to the point where I felt I was completely familiar with them. Next, I tried to find any parallels, connections and similarities throughout the material. To identify these I used various forms of notation. For example, I used many different colours in order to visualise all the ideas that came to my attention or that I considered relevant. I drew signs, question marks. I wrote words and notes in the margins of the transcribed interviews as thoughts began to take shape. The purpose was to identify the themes, concepts or categories that I could begin to see appearing throughout the whole body of the data.

In the process of analysing the data of this thesis I did not want to focus my attention on concepts or categories, a quite common practice in many types of sociological research. I considered that to conceptualise the categories a priori would be inappropriate for this research and that to structure the data through categories would mean missing or underestimating the importance of nuances and multiple meanings. Because of the area of my research I considered it potentially quite misleading to define and consequently to limit concepts or categories, especially where they have many cultural connotations. For that reason, I decided to work with themes and enunciations rather than with concepts. After many readings and a considerable amount of hours,

specific themes appeared time after time throughout the material. It was a process followed by a technique of expansion, by writing up any thoughts, ideas or impressions that were emerging, then returning again to the process of thematisation to produce a consistent global picture. Initially I had around fifteen themes, that I then reduced to ten, and afterwards to five. It was a very slow (and often uncertain) process of building. Once I was sure about the salience and relevance of the five themes, I went again through the data, paying special attention to them and to their connections with existing theories and interpretations. It was a combined method, because my theoretical writing was not completed until all the fieldwork was done.

In other words, although this research began with a concrete theoretical standpoint, the theory was concluded after the data analysis was finished. The data and the theory development constantly depended on each other, and the theoretical standpoint supported the production of the data, and the data allowed to the theory to come together.

As result five different themes or social dimensions are analysed in this work, which all have contrasting expressions in Tatar and non-Tatar gymnásias, depending on the institutions. i) Attitude to the Tatar language, sometimes perceived as a primordial tie and sometimes as an external imposition. ii) Rhetoric of Otherness, strongly underlined on some occasions and absent in others. iii) Discourses of ethno-cultural segregation or integration. iv) Religiosity and v) patriotism, referring to an inclusive or exclusive perception of Tatarstan. All five dimensions, can be correlated with the triadic dialectic between political discourse, institutional praxis and everyday life in the process of identification - dimensions that I will develop in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 5

Tatar gymnásias; ‘National Archipelagos’

The purpose of this chapter is, first of all, to describe in more detail gymnásias No.2 and No.16, two different, but complementary schools which are the main source of evidence for this research. The aim is to present as clear as possible a picture of these two examples of specific niches in the educational system. Subsequently, after a short introduction to the selected themes, I will discuss how pupils, teachers and parents represent and perceive these two centres and their attitude to Tatar language, and why the notion of ‘Others’ is central to the identification process. Ethno-national segregation, religiousness and sense of patriotism, will be addressed also and analysed in this chapter, as a key dimension in the gymnásias’ discourse.

The technique that I will be using to present and analyse the evidence in this chapter (as well as in the following one) will be direct quotation, an interpretation that offers a multidimensional space and allows a voice to be manifested.¹³⁹

5.1 Gymnásia No.2 Shigabutdin Mardshani.¹⁴⁰ *Isenmesez*¹⁴¹!

The moment you walk into the school and cross the threshold the first impression is almost as if you have travelled to a different space and time. An old woman with a very friendly face, unbelievably blue eyes and a sort of (because she is quite old) blond hair, will immediately stop and ask you something in a language that you cannot speak or understand¹⁴². You can probably imagine that she is asking where are you going? Or what do you want? You are an intruder in the castle, and everyone will notice you, firstly because of your appearance, women do not wear trousers to school, (even if it is twenty degrees Centigrade below zero), and secondly, because of the

¹³⁹ See Chapter 3.

¹⁴⁰ A nineteenth century historian and theologian. One of the first intellectuals who re-opened the question: Who are you, if not a Tatar?

¹⁴¹ *Isenmesez* can be translated as *how are you?* In Tatar.

¹⁴² Judging by her appearance, (and according to ‘widespread’ stereotypes), it is difficult to imagine that she is Tatar, in a completely different context I would not hesitate to think that she was Russian. I will probably have to thank her for helping me to deconstruct such a stereotype; not all Tatars have dark eyes and dark hair; this is something that I learned on the day of my first visit to a Tatar gymnásia. From that moment on I realised that I had better adopt a rather sceptical position to what people will say to me in relation to defining or describing Tatar or Russian people; not all Russians are blond neither do all Tatars have dark hair!

language that you do not speak.

All pupils and teachers look immaculate and clean compared to the people in the street, the colours of their uniforms, their hairdos and make-up are prominent but discrete at the same time. It is almost impossible to hear one voice louder than the rest, there is an assumed code of behaviour, everyone knows how they should and how they should not behave. When pupils and teachers pass each other in the corridors, or when pupils come into the classroom, they always have to greet the teachers with; '*Isenmesez!*' the magic word that you must not forget to say. More than anything else, it is a symbol, a symbol of your 'positive attitude' to Tatar language and culture, an indicator that at least you are trying. As a good adviser told me, it does not matter if you do not speak Tatar, as long as the first word you utter is *Isenmesez* when you meet a Tatar person, especially in a Tatar *gymnásia*, you are safe!

I walked into the headmistress's office, we shook hands and exchanged an *Isenmesez* with correspondening nods. In the course of our conversation several persons came into the office, and she also had to answer quite a few telephones calls. It was difficult to know what people came in for, or what she talked about on the phone, since they all spoke Tatar. For the first time, after almost three months in Kazan I felt that I was in a new environment where I could not understand a word; a feeling that I had never experienced before. In shops, on public transport, at the University or even in the Theatre, Russian was the language in which people communicated ¹⁴³.

'Yes, on public transport, it was perceived as something negative [to talk in Tatar]. It was like that, there was such a period, there was... People spoke[Tatar] among themselves, but in public places they tried to speak Russian, of course... they, we feel ashamed, there was a period like that' (History teacher).

After a short period of time inside the school, all of a sudden, I had the impression that I was somewhere else, but not in the city where I had lived for some time. All the decoration in the school was almost speaking for itself, through various murals on the walls, with Tatar motifs, sentences in Arabic, the contents of the school's ethnocultural Tatar museum, everyone's haughtiness,

¹⁴³ It is also important to stress that from my first visit to Kazan in 1997, to my last in October 2000, I noticed an increased usage of Tatar language, especially in public places like public transport or streets.

including the teachers' and the pupils'. There was an exhibition of a famous Tatar artist whose pictures are owned by 'important' politicians in the republic, including President Shaimiev. There are strong colours on the walls, Tatar ornaments and calligraphy are everywhere, pictures of mosques¹⁴⁴ and arches are complemented with Tatar songs and music between classes and during the break. And if you are lucky, you may even see some girls in traditional Tatar costumes preparing new shows, including songs and dances for special visitors¹⁴⁵. There is not even a glimmer of hope finding signs of other cultures, not even a hint of a non-Tatar display; Tatar culture is in the air, not only can you hear it and see it, you can almost smell it.

Of course, it was not by accident that I chose this school from among the Tatar gymnásias available. As mentioned previously, after three months in Kazan, talking to different people and spending many hours in the library reading different articles, and trying to find 'something' on the subject of national education, everything pointed to gymnásia No.2. Since I understood that this centre would probably be the key element in my research, I decided to negotiate access in a much more careful way than with the rest of the schools. Once I was sure that I wanted to visit the school, and I did not want to face a rejection; (it is not that I experienced many rejections, but in this case I did not want to run the risk), I decided to adopt a 'local way' of approaching my target. Rather than phoning the school myself, as I did most of the time, and presenting in a couple of words my research and my interest in visiting the

school, I tried to find what is called a collaborator or visiting card. After symbolic bartering, this person, my visiting card (the headmistress of another school) who actually knew the headmistress of gymnásia No.2 quite well, introduced me to her. Finally the possibility of rejection was avoided and the main doors were opened to me - *Isemesez! Isemesez!*¹⁴⁶

The manner in which the headmistress spoke as well as her 'body language' gave the impression that she was quite a strong woman, confident enough to believe that she was doing the right work and the right thing. She immediately transmitted a sense of being entirely sure of her institution, and she defined herself 'as a patriot of it'. She complained effusively about the

¹⁴⁴ See picture 4, page 112.

¹⁴⁵ See picture 5, page 112.

¹⁴⁶ The first time that I met her was in 1997 during the pilot study, but after that I visited her each time I was in Kazan.

national education situation: ‘What can you say if, in Kazan, the capital of Tatarstan, there was not even one school where the educational programme was taught in Tatar language? What can you say?’ However, at the same time, she really believed in the power of team work; ‘this is only the beginning, but things are starting to change’. The major objective of the school, according to its headmistress, is national education (*natsional’noe*¹⁴⁷ *obrazovanie*), and by education she means not only the core subjects, but rather a broader notion which incorporates the whole spectrum of life. ‘Education that will intersect all subjects, and will create an all round educated person.’ (Headmistress)

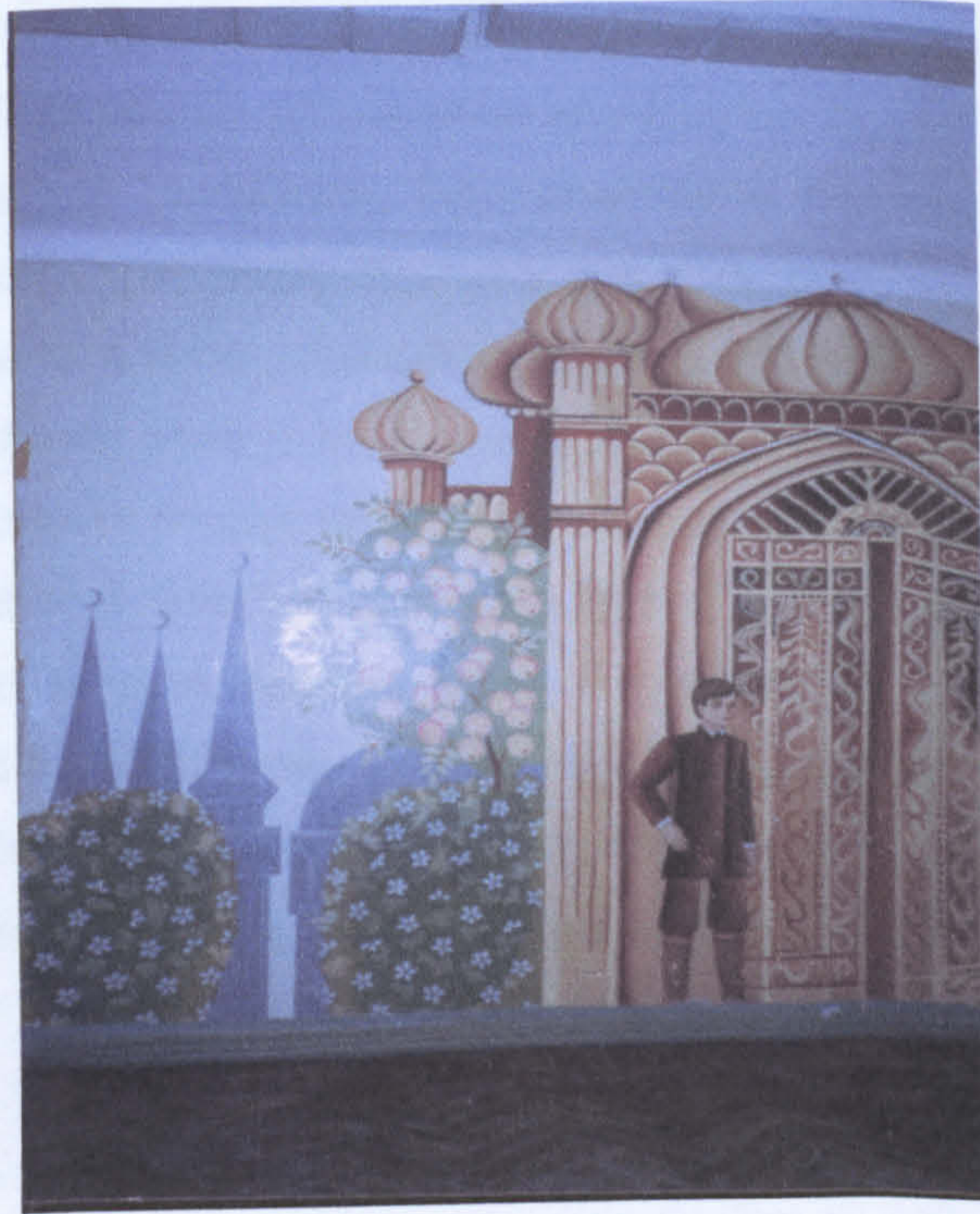
Nowadays the purpose of the school is the rebirth and development of national education. The rebirth of traditions and national content has intrinsic value, because as she explained:

‘National education cannot be bad, it doesn’t matter which nationality, Russians, Tatars, Udmurt or whatever. National food cannot be tasteless, it can only be badly prepared. National dress cannot be hideous, national art cannot be bad, and in the same way national education cannot be bad. And the explanation is quite simple, because national culture grows from people’s roots, and things that are based on a good foundation cannot become bad. This is why we are sure that Tatar people should study in national schools. Our aims are the rebirth of Tatar national education, national intelligentsia, and more precisely the rebirth of our republic’s government; and without people this process is not going to happen.’(Headmistress)

The headmistress of gymnásia No.2 is definitely aware and not naïve: as she said, ‘this school has always been a national educational island’. Although she does not think that she has achieved her goals, she believes, ‘they are only at the first stage and the important thing is that in order to start, it is important to stand on the right path; which they are doing’. She aims to bury the idea that pupils from Tatar schools cannot get into Universities - an old stereotype inherited from the past.

‘An absolute fallacy, since there is nothing better than studying in your mother tongue, something that you are used to even before you are born, something that is natural’. (Headmistress)

¹⁴⁷ In Russian language the notion *natsional’noe* is related with an ethnic component, rather than with the western understanding of national. Consequently in this work, we will use the word ‘national’ to refer to a Russian notion of *natsional’noe*.



Picture 4 (gymnásia No.2)

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Picture 5 (gymnasia No.2)

She really wants to demonstrate (and to prove) that pupils of Tatar schools will be able to get access to any faculty regardless which University or city they choose. In addition, Tatar language in her words is something almost 'supernatural'; 'something that you get with your mother's milk.' Thus the headmistress is a strong defender of national education, considering that basic education should always be in one's mother tongue, whatever it is, and only when a person is twenty or twenty-one years old, can they be immersed into the 'international level' of education. But she is not the only one to manifest such a point of view, because there is a radical nationalist sector in Tatarstan which considers that national schools are only for Tatar people, and they are the place where the future Tatar elite should be educated ¹⁴⁸.

Within gymnásia No.2, in contrast to the rest of the city, the prevalent language is Tatar; Russian has been displaced from playing the central role. Sometimes you can hear some conversations in Russian among pupils, but never when there is a teacher nearby, they know the norm: inside the school they should speak Tatar (even when most of the pupils admitted that they prefer to speak Russian with their classmates).

As the interviews show, pupils in this gymnásia come from quite a specific context, usually most of them are the first generation that was born in the city, having strong family connections with the countryside. They learned Tatar at home, as their first language, and Russian in the nursery. They speak Tatar mainly with their grandparents and relatives, but it is not the predominant language in their homes or with their friends; however many of them recognised that they use both languages indiscriminately. Some pupils admitted that they prefer Tatar language and they used it with their friends because they feel more comfortable speaking Tatar than speaking Russian. Nonetheless, they all prefer to read and watch television in Russian, because 'there is not much interesting literature available, or television programmes in Tatar language'. This information has been confirmed by Iskhakova's 1990 research. In rural and urban Tatarstan even the Tatar schoolchildren whose first language was Tatar spoke with their Tatar friends either Russian (40 per cent of the total), or Tatar and Russian (31 per cent of the total); the proportion of those who spoke only Tatar with their Tatar friends was less than 30 per cent (Kondrashov 2000:42). According to this research most urban Tatars use both Russian and

¹⁴⁸ Sagitova, interviewed in March 1998.

Tatar in all real life situations, with the only exception being the usage of the Tatar language with their grandparents (ibid.). Grandparents are the key educational personages in the pupils' lives, especially in relation to Tatar language and cultural conservation. In most cases grandparents are the bridge and the union between the urban and the rural environment, the Russian and Tatar language. Grandparents usually live in the countryside, whereas children were born in the cities, or moved there in their early years. Grandparents usually speak Tatar (some do not even know Russian), whereas children, even if they are bilingual, will speak predominantly Russian in the city and Tatar with their grandparents. Quite often, grandparents are the ones who teach or encourage children to speak Tatar. However, regardless of its 'apparent' irrelevance or marginality, Tatar language has emerged as the main motivation and basic demand for these gymnásias.

5.2 Gymnásia No.16 'A prestigious space'

As in the school described above pupils and teachers in gymnásia No.16 looked immaculate. Pupils' uniforms were perfectly ironed and clean, teachers were wearing their best clothes as if every single day in the school was a big festivity. Here (more than anywhere else) teachers are especially well dressed - as for a fancy dress ball - trying to match the grandeur and flamboyance of the building. There was a feeling that people were making an effort to blend with the building, rather than the building adapting to the people's needs.

There is marble everywhere ¹⁴⁹, a wide range of colours and tones, without a doubt the raw material has a particular 'social prestige'. The school was not completely finished, but it was mainly a question of small and almost insignificant details. Bearing in mind the condition of most buildings and houses in Kazan, it would not be an exaggeration to present this school as a palace in the jungle, with each detail being meticulously thought through.

Initially I experienced strong contradictory feelings, because a constant incongruity kept emerging. Gymnásia No.16 was not the first school that I had visited in Kazan, it was actually the last one in the list of many (both Tatar and non-Tatar gymnásias). Nevertheless gymnásia No.16 had nothing in common with any of the other schools. (I am talking in terms of material resources). It

¹⁴⁹ See pictures 6 and 7, page 116.



Picture 6 (gymnásia No.16)

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Picture 7 (gymnásia No.16)

immediately made me think, why is there such a contrast and difference between the schools? Why were they like chalk and cheese? How is it possible to explain these contrasts in the same city?

On the one hand, I was impressed and delighted with the material display, but on the other hand, I could not stop thinking why some schools have and others are denied access to these privileges, taking into consideration that all schools depend on state financing and most of them have to face real economic problems and setbacks when trying to improve even basic conditions.

In this gymnásia everything is far too new, too clean and too shiny, as if the place was outside real time and everyday life. When I was walking around this 'pseudo palace', completely out of character and 'disharmonic' with Kazan's general living standards and conditions, I often had the impression that I was in a museum or an exhibition gallery rather than in a school. It was as if the school was a shop window and everything depended on the visitors' impressions; a place where they were extremely dedicated to form and appearance. There were neither loud voices nor bustles, but the deputy heads were always quite occupied with organising a succession of seminars and conferences. Something that also surprised me was the number of deputy heads (three or four), bearing in mind the size of the school. It made me think firstly, about the notorious institutional bureaucratisation of the gymnásia and, secondly, whether there was a real necessity for this number of deputy heads.¹⁵⁰

But what is the main purpose or aim of this gymnásia?

'Do you know, I think at the end of the day it is the rebirth of Tatar culture. We are very underdeveloped. Tatar culture: living in Tatarstan we were forgetting our culture, our language,... The language was considered, it is possible to say that it was considered as a second class language, and I am happy that at the end people like that appeared, such leaders that would take into their hands... It is a big effort, big responsibility, it is a big, big effort from the rulers, especially from the President, and they are in charge of a colossal mission – our cultural revival, our people and language. And it seems... that it is so

¹⁵⁰ Note that when I conducted this research there were only six hundred pupils in the gymnásia.

underdeveloped, there is a need for massive resources to manage the task. This is how I explain its appearance.’¹⁵¹ (Liaisan’s mother)

The purpose of the school is to focus on the general national route, and quite often the headmistress reiterates that the objective is to establish direction and meaning of life to the pupils, something that will become their philosophy in life.

‘National education (...) is something very big, like a ball of wool, we have to unwind each thread and study and study it every day. You cannot love it in one day, it is a question of ten or eleven years, every day our children bit by bit take a part and store it. So at the end the result will be a citizen from Tatarstan that will love its people [Tatars], and its language [Tatar], they will love their marvellous country, its landscapes and countryside. Our pupils have it, I can see it, they are very nice (...)’ (Headmistress)

The headmistress expressed remarkable optimism about the new period that they are living in, especially in relation to Tatar language development, because finally she could see how hard work and invested time was recompensed. As she indicated, they want to promote and cultivate pupils’ love for their language, nation, culture, countryside, etc. ‘It is very positive that many new Tatar gymnásias have been opened, which indicates that there is a future since children are studying in their vernacular there is a future for this people [Tatar people], and this country’. However, it would be wrong to assume that their aim is only to teach Tatar language, moreover, nor should we reduce their objective to mere cultural transmission based on some folklore and ‘exotic’ characteristics.

‘Why did I choose this gymnásia? Firstly, which is important, it is close to us. Secondly, my girl is..., I suppose because she was with her grandmother, maybe because of that. We are – my generation, we are a bit ‘Russified’ but my daughter spends more time with her grandmother, and she is a very knowledgeable person. She worked thirty-five years as a teacher and in some way she transmitted some love, I will say respect, especially for her Tatar *natsiia* [people, nation]. And this is why the girl also feels that way, her attitude is a bit different. She unconsciously wants the revival of her *natsiia* her culture and her language. To some

¹⁵¹ All the quotations have been translated from Russian and in some occasions they may look incoherent or unstructured, but I tried to maintain the maximum similarity with the original Russian texts.

extent she is even a bit religious. This is why I realised that a gymnásia is a very appropriate place. (...)’ (Liaisan’s mother)

Perhaps it is difficult to believe that a thirteen year-old girl has a concrete and explicit wish for the revival of her *natsiia*, culture and language. It is even more difficult to believe that someone (including her mother) can anticipate and define unconscious desires, especially when they are not related to concrete and palpable objects but to abstract notions of cultural or national revival.

5.3 Attitude to Tatar language. Redefining ‘primordial ties’

What attitude do Tatar gymnásia pupils have to Tatar language? What does Tatar language symbolise to them? And why is it so important?

Amir’s ¹⁵² father opted for a Tatar gymnásia (in this case No.16) because, as Amir said, he is Tatar. He did not want him to go to a Russian school because they do not teach Tatar language there, and he would forget everything he knew because they promote Russian language and Christian propaganda.

I asked Nadir what he thinks (in general) about the gymnásia.

‘About the gymnásia?.. in here we are all Tatars together, it is possible to say that it’s like .. That here... somehow we can talk about Russians with our Tatars, yes, because if there were Russian children in our group, we would not speak to them in a direct form, about Russian *natsiia* or Tatar *natsiia* and we feel more freely here, in such an environment. But ... there is no discrimination towards the people, because we are in Tatarstan and we are all at the same level Russians and Tatars. It is only, I suppose my parents wanted me to study and ... to learn to speak in my mother tongue.’ (Nadir)

To which he also added ‘but also because the teachers are Tatars and they have a closer relationship with us, you can say that they are concerned about us’.

Nadir was very honest and sincere. He likes the school not because it is nice, even one of the nicer schools in Kazan, nor because of his friends, or teachers. It is not because of the swimming pool or the computer laboratory. The reasons are simpler and yet more complex at the same time. The reason is

¹⁵² All the names presented here are fictitious and do not correspond with interviewees’ real names, since I gave a guarantee of anonymity.

because they are all Tatars; an explanation not always easy to understand. He feels at ease inside his clan, free to talk about the 'others' and to define himself. He justifies himself saying that there is no discrimination, but perhaps there is a desire for segregation. In what he says he is almost assuming that Russian teachers do not care about Tatar pupils, or Tatar teachers do not look after Russian pupils. Without any restraint or doubts he expresses what he thinks, in all likelihood it corresponds to what his parents or teachers think: Tatar people are much better amongst Tatars. Probably he is not aware of the dimensions (and significance) of his words, when he says that there is no discrimination, nevertheless he prefers to study with Tatar people and Tatar teachers because he feels secure; free from the threat and free from the 'enemy'. Do the equals of the *Polis* feel a danger? What does he want to talk about that cannot be voiced with Russians present?

Until Nadir was three years old he lived in a Tatar village and he only spoke Tatar. When they moved to Kazan, he had to learn Russian because he attended a nursery. Nadir described a moment in his childhood when he started to forget Tatar because he did not need to speak it. And probably for this reason (that he was forgetting Tatar and according to him, almost all Tatar children gradually forgot their mother tongue), his parents made the effort and decided to choose a Tatar school. But Nadir speaks with his classmates in Russian because 'we are used to it'. Furthermore he also explained that in some cases there are no such words in Tatar, or:

'perhaps some people feel embarrassed to speak Tatar in front of Russians. Because sometimes... even in the villages people say that, if for example there is one old Russian woman sitting and there are seven Tatars getting close to her, they will start to speak in Russian even if there is only one Russian. Perhaps since that time, with the communism, they discriminated against human rights, probably people were embarrassed by their language. Even those who come now from the village... try to speak Russian. When you start to speak Tatar with them, sometimes they try to speak back in Russian to you.' (Nadir)

Indicative of this background is the fact that Nadir's brother studies in a Russian school, Nadir had explained that when his brother started studying in a Tatar gymnásia all the teachers were from villages and in general not very knowledgeable. As a result, now his brother has a better knowledge of Russian language than Nadir, but worse knowledge of Tatar language. Most of the time for the parents, it is almost a question of priorities, Russian or Tatar, whereas to

have complete command of both Tatar and Russian is not a real option yet.

One of the Tatar history teachers that I engaged in conversation with has been working in the school from the first day that the school opened. She remembered that the first group of pupils came from a very specific social stratum, they were the children of the intelligentsia, people dedicated to culture, such as teachers and doctors. They were the first to make the effort because they understood that it was impossible to develop Tatar language if the children could not speak the language. (Children are always one of the main objects of future changes.)

Tatar gymnásias No.2 and No.16 were places where, more than anywhere else, I began to experience an 'understanding' that there are some sections of the population in Tatarstan that are not very close to Russian culture. Not only are they not close to it, and even more revealing, or perhaps frightening, is that they positively dislike it. They reject it with 'emotional' rather than 'analytical' reason, but they reject it. I became aware that there is a proportion of the population, not very large, but a proportion, which really exaggerates how they voice their 'Tatar belonging'. These are the people who work hard for and believe in a Tatar renaissance, rebirth or revival, based on the past, but who also make it a claim upon the future.

According to sociological research conducted in Kazan in 1998¹⁵³, besides the enormous dedication of organisational, political and professional resources, bilingualism has not been realised in practice; Russian-speaking pupils were not starting to speak Tatar. Different reasons are presented in the research to justify this failure, which can be summarised as: (1) problems embedded in educational methods, the level of professionalism, and the position of the cadres in general and (2) problems connected with wider social factors, which often slow down the activation of the ethnolinguistic process. Nevertheless, according to the research, both are strongly interrelated and connected. The research clearly demonstrates that because of a notorious absence of Tatar language specialists in schools, it is not rare for non-Tatar language specialists to have to teach Tatar, leading to lower standards in

¹⁵³ Tatarskii iazyk v shkolakh RT v konteskte sovremennykh sotsial'no-obrazovatel'nykh tendentsii: sostoianie, problemy, perspektivy . Kazan' 1998: Ministerstvo Obrazovaniia RT . Laboratoriia sotsiologicheskikh issledovaniï IPKRO RT. Although the research was sponsored by the Ministry, I will consider the results quite reliable because they coincide with the results from other sources of research and with my own research.

general teaching, (as we will see in the next chapter).

However, I believe there is evidence, in addition to what the research shows, that there is also an extra element or a problem with the *attitude* towards learning Tatar language. This is what I will call to some degree lack of respect leading up to disrespect towards other languages and cultures. There exists quite a different attitude or approach to Tatar language depending whether pupils come from a Tatar or a non-Tatar gymnásia. It is possible to detect, on the one hand, an *instrumental* approach among non-Tatar gymnásias' pupils towards Tatar language learning, and on the other, a defence of *primordial ties* and *identity claims* among Tatar gymnásia' pupils; a distinction that I will try to expand on throughout this analysis.

'The idea of language not only as means of communication but as the central source and marker of 'peoplehood' is part of the romantic nationalism discourse of those involved in language revival and of most ethnonationalism more broadly' (Macdonald 1997: 219).

Particularly under specific circumstances like political and economic instability, periods of transitions or social insecurity, language heritage became a symbol of cohesion, an indicator of their past and roots, a symbolic and political force allowing people to proclaim their belonging to a certain group. Furthermore, as Macdonald indicated, 'very often, the loss of a heritage language is seen as synonymous with the loss of identity' (1997: 219); ideas that are permanently expressed in Tatar gymnásias.

It is not a new discovery, and a considerable amount of literature and research in the social sciences is concentrated on the connection and association that many people make between a language, more precisely 'their' language, and 'their traditions'. Identifying a language as a visible feature with the main bearer and representative element of 'their' *traditions*, *authenticity* and *uniqueness*, is something that distinguishes them from the rest. A language, 'their' language, becomes a 'sign' and a carrier of the distinctness of 'their' culture, an element that can guarantee group cohesion and consistency, and consequently security.

According to research conducted by Iskhakov¹⁵⁴ about why people considered themselves to be Tatar, it was found that very often, language

¹⁵⁴ Interview 17.03.1998.

appeared as a strong indicator of identity. Nevertheless there are many Tatars who do not speak Tatar, in which case, religion was presented as an important component of how they represented Tatar identity. However, Sagitova¹⁵⁵ observed that there is also what she considers to be ‘family tradition’ or ties stronger than anything else, because respondents were saying: ‘if my parents are Tatars, so am I’. In other words, quite often, in answer to the question why do you consider yourself to be Tatar? ‘It is a matter of tradition’ was frequently repeated. However, language was also presented as a common explanation, an idea that was continuously reinforced by the two gymnásias, as one of the main indicators of what they called Tatar.

Tatar language revival in Tatarstan can be seen as an awakening from the long ‘sleep’ that they went through in the *Russification* period. It is a real and palpable mechanism, that people can observe and gauge its progress and development. They can expect to see a relatively quick incorporation of Tatar communication in different spheres of everyday life, from schools to mass media, from shops to the work place. During all the time that I spent in both of the Tatar gymnásias there was an observable tendency among pupils and teachers to connect certain sets of words that always occurred together. References to *Tatar language, history, traditions, past* and *culture*, are continuously preceded by the possessive adjective ‘our’. The words constantly presented as a unitary and homogenous set. Similarly, the notion of language is commonly associated with a notion of *natsiia* (people, nation), where the language is almost the main defining feature. Therefore if you live in Tatarstan, you are supposed to speak in Tatar, both being inseparable, echoing Kaiser’s statement that language is ‘one of the most important objective characteristics of the nation’ (1994:253)¹⁵⁶. Ideas of the union and connection between Tatar language and Tatar culture, identity and history, are ideas also shared by what I would call the Tatar renaissance circle, especially among the nationalist movements. Tatar language revival was one of the main demands made by TOTs¹⁵⁷ and Itiffak¹⁵⁸ to the government as the key element of the

¹⁵⁵ Interview March 1998.

¹⁵⁶ It is not part of my task here to discuss this point, whether or not language is the main characteristic of a *natsiia*. However what I want to illustrate that many Tatar pupils and teachers from both Tatar gymnásias perceive language as a definition and very important features of a *natsiia*.

¹⁵⁷ The Tatar Public Centre (*Tatarskii obshchestvennyi tsentr*) created in 1988, representing a national front, involved in political and cultural areas.

ethnocultural renewal process. Another key element was the Tatar gymnásias, which played an enormous political role at the beginning of the 1990s promoting and defending Tatar language and cultural revival.

Zulfiya parents have chosen gymnásia No.2 because it is only for Tatars and also because they study Arabic.

‘Tatar language will become the most important language, and all Russians will be able to speak Tatar. Since we live in Tatarstan, we already speak Russian, and they live in Tatarstan, but they cannot speak Tatar, why is that? If they are living in our country!’ (Zulfiya)

Diverse issues emerge in what Zulfiya said, and particularly interesting is the fact that she compares Tatarstan with a country (*strana*), a confusion that I encountered not just once but several times, not only from pupils but also from teachers. Should I consider it as a simple *lapsus linguae*?

Zulfiya, like many other pupils in fact accepts the importance of Russian, and I doubt that she was trying to downgrade the importance of Russian language, or to defend a monolingual society. It is more a question of the Russian speaking population’s attitude to Tatar language, a lack of respect or disinterest in learning Tatar language ¹⁵⁹. In response to the question whether she noticed that the Russian population was beginning to speak Tatar, her immediate reaction was a spontaneous laugh with a categorical: ‘*Net*’, (‘no’ in Russian). ‘They study it, but they do not speak it, I have never heard a Russian ¹⁶⁰ speaking Tatar. Every time that we meet with them, with Russian friends, and I like them very much indeed, we always speak Russian’. (Zulfiya)

This is something that is confirmed by a great deal of research. Bilingualism is not a two way process, and whereas most urban Tatars speak Russian, almost none of the urban Russians speak Tatar. According to the last census of 1989 virtually all city-dwelling Tatars knew Russian and so did about two-thirds of the Tatars in the countryside. In contrast to this, less than 2 per cent of the Russian rural population indicated that they knew Tatar (Kondrashov 2000:37).

However, in the particular environment of gymnásia No.2 and No.16,

¹⁵⁸ Nationalist party.

¹⁵⁹ This issue will be analysed in the next chapter.

¹⁶⁰ She actually said *kakoi-nibud Russian* which is a quite scornful and pejorative way of speaking of someone.

Tatar language is not only a mechanism or a medium for study or communication, or even a language that will help to bring success in a career. It is not synonymous with sophistication, or access to high technology, computers or the Internet. On the contrary, it seems that the significance of Tatar language is strongly related to the past, but also to the future, proving a connection with ancestors, roots, the mother tongue; a key to how they represent 'Tatarhood'.

When I asked Liaisan's mother ¹⁶¹ in which language they speak at home she said both, but when I was there I had the impression that they speak more in Russian, but it is possible they spoke that day only in Russian because I was there. However, it is quite typical that she mentioned that they do not give priority to any language, but she would like Tatar to be given precedence. But without being aware of it, they naturally happen to use both languages, according to a dynamic beyond their control. Russian language was dominating their lives, as something against their will. Before entering gymnásia No.16, her daughter was studying in a normal school but she decided to change the school because she did not like their attitude to Tatar language. From her point of view they were not serious enough, and the teacher was far too young and without experience. Generally Tatar language is one of the main reasons why parents want their children to study in a Tatar gymnásia.

Among various others, I conversed with Shamil's father and he explained to me that they speak at home in both Tatar and Russian, but he admitted that they speak a domestic Tatar, which is very common amongst urban Tatars. They managed to maintain only a domestic level of Tatar language, whereas Russian is the working language (something that has been confirmed by a number of studies in Kazan). But in the case of his son, the situation is different because: 'In Tatar schools they don't study only how to write and to read in Tatar, but also to think in Tatar.' In Shamil's father's words there was a constant emphasis of the vernacular, a continuous repetition of its importance and necessity.

'The school has to develop respect and love for knowledge, including the vernacular, so people will be able to read the original texts, Tatar writers,

¹⁶¹ She is originally from a Tatar village and she studied (until she was sixteen) in a Tatar school. However, because she was from a quite well educated family she had no problems with Russian.

Tatar poets... not reading the translations into Russian, to be able to read the original. These are different things, - vernacular or translation.’
(Shamil’s father’s)

When Shamil’s father talk about original texts I assume that he is referring to Tatar texts in Cyrillic. Because nobody talks about the original texts that Tatars cannot access even if they know Tatar because they are in *Ianalif* (Latin). A considerable number of books are kept in libraries, as historical and cultural artefacts to which access is denied. There is a parenthesis in the cultural transmission due to the repeated shift in the Tatar language alphabet, changing from Arabic to Run, to *Ianalif* (Latin) and to Cyrillic; and probably in the near future to *Ianalif* again. Each change symbolises the disruption and discontinuity in the Tatar heritage and cultural transmission. Today the tragedy is that most of the people can only get access to Tatar texts in Cyrillic and according to Karimovna ¹⁶², Cyrillic does not correspond to the needs of Tatar language and the main Tatar cultural capital is in *Ianalif*.

Shamil’s father presented himself as Tatar, originally from Siberia (Siberian Tatar), and more precisely from Tobol’sk ¹⁶³. For example he confessed that when he was still at school he knew German much better than Tatar, because we cannot forget that especially for Shamil’s father’s generation, being Tatar does not involve being able to communicate in Tatar. ‘Now that you think about it, it should be the other way around, first your vernacular, then Russian of course, and a foreign language after that’.

The generation of girls and boys that are studying now in Tatar gymnásias have a difficult task on their hands, it seems as if they should redeem their parents’ ‘fault’ because they had no opportunity (because of the adverse circumstances) to learn their vernacular.

‘I will not call it repression, but there was such a relation. We were giving priority to Russian language... Almost everything was in Russian, Russian culture. But I would like to say that probably, it also depended on us. That we were weak-willed and we permitted it. (...) I think there is also our guilt.’ (Liaisan’s mother)

¹⁶² An ethnographer working at the Institute for Historical Studies of Tatarstan. Interview March 1998.

¹⁶³ He emphasised that it is the town where Dmitrii Ibanabich Mendeleeb was born.

For example a Tatar language teacher expressed the view that whereas Tatars are always making the effort and trying to learn the language of the people that they are living with, Russians seem to be more reluctant to learn other languages. A considerable criticism emerges of Russian people, of their attitude in general, as a collective and as a group; a criticism of their lack of interest in and respect for other languages.

‘It doesn’t matter who Tatars live with, here with Russians, they always learn the language. It depends on the mentality, it is related to the people. I think you have to, if you live nearby- you have to know... This is what I think. It depends on the person, but there are Russians who want to know, who know and study it, but there are very few of them. There are only a few who understand, it seems that they didn’t find out yet. I would learn for example, if I have a Spanish neighbour, if my neighbour is Spanish, I would study Spanish with pleasure. It depends on the person I think.’ (Tatar language teacher)

This teacher, before she started at university, was living in a Tatar village and it was quite difficult for her because she had to pass a History exam in Russian. Paraphrasing her: ‘I hadn’t seen a living Russian before’; however they speak at home in Tatar and sometimes in Russian because of her husband. ‘Because of my husband. My husband is from that kind of family. He didn’t know Tatar very well, now he is making an effort and it seems that he has more or less learned it. He wants to do it because of the children, he wants them to know Tatar and they will also teach him, that is what our family is like’. When she said that her husband is from ‘that kind of family’, she did not say which kind of family, but she assumed that everyone would understand what she was referring to. They are Tatars that cannot speak Tatar language, families that are not always very well accepted amongst Tatars. Relations are not always calm and peaceful, and the so-called radical sector, quite often discriminates against Tatars who have become more assimilated, who do not know their mother tongue, or simply, have become closer to Russian culture. They are not always totally accepted and at times a certain rancour can be observed. Derogatory and pejorative categories like, for example, *mankurt* (used to denote Russified Tatars), can be heard. The rejection can adopt different forms but the most common target is against non-Tatar speakers.

I started our conversation with very basic and general questions about the school, which subject does she teach, how many hours and so on. But I have to admit that I was surprised by her reaction when I said: so do you teach

here everything in Tatar plus (in terms of an addition) four or five hours of Tatar language and literature? To which she replied:

‘But this is not a plus, it is a separate subject, like Russian language in the same way, and English. They are the same. Here we have the same number of hours of Russian and Tatar. There are no privileges here: for example seven hours in the fifth grade, as I understand, Russian language and literature, and the same for Tatar language and literature.’
(Tatar language teacher)

The above quoted answer was defensive because of the word ‘plus’ in the question; she presented it as something ‘normal’ rather than a plus or an extraordinary exception. However, I find the relation between Tatar and Russian quite asymmetrical (and disproportionate). As the teacher explained they do not dedicate the same amount of hours to both languages since the entire educational process, including all subjects, is taught through the medium of Tatar. After eleven years in this mode pupils are not receiving a bilingual education, but rather a monolingual. Tatar education, with some Russian language instructions. According to this emphasis at the present time, Tatar language revival depends and is based on the demotion of Russian language, a reversal of the priorities, rather than a transformation of the principle and promotion of real bilingualism.

During all my time in Kazan I could observe in Tatar gymnásias and pro-Tatar environments and contexts, the idealisation and mythification of Tatar language; a romantic vision and approach to the meaning and significance of Tatar language. It was almost as if the recovery of the vernacular would blot out the past, with its discriminations and incongruities. Thus Tatar language was regularly presented as the unique ingredient, the special mechanism to reinforce ‘Tatarness’.

There is an interest and a desire to recover the ‘lost language’, something that ‘belongs’ to them. Now is the time to claim it, like an old buried treasure or a legacy. As one Russian language and literature teacher said:

‘I wish, they [pupils and parents] will know their mother tongue very well. (...) Our roots are here, we have to know our history, our culture, I think it is impossible without it. (...) I speak with parents in the vernacular - in Tatar language. They speak with me in Russian, but anyway I reply and ask them questions in Tatar, because they can

understand everything, but I would like them to begin to speak. And many have already started.' (Russian language and literature teacher)

Russian language and literature teacher wants pupils and parents to speak Tatar because of the symbolic meaning that is surrounding the notion of the vernacular. Edwards has observed that language is still commonly taken to be the central pillar of ethnic identity (in Billing 1997:14). 'Many analysts have claimed that language is a prime determinant of nationalist identity: those speaking the same language are liable to claim a sense of national bond. (..) The creation of a national hegemony often involves hegemony of language. It could not be difficult to construct a model of nationalism around the importance of speaking the same or different languages' (Billing 1997: 29).

There is no doubt that languages are some of the more concrete, visible, audible and palpable characteristics that support the notion of identities differentiation. 'Language has been regarded as a defining characteristic of a nationality, within the sphere of the Judeo-Christian tradition, since Biblical days' (Fishman 1973: 44). The fate of minority languages is intrinsic to the narratives of resistance and identities. '(...) the depiction of Gaelic as forcibly suppressed has an important moral place within renaissance accounts for if language is seen as the key site and symbol of a people's identity, then Gaels willingly learning English can only seem like a terrible mistake and an indication of severe alienation from their identity' (Macdonald 1997:48). It is not surprising then, that Tatar language revival was strongly emphasised and one of the priorities demanded from the government by Tatar nationalists at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s.

There is a constant idealisation and almost a mythical perception of the vernacular, presented quite often as something sacred. It is almost as if through the school they will rescue their vernacular and achieve their goal. Nevertheless from time to time, practical reasons are also cited.

'I am Tatar by *natsional'nost* (...) and nowadays there is a demand in society to know your mother tongue. And I would like our son to know Tatar better than I do, so he will be able to speak, to read, he will not be determined enough, this is the main reason. And in the future, politics...to lead the republic, the Ministry of Education is working in that direction, they are developing national cadres.' (Shamil's father)

Everything is presented almost as a simple mathematical equation, as a dream and an illusion, probably a self-justification to his choice and decision, a

reason why this parent opted (as did many others) for a more innovative gymnásia. He stressed a direct correlation between Tatar language and politics, assuming and anticipating that knowledge of Tatar language brings access to the political arena, not to any specific administrative position, but to the national elite. In fact it is quite a common idea in the school because everyone (pupils, teachers and parents) is conscious that it is a prestigious gymnásia supported by the State benefactor. The prestigiousness is obvious and there is no attempt to hide it; quite the reverse, everyone underlines the difference and sees it as an elitist and prestigious centre, something to be proud of.

‘The level is higher here because [education] in this gymnásia is more prestigious. There is a selection, they had to pass some tests, different subjects. (...) Actually the President Shamiev came to open the school, and in fact, he patted my son on the back...’ (Shamil’s father)

The word prestige and prestigious education¹⁶⁴ was voiced quite often by parents’, teachers’ and pupils’ and everyone seemed to be aware of the concept.¹⁶⁵

Everyone knows that there are explicit incentives because the current government is working insistently to promote Tatar language by offering financial premiums to employees.

‘Do you know what I think? I have the impression that lately prestige is growing, Tatar language is required, it wasn’t required much before, and we didn’t pay much attention to it. But anyway, a person should know his [her] mother tongue. And we knew it before, we used it at home. Even if we didn’t read literature [in Tatar], in any case we knew it – we listened to music, and went to the theatre. Theatres were always packed.’ (Tatar language teacher)

There is a general agreement among Tatar population that Tatar language has acquired more prestige and it is receiving political promotion and reinforcement, which is clearly manifested inside Tatar gymnásias.

Nailia was one girl whose experience followed the same pattern as most of the pupils. Until she was three years old she only spoke Tatar, but when she

¹⁶⁴ One Tatar language teacher that I spoke with also thinks that in the last few years Tatar gymnásias have become prestigious institutions and people are appreciating them much more.

¹⁶⁵ Lilia’s mother also mentioned that there are not many gymnásias as prestigious as this one and nor did she forget to mention that the President inaugurated the centre, which according to her was a significant gesture.

started to attend nursery school, she had to learn Russian. Today, she and her family speak both Tatar and Russian at home. Nailia is a fifteen year old who dreams of becoming a journalist, and she is already working in that direction. In this society they know that they will have to work especially hard if they want to achieve a little piece of the cake, and it is never too early to start. She writes some articles for a local youth paper 'Let's talk' (*davai pogovorim*). In order to be accepted at the journalism faculty, apart from very high exam results, they need to have at least five publications. She writes in Tatar not just because she wants to but for a more practical reason. In the Tatar department (Journalism Faculty) the competition is considerably lower; there are two applicants for each vacancy, whereas in the Russian department there are eight. Consequently it is much more difficult to be accepted by the Russian department. She is aware that with Tatar language it will be easier to succeed because it is still a small minority who have complete command of Tatar language.

Nailia can read in both languages, and she likes both Russian and Tatar writers, but Russian literature is closer to her. Even today, the youngest Tatar generations are very close to Russian culture, the culture that their parents have grown up with, the culture that they receive through the media, and in the street, something that is not easy to avoid.

'There is no difference to me in which language I speak. I can... speak, I can easily switch from Russian to Tatar, but I don't, for example, like to speak [Tatar] in a context where people don't understand Tatar. For example if a Russian person cannot understand Tatar, I don't like to speak only in Tatar, because it can embarrass the person, can't it?'
(Nailia)

It is a sign of respect and a good indicator of tolerance and appreciation. But she knows that the Russian population are not always going to make the effort to learn Tatar, and to some extent her respect (towards Russians who do not speak Tatar) reinforces their lack of interest in learning Tatar, creating a complicated dynamic.

Since the disintegration of the Soviet regime, Tatar language has become an ideological symbol, representative of a specific reading of Tatar history, burdened with different historical interpretations and cultural nuances. Because a language is not an empty category, its meaning as a whole is susceptible like any cultural 'creation' to being negotiated and (re)defined from

time to time. At a given time languages can become ideological symbols with different meanings and connotations constructed through the accumulation of experiences and interests. An ideological symbol used by specific groups which can try to achieve a new relocation. A process of revival, repossession and reclamation where the unity of the group plays an important role.

‘For example during Ramadan we celebrate *Kurban-bairam*¹⁶⁶, nobody has this, only here. All children and parents come, they bring their donations, they help, they... come here, it is like one family.’ (History teacher).

The reference to ‘family’ is to a metaphorical unity: one family, one school, one community, one people - the Tatar people. It is a family that shares pain and happiness. It is the belief in the family unit in its ‘traditional’ sense, a group of people with the same ancestors, people who live in the same place, who share the same language, who cook the same food and sing the same songs; a family that experiences the same suffering; a conception that consolidates their notion of uniqueness and communality.¹⁶⁷ Tatar language is a ‘real’ objective to be claimed like property or a possession that they are not prepared to renounce again. Strong emotions are invested in how people live and experience their language and culture.

‘I have a friend and he is Tatar, but his family do not speak any Tatar whatsoever. They consider themselves to be Tatars, but they don’t know Tatar language, and the same with Tatar culture, and this is like degradation. This is why it is necessary to study Tatar language, to preserve our culture.’ (Bulat)

Concepts like degradation and preservation are only capable of meaning in relation to something else, having intrinsically comparative connotations. Degradation implies humiliating, debasing or being degraded in

¹⁶⁶ *Kuiran Bairam* is the most significant Muslim holiday. It is a holiday of sacrifice in memory of the Prophet Ibrahim’s willingness sacrifice his son for the sake of Allah. Each Muslim has to bring a sacrifice, preferably an animal with hooves and invite someone to eat this animal’s meat.

¹⁶⁷ ‘The members of an ethnic community must be made to feel, not only that they form a single ‘super family’, but that their historic community is unique, that they possess what Max Weber called ‘irreplaceable cultural values’ that their heritage must be preserved against inner corruption and external control, and that the community has a sacred duty to extend its culture values to outsiders’ (Smith 1996:189).

rank, status or condition, in relation to something in a superior position. The superior is usually associated with 'the good', and the inferior with 'the bad'. Similarly with preservation, which also demands something that you have to be defended or protected from, usually preservation against destruction or domination. In this case, Bulat refers to Tatar 'language' and Tatar 'culture' as parallel elements which emanate from each other. A stronger culture or language, i.e. Russian can destroy them. Consequently Tatar language and culture are presented as being in a constant state of turbulence, trying to prove themselves and achieve the 'position' that they deserve. The Tatar people's future, the vernacular and Tatar gymnásias, are presented as a triad, three mutually dependent elements. The notion of the future emerges as the main justification and reason why there is a need for Tatar gymnásias, Tatar language and Tatar people. More precisely it is the concrete future of the Tatar people. 'If we don't know our past, who we were before, we will not build a future, this is why I think it is important and necessary for us' (Gulnara). Furthermore, notions of the past and the present are (re)presented with a sense of unfairness, inequality and imposition. Through constant repetition and insistence on unjust relations, 'why if Tatars speak Russian, do Russians not speak Tatar?' There are unceasing references to the unbalanced dynamics. The following teacher's statement was very emphatic.

'All their life they are used to knowing only their own language. They... didn't need [Tatar]. But we had to learn Russian. So if you leave your village, you need to know Russian. Russian was everybody's language, this is why we studied Russian. But what for? We all knew, at least a bit, all people knew some Russian. So why should they make their life more complicated? They do not want to cause difficulties for themselves. They don't want to.[Russians do not want to learn Tatar]. Why extra hassle? They don't want complications - that's just the trouble. But we had to... we learned it...we had to, but they didn't need to.' (Tatar history teacher)

Throughout the centuries that the Tatar and Russian populations have lived together there have always been asymmetrical relations in terms of culture and language. It is difficult to say that there was a 'planned' and 'calculated' repression of Tatar. It would probably be more accurate to portray it as a gradual displacement without regard to the wishes of the Tatar population. In general terms, there was a common disregard for and disrespect shown toward Tatar culture and language. Since the Russian population never demonstrated an interest in learning or knowing Tatar it never had equal status.

The Russian population never had the need to learn any other language in order to get access to university, to succeed in their careers, or to obtain a decent room in a big city. If the population wanted to speak Tatar, there was no objection as long as it was in their villages and their homes. Thus Tatar language became associated with parochialism and provincialism. In time, the notion that Tatar was inferior became accepted and internalised by the Tatar people themselves.

Lilia's mother wanted her children to study only in Tatar because she (and her husband) had to study in both Russian and in Tatar, and she considered that it is much more difficult to be between two languages. She is from a Tatar village but she studied in a Russian school, and she went to a Tatar school only in the last two years (ninth and tenth school years), which she found very difficult. When she was at university everything was in Russian again, no Tatar at all.

'You know, this gymnásia's purpose, how to say it to you, nowadays it is not only this gymnásia's purpose but also the republic's. It is to ensure that children will obtain more of Tatar language. (...) there are more Tatars here in our Tatarstan so Tatars will not forget their mother tongue. This is what I think (...) Anyway, they want to show themselves, that this gymnásia can be the first one, Tatar gymnásia can be the best one, and not necessarily it will be a Russian one. This is how it is. And I like how my children speak, in authentic Tatar. And even some words, they say such words that I never heard in my life, it is very interesting. Sometimes I ask them- what is it? - But mum, aren't you Tatar? I say- I don't know, I never heard it before.' (Lilia's mother)

According to Sagitova ¹⁶⁸ and Kondrashov (2000:35) there is a noticeable inferiority complex amongst the Tatar population as a result of the socio- political asymmetrical relations and class distribution between Tatars and Russians. Only now, the 'sleeping beauty' has started to polish and tune its voice. Now Tatars have to show that they are not "inferior" and that they can be even "superior". It is not a question of choosing one language and renouncing the other, because they are aware that they need to know Russian for practical reasons.

There are a significant number of reasons why people might want to study different languages, oscillating between utilitarian to altruistic motives,

¹⁶⁸ Interview March 1998.

but most of the Russian population do not exhibit any of them in relation to Tatar language. There is no practical reason, since everything is in Russian, and everyone is able to speak Russian, removing the need to learn Tatar. But at the time when Russian was developing into an international language as well as the language of the majority, people could see no point in studying something that within a short period of time, was expected to become obsolete and archaic.

The same issue can be examined in reverse: would the Tatar population learn Russian if they did not need it? This is clearly an important question that helps to interpret the nature of bilingualism in Tatarstan.

Part of the problem concerns the necessity or lack of necessity. Since it can be considered 'normal' that people try to learn a language, a second language, when they consider it to be necessary and useful. Necessity can be defined in different ways, according to pragmatic or completely idealistic reasons, but always depending on personal need or peer (or family) pressure. Even in the case of peer or family pressure it becomes ultimately a 'personal need', since we convince ourselves that it is necessary for certain reasons. So what is the need for Tatar language among Russian people? Cultural respect does not appear or emerge as a convincing or even conceivable reason.

Guzel is a very interesting sixteen year old girl who I really enjoyed talking to, and with whom I also spent some time outside the school. Her parents were originally from a Tatar village, (according to her, 'they are country people') but she feels very proud of them because they have achieved a lot in life. Her father became a deputy of the Supreme Soviet, and as his daughter defined him, 'he is a famous writer, an excellent politician'. And her mother teaches Tatar language and literature at several faculties. Her grandfather is also (her description) 'a well-known person' and used to be the Head of a Collective Farm (*Kolkhoz*).¹⁶⁹ It would be true to say that Guzel belongs to a Tatar intelligentsia family; they only speak Tatar at home, and her father is an active promoter of Tatar culture and language. She says: 'my father is a very nationalistic person'. A year ago Guzel spent one month in New York visiting a Tatar community that lives there, people whose parents or

¹⁶⁹ She invited me once for lunch, with some other girls from the class, and when we arrived at the restaurant I realised that they only opened for us (seven people), because Guzel's father was one of the owners of the place.

grandparents emigrated at the beginning of the century after the Revolution, the Tatar Diaspora. On one occasion that I saw her, she was back from a summer spent in England, and she had a wonderful time, an experience that most children in Kazan definitely cannot afford.

One day we went to the conservatory to a concert and I was quite impressed with the musical knowledge displayed by Guzel and Elmira, her school friend. They organised a quick impromptu tour inside the conservatory building explaining every single detail about the building to me. They were both students at a music school, Elmira playing the violin and Guzel the piano. (Consistent with the established Soviet tradition where it was almost obligatory for children to play a musical instrument.) They knew all the words and melodies and before each piece they explained everything to me about the composers (including Strauss, Mozart and some Tatar composers), including the most notorious biographical details. When the orchestra began playing Tatar compositions, both girls instantly recognised what they were playing, all the popular adaptations with their different nuances. I could feel how excited they were, explaining and presenting Tatar music to me, asking every three seconds whether I liked it or not, gesticulating a lot. They were trying to convey and share with me not just a feeling for nice music, but what they considered to be 'their' music.

Both girls are from very pro-national households, easily capable of expressing very strong opinions about Tatar language and culture, as well as making negative and derogatory comments about Russian people. However, they do not seem to be anchored in a static notion of tradition. Looking at how they dress, talk, and behave, they do not give an impression of strong ethnonational feelings. It is not cultural arrogance, it is rather a question of admiration for Tatar culture. They do not reflect the stereotypical image of the quiet, submissive and obedient Tatar girl. They have strong opinions, they do not wear austere clothes, they are from quite wealthy families, they wear rather fashionable clothes. Both girls have been abroad more than once and they dress according to Western standards. They like pop music, and when they have the opportunity they also like to go to the disco, like any other teenager. They like Tatar language and culture, which they know very well, following the traditions and celebrating the main festivities, but they are the new *pro-Tatar generation*. They are not stuck in the past, they are curious about the future, they are bilingual in Tatar and Russian, but they also speak English. Elmira is

thinking of learning German and Guzel French and they would like to study abroad for a couple of years. They can easily talk about politics, literature or music, and they are quite familiar with Russian literature. They like to go to McDonalds and they enjoy parties; but they do not want to get married to a Russian person and they will never, under any circumstances, define themselves as Russians. They reproach Russian people for the present state of Tatar culture, and in that sense, there is no *amnesty* for Russian people.

‘Perhaps Russians feel superior...I mean to Tatars - they...so what do they want to study an inferior’s language for?... For example imagine, we Tatars go somewhere - to the theatre or disco, or to a Russian school to show our concert, they immediately will say [Russians]: Oh, these Tatars, from a Tatar gymnásia - it is very uncomfortable, and they live in Tatarstan, they have no right to talk like that Firstly, it perhaps depends on the current youth, their parents, that they are able to educate their children in such a way... And many Tatars are following Russian psychology, they have relatives, I am telling you, and there are many mixed marriages. Plus, Tatar people are not very persistent people, but I cannot say that Muslims are not determined, it is the opposite, - they have firmness of purpose, imagine if we take the example of Chechnya , which is separated from Russia, they are very persistent, with self-assurance.’¹⁷⁰
(Guzel)

It is interesting that Guzel talked about the superiority complex that Russians have, and by implication, we can assume, Tatars’ inferiority ¹⁷¹. A sense of inferiority which should be considered as the result to the unbalanced relations that were established between Russian and non-Russian population. A process of assimilation, where the Tatar population internalised Russian “superiority”, and consequently their “inferiority”. A sense of exclusiveness that was reinforced during the communist regime and which operated from an institutional, symbolic and emotional level. As it was stressed in Chapter 2, the process of urbanisation ¹⁷² or the passage from rural to urban (Schöpflin 2000: 21) or the trauma of urbanisation (ibid:154) and the communist installation, were accompanied by the Tatar population’s acceptance of their “inferior” or

¹⁷⁰ Note that Guzel got a bit confused, because Chechnya is trying to be, but has not achieved separation from the Russian Federation.

¹⁷¹ Kondrashov (2000) and Sagitova (interview March 1998) had referred to this inferiority complex. There is a substantial amount of literature in social psychology on this subject, however, in this work I used the concept in relation to the dynamics of exclusion and marginalisation practised against the non-Russian population that were addressed in Chapter 2.

¹⁷² See Chapter 2.

“secondary” position. The relationship between the Tatar sense of inferiority and the Russian aim of superiority is directly affecting the current tendency for national revival.

Guzel also expressed the inseparable and direct correlation between Tatarstan and Tatars, almost assuming that Tatarstan belongs to Tatars. Consequently, if you live in Tatarstan you should by definition respect Tatars.

But Guzel does not talk about general and genuine respect that people deserve, regardless of ethnic categorisation. When I asked Guzel what is the best policy for preserving Tatar language, her answer was:

‘Firstly, it is necessary... From childhood to isolate children from Russians. I mean Tatars. And after that, when children are growing up, they will know it by themselves, they will start to study Russian. So there is no need to live with Russians from an early age. To raise our culture, Tatar language, it is necessary to open more Tatar gymnásias, there are only a few at the moment, and this is why they do not excel themselves, with the exception of our gymnásias, of course. This is why there is no tendency among people to choose Tatar gymnásias. And these parents who do not force their children to learn Tatar language, they are just people that do not think about themselves, about their *natsional'nost*... So in general, to open Tatar nurseries, and schools.’ (Guzel)

In Guzel’s words we can observe that the idea of social exclusion or ethnic isolation has not only survived, but is even strongly endorsed by the young generation. Instead of promoting Tatar language and culture as a means of understanding, and cultural integration in a predominantly Russian cultural context, the prevailing rhetoric is the rhetoric of discrimination, favouritism and intolerance. It mirrors the problem rather than increases the popular interest in Tatar language through different mechanisms, reinforcing and changing the approach to Tatar language in the schools, initiating evening courses for the older generation, promoting equality and mutual respect between different cultures and languages. Incorporating differences rather than negating and denying them. Negative and destructive attitudes of segregation and separation seem prevalent. Russian language continues to be perceived as dominant so it will always be learned and hopes for Tatar language are relegated to Tatar nurseries and gymnásias, the only mechanisms for promoting Tatar language, centres exclusively for Tatar people.

In spite of the fact that almost ten years ago Tatar and Russian languages were declared the two official languages in Tatarstan, Tatar people do not seem optimistic about the situation.

‘If in the family the mother is Tatar and the father Russian, then the son on very rare occasions will speak Tatar. I don’t know why, but Russian is always dominant. And they will also give him a Russian name.’ (Renat)

So when I asked: ‘But do you want them to speak Tatar?’ the immediate answer was:

‘It is necessary.... How can... I am a patriot of my *rodina* [homeland] (...) I think the more languages you know, the better, then your head works better (...) It is possible to say that the more complicated the language is, the more intelligent its people are. You know, most scientists are Germans, Austrians, Swiss, and many Russians.’ (Renat)

Then I asked him in which position or level Tatar language would be according to this principle? To which he replied: ‘Tatar language I suppose isn’t very difficult, it is quite simple, but it is our mother tongue, we need to study it’. And to my spontaneous question what for? I received a rather short answer: ‘Because I suppose it is part of patriotism’.

Supplementary to the notion of *natsiia*, *culture*, *traditions* and *ancestors*, Renat introduced effortlessly and easily the final and complementary category to the previous set already accumulated; the notion of *patriotism*. Like Siamese twins, language and patriotism are locked together. It is beyond dispute because the mother tongue is not about difficulty or development, intelligence or capacities, it is rather a question of ‘patriotism’ a word too easily used in the school environment.¹⁷³

Regardless of the prevailing optimism and belief in the new period that Tatar language and culture is entering, there are also certain manifestations of uncertainty and insecurity. There is recognition that it is not an easy option and that external pressures could lead to failure. For instance, it is striking that when I asked Nadir what he thinks will happen to the gymnásia in ten years’ time he unexpectedly said:

‘This gymnásia was a specialised centre in languages from the beginning, and I am not very good with languages, so I think that if this gymnásia were to specialise in mathematics or something else, perhaps it would be better. Even if it was in Russian. Because I think I will go to KISN [University] and I will need algebra and geometry. (...) I don’t know, but

¹⁷³ The notion of patriotism is examined separately at the end of this chapter.

now I am not giving much attention to languages, I don't have this interest... I want to do geometry.' (Nadir)

Only a year before he is due to graduate from school, he is beginning to have doubts about the centre, more pragmatic questions are emerging and it is not enough just to be amongst Tatars. At the present time, when he is thinking about his future and access to the university, mathematics seems to be more important than having Tatar teachers and Tatar friends, as he maintained at the beginning. More practical and utilitarian interests, like how to get access to the university of his choice, are more pressing. But Nadir is not the only one who is expressing his doubts and insecurities about the future.

'You know, for example I tell my children that they should also not forget Russian, they also have to know it well. You know, today is for example Tatar language, but tomorrow- Russian language again. They have to know both languages. Because anyway there are many Russians living here in Tatarstan, the communication is anyway, in Tatar and in Russian. This is the reason why they should not forget that language, to know it properly.' (Lilia's mother)

At the present time there is still a high level of uncertainty and unpredictability, and Lilia's mother knows that things can easily change again, they are accustomed to the instability and they have learned to live with this attitude. They have to keep all options open because they cannot take the risk of renouncing Russian language.

'(...) Of course what worries me is the unstable political situation, and if pupils when they graduate from this gymnásia will find themselves in this life, if they will be able to receive higher education and if they will be in demand. This is what really worries me (...).' (Liaisán's mother)

Tatar gymnásias are not only immature centres, (no more than ten years old), but they are also innovative centres that strongly depend on the political relationship between the republic and the central government. More broadly the situation in the republic as a whole depends directly on its relationship with Moscow. Lilia's mother is very proud that her children are studying in a Tatar gymnásia and they know their mother tongue, but sometimes second thoughts appear and the doubts invade.

'Now and then I think - I chose a Tatar gymnásia, my desire, so they will study in Tatar, but later on [she thinks] - this language it will be useless.

It can happen (...). This is what we want, because we live in Tatarstan we want to preserve our language, we want it to live, to exist, to know it our children and their children, great-grandchildren, so everyone will know it. But then perhaps we will have such a government - it will be repressed again, only in Russian again, our language will disappear, it will disappear, and everything will be in Russian or in some other language. We don't know what is going to happen in the future. We wish, of course that Tatar language will be everywhere, so it will be useful at the university and at work, and they will be able to communicate here in Tatar language, it will be good. But this is only going to happen in the Republic of Tatarstan, she would not communicate in Tatar language further from here [Tatarstan]. If for example she goes to another republic she would not speak Tatar. They will have one language – Russian, she will communicate in Russian. So Tatar language will be only for herself, she will be the only one who will know it.' (Lilia's mother)

Lilia's mother knows that there is not much space for Tatar language outside Tatarstan, and they are investing time and effort in something without knowing whether it will be ultimately useful. But she continues to insist; 'perhaps it will be only [useful] for her'. She thinks that there are new patterns of involvement, with some Russians trying to learn Tatar and some not. She never had problems in Kazan during the Soviet period because she knew Russian, but the situation would be different if she did not speak Russian. For example according to Liaisan's mother, the Russian population (at least where she works) is quite positive about Tatar language and nobody sees a negative side in knowing two languages. But are Russians studying Tatar?

5.4 Reinforcing the 'Others' and creating the 'We'

'For a person to develop a self-identity, he or she must generate discourses of both difference and similarity and must reject and embrace specific identities. The external Other should be considered as a range of positions within a system of difference' (Riggins 1997:4).

'The national culture is a repository, inter-alia, of classificatory systems. It allows "us" to define ourselves against "them" understood as those beyond the boundaries of the nation' (Schlesinger 1991: 174).

Recently, considerable attention has been devoted in sociology, anthropology, political science, geography, and the social sciences in general, to the notion of 'Otherness' and the 'Other'; concepts of 'inclusion' and 'exclusion', the 'outsider' and 'insider'. At the present time it is almost axiomatic that research into ethnicity, migration, racial conflicts, class

antagonism, gender distinction and national policies, cannot be adequately addressed without considering the notion of the 'Other';¹⁷⁴ understanding that the construction of the self is inseparable and non-detachable from the image of the 'Other'.

The plural 'Others', as Riggins (1997) stressed, is perhaps a more appropriate category than the singular 'Other'. He notes that 'several authors prefer the plural form, Others, because it conveys the notion that the Self in its discourses of identity is continually negotiating several identities simultaneously' (Riggins 1997:4). Multitudes of 'Others' perform and 'consolidate' our social lives. Any notions of identity are an amalgam of 'Others', whether anonymous and undefined or well defined and presented. The representations of 'Others' are related with classificatory systems, categorisations and demarcations. Because 'to institute, to give a social definition, an identity, is also to impose boundaries' (Bourdieu 1991: 120). To identify what is included and what is excluded from the notion or category that we are referring to.

'The transactions during which ethnicity is produced and reproduced have two complementary characters. First, there is internal definition: actors, whether as individuals or in groups, define their own identity. Second, there is external definition, the definition of the identity of other people' (Jenkins 1997: 80).

Both, internal and external definitions are absolutely determinant in the process of identities (re)making. Using Fenton's words 'the social process of making ethnicity significant is part of a constant interplay. This is an interplay between those who belong to 'us', and those who look on 'them'' (1999: 64). Rhetoric of the 'Other' begins to be incorporated in discourse at a very early age, from the moment we start to understand the words that apply to our day-to-day interaction. Construction of 'Others', as I will try to illustrate, is an integral part of the family and the school environment, producing collective images, stereotypes and simple myths about other groups that are perceived as particularly different, and often 'worse'.

In Tatar gymnásias, the 'Others' are not abstract or generic but rather known and named 'Others'; Russian girls and Russian boys, Russian women

¹⁷⁴ The relevance of the 'Other' in the process of identification has already been underlined in Chapter 1.

and Russian men who are presented as the ‘outsiders’, the historical enemy. In a rather disrespectful manner and pejorative way Tatar pupils and teachers talk about their neighbours without much hesitation. Russians are ‘negatively’ defined: ‘Russian schools are undisciplined, badly organised, most of the pupils have police records, and almost all smoke and take drugs’. These pejorative categorisations construct and reinforce the ‘we’ and the ‘they’ in a rhetoric of Othering (Riggins 1997). It represents a mechanism of ‘auto-defence’ and ‘auto-justification’ of their centre, (a symbol of the Tatar family), and their choices and actions.

‘Unified’ cultures are those which have told themselves the right kind of story, and have the power to impose it on listeners. Identity becomes an effective story which people tell themselves but one which is written across differences’ (McCrone 1998:35).

In this section I will try to illustrate this process in three different ways through three ‘sphere-questions’ in which I observe a dichotomous attitude in terms of ‘we’ and ‘they’, or the ‘Others’. The distinction applies to the discourse of teachers as well as pupils. The first question is: who is your favourite writer? The second is: what is the difference between this school and other schools? And the third question is: which is your favourite festivity? The answers convey a significant impression of how pupils and teachers adopt a rather dichotomous way of thinking, at least, in relation to these topics.

Nevertheless, it was possible to detect in some instances of pupils’ and teachers’ answers simultaneous indications of what I have called *processes of transgression*¹⁷⁵. There are opinions and attitudes that cannot easily be classified or organised into categories or notions of ‘Russians’, ‘Tatars’ or ‘Soviets’. There are attitudes, ways of thinking and behaving that go beyond any fixed notion of what it is to be Tatar, Russian or Soviet; confirming Maffesoli’s view that ‘our daily existence is fragmentary and polysemic’ (1996a: 141). People’s everyday lives do not always correspond precisely with the dominant political paradigm or ideology.

Through the different conversations¹⁷⁶ it was possible to see that pupils

¹⁷⁵ See Chapter 1.

¹⁷⁶ As I already indicated in the methodology chapter, I will talk in terms of ‘conversations’ rather than ‘interviews’, because at the end of our interaction, pupils and teachers were also asking me different questions, and consequently both parties were equally involved in the process.

in Tatar gymnásias had a strong ‘mental’ division between Tatar and non-Tatar, and more precisely Tatar/Russian. They revealed a *dichotomous* way of thinking that emerged in specific discussions, showing to what extent the division Tatar/Russian is embedded, learned from an early age. The dichotomy was particularly noticeable for example when I asked them the question who is your favourite writer? Every Tatar gymnásia pupil responded with the following question: ‘Tatar or Russian?’ The response does not really answer the question, since a favourite writer is a favourite writer, regardless of whether (s)he is Tatar or Russian, female or male, white or non-white. On some occasions I had the impression that pupils used little ‘boxes’ with the corresponding answer inside, but always with a clear distinction between the Tatar and the Russian ‘box’.

When I asked Guzel who was her favourite writer, the first reaction was to ask: ‘Tatar?’ To what I replied: ‘I don’t know....’ Then she continued:

‘Perhaps, firstly - Gumer Vashirov ...amongst ours - Aksakal, he is ninety years old. They [both] write very realistically, they write the truth, what they think and what it is... He is a very experienced person, [Aksakal], he saw a lot, perhaps... because I spoke with him. But do you mean among contemporary writers?’ (Guzel)¹⁷⁷

Later on, during our conversation, she also mentioned Dostoevskii, because, in her words ‘He is a gentle psychologist’. Subsequently she also mentioned Tiutchev; ‘I read Tiutchev for my soul, to calm down. He is a great Russian poet, who wrote quite a lot about the environment.’ (I also should add that he is not an easy poet to read, especially for a teenager!)

All the time I have the sensation that these pupils will never cease to surprise me, because of how well qualified they are, and their cultural level. It is probably difficult to determine what is the precise reason for that. In Guzel’s case she comes from an intellectual family, but perhaps it is because of the high standard of education in the gymnásia or because of the Soviet influence.¹⁷⁸ Or Guzel is maybe simply repeating what she hears at home.

¹⁷⁷ It is relevant to remember that Guzel’s father is a famous Tatar writer, very nationalistic, according to her, because apart from asking if I was referring to a Tatar writer or not (as most people did) she went into concrete details with each author, presenting and explaining each of them. Whereas in most cases, the answers were rather general.

¹⁷⁸ For some general references about Soviet education look at Bereday, Brickman and Read, eds. 1960.

There are signs that she is the daughter of a writer, since she was the only one who voiced such an opinion of Dostoevskii being a 'gentle psychologist'. However, like the rest of the pupils, she also made the distinction between Tatar and Russian, and actually her first reaction was to mention a Tatar

writer ¹⁷⁹. All the pupils wanted to know if I was referring to a Russian or Tatar writer:

'Writers? Russians or Tatars? I don't even know who to mention. Amongst poets, I like Gabdulla Tukai, and Russian poem writers' - Pushkin and Esenin.' (Liaisan)

Also when I asked Zulfiya and Alfiya about their favourite writer, they also immediately asked: 'Tatar? Russian?' Albina she also replied: 'Tatar?' And when I asked Renat the response was: 'National writer, or in general?'

It is important to stress that at the beginning of this research, when I was planning the questions that I would try and ask pupils, I thought about their favourite writers, because with this question I was expecting to see if they were more familiar with Tatar or Russian literature. But I have to admit that I never imagined that they would re-ask the question, wanting to specify if I was referring to Tatar or Russian writers because it touches on something that is a significant difference for them.

There is no doubt that they all know both Russian and Tatar writers, through studying Tatar and Russian literature. But I am still intrigued why they should all want to clarify this question? Is it an auto-reflex, or spontaneous question that emerges without much thought? To what extent is this distinction embedded in their lives? Since without exception all the pupils from Tatar gymnásias tried to clarify the distinction, it probably shows that this tendency to distinguish and divide is not a random or accidental reaction but rather something deeply embedded in their perception and understanding. However, as we will see later, it is not always so simple to make a demarcation. Pupils occasionally jump from one side to the other, or straddle the boundary, or in an even more complicated manoeuvre, manage to 'walk' in the middle, incorporating elements from both sides.

The second area in which I could also observe a strong Tatar/Russian distinction, without any prompting on my part, was in response to the question

¹⁷⁹ At the time when I talked with her, she was reading Tolstoi's 'War and Peace'.

relating to the difference between this school and other schools. They immediately assumed that when I asked about other schools I was talking about Russian schools, whereas I only said 'other schools'. To some extent it is understandable since most of the schools in Tatarstan and Kazan are Russian, the main language is Russian, and the cultural support is also Russian. But nevertheless there are English, French, Tatar and German gymnásias. There are also Turkish lýcéums in Kazan. They are a minority in relation to the number of Russian schools, but they are also an option. In spite of that, a hundred per cent of pupils and teachers referred to Russian schools, as if in comparison to 'their' Tatar gymnásia the only alternative was the Russian school. Nobody asked me to clarify what schools I was talking about. Interestingly enough, during all these conversations, there was not even one positive reaction or opinion about Russian schools. Russian schools and pupils were invariably associated with 'uncivilised', 'badly educated', 'undisciplined', 'hooligans' and 'drug addicts'.

Alfiya for example, stressed that:

'In here, I think, even our culture of communication... the school is more civilised, I think. When you meet... from a normal Russian school, they are like, you know? Children in there are like street delinquents. They are, they even spit in the street, and it's so uncivilised. I think that our school is more civilised.' (Alfiya)

Todorov identifies three dimensions of the relationship between the Self and Other, and one of them is what the author called, *value judgments*¹⁸⁰; the Other can be considered good or bad, inferior or equal to the Self (in Riggins 1997:5). In this case it was possible to identify a clear value judgment, in terms of inferiority and badness.

'I don't know, I went to a school, where my friend is studying, she changed to this new school. Oh, I came to their class: the teacher is standing up, a horrible noise inside... pupils burst into the classroom. Anyway, my friend started to show me each classroom. Incredible disorder everywhere, so vile, I don't know how you can study in this school? OK, I went into the toilet, syringe, matches, some, I don't know, what else? Smoking, it smelled of smoke or something else. Oh, I immediately said: Can we Lil' just leave? She says: Yes, I am already used to it, at the beginning I also felt so vile. I think that in our school more civilised pupils study.' (Albina)

¹⁸⁰ The other two are b) social distance and c) knowledge.

Something that I noticed quite often in gymnásia No.2 was a tendency for pupils to perceive themselves as different, special, almost 'unique'; not only different from non-Tatar schools, but also from other Tatar gymnásias. This place was continuously presented as exceptional and exclusive, an idea that pupils and teachers reinforced. The gymnásia was a 'dignified' or a 'holy' place with nothing in common with the rest of the city; a real island in the middle of the ocean.

In one of the conversations that I had with Elmira and Mariam, at some point in the conversation I started to ask them: if we compare this school with other schools in Kazan... And before I had finished the question even, Elmira said: 'in relation to Russian schools?' It is true that most of the schools in Kazan are Russian schools. However, I had the impression that they were only too accustomed to comparing their school, a Tatar school, with 'other', that is to say Russian schools. They easily resort to a simplification and stereotypical picture.

'I can feel it, yes, I can feel it. Do you know what I feel? (...) Children of Tatar *natsional'nost*, from Tatar families, they are, you know, how to say it, you can immediately see the good manners, respect for older people; it is possible to say, in relation to their behaviour that there is an immediate difference... But the rest, children are children. All the children are the same. But in this, I can see more propriety; they are more proper - this is what. It is perhaps deposited in our *natsiia*, like in the *natsiia*, it was already part of the traditions, and this is how it comes - good manners. (...) In our, ... Here it is less likely, that someone will say something negative about somebody else, less than in Russian *natsional'nost*.'¹⁸¹ (Zulfiya, history teacher)

The lexicon that teachers use does not do much to qualify their tendency to discriminate. The difference is clearly and openly expressed without much vacillation or concern. It goes further than a difference between schools; it is presented more as a difference in terms of *natsiia*. There is constant repetition of rhetorical clichés, like slogans or choruses; 'we are different', 'we are not like them' or 'we are much more civilised'. These are not mere words, they are incorporated as 'meanings' deliberately transmitted inside the school environment. Because 'the social world is also will and

¹⁸¹ Russian notion for *nationality*; different from Western understanding of nationality.

representation, and to exist socially means also to be perceived, and perceived as distinct' (Bourdieu 1991: 224).

One of the longest conversations that I had in gymnásia No.2, was with a history teacher who has been working in this centre for the last fourteen years. As in other conversations, I received the same 'presentation' of this school and Tatar people.

'On people, the team,...the environment, - In here it is a purely Tatar environment. And this is quite a lot, quite a lot. This is why we are trying to stay here, don't leave, we are all trying. English teachers refer with such respect to older teachers, there is not such boorishness as in Russian schools. (...)The fact that we have such an environment, purely Tatar environment, - it is like one family.' (History teacher)

In this case she is not only presenting the 'positive' elements of the school; she is strongly defending and presenting this school as a 'positive' example of cultural segregation. Not one person expressed any doubts or uncertainty about the future impact that a mono-cultural and mono-ethnic environment might have on pupils' perceptions and opinions, or how this 'Tatar' environment might affect them when they start university and enter a rather more diverse 'reality'. Open rhetoric of discrimination does not seem to be either 'incorrect' or 'inappropriate'. Paradoxically, they will all say that they have very good relations with Russian people; however, they think they are 'better'.

A complex differential institutional structure has been developed in Tatarstan in the last ten years. There is a department in the Ministry for Education specialising in National education, which includes inspectors, coordinators, permanent seminars and other events. Currently there are seminars exclusively for Tatar gymnásias, and Olympiads only for Tatar gymnásias. My experience illustrates that pupils and teachers do not only feel 'different', they also have the need to show and demonstrate to the Russian 'world' that they are not only different but quite often, even 'better'.

Some teachers are more forthright in their positions; to them the explanation of why Tatar gymnásias are, in their words 'better', is because there are only Tatar pupils and this alone provides enough grounds for the difference. Everyone stressed the contrast between Tatar gymnásias and Russian schools, everyone indicated the 'marvel' of Tatar centres. However, nobody acknowledged the fact that Tatar gymnásias today should also be

considered different because they are experiencing quite privileged conditions in Kazan, as they benefit from more financial support than normal schools and have more resources. However, only two people acknowledged that the number of pupils is much lower and that this had positive implications for teachers and pupils. In contrast to the previous regime, Tatar gymnásias are currently well protected and sponsored by the republic's authorities. This view does find expression outside the school system, for example Karimovna, an ethnographer from the Institute for Historical Studies of Tatarstan, gave a clear indication when I spoke with her in 1998 why in Kazan there are certainly a small number of Tatar gymnásias with a genuinely distinctive atmosphere. To begin with, pupils there are strictly selected, they do not accept just 'any child'; secondly, their parents want their children to obtain not only a good standard of education, but an education in Tatar language, and an education in Tatar culture. They are elite centres, with a good "sieve" where the 'big' ones are caught, and the rest go to other schools. In her words, probably if you tried to organise the same conditions for a Russian school, you would also get an excellent Russian school. Consequently they create what she called 'ideal gymnásias', with a small number of pupils, which then produces an idealised and stereotypical image of these centres. From Karimovna's point of view, when people say that 'Tatars are better', it is a simple myth, an idealisation of past memory.

'Idealisation and mythification that is happening amongst the Tatar intelligentsia, because they observe these centres, and immediately assume that because they are Tatar [pupils] this is why everything is so good. But if you try to select in the same way Russians through a sieve, it will be also very good. There is a big difference between thirteen pupils in a classroom or forty.' (Karimovna)

I would conclude that the permanent accentuation of their 'difference', 'uniqueness' and 'exclusiveness', and consequently Russian schools 'inferiority', should be regarded as the predominant way of thinking in Tatar gymnásias.

One of the history teachers from gymnásia No.16 had many years of experience teaching, first in a Russian school then for the last ten years in a Tatar gymnásia. According to her, the main difference between these two types of centre are:

‘(...) Firstly, in most of the cases, the difference with the Russians pupils is that Tatars are more used to education, most of them, I will not say that all of them, but most of them are more... At the same time, I would like to say that they should be more confident, more assured and will have the opportunity to express their opinion as in these Russian schools. Children cannot say anything; for example they are, our children, there is a proportion, not very many, of children who are embarrassed (...) Yes, they have a complex, but it has been acquired later on, nowadays they take part, they absorb a kind of subculture ... and television is educating them, not in the best way... is making them stronger. And it was possible to detect that during the first years, and always our teachers, who had some experience of teaching in Russian schools they say, that anyway, our children are more correct, there are no street boys amongst them, and there are no such gangs as there are in Kazan. There is no element of such children that will break the law, there are none, in this sense, there is a difference between pupils. But children are children, and they like to have fun, so I don't see such a difference anymore.’ (History teacher)

Although in this case she did not only say that Tatars are more educated, more disciplined, as most of her colleagues or pupils did, she indicated that ‘they should be more confident’; maybe because Tatars are shy, or they are not used to talking in public, maybe because with the constant reinforcement of discipline, pupils are ashamed of expressing their opinion. Or perhaps she is just indicating (as did another teacher) that it is more a ‘cultural’ characteristic. Many people think that Tatars are less ‘certain’ about themselves and that they have an inferiority complex in relation to the Russian people - a complex that according to the history teacher is changing and disappearing as a consequence of cultural fusion.

One Tatar language and literature teacher described the main difference between her school and other schools in Kazan in the following way:

‘Do you know, the difference, I assume, ... in children, our children are good. Our people are very calm, hard workers... and in human relations, they are more developed, and you can notice that amongst children. I was invited to work in a Russian school, to the school where my children study, for many years they have been inviting me, but somehow... I am sorry for my pupils, my school... and our team is very good- everyone is Tatar-... and the relationships are completely different. They show much more respect for the older people, they protect them. I don't see such things in Russians. Here,- yes, it seems, it is already rooted... with traditions... Tatar people. It seems it's such a people. I really like that.’ (Tatar language and literature teacher)

Throughout these constant reiterations, probably one of the most relevant ‘readings’ of the relationship that has been presented between Tatar and Russian schools, is the ability to reduce rather complex categories. In the

words of pupils and teachers, Tatar schools are a reflection and an image of the Tatar people, and Russian schools of the Russian people.

According to the Tatar language and literature teacher, the reason why pupils in Tatar gymnásias do not smoke, for example, and do not behave as badly as Russian pupils is:

‘you know, I will say, that there isn’t such a discipline that someone is forcing, and telling them off. They don’t tend to do that. Only... rarely some, I think. Nowadays it is not a secret, and drug addicts, and everything... but thank God, it isn’t like that in here. We don’t have anyone with antecedents, there is not even one case. But in other schools they have plenty of them, in each class. We don’t have even one. Our children are like that, they are Tatars – this *natsiia* is like that, I think. We don’t have such things. When others surround them, they get stronger, they take some characteristics from them; this is what happens. But when there is a pure Tatar school- there are no things like these.’
(Tatar language and literature teacher)

Once again, here is an extremely strong sentiment openly expressed; she is quite clearly stressing the positive side of segregation. The good thing about the school is the positive aspect that they are all Tatars. She does not think that her children will change or will begin to behave badly because they study in a Russian gymnásia; her children study there only because it is close to their house and she could not find a Tatar gymnásia nearby; and the reason why they will not change is because, according to her: ‘we have a Tatar family, we have a different mentality,... such an understanding...’. The role of the Tatar family and its values is something that should not be underestimated. It is a strong social mechanism for promoting segregation that I will try to analyse in the following section.

Finally the third and most complicated ‘question-sphere’ that generated a dichotomous answer from some pupils, though not all of them, was the question about their favourite festivity. While this question on the one hand revealed some dichotomous attitudes, on the other, it can be considered as the best example of the transgression dynamic that I referred to at the beginning of this section.

‘(...) For example if we don’t take into consideration Tatars,

[festivities] then, I suppose New Year.’ (Guzel)¹⁸² Guzel’s first words when she started to answer the question were already a clear differentiation and clarification; she underlined the fact that she was referring to non-Tatar festivities. But a festivity is a festivity, regardless of ethno-national distinctions.

There is a tendency to associate a set of concrete habits and traditions with, for example being Muslim, and quite a different set of traditions and customs with the people from the Russian Orthodox Church, different habits among Buddhists, and so on. It is often assumed that what is permitted or adequate for a Jewish person is not for a Muslim, or what is possible for agnostics is unthinkable for religious believers. According to the ‘rigid’ understanding and frequent ‘frontierisation’ of what is ‘A’ and what is ‘B’, an inclusive option of A+ B must entail rejection and refusal. According to this structure, for someone like Guzel who defines herself as ‘Tatar’ and ‘Muslim’ New Year is a ‘strange’ festivity to celebrate. However, this was a ‘transgression’ that I observed in almost all pupils, since almost all said that their favourite festivity was New Year. This illustrates that certain presuppositions are not always correct; some Muslims do not only celebrate New Year, but it is even their ‘favourite’ festivity. Moreover, some of them openly stated that one of their favourite festivities is the 8th of March, international women’s day - one of the Soviet bastions. An adequate understanding and evaluation of the complex dynamics of everyday life does not necessarily involve rationality or intentionality; very often their dynamics can escape the direct ‘cause-effect’ relationship. ‘Where social life is concerned, it is quite obvious that everyday existence consists largely of anomalies, or so-called anomalies’ (Maffesoli 1996:135).

‘Festivities? My birthday, 8th of March and New Year.’ (Liaisan) I suppose it is normal that pupils like the days when they get presents, and as we can observe, more than seventy years of communism also left some residues. Albina for example, likes all the festivities, but she prefers, New Year and her birthday. Renat in our conversation about his favourite festivity, replied: ‘Festivities in general or some national?’ Apart from others that he mentioned, the best one was his birthday. Amir, immediately made the distinction between

¹⁸² Curiously enough for that age, she also said that she does not like her birthday because each year she gets older and older; she is definitely not a standard teenager!

religious and non-religious festivities, stressing that amongst the non-religious, he prefers his birthday and New Year, and amongst the religious festivities, *Kuiran-Bairam*. Alfiya's favourite festivities are: her birthday, New Year and the 8th of March, and simultaneously without much hesitation she defined herself as Tatar and Muslim. Lilia, Gulnara, Zulfiya and Alfiya also gave the New Year as their favourite festivity. In Alfiya's house, for example, they do not eat pork, they only buy beef, because as Alfiya stressed 'because I suppose, we follow the traditions, religion'; however, they do drink alcohol.

What can strike the outsider as something perhaps 'unique' or 'unusual', is absolutely 'normal' for Tatar pupils, the new generation that are ideologically alien to the communist time, perfectly bilingual and more familiar with Tatar culture than their parents or even their grandparents. They define themselves as religious and Muslim, but they prefer New Year to other festivities. Transgression is not always permitted or well received by the institutional side, as the instance of the celebration of the 14th of February shows.

Zulfiya explained that they previously used to celebrate the 14th of February, (Saint Valentine's day) but now they do not celebrate it anymore.

'I don't know why, I suppose there are different reasons, one teacher said to us that it is not our festivity, is not Muslim, and this is why he should not celebrate it. I think, that people all around the world celebrate it, young people like it. We would like to, and we are sad that we don't celebrate it. I don't think there is anything bad in it. New Year isn't a Muslim festivity either, but we celebrate it.' (Zulfiya)

Pupils are aware that they 'transgress' the dividing line. They know that Muslims 'should not' celebrate New Year, but things are more complicated in everyday life than 'theory' allows. As Zulfiya said: 'if they like it, why not?' Their parents and their parents' parents, and even their great-grandfathers and great-grandmothers celebrated New Year. It is part of their families' memories and traditions, and it is difficult to believe that overnight, without protest, people will stop celebrating it, even if they consider themselves more than ever Muslims.

According to Karimovna ¹⁸³, during Soviet times Tatars did not only lose their religious festivities, as the Christians did, but they also lost all the

¹⁸³ Interviewed in 1998.

non-religious festivities. However, during Soviet times Tatars adopted others festivities, including the ones that were completely alien to them. For instance, New Year became an absolutely 'familiar' festivity for Tatar people, with everyone decorating the Christmas tree, and doing everything that is associated with the New Year. According to her, it would now be impossible to take this day out of peoples' lives, because they are already too used to it. For her there are no doubts about that.

'New Year is a Soviet thing, but it became a popular festivity, and it will be a big mistake if Tatars start to spend energy and force against something which is well established, because we will divide people; because everyone celebrates it.' (Karimovna)

In Karimovna's words, public holidays are marked as red days on the calendar, and they include New Year, 8th of March (international women's day), 1st of May (international workers day), and the 9th of May, (day of the victory in the Second World War). The day of the Russian constitution, the day of the Tatarstan Republic, the October festivity (commemoration of the Bolshevik revolution), and also *Kurban Bairam*¹⁸⁴ make up a complex mixture of events. People in general react very well to all red days, because they are days that they do not go to work. However, Karimovna stressed that people do not know what they have to do, they are not familiar with the 'rituals'. 'They have only a utilitarian character- bank holidays- one day off'.

I asked Nailia if she thinks that her generation's pupils are familiar or not with Tatar traditions:

'I think so, because we celebrate the festivities. For example there is a Tatar festivity, *Nauruz*¹⁸⁵, we also celebrate it. It became almost all-nationalities, because in Tatarstan, Russians and Tatars, all together celebrate this festivity, it takes place nearby Kamala. And also *Sabantui*¹⁸⁶, it will be in the summer, around the twentieth of June. It takes place in different parts of the city (...) It is considered mostly as a Tatar festivity, but nowadays the whole city participates, Russians and Tatars. And somehow, it became all-nationalities, this festivity brings together everybody. It is impossible to distinguish a Tatar from a Russian

¹⁸⁴ Since 1992 two religious holidays *Kurban Bairam* and Christmas are included in Tatarstan's calendar of public holidays.

¹⁸⁵ Festival that celebrates the arrival of spring.

¹⁸⁶ In Russian language people use the word *Sabantui* as a synonym of a word meaning to party, (an occasion to gather) and some people do not know that *Sabantui* is a Tatar festivity because it is entirely incorporated in Russian language, outside of Tatarstan.

there. It can be like that. Of course, it is a good thing that all the people are together, everyone.’ (Nailia)

But not only ‘pleasant’ festivities (or days off) seem to be ‘alive’ in Tatarstan, Lilia’s mother explained to me that parents participate in what are called *subbotniki*, an example of the Soviet heritage and influence. *Subbotniki* are Saturdays of collective work, when all parents and teachers dedicate their time (for free) to work in the school, especially to repair and clean the school. Lenin established them, and they symbolised a civic commitment to the building of the Soviet Union, an example of community work, when people dedicate one day to clean the streets, public gardens, or places where they work.

Another example is that Lilia’s mother complained because they did not organise the Christmas tree celebration day in the school, which is very symbolic Soviet tradition, a day that most schools still organise, specially for the youngest pupils. She attributed this to the headmistress being very strong and disciplined, refusing to celebrate such an important day, because it was not a Muslim festivity. A Christmas tree celebration day is when the school celebrates the New Year, all the pupils receive presents, and they sing, dance, and enjoy different activities. It is another concrete example of a Soviet tradition that is still alive, which even some of the most ‘pro-Tatar’ families do not want to lose, in defiance of certain radical nationalistic groups who claim that they are not ‘proper’ Tatar traditions (Karimovna interview in 1998).

However, as I illustrated at the beginning of this section, and as I will try to analyse, not everything is ‘ambiguous’ or ‘unclear’, ‘hybrid’ or ‘symbiotic’; or even suitable to be transgressed. Some pupils and teachers seem to have a strict notion of who is who; who is included in ‘We’ and who is included in the ‘Other’.

5.5 Reproducing discourses: Ethno-cultural segregation and endogamy as a common tendency

As can be seen from the previous section, the segregation that teachers and pupils from Tatar gymnásias claim, defend and protect, is an attitude commonly accepted and promoted, especially in the ‘family environment’. The tendency both reinforces the process of ethnic and cultural segregation and promotes the rhetoric of otherness, stressing the differentiation between ‘We’ and the ‘Others’.

The purpose of this section is to illustrate how this tendency to isolate and divide is not only characteristic of Tatar gymnásias, but is strongly emphasised within families. Consequently, pupils do not receive the motivation either at school, or in their homes, that would encourage inter-cultural or inter-ethnic interaction or marriage; since for most of the pupils, marriage outside Tatar circles would represent a tragedy for their parents. It would be perceived as betrayal of Tatar culture and traditions.

In general terms Tatarstan has a significant proportion of mixed marriages between Tatars and Russians, since it was a relatively common practice especially among the urban population. According to Iskhakova's work (1999:30), the proportion of mixed marriages is higher in the cities than in rural areas. In 1979 10.7 per cent of the marriages were mixed, (14.1 per cent in the cities and 4.6 per cent in the villages); a number that increased to 14.9 per cent in 1989, (18.0 per cent in the cities and 6.6 per cent in the village).

However, not all Tatars welcome it, and they persuade their children to marry within their own group, as a mechanism for maintaining and consolidating Tatar 'unity'.

Guzel, like all the pupils that I talked to, wants to get married: 'Of course, *Allah birse*' (which can be translated as: if Allah wills) but the question is to whom. Guzel does not want to marry just anyone and she has quite stringent criteria. Her first consideration is that it is not really important for her if he is Tatar or not, as long as he is Muslim. Nevertheless, when I was quite sure that it was a question of 'religion' and she only wanted to marry someone of the same religious denomination, all of a sudden she changed her attitude. She accepted that she would not object to marrying a Jewish man but she was worried that she would lose her culture, her religion and her language. But she is prepared to abandon all that, as long as he is not Russian, since she is completely sure that she does not want to marry a Russian man. 'Because Russians are associated with vodka, they just want to drink'. But a bit further on in the conversation she returns to the first approach.

'I am worried that I would not raise my children as Tatars, there would be many conflicts. To be honest, I don't believe in mixed marriages, that they... But it is possible to marry a Tatar who lives abroad. They are educated in a completely different way. Here Tatars are educated like Russians, this is why they have so many things in common with Russians.' (Guzel)

In an unanticipated pirouette, Guzel spins from absolute tolerance to the extreme of intolerance, from a possible Jewish husband to a Tatar from outside Tatarstan, because of the Russian influence.¹⁸⁷

Most of the pupils that I talked to wanted to marry a Tatar person. For instance Bulat also prefers to marry a Tatar girl: 'Yes, it doesn't play a big role, but anyway, I would prefer my own blood'. There can be a tendency to think that they still have plenty of time to change their opinions and attitudes; that the strong opinions, impulsiveness and spontaneity that characterises teenagers may disappear in a couple of years. However the concrete situation with these pupils is not simple by any means. Quite frequently it is not only a question of who they are going to marry, it is a more general phenomenon of the division and segregation that permeates their lives, i.e. who they are not going to marry. Pupils from Tatar gymnásias have very few chances on a day-to-day basis to interact with non-Tatar friends. All the pupils in their school are Tatars, their teachers are Tatars, they come from Tatar families, and most of them spend their holidays in Tatar villages with their Tatar relatives. Consequently, as most of the pupils stressed, the majority of their friends are from their own gymnásia and as a result they are permanently enclosed in an environment that is continuously reinforcing the notion of Tatar unity and distinctiveness, in other words, reproducing and supporting ethno-cultural Tatar segregation.

According to Kondrashov during Russian domination, even before the Bolshevik Revolution the Tatar population had always lived separated from the Russian population. It was a territorial and cultural isolation that only began to break down with the process of industrialisation and urbanisation (2000:23). However, the integration of Tatars should not be confused with equal opportunities because integration always implied their assimilation. Integration was driven by the process of industrialisation, as Tatars represented a source of labour for the new factories. Today, segregation has a more voluntary

¹⁸⁷ We should remember that at the beginning of this chapter (section 5.1) she also emphasised that the only way to avoid 'bad influences' from Russians, is to separate Tatars from Russians when they are very young. Then Tatars will not forget their language and culture. Therefore, Guzel does not only refuse a Russian man as a possible future husband, she is not even very happy with the idea of a Tatar man who lives in the republic, because they are excessively 'Russified'. We should also remember that two years ago Guzel travelled to New York to meet people from the Tatar Diaspora that live there (section 5.1). Therefore, she already met some Tatars that have not experienced the Russian influence. (Perhaps they are rather 'americanised', but probably this issue does not perturb her very much).

character, and is promoted from inside the groups, rather than from outside. 'Self-segregation' should be perceived as a reaction to the past, but at the same time, it has strong motives in the present.

Elmira like many other pupils from gymnásia No.2. does not have Russian friends. The reason is not only that her school is exclusively for Tatar pupils, although this is a solid enough explanation. But it is not the only one; Elmira does not like Russian people and she is not ashamed of admitting it.

'Do you know? When I talk to Russians at the music school that I go to, and there are Russian girls there, and on some occasions you feel uncomfortable, it isn't nice to talk to them, because when I talk with our girls, I can speak in Tatar, and I can say it in Russian, they understand everything; we have common interests, but I don't have much in common with Russian girls (...) They are not educated in the same way that I am, they are a bit different.' (Elmira)

In what sense? I asked her.

'(...) I don't know, but in their deep down, I don't know, perhaps they have something different; different education, ways of thinking about (...) And you can say the same about their schools... also because of *natsional'nost* (...).' (Elmira)

Elmira is quite sure because according to her she can feel it; when she meets somebody she can tell if this person is Tatar or Russian. 'I don't want to say that I have bad relations with Russians, and I know nice Russian girls, but it is just that sometimes I can feel it'. She does not think that she could immediately, after the first minute of interaction, identify whether a person is Tatar or Russian, but she would definitely notice it in a deeper interaction. '(...) I am not talking about a normal relationship, but rather about a close friend, I just would not do it, a closer friend; in the end, the families are different'.

Elmira wants her future husband to belong to her *natsional'nost*, and she repeated twice, that she really wants that.

'In the family,... and for me it is also important, because at the beginning perhaps it will be good fun, but later on, when we will get older, anyway, I will want my children to speak in my language, my religion, to profess, ... and I suppose I would not want my husband to be of a different *natsional'nost*. Russians are very, even if you don't see it, that they are like that, many of them really follow their religion, they all baptise their children, even if their wife is Tatar, he can go and baptise

[the children] according to his religion. They are really like that...'(Elmira)¹⁸⁸

Throughout all the conversations the same 'justification' was repeated time and again. Without exception, religion and tradition were presented as the reason why they wanted to marry a person from the same peer group. The recurring theme was: 'while you are young it is fine, but when you get older you will need your religion and your traditions'. But if they are only fifteen or sixteen, how or why do they know what will happen when they get older? Why do they want to think about it? In practice, it is not only what they think, but also what their families say. For example Alfiya will marry a Russian man if she loves him, but she would prefer a Tatar man because of the religion. Alfiya's mother, like many other parents, advises her to find 'a Tatar husband – a good and educated Tatar man'.

Renat is a very quiet boy, his answers are short and concise, almost as a telegraphic message, as if he has no doubts about anything. He seems far too certain about his future wife, and when I asked him about a hypothetical case, if his future wife could be Russian, his immediate answer was: 'That can never happen (...) That is negative (...) because of religion, and because I don't want my children to have a parent from a different religion'. (Renat)

Mixed marriages and parents from different religions appear to represent 'evilness' and 'badness' in pupils' eyes - something above all to be rejected. It amounts to a 'moral duty' that all Tatars should do for their people, their language and their traditions. There are a considerable number of Tatars who think that the reason of the current degradation of the Tatar language, and Tatar culture is due to Tatar people who married Russians in the past; a pattern of behaviour that nationalist organisations now strongly reject. It is noteworthy, as Kondrashov showed, that a considerable number of activists of the

¹⁸⁸ I remember on one occasion I arranged to visit her parents' village for the weekend, and they were all very persuasive in inviting me to celebrate *Sabantui* with them, they wanted me to see, as they said a 'real' Tatar village with its festivities. But the day before the trip a friend of mine came to visit me in Kazan, so I phoned them and I said: 'I am so sorry, but a friend of mine from Moscow came for a couple of days,' And I noticed that when I said a 'friend from Moscow' Elmira's voice changed immediately, almost as if it was frozen. And when after a couple of minutes I added that this friend was Spanish, she changed again, and said that if he was Spanish there was no problem at all (as long as he was not Russian), for both of us to come to visit them in the village. I think this was the first time that I could really appreciate, that everything that she said a month ago in our conversation was completely true, and she was quite honest when she said that she didn't like Russian people.

nationalist movements are people who grew up in a rural mono-ethnic Tatar environment, and who faced a certain 'cultural-shock' when they moved to the city and had to confront Russian-dominated culture (2000:31). In the case of the pupils from Tatar gymnásias the situation is rather different, since they did not come from an 'absolutely' mono-ethnic environment. They live in Kazan where about half of the population is Russian. But they are maintained 'artificially' in 'isolation', avoiding inter-communication with the people that they live with. This new generation of pupils has spent their childhood in Kazan, with parents originally from rural areas, but this generation has full exposure to talk in Russian, to Russian television programmes and to Russian DJs; Russian culture is not alien to them. Nevertheless family and school discourse fosters a strong sense of exclusion; *ipso facto*, rejecting any chances of cultural diversity and inter-cultural fusion or interaction. The sense of self-exclusion does not correspond with the opportunities that a culturally diversified context is transmitting to these generations. Pupils who speak perfect Tatar and Russian, should be in 'theory' defending mutually respectful attitudes, advertising Tatar language amongst Russian speakers, and in general, offering their privileged position as a bridge between Tatar and Russian cultures. In contrast they are strongly encouraged to avoid interaction or communication between the two groups.

According to sociological research conducted in the Russian-Tatar gymnásia No.65 ¹⁸⁹, with pupils from Tatar, Russian and mixed families, Tatar families devote more attention to their culture and to following their traditions. Pupils from mixed families on the other hand have a rather 'marginal position' (literally translated), since they show only a slight tendency to follow and to preserve traditions and customs. The research also indicated that this interest is mainly shaped inside the family, in relation to parents' behaviour, and their cultural orientation, suggesting that 'in these circumstances the school can and should catalyse further ethno-cultural development of the youngest generations and the reinforcement of their identity' (literal translation). It points clearly to the relevant role that schools should play in the ethno-cultural development of the republic.

¹⁸⁹ Iazykovye i etnokul'turnye orientatsii shklo'noi molodezhi v kontekste sovremennykh sotsial'no-obrazovatel'nykh tendentsii. Kazan' 1999: Institut povysheniia kvalifikastii i perepodgotovki rabotnikov obrazovaniia respubliki Tatarstan. Laboratoriia sotsiologicheskikh isledovaniia.

Elmira and Mariam want their children to study in a Tatar gymnásia, but not only that, like most of their classmates they also want their future husbands to be Tatar. More precisely, in Mariam words': 'I hope that my husband will be not a Russian'. When I asked her to explain why she did not want a Russian husband she said:

'Well, I suppose, to preserve... Nowadays there are many mixed marriages, - Tatar women and Russian men, I don't know, it is, to some extent it is an obstacle to our *natsional'nost*, because if you imagine when a husband and wife are getting older, because when they were young they can not follow all the religious practices, but when they are getting older, they are closer to it, so when they are older, they may have different conflicts because of their *natsiia*, and then religion.' (Mariam)

There is a general 'social agreement' that endogamy in religious terms, (which is to marry within the same religious grouping) is likely to lead to greater agreements on child-bearing practices and family rituals, frequently presented as the only method capable of keeping religion and traditions alive. Such agreement may be based on people's experiences, or perhaps only mere speculative thoughts, which were strongly encouraged through generations. The sense of exclusiveness does not necessarily achieve the claimed purpose since cultural and religious traditions need other mechanisms to be operating at the same time.

There were many examples that I observed in both gymnásias that illustrated the tendencies to endogamy, to cultural enclosure and ethnic-isolation. Albina's friends are Tatars, including pupils from her school and her neighbourhood. Her comment is typical.

'I don't go out with Russians, they are not to my liking. They are all the time..., I don't know. They always believe in God. - Let's go to the church to light a candle, all our sins will be absolved - like that, straightforward. They all have an obligatory cross.' (Albina)

Albina is only twelve years old, but she already knows that she wants to marry a Tatar man. Albina's parents want her and her brother to marry Tatars, and this is something that her brother, who does not study in a Tatar gymnásia, accepts.

'He has already accepted that. In their class there are ... Tatar girls, and I don't know, but they are more beautiful, I don't know, but I think they are the most beautiful, the most wonderful girls. He shows me a photograph, and I say: She is Tatar. He says: You are right. Also this one,

and this one - I say, definitely is a Christian. - Yes- he says, where did you learn all of that from? Like that - I say- I know it. (...) I don't know, yes I feel it. Today I saw a girl from his class; anyway...because of the face, because of the interaction, it is clear that she is Tatar. I don't want to offend, but... Christians, Catholic, Orthodox,... but because I am Tatar, I like my own religion better.' (Albina)

Albina is one of the youngest pupils that I talked with, she is a very extrovert person, she knows everyone in the gymnásia, in which year they study, in which class, and who they go out with. She is only in her seventh year, but she knows pupils from the ninth year or sixth year. My impression was that she was far too alert to miss something around her, the kind of person who had an opinion about everything, and who was friendly and sociable with everyone. However, she also has some familiar prejudices, she prefers Tatar people to Russians, this is something that she already learned.

In the case of Liaisan who is a sixteen year old, her parents wanted her to study in this school, because they did not want her to marry a Russian man. They want her to be surrounded by Tatar children. 'They didn't want to. They have such an opinion, that Tatars should be Tatars, and Russians-Russians'. She did not say that according to them Tatars should be with Tatars, and Russians with Russians; in this case the rhetoric is even more complicated because when she said that 'Tatars should be Tatars' she implicitly implies that to be a Tatar involves being with Tatars; in other words, if you are Tatar but not with Tatars, you are not a Tatar. All Liaisan's friends are Tatars, and her parents are strongly encouraging her to avoid Russian male friends. When I talked to her about it, firstly she said that it was all the same to her whether her future husband would be Tatar or not, but later, she said that she would prefer a Tatar man, because it was a very important issue to her parents.

'They said to me, if you have a Russian husband, consider that you don't have parents. They don't like Tatars who are with Russians, they are against crossing, mixing. They don't want me to (...) In general, it's possible to have Russian friends, I suppose, but to see a Russian boy- my mum will not allow me, and the same goes for my father.' (Liaisan)

But do you have Russian friends?

'I had one Russian friend, we didn't go out together, because if my parents were to find out, I think, they would be against it. We met some Russians guys in the village, but our parents did not allow us to go out with them, because they thought that we should not have relationships with Russians.' (Liaisan)

However, the anti-Russian restrictions only apply to boys, Russian girls are allowed. For Liaisan's parents a female Russian friend is not quite the same as a male Russian friend, since a male might become a 'candidate' for a future husband.

The sociological research conducted in the Russian-Tatar gymnásia No.65, shows that 74.7 per cent of Russians and 81.5 per cent of Tatars consider that when they interact amongst themselves they do not pay attention to people's nationality. For one in ten pupils, it is all the same what the nationality of the other person is (ibid:10). These results, it has to be said, do not exactly correspond to what pupils in gymnásias No.2 and No.16 illustrated, since nationality did seem to be an important issue to these pupils from monocultural backgrounds.¹⁹⁰

'I would like my husband to be a Muslim, but, if he is a good person, in theory, it is possible that he could be of another *natsional'nost*. But he has to be a very good person.' (Zulfiya).

To which Alfiya added:

'But our parents say that, it is essential that he should be Tatar. They don't like people of other *natsional'nost*, or a husband from another *natsional'nost*.' (Alfiya)

To which Zulfiya replied:

'Many people think that when in a family a mother or a father is Russian or some other *natsional'nost*, then they are not Tatar anymore, because this is what used to happen more often. If for example the mother is Russian and the father Tatar, the children will be Russian, in most of the cases.' (Zulfiya)

This hypothesis is also confirmed by Iskhakova (1999:31) where she indicates that as a rule, in mixed marriages in Tatarstan only one language predominates, instead of two as in other republics; and bilingualism is an exception rather than a habitual tendency.

Shamil's father would like his son's wife to be Tatar.

¹⁹⁰ In the next chapter when I consider non-Tatar gymnásias we will see that the results will be substantially different.

‘For a start if you want to know what I think about mixed *natsional'nost* marriages... for example... different *natsional'nost*, they will be forced to talk in one language- naturally it will be Russian. If some of them learn Tatar, it is necessary, ... and anyway it will affect the children- so they wouldn't know their mother tongue (...) when I was young I didn't make any distinction between *natsional'nost*, but to create a family, I think a single *natsional'nost* is necessary.’ (Shamil's father)¹⁹¹

Nadir for example, like most of his classmates, speaking of his future wife, emphasised:

‘At the beginning, it is not very important, but afterwards, at a certain age, a person is becoming closer to his roots, his people, and he just wouldn't love his Russian wife anymore, because they will not have any more conversations in common about Tatars, about their roots. Yes I would prefer. And anyway, your parents will never understand you if you bring a Russian woman to your home (...) But love can happen, but of course it will also finish.’ (Nadir)

For Nadir there is a clear difference between, on the one hand, going out with a Russian girl, and on the other, getting married. The important thing for him and his family is religion. However, he does not think that he would marry a Turkish, Iraqi, or Iranian girl. Consequently it is not certain to what extent it is really only a question of religion.

‘(...) I don't know. I cannot see how our paths can cross with an Iranian or Turkish girl. Anyway... they are also very fundamentalist.... I mean, in Turkey at least, religion is in a very important position in relation to our religion.’ (Nadir)

The solution then is only a Tatar woman, and in this particular case, religion is not as crucial as he tries to make it out.

Nailia on the other hand says she is not very sure why she would like her future husband to be Tatar, (at least that is what she claimed), but anyway she wants a Tatar husband. There is evidence to show that she is probably much more aware of the motives than she admits, because she gave enough reasons to justify her decision.

‘A Tatar. I don't know why. But you know, sometimes you meet someone... a boy, and when you ask him: Are you Tatar? And he gives

¹⁹¹ He would agree to a Muslim woman, (as he said), as long as she has the same education as his son, or if the level is higher there is not a problem with that; as I understand, the important thing it is that should not be lower.

his name, you have the impression as if you already knew him.... Long, long ago, I don't know, but it brings people closer. And when he says that he is Russian, somehow you feel, that you don't know the person. If he is Tatar, he is closer. There is a differentiation. I would like a Tatar man, because in the first place... and also festivities,- for example you will celebrate your festivities, and the Russian festivities - his festivities, so in the family you will have... confusion, such a mess, he will go to the church, you will go to the mosque- what will you get? I would like him to be Tatar. And then, arguments about the children, - the children will be Tatar or Russian, and of course, I would like for them to be of my *natsional'nost*, and the husband will like the same for his children - so again quarrelling, and the children would be caught in the middle, I don't want this to happen.' (Nailia)

Time after time, mixed marriages are represented in negative terms. Not even one person talked about possible enrichment through mixed marriages, the opportunity of learning new traditions and new habits, the experience of sharing and trying to make compatible two different points of view or separate religions, as well as learning new concepts and perceptions. Quite the contrary, the most unattractive aspect of bicultural matrimony such as conflicts, arguments, disputes and disrespectful attitudes constantly reinforce the idea of the 'Others' as a stranger for 'us'; a message that parents' strongly encourage.

The family has a crucial role in Tatar culture and it is perceived not only as a group of people who share a household, but basically it represents 'unity' in terms of traditions and habits. According to Tatar culture is extremely important to maintain familial harmony by following Tatar traditions and celebrating Tatar festivities. The role of in-laws in family is to guarantee this harmony and avoid any conflict or disruption in the family. In that sense, members of the family are encouraged to marry within the group (Tatars) and to follow the same habits and practice the same religion. There is a special boundary around the family that separates it from other groups, especially from non-Tatar groups. This boundary is expressed in terms of habits and traditions, which is a mechanism to consolidate and reinforce the values that are promoted inside the family.

According to pupils' discourse (and consequently parents' and teachers' discourse), one has to make decisions for the future (when they will be older), rather than for the present. Love is not accepted as something significant enough to make a marriage decision. For pupils, the tension between love or family's norms, does not exist. Even in teenage years, the values of the older generation (marriage within the group) prevail. Grey hair and life experience are crucial features in Tatar culture, and in that sense, pupils will not transgress

their parents wishes.

At the beginning Liaisan's mother seemed very tolerant (like most of the people that I had the opportunity to converse with) accepting the possibility that their children could marry a person of a different nationality. Nevertheless, at the end, she also stressed that they (she and her husband) would prefer a person of the same nationality.

'Do you know in theory, it doesn't make any difference when you are young. But with all my respect for the Russian people, because we are - internationalist, everyone in the republic, we are- to a certain extent. I just tell them: It will be difficult for you when you get older, when you are old and read your prayers, and your wife, if she is Russian, puts icons there in the corner, in that sense it will be difficult, so think about it. We only talk like that, there is not such a categorical thing like, 'don't do that'- there is no such thing. But I don't know, how they will decide by themselves, how the destiny will turn. I don't have an absolute categorical rejection. But, I suppose, it will be better when the family is from one *natsiia*. It is with ageing, I think, you don't notice that when you are young, but with ageing, probably you will notice it, when you are closer to religion, closer to death, then your traditions, customs, habits; I think, it will be more complicated.' (Liaisan's mother)

But she is not the only mother who thinks like that Lilia's mother also would prefer her son and daughter to marry somebody from the same *natsiia*.

'My *natsiia*, yes. But this is what each mother wants, I suppose, but if it will not happen, I will not push her. Why destroy them? For example, later on they will say- mum I loved her or him with all my heart, and you take him or her from me. Why should I put pressure on them? (...)
Nowadays there are some people who are like that, they only want them to marry a Tatar, that the husband will be only Tatar, or a Tatar wife- of course we all want that, of course we want, that our *natsiia* is closer together anyway, but if something happens, I will not go against it. But of course, even,... I suppose, they will not do it. At present they can see it for themselves- their *natsiia* is closer.' (Lilia's mother)

Obedience and respect for older generation is extremely important and is accepted inside each household as unchangeable premise.

Most of Lilia's and her brother's friends are from the gymnásia, consequently they are Tatars, and the same is true of their friends from the village, because her mother is from a Tatar village. It is interesting that when I asked Lilia's mother about her daughter's and son's friends, she said that they are very open minded, but in fact, most of their friends are Tatars. Perhaps in this case and in this family it is an unintended segregation and division, they do not do it purposely, perhaps they do not even think about it; perhaps this

constant 'isolation' and segregation is therefore 'normal' and accepted; there is no need to question or to think about it, nor even to speculate about their children's future in twenty years time. They will have already incorporated the idea that they are Tatars, and Tatars are 'closer' to them, just like that, without any need for explanation.

As we had observed throughout this section most of the responses were notoriously similar, almost as if they were 'programmed'. As if we were hearing the 'institutional talk', a reproduction of the Tatar gymnásias' talk which has been perfectly incorporated, accepted and repeated. Manifestations that are not coming from any concrete school's sessions, furthermore they are reflections of an accumulative procedure (leitmotiv), embedded and incorporated in each area of activity inside the school. If following Bourdieu we 'establish the relationship between the properties of discourses, the properties of the person who pronounces them, the properties of the institution which authorizes him to pronounce them, and the properties of the person who is leasing it' (1994: 4); we would deduce that all pupils responses are to some extent direct manifestations of Tatar gymnásias interest and/or discourse. Responses that indicate the strategic function (responsibility) that Tatar gymnásias are performing in the process of identities (re)making; in this case, ethno-cultural rebirth.

5.6 Tatars and Muslims: religiosity or cultural tradition?

'The statement that for the Tatars, Islam and nation are inseparable, was made without ambiguity by the Mufti during a reception of the Presidium in 1989' (Bennigsen 1990:287).

Up to this point, the main observations in the three previous section were: i) the central importance of Tatar language in pupils' and teachers' representations of what they consider to be Tatar culture, history and traditions, the primordial character-tie that is established between Tatar language and what they consider 'to be Tatar' ii) the process whereby the difference between 'them' and the 'Others' and the rhetoric of 'Otherness' is embedded in pupils' perceptions and expressed practically as a mental dichotomy tends to appear spontaneously in their discourse, even when it allows some space for transgression in everyday life, and iii) the distinction between 'We' and the 'Others' that corresponds closely with endogamy, as a mechanism to maintain

mono-cultural and mono-ethnic segregation, opposition to mixed marriages.

In the following two sections I will incorporate the dimensions of religion and patriotism, as two key elements of the discourse of the Tatar gymnásias and families which shape pupils' perceptions and understanding of what it means 'to be Tatar'. The disposition of these elements allows them to be transgressed in everyday life, illustrating the frequent 'incompatibility' between institutional discourse and day-to-day realities.

According to Enloe (1996) one of the indicators that illustrates how far religion sustains ethnic boundaries is intermarriage, which she considers to be the 'bottom line' (ibid:199) of ethnicity. However, she also stresses that the rate of intermarriage is not determined by religious rules exclusively, for example in the Soviet Union, intermarriages were promoted as an important element of Soviet national policy. However, as she clearly shows, Muslims are less likely to marry non-Muslims; something that we observed in the previous section where everyone indicated that they would prefer to marry a Tatar person rather than a non-Tatar person, religion being presented as one of the main reasons.

But if religion is such an important issue, how do they live and experience religion in the course of daily life? Are they practising members or is it a question of tradition? To what extent is religion incorporated in their day-to-day life after seventy years of communism? Have the new Tatar generations become more religious since the communist disintegration or is religion just another dimension of what they consider to be 'Tatar-ness'? There is no consensus on what unites an ethnic group. For different groups certain dimensions like language, religion, images of common history, or shared traditions, just to mention a few, are more relevant than others. But in this research it was possible to observe how most of the pupils and teachers constantly associated what they considered 'to be Tatar' with 'being Muslim'; ('we are Muslims, of course; we are Tatars'). Nonetheless their perception and understanding of 'Islam' was 'circumstantial' and depending on situational contingencies.

The category of 'being Muslim' is a noticeable component in their rhetoric, but it is equally apparent that observance is more a question of personal choice; and not always in accordance with Islamic canons or laws. However, regardless of the level of transgression in teachers' and pupils' observance, on the institutional side, in gymnásia No.2 to be precise, Islamic

rules and attitudes are strongly encouraged and promoted. There is a definite institutional strategy based on the study of Arabic, but also through the celebration of religious festivities inside the school which does not always correspond with how people experience religion in their everyday life. I will try to expand on this subject in this section.

As Swidler maintains, ‘people engage in their everyday activities by selecting certain cultural elements (from both tacit culture such as attitudes and styles and explicit cultural material such as rituals and belief systems) and investing them with particular meanings in concrete life circumstances’ (quoted in Vertovec and Rogers 1998: 7). Nevertheless, this cultural flexibility and elasticity, ‘crossing’ and ‘milieu-mobility’, is not always welcomed inside the school, as we noted with pupils’ preferred festivities.

5.6.1 Belief, but minimal practice: ‘religious nationalism’

‘To be honest with you, I think, I am learning; it is interesting to learn about religions, to learn what is new in religion. I think that so far neither Islam, nor Christianity, or any of the other religions yet...there is not the best one among them. In each of them there is some deficiency, and Tatars are close to Islam, it is like national, it is accepted. But I know Tatar people, who... are Christians, they are converted Tatars. And I know some who are members of a sect. But anyway, I would like my children to learn Islam. I think... this is one of the best religions.’
(Renat)¹⁹²

Gymnásia No.2 is probably one of the few schools that celebrates religious festivities not least because education and religion are strongly separated in the Russian Federation ¹⁹³. Schools are not supposed to undertake religious education but practice does not always correspond to the theory; or it may correspond in ‘absolute’ but not in ‘relative’ terms.

Some years ago in gymnásia No.2 pupils studied Islam as a separate subject, but the Ministry had decided that *medrese* should be in charge of teaching religion. Nevertheless they *celebrate Kurban-Bairam* and *Uraza Bairam*¹⁹⁴; inviting parents for the day, and bringing donations. Everyone helps

¹⁹² Renat’s father does not believe in anything, as Renat said, but his mother is trying. Although she had received Soviet education, she believes that there must be something.

¹⁹³ In 1998 when I interviewed (and in this case I strongly underline ‘interviewed’ rather than ‘conversed’ with) the Minister of Education, the reason he gave for not having religion in the school was that they constitute two different spheres, two separate institutions.

¹⁹⁴ Uraza Bairam is celebrated at the end of a 30 - day fast in Ramadan.

as much as they can, and they celebrate it as ‘a big family’ (again the family metaphor is used). On some occasions people from the Mosque are invited.

In 1998 I had the opportunity to be in the school when *Kurban-Bairam* was celebrated. The headmistress invited me to the special day to show me how they celebrate it, and to enjoy this important day with them. I arrived at the school at 10:45 a.m., by which time there was a buzz of activity. Everybody was especially well dressed. Inside the canteen there were pupils round all the tables, all the girls were wearing headscarves, (unusual on ‘normal’ days) although some were wearing mini-skirts. Some of the boys were also wearing the traditional Tatar ‘covering’.¹⁹⁵ The headmistress covers her head, takes a microphone into her hands and starts to pray. Some of the pupils are very

serious, but you can also see that some of them are just waiting for her to finish because they are bored. Once she has finished, she wishes well being and at 11:00 a.m. the breakfast begins. There is black bread, oranges, *plof*, a central Asian dish cooked with rice and lamb, carrots, onions and some herbs; and a Tatar dessert. All the time there is Tatar music in the background. This is the first shift for the youngest pupils; later the older ones will come in and they also read the Koran.¹⁹⁶

But something that I could not stop thinking about was: if they are not supposed to teach religion at schools, why do they celebrate *Kurban-Bairam*, which is a religious day? Is the institution in this case, the Tatar gymnásia, operating outside the rules? Is this an example of antagonism between political discourse and institutional praxis? How exactly are they incorporating religion if they do not teach religion as a separate subject, and how do pupils comprehend and interpret religion? What role does it play in their lives, and how do they associate it with Tatar culture?

The level of engagement is illustrated by the following comments:

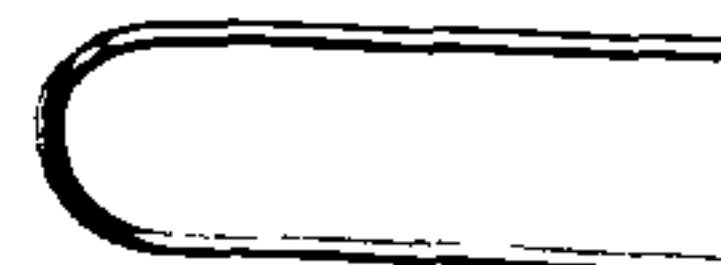
‘I believe, of course, I am a religious person, but I don’t think, I believe, but I’m not a fanatic’. Alfiya does not read *Namaz*, (prayers), and she does not go to the mosque; ‘I just believe in Allah’. Like most of the pupils, Alfiya believes in Allah, she does not even question that, but she is not a practising member, she does not follow the rules, or attend the mosque.

¹⁹⁵ See picture 8, page 171.

¹⁹⁶ Around three o’clock all the staff start to celebrate. There are about one hundred people; they read the Koran, have some food and talk with each other.

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Picture 8 (gymnásia No.2)

Liaisan, for example, believes in God, but she does not like to go to the mosque, because when she was younger her grandmother forced her to go. She also has to follow Ramadan, but only because her mother had forced her this year; it was not her choice.

Shamil also defines himself as not very religious but, for him, there is a concrete reason for religions to exist. '(...) In this life, I think; it doesn't really matter which religion you belong to, the important thing is to be a good person'. But like his father, he follows (he says, without hesitation) Islam. But he does not go to the mosque or read *Namaz*. If for any reason he had to, he would do it. When I asked him if he believed in Allah, Shamil said: 'But I don't know, it is difficult to say. I suppose that there is something, if all this is invented. I suppose there is something, but not necessarily the great Allah, I think, God, Allah- it's just to moderate life, perhaps, if someone makes mistakes,... it is the same, Islam or Christianity...' I also asked Shamil if his parents were religious, and he said that in the same way as he is. For instance he does not think that there is need for Ramadan, only if he was ill and a doctor recommended fasting, or if he thought that it could help his body.

However, regardless of these 'concrete' and 'specific' approaches to religious observance; when I asked Albina if she was a religious person, her immediate reaction was: 'I am Muslim'. But do you celebrate religious festivities? 'No, but you know, how should I put this, for example, if you observe the rules then - a Muslim woman, she should cover her head. Go to the mosque, *Namaz*... I kind of believe, but I don't follow all the rules.' (Albina)

In the words of one history teacher, she believes in her God, but she does not observe Ramadan and she never did. But she defines herself as Muslim, as Tatar, she likes her language, she respects her culture, her traditions, but she does not go to the mosque, and she believes in her own God. Nevertheless, she considers herself as a truly Muslim, without the Ramadan, without the prayers, without the mosque; she has her individual interpretation.

According to the British sociologist Davie 'the overall pattern of religious life is changing. For it appears that more and more people within British society want to believe but do not want to involve themselves in religious practice' (1994: 117). Following this author, believing without belonging (*ibid.*) is a rather common tendency that characterises Britain, something that some authors would claim is a response to the process of secularisation that defines Western societies in general. However, Davie

maintains that this tendency of believing without belonging, should not be perceived as a consciously post-modern form of religious activity (ibid: 193). She emphasises that 'it is the nature of society which is changing, rather than - or at least just as much as - the nature of religiosity' (ibid: 194). The same could be said of religion in Tatarstan. For example Albina claims she does not go to the mosque because she does not have enough time. When I asked if her parents go, her response was: 'Oh, we would like to go, but we don't have the time at all.' (Albina)

In Nadir's family they all fast, apart from his brother who is twelve years old, because his parents think that he is still too young, whereas according to Koran you can fast from the age of ten. 'No, he is still too young, this is what my parents say, he doesn't need to yet, when he grow up a bit. The Koran says that you can do it when you are ten and he is twelve. But anyway... exactly like that... we don't undertake it exhaustively as set down in the Koran'.

When I asked Shamil's father if he was a religious person, he answered: 'How should I put it.... I am not against'. But do you celebrate religious festivities at home?

'(...) Well, we celebrate the appropriate festivities. When we were young, when we were growing up, atheism was flourishing... I consider,... my mother said: don't say that there is no God, and don't say that there is... I think that there is God... it is necessary to maintain all requirements, respect, learning of Islam... but at the moment I am not an old believer, a devotee.' (Shamil's father)

Vertovec suggests that 'many young Muslims in Britain are currently adopting a strong 'Muslim' identity, although, this often does not necessarily entail an enhanced knowledge of Islam nor an increased participation in religious activities' (1998:101). He sees it often as a cultural Muslim identity that emerges as a form of resistance to anti-Muslim sentiment and racist attitudes. The same hypothesis might be applied to the ethno-cultural Tatar renaissance, which is understandable as an anti-Russian attitude, a reaction and resistance to Russian domination and imperialist policies, expressed thorough an exaltation and 'hyper-adoration' of everything that is included in the category of 'being Tatar'. Yet, it is a category that possesses more flexible capacities than its 'promoters' would expect; leaving enough room for a certain amount of transgression, manifested in concrete practices and attitudes – an

issue I will return to later on.

For most of the people that I talked with, Tatars are Muslims. However, there was a rather 'diverse' understanding of what it involves 'to be Muslim'. It can include a variety of ways of practising religion, and a range of ways of experiencing it as a cultural phenomenon. According to Cesari (1998), there is a tendency among Western scholars to assume that Muslims are required to conform to Islamic Law because they are Muslims. This neglects the transformations in Islamic identity among the new generations that have been born in Europe and who are experiencing a process of secularisation which means that Islam is becoming increasingly a part of their private life. Also confirming what Vertovec (1998) described as cultural Muslim identity, Cesari considers that: 'for these young people (second or third generation of migrants in France) to define themselves as Arab or Muslim would represent a symbolic assertion which is not always connected with their everyday life, (...) To define themselves in France as Arab or Muslim does not mean that they are homesick but refers to their situation in France. In fact it is a reaction against discrimination' (1998: 29). The identification does not entail, as the author stresses, that they live as Muslims, since it is 'more symbolic allegiance' (ibid: 30); closely related with cultural values.

Alfiya for example was a very religious girl when she was younger. She used to go to the mosque and studied there, but now she has changed her mind because she finds it impossible to combine religiosity with the modern life style.

'My mother recommended it to me, and I also had a friend, and I was following her, and it was interesting at that point. But now, you know I am young, and to go to the mosque and to the disco- it is incompatible one with the other. If I behave like that, I will be embarrassed of it; that I read *Namaz*, for example, and went to the disco. And this is why for the meantime I decided to stay with the other, to go to the disco, and *Namaz* will come later on, when I am older.' (Alfiya)

What Alfiya expressed is probably one of the most difficult aims for the younger generation who find themselves caught between their willingness to adhere to religion on the one hand, and their desire to enjoy activities that are not always accepted by their religion, on the other.

Bulat is in his eleventh year at school, and like some of his classmates, he does not think of himself as a religious person. In fact he has never been to a mosque: 'I haven't been there, not even once. In theory I would like to go to

have a look' and when I asked him, why he had never been? He said: 'I don't have the time'. However, he thinks that Tatars are Muslims. Once again, time is presented as an impediment for practising religion. He also considers that it would be positive if they had a subject like religion in the school. 'It is necessary to teach religion, because the subject will prepare you for good behaviour. I mean in terms of discipline and all that, even if in a Russian school, they have two groups- Russians - are Christians and the second group are Muslims, something like that. The Koran is a necessity, it influences people's psychology.' (Bulat)

Vertovec (1998) also agrees that there is a general acceptance among young Muslims living in Britain, that they will become proper Muslims when they are older; an idea that was echoed repeatedly by everyone in both gymnásias in relation to mixed marriages. It indicates that religion will be an important issue when they get older, but probably not at the moment. It is not a denial of the relevance of religion. On the contrary, moreover, they perceive it as relevant and important for their lives, because by that they means that one can lead a respectable and decent life.

'(...) I think that there is something, (...) it's necessary to believe in something, this is what I think. My grandmother knew the prayers, she read the Koran. I respect her very much, she died long ago, but I think that she gave the basis (...) fairness (...) these roots of fairness, fairness; learning of what is kindness, perhaps I have got it from my grandmother. Maybe, (...) Very often I think about it, and all the time I remember, every time that I see some kind actions, that someone did something kind, for example; all the time I remember my grandmother. She talked a lot about that - you cannot do that, because God sees everything, God hears everything, if you do something unkind, or bad things, when I was a little girl - you can think that nobody sees you when you are doing something bad, and it will be like that, but God sees everything, hears everything, you cannot do that, - my grandmother said. But you know, perhaps it wasn't religiosity, but learning that gave me something, anyway, I learned kindness, gentleness, understanding, perhaps, (...) my grandmother always instructed me to be correct, if it was necessary to go and help. If someone has problems, you have to be always close, - she told me. And she brought me examples from the Koran. I was really a little girl- seven, maybe, I was five or six years old. I remember these lessons from her, I think about my grandmother's lessons, lessons from the Koran, in the evenings she read and translated them for me. And now I returned [to religion], I would like to read the Koran myself. ' (Russian language teacher)

For this Russian language teacher, religion was always there, since her childhood; but perhaps in a semi-conscious state; and only now, at over fifty

years old, is she trying, as she said, to return to it; especially because religion is associated with positive values and attitudes.

Zulfiya, one of the history teachers said to me that she believes in God but she is not a practising believer. Her family celebrate religious festivities because it is something that is part of people's everyday life, even if they are not religious. Zulfiya and her family take part because they do not teach anything negative, only kindness.

In Cesari's words:

'Islam is an ethic, a source of moral values giving significance to their life but without implication for their practice. (...) In this case, the collective dimension of Islamic membership is moderated by an individual logic. But this individualisation of Islam is constrained by two things: circumcision and the prohibition on intermarriage. (...) Their opposition (to intermarriage) is not justified by religious arguments but by cultural ones; they reason that there would be a cultural incompatibility between husband and wife and the risk of domination of one by the other.' (1998: 31)

There is a remarkable correspondence between these ideas and what we observed in the previous section concerning endogamous practices. Nevertheless, alongside the parallels and commonalities, there is a considerable difference between the Tatar case and the French migrants. First of all, for most of the Tatar pupils that I conversed with, their parents were in a quite similar situation to them in relation to religion, because they had never experienced an 'orthodox' Islamic way of life. In the case of the French migrants that Cesari describes, the life of parents of the new generations of Muslims who live in France, was strongly governed by the Islamic Law. Consequently, there is a generational 'conflict' regarding religious perception and understanding. Whereas in the case of Tatar pupils, most of their parents had very little previous experience of religion since all of them were educated in a Soviet society. Present circumstances are rather different but interestingly the current dynamics in both cases are somewhat similar though for different reasons: 'over-religiosity' in one case, and in the other, 'absence of religiosity'.

There are some parallels between the Tatar people's situation and that of immigrants in France. Russian culture, like French culture is dominant and Tatar people, like French Muslim immigrants, stress their Muslim belonging, not as a religious belief system, but as a cultural claim, a response to cultural marginalisation and discrimination. The major difference is that Tatars did not

migrate to the current Republic of Tatarstan, but Russians ‘colonised’ them. The peripheral status applies to the Tatar people not as a numeric minority, but a symbolic one. They are a minority because their language and culture was relegated to the margins rather than to the centre. This status affects their self representations, and consequently their belief and belonging.

‘(...) a person should be developed in many directions. And also – religion- because it is our own religion, national, it has to be shown, shown and developed, and a person needs to know his own religion (...)’
(Nailia)

This notion of ‘*national religion*’ is one that I consider to be the leitmotiv of the present establishment and development of Islam in the gymnásias’ environment. Musina¹⁹⁷ used the term of *religious nationalism* to describe the process that is taking place in Tatarstan: ‘when I am talking about religious nationalism, I am referring to national emotions revived through religious forms; but religion is just a form’. The religious growth that started during the 1980s (Musina 1998), the process of *re-Islamisation* (ibid.), is not so much a religious re-emergence, as the expression of national identity, under the specific form of religious nationalism since according to her, the young generation in particular do not know the bases of Islam.

According to research carried out by Musina (1997) between the 1960s and 1980s, most of the Tatar population defined themselves as ‘indifferent’ to religion (ibid:212). In 1990 20.4 per cent of youth between 20-24 years old living in cities, defined themselves as religious, and 36.7 per cent were unsure. In 1994, 53 per cent described themselves as religious and 61 per cent of 25-29 year-old (ibid.) However, the resurgence in the republic is not merely religious, because according to her ‘not even 20 per cent of the Tatars adhere to Muslim principles, although probably 60 per cent in the cities and 80 - 85 per cent in the villages consider themselves to be believers’. According to Musina there is something like a process of ‘privatisation’ amongst religious people, in the sense that people do not consider that they have to follow all the precepts: ‘they have their own understanding of religion’.

From Musina’s point of view, religious and national traditions are very closely connected and intertwined and it is almost impossible to make a clear

¹⁹⁷ An ethnographer from the Institute for Historical Studies of Tatarstan. Interview 5.03.1998.

distinction between them. According to her data, almost half of the urban Tatar population mentioned religious festivities when they were actually referring to national festivities. Under present circumstances, she says, religion has become an element of ethnic identification (ibid.) since Islam has acquired legitimacy as an ideological pillar of Tatar nationalism. Islamic rebirth in the Republic's ideology is perceived by nationalist movements and organisations as a possibility for the revitalisation of Tatar people and their culture. According to Musina, (1997) it is possible to observe in Tatarstan not only *political Islamisation*, but also *Islamic politicisation*.

The complexity of this relationship between religions and other discourses is illustrated by the following case. On one occasion I had the opportunity to talk with a teacher of Arabic (from gymnásia No.2). The first time that I saw Nailia, she was outside the classroom surrounded by a dozen pupils, all very small and noisy, running in the corridor. She was in the middle of that 'disorder', wearing a very long dress, covering her whole body from neck to ankle, and wearing a headscarf, something not very commonly seen in the school, nor in Kazan. A few women dress in this manner but it is not very common.¹⁹⁸ I immediately approached her, and she agreed wholeheartedly to meet the next week for a conversation.

One of the first things that really shocked me was Nailia's age, extremely young, from my point of view. I was expecting to find an older woman, from the countryside who had learned Arabic in her early years. To my surprise, the reality was rather singular. She was only twenty. This increased my surprise, because I was aware that she was young, but never imagined her to be so young as it was already her third year of teaching in the school. She was also a student in the Islamic Institute¹⁹⁹, Arabic Faculty, and

¹⁹⁸ Nailia remembers how when she first moved to Kazan people stopped her in the street and asked her who and what she was, what religion was that, and why did she have to wear a scarf.

¹⁹⁹ The Islamic Institute is a fine building near Freedom Square, right in the center of Kazan. When we arrived to the Institute we had to wait in a queue in order to be able to get in, and there were some controls at the main doors. The building was old and beautifully restored. Nailia explained to me that you cannot get inside the building without permission or an invitation. At the main doors there were two uniformed men with weapons and bullet-proof vests, very intimidating with a list of all the students' names. But the interesting thing was, that at the end, it was more difficult to get out than to get inside the building. On my way out they were asking for everyone's passports and checking the list, and I did not have my passport and I was not on the list either. Even Nailia suggested I should go to talk with a teacher, that will accompany me to the main door and who would have a word with the two friendly boys.

she was in her fourth year of a five year course. But that was not all, she was simultaneously studying for a pedagogical degree, and she was also in her fourth year of that. In addition, she has a diploma that allows her to teach Arabic.

Her skills were in evidence on another occasion, I went to a conference on the promotion of Islam, there was a spokesman from an institute in London, an Iraqi man who has been living in the UK for the last twenty years²⁰⁰ and I met Nailia there with some girls from her course. This person was also giving a speech the same evening in a mosque, and when I arrived to the mosque I saw her again, and she helped me a lot as the entire speech was in Arabic and she translated it for me.

In Nailia's words, she teaches Arabic because pupils in Tatar gymnásias need it, not only because it is a subject, but also because it is the language of the Koran, and according to her, if you bring together all Muslims, it would be the common language that they would all speak. It will help pupils because:

'they are Tatars, they are all Muslims, they read the Koran, it will help them to understand what are they asking of Allah, the prayers. For example, they pray in Arabic, all the prayers are in Arabic, we don't have them in Tatar or in any other languages, only in Arabic. And now, for example, they pray the way their great-grandparents did, grandparents pray, now they are helping them; -so you say this in the prayers- so they can correct them.' (Nailia)

Nevertheless, most of the pupils did not show great enthusiasm for learning Arabic, and most of them stressed that they would prefer to know more European languages.

Nailia is a tremendously pragmatic young woman, regardless of her spiritual and religious side. This is noticeable when she speaks. For instance, in relation to the debate on changing the Cyrillic alphabet in Tatar language, according to her, it is regressive, a step back because pupils already can read perfectly well with the Cyrillic alphabet. She also maintains that at the moment

²⁰⁰ The promotion of Islam in the republic is nowadays encouraged and supported by the government, including a multitude of seminars and conferences. This time the seminar was inside the Ministry of Education building, and the speech was about the lack of people who study the Religion of Islam, what he called the science of Islam. According to him, the main reason is because the 'strong' pupils want to study medicine or engineering, and only not very good students opt for the science of Islam, with the consequent connotations.

they do not have the financial support for a change of such magnitude. To change all the literature, to republish all the books, or to prepare qualified cadres, and good teachers. She considers that the Tatarstan economy would not sustain such a change. Neither is she very enthusiastic about changing to Arabic, again for economic reasons. ‘ Perhaps in my heart I would like to change Tatar to Arabic, so children will learn it more easily. But I have also in my head the economic side, I think it’s impossible, any change to the right or to the left, will affect the country’s economy. I just cannot imagine it, perhaps I am a materialist, a realist, I just look at it realistically, rather than any other way’. (An interesting self-definition for a religious person!)

Nailia comes from an intelligentsia family (in her words), and they speak Russian at home. She studied in an English lycée, rather than in a Tatar gymnásia because at that time none of them were available.²⁰¹ When she was younger she went to the *medrese* and learned Turkish. She says that she never had any pressure from her family, because the norm in her house is - ‘if you want to do something, do it; if you do not want to, do not do it’. When I asked Nailia if her mother was a religious person her words were: ‘Religious?, how should I put it; now she is more concerned with her work, she has her genetics’ laboratory, this is why, as I said, she doesn’t go, because according to Islam you have to cover yourself, yes? But let’s say that she wears more secular clothes in the clinic’.

One of Nailia’s grandmothers was a very religious woman and she was (in Nailia’s words) a very big person in the village where she lived; she knew Persian and she had always been an example for her. She remembers that especially when she was in the school, it was quite difficult to be different. ‘Nobody in my town was wearing a headscarf, or read *Namaz*, or fasted. It was difficult at school, when everyone was eating and they also forced us in to the canteen, when you are fasting’.

According to Nailia, Arabic was always alive in their family:

‘Arabic? It was always in our family, because of our religion, because we have Islam, and all our prayers and everything are in Arabic, so my grandmother read for me - from childhood, I observe the books she read, how to read them, because before they wrote in Arabic and also read in

²⁰¹ Her mother is a doctor and her father an engineer, both typically Soviet professions. Her brother also lives in Kazan, studying medicine.

Arabic, we have this alphabet, so I have it from my childhood, and afterwards I started to go to the mosque, and get deeper into religion.’
(Nailia)

But Nailia is not ashamed of her difference. She easily incorporates her religiosity within the school, and I have no doubt that many teachers in the Tatar gymnásia perceive it as a positive influence for the children. ‘They support it, but more with their heart, it is difficult (for the society) to understand yet.’ One of the times when she should say her prayers she is in the school (midday), so she quickly locks her class-room, says her prayers, because according to her it takes no longer than two minutes, and then she opens the class-room again. I do not think this is very common practice in the school, and literally, she is the only one who does it. The pupils do not react negatively to it; rather, they are curious and ask her many questions. Her pupils are only in their fourth and fifth year, and while religious practice is incorporated in their perception of the school it does not necessarily impinge on their lives. The teacher does not pray with the pupils, but they can see how she locks the door, says her prayers and opens the door again. It is a symbol of crossing the line between school’s public and private life, which also takes place within the public school sphere, but the division is represented by a locked or unlocked door. Without being a discipline, nor a direct message, religion is part of the everyday life of the school.²⁰² In Nailia’s Arabic classes, they study Arabic grammar, they choose different dialogues and texts that develop their conversational skills, and then compare them with the Koran; there is regular juxtaposition of daily life and the Koran. ‘Because it should be a unitary whole, Islamic religion- it is a way of life. However because hitherto they were separated here, we are forced to compare them as two parts, two different parts’.

Nailia understands that her way of life is still a marginal option in Kazan, however she does not cease to try, and as a teacher in the school she makes an effort to explain to pupils her approach. Officially they do not study religion at school, but they analyse the Koran during Arabic classes. For Nailia

²⁰² Muslim people have two main festivities, *Aidel'-Akha*, and *Kurban-Bairam*, and for these days they select the best pupils from the school, a small group, and they go to the mosque. They meet with children from all over Kazan and the Republic, they organise tea with cakes (that people cooked) for everyone, they share them, they invite each other and they also play different games.

religion *is a way of life*, the way of life that she has chosen, and the way of life that she will also try to transmit to her pupils.²⁰³

Hence, the political claim that religion is separated from the general education, does not always correspond with concrete and specific institutional practices. As explained by Nailia and other teachers, religion cannot be separated from other subjects because it is a philosophy of life. This is also why Nailia thinks it is inappropriate to separate religion from the government. Moreover, Tatar gymnásia No.2, contrary to state policy, reproduces and transmits religious education inside the school, though probably not as a premeditated Machiavellian strategy, nor as an anti-government plot. It is because they cannot perceive the syllabus and religion as separate and divided. They do not need to have a separate and isolated subject called 'religion'; since religion is a way of life, relevant to all the subjects and disciplines, and cross-cutting all aspects of school life.

'We have summer camps - purely Muslim, - each child stays for fifteen days at school, they eat here, interact with everyone, but they don't stay overnight here. They go back home, and constantly study Islam, Arabic, as preparatory, - that is to say, they are in their third year, to their fifth year, - they also study something else. It is a day camp at the end of the year (...) It takes place here, they invite teachers from the mosque, they provide literature (...) It is even interesting for them to wear a headscarf, to try how it feels, they constantly take them to different mosques, to excursions.' (Nailia)

Nailia explained that everything is in a rather informal manner, pupils can sit on the floor or in a circle, and pupils usually enjoy their time because they have the chance to come to the school but to be engaged in activities that are different from the usual ones. Religion, though not a school subject, is presented as a pleasant summer activity that they probably enjoy much more than normal classes, both because it is different and because it is something new.

'Everyday life is constantly influenced by religiosity, so many words when a person is talking, refer to religion. For instance when greeting, a person always greets in a religious way. Muslims don't greet in any other way, they say: *Salaam aleikum - Aleikum salaam*. Then they will ask

²⁰³ After more than an hour and a half of conversing, when I asked her if the school organised any religious education, she just said: 'For pupils, permanently; religious education is constant in Arabic language class'.

how are things going. But all the words, even in everyday life are from the Koran. That is to say, the Koran is already a complete subject, and in daily life they should know how to apply the Koran.’ (Nailia)

When I asked Nailia if her main purpose was to teach them Arabic language or to teach them to read the Koran, in order to understand it, she answered: ‘The main purpose- is to educate a good Muslim, I mean, that they will read, understand and practise. I mean, as our prophet said, that to believe- it is not only in the heart, in the words, but also in actions. So three pillars of belief- word, action and heart.’

Her teaching of Arabic is especially focused on Muslim people, and she thinks that if she had to teach Arabic in a different school and different environment, she would have to change her whole methodology. Therefore, she does not just teach Arabic, it is an entire package involving Arabic for Muslim pupils. However, none of the pupils that I conversed with, seemed to incorporate the ‘action’ pillar that Nailia referred to. It is possible that the panorama will be rather different with the new generations that Nailia is teaching, the pupils who are now only in their fourth year. Their approach in six years time may be different from what the current fifteen or sixteen year old pupils described to me. However the pupils that I talked with, are generally a long way from achieving the three pillars that Nailia is talking about. My impression was that religion was incorporated in their discourse, as a tradition, as something that they recognised as a requirement more willingly than as genuine practice incorporated in everyday life.

For Nailia there is a religious renaissance under way,

‘because before people were like hungry people, who did not get anything, they were fed morally, but their soul was empty, the soul was... was empty. Why? Because there wasn’t anything religious, to fill the soul. (...) There wasn’t, I mean, people were forced to believe that there was Stalin, Lenin. This is your main God. People believed in a strong and horrible tyrant, they were ashamed of not doing that; that someone will hear that you said something bad about them. But now here – there is freedom of belief- to believe in God, you are welcome, nobody will force you, will persuade you, only if it comes from within you.’(Nailia)

Nailia believes that she has a mission, and she wants to carry it out, to guide these pupils. Nevertheless, she also has some ‘personal’ ambitions; something that I always thought would be inappropriate for an extremely

dedicated religious person. She likes the school, and she really enjoys teaching, but she is not one hundred percent devoted to this job; she also would like to have a job with more opportunities to move on, to improve her position, to have (paraphrasing her) continuous development. She would like to work in a place related to economics, finance, and business or banking, the subjects that she studies in the Islamic institute. Her degree covers three areas: theology, jurisprudence and economics ²⁰⁴; and after one more year she will be a theologian- philosopher, or theological philosopher.

Nailia is absolutely sure that within about two years pupils will have more hours of Arabic because this process started only recently, and there is a growing proportion of people becoming interested in religion. She thinks they are on a learning curve, it is new for them, but in her opinion the situation will change for the better. It is true that there has been an increasing interest in religion since the 'collapse' of the Soviet Union, and even some of the most pro-Soviet and atheistic propagandists are now becoming involved in religion. For many people religiosity is only in its earliest stage. Some of them have previous experiences from their childhood, and associate religion with their grandmothers. Others are making a serious effort to understand the doctrine and the rules of behaviour. Others are just incorporating it as another tradition or festivity to celebrate.

'Yes, [we celebrate] out of curiosity, respect. In general out of respect we are trying to celebrate all the festivities. But I suppose, not as adequately as is described in Islam, and all that. But in general - yes we are following them.' (Liaisan's mother)

Among the middle aged generations it is quite common to hear expressions like, 'we are trying (...) To the extent that it's possible, we are still very underdeveloped, don't know details, we are only beginners. Only a few years, but in general we are trying.' (Liaisan's mother)

It is already possible to observe one or two generation gaps - how the current younger generations are more familiar with religion than their parents or grandparents (especially those who grew up in a city during Soviet times where religion was practically absent). However there is almost a 'desire', or

²⁰⁴ All the subjects are in Russian because the teachers do not know enough Tatar to give lectures on finance. The condition to be accepted in the Institute is to be Muslim, but this is something that does not apply to teachers, only to students.

perhaps a ‘necessity’, to try to achieve a certain closeness to religion, since for most of the Tatar people that I encountered, and as Musina’s (1998) research confirmed, Islamic membership is linked with Tatar membership. Islam constitutes an important dimension of what they consider to be ‘Tatar’. This form of Islamic belonging has little in common with the fundamentalist ‘spectre’, although it is occasionally strategically manipulated by some nationalist discourses in the republic; discourses that at the moment do not escape the confines of the most radical nationalist circles.

5.7 Mythic enemies, patriotism and the ‘dream of independence’

‘(...) Only national schools, the national environment... only in the national environment are there dances, there are also songs, there is also pride for their people, without pride there is no patriotism, without patriotism there is no country, there is no future for this country.’ (Gaifullin)²⁰⁵

‘Do you know, I also forgot to say, the difference with the other school, where we studied before, why I also like this school, as well as my daughter - to some extent they teach the sense of patriotism! To the *rodina* [homeland], to the republic... I think the girls also have that, and if we have the opportunity, I suppose, we will... we will go somewhere else because of the knowledge, but in the end, I would like for them to stay here.’ (Liaisn mother)

Language, traditions, respect and love for your mother tongue, your people, are duties that pupils acknowledge, or should acknowledge; they are part of their life and of what they describe as patriotism. As well as being perceived as a positive attribute, it is also naturalised in pupils’ discourse. Patriotism is not merely a passive and unconditional love or respect, but the motive to improve, spread and elevate the language and traditions. Only then will the goal be achieved; only then Russians will also start to value the language and consequently respect Tatar people.

‘Of course I don’t think that there is a difference what language you speak, it is just that we should have some patriotism, (...) Love for your mother tongue and your people, to try and establish it and give it a place of pride. Russians will also value it.’ (Nadir)

²⁰⁵ Minister for Education between 1990 and 1997. Interviewed 14.09.2000, when he was the Vice Chancellor of the Tatar Humanistic Institute.

The assumption is that if only you respect yourself, 'Others' will also respect you. The respect takes a concrete form: love for your language and your people; like a life-pledge or solemn promise, almost as a rite of passage that all pupils have accepted and incorporated during their stay at school. It is a form of patriotism that does not only emphasise the group's attributes and characteristics, but also expresses the conviction of superiority. 'They said that Tatars cannot write. I think Tatars were more literate than Russians'. (Renat)

There is a hope, a long term dream, a strong aspiration that one day, the empire will assign more 'space' to the colony; that one day, life will be better and Tatars will be in the same position as the Russians are. Meanwhile pupils and teachers are ready to claim and to promote their Tatar belonging, as something separate and different from Russia. '(...) One day the empires will anyway... fall down, but only not in our life time'. (Tatar language teacher). It is not about short term or immediate success. For many people, as for this teacher, it will always be a dream, since she is not expecting to see it. Nevertheless, regardless of its achievement or not, the dream reinforces the sense of unity and commonality inside the group. It is a common project and aim to pursue.

A strong sense of attachment to the territory is confirmed by other sources. According to sociological research conducted in the Russian-Tatar gymnasium No. 65²⁰⁶, Tatarstan was identified as their *rodina* (homeland) by most of Tatars and pupils of mixed families, whereas half of the Russian pupils indicated Tatarstan, and half of them a 'complex' homeland, what is also known as small *rodina*, Tatarstan, and big *rodina*, Russia (ibid: 10).²⁰⁷

Furthermore, 29.2 per cent of Tatars consider themselves to be patriots, 29.2 per cent do not, 15.4 consider unnecessary to be patriots, and 26.1 per cent find it difficult to answer the question (ibid: 11).²⁰⁸ These numbers

²⁰⁶ Iazykovye i etnokul'turnye orientatsii shkol'noi molodezhi v kontekste sovremennykh sotsial'no-obrazovatel'nykh tendentsii.. Kazan' 1999: Institut povysheniia kvalifikatsii i perepodgotovki rabotnikov obrazovaniia respublik Tatarstan. Laboratoriia sotsiologicheskikh isledovaniia.

²⁰⁷ Amongst Tatars 72.3 per cent say Tatarstan and 4.6 per cent Russia; mixed marriages pupils, 72.7 per cent indicated Tatarstan and 9.0 per cent Russia. And amongst Russians 41.3 per cent included both Tatarstan and Russia (small and big *rodina*) and 46.6 per cent only Russia (ibid:10).

²⁰⁸ Whereas 37.3 per cent of Russians and 45.4 per cent of pupils from mixed marriages do not feel it (ibid:11).

indicate that the notion of 'homeland' is strongly related to ethnic groups, but not symmetrically. Whereas some Russian pupils perceive Tatarstan as their *rodina*, the number of Tatars who perceive Russia as their *rodina* is significantly lower. The sense of patriotism is higher among Tatars and pupils of mixed marriages than among Russians. I should add that in all the various conversations that I had with pupils from Tatar gymnásias, not one pupil presented Russia as his or her *rodina*; they all expressed a strong sense of patriotism. On some occasions the sentiment was expressed directly by use of the word 'patriotism'; at other times it was by reference to the relation between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Tatarstan. The 'wish' was frequently emphasised, real or unreal, to achieve complete independence from Russia. It was often expressed as open and 'unquestionable loyalty' to Tatarstan, rejecting the option of moving abroad for good, regardless of the economic and social crisis currently being faced. Thus the image of Tatarstan is often idealised and reinforced by teachers and parents.

I asked Zulfiya and Albina what would they answer if they were abroad and someone asked them where are they from? Both of them insisted that they would never say that they were from Russia, and they would always respond that they were from Tatarstan. Zulfiya said that even if she needed five hours, she would explain where Tatarstan was, so people could learn.

'When I went to Turkey, I said that I was Tatar, but they didn't understand, and they said: Kazakh? But I replied: No, Tatar. Of course, many people don't know. But I will explain that Tatars are a people, and of course I will not feel embarrassed of being Tatar.' (Alfiya)

Alfiya also added that even if Europeans do not know who Tatars are, 'they will find out soon'. Here is evidence of a myth of redemption and suffering (Schöpflin 2000:91) that claims Tatars are recovering from a mournful history - a situation that will be redeemed.

'We are so different from them, even if we speak Russian, we are different in spirit. I am not going to betray myself and call myself Russian.' (Zulfiya)

These young generations do not want to become politicians or dedicate their time to politics, nevertheless they all have very negative opinions about the Russian President and are very positive about the Tatarstan President. They have similarly strong opinions about the relationship between the Republic and

Moscow and they are absolutely sure what Tatarstan independence means.

‘I think if Tatarstan separates from Russia, everything will be different. Because we have such a strong dependency on Russia, on its politics (...) But perhaps one day, somehow we will be a separate state and everyone will acknowledge us as Tatarstan, not as part of the Russian Federation, but straightaway as Tatarstan. And Tatar language will be the most important language, and all Russians will be able to speak in Tatar (...)’ (Zulfiya)

However, not everyone agrees that achieving Tatarstan independence should be an aim. For instance, Liaisan says: ‘I think there is no way we can become independent because we are in the middle of Russia, there is no way that we can get out of it. They can only drown us, let’s say; we are a small state. I don’t think there is any way we can be independent although we have sovereignty, but it is only on paper, we cannot exist separately.’

This opinion was commonly expressed. Some pupils have quite a realistic attitude, and although they would like to be an independent republic, they do not think that it is a very realistic option. However, they do not deny the wish, even if it is not an achievable goal. ‘Of course, we would like to see Tatarstan as a totally independent state, but I don’t know, in the end, geopolitically it is in the heart of Russia, I think it will be very difficult.’ (Gulnara)

Most of the opinions that I heard expressed strong disappointment with Russian policies, and in general in the relationship between both sides, Kazan-Moscow.

‘Of course it is dreadful. For example, we give to Russia our oil for nothing, or to other parts of the country, for example our mineral resources are given away for some peanuts, even though we could process them here and sell them for a higher price. And with this money we could pay our salaries to our parents, but now we have such a situation, salaries aren’t paid for six months at a time, and people cannot live (...)’ (Lilia)

Guzel feels that Tatarstan is part of the Russian Federation, but:

‘I don’t want to consider it like that, but I am forced to, because whether you like it or not, we are part of the Russian Federation, the Republic depends on the Russian Federation (...)I think that of course, we should be independent, but we will not be able to be independent in a short period of time, because we don’t have anything that is ours - literally nothing... It will be better, of course, if we would be independent, but we

don't have such opportunities, there aren't the conditions for independence. I think that now and in the longer term anything can happen, but I don't know what will happen with the Russian Federation- everything is getting worse, decline, consequently Tatarstan is also following the Russian Federation.' (Guzel)

Thus the pupils can see that the dream of independence has mythical status and cannot always be visualised as a real option for the foreseeable future.

At some point in our conversation I asked Zulfiya (history teacher) whether she thought current pupils have a sense of patriotism or not, to which she responded:

'Yes. I try and introduce such a conversation, on purpose, I try to confuse them - final year pupils - on purpose, to see how they will get out of this puzzlement? Children, I told them, you can see: today here, we have a crisis in the country, a breakdown, it is difficult, it is lasting many years, we cannot find the direction in which we should go. It is becoming more and more difficult to live. I said, perhaps, you should leave? Somewhere abroad, where it is easier to live, perhaps you can get your education over there or live there (...) No, we will not leave our country, this is our *rodina* - children say to me - This is our *rodina*, no, it's not right what you are saying, we will not leave. And how we will build up this country, recreate our country? We can go somewhere to study - they also say- they compare universities, faculties, and they say that in many aspects our institutes' curricula give them more knowledge (...) I will study here. The level abroad is very low; we have anyway, very good experts. I asked them, because there are some very bright pupils, are you planning to go abroad to study? - No, we will get the knowledge here.' (Zulfiya, history teacher)

It is difficult to know what she was expecting to hear, if she was waiting to hear a 'confirmation' of her own ideas, or pupils saying what they really think, or what they think she wants them to say. It is not clear if pupils are protecting themselves 'inside the group' by claiming to share all the same ideas, because even if somebody were to disagree, maybe this is not the right context to express it. According to Zulfiya this is what most of the pupils think. Finally, she concluded: 'I consider, how to say it, that I am happy that they think like that of their *rodina*, even when the situation is not very good'. She is rather optimistic about the future, and an example that she used to illustrate it was that they had began to receive their monthly salaries on time; 'it is almost normalised because we are expecting this month's salary'. (What she considered 'positive', in many places would just be defined as 'normal', never

as 'positive'.)

In the history class, very often they tend to talk about the relation between the Russian Federation and the republic, a situation that she thinks is quite difficult. 'There are many unresolved questions, (...) In relation to legal questions, there are unanswered questions, it seems that this is our country's destiny. And pupils say that the main laws don't operate here, they understand that perfectly.'

They seem to be aware of the situation, but nobody wants to become a politician or be involved in politics, (something that teachers and pupils confirmed), unless it is something related to international relations or diplomacy, representing Tatarstan in the international arena. But all (without exception) denied having any interest whatsoever in internal politics, a 'game' that they do not appear to take very seriously, largely because every day they can observe on the television some new political scandals. These generations do not trust politics anymore since many of them (according to Zulfiya) are aware that 'political ideas' are the reason why they have to endure the current circumstances. Most of the pupils have little confidence in what politicians can actually do.

'Our government is like a puppet, they wouldn't do anything. All of the government, they are like a doll, like a puppet in the Russian government's hands. Whatever they order, they do it. They would not change anything.' (Amir)

According to Zulfiya, they do not want to study international relations simply because they will get the opportunity to travel abroad, or because it is one of the most prestigious degrees at the moment. In her words the reason is because 'they want to participate and take part in the process of decision-making for their country. This is what is interesting, and this is what they are interested in.'²⁰⁹

One of the things that attracted my attention was the security and confidence that pupils seemed to display in relation to what I would consider a

²⁰⁹ My stay in Kazan coincided with the war in Yugoslavia, and when she mentioned to the pupils that I came from England, (actually I did not say England to her, I said I came from the United Kingdom), pupils did not like it and they said: 'they are pro NATO, they are supporting America'. Frankly, at that moment I thought that it was a rather quick reaction, bearing in mind that they were not interested in politics!

quite delicate issue in Kazan, and generally in the old USSR, namely, any possible plans to live abroad. Many of them seemed to have a realistic attitude, being aware that it is not so simple to do. Some of them would not mind leaving; but as someone said to me 'only wealthy people leave, so what is the point'.

Liaisan also said that she could move abroad, to England, America, or Australia, but not to Africa; but she will never leave for good. 'Because here is my own city. Here, even if there is nothing interesting, is where I was born and what I am used to. I lived all my life here. I will always want to come back here'.

Also Shamil's father stressed: 'I think it is possible to go there where it is possible improve the level of your education. But don't hang on there permanently.... Go to study and come back'.

Lilia's mother is not against her children visiting another country for a while:

'(...) Everyone should live in their *rodina*, in their place. But to go abroad, to have a look, study, get some practice, and see the world, yes please; for example, I don't say to my kids study and live abroad, life is very good over there, it is very good to live there, and here life is very bad; I don't say that at all. It depends on the person, if he tries, he will also have a very good life here. If not, if they are not going to make the effort, they aren't going to live well there either. It also depends on people's situation.' (Lilia's mother)

Most frequently, the rejection of the idea of leaving for good was associated with their sense of patriotism, their inability to live somewhere else outside the republic, but the idea of the 'homeland' was given by pupils as the main reason; 'I cannot live outside of my Tatarstan'.

However, the option of leaving for good is not directly associated with an absence or less strong sense of patriotism, there is not always a straightforward correlation. For example Amir is willing to leave for good because:

'I don't mean Tatarstan (to leave), but Russia, I would leave Russia... we are under nazi Russia, we cannot grow up by ourselves, we cannot use our oil for our country, for the development of our country, this is also why we have.... A large number of unemployed... people are poorer in Russia.... This is why I would like to leave, possibly for ever, I will

come to visit my parents, and I will also try to take my parents out from Russia to a more civilised country.’ (Amir)²¹⁰

For example Elmira also seems to be very tired of the situation, and she shows very little enthusiasm about the prospects for change.

‘No, I don’t believe that all this will change, because if you look at history, very rarely did they live well in Russia. It was never like progress. I don’t know. It’s difficult to believe that something will change during my lifetime. I would like to move somewhere else to live, only because I’m very uncomfortable here. Of course I am not denying that, I have a very good life, my parents are very nice, we live in good conditions, they support me, but I also would like to gain some independence, I suppose. I like to meet different people, different nationalities, from other countries. I really liked it in England. Italians, Spanish, Germans; it was a very friendly group, and we all spoke English, I liked it.’ (Elmira)

(Despite Elmira’s interest in meeting European people, her curiosity towards Russians was completely non-existent.)

‘But of course, nowadays young people are encouraged to leave, but I think it is still possible to change something here, it is not going to be a crisis all the time, some of it depends on us, not only on the government. We can change our future ourselves towards the best direction, there is going to be some movement in some direction.’ (Bulat)

On some occasions, and for some pupils, the idea of leaving was perceived as betrayal of their ‘country’, a disloyalty to their duty as Tatars. Like knights having to defend their castle, it involved a romanticised perception of their responsibilities, or like Don Quixote visualising monsters instead of windmills.

However Bulat is not very sure that at the moment Tatarstan would survive without the support of another country:

‘To some extent, Tatarstan would not survive if it were to become a sovereign Republic, without depending on any other country. I think that we are not ready for that yet. For autonomous development, let say, we need time. But working with –Turkey, with America; we have dealings, how to say it, shares of corporations are out in the international market, and of course, they are not very profit-making, this is why the financial situation of Tatarstan still depends on the Russian Federation.’ (Bulat)

²¹⁰ When I asked him about the army, he said: ‘I am not planning to go to the Russian army...’.

One of the most interesting conversations that I had in this school was with a history teacher, a woman who had been working in the school since 1987. She is quite talkative, quite emotional on some occasions, and it was difficult to follow her because she flitted from one subject to another, or left the sentences unfinished. Pupils had given me prior warning so I did not find it unexpected. (On some occasions you had to almost imagine, or assume, what she was trying to say.)

‘It is necessary to go by a civilised way, as we say, it is possible to do it gradually, not at once, even if we go slowly, there is some movement. Even that is slow, not instantaneously ...since 1552 we are... almost... established this, and immediately in three or four years, in ten years we cannot do it. It will come in the future.’ (History teacher)

She does not say it openly, and I can only speculate on the exact meaning of her words. She probably wanted to say that better times will come, a period when Russians will speak Tatar, (because this is what we were talking before), and they will demonstrate some interest or respect for Tatar culture. It will be a relationship between equals instead of unbalanced interaction. In response to the question what did she think about the relationship between Tatarstan and the Russian Federation, she said:

‘(...) As a historian... we had signed an agreement... But Russia of course, is trying to dictate... and Tatarstan is trying to incorporate an equilibrium, a balanced federal relationship. Tatarstan is trying but Russia doesn’t want to renounce, to cede. Russia still has these chauvinistic ideas - Russia has to rule. And Tatarstan little by little wants to become self-sufficient. Russia doesn’t want to leave it. We are trying gradually, slowly, by civilised means to gain all our rights. This is why the relationship looks like that. Of course it can be difficult, during agreement time. The agreement time is finishing, and Russia wants through any mechanism to keep Tatarstan, not leave it, but we still are dependent ... on paper, we are free only in words, independent, but in reality we depend on Russia a lot. In the economy everything is related, we don’t have absolute rights, we have a constitution, of course, but like that, economically we still depend on Russia. It is still difficult.’ (History teacher)

Furthermore, she complained about the taxation system, since from her point of view they pay too much to Moscow, and they do not get even a minimum part of what they pay; ‘we want to be absolute owners’. Finally, I asked her if she thought that Tatarstan’s situation would be better if they were

independent, to which she confidently repeated: 'Of course, of course'.

Certainly it is difficult to interpret these words, to draw the line between what she says as an historian and an expert on this topic, or what she says as a person directly involved, who just presents the 'idealistic' dream or wish that she probably grew up with. 'Here the crisis is not so bad as in Russia, here people work hard. In the villages people don't live so badly (...) our government is trying, is definitely trying (...) but of course, if we are free, a sovereign government, we will live better'.

However, she does not think that such a time will come soon, because in her words: 'people are not ready'. To which I ask, in what sense?:

'In what sense? We are too close to each other (...) Russians and Tatars, yes. Anyway, ... Russian children live in Russia, and their parents are here, and the same with Tatars. There are many Tatars living in Moscow. We are too close to one another. In many families the daughter is married to a Russian, or the son to a Tatar ... And myself, On the one hand, I don't have any desire to fight with them, to discuss, what do I need this for? This is why. It will not happen soon, I think. Because people are conscious; you need time for that, years, education, and then, all Europe is reunified, so why should we separate? What we will get from that? If I have the right to speak in my language, to study in my language, and I have my culture, I can show it, ... I am personally not, such a nationalist.'

(History teacher)

Nevertheless, five minutes before she considered that life would be much better if they separated from Russia, the symbolic or perhaps imagined 'ghost', the mythical enemy. As Khakimov²¹¹ stressed, people perceive Russia as a permanent enemy, synonymous with closing schools and oppression, because during Tsarist and Soviet times there was not enough room to develop Tatar culture. The myth of independence was widespread amongst pupils and teachers, and was expressed through a well-developed mythical discourse, and a commonly reproduced narrative about Tatarstan's future. It has a mythical quality because on some occasions they do not think that they could survive without Russia, they depend on Russia as much as they claim that Russia depends on them. They do not want to fight with their neighbours, they are too close to one another, and, as the history teacher stressed, people are not ready yet. But part of their sense of 'community' and 'belonging' is based on the

²¹¹ Rahpael S. Khakimov, State Adviser to President on Political Affairs, and Director of the Institute For Historical Studies of Tatarstan. Interviewed in 1998.

constructed ideal (whether mythical or realistic) of independence, a project for the future, that reinforces the group and is able to create a certain cohesion within the group.

At the end of a very long conversation with the history teacher we came back to the idea of independence and the relationship between Tatarstan and Russian Federation, I have to admit that her opinions became even more categorical, and strong anti -Russian statements became visible. She repeated again the same ideas as in the beginning, and then she added;

‘ (...) Russia still wants to present itself as an empire, but this is temporary. Since all the time we learn in history, empires cannot be maintained until the end, they have a period of time, and then they collapse, all empires collapsed, this is why it’s only temporary, it is not always going to be like that. And probably one day, the Russian Federation will understand that it is impossible to be an empire permanently. History has already demonstrated it to us, it is a law, whether you want it or not, an empire will collapse, it is not for ever, and new nations will emerge (...) We do not agree with the current policy, but as our President said, we will try to find a civilised way to solve the problem. For example Chechnya, they struggled, they killed each other, but they didn’t achieve anything, we don’t want the same happening. We don’t want to take this path because we have mixed marriages, we don’t want to destroy the families, we want to do it in a civilised way, through reforms, and agreements, we have an agreement, but in order to live peacefully and honestly, that is our motto.’ (History teacher)

I also asked her if the relations that they have with Moscow affect what they teach, and she stressed that ten years ago they used to have quite a lot of freedom and not many restrictions from Moscow. However, her last sentence was: ‘We have such an opportunity where education is concerned, we have it, but meanwhile we are part of the Federation, it is not an absolute one.’ Moreover she stressed that between what they taught before, and what they teach now, there is ‘a huge difference, now we give them the truth, how everything was, how everything was in 1552, how Christianisation came about, how they forced people to adopt this religion...(...)’

Tatar gymnásias do not only symbolise the possibility of overcoming the neglect of language, improving Tatar language, or creating a place where pupils can learn Tatar history and traditions. For many people, Tatar gymnásias are able to consolidate and reinforce Tatar *natsiia*, especially stressing the difference with Russian *natsiia*.

‘It is good that there are such schools as this, because somehow they keep the *natsiia* together. But the Tatar *natsiia*, is completely dissolved in Russia, and it’s as if it was all one, and in some way I would like to have some kind of *natsiia*, to keep it; I wouldn’t like to feel myself Russian.’ (Elmira)

When I asked Nailia what was her wish for the future, amongst the different things that she mentioned, one was that: ‘my country will improve its conditions, will not stay how it is now, but it will be better (...) I don’t know, I would like, I suppose, to be independent, autonomous, ... and ... somehow,... to obtain the resources in our country – that they will stay here and will be utilised; because they find them, send them somewhere else, and we only get harmful - not much result.’ (Nailia)

The myth of rebirth and renewal (Schöpflin 2000: 95) presents the idea of a new start, and, following Schöpflin, provides a way of legitimating change directly related with myths of foundation (ibid: 96). Such myths mark the new period with some special act or symbol. In the case of Tatarstan the bilateral agreement signed in 1994 between Moscow and Kazan can be perceived as the myth of foundation. It was an agreement, as Mujariamov ²¹² stressed, that possessed a symbolic meaning rather than a financial or juridical one; a symbol that Moscow and Kazan were able to find a peaceful agreement, a symbol of compromise and commitment rather than concrete decisions.

As Schöpflin (ibid.) has emphasised, the implicit and explicit message of the foundation myth is that afterwards everything will be different and ‘better’. It amounts to a project for the future, a project in which some pupils believe, and others appreciate as a mythical and not absolutely realistic objective.

As we have seen through this chapter, language, religion and patriotism constantly emerged in pupils’ and teachers’ representations, and they are strongly reinforced in Tatar gymnásias as the main support and characteristic of a particular interpretation and representation of Tatar identity. The institutional praxis manifested in both Tatar gymnásias creates and encourages static notions of an ethno-Tatar universe that pupils adopt and reproduce; praxis that not always contains inclusive aims. In that sense, Tatar gymnásias appear as a powerful medium for identity transmission and (re)formulation, with the ability to enunciate and diffuse what they consider as “needed”.

²¹² Professor in Political Science, interview 15.09.2000.

Although certain flexibility and transgression is also visible as a consequence of people's adaptation to ideological and socio-political modifications, unidirectionality is permanently emerging from the institutional discourse. Discourse that people and teachers did not aim to hide or dissimulate. Time after time, the same enunciative strategies and mechanisms of marking difference appeared through the conversations, a static representation of Tatar identity that Tatar gymnásias are encouraging and pupils and teachers are easily reproducing and accepting, and only on some occasions questioning and transgressing. The dynamic of transgression that shows certain 'tension' between the institutional discourse and pupils' and teachers' everyday life.

CHAPTER 6

Non-Tatar Gymnásias Discourse: The Other Side of the Coin

In the previous chapter we saw how ethno-Tatar segregation was one of the main features that characterised Tatar gymnásias' pupils everyday life; on the one hand, segregation inside the school, and on the other, segregation strongly promoted by pupils' parents. A context where Tatar language is romantically emphasised as a defining element of what they consider will consolidate 'Tatarhood'; a key element that brings together the past and the future.²¹³

I also tried to illustrate how Tatar culture is permanently presented as the main goal that two gymnásias are reinforcing and promoting within their centres, very often represented as a clear opposition to the Russian culture and people, rhetoric of Othering that is manifested through different dimensions and representations of everyday life. Religion, marriage, patriotism, and traditions are part of pupils and teachers discourse, however, the relation between discourse and praxis is not always as linear and 'orthodox' as pupils and teachers argue, leaving some room for transgressions; paradoxically combining the 'modern' and the 'traditional' in daily experiences.

The main purpose of this chapter is to present a comparative side, a description of two non-Tatar gymnásias, (No.9 and No.52) as the other side of what has been illustrated in the previous chapter. It is important to stress that it is not my purpose in this thesis to present both dimensions - discourses, in Tatar and non-Tatar gymnásias, merely as contrary or contradictory, or as a binary opposition; this is why, perhaps, the term reverse image should not be taken in its strictest sense in this context. Furthermore, I am not pretending to present a comparative image in ethnic or national meaning, since in gymnásia No.9 and No.52, almost half of the pupils and teachers are Tatars and half are Russian. This is why it is so important to stress, and make it clear from the beginning that the comparison is based and focussed in the centres, in their institutional dimensions, but not in ethnic or national terms. Nevertheless, both of them, ethnic and national dimensions, as we will see later on, are the key elements in the whole picture.

²¹³ Kayyum Nasiri (1825- 1902) was the first to raise the issue of preservation of the Tatar language, since he considered it to be an important element of Tatar identity. Nasiri was considered to be 'Tatar Lamonosov' or 'Tatar encyclopedist' in recognition of his contribution to Tatar culture development (Rorlich 2000: 65).

Through this chapter I will try to cover four different areas, the first one related to Tatar language, how Tatar language is incorporated in the centres and how pupils and teachers are reacting to this incorporation. The second one, shows how pupils and teachers define the relationship between Tatar and Russian populations, Russian and Tatar culture, and what role Russian culture plays in their life. Thirdly, I will dedicate some attention to pupils' and teachers' 'religiosity' and how they present themselves in terms of religion. Finally, the fourth dimension will be the notion of *rodina* (homeland), and patriotism, the way pupils and teachers represent what they call *rodina*, and what role Tatarstan and Russia play in this representation. All four dimensions that had been analysed in the previous chapter.

6.1 Absence of enthusiasm: Perceiving Tatar language as an imposition

'There was a period Russians were offended when people spoke Tatar in public transport. Nowadays they are not offended, or they don't show it; now they are forced to help their children.' (Emeritus teacher in the Republic of Tatarstan)²¹⁴

As we have seen in the previous chapter, Tatar language (in Tatar gymnásias) is part of their culture, their traditions, it is bonded and connected with their past and their ancestors. For pupils in Tatar gymnásias, Tatar language is a symbol and a characteristic of their group and their understanding of the notion of 'Tatarhood'; and Tatar language is not comparable to the study of English, French, or other languages that they may come across at school. Whereas for pupils from Non-Tatar gymnásias, (as we will see in this section), it is noticeable that there is a particular absence of cultural motivation; an attitude towards Tatar language that I will define as an *instrumental pragmatic interest*. Pupils and teachers live in Tatarstan and they are aware that there are two official languages, that they should know them both because it will probably 'help' them in their future. However, they are studying it without much interest or devotion. It is important to underline that what I call instrumental interest does not exactly correspond with Baker's (1992) distinction between *instrumental orientation* and an *integrative orientation*. According to this author, an instrumental motivation reflects pragmatic and

²¹⁴ Interview May 1999.

utilitarian motives; in terms that it will involve some benefits in the future. Whereas in this case, I use the notion of instrumental interest in relation with its compulsory character. That is to say, pupils are not always sure if Tatar language will represent any concrete and real benefit for their future, nevertheless, they all know that they have to study it, not because they want to, but because they have to. They understand that if they live in Tatarstan they should 'know' Tatar language; but not always they expect to get anything exceptional from it. For non-Tatar gymnásias' pupils, Tatar language is a formal school subject, and their attitude or approach to it, does not change from their attitude to other subjects, on some occasions, (as we will see) they are even less respectful.

One of the key problems that I detected was the lack of interest among non-Tatar gymnásias' pupils, any indications of a broad and open understanding of the reason why they should need to learn Tatar language. There is almost a lack of cultural respect and curiosity, little interest in questioning or recognising the unbalanced situation between the two languages. This is quite common attitude among peoples with a long history of cultural supremacy. Without doubt, it is an attitude that can cause substantial problems in the short term future. Problems expressed throughout: on the one hand, a cultural segregation among one sector of the population - Tatar speaking population; and on the other hand, a continuation of an absence of interest and respect to other cultures - an attitude that characterises some of the Russian population. Consequently, the final picture may not be as harmonious as some politicians would like to claim. Furthermore, it might be possible to predict latent and serious problems in the coming time. In other words, this may outcome a society that defines itself as a multicultural republic, but is not able to create the conditions to promote an educational environment portrayed by a tolerant and respectful attitude to other cultures.

Gardner's model indicates, different dimensions are involved in people's attitude to learning languages, including social and cultural background, individual differences, the context where language is acquired, but also bilingual proficiency, and cultural values and beliefs (Gardner 1985:147); some of them I will analyse in this section.

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, bilingualism has not yet become a concluded reality. According to Gizzatullina thesis (1999) the interest that pupils show to Tatar language does not depend completely on

pupils' nationality, there is a direct correlation between their interest to Tatar language and their success at school, the higher the pupil's general success is at school, then his or her interest in Tatar language, independently of their nationality is also higher. However, according to my research, there is a remarkable difference in pupils' attitude to Tatar language, depending whether they are studying in a Tatar or a non-Tatar gymnásia; consequently, I will have to add, pupils' interest in Tatar language is strongly related to the institutional environment and institutional support in learning and promoting the language.

Difference in attitude (as my research indicated) that should be presented in institutional rather than only in ethno-cultural terms. In other words, almost all pupils in both non-Tatar gymnásias, presented a rather similar discourse and attitude towards Tatar language, which I have defined as an instrumental approach; regardless whether they were Tatar or Russian. Whereas, as indicated in the previous chapter, in the two Tatar gymnásias, Tatar language was presented as a primordial characteristic that defines Tatar people. Therefore, it is necessary to dedicate some attention to the general discourse that each institution is promoting and adapting in relation to Tatar language.

According to sociological research carried out in Kazan in 1998²¹⁵ and the Tatar language teachers' point of view, the low interest in Tatar language is due to the absence of Tatar language requirement in everyday life, the low social prestige of Tatar language in society; and also rural teachers underlined, the difficulty of getting a higher education in Tatar language. To which it is necessary to add the Russian speaking atmosphere within the families. Furthermore, according to the research, Russian language first, a foreign language second, and Tatar language in third position, is the order in which pupils' preferences of languages, regardless of their nationality show up. This is confirmed by my own research in relation to the two non-Tatar gymnásias, but not in the two Tatar gymnásias. These results are strongly related to the way Tatar language is perceived and presented within every institution. In opposition to what we observed in the two Tatar gymnásias, in the context of gymnásia No.9 and No.52, Tatar language is conceived, very often, as an extra

²¹⁵ Tatarskii iazyk v shkolakh RT v kontekste sovremennykh sotsial'no-obrazovatel'nykh tendentsii: sostoianie, problemy, perspektivy . Kazan' 1998: Ministerstvo Obrazovaniia RT. Laboratoriia sotsiologicheskikh issledovaniy IPKRO RT.

subject that pupils are studying but are not really learning. It is seen to be a subject that is taking up the hours of other subjects, to the consequent detriment of the rest of the curriculum. It is considered to be an immature subject with an inadequate methodology, inadequately skilled teachers, and with little popularity amongst teachers and pupils. Paradoxically, it is a language that everyone seems to agree that they 'need' to know, because they live in Tatarstan, but a language that they do not see much 'use of'. Furthermore, it is a language that they do not think they will use in the near future. Because Tatar language is synonymous to a subject, but not to a possible medium for future interaction.

One of the main ideas that pupils and teachers were insisting on, was that they 'were forced' to study Tatar; an imposition that they did not have the chance to discuss or reject. 'It is sad to me, as a Tatar, that my mother's tongue is introduced by force'.²¹⁶

It is doubtful that the new generations will learn any Tatar language unless it is incorporated into the curriculum as a compulsory subject. It is even less likely that the new generations and the Russian population in general will make serious efforts to master the language. Therefore, one of the key questions is to discover mechanisms by which the government could introduce Tatar language into society by other means.

'You know, a pearl is so small, but looks as pretty as it is, if you blow it up, it will lose its attraction, its form, and the same here. It is unnecessary to try to find the big in the small, it is better if it is not much, but it is ours, beautiful, with charm, magnificent; whereas by force, they try to find in small people what doesn't exist, it is not the same, but I hope that human intelligence will succeed. If we compare Russian, Tatar and foreign literature (...) I will never find romanticism, sentimentalism, classicism and so on, in Tatar literature, and perhaps there is no need to try to find it in there, if there is no such thing, let's show what is there (...). Nationalism in the end is always a symbol of low culture, this is what I think, and it is necessary to think a bit, I think that with time, this is the first wave, and it will pass, and everything will come into its place, it is just necessary to wait.' (Russian language and literature teacher)

Russian language and literature teacher used a very nice metaphor, comparing Tatar people with a pearl, and she is probably quite right stressing

²¹⁶ One Russian language and literature teacher from gymnásia No.9 stressed that there was a very good Russian language teacher in the school who used to say this.

that there is no need to force things; nevertheless how do we define what is big and what is small? It is interesting that she says that nationalism is a symbol of low culture, because historically, Russia has enough in the way of its own indicators of nationalist policies and attitudes. It is likely from her perspective, however, that Russian nationalism does not represent a symbol of low culture, because of Russian classicism, romanticism and modernism. It is common among teachers to find evidence of the general belief that there are low and high cultures or, in other words, civilised and non-civilised, barbarian cultures. According to this representation Russian is the civilised and Tatar is the barbarian culture. The idea has been reinforced for many centuries and it is still accepted by some people.

In general terms, my impression is that there is a collective dissatisfaction with the way Tatar language is imparted in the school; furthermore, a significant number of teachers are absolutely convinced that pupils are not enjoying it; more precisely they dislike it.

‘Yes, they don’t like it. The younger children- are attending through obligation, but older children ... are disappointed, they say: Why do they give us so many hours of Tatar? (...)Tatar language - isn’t a working language yet [A language that people use]. Mainly, the ones who knows Tatar language, are the people who learned it at home, and spoke Tatar from their childhood- of course they have a higher level of knowledge. But in general it is not a working language, it is a Russian speaking population, and all Tatars belong to a Russian speaking population, Ukrainians, Jews, and people from other *natsional'nosti* - they are all Russian speaking.’ (Russian language and literature teacher)

Quite often I had the feeling that some people are not ‘ready’ or willing to accept and assume the new situation, for these people it is difficult to perceive the significance and meaning that nowadays Tatar language is also considered an official language, and should not be relegated to domestic use. There is this widespread idea that Tatars should know their vernacular, but what about Russians?

‘I think ... it hasn’t a big role... to know the language. Before we lived without knowing this language, and we lived in a friendly atmosphere, we lived in agreement, and in the same way we worked- but what has changed? I think this *natsional'nost* - Tatars should know their language- this is obligatory of course. This is what I think.’ (History teacher)

According to the Russian language and literature teacher, there is no tendency in the school to study Tatar, but the necessity may emerge. If for example she is required to learn Tatar or to leave her job, she will learn it. However it is still quite an extreme option, because if nobody forces her, she will not learn it.

One of the main difficulties with Tatar language is that people do not need to learn Tatar in order to communicate with their neighbours, or to find a job, or to shop in a supermarket. So quite a common question that tends to emerge is: what does Russian population needs Tatar language for?

Popular culture and the media no provide an incentive for Tatar language and cultural development, and in most cases pupils prefer Russian programmes (television and radio) as well as Russian magazines, as Tatar language equivalents are not able to supply youth with what they like.

There is a certain predisposition to associate Tatar language with concrete, and at the same time rather peculiar, contexts; when teachers and pupils talk about learning Tatar, constantly, I observed, they are associating the language with very concrete circumstances and specific interactions; shops, villages or queues, imaginary places where they think, they could use Tatar language; locations related to marginal or peripheral positions. But never in relation to their future job, or universities, hospitals, or as a medium to access some literature or knowledge, never as a medium of general communication.

‘But in principle I suppose it will be useful, we live in the republic, it’s elementary, you are queuing and there are people speaking in Tatar, why not understand what they are talking about! In principle I’m in favour of knowing, but I can say for myself, I am not very good at languages, it is not easy for me, I have to dedicate a lot of effort to it, to get a five or four - good marks are not easy.(...)’ (Irina)

Irina is not refuting Tatar language ‘usefulness’, which has a component of inquisitiveness or curiosity, (what are people talking about?), more than a necessity for interaction. She is aware that she does not need Tatar language in order to do her shopping, or to take the bus, or to go to the cinema. She ‘needs’ it (theoretically) because she lives in the republic (a symbolic need rather than a real one) and also because when she is queuing she wants to know what is going on.

For example Misha thinks that in the future it would be helpful to know Tatar but he doesn’t seem very enthusiastic; but helpful in what respect?

‘If you end up in a remote village where nobody speaks Russian, you will have to communicate with the inhabitants. Or for example, if you work for a government organisation and you need to communicate with some representatives and there is an old woman who doesn’t speak Russian, doesn’t understand very well, so again you will need Tatar language.’
(Misha)

Misha’s perception of Tatar language seems to be to certain extent detached from everyday life, and associated with extremely concrete and specific circumstances, in a remote village or if an old woman does not speak Russian, It is never seen as a medium for conversation with his friends or relatives.

Regardless of what most of the pupils and teachers think, institutional effects (Baker 1992) are absolutely necessary in order to relocate Tatar language from its marginal social position, because ‘when a minority language is the modus operandi in public transactions and discourse, attitudes may stay or become more favourable’ (ibid: 110). An illustrative example is the case of Welsh language, how the language was developed by its increased incorporation at the institutional level. But it is an open question how the Russian population will react to that.

At some point, for example I asked Misha what he thought about the official policies towards Tatar language promotion, increasing fifteen percent of the salary to people who speak Tatar. Misha is pretty aware that his opinion cannot be neutral or impartial, as a Russian he is affected and directly involved, and this is why he justified his incapacity to have an objective answer.

Irina, for instance, considers that Tatar language is an optional thing, and she is quite against the idea that only people who will speak Tatar will be able to achieve certain positions or jobs; she thinks that is completely wrong.

‘(...) If for example I am Russian, and I cannot, I don’t like it, for example, when a division is made- Russian Tatar; for example my grandmother and my grandfather are living in Russia and when they come here they don’t understand how we can live in our Tatarstan. Since I live in Tatarstan, I was born here and lived here all my life, I had never made such a distinction – you are Tatar, I am Russian, or mixed. Definitely there is no such thing, but if there would be, and if you don’t know Tatar language you will not get a job; I think it’s incorrect, if at the end of the day I am Russian and I don’t have to know someone’s language, for example Chuvashs, or any other. So in principle I think that it is helpful to know it but it should not be compulsory.’ (Irina)

Irina does not understand why everyone should speak Tatar, even for this generation, Russian is perceived as the main language, the use of Russian is 'naturally' accepted without any hesitation or request, and Tatar language is identified, by a considerable proportion of Russian population as something exotic or unusual, rather than as an alternative medium for everyday interaction. This is a commonly widespread opinion in a community or group that represents the dominant or the mainstream position. Usually the supremacy is expressed in cultural and linguistic terms, and the group or the community cannot perceive the reasons why or what for they should learn other language.

In Grisha's house nobody speaks Tatar, and his answer is: 'we have a Russian family'. There is a common and straightforward association in Grisha's words: if you are Russian you do not speak Tatar, you are exempt. Therefore, only if you have a Tatar family you may be able to speak Tatar, but in any case, it is not a guarantee.

According to Gizzatullina's thesis (1999), Russian and Tatar pupils in their last years, prefer Russian and foreign languages as the languages to communicate with other people. Tatar language is positioned in third place in their structure of priorities, and they consider it to be imperative to increase the number of foreign languages like French or English, hypothesis that has also been confirmed by pupils from gymnásias No.9 and No.52. Foreign languages are equated and identified with a real chance for career success and flourishing future, as in the rest of the world, foreign language knowledge is a guarantee for future opportunities; what Baker (1992) defined as an instrumental orientation.

Volodia for example, is aware that he lives in Tatarstan and there are two official languages, Russian and Tatar. However he also thinks that Tatar language will not be very useful in the future, especially if he travels abroad or even in Russia, because outside Tatarstan, people do not speak Tatar. Nevertheless, at the same time, he believes that it is necessary to study Tatar, because he lives in Tatarstan and if someone asks something in Tatar, he should be able to answer, but he does not think that it will be of much use. According to Volodia, his parents do not speak Tatar and it is all the same to them if he learns Tatar language or not. Probably because they are not

interested in the language they are not dedicating much attention to it. As indicated by sociological research conducted in Kazan in 1998²¹⁷, most of the pupils and parents consider it more important and relevant to study a foreign language than Tatar. According to teachers point of view, 47 per cent of Tatars consider Russian as the most important language, 33 per cent consider a foreign language, and 16 per cent Tatar. Whereas among Russian pupils, 50 per cent consider a foreign language in the first place, 44 per cent Russian, and only 6 per cent Tatar (ibid: 24).

‘(...) And because there are two official languages it doesn’t mean that they will need Tatar language, and from my point of view it is necessary to dedicate more attention to English, preferably to English than to Tatar.’ (Liaisan, history teachers)

Amongst the languages that Elena studies, she considers that English is the most useful because more people speak English than French, nevertheless she prefers French because her pronunciation is better. Remarkably enough, she did not even mention Tatar language; perhaps she just forgot it, or perhaps she did not consider it as something ‘relevant’ to mention. But when I asked her about Tatar language, her words were:

‘But currently.... By the year 2005 we have to learn Tatar language, the result is that they are forcing us, because I think if a person wants to study Tatar - (s)he can do it- but if (s)he doesn’t want to, they should not have to study it. We are having some difficulties with it. I think Russians at least should not take the exams. (...) I don’t think that everyone needs it. The ones who want- they can study it, and the ones who don’t... Tatars, if they are Tatars, they should know their vernacular, but not to put pressure to such a degree. Because now, apart from Tatar language and Tatar literature, Tatar history is also introduced, and Tatarstan geography. But perhaps it is necessary to know the history, but not to the extent we have to.’ (Elena)

According to Baker changes in learning languages can occur when it is not forced, and it is felt to be voluntary. ‘Imposing conformity in an authoritarian, rule-bound manner is unlikely to change attitude. Informing and consulting, and giving freedom of choice, are paths more likely to lead to language attitude change’ (1992:107). But would pupils study Tatar if it was to

²¹⁷ Tatarskii iazyk v shkolakh RT v kontekste sovremennykh sotsial'no-obrazovatel'nykh tendentsii: sostoianie, problemy, perspektivy . Kazan' 1998: Ministerstvo Obrazovaniia RT . Laboratoriia sotsiologicheskikh issledobanii IPKRO RT.

be presented as a voluntary subject?

I asked Elena her opinion about President Shaimiev, to which her answer was:

‘It is good of course that he is showing interest in Tatarstan, but it is necessary to dedicate more attention to other people not only to Tatars, but also to Russians, it means, Tatar people have more privileges.’
(Elena)

Can you notice that happening in Tatarstan?

‘Yes, because there are many decrees that are indicating that, - people who know Tatar language... they receive a higher salary, there is extra, more money... in the top structure there are such cadres - pure Tatars, not even of mixed blood, but pure Tatars. There is unequally,... but the government, Tatarstan is in Russia, Russian language...’ (Elena)

Ideliia and her parents are from Kazan, and also her grandmother; although she comes from a Tatar family, they predominantly speak Russian at home. She considers that is enough if Russians can learn a bit of Tatar. ‘Because we all have different aptitudes for languages, and I think it is impossible that everybody can start speaking fluent Tatar, but I think that to understand general conversations, everyone should be able’. On a couple of occasions she mentioned that Russian is closer to her than Tatar, and she does not think that everyone should learn Tatar, she is comfortable enough with the Russian language, and it does not represent a big issue in her life.

‘When for example you talk with village’s mates, Russian language doesn’t operate, they don’t understand it and don’t like to communicate in Russian. Of course there, because you speak Tatar you feel fine, but here... it’s odd when young people talk Tatar – it looks strange from the outside.’ (Ideliia)

For many Tatar pupils, each concrete language is associate with particular environments, there is not a spontaneous shift, it seems to be more calculated and carefully employed, always depending of where and with whom. ‘I don’t know, we are not used to it, here we use Russian language, it is like our vernacular for us, but only when in the village, we only speak Tatar when I go to the village.’ (Alfiya)

For Zulfiya it is not the same in which language to speak, it also depends on the environment, ‘it depends on where, I suppose (...) For example

in the street, if everyone is speaking Russian, Tatar... they can understand it wrong ... In general, here in the streets only Russian language is present.' According to Zulfiya's explanation it is not a question of what language she prefers to speak, but it is rather a question of where; incorporating a different dimension to the language, a symbolic meaning where each physical space has its own code, its own language and norms.

In the course of different conversations with pupils, it was possible to perceive certain relativism and de-mythification of Tatar language, but not only presented by Russian pupils, but also by Tatars; a pragmatic and 'utilitarian' approach, more than a romantic idealisation of its meaning and value.

Volodia would like to know both languages, and he understands that if Tatars know Russian, then Russians should also know Tatar, and he does not deny that. However in the course of our conversation Volodia slightly changed his attitude and when I asked him once again (to confirm), if he considers it appropriate that Russians study Tatar, he said: 'On the one hand it is adequate.' To which I asked; and on the other? 'And on the other- I don't want to study it, in principle for me, it is hopeless. But I am studying it because I live in the republic'. At the same time Volodia defined Tatar language as hopeless, but he is also aware that if he lives in Tatarstan he needs or he should know Tatar, a complicated contradiction. He knows that he should learn Tatar but he does not want to.

During all the time that I had been in the schools, and through many conversations, I would observe that there was not a motivation or an eminent enthusiasm, not even a curiosity towards Tatar language. Tatar language was perceived as an imposition and obligation strongly required without elaborating or working on pupils' attitudes.

Pupils can see the advantages that subjects like English, French or mathematics can offer to them, but they still cannot see, the 'profit' or 'benefit' of Tatar language. Most of Masha's friends are Russian and they do not speak Tatar. For her, the equation is quite simple, if you need Tatar language you should speak it, but she does not need it, she does not have the necessity. The problem is how do you define or demarcate who does need it and who does not. Is it a question of personal decision? In which case probably, Russians will never learn Tatar; or is it a question of social demand? Therefore they will have to learn it, if they want to adapt to the new social context.

Pupils are also discontented because it is extra work and extra hours,

and they do not have a special desire to study it. According to one history teacher, and many others who maintained that people are free and it is a personal choice if they want to study a language or if they do not. If you need to know it, if it is absolutely obligatory, then you should study it.

‘It is considered that there are two official languages here - Russian and Tatar, but, for example, I never studied Tatar at school, I didn’t know it, and my best Tatar friends didn’t teach me; how to say, I lived and I didn’t need it. I survived, and I will survive, because if I will go to any organisation - they have to speak to me in Russian. However, if you will work with people, not with machines as an engineer, but with people you will have to speak in both languages because different people will come to see you. So you will need it in your work. And in terms of obligations, I don’t think there is a need to force people, because I survived and I will keep surviving, and it is exactly the same for the other people.(...) I went to Ukraine in the summer, so if I go to the beach I will have to learn Ukrainian language! No, because I speak Russian there. Especially, because it used to be our common *rodina*. (...)’ (Olga, history teacher)

There is almost a general agreement that the option of learning Tatar language is an individual choice, without dedicating much attention to its social dimension. Olga like most of the teachers, is denying the fact that the situation has changed and the younger generation should know Tatar language, and it is probably not a question of surviving or not. Olga’s discourse denotes quite a derogative attitude, expecting almost demanding, that the rest of the people should know Russian without even wondering why. I have to admit that I found her example quite peculiar that Olga is almost defending her right not to speak Tatar, and indicating little interest. According to this premise, she is assuming that Russian will remain as the principal language and Tatar will continue as a domestic language, but never a language of social interaction outside Tatar households.

‘It never happened before that in front of me at school someone spoke Tatar, but now it is possible, they will do it even if I am there. If for example I am sitting and there is someone else, they can speak Tatar - I don’t understand, I think that if they know Russian, it is an elementary norm of behaviour, isn’t it? But if they don’t think like that... Of course, I don’t think that they are gossiping, perhaps it is easier for them, but Tatars are now feeling freely, openly. Younger generations - they talk Tatar, before they all... and at the university everything was in Russian, but now please, you can operate in Tatar, everyone there. Perhaps it really gave Tatars some freedom to self-esteem, to believe that they are a special *natsiia*, their language gave it [self-esteem] to them. But there is not a tendency amongst Russians, there isn’t (...) Perhaps it is necessary

to understand, - what people are saying, it is necessary. But not so persistently, not to force pupils to study it for six hours at a time.’(Olga, history teacher)

Pupils have been studying Tatar language for almost ten years but the school had not succeeded in promoting respect for or curiosity about other languages and cultures. It is quite understandable that for pupils, any extra work or an extra subject will be perceived as a nuisance, but this is where teachers should be engaged in transmitting enthusiasm and interest.

Nowadays and under the current circumstances, bilingualism is a remote dream rather than a feasible reality, a long term process that demands a considerable change in people’s attitudes in order to achieve anything close to bilingualism, in practical terms and not just on paper. A real bilingualism not only amongst the Tatar population but also amongst Russians. Without doubt it should be perceived as a remarkable achievement that Russian pupils are studying Tatar, and what is even more significant, that they perfectly ‘understand’, at least formally, the importance and the relevance of learning Tatar; probably unthinkable ten years ago. However a passive attitude and little interest emerged from pupils’ and teachers’ discourse, never positioning both languages on the same level.

For example Farida and Alsy stressed how they use Tatar language in a comic and not very serious circumstance; emphasising its non-sombre character, and perhaps to some extent, non-serious attitude to Tatar language; as something that they have, and they can take advantages of; as a powerful tool, rather than a quotidian medium of communication or interaction.²¹⁸

According to Baker (1992), attitudes to learning a second language change as a combination of individual needs and social situations, and this change may occur when social, economic and political environment is promoting and encouraging it. However, it is extremely crucial the way and the method in which they are encouraging it, since the opposite effect can be achieved.

One of the main difficulties that Tatar language is facing nowadays, is what I will call its intrinsic contradiction between its formal (bureaucratic) and

²¹⁸ Alfiya, as many other Tatar pupils in gymnásia No.9, prefers to communicate in Russian and she also speaks Russian at home. With her friends she uses Russian and very occasionally Tatar, “as a joke”.

informal (everyday) position. In other words, what Iskhakova presented as considerable distinction between *juridical status* and *real functioning* (1999:157), which indicates that Tatar language is performing, only partially, its official position, because in daily use Russian language is the dominant language. One of the reasons why pupils seem to have such little interest in learning Tatar is because there is not enough motivation that would stimulate the effort.

6.2 Endemic problems in schools: some reiterative inadequacies

‘The school is a reflection of society, the mirror where our life is reflected, not very normal, not very controllable, and that is why, in a word, now there are many inadequacies in the school (...).’ (Russian language and literature teacher)

The establishment of Russian-Tatar bilingualism is nowadays one of the key targets in the educational environment, however, as Iskhakova indicated in her thesis, the insufficiency of theoretical and methodological literature, the absence of well qualified teachers and the lack of material basis, are reducing the development and consolidation of bilingualism in Tatarstan (1999:157). Difficulties that pupils and teachers are permanently pointing out and stressing are rooted in problems that are not readily resolved.

Tatar language is a compulsory subject in all schools, the demand for teachers of Tatar language has increased significantly, nevertheless, it is not always adequately provided. For example, gymnásia No.52 is one of the biggest in Kazan, (there are only four schools with 2000 pupils); they have between one hundred and one hundred and twenty teachers, including forty Tatar language teachers. Let us remember that we are talking only about one school; it is difficult to imagine the dimension of demand for Tatar language teachers as a whole. According to official statistics ²¹⁹, 97 per cent of pupils in Kazan are studying Tatar ²²⁰. Under which circumstances, it is also perfectly understandable the consequent teachers problem that the republic is facing (as different sources have strongly emphasised); a difficulty that is affecting and influencing pupils attitude to Tatar language.

²¹⁹Information presented by an expert of National Education from the Ministry for Education during an interview conducted in Kazan in 1998.

²²⁰ Perhaps nowadays this number has increased.

Misha, like many other pupils, complained about the problem with teachers; each year they have a new teacher, and each time they start at exactly the same place. Masha ²²¹ for example, complains: 'I have been studying Tatar for five years already, and I think it is meaningless'. However, Masha is not the only one.

'I am studying Tatar language from the first year, we are again the generation for whom they introduced Tatar in our republic, in principle I don't have a bad attitude to it, but there is a little problem, we never had a permanent teacher, probably each year, in all this time, we had around fifteen teachers, for the last two years, and even now, the teachers keep changing too often, we have many changes, and each time we have to start from the beginning, I would say that I don't know it enough, my knowledge is not enough.' (Irina)

One of the Tatar language teachers from gymnásia No.52 that I had the opportunity to converse with, is a biologist, and she travelled a lot because her husband is a soldier. But she has been working for six years in this school. The reason why she decided to teach Tatar is because there was a demand for Tatar language teachers. First she attended some courses, but she is still in a process of learning. 'It is my vernacular, I spoke it, but now... I am assimilating the grammar together with the children.' A way of working that to some extent can be considered quite precarious. She does not teach to Tatar pupils, only to Russian ones, and she considers that her knowledge is enough for them.²²² Another Tatar teacher, also from the gymnásia that I met, used to teach French and German, and because they are not teaching French in the school anymore, she has been forced to change her speciality and to swap to teaching Tatar language. She had been living twenty years outside Kazan because her husband was also a Russian soldier and they lived in different cities, and she never had the opportunity to speak Tatar. But when she returned to Kazan, she had two options, one was to be unemployed, and the other one was to start to study again from the beginning and become a teacher of Tatar language. At the beginning she had to learn everything by herself and only after that start to

²²¹ Masha is fifteen years old and she has been living in Kazan for the last five years, and her relation with the school is quite extraordinary. Her mother teaches mathematics and her grandmother biology in the centre.

²²² She also stressed that there is not a tendency amongst Russians to study Tatar, and the reason is because there is no need, since the majority speak Russian.

teach pupils.²²³

‘Tatar language? Here there is the following problem - I think if you live in the republic it is necessary to know Tatar language, and there is a tendency to place it at the same level, Russian and Tatar equal. Perhaps it would be possible a bit less. For example they study a foreign language twice a week, two lessons, it should be also two lessons of Tatar, perhaps three. Personally I think it is too much, because the quality doesn't depend of the quantity of hours. They study it a lot, but I don't see the quality. My daughter is studying here, she received a four²²⁴ in Tatar language, but she doesn't know it. I think the problem is the methodology of teaching the language,... it is a bit underdeveloped, Tatars have a limit at home, it is a language with limits. (...) I have the impression that they are just running after the hours, this is why they have so many hours. But perhaps, I hope they will learn the language, but I don't know because some of my pupils from the eleventh year, even the best pupils, with five in Tatar language, they have some constraints - they are able to read, to translate, but the main thing - is to speak! What do people study foreign languages for? In order to speak, and without a translation they would read and understand - this is what I think.’ (Olga, history teacher)

Olga is quite disappointed with the methodology, she is not only a teacher in the school, but she is also a mother of a school's pupil and she can observe that at the end of the day pupils do not speak Tatar. Something that can also frustrate pupils because they dedicate so many hours to it, but they do not see the result. She underlined that there is almost an obsession with the number of hours, an excessive tendency to show off and to demonstrate that Russian and Tatar are both at the same level. There should be probably a precise and continuous educational process that will prompt their awareness and will answer the question why and what for.

‘How can I say it! You know, the more languages a person knows the better, and at the time when we were starting to introduce Tatar language here to the children - who didn't want to go to Tatar classes - I was telling them - that our great Russian writer count Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoi was fluent in Tatar and it helped him a lot in his life, he studied at the faculty of Oriental studies. But later on pupils started to tell me that I told them that his Tatar teacher was Professor Kazim-Bek, and of course there is not much that I can say. I think that if they are taking our hours, and we are giving them away from our subjects: mathematics, computing,

²²³ According to her, there is an important incoherence in the curricula, because they study Tatar grammatical rules when they did not study the Russian grammar, consequently (quite often) they do not understand it.

²²⁴ In the system of marks five is the highest mark that a pupil can get.

Russian, French, I think, the teaching should be at the same level. If children will start to speak in Tatar there will be no threat, they can speak in all the languages that they are able to learn; but so far, I have not seen in the school not even one child who would speak Tatar, apart from the pupils who have Tatar language in use in their family, a Tatar family, we also have children like that, and they speak Tatar, and they are language bearers. You know, I suppose it is impossible, all the time texts and poetry; poetry is a good thing, but it should be spoken language, to teach children to use it, to interact in the shops, to use the second official language, but there is no such thing yet, there is no an elaborated and complete methodology of teaching.' (Russian language and literature teacher)

There is a general worry and concern the way Tatar language is presented to pupils, a general dissatisfaction with the methodological approach; feelings that affect pupils and teachers attitude to the language; very often producing an automatic rejection, not because of the language, but because of the way it is taught.

As we saw in the previous section, there is not an integrative purpose (Gardner 1985) because pupils do not want to learn Tatar to communicate with other communities or groups, they can communicate perfectly in Russian; in that sense they do not have the motivation for learning. Too often teachers change, discontinued work, unqualified teachers, and too many hours are some of the most commonly heard complaints amongst teachers and pupils. Inna thinks that pupils do not like Tatar because there is no real motivation, or incentive and consequently there is no improvement, and if you cannot see an improvement you do not have the stimulus; for her it will be perfect if in principle they would increase the interest in Tatar language.

One Tatar language teacher that I talked with, mentioned that it is the second year that she is teaching Tatar in this school, but only to Russian groups, (commonly includes mixed marriage). Before she was teaching geography and the next year she is planning to go to college in order to become a qualified Tatar teacher. She is originally from a Tatar environment, and regardless that she received all the education in Russian, she spoke Tatar at home and with friends. She has been living in Kazan only for two years, but she always had this dream to move to a big city, but most of her family is still living in the village. She explained to me that quite often at school, French teachers (who are Tatars) also teach a couple of hours of Tatar language, and even if they are not qualified as Tatar teachers, according to her, they have the knowledge and the methodology of teaching foreign languages. ' I think it is

enough, the knowledge you have, they all have higher education, they graduated from the pedagogical faculty or from the Kazan State University, and they have the methodology of teaching a language, and the grammar anyway, so if you read up on it, you can learn it’.

But there is a double problem, the general dissatisfaction is not merely that pupils are studying the language but not learning it, furthermore, that the rest of the curriculum is suffering as a result of studying Tatar language; since the introduction of Tatar language knowledge in all the other subjects has begun to decrease.

‘(...) As a result Russian language is suffering, pupils’ grammar is suffering not because you are teaching badly, but because there are not enough hours for most of the classes. In 1990 when I came to work here for the first time, I was teaching in the fifth year, I had two fifth year classes and with each of them we had eleven hours - seven hours for Russian language and four hours for Russian literature. Imagine how much we were able to talk with them, and how we were communicating, these pupils were ‘golden’, they finished the last year and there were many graduates with distinctions, they were really good children.’
(Russian language and literature teacher)²²⁵

Generally teachers stressed that they will study Tatar if they will know where to go to study it, since they complain about the bad infrastructure and the lack of mechanisms for them (teachers) to study the language.

‘But organise courses to learn Tatar! Please, I will go to them, I am not going to leave Kazan- here are the graves of the people that were close to me, I grew up in this city, I very much love Kazan! I am not going anywhere, I would prefer to learn Tatar language! Who is waiting for me? Who is waiting for my family? I don’t want to leave, I will learn it but they have to tell me where? I learned English at school, after that, French more or less, so why should I not learn Tatar?’ (Russian language and literature teacher)

One of the history teachers from gymnásia No.9, that I met with, has been working at the school for nineteen years, also underlines that at present her subject is suffering because of Tatar language, since they have to give away

²²⁵ Two years ago when she started a new class, (again fifth year) they had only four hours a week, and after the second semester they reduced to three hours. However this year, as she said they realised, and they have again seven hours, five hours Russian and two hours Russian literature.

some hours.

‘ I don’t have a very agreeable attitude in relation to it, I am in favour of studying the language, that children should know it, we live in this country, in this republic, we should know the language, especially the younger generation; but the fact that they are doing it at the expense of other subjects, it’s wrong, it is necessary to solve this problem in another way, because I think history is also a very important subject, (...) we are galloping, galloping, running, they changed the curriculum, things that we used to start in the eleventh year now we have to finish in the ninth, (...)’ (History teacher)

She explained that when she was in her sixth and seventh years she went to Tatar classes with pleasure, but they were not compulsory for Russians, (only for Tatars); and according to her, if you force children to do something, they will always reject it. But why do they not reject the rest of the subjects? Why should Tatar language be voluntary, and not have the same status as the rest of the subjects? This is probably one of the main questions that is crucial to think through carefully.

In the school there are different opinions, some teachers agree with the new changes but others think that there are too many hours of Tatar. Some Tatar teachers do not think that Russian pupils should study Tatar anyway, and some consider that two or three hours a week would be enough. Pupils call it “the favourite subject!” with inverted commas, they can relax and sit back in there.

‘I think that Tatars can study their Tatar language, it is up to them, it is their mother tongue, but the fact that they are forcing Russians to study it - I don’t like it at all. And I also think, for example Tataria²²⁶ is absolutely under unequal conditions with Russian regions. For example, what I am saying is, if our final year pupil will want to go to the University in Moscow - (s)he will never pass the exams. When we were finishing our school, we have equal relations with Moscow - we have completely the same curriculum, there was no difference whatsoever. And today, our final year pupils - do they have any chance of a Moscow or Petersburg university? They will never pass the exams because they have mathematics twice a week instead of five times, Physics twice instead of four times a week. They gave all these hours to Tatar language, something which is absolutely unnecessary to get to the university...completely unnecessary. Now our children are already discriminated against because they cannot enter into any Russian university only in Tataria. They wouldn’t get into any of them because

²²⁶ In Soviet times the current Republic of Tatarstan was known as Tataria.

they don't have the same base like pupils from Moscow for example, they don't have the same base. Because the curricula are reduced - all the hours that they have cut down from literature, mathematics - everything has gone to Tatar language, and I think it is absolutely incorrect (...) I don't think it is temporary. I don't know, perhaps of course, they will listen to reason, but I consider that it is an unbalanced tendency in favour of Tatar language. I am not against it; Tatars can study it, the ones who need it, and even Russians can do it a bit, anyway they are not going to be fluent, there is no way that they will learn it.' (Larisa, history teachers)

She probably exaggerated slightly since at present there is no indication of the direct relation that she presented between the incorporation of Tatar language to the curricula and the inaccessibility to the universities outside Tatarstan. It is true that in relation to previous generations the number of pupils who had the chance to study outside of the republic had decreased, but economic and financial reasons are the main ones, since it has become very expensive to live, for example, in Moscow and the scholarships are too low to be able to guarantee basic expenses. Her argument justifying that a Russian will never learn Tatar is her daughter, who is in the second year and it is also the second year that she is studying Tatar, but she only knows odd words, and she cannot say basic sentences. She does not think (on the other hand) that with time the situation will calm down because each year there are more and more hours, they started with two hours a week, then three, four, and now they have six. And she seems to be quite worried about the situation. However, she did not notice that the new situation is also demanding her to know Tatar language, at least not yet.

'For children Tatar language - is like a forced labour ²²⁷, everyone thinks that they are wasting their time; with such an undesirability, with an enormous disagreement. And I am insisting that with the current situation if they don't know Tatar they will never find a job, but they say that anyway they don't know it. Anyway they don't know it, even if they are going to study it, they will not be able to speak. (...) What do we need Tatar for? Why are we going to waste our time in there? My girl is like that. With my daughter - there has been a constant argument - in the second year- everyday a racket about Tatar language, but we are insisting that she needs it, everyone is studying it. And she shouts, - then Tatars can study it'. (Larisa, history teacher)

²²⁷ *Katorga* is a Russian word that means forced labour, but it became a quite common expression in Russia when people want to refer to something that is very difficult and hard, something unpleasant and undesirable.

Larisa's daughter is only eight years old, but according to her mother she seems to be repeating the discourse which surrounds her so that this disrespectful attitude is part of what she is likely to be hearing in her everyday environment.

The main problem is that teachers are not only discontent with Tatar language, there is a general dissatisfaction with the new curriculum, especially amongst history teachers.²²⁸

After almost a decade, the incorporation of Tatar language in schools is still in an embryonic state, and in spite of what the statistics show (97 per cent of the pupils are studying Tatar) or the politicians claim, it seems that at the current stage, it is necessary to rethink the general methodology and mechanisms of incorporating Tatar language, not only on paper, but also in practice. Moreover, not only Tatar language, but also equally, Tatar culture, literature, broadcasting, and in general Tatar culture production and diffusion which is almost non-existent. In general terms, Tatar cultural production is still very marginal and it does not enjoy massive popular support; furthermore, it is even possible to sustain that is still in the process of gestation, (or in its very early days) if we compare it with Russian popular production; which creates additional and extra difficulties in any attempt to develop Tatar language and a change in people's attitude and perception of Tatar culture.

6.3 Ethnic integration but unquestionable Russian domination

Through this section firstly I will try to introduce what I will call a discourse of ethno-national integration; a discourse that without exception was equally reproduced by Tatar and Russian teachers and pupils in gymnásia No.9 and No.52. Integration, however, that is simultaneously surrounded, by an almost unquestionable Russian domination; an approach that we had the opportunity to observe in terms of teachers' and pupils' attitude to Tatar language. Integration that very often operates in theoretical and rhetorical, but not always, in practical ways. Tatar- Russian integration operates as a

²²⁸ According to the new curriculum in the eleventh year they dedicate one hour to Russian history, one hour to world history and one hour to history of Tatarstan; something that most of the teachers are not very happy with; most of them cannot understand how you can compare Russian history or World history, with Tatarstan history, how can you dedicate the same number of hours to the three subjects. Furthermore, this new change in the curriculum is translated by many teachers, as Tatar domination and unbalanced relations.

discourse but not always as an expression of attitudes and practices.

Secondly (and in opposition to Tatar gymnásias discourse), I will try to illustrate the absence in pupils' and teachers' discourse of what I have called a dichotomous way of thinking, and to illustrate this point, I will use the three sphere-questions that I used in the previous section. One sphere is i) their favourite writer, the second one ii) the difference between their school and other schools, and the third one, iii) their favourite festivity. Therefore the frequent tendency to reinforce and differentiate between Tatar and Russian, is a predominant characteristic of the Tatar gymnásias No.2 and No.16.

During the different conversations the same idea- discourse was repeatedly expressed by pupils and teachers, 'we have perfect relationship between Tatars and Russians, not only at the school, but in general terms'. Or 'we do not make such a distinction, it is all the same, it does not matter, nationality does not play any role' and 'we are all friends'. Everyone without exception considered that they are on good terms, that they do not make any distinction and never felt any difference whatsoever. This attitude was confirmed by teachers, who had never noticed any conflict or confrontation concerning nationality.

'Relationships I think, are good, calm.... but at the same time, there are, of course,... some nationalistic groups, equally amongst Tatars and amongst Russians, and that, I think, will exist always, in any country. But in general, the relationship between Russians and Tatars is, as if it was one whole *natsiia*.' (Igor)

However, I wonder if Tatar gymnásias' pupils and teachers will agree with Igor statement, that they are all, Tatars and Russians, one *natsiia* because as we saw in the previous chapter, a constant repetition of the distinction between Russians and Tatars was continuously manifested and reinforced in the two Tatar gymnásias. But in new environment, it does seem that Igor is not the only one who has these ideas. In a very similar way as Igor, Inna, stressed: 'I don't think there is any difference at all, because whichever way you look at it, we live in one country, with one tradition, so there are absolutely no differences'. However, I do not think that pupils and teachers from both Tatar gymnásias will completely agree with this idea. Perhaps this is one of the main obstacles in achieving certain changes in some people's attitudes, since they do not perceive (or do not want to perceive) the cultural differentiation that Tatar gymnásias are willing to underline.

In opposition to Tatar gymnásias, in the two non-Tatar gymnásias, it was impossible to observe or identify any sign of ethnic or national segregation; everyone including teachers and pupils have Tatar and Russian friends, absolutely everyone underlined that they do not make such a distinction. However, this rhetoric of integration does not always symbolise a cultural amalgamation or integration, more often is related to a process of cultural assimilation or acculturation.

‘In Kazan it isn’t bad at all. I have many Tatar friends, to be honest, my husband is half Tatar, my mother-in-law, who lives with us, is Tatar and I don’t see anything horrible in that; everything is fine, everything is wonderful. I have many friends amongst Tatars. And I know very talented people, marvellous actors, musicians, writers.’ (Russian language and literature teacher)

Not only in their work or the places where they study, but also in their personal lives, people are used to interacting and be equally involved with Russians and Tatars, regardless of their own origin. ‘The relationship doesn’t depend on *natsional'nost*, we just interact simply as people’. (Aly)

Historically, in terms of population Kazan has always been a very mixed city, and in general terms, as people underlined, they are used to interacting with people from different groups. Nevertheless, Misha thinks that the level of tolerance depends on personal development, and only older people still have some resentment.

‘But for example in our class there is nothing, but when people are older, as they become older, they become more nationalistic, for example, Russian and Tatar grannies do not talk [between themselves], and sometimes it happens that, but this depends on the person basically, that everything is fine; it depends on the personal enlightenment, for example, a Russian village and a Tatar one, they can fight, but in the city you don’t feel it, because people are more educated, cultured; but it can be everything.’ (Misha)

However I have to admit that all the conversations with pupils and teachers from the two Tatar gymnásias suggest a rather different picture. Pupils were not old, and most of them were from Kazan, they were not from a rural environment (although they all have some relations with the countryside), and we cannot presuppose (as Misha stressed) that they are less enlightened. Many pupils argued that only the older generation still perceives some differentiation between Russian and Tatar populations, but not the younger people. It is

something that, as far as they are concerned, belongs to the past and has nothing to do with the present, but pupils and teachers from gymnásias No.2 and No.16 are not anchored in the past.

But not everything is perfect harmony, pupils are also aware that there are some concrete and specific circumstances when some tensions can emerge and increase, and they tend to position themselves at one or another extreme.

‘We all understand each other, there are no differences, but there are sometimes, but not significant ones, for example, if there is a war, in history you analyse the war, like between Chechnya and Russian, Chechnya is also Muslim, Tatars are also related to Muslims, so there is little difference, somebody is right, somebody is wrong, there is little argument, but in general everything is fine.’ (Artur)

In most of the cases, ethnic or national differentiation does not appear to symbolise any problem or conflict, the repetitive idea that emerged in Tatar gymnásias, that people with different religions or traditions should not marry because it will create all sorts of difficulties or dilemmas in the future, does not appear as an issue in this environment.

One of the history teachers that I conversed with, Liaisan, is Tatar and married to a Russian man, but they seem to be quite sure about their children.

‘Oh, this question appeared from the beginning, but we decided that, for example, when he will get older, he will decide for himself, who he wants to be, if he will want to adopt any religion, is assumed that he will have to take this step, but he has and will study Tatar language, and my husband’s parents are not against it, and they even say, he should study it, and in theory the child has an interest in the language, still we communicate of course, in Russian at home.’ (Liaisan, history teacher)²²⁹

Generally, pupils do not have predilections or rejections about their future husbands or wives (in opposition to Tatar gymnásias pupils), I did not observe any restrictions or segregation in ethnic or national terms; some girls stressed that it will be someone who will give them freedom.

Irina, for example, does not think that religion plays any role in her choice, and the most valuable thing for her, is her freedom to do what she wants to; an idea that never came out in the conversations with girls from the

²²⁹ On this occasion, it does not seem to be a huge problem, they have decided that the boy will choose for himself when he will get older, however, as she stressed, they of course, communicate in Russian.

two Tatar gymnásias. Irina's parents never get involved in her choice of friends, and she does not think that they will ever interfere where her husband is concerned, only if, for example, she were to get involved with a drug addict, but (in her words) they really trust her.

For example Ideliia, said: 'My parents are also very calm about it, for them as well, if he is a close person.... As long as he is a good person, what difference does it make which *natsional'nost* he is? They have the same attitude as me'.²³⁰ For example Grisha thinks that it is not an issue which *natsional'nost* his future wife is, even if she is Muslim he is fine with that. 'From my point of view there is no problem, please, I am not to such an extent religious, that for this reason, that she is Tatar-Muslim, because of that, to stop communicating with her'. In relation to possible children, 'But I think, it is an internal family matter, and I think it is just necessary to resolve it, in this case, each family has its solution'. Grisha is extremely rational and I would say open minded, and he does not perceive that different religions would be an obstacle for a future family. However, he illustrates quite a conservative attitude in relation to women's position in the family; similarly to many other pupils. Firstly is the family, and afterwards, if she wants, her career.

But not only Andrei, Grisha, Irina, or the Russian literature teacher, who are Russian indicated this type of attitude, also Ideliia, the history teacher, and Zulfiya, who are Tatars, agree to marry someone from a different *natsional'nost* or ethnic group. Moreover, not merely this was a rhetorical agreement, since the history teacher was married to a Russian man, and the Russian literature teacher to a Tatar man.

However, parents and pupils did not always share the same ideas, and occasionally, pupils find it difficult to understand their parents. Timur is a Tatar boy, his parents are originally from Tatar villages, and he is quite open minded about his future wife, however, he admitted that his parents do not think the same way.

'Parents, this is of course an issue. They would like, of course, for me to marry a Tatar girl, because, for example, when I ask them, 'why do you want that?' they cannot give me a commonsense answer, they just think like that, and of course, sometimes I try to convince them because there is no difference between *natsional'nost*, but they are people with old habits, in their time they were persuaded, also by their parents, that they

²³⁰ Ideliia's sister is married to a French man and they live in France.

should marry a person with the same belief; and somehow they have negative attitudes, of course.’ (Timur)

For these pupils, their daily life does not operate in terms of antagonism or differentiation, and ethno-national integration is perceived as “normal”. They are prepared to deviate from their parents’ wishes and traditions, and to discuss it openly with them.

It was possible to identify an absence or lack of signs of ‘Otherness’ in pupil and teacher discourse. Probably because they do not have to explain or justify, or even to defend their positions and their ‘castle’, there are no enemies around, strong enough to question or threaten their situation; there is no need to guard or attack. There is no need to show and reinforce their position; they did not perceive the threat of losing their language and their culture, consequently, there is no need to emphasise their ‘uniqueness’ and ‘differentiation’. Security in their domination that does not involve the incorporation of new elements of other cultures, especially Tatar culture. There is no need for ‘auto-ethnisation’ (Gutiérrez 1999), as Gutiérrez defined it, a double movement, on the one hand, a resistance to the practices of hegemonic nomination, and on the other, the reproduction of stereotypes. This practice of representation which elapses inside a logic of a discourse on ‘cultural difference’ (ibid.263). In other words, pupils’ and teachers’ discourse from non-Tatar gymnásias does not need to struggle or confront the practices of the dominant definition, or to reproduce the stereotypes, since they do not have enemies or ‘Others’ to protect them from. Invisibility of the ‘Others’ that is detectable in what they read or what they celebrate, also explicable by the absence of dichotomous way of thinking.

In the course of the different conversations, curiously enough, not even one person mentioned one Tatar writer when answering the question, which is your favourite writer? Furthermore, nobody re-asked: Tatar or Russian? Somehow I have my doubts that they are very familiar with Tatar literature. Pushkin, Lermontov, Dumas, or Dostoevskii were the most commonly mentioned names.

‘Oh... who is it? ... Somehow I really like Dumas, I remember when we were studying in Literature - there was no time to cover it all. I really liked War and Peace - it’s superb! And also Quiet flows the Don, we didn’t study it yet, but I read it long time ago, I really liked it. I like Tolstoi, yes, and Quiet Flows the Don; I don’t know, whether I will like Sholokhov in general or not, but I like Tolstoi.’ (Natasha)

In relation to their favourite festivity, everyone indicated New Year and their birthday; in the schools they do not celebrate any Tatar festivities, and in the gymnásia N. 9 one of the main days is the 14th of February, the day of their theatre premiere; it coincides with pupils preferences from Tatar gymnásias, but not with the institutional festivities that the gymnásias tend to promote.

One of the areas where I would observe a remarkable difference between the discourse of the two Tatar and non-Tatar gymnásias, was the question related to what they consider is the main difference between this school and the rest of the schools in Kazan? Once again, an absolute non-existence of distinction between Tatar or Russian schools, Tatar or Russia pupils, confirmed my hypothesis about the dichotomous way of thinking that was presented in the previous chapter; dichotomy which was not generated through my own questions.

When this question was asked of Tatar gymnásias pupils, a common way of answering was to present how negative and bad the situation was in Russian schools, despite the fact that I never specified which schools I was asking about. The 'common' reaction was to talk about how badly organised and ill behaved pupils were in Russian schools, and in contrast, how good Tatar gymnásias were. However, when I asked pupils and teachers from gymnásias No.52 and No.9 the same question, the answers and representations that I received were rather different; they never talked about how bad the situation was in Tatar gymnásias, more precisely they never even mentioned them, almost as if they were non-existent, once again demonstrating the invisibility of the 'Others'. More commonly they stressed how good and positive things were in their own school, presumably quite a 'positive' attitude; they were not justifying their 'marvel' by rejecting other centres.

For example Irina was very proud of her school, and she definitely would like her children to study there. She always talked in general terms, and she never mentioned any distinction between Russian or non-Russian schools (as happened in the two non-Tatar gymnásias).

'(...) I don't know, but all these years that I have been studying, and they say that in each school there are drug addicts, and this and that - I never noticed anyone in our school take anything... Yes, they smoke, but nowadays I think it isn't such a big problem - it's a personal choice, but there is such a friendly atmosphere,.... it is easy to study. (...).'(Irina)

Irina's representation of her schools is not presented in opposition to

other schools, she can define her school without mentioning other schools, and without comparing how good or bad other schools are.

For some pupils like Natasha, the main difference is that this one is her school, again, she does not refer to pejorative comparisons with other centres.

‘Firstly, this is my school, then... secondly, this is my school and I think that the difference is ... that we study more languages, but like that, I think there is not a big difference. Perhaps, education plays a role, but the people are all the same.’ (Natasha)

There are no ideas of ‘uniqueness’ or ‘exceptionality’, teachers and pupils seem to have quite a positive but realistic image of their schools. There were no hyper-exaltations or over emphasis of their ‘magnificence’.

Ideliia, like the rest of the pupils and teachers did not assault or underrate the rest of the schools, and for example Igor knows that one of the main distinctions is their dedication to languages, and objectively this for him was the basic differentiation.

‘(...) In our school we dedicate a lot of time to studying French, and in Russia there are very few schools like this, ... and if there is a school where they study French, they have a low level, and this is the difference mainly, our dedication to languages. We study many languages - three languages and this is why.... they don’t study them in all the schools, this is the basic distinction.’ (Igor)

When I asked one of the history teacher’s what was the main difference between their school and other schools? She said:

‘What is the difference? This is difficult to say - I go very rarely to other schools - only to some seminars (...) But what can I say? You always have the impression that our children are more cultured... , I even think that they are more kind, because I know them better, and the others - they are anyway unknown children not yours.’ (History teacher)

As probably most of the parents will stress that their children are the most marvellous or splendid, in the same way this teacher recognises her pupils as kinder or more educated; but nothing related with Russian or Tatar differentiation, nothing that can be associated with Russian or Tatar people as a group.

6.4 Religious disengagement; adapting to quotidian 'de- Sovietisation'

'Religious distress is at the same time the expression of real distress and the protest against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of an unspiritual situation. It is the opium of the people. (...) The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is required for their real happiness.....' (Marx and Engels, In Fallding 1974: 36).

'Easter 1992. A long line of people stretches across Red Square waiting their turn to visit the Lenin Mausoleum. Behind them the red bricks of the Historical Museum to which is attached a huge poster. As had been the case for many years the image is trinitarian, but in place of Marx, Engels and Lenin, are to be found Father, Son and Holy Ghost' (Anderson 1994:1).

After the Soviet Union's disintegration many people feel attracted by religion, impulsively, the slogan, the religion is the opium of the people became 'unfashionable', and many sociologists claimed that religion was the new substitution to communist ideology. However, as Kiaiariainen (1998) stressed, it would be an over-exaggeration to characterise the new situation in Russia as a religious renaissance. Despite the fact that the number of people who believe in God has increased considerably since the beginning of communist disintegration, people are still, according to this author, inadequately knowledgeable about religion.

Following Kiaiariainen (ibid.), it is possible to divide the Russian population into three different categories according to their religiosity. The people, who believe in God or have a positive attitude to religion, constitute the biggest group; what the author called believing or searching. The second is a group of believers who dedicate considerable attention to religion, mainly composed of middle aged women and with a low level of education. The third group, and the smallest one, is what Kiaiariainen called traditional believers, they are believers and practising, they often go to the services and pray, usually composed of women over sixty with low level of education (ibid: 24).

Some survey data suggested that in Russia in 1996 49.6 per cent of the population considered themselves believers, of whom 74 per cent were Russian Orthodox. (Mchedlov 1996: 114-15). Supporters of the Moscow Patriarchy, however fell from 46 per cent to 9 per cent between 1990 and 1992, suggesting lack of support for the institution while retaining loyalty to the faith (ibid. 1996).

One of the main purposes of this section is to illustrate how religion, in teachers' and pupils' discourse, does not involve much inclination for practising; however almost the global totality defined themselves as believers. Very often, pupils and teachers presented (religion) as a relatively 'recent' and 'new' dimension of their daily life, hypothesis equally applicable, not only to Russians, but also to Tatar teachers and pupils. This premise to a certain extent coincides with the main dynamics of the two Tatar gymnásias; however, it is necessary to underline, that in the current case, the two non-Tatar gymnásias, equally for Russian and Tatar teachers and pupils, religion does not seem to symbolise a relevant category in the way they (re)present themselves in terms of identities. As we were able to observe in the previous chapter, regardless of the level of transgression, and disconnection between practising and belief, Islam was permanently presented as one of the key elements of what they considered constituted 'Tatarhood'; dimension, as we will see, is non-existent in these contexts. On this occasion, pupils and teacher did not present themselves as Muslims or Orthodox, and religion did not perform a distinctive element of how they introduced themselves. I would observe that religion was presented as an individual and personal experience, rather than a collectively shared space. A manifestation of disengagement or privatisation of religious beliefs, but not of disenchantment, a loss of spiritual concerns (Fulcher and Scott 1999).

In this context, the Durkheimian notion of religion, as a guarantor of social unity, does not function to maintain social cohesion, and it was difficult to observe any indicator that religion was a source of social integration, more precisely, my impression was that very often it was presented as a mechanism of personal survival or salvation. Following Rousseau, a 'religion of man'²³¹ which is a private matter between the individual and God.

According to one history teacher, pupils cannot be defined as religious, because it is something that they are not educated in. She also considers that at the present time religion is more associated with concrete manifestation (something that we will see along this section), for example to go occasionally to the church and perhaps to light a candle, but there is no deep immersion into

²³¹ Rousseau was the first author who used the concept of civil religion, he distinguished between religion of man, religion of citizen, and religion of priest, Bryant (1995) and Santiago (1999).

religion.

For example Grisha lives with his mother and grandmother, he considers himself to be religious, he believes in God, and he showed me a cross that he wears around his neck; he knows some prayers that his grandmother taught him. Sometimes, not very often, he goes to church, and for Easter they paint Easter eggs; something that he is used to doing since he was little and he really likes it.

However, according to the history teacher, pupils should not be considered to be religious, and in her words, to wear a cross around the neck has become a fashion, rather than a sign of religiosity. But one of the main difficulties is how one defines and perceives religiosity, what someone will define as religious behaviour or someone to be a religious person, someone else would characterise as superficial manifestation; very often it is a question of personal perception.

‘To religion? I would not say that they are religious, nevertheless I know that some children believe in God. This is amongst the youngest pupils, in the seventh year there are some children... that follow all the norms,... firstly they are educating their parents, who are atheist and only with age are starting ... Our attitude to religion is: save and preserve - this is what we can say. Further on - we can come into the church for example, and light a candle, for example, when my father died, I went and lit a candle for the peace of my soul, to read some prayers. But I cannot say that I believe or that I don't believe, I don't know. I wasn't educated like that. And now I am starting to think: but how do we know? Perhaps there is something inexplicable, and in that way many children... We cannot say that there are many who believe, the parents will go to the church and will stand with a candle, or will go to the mosque, and will sit kneeling and will read the Koran - but not to the end. You need to educate it from your birth, to cement it. (...) I think there are more materialists, it is cemented probably, their mothers and grannies. They were educated like that... I don't know, perhaps little by little some generations will start to grow up, who will really start to go church, not because they have to, but because they will have something in their soul.’ (Olga, history teacher)

There is a certain uncertainty and ambivalence in how they experience religion; there are not categorical or close answers, however according to Olga (history teacher), there are elements of appearance more than sincere belief. People can sporadically appear as very religious because they adopt concrete practices but at the same time they can express some doubts as to whether they believe in God or not.

Zulfiya's parents are not very religious, and one of her grandmothers

believes in God and the other does not. But Zulfiya, like many of her classmates, is quite a pragmatic girl, and she openly says that she cannot rely only on God. '...Probably fifty- fifty'. I asked her: What do you mean?

'But for example, our religion is Islam, we believe in Allah. But you know, I don't believe a hundred percent in God's existence... I do believe, but only fifty percent, yes it helps... But I think that a person should not only rely on God, but believe also in herself [himself], that is she, not God, who will help.' (Zulfiya)

This ambiguity was shown indistinctly by Russian and Tatar pupils and teachers. In contrast to Tatar gymnásias, in non-Tatar gymnásias, not even one pupil was observing Ramadan and only very few teachers did. For example, to one of the Tatar language teacher's it was also relatively new, because it is the fourth year that she observes Ramadan.

'I think here we don't see such a thing in the school, I didn't notice it last year; they try, even if a kid observes Ramadan, of course they are trying not to show it, because they think it is like a complex, not exactly a complex, but anyway kids don't want to show to each other that they are, -that I observe Ramadan, that I believe in God,- and so on, some kids can react inadequately, and because of that, there is not such a demonstration, like - look now I am observing Ramadan.' (Tatar language teacher)

Interestingly enough, in Tatar gymnásias, I would observe a certain pride in pupils and teachers, they were not showing it off, since according to the Koran Ramadan is personal, still, they were full of pride, they did not exhibit it, but when I asked them, many pupils and most of the teachers in both centres stressed and emphasised it, as good behaviour that they should be proud of.

On the whole, I observed a much more secular atmosphere in non-Tatar gymnásias, not only in terms of pupils' and teachers' expressed attitude to religion, but also in the way the schools are decorated, and the vocabulary that they use. Very often, in Tatar gymnásias, for example, Allah was mentioned, as a commonly used afterthought, 'if Allah wants' or 'Allah will decide'.

'In the eleventh year I had one girl, she came to the class with a headscarf, I was very surprised - 'Why are you wearing a headscarf?'... Is it Ramadan or what? During the month of Ramadan Tatar women have to cover their head with a scarf. For me it was also very astonishing. This was two years ago. I know, pupils go to church. I cannot say that they are religious, but it seems, there is such an extreme tendency, and parents are

trying to educate them to get used to it. But more or less, half of the class go to church or the mosque.’ (Larisa, history teacher)

Larisa’s reaction illustrates that they are not used, by any means, to see girls at schools with a headscarf. Even the fact that she asked her, ‘is it Ramadan or what?’ Can denote a certain inadequacy in the teacher’s attitude. To see a girl or a teacher wearing a headscarf in the school is quite unusual, and there is no guarantee that it will be accepted without criticism. In other words, there is no encouragement inside the school to show religious propensities.

Larisa is not extremely religious, and her mother, a communist and a teacher did not want to baptise her (whereas Larisa’s grandmother really insisted). Only relatively recently, when Larisa has a daughter, her mother insisted that she should baptised her granddaughter (she changes her opinion), and consequently Larisa has to baptise herself first, and then her daughter.²³²

Alfiya for example had been only once to a mosque, but she was very little and she does not remember it, her parents believe in Allah and know some prayers, and Alfiya’s grandmother observes Ramadan, and Alfiya tried for one day. ‘One day I observed, it wasn’t bad, I liked it, and it’s also practical, you can lose weight, in general I wouldn’t be against it’. The positive thing that Alfiya underlined is the instrumental dimension of Ramadan, the fact that she can lose some weight, is appealing for Alfiya; but not the religious idiosyncrasy.

One of the Russian teachers openly stated that she was a believer,²³³ furthermore, she stressed that pupils believe in God more often than before. She was the only one who argued that they should organise courses of religion at school, including the study of Islam, Russian Orthodoxy, Judaism and any other religion, because in her words ‘religion is always part of a culture, and taking religion away from children, we are also taking away cultural heritage’. She does not talk about religion explicitly in her classes, but she is often referring to it.

However for the majority, in both schools, religion is a personal thing, and they will probably remain like that. Pupils and teachers are conscious that

²³² Nowadays her mother is also fasting on Thursdays and Fridays.

²³³ She has a very religious background, in 1934 one of her grandfathers was imprisoned because he did not renounce his belief, and stayed ten years in a camp; but not only that, all her grandparents had some connection with religion, but not merely as simple believers.

it would be very difficult to incorporate religion in the school curriculum. Apart from the Russian language teacher, not even one person agreed with the idea of teaching religion at the school, since they were all aware that it could create tensions and stress, the differences between Russian and Tatar pupils inside the school. They considered religion as a private option, but not a subject that should be taught at the school or even shared with the rest of the school.

The claimed communal charter of religion is not only denied, but also rejected; since in this concrete environment, with two different religious groups, religions are perceived as a possible cause of disarrangement to the peaceful cohabitation, an element of disturbance. Therefore sharing one single religion can create cohesion and unity, (as in the case of the two Tatar gymnásias), whereas, combining two different religions in the same space, everyone seems to agree, can generate some conflicts.

‘I think, it’s unnecessary, because different pupils study here, and anyway some pupils will start to divide, I think- that you are Muslim - I am Christian,- probably some other religions may appear; and I think that to teach religion in the school is unnecessary, we have a subject of cultural studies, where all these churches, icons, all of that is studied, and mosques, everything in terms of information, as a transmission of knowledge, but to study religion in more detail I think it is unnecessary.’
(Tatar language teacher)

According to Baltanov (1994), at the present time in the republic there is a general belief that Islam and Christianity are diametrically opposite, incompatible religions. However, for example Inna, has a very personal opinion, and for her all religions are more or less the same.

‘Yes,... but of course, you know, ... You cannot say that I am exactly practising Islam, because, nowadays - there is a lot of different literature, for example, about Karma and so on. But in general, I think that there is one God and it doesn’t matter in which language you refer to him and which religion you practise - if you are Christian - anyway there is one God and there is no difference.’ (Inna)²³⁴

Most of the pupils’ parents or teachers are not very religious, many of

²³⁴ Inna is Tatar, and her family and herself (she said in theory) are Muslims. She read *Namaz* only once, when she was in a camp with some girls from the *medrese*; on that occasion she was very curious and she tried.

them have an atheistic background, and in many cases religion is part of some families' disagreements. For some of the older generation it is not always easy to observe how their grandchildren are all of a sudden getting involved with religion, because not everyone, after the communist disintegration, became an active pro-religious defender.

'Yes, but I am not christened yet; but for sure I would want to be christened, because we have a disagreement in our family, my grandfather, for example, he doesn't believe in anything, and I am a religious person, and my mother wants to christen me and all that, but because she doesn't want to get involved with my granddad.' (Masha)

But do you go to church?

'By myself no, because what am I going to do there! But we've been with the class in the *Raifskii* Monastery, and also, not long ago, what is the name? also there..., there was a church, we went to have a look, and to light a candle.' (Masha)

It is worth noting that Masha cannot imagine going to the church by herself, and her reaction was, what am I going to do there!

However, it is also possible to find a different variation, for example Misha's parents are atheists, but his grandmother is religious and she baptised him.

'I am religious but moderately, I mean, as they say, there is a proverb 'force a fool to pray to God, and he will smash his brow', so I am not religious to the extent that I would smash my brow against the floor, but still I believe in God, I try to maintain the tradition.' (Misha)

But Misha does not go to church, 'because very often I don't have enough time'. As can see from the previous chapter, lack of time, very often is a recurrent cause for not going to church or to the mosque.

As Luckmann argues, in the modern world there is a process of disinstitutionalisation and privatisation of religion, however, in the concrete context of post Soviet societies, additionally, it is pertinent to talk about the absence of cultural habits of religion. It is quite unusual to see young people in church, on many occasions I had the opportunity to visit different churches, not only in Tatarstan, but also in Moscow and other cities in Russia, and the vast majority were women, as Kiaiariainen stressed, over sixty; some of them with

little children, presumably their granddaughters or grandsons, but very rarely did you see a teenager in church.

Irina's mother had very bad experiences in her career and because of her dissatisfaction she turned to religion; however Irina does not think that her mother influenced her. Her father is not very religious, and in Irina's words, he can go to church and light a candle, but that is it. Her grandparents are very young and she defined them as sovietised characters; but her great-grandparents go to church.

Irina was baptised at the initiative of her great-grandmother, and at that time, even her mother was absolutely disinterested in religion. When I asked Irina how often she goes to church, she answered:

'It happens very occasionally, but, firstly, I am a very busy person, and in general, it is quite difficult because you have to stand up for a long time, but perhaps, something like twice a month; we receive communion there, but if it is just to light a candle, if I am around, if we are out with the girls, it isn't a problem in theory.' (Irina)

What about prayers?

'Oh, no, I am still quite.... But just before I go to bed, I can say something like - I hope everything will be good, - but I may know one or two by heart, the main ones, the shortest.' (Irina)

I have to say that Irina was the only person who goes that often to church, since to go twice a month it is already a considerable frequency. Nevertheless she stressed that it does not happen very often, firstly because she is very busy, once again the time justification, and secondly because she has to stand for a long time; also a peculiar explanation.

Pupils and teachers do not always have categorical answers, and their uncertainty comes out over and over again through the conversations. Are you religious?

'... I don't know, I am like... like a lot of people I don't believe in God, I mean, that he exists for sure, but I go to church, to light a candle. In theory, I suppose, there is somebody who invented all this... I suppose there is.' (Anita)

So you go to church but you do not believe in God, is that right?: 'But, I believe, and I am baptised, and all of that, but somehow all that...

worshipping, that for sure, that he will always help, but I don't know, if it's right'.

Often for the majority, to go to church is presented as something exceptional, including the people who consider that they go to church, like Natasha, it only happens very rarely and under very concrete circumstances; for some special reasons. 'I go, because I am baptised and before school, at the end of August, before school, before the first of September we go to church to receive communion, yes. We wake up and go to church'. Or like one history teacher that goes to church to 'help' her daughter with her exams.

'No... even though I am baptised... very rarely do I go to church, but you know, I suppose, it's necessary to believe in something, but not that I am a deeply religious person. I would like to believe, that there is something, that should help, because sometimes we turn to God, when you want his help during difficult moments. Or your daughter is taking an exam - I go to church and light a candle, to help her, for God to help her - in that sense, but not that I behave fanatically, nothing like that.'
(History teacher)

As we have seen in the preceding section, pupils do not seem to be concerned with their future husband or wife, furthermore, religion does not seem to worry them much.

Igor for example, seems to be quite sure that *natsional'nost* does not play any role in his choice of future wife, and I asked him what if she is Muslim, what will he think about his children's education?

'But... I think that nowadays there are really not many people who follow religion strictly, precisely do all the practices, and I don't think that I will ever meet such a woman and she will become my wife, that she will follow all Islamic norms. And equally, I don't maintain some of the Christian practices, because I don't consider it is necessary to follow them, since they do not always affect my life positively, or the lives of people close to me.' (Igor)

Pupils' and teachers' attitude to religion is surrounded by insecurity and uncertainty, sometimes they do not know if they believe or do not believe in God, sometimes they define themselves as religious but do not know the prayers, do not go to church or the mosque because they do not have time; and very rarely do they fast or observe Ramadan. Davie indicated that in the case of British society, religious life is not disappearing but mutating, characterised by what he considered believing without belonging (1994:198); but can we also

talk about believing without belonging in the context of Tatarstan?

Baltanov (1994) indicated that if in 1985 throughout of the Republic of Tatarstan there were 37 religious units, in October of 1993 their number had increased to 440, (amongst which 330 were Muslim, 88 Orthodox and 9 Protestant). Nevertheless, for the author, this increase does not represent a return to religious institutionalisation; since he considers that the current believer is a new type of believer, very much altered from a religious person from the previous years. New believers' behaviour does not correspond to the classical canons of religion, because they only maintain some of the religious demands. As an example, Baltanov indicates that the Islamic request to read *Namaz* five times a day, is something that only a small minority of believers practise, despite the fact that it is considered as one of the five pillars of the Muslim religion (ibid: 84).

To Baltanov (ibid.) at the present time, a considerable number of people turn to religion for help and support, because post-Soviet societies are facing an ideological vacuum, and they do not see the prospect for the future, since they live in a context of political instability, economic and social difficulties. As we have seen, very often to go to church has an instrumental and concrete purpose, to light a candle at the beginning of the year, (as Natasha) or when a daughter has an exam, (as the history teacher) but not as a permanent and daily practice. For some people there is a component of curiosity, and they just want to try, they are curious about the 'new' and 'unknown'. However, pupils are mainly educated in pragmatism and secular values; values that can help them to survive everyday reality.

'(...) Before we were trying to make everybody equal, nowadays, they understand themselves, that in life there is no such equality - someone is living better, someone worse, and someone has a prestigious job and someone doesn't. So now they understand - everyone has what they deserve,... so they choose what they deserve. (...).' (Olga, history teacher)

Pragmatic attitudes and approaches not only in relation to religion, but as a general philosophy in life. For instance, when I asked Grisha for his biggest wish for his future, he said:

'I don't even know, probably at the moment my wish is to study adequately, to obtain a medal [graduate from school with distinctions], to graduate from school and to be accepted at the university. Furthermore, I

don't have like a concrete dream, like to become an astronaut - I haven't got such a specific wish. Perhaps it is bad, I don't know, at the moment I am studying.' (Grisha)

They live 'down to earth', they are ambitious and want to graduate with good marks, the vast majority want to be able to enter the university of their choice, when they choose one university, very often they have already analysed all the future options for finding good jobs. When they talk about the degree that they will obtain, usually they do not refer to the subject or courses that they like, but the ones that will be more advantageous for their future. Once they have finished their degrees, the next step is to marry and to have a family; most of them are very conservative about women's role in the family, not only boys, but girls also. Almost without exception, they considered that women's role in the family is to bring up the children, and only then, her career; nobody agrees with the idea of the househusband, (that she will work and he will stay at home with the children), not even the girls. Their wishes and dreams for the future have no ideological or utopian components, or any references to changing the world. Generally, their maxim in life is to achieve a good job and a nice house, a peaceful life.

On some occasions and in some environments, like Tatar gymnásias, mono-confessional environments, Islam represents a symbol of Tatar traditions, Tatar unity and cohesion, an integrative part of the image of how they (re)present themselves. Furthermore, Islam offers the opportunity for Tatar unity and cohesion. However, for the two non-Tatar gymnásias, bi-confessional environments, religion is allocated to a rather private sphere, and one of the reasons is because it can reinforce and promote differences inside society; it represents the Pandora's box, once it is activated, it will generate many unmanageable difficulties.

6.5 Inclusive perception of Tatarstan. Notions of small and big *Rodina*

'Most likely I am a patriot of Russia, and also of Tatarstan, because I am proud of my republic, she isn't showing bad results according to all parameters, and I am repeating again, our President is a very respected person (...).' (Grisha)

There cannot be doubts that without exceptions, the *amor patriae* has been, historically, one of the most recurrent imagined attachment, from the

North to the South, and from the East to the West of the globe; from the “remembered” past, to the most contemporary present; *amor patriae* has been a cause to die for. In very different forms and through different mechanisms and with different intensity, most societies, to some point of their existence, have claimed a commitment to the so-called homeland, native land, territory, or what in Russia is called *rodina*. This concrete commitment, which can adopt different forms and degrees of sacrifice, is generally known as patriotism, and the person that manifests a sense of patriotism is a patriot. According to the Oxford dictionary, a person who is devoted to and ready to support or defend his or her country. But not only belligerent conflicts or wars can demand a patriotic attitude, often patriotism can become incorporated as self-justification that helps individuals to cope with an unstable present and sacrifice for the better future under circumstances that the imagined enemy is nothing more than a symbol (reminiscence) from the past. Nevertheless the sense of patriotism is ‘encouraging’ to the enemy to stay alive.

From the times of ancient Russia (Rus) to the current Russian Federation, a permanent and constant sacrifice has been demanded in the name of patriotism from the people that reside on these lands; to support despotic Tsars, to build a better world, to campaign for communism around the world, to struggle against the fascists, or to establish a capitalist economy. As Anderson has stressed ‘it is useful to remind ourselves that nations inspire love, and often profoundly self-sacrificing love’ (1991:141).

Patriotism (unconditional support) was and still is, part of the youngest generations’ rhetoric, who define themselves as patriots, on some occasions of a complex and combined *rodina*; the big *rodina*, (Russia), and the small one, (Tatarstan). The notion of *rodina* has not disappeared from pupils and teachers representations, but is adopting a further fragmented dimension. For example pupils from Tatar gymnásias, consider that Tatarstan is their *rodina* (Russia was never mentioned). Whereas pupils and teachers from non-Tatar gymnásias consider Russia and Tatarstan, as their *rodina*; as we will see, occasionally Tatarstan was presented as the only *rodina*, and on one occasion, the former USSR. However teachers do not seem to agree about their pupils’ attitudes and perception, which is also an indicator of the notion’s fragmentation. Some teachers maintain that pupils have a local sense of patriotism because they do not know Russia anymore. Some teachers will claim that Russian pupils identify themselves more with Russia than with Tatarstan, and some others,

that pupils are not really aware of being part of Russia; as we can observe, very different interpretations. However my impression is that generally, it is not a question of one or the other, Russia or Tatarstan, because you do not notice this dichotomy or opposition when you talk with pupils; both are presented, very often as an integrated structure. Their understanding of Tatarstan is incorporated and associated with Russia, they do not perceive them as something separate. 'There is not any difference, because even if you look at it, anyway we live in one country, with the same traditions, so there is absolutely no difference'. (Inna)

Quite often regardless of whether the pupils or teachers were Russian or Tatar, expressions like: 'our Russia', 'our Russian people', 'we are Russians', used to arise; something that I never heard in gymnásia No.2 and No.16.²³⁵

The disintegration of the communist systems in Eastern Europe and the former USSR opened the way for a whole new set of regime transitions. The transitions that should be defined as very difficult, because it involves not only a dual process of economic as well as political change, but also a considerable change in people's rituals and beliefs, as well as, in peoples' perception and understanding. It is a combination of fluidity and uncertainty that affects all individual and collective representations.

The hegemonic party system has "collapsed" and is being replaced by a fragmented competitive multi-party system, the inexperience of the politicians and the weakness of democratic political culture, the economic crisis, the enormous debt and corruption, are some of the destabilised elements for the imagined unity pursued for more than seventy years. The venerated unitary *rodina* has been reduced to ashes, allowing the fragmentation and lack of references to construct a personal rather than collective *rodina*.

It is not clear anymore what pupils and teachers call their *rodina*, nevertheless, regardless of what they mean by this term, whether it includes only Tatarstan, or Tatarstan and also Russia, or merely Russia, or even the USSR; what seems to be clear is that the notion of *rodina* is still alive. The concept exists, but it is not clearly identifiable what they include or exclude from this concept. A concept that pupils and teachers use, as we will see, and

²³⁵ It is necessary to bear in mind that quite often Tatar pupils or teachers referred to themselves as Russians, nevertheless, it never happened the other way around; that a Russian pupil or teacher would refer to himself or herself as Tatar.

an attitude that they maintain and support. There are many indicators that corroborate this hypothesis, nevertheless what is not clear is: what is their *rodina*? A difficulty that teachers and pupils from Tatar gymnásias did not seem to have in their discourse.

I asked one of the history teachers from gymnásia No.9 if in her subject, she would feel that pupils have or do not have a sense of patriotism. To what she said that yes they have, and they love their *rodina*, and when I asked her, but what does she mean by their *rodina*? She said:

‘I mean their *rodina*, not only Tatarstan, but also Russia, yes. Because the youngest classes don’t... have such a subject as ‘Tatarstan History’, they start in the older classes - from the eighth year, but before that, kids study Russian history, of course, this is why, of course, in the tutorial class we try to familiarise them with our *rodina*, for example, I took my sixth year class, for an excursion around our Kazan, around our Tatarstan, and we have also been to Raifa, and Sviiazhk. And we also organise different games, and study the Kremlin, so we start to study history with them simultaneously with what they are studying in the Russian history lesson, and during non-class hours we also study... our land’s history, they have seen everything.’ (History teacher)

However, some of the older pupils expressed more of a local sense of patriotism, and, for example, Alfiya considered Kazan to be her homeland, rather than Tatarstan, because in her words, ‘I don’t know Tatarstan well enough to consider it to be my *rodina*.’ I have to confess that Alfiya’s pragmatism really surprised me, habitually people do not know all the territory that they refer to or identify with their homeland; it is more a metaphor of familiarity and known territory (in figurative terms), rather than in literal terms.

According to the Russian language and literature teacher:

‘many of them have never been outside Tatarstan, they haven’t been to Moscow or further afield. This is why many of them, of course, are limited to Tatarstan. And only a few know that it is part, of course they know, but they are not conscious of it. Before it was easier - we were saying - this is a big big country - the Soviet Union. We were educated like that. But nowadays they have begun to divide it in their corners. Here is all Russia - and Tatarstan - a little corner. There is not a broad understanding.’ (Russian language and literature teacher)

In opposition to what the history teacher underlined, that the younger classes are not familiar with Tatarstan history and have not an absolute perception of Tatarstan, the Russian language and literature teacher considers that it is the other way around, that they do not have a conscious understanding

of Russia.

Probably the Russian language and literature teacher is right when she indicated that they know that Tatarstan is part of the Russian Federation²³⁶, but because many of them have never travelled around Russia they do not have a real perception, and they tend to identify with their *rodina* what is familiar to them; probably they do not have an absolutely unitary notion of Russia as her generation used to have with the former USSR. Nevertheless my impression was that the older pupils seemed to be very aware that Tatarstan is part of the Russian Federation.

Although the sense of patriotism is not static, it can actually be modified through people's life; for example, there was one case, a history teacher, who stressed that just recently she had become a patriot of Tatarstan; before she was also a patriot of Russia, but she is so fed up with the current situation.²³⁷

'Tatarstan I suppose, Tatarstan; of course before, I was a patriot of Russia, now I am so tired of all these, that there are no forces left, however, not long ago they asked me - if you had the opportunity to emigrate, would you emigrate or not? - Of course, I would like to live a life of normal people, who live in the West, to feel really free, to be a free person, and to live under a normal government with rights. But anyway this feeling of small *rodina*, would probably not allow me,....my mother,... everything is familiar, the things that we are used to, and friends.' (Liaisan, history teacher)

In spite of the difficulties that she is facing, and her unhappiness and dissatisfaction, what she called a feeling of small *rodina*, would not allow her to leave; the sense of sacrifice is emerging again. Her representation of the *rodina* has changed through time, although her sense of patriotism did not disappear, simply adapted to the new circumstances.

There was also one example of Soviet nostalgia that I would like to illustrate here; in this case it is also very relevant to stress that the respondent is Russian.

'(...) Maybe it is manifested, I think, because a Russian kid doesn't feel Tatarstan is his *rodina*. He feels Russia, the whole country. For me, for

²³⁶ Very often throughout this text I will be referring to Russia instead of Russian Federation, because not even one pupil or teacher ever mentioned the Russian Federation, permanently they were talking about Russia; which I consider is also a relevant matter.

²³⁷ I think that in this case it is important to bear in mind that she is Tatar.

example, particularly my *rodina* is - the Old Soviet Union. Because before, when I travelled to Estonia or to Uzbekistan, - nobody offended me, nobody... had a bad reaction, everywhere I felt very good. We had really good friends everywhere, all... and I never considered ...Tatarstan?... my homeland. Kazan, yes, I was born here, but not Tatarstan. Kazan is my city, and in general it is my country (...). I don't have in that sense some kind of narrow national patriotism. Students, I think, Russians have some kind of understanding - that he is Russian, it means Russia. A Tatar, again under the pressure of the elders, starts to think - perhaps we should separate? Perhaps our state? I tell them: it is difficult when one state is surrounded by different states.' (Olga, history teacher)

But the majority of pupils and teachers do not think that Tatarstan should be independent, they do not consider that the situation would improve if the republic were to achieve the status of an autonomous republic, more frequently they sustain that the situation will deteriorate. Pupils and teachers do not talk about unbalanced or unequal situations, about the exploitative empire (Russia) or the repressed colony (Tatarstan); these sets of words do not form a part of their vocabulary; there is no anger or frustration in their words, there are no historical blame or reproaches.

'I don't know, in theory, things are going fine. If we achieve some sovereignty, even if it's an absolute one... In theory, it is necessary to have some help from outside, if it is going to be a completely independent republic. Everything is decided... not by one person, anyway, I think that when there is a collective, it's easier then. I suppose, there is no need for a complete one.' (Ania)

But not only Russians maintain this position, for example Zulfiya is a Tatar girl and does not think that there is any need to separate from Russia. 'No, I think there is no need. I wouldn't like to separate from Russia, from Russians, because then this division will start, I would prefer to live together'. Pupils and teachers do not seem to share the mythical dream of independence that characterised Tatar gymnásias discourse.

'What will be better? Now the Soviet Union has disintegrated, all the economy is disorganised, now they cannot..., from one factory to another for example, somewhere they are buying the cheese, and somewhere are processing it, and to transport from one border to another when it becomes necessary to pay taxes, and also to do something over there, everything is more complicated, all the economy is destroyed, now they are trying to re-establish it, and it will be the same with Tatarstan. If Tatarstan will separate, from the beginning to divide everything, and then reunification again, they will only lose time.' (Misha)

For example Grisha considers that the answer to the independence question depends if a person is Russian or Tatar, because the effect will be different.

‘The thing is that, probably... if I was Tatar, I would of course agree with that, but because I am Russian, I think that if we definitely separate from Russia, for us it is going to be very difficult, for the Russian people. Because for sure, I think, there will be Tatar language, they will not take you to work unless you speak Tatar, I think it is going to be very difficult; I prefer a limited sovereignty. (...) But do you understand, if Tatarstan was just like Chechnya, somewhere on the border, then perhaps it would be independent, but it is located in the centre of Russia, Moscow will never allow them to separate anyway.’ (Grisha)

We can see that some pupils are aware of the differentiation between Tatars and Russians, and they assume consequently, that their answer should be different; nevertheless almost all Tatar pupils and teachers considered it to be unnecessary to separate from Russia.

Very often pupils referred to Chechnya as a practical example of why Tatarstan should not be independent. ‘I don’t know, but I think it’s unnecessary. Chechnya tried to separate - it is not like within Russian or outside Russia... it is not; better within Russia’. (Natasha)

In contrast to pupils’ opinions from Tatar gymnásias, most of the people that I conversed with in non-Tatar gymnásias were completely in agreement with the Russian policies and actions in Chechnya. Is this a sign of patriotism? For instance, Inna, (whose father is a soldier) expressed it very openly.

‘In Chechnya, in theory, I think is an internal Russian issue, why they always forget that when... for sure now I will not tell it right,... when there was a conflict between England and Argentina, some islands were over there, yes - they mobilised all the air force over, and they bombed everything and nobody said a word, whereas when Russia started to organise her internal affairs, immediately everyone - UN started to talk about human rights, and nobody remembered anything. At the end, the result is that all the countries, apart from Russia can do what they want to, but if it only concerns Russia, then that is it, and that is an internal issue and I think they are not allowed to get involved.’ (Inna)

But do you think that is the right thing to do?

‘It is right. Otherwise it is impossible. If not - they rejected peaceful mechanisms, peaceful ways - it didn’t work and now there is only the option of eliminating all these gangs only that way, and then put puppets in the government, who will only obey Russia and only like that it will be possible to have order for ever. And then, such things happen, you’re sleeping at night, you are not disturbing anyone and, all of a sudden, your house is blown up! It is inconceivable that it can happen like that. And for example, if the USA can do something... to protect its citizens, so why does Russia not have the right to protect hers?’ (Inna)

Pupils express almost unconditional support for Moscow policies, often, as Inna showed, surrounded by a strong anti-western argument. With the exception of one or two Tatar pupils, the vast majority not only did not criticise or assess, but they openly supported the policy that Russia is conducting in Chechnya. According to Larisa (history teacher):

‘What do they think? But nowadays, they tend to support the necessity to free the place from bandits, actually nobody is expressing that they are doing it wrong - nobody. When there was a war for the first time in Chechnya, then of course, there was a division of opinion. I have older classes - I teach them economics, however we had a discussion, and they were especially divided. But now - without exception, it’s necessary to destroy, or they think that - just to bomb Grozny, to erase it from the earth. Of course it sounds dreadful.... However, there are such opinions’.

Certainly, opinions that most of the pupils that I conversed with confirmed.

Some pupils do not reject the option of moving to another country to work, however, most of the pupils will be willing to move abroad to work, but not for good; an emotional attachment with the place, their friends and their family were most commonly the reasons why, although, some strong patriotic loyalties were also manifested.

‘Why? I have a tranquil life, I live fine, I’m happy with this life... Because I say that I believe in our flourishing future, that Russia will transform, ...respond to the government, because Russia has an enormous potential - and the countryside, resources, and many intelligent people and ... it has potential, I think, even more than America has, it is only that in the meantime Russia is getting over a crisis, which is going on for too long, but anyway, soon we will start to live.’(Grisha)

Grisha, like some other pupils reproduces a very enthusiastic and patriotic discourse, showing unconditional faith and hope in Russia; moreover he was not the only one.

‘But why, why move from your own country? The rats abandon a sinking ship first. Why do this? Because there is a crisis now, a difficult situation, but it has to come to an end at some point, anyway everything will be solved and it will be fine.’(Andrei)

For example Zulfiya is Tatar, but she does not perceive Tatarstan as something separate from Russia, she considers herself to be a Russian patriot, and as most of her classmates she does not want to leave for good.

‘Only as something temporary, not for good! (...) For me, mine is closer, I suppose I am a patriot. For me of course, other countries, all of them are interesting... because many of my friends went to study abroad, but anyway, to return (...) A Russian patriot I suppose, because we don’t have such a distinction -Russian, Tatar, Chuvash, Jewish, and so on, we are used to being together, including at school.’(Zulfiya)

As in Tatar gymnásias, pupils do not want to move away for good, and they are also expressing quite unrestricted loyalty, but in this case not only to Tatarstan, but also to Russia.

I asked pupils (in non-Tatar gymnásias) what they would say if they were abroad and someone asked them ‘Where are you from?’ The most common answer was ‘from Russia’ first, and only after that, would they explain that they were from Tatarstan, a part of Russia.

‘But of course I will say that I am from Russia. But because I have never been abroad I don’t know how they will react to that. Because here... if you say that you are from some other place, I think people are fine about that, and it can be the same abroad.’(Natasha)

Interestingly enough, Natasha did not even mention Tatarstan, and I do not think she would even imagine what was the real intention of my question. Ideliia on the other hand would replay by saying she was from Russia, and then would explain in more detail about Tatarstan and Kazan; something that she had experienced when she was in France.

‘If for example somewhere in Russia- yes I can say that ‘I am Tatar’, because they know, that there is a place called Tatarstan, but abroad nobody knows, mainly they know that there is Russia, but they don’t know that there is Tatarstan, Chuvashiia, - very few know that. This is why I suppose the word Tatarstan is not familiar to many of them.’(Ideliia)

So you will present yourself as Russian?

‘As Russian, especially because I heard that abroad - my friend went - and somewhere like at the customs where you have to write... your *natsional'nost* - if you write Tatar, they will just cross it out; you have to write Russian they say, that they don't know such a *natsional'nost*.’
(Zulfiya)

Despite pupils *natsional'nost*, Zulfiya, and Ideliia, for example are Tatars, everyone without exception, agrees that they will say first from Russia or that they are Russian, and in some cases, only afterwards, they will explain that they are from Tatarstan. Whereas in the context of Tatar gymnásias pupils clearly indicated that under no-circumstances would they present themselves as Russians. Why is it such a relevant issue for some pupils and completely irrelevant for others? Why this categorical differentiation? Why in the two Tatar gymnásias for a pupil to present himself or herself as Russian or from Russia, symbolises the worst offence and an action of disloyalty and betrayal, whereas for pupils from non-Tatar gymnásias it is perfectly acceptable?

CONCLUSION

At the beginning of this journey I described my orientation to this work, but now the important point is to be able to describe the point of arrival. For that purpose a certain amount of recapitulation will be necessary.

The research began with an attempt to defend and argue the need for multidimensional perspectives in the study of identities. I have used a variety of sources to show how diverse discourses, interests, enunciative strategies, policies, institutional dimensions, aims and purposes, are directly involved in the process of identisation. They may create tensions and antagonism or coexist peacefully. A conception of identities which allow for internal and external definitions to coexist is indispensable for the study of the identisation process.

‘One cannot treat collective identity as a ‘thing’, as the monolithic unity of the subject; it must, instead, be conceived as a system of relations and representations. Collective identity takes the form of a field containing a system of vectors in tension. These vectors constantly seek to establish an equilibrium between the various axes of collective action, and between identification declared by the actor and the identification given by the rest of the society’ (Melucci 1996:76).

I defined the identisation process using the notions of discourse, institutional site, specific enunciative strategies and marking difference and exclusion²³⁸, in order to illustrate the multidimensional relation and the complex dialectic that emerges in the Republic of Tatarstan between three different areas: political discourse, institutional praxis, and everyday life. There is a dialogue between a formal rhetoric of inclusion, a rigid discourse (frontierisation) and primordial understanding of identities transmitted by some institutions that aim to reinforce particular practices of segregation; as well as personal transgression in everyday life. The frontiers of these interpretations are easily mouldable and adapted to personal demand and circumstances, but they also have a fractured and fragmented character. There is transgression of the imaginary boundary-line and structured frontiers between different extremes - a transgression that represents personal adaptation to a permanent process of (re)definition and (re)invention of relatively restricted norms and codes. It serves the purpose of bringing about an intense amalgamation and cultural multiverse.

²³⁸ See Chapter 1.

My interest was to observe how Tatar national gymnásias create and reinforce static notions of ethno-Tatar identity (ethno-national universe), and at the same time, to show how this process of identities formation, transformation and creation involves a complex dialogue, a dialectic, between political discourse, institutional praxis and everyday life. Personal and individual experiences are deeply implicated in the process. One of the purposes of this work was to stress the opaqueness of the identisation process and the absence of clearly demarcated representations of identity in individual perceptions and interpretations.

In summary the multidimensionality of the process was presented by illustrating the complex dialectic that emerges between three different areas: political discourse, institutional praxis and everyday life. The first defends the idea of integration (*Tatarstantsy*)²³⁹, the second promotes the practice of segregation (inside Tatar gymnásias), while the third manifests transgression between the apparently rigid and divisible lines of identities and accentuates their fractured and fragmented character²⁴⁰.

The purpose of this thesis has been to illustrate the triangular relationship that emerges between political discourse, institutional praxis and everyday life (integration – segregation – transgression). The relationship between these three coexisting areas is flexible and changeable, adopting different forms depending on the circumstances. For this reason, they should be treated as interrelated dimensions, avoiding any rigid differentiation or hierarchical distinction. They each need to be positioned at the same level because all three have equal importance. Thus, during the research it was possible to identify a common dialectic of integration- segregation- transgression. However, this dialectic was expressed in different forms and characteristics according to the situation.

For example in Tatar gymnásias it was possible to observe an intra-elite process because the discourse of some sectors of the Tatar political elite, corresponded closely with the institutional praxis inside Tatar gymnásias, as well as with pupils' and teachers' discourse about their daily practices, values and interpretations. In other words, institutional praxis is translated into everyday life through the reproduction of ethno-national discourse which is

²³⁹ See section 2.3

²⁴⁰ See section 1.3

created by Tatar gymnásias, pupils' families and some sectors of the Tatar political elite. There is a direct correlation between Tatar gymnásias and some sectors of the Tatar political elite, performed through an intra-elite process, mutually and dynamically reinforced in both directions. Pupils repeat what they hear inside the school and in their homes (as most of the children do). Moreover, pupils accept without much hesitation what the adults claim. According to Tatar culture, the voice of the elders has to be listened to and accepted. Pupils hear, accept and reproduce what are portrayed as the advantages of ethno-cultural segregation. They uphold the belief in Tatar language primordially, the need to reinforce and maintain mono-cultural environments (Tatar schools) and the marriage only within the group (Tatar endogamy), as mechanisms to ensure cohesion and Tatar cultural survival.

Although I have devoted special emphasis to Tatar language in this work, other factors are equally involved in the process of identification, and other dimensions should be also explored in future projects. Tatar language emerged as a key dimension because during the time that I was conducting this research it was one of the main topics of concern inside both gymnásias. In any case, as Schöpflin stressed, the role of language as an ethnic marker has been especially salient in Central and East Europe (2000:118), and the same is true of the former Soviet Union. The Hungarian writer Gyula Illyés said 'the nation lives in its language' (quoted in Schöpflin 2000:120).

The Primordially of language was and still is generally accepted in many places as the strongest source of attachment to a community, a group or a nation, and to its national symbols (songs, stories or hymns) because these representations are transmitted through language and a language emerges as the mechanism to protect and keep them alive. '(...) ethnicity may not be related to language, whereas language as a boundary marker is always related to ethnicity' (Haarmann 1986: 261).

It is not easy to estimate if this amount of attention to the language dimension is the most sensible approach. However, I would maintain that it is a direct result of the characteristics and idiosyncrasies of the environments where the research was conducted. Language emerged as the epicentre of the discourses reproduced in these settings. It is important to bear in mind that a visible change was taking (and is taking) place in the republic and Tatar language is directly associated with it. Furthermore, it represented a clear boundary marker in pupils' and teachers' representations of 'Others' and how

they constructed the idea of the 'we'. Nevertheless there were opportunities throughout this work, to see other dimensions like religion, history, mass media, cultural production, composition of the political elite or politico-economic interests, just to mention a few. They should not be neglected in future research nor should these factors be analysed in isolation from each other.

The leitmotiv of this work is the assumption and claim that there is no cultural, ethnic or national essence, and that any attempt to naturalise and present them as essential features should be seen as a response to institutional, historico-political and individual interests. However, primordialism cannot be rejected *ipso facto*, because it exists as data in the constant reference to primordial ties made by the participants in the research. Hence, I have stressed the need to operate not only in terms of a constructivist approach, but also to consider the evidence for *constructed primordiality*. Such an approach requires us to focus 'on power as well as on authority, and on the manner in which different modes of domination are implicated in the social construction of ethnic and other identities' (Jenkins 1997: 73), as well as the manner in which people are adopting and incorporating these dynamics in their representations through an internal and external dialectic (ibid: 20). Identities are malleable, flexible and negotiable, but to paraphrase Jenkins: 'the recognition that ethnicity is neither static nor monolithic should not be taken to mean that it is definitively and perpetually in a state of flux. There are questions to be asked about how and why ethnicity²⁴¹ is more or less flexible in different places and time' (ibid: 51). They lead to further questions such as under which circumstances some identities are more vulnerable and liable to be redefined and reformulated or why under conditions of threat or instability, references to the past and historical justification 'become' manifest using 'history' (its specific narratives) as an indicator of authenticity and legitimacy. 'History' appears as a recurrent reference because, as Calhoun indicated, 'we make national identities seem natural, or at least primordial, by building them into our very sense of history' (1995:233). How history is represented, by whom and when, are key factors to bear in mind in the process of indentisation. They need to be analysed in detail because as Bhabha explains:

²⁴¹ Or other social or collective identities.

‘The enunciation of cultural difference problematizes the division of past and present, tradition and modernity, at the level of cultural representation and its authoritative address. It is the problem of how, in signifying the present, something comes to be repeated, relocated, and translated in the name of tradition, in the guise of a pastness that is not necessarily a faithful sign of historical memory but a strategy of representing authority in terms of the artifice of the archaic’ (1997: 205).

The present is constantly rewriting the past, mainly because history is a powerful tool that legitimises and justifies possible projects for the future. In the name of history, traditions and ancestry, identities are permanently (re)defined, (re)negotiated and (re)formulated. However it is not only relevant to observe how the past is represented in the present, but also how the constructed memory of different policies, which were applied in the past, for example, Russification and Sovietisation, are directly affecting and influencing the current dynamics. These external definitions and categorisations strongly affect the process of identification.

‘(...) actually identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not ‘who we are’ or ‘where we come from’, so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves’ (Hall 1996: 4).

But the differences between the ways in which history can be read, the differences in the attitude to the language, the differences in representing or in marking the ‘Others’, cannot be reduced to the ethno-cultural or national groups without paying attention to institutional sites, since they play a notorious role in this process by reinforcing and promoting specific attitudes and representations. The research revealed how inside two different types of schools two almost diametrically opposed representations appeared. In relation to Tatar language, on the one hand, a primordial and essentialist interpretation inside Tatar gymnásias, and on the other hand, in non-Tatar gymnásias, an instrumental and functional attitude, an entirely quantitative and ‘arithmetical’ expression.

At one extreme (in Tatar gymnásias) there is clearly visible a constant elevation of Tatar language and Tatar culture, as inseparable entities, invariably presented together. At the other extreme (in non-Tatar gymnásias) while it is accepted that Tatar language is also an official language in the republic, the fact is recognised without much enthusiasm, and indeed often with some

hostility because of the number of hours, the bad organisation and poorly qualified teachers. One side of the coin represents hope, anticipation and illusion; the other represents very desultory interest and absence of curiosity about Tatar language or Tatar culture. The lack of respect and interest is a matter of increasing concern for the future if the objective is to build an egalitarian society, to be built, and if the various mechanisms and structures needed to bring about a change in pupils' and teachers' attitudes are to work successfully. The fact that bilingualism (as this research illustrates) is permanently and historically presented as a one-way process, reinforces the feelings of injustice, unfairness, inequality, cultural domination, discrimination - to list just some of the issues that pupils, parents and teachers from Tatar gymnásias were keen to emphasise.

Ironically, but at the same time, non-Tatar gymnásias pupils and teachers perceive Tatar language as an 'exotic' subject which will never amount to anything of more than secondary or minor importance, mere curiosity. In non-Tatar gymnásias, the discontent arises from the number of hours that they have to dedicate to Tatar language (some teachers see as damaging to the rest of the curriculum). The shortage of qualified teachers, the absence of a well-developed methodology to teach the language, and the compulsion to adopt Tatar language, are all causes of discontent. In short, it is experienced as an unexpected and undesirable change to the normal state of affairs.

Inside Tatar gymnásias, discontent centres on the long term established experience of subordination, the marginal and minority status of Tatar language. There is dissatisfaction with the history and development of Russian linguistic and cultural domination, and the current low level of interest shown by the Russian population towards Tatar language and Tatar culture. In that sense, for some sectors of the Tatar population, the Tatar language revival is a symbol of new relations and new rules of interaction, hence new opportunities for Tatar people.

The marking of difference had also a different role in each institutional environment, because in the context of Tatar gymnásias a dichotomous way of thinking clearly emerged, which illustrated to what extent the strong division Tatar/Russian ('us' and 'them') is not only an occasional expression, but, is embedded in their representations, and constantly reproduced inside the schools and families; confirming that 'identity is always a dialectic between

similarity and difference' (Jenkins 1997:165). The process is both differentiation and identification, inclusion and exclusion since in McCrone's words, 'the 'difference' involves the 'same'' (1998:36).

'Since every 'we' generated a 'they', since communality encourages participation on the inside and erects barriers against participation from outside, there is no collective action without some kind of inclusion and exclusion, and without a dividing line between 'them' and 'us'. Borders of this kind may be visible, as in the case of territorially organized political communities. Many borders exist only in people's minds and remain invisible, as is often the case with markings of social difference' (Wicker 1997:22).

The process of differentiation and demarcation of the 'we' and the 'Others' cannot be detached from how recollection of the past (narrative construction) is performed. The representation of the 'Others' is not always in direct opposition to the 'we', nor is it always surrounded by negative connotations. For example, inside non-Tatar gymnásias the 'Others' do not appear in their discourses and representations because they do not even exist, the category is relegated to silence and to the status of nothingness. It never symbolised a danger or a threat, and in that sense there cannot be a dichotomy or construction of the 'Others', because the domination is clearly established. Consequently the 'Others' do not exist, not because of their integrative, fair-minded and impartial attitude, respect or tolerance, but because of its marginal and irrelevant status in their representations. Extremely little is known about Tatar culture, which has been silenced and made invisible during many decades and centuries. For that reason it is important to appreciate that the strong presence or absence of the 'Others', are parts of the same process, each depending on the other. They are two sides of the same coin, both essential to its appearance. The absence of 'Otherness' in this case does not necessarily symbolise or involve a truthful effort (or any kind of effort) to achieve a cultural interaction or an amalgamation. The rhetoric of integration was often intimately related to a process of cultural assimilation or acculturation, where Tatar culture and people were demoted to subordinate positions.

Pupils' families also play an enormous role in the process of marking difference and exclusion. Endogamy and closure within the group are values transmitted by the pupils' families from Tatar gymnásias because marriages

outside of the group is fervently stigmatised and the danger of mixed marriages is overemphasised in pupils' eyes ²⁴². Marriage within the group contributes strongly to the differentiation and non-communication between different groups.

Religion was also portrayed as an important parameter in the Tatar gymnásia discourse, and in what pupils, teachers and parents presented as descriptive characteristics of their idea of 'being Tatar'. Like language itself, it was presented as an 'essential' feature of a *natsiia*. However, the so-called process of reislamisation is composed of two different tendencies; one visible propensity (inside Tatar gymnásias) where religion is a component of ethno-cultural identification. Thus 'Tatar' is associated with 'Muslim', and in that sense, religion complements and reinforces cultural identity. Musina (1998) used the term religious nationalism to illustrate how religion is associated with national and cultural rebirth, shaping and consolidating the notion of 'Tatar identity'. The second, and concurrent tendency is the well-known privatisation and individualisation of interpretation and practice of Islam. In short, religion operates on the one hand as a constitutive element of how they represent cultural identity, as cohesive and unified, while on the other, religious practice is experiencing a clear individualisation, where each person tries to adapt Islam to their lives in a way that suits them. This individual appropriation of religion amounts to a significant transgression of what should be practised according to recognised definitions and protocols. But religion, like attitudes to the language and the construction of the 'Others' does not have the same features in all institutional niches. Whereas in Tatar gymnásias religion was an element of identification within the group, in non-Tatar gymnásias it was perceived as an element of division and fragmentation. More precisely, they strongly rejected the idea of teaching religion inside the school, since it would create the risk of frictions between Russian and Tatar pupils. Religion was strongly highlighted as a private choice, but never as a subject that should be taught in the school, and never as a way of life or philosophy as in Tatar gymnásias.

However not everything involved differentiation and opposition between the two types of institution. Similarities were also found, especially in relation to pupils' favourite festivities, a field where a clear transgression in the Tatar gymnásias was manifested. This is understandable because while

²⁴² See section 5.5

discourses are rigid and static, practices can be flexible and permeable. There is a 'dialogue- tension' between what should be according to the discursive level and what they are actually used to or what they like (as a result of many years of practical experience). Paradoxically, as we have seen, pupils without much hesitation would define themselves as Tatars and consequently in their terms as Muslims, and yet portray the New Year as their favourite festivity. This was perfectly accepted by the pupils, but not equally welcomed by the institutions. It was a point of conflict and disagreement between institutional enunciation and pupils' practices; a fissure that very well symbolised the level of transgression incorporated in their everyday life; a space where what the institutions defend or proclaim is refused. Therefore, pupils from both Tatar and non- gymnásia, regardless of their background, seemed to agreed that they like the same festivities. Furthermore, in Tatar gymnasia this pronouncement is a clearly implied challenge to the institutional position and a transgression in relation to the institutional imperatives.

As it has been mentioned before, the notion of patriotism stood as another pillar in the way that 'Tatarhood' was represented inside Tatar gymnásias. The Tatar gymnásia pupils', teachers' and parents' *rodina* was well defined. There was no room for misunderstanding what they meant by their *rodina* and what it was not. It combined constant dissatisfaction with the Russian government, with the wish and hope that if Tatarstan were to become an independent republic (in real terms, not only on paper) things would be much better for Tatars. It is a hope and an illusion, perhaps even a myth, which does not necessarily correspond with real conditions and circumstances but it has a secure place in people's imaginary representations.

In these various ways the research identified a collage of attitudes, discourses, representations, narratives and imaginary constructions. It is this complex amalgam that constitutes the never-ending process of identification.

National archipelagos (the Tatar gymnásias) epitomise a mechanism to prevent the demise of Tatar language and a place where pupils can learn about the history of Tatarstan and its traditions, learn Arabic or become familiarised with Islam. They are spaces where patriotism for Tatarstan is accentuated, an environment where new narratives of Tatar people are in a state of effervescence and where a primordial understanding of 'Tatarhood' is in an advanced stage of gestation. On the other hand, inside non-Tatar gymnásias, Tatar culture and traditions are relegated to a marginal position. English and

French are the two main languages that pupils would like to learn, religion is disassociated from the school environment and there is a fragmented representation of *rodina*. Sometimes it refers to combination of a big and a small *rodina* (Russia and Tatarstan), on some occasions it means only one of them, and on others occasions it can even refer to the former USSR, depending on the individual. It is often presented as an integral structure, because Tatarstan is conceived as part of the Russian Federation. Thus the proclaimed unity of the past under the form of the Soviet Union had been replaced by a highly fragmented *rodina*. Moreover the former enemy established during the Cold War became the new point of reference for the adolescent population.

The notion of *rodina* is not static but is always liable to change as result of the political and social changes. People create specific mechanisms to adapt to these modifications, which operate with their own definitions and representations.

Inside both gymnásias an effort towards 'de-Sovietisation' is evident, with different mechanisms and methods, promoting diverse interpretations and justifications in the attempt to construct new points of reference and orientation. Inside Tatar gymnásias there is the attempt to restore what they consider to have been neglected, stolen or annihilated over many centuries. In non-Tatar gymnásias the aim is to avoid opening Pandora's box, which would generate difficulties and new problems that they are not ready for (or do not wish to know) even if they have to be dealt with in the near future. Some problems will be unavoidable and need to be addressed. For example, there is the issue of how to organise a common space where Tatars and Russians would feel equally at home, but not because the silencing code of Russian domination is accepted and reproduced. It would require a real space for cultural communication and dialogue and a school system based on the principal of plurality and diversity, where differences would be perceived as a means of enrichment and the mechanism to escape from a divided society.

In the coming future, Tatar gymnásias will have to decide which path or direction they will promote: whether to strive to return to the past they claim to have lost, or to adapt to the new circumstances and demands. It will be a question of finding a balance between what they consider to be the recovery of Tatar traditions and the dynamics of the present situation. But Tatar gymnásias are not simply defenders of archaic traditions or isolation from the rest of the world. They are, for example active promoters of the Internet in their

curriculum as well as the incorporation of English language in their schools. But because of the current socio-economic crisis in the Russian Federation, Tatarstan along with other republics and regions are trying to find some support outside of the Federation. They are searching for foreign investments, and so far, in the context of Tatar gymnásias, this type of collaboration is coming from the 'historical' partners, especially Turkey and Saudi Arabia. However, they know that it would be a mistake to look at the 'past' as the only point of reference, especially when many schools in Tatarstan have a diametrically opposite angle, and countries like United States, Germany or England are their current panacea.

It is difficult to predict what will happen in the near future in the republic, especially because the boundaries to my own research are quite limited. It is focused on the end of the 1990s, (last years of Boris Yeltsin's mandate) and it would be unrealistic and speculative to pretend these results apply to the most recent circumstance, - especially because the political arena has already experienced considerable changes since the year 2000 with Vladimir Putin's election as President of the Russian Federation. But for the same reason further developments in that field could be important.

What happens in Tatarstan is strongly related to and dependent on what happens in Moscow. If there is political or economic instability in Moscow, there is bound to be some effect in the republic. In other words, Tatarstan's stability depends on Moscow's stability. In the same way, it is difficult to define where the possible path that the cohabitation between the two main groups, Russians and Tatars, will lead. At this time there is general agreement that there is a peaceful cohabitation between them, but many problems could emerge in the future if Russians were to start to feel discriminated against in Tatarstan, or if they were to perceive ethnic prejudice. Similar problems could occur the other way around, if Tatars do not perceive any change in Russians' attitude to Tatar culture (and language), if they persist in ignoring the issue and the need to show more interest and respect. There is a complex relationship which should result in both sides thinking carefully. The chronic anger which, as we have seen, comes from Tatars' belief that they are victims, (feelings that nationalistic groups are using to their own benefit), combined with the blindness and lack of interest that Russians are showing towards certain demands made by Tatar population, can easily reinforce extreme tendencies.

But it is difficult to imagine in the context of Tatarstan a violent

conflict or nationalist explosion, since the relationship between the main population groups is based on a permanent attempt to find a consensus. Almost half of the population is Russian, and generally speaking the population does not want to face a conflict since a high proportion of the population live in mixed marriages and relations are very close between them. The cohabitation is based on a long experience. Nonetheless, it is time to start to redefine the relationship between both groups in order to be able to construct an integrated and inclusive society, without the dissatisfaction of some sectors, and the reluctance to see the discontent of others. The Russian Federation has an enormous role to play in terms of their political performance, since these days it is still inadequate to assume that federalism is really working. It will only be achieved when Russia accepts that the old idea of the Russian Empire should be buried, and is prepared to adopt radical changes in its policies. To date, the central government has not indicated any willingness to promote or develop such federalism. In the long term it can only highlight the differences inside the republics and regions; differences which as we have seen, some social actors are reinforcing and encouraging.

The historical division between the rural and urban populations where Tatars symbolised the rural and Russians the urban, consolidated and reinforced the existence of the *agrobureaucracy*, a group that is today responsible for the political decisions in the republic, because they constitute a large proportion of the political elite. They are a highly cohesive group that has representations in different sectors of the society, including the running of Tatar gymnásias. During Soviet time, they left the countryside and achieved a certain status in local governments which allowed them by now to reach top political positions. They are a sector of the population that proclaims their 'Tatarhood' and the necessity to develop and revive Tatar culture. Generally speaking, this *agrobureaucracy* has been educated with a nostalgic attitude towards Tatar language and culture and they have not been acculturated or incorporated into Russian culture as have some sectors of the urban Tatars who do not speak Tatar and who are currently much closer to Russian habits and traditions than to the Tatar ones. They are people who lived previously with the identity of Soviet citizens.

The *agrobureaucracy* are the first or second generation to live in the urban environment but they maintain strong connections with the countryside. Until recently the rural culture was stigmatised and coming from the

countryside involved an inferiority complex in relation to the Russian population. This should not be underestimated in any future analysis of the situation in the republic. The *agrobureaucracy* are not only in charge of political decisions and many administrative posts, but equally they are educating the future political generation inside Tatar gymnásias; and the same resentment and discontent is exhibited in their discourse.

In order to avoid any tendency that would reinforce segregation, it is not only necessary to incorporate Tatar language in the curriculum, and to promote policies to revive Tatar culture. These measures are only a first step. In order to build a plural society, and respect for diversity, pupils should be educated in mixed environments, where differences are accepted, along with different languages and cultures, habits and traditions. Only under such circumstances can the old phantoms be banished and new relations of respect and tolerance be established. This option is being denied to the current generation of pupils.

In the past decade, President Shaimiev has managed to create an image of peaceful cohabitation, and of course, if we compare it with Chechnya, the most extreme and violent case, Tatarstan is an excellent example of undisturbed relations. Nevertheless, a rather more cautious and subtle diagnosis is called for because this research indicated that the absence of manifest conflict does not always mean fair and impartial relations, specially when new generations of pupils are educated with strong feelings of dissatisfaction, and many of them cannot even see the need to show some interest in, and respect for, Tatar culture or to learn Tatar language.

Tatarstan 'sovereignty' represents different things for the Russian and for the Tatar populations, and the two groups have different motives and interpretations. Russians see the value of 'sovereignty' in economic terms and economic prosperity; therefore the parameter is economic development. For Tatars, on the other hand, it involves economic development plus ethno-cultural Tatar renaissance, the cultural-national parameter. As long as both parameters exist together, consensus is achieved, but problems may start when one of the parameters becomes stronger than the other, or one starts to decline.

In summary, the relationship between the different ethno-cultural groups inside the republic, the relation of the republic to the centre, and the political stance that the Russian Federation will adopt in the future, are some of the key dimensions that will influence the situation in the republic. The

dynamics are unpredictable because the elements are fragile, unstable and mutually interdependent. A minor change in one of them, would affect the relation between all of three.

The relationships are not only matters of the present. The past is alive in the republic. Not merely as a marginal or folkloric phenomenon, in terms of festivities or rituals. Paradoxically, the same policies and institutional practices that are claimed to have had a negative effect in the past, are reproducing similar mechanisms and dynamics of delimitation and division; once again reinforcing ethno-national belonging as one of the main social dimensions and forms of categorisation. For example, in the context of education, schools are still working in a similar way as during Soviet times, obviously with a different message. The form has not yet been replaced because most of the teachers were educated during the Soviet period, and even if they emphatically deny and reject it, it is not always easy to renounce the forms that have been taken for granted for many decades. The legacy of the Soviet past is still strongly manifested inside the classrooms and teachers' methodology. The message and content are different but the forms laid down over seventy years cannot be replaced in a day, however willing people may feel.

Like a kaleidoscope, depending on the movement of the fragments the process of identisation depends on what we turn our attention to. It contains a multitude of elements and combinations, allowing different possibilities, images, pictures, and interpretations to emerge. It combines rigid universes and flexible multiverse. The kaleidoscope of identisation, comprises each institutional side with its discourses and enunciative strategies, attempts at Russification, Sovietisation and Tatarisation, and rigid frontierisation which incorporate different practices of transgression, apparently incoherent from outside, but well adapted to everyday demands. The kaleidoscope allows integration, segregation and transgression to move in relation to each other so the difficulty consists in trying to visualise the whole, not to see each little separate piece isolated from the rest, but in combination, creating different images and representations. Only then, can a multidimensional approach be achieved.

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