

**REPORTS**

**Mamadysh Kriashen Folk Music Traditions in Contemporary  
Recordings  
(review of materials collected in 2013)**

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Abstract

The article characterizes folk music traditions of Kriashens, the Christianized Tatars of the Volga-Ural region. The author focuses on materials collected during an expedition in 2013 to the Mamadysh region of Tatarstan, Russia. Recordings of music and poetry samples, notation, transcription of verbal texts, and photographs were made by the author.

The author presents remarks on the genre structure of the material (including lore associated with calendric rites and divination; life cycle rites; game and dance songs; childlore; religious lore as well as the instrumental musical tradition) and discusses the current state of the Mamadyshsky Kriashen tradition. In the villages of Vladimirovo, Iukachi, Ziuri and Komarovka the core of the folk music tradition is mainly composed of ritual songs. In the village of Nikiforovo, liturgical chants (a folk version of Orthodox prayers) tend to dominate the tradition.

Introduction

Over the last 20 years I have been collecting and studying of the folk music of different Tatar ethnic groups. For the past several years, I have undertaken from 2 to 4 expeditions annually to various regions with heavily Tatar populations. This expedition report is based on the field work I performed in June 2013 in the Mamadysh region of Tatarstan, Russia. (1) I will present my initial findings on the state of the material in that region. A more in-depth analysis of

the musical tradition of the Mamadysh Kriashens is planned for the future.

The Mamadysh region is densely populated by the Kriashens (Christianized Orthodox Tatars), who occupy more than 20 residential areas. They are the bearers of the so called trans-Kazan subdialect [Borhanova 1977: 80; Baiazitova 1986: 15] and are part of the Near Kama territorial group that is considered to be the oldest settlement of Tatars in the region [Vorobiev 1967: 57; Mukhametshin 1977: 21]. I recorded materials in 6 villages: Vladimirovo, Yukachi, Ziuri, Nikiforovo, Komarovka, as well as in Shadchi (which is predominantly populated by the Muslim Tatars). The locations were determined by the route of an expedition performed under the auspices of the Ibragimov Institute of Language, Literature and Art of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tatarstan (Kazan, Russia).

The genre structure of the material collected may be characterized as follows: 1) folklore of calendric rituals, namely plangent roundelay songs performed on the Trinity, and divination songs performed during the celebration of *Nardugan* (the equivalent of Yuletide); 2) folklore associated with the life cycle, namely wedding and funeral songs as well as farewell songs for departing soldiers; 3) game songs, round-dance songs, and dance-refrains (*takmak*); 4) children's folklore including lullabies, nursery rhymes; 5) Orthodox prayers; 6) instrumental melodies (folktunes performed on harmonica).

The musical style of the material may be characterized by three multi-cultural layers that fall into three time periods:

1. early subethnic – defined by the ethnographers as *kräshenkôe* [Kriashen tune], represented mostly by ceremonial plangent melodies that are characterized by a long verse form (9-10 lines in length), a regular rhythmic pattern, and intonational formulicity;
2. late general ethnic – *tatar kôe* [Tatar tune], game songs and lyrical songs *auyl kôe* [village tune]; *kyska kôi* [short tune], *uen kôe* [game tune], all of which often performing the function of ritual songs that are characterized by a short

verse form (8+7 lines in length), a syllabic rhythm of equal beat, and a four-fold structure;

3. *iman jyrulary* [church singing], essentially folk interpretations of Christian songs. (2)

The Kriashens have been able to preserve archaic features of art and culture captured in melody, poetic imagery, and the manner of execution. It could be said that the Kriashen ritual singing embodies distant epochs from their past in the Volga basin. However, this tradition is being lost because the musical works have almost all gone out of use in daily life; the mechanism of succession has been disrupted; and the number of bearers of this tradition is rapidly decreasing each year. Those born in the 1930-40s, or rarely, in the 1950s still preserve traditional Kriashen song styles, but their numbers are rapidly shrinking. Younger people, even those in folk choruses, do not maintain the tradition as their elders do. Thus, our expedition focused on the older generation, and I will present some of the material we were able to gather that demonstrates the traditional patterns and song styles of the Kriashen Tatars in this expedition report.

Our expedition data demonstrate that micro-local traditions of the villages of Vladimirovo, Yukachi, Ziuri and Komarovka have much in common. However, the village of Nikiforovo presents a special case. First, it is distant from the other Kriashen settlements, but it also boasts a distinct folk music system. Their tradition is dominated by liturgical chants, which have largely replaced ritual chants (there were actually very few songs recorded in Nikiforovo because people seemed reluctant to remember them). In the other villages the situation was quite the opposite; the core of their tradition is made up of song and ritual samples, while the religious genres are rather marginal.

#### Family Ritual Folklore: Wedding and Funeral Songs

The largest group of songs collected in this expedition falls into the category of *tui jyrulary* [wedding songs]. This is not surprising because the traditional Kriashen wedding features continuous

singing. Each episode of the full wedding ceremony (hanging of the bride's crafts; opening the trunk with gifts; meeting and seeing off guests; matchmaker dialogues; wishing the engaged couple well; serving ritual dishes; thanking the hosts and the like) is accompanied by a particular verbal and musical arrangement. The informants proudly discussed this feature and regretfully noted that in contemporary culture it is all quite different; weddings now feature a toastmaster and guest artists instead of community singing.

The lyrics would be sung in the "long" and "short" tunes of both older intonation patterns as well as in innovated, newer forms. Among traditional guest tunes common in Vladimirovo, Ziuriand Komarovka villages, one song has become a popular piece in concerts: "*Urmannarda iõrdem*" [In the woods I walked], with lyrics by G. Zainasheva. Based on data collected in an expedition to the region in 2000, this melody was also common among Kriashens of the Tiuliachi and Rybno-Sloboda regions. In Mamadysh folk culture this tune serves several functions: it is not only performed at weddings but also at other ceremonial meals, including the memorial ceremony.

According to my respondents, the tradition does not allow crying and singing at funerals or wakes. Such rituals are accompanied by the performance of religious pieces: it is customary to read Psalms over the deceased (during nightly vigils) and to say Orthodox prayers such as "*Sviatyi Alla*" [Holy Allah or Trisagion] and "*Āi, Kuktäge Atabyz*" [Our Father] among others. At the same time, there are very few examples of farewell songs for the deceased (Vladimirovo). At the wake on the fortieth day after death, these songs sometimes are performed following and in addition to the prayers, either in the house at the end of the community meal and/or on the street when seeing off the guests. (3) The text and melody of a wedding/guest song are usually adjusted for this purpose, as in Example 1 below, (see also Music Example № 1 at the end of the article). Example 2 is the variant of the same song used at the wedding for departing guests: (4)

Example 1

«Урманнардайөрдем»

Урманнарга кердем, ай, мин  
керде(у)м,  
Чыкланганнар эле, дый,  
үләннәр. (2)  
Ашадьк, тый, эчтек, искә  
алды(у)к,  
Бәхилләб үк китсен, дый,  
үлгәннәр. (2)

“In the Woods I Walked”  
(fragment)

Into the woods I went, I  
went,  
Covered with dew still the  
grasses.  
Ate, drank, remembered,  
Let them go with peace  
(pardoned) the deceased.

Example 2

Жырлап та, ла, жырлап мин  
карыем,  
Килешерләр булса, дый,  
көбез.(2)  
Килешерләр булса, ай, көбез,

Singing, singing I will try,  
If the refrain fits.  
If the refrain fits,

Жәланшушылайберләргәжөрер  
без.(2)

Again in such a way we shall  
meet.

Безгә әтекәбез бер ат бирде(у):

«Жирән алалар белән алыш»,–  
дип.(2)

Our father one horse has  
given us:  
“For the ginger-speckled one  
don’t you change”, - having  
said.

Безгә әтекәбез шуны әйтте(й):

«Якшы әдәмнәр белән  
таныш»,– дип,  
«Яхшы әдәмнәр белән  
таныш»,– дип.

To us our father advised:  
“With a good person should  
you meet”, - having said.  
“With a good person should  
you meet”, - having said.]

The words to songs for parting with the dead may be sung to a melody or recited without one. There were only two examples found

in the village of Vladimirovo village. (5) The song component in the structure of the funerary and memorial cycle is considered to be a vestige of the past dating back to pre-Christian times.

A wide variety of melodies for Orthodox chants was recorded in the village of Nikiforovo, including “*Izrail kory jirdän*” [From the Arid Land of Israel], “*Ei, Kotkaruchy*” [Hey, the Savior], “*Ei, Khodai, kibengän jirengä*” [Prophet Elijah, save us from drought], “*Ei, Nikolai äti*” [Hey, Saint Nicholas], etc. These were sung in a duet and in a trio by older women (ranging from 73 to 77 years of age), who usually sing in the village during church services. For example, the tune structure of “*Izrail kory jirdän*” (see Example 3 and Music Example № 2 at the end of the article) is composed of an alternation of two contrasting elements. The psalmodic recitative element is based on one sound (in the initial construction) and is sequenced with plangent fragments and tempo slowdown in the completion of phrases. The scale is a hemitonic tetrachord in the succession of fifths *a-c-d-e* (major third mode with sub-third). The musical structure is monodic. In group singing (duet or trio), minor spontaneous differences could be observed. The melodic line is sung by the lead singer, while the rest of the singers pick it up at different times. Most singing is done from memory, but some female performers held photocopies of lyrics from old books. For example:

### Example 3

«Израил коры жирдән» (озату иманы)	“From the Arid Land of Israel” (prayer for the deceased) – fragment
Израил коры жирдән үткән күк дингез төбөннән үтеп,	From the arid land of Israel fleeing, on the bottom of the sea having walked,
Үз артыннан ковып килгән Параванның батканын күреп әйткән:	Seeing the drowning of Pharaoh, rushing after him, he said:
«Аллага жиңу жыруын жырлаек»,– дип.	“To the God we shall sing the victory song”.

R: Эй, Ходай, үлгән бәндәңнең R: Hey, God, the soul of the  
жанын(ы) тынычландыр. deceased should you save.

It is important to emphasize that the village of Nikiforovo was home to Vasilii Timofeev (1836–1895), the missionary, educator and the first priest of Kriashen Tatars, who was a companion of Nikolai Ilminskii. (6) Being a teacher and the director of the central Kazan Tatar Christian School, he frequently traveled to Kriashen settlements where he conducted talks and readings of religious and moral literature. As a result of these trips, between 1864–1867, several schools were opened in the villages of Nikiforovo and Arniashin Mamadysh County and in the village of Apazovoin Kazan County [Tatar Encyclopedia 2010: 640].

My field research shows that many traditional rituals and holidays in the village of Nikiforovo had long not been observed. The rapid disappearance of traditional rituals and their songs is not typical for the Kriashens, but can be explained by the persistent influence of religion. The Christian worldview is so deeply embedded in the consciousness and daily life of local residents that native folk beliefs and customs, (including pre-Christian beliefs), are perceived as irrational and frivolous remnants of the past. For example, *Nardugan* is scornfully defined as the *shaitan tue* [devilish wedding]. The basis of the musical culture, as stated above, is formed by the church singing, which has replaced the songs previously sung in daily life. On Saint Peter's Day, when rainmaking prayers are organized, people go to church or to the local holy spring and chant prayers, not traditional folk songs. Observing the practices of Muslim Tartars reveals a similar pattern of ritual folk activities being replaced by more formal religious and signals that their practices are also evolving.

#### Family Ritual Folklore: Farewell Songs for Soldiers

While we recorded farewell songs for soldiers, it was impossible to record any of the more archaic tunes in this genre as we did with the wedding and funeral songs described above. The poetic texts are now performed to melodies that formed at a later time; the general tune type is *ayl kôe* [village tune] in the villages

of Vladimirovo and Ziuri, and *kyska kõi* [short tune] in the village of Komarovka. Informants refer to them as *soldatozatu kõe* [soldiers' farewell tune] and *uram kõe* [street tune].

### Calendric Folklore

Lyrics characteristic of the Tatar song tradition have also entered into the scope of the calendar ritual folklore, as evidenced by the musical content of the Yuletide [*Nardugan*] and summer round-dance processions we collected. Traditions for the celebration of *Nardugan* were also performed in all the surveyed Kriashen villages in the past. While many of the practices described below are no longer performed, the ritual is being revived and is now observed in the form of a communal celebration organized by professionals. The most full and complete findings were recorded in the village of Ziuri. According to the inhabitants of this village, mumming is central to the celebration of *Nardugan*. The mumming period lasts from January 7 to 12 (and for some Kriashens, according to informants, until January 19). By its end (January 13), they tell the future using rings. January 14 marks the Old New Year (in the Julian calendar), while January 19 is Epiphany. The ritual actions performed from January 7 to 19 form a single yearly-cycle rite.





*Image 1. Pectorals (fragment), Ziuri village. Photo Credit: Author*



*Image 2. Bracelet and ring with pendants, Ziuri village. Photo Credit: Author*

Mummers used to go around households in the evenings. A group of young people would wear costumes so as not to be recognized. Participants disguised themselves as a bear, a horse, an old man, a Roma, or a corpse. While visiting a house they first uttered good wishes to the owners and then entertained them by either dancing, singing while rocking a spindle, or telling fortunes. There were no special ritual songs performed according to my respondents. The mummers' primary goal was to make as much noise as possible by rattling of spoons or banging samovar pipes together.

Divination using rings [*iözek salu*] took place to the singing of a series of songs called on New Year's Eve, observed on January 13 according to the Julian calendar. A group of 14-16 people typically gathered after midnight. Three people would fetch water for the reading. They had to be relatives from three generations: eldest, middle-aged and youngest. The trek to get the water was to be done after sundown and by midnight in complete silence. They would cut a hole in a sheet of ice on the river in the shape of a cross, fill buckets and carry them on their little fingers (in this way they limited the amount of water in the bucket). Upon entering the house, they would say, "*Tyn jitte*" [talking is allowed now]. Only then could they resume talking. At that point, the divination began.

First, a special ring with an image of a horse called *atly iözek* was lowered into the bucket of water. They covered it with a towel and listened to how the ring fell. If it descended quietly, then the next year would be peaceful, if they heard a loud sound, then an unpleasant incident would occur. After this, each person would lower their rings into the bucket. A person could put from ten to twelve rings each rings into the water. Each ring was marked by different thread so that they would not get confused with each other. While lowering the ring, a person would silently make a wish or ask for solutions to a pressing issue. The bucket was then covered with a towel, and a fortune-telling text called *nardugan takmagy* was then read over it. At this time, one of the males present would stir rings by hand, and when he finished reading, he would remove one. We recorded a divination song that was sung as each ring was removed. Participants made wishes not only for themselves but also for the

fates of their relatives.

They began the ritual with rhymed wishes for the well-being of the farm; good crops and healthy livestock, for example. They would then proceed to singing verses sung to “short tunes.” They also recited these verses without music. In the former case, the tune to “*Almagachy*” [Apple Tree] was used as the melodic base. *Almagachy* was popular throughout the whole Tartar community. Example 4 below, and Music Example № 3 at the end of the article are typical of rhymed wishes.

Example 4

“Йөзек салганда жырулар “ (Нардуган)  
Билләрөндә путалар,  
Алар нәселләре белән  
Беренче урын тоталар.

[“Songs for divination using rings” (Nardugan)  
On their waist they wear waist-bands  
They, all their kin together,  
Stand on the first place.]

According to the performer Maria Aleksandrovna Petrova, (b. 1951, see her in Image 4 on the right), this verse was sung when she asked, “Could we build a house?” Indeed, that year they finished building their house.

They would return home at about one o’clock in the morning. Before their departure, all the participants washed their faces with water used during the divination ritual because it was attributed with magical properties. As they exited, another divination ritual was also performed. Walking backwards, they would reach towards a fence with both hands; if they clasped an even number of slats, that foretold their marriage. Clasping an odd number of slats meant they would not marry in the new year.

Of great importance to the calendric system were roundelay songs [*tügäräk uen köe*] associated with the major holiday of *Oly bairäm*. In the villages of Vladimirovo and Yukachi, this holiday fell on Trinity (*Truchyn, Troisyn*), while in the village of Ziuri, it

corresponded to St. Peter's Day, (once called *Pitrau*). It was also observed in the village of Albaevo. Kriashens often associate it with *Sabantuy* [Plow Festival]. (7) The *Oly bairäm* celebration went on for one week. The slow roundelay tunes were named for the village where they were prevalent, e.g., "*Vladimir kõe*" [Tune of Vladimirovo village], and "*Albai kõe*" [Tune of Albaevo village]. Therefore, each local tune was seen as the namesake and marked those villages song styles. They were also performed in other situations, for example, when the peasants were going or returning from game-playing and haymaking sites in the fields. The melodic formation from the early stages of development still remained in the repertoire of the generations born in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. We recorded one song representative of this type in Vladimirovo. For our informants born after the 1930s, *auyl kõe* [village tunes] occupied this niche.

### Instrumental Music

In the village of Shadchi, the talented accordionist Alexander Maksimovich Arkhipov (born in 1946), contributed to our recordings of ancient and modern dance tunes as well as instrumental versions of traditional folk melodies. He plays the *talyanka*, (a 12-key single-row button accordion), the Saratov harmonica, and a standard accordion. Despite repeated inquiries about *gusli* [psaltery], we could not find any trace of a performance tradition in the Kriashen Mamadysh region.



*Image 3. Accordionist Alexander Maksimovich Arkhipov (1946), Shadchi village. Photo Credit: Author*

### Summary

We should note that the music and folkloric tradition of the Mamadysh Kriashens as a whole has much in common with the traditions of other local subgroups of Kriashens of the Near Kama region (in particular the Pestretsy and Tiuliachi regions). We find similarities in the composition of the genres, in the characteristics of the form of the songs and the unity of their melodic structure. An exception to this are the traditions of Nikiforovo, since the central component of this tradition is canonical Orthodox chant.

Folk culture is generally best preserved in places where there are motivations for its active use. In the contemporary world of the Kriashen region, most ritual and song traditions continue to exist as a secondary form within the framework of folk art. It is symptomatic that the majority of the tradition bearers are the former or current members of rural folk groups (for example, singers of the Yukachi village, see Image 4). Those who stopped performing in concerts or have no experience singing on stage do not always remember the words and melodies, and their performances occasionally depart from the original lyric patterns.



*Image 4. Tatiana Nikolaevna Vasilieva (b. 1937), Lydia Fedorovna Beykina (b. 1940), Elmira Rinatovna Kayumova (collector of folklore), Anna Illarionovna Ovchinnikova (b. 1949), Yukachi village. Photo Credit: Author*

One example of the importance of a village chorus is the *Kumyryk* ensemble, a performing group from the village of Komarovka (see Image 5). They have enabled a substantial group of traditional performers to maintain the original style. Out of all settlements surveyed, Komarovka is most characterized by stability

and variety in its repertoire of traditional songs. The folk singers there even remembered “*Krasnoyarsk kôe*,” a tune brought by immigrants who left the area over one hundred years ago, but founded a village of the same name in the Krasnoyarsk region. The tune was common in the village of Komarovka at one time, but had been forgotten. The recent meeting of the Mamadysh people with their Krasnoyarsk counterparts restored the tune to their repertoire.



*Image 5. “Kumyryk” Folk Ensemble, Komarovka village. Photo Credit: Author*

Playing live music maintains a tradition’s vitality and prevents its disappearance. This may also be true for traditional Orthodox music culture. The vibrant church choir in Nikiforovo helps preserve and transmit musical traditions from generation to generation.

However, preserving the traditional song styles from this region will require more than an active folk chorus. The rural folk groups at present consist mainly of young and middle-aged artists, since the elderly find it difficult to maintain an extensive concert schedule. But younger generations, as a rule, do not know the traditional vocal style and sing more contemporary forms derived from popular

culture and other song styles.

## NOTES

1 Song recordings, notation, transcriptions of the lyrics, and photography were performed by the author.

2 Stylistic multilayering of musical culture is not only a characteristic feature for the Mamadysh Tatars but for the other Tatar-Kriashen groups as well [Almeeva 1989: 15; *Pesnitatar-kriashen* 2007: 14-15]. The new melodic style was established in the second half of the XIX century, when, during the general integration processes, (consolidation of various groups of Tatars and the formation of the contemporary nation as well as the development of a standard language), a new layer of songs of supradialectal content was created. For additional details, see Kayumova 2005; regarding church-singing in the Kriashen folk tradition, see Iliasova 2008.

3 Legends state that the soul finally travels to the otherworld on the 40th day. According to older residents, they would escort the deceased to the cemetery. It was believed that the deceased was invisible, but present. At some point, they began to accompany the dead only to the church, but more recently, they only go as far as the street.

4 Musical and textual examples contain only fragments of the recorded songs.

5 The first sample (one strophe long) was recounted by Ekaterina Guriyevna Sapurina (b. 1939, birthplace Bolshoi Artash, Mamadysh region). According to the informant, she learned the song from her mother, who advised her only to sing it after Orthodox prayers. The second sample (two strophes long) was delivered by Anna Semenovna Dolgova (b. 1953, see Image 7), who in turn heard it from Ekaterina Sapurina (see Music example № 1, verse 1).

6 Nikolai Ivanovich Ilminskii (1822–1891) was an Asianist, teacher, missionary, and a member of the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences who developed the plan for the Christianization and Russification of the non-Russian peoples.

7 *Sabantuy* [Plow Festival from *saban* [plow], *tuy* [fest] was an archaic folk celebration of the Kazan Tatars. Originally it was



celebrated before spring sowing in the villages of one district, and then in each village thereafter in a particular succession. In the twentieth century *Sabantuy* acquired the status of a national holiday in Tatarstan.

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## APPENDIX

### MUSICAL EXAMPLES

Music Example № 1.

“In the woods I walked” (traditional guest tune) was recorded in the Vladimirovo village and performed by Anna Semenovna Dolgova (b.1953).

$\text{♩} = 144$  Оживленно

Ур - ман - на-р(ы)-га ке-р(е)-дем, ай, мин кер - де(у)м,  
 Чык - лан - ган - нар ө - ле, дый, ү - лән - нәр,  
 Чык - лан - ган - нар ө - ле, дый, ү - лән - нәр.  
 А - ша - дык, тый, эч - тек, ис - кө ал - ды(ук),  
 Бө - хил - ләб үк кит - сеп, дый, үл - гән - нәр,  
 Бө - хил - ләб үк кит - сеп, дый, үл - гән - нәр.

Image 6. “In the woods I walked”



Image 7. Anna Semenovna Dolgova (b.1953), Vladimirovo village.

## Music Example №2.

“From the Arid Land of Israel” (prayer for the deceased) was recorded in Nikiforovo village and performed by Maria Ivanovna Ivanova (b.1936) and Theodosia Pavlovna Stepanova (b.1939).

♩ ≈ 104 Соро, сосредоточенно

Из-ра-ил ко-ры жир-дөн үт-көн күк дин-тез тө-бен-нөн ү - тен,  
 Уз ар-тын-нан ко-вып кил-гөн па-ра-ван-ның бат-ка-нын кү-реп өйт-көн:  
 "Ал-ла - га жи-нү жи-ру - ын жыр-ла - ск", - дин.  
 Эй, Хо-дай, үл-гөн бөн-дөн- нең жа-ны-н(ы) ты-ныч-лан - дыр.

*Image 8. "From the Arid Land of Israel"*



*Image 9. Maria Ivanovna Ivanova (b. 1936), Theodosia Pavlovna Stepanova (b. 1939), Tatiana Ivanovna Kazakova (b. 1940), Nikiforovo village.*

Music Example № 3

“Songs for divination using rings (Nardugan)” was recorded in Zyuri village with Maria Aleksandrovna Petrova (b.1951, birthplace Komarovka village).

$\text{♩} \approx 184$  ( $\text{♩} \approx 92$ ) Подвижно, ритмично



Бил - лә - рен - дә пу - та - лар,



А - лар нә - сел - лә - ре бе - лән



Бе - рен - че у-рын то - та - лар.

*Image 10. “Songs for divination using rings (Nardugan)”*



*Image 11. Nadezhda Ivanovna Nikitina (b.1948), Maria Aleksandrovna Petrova (b. 1951), Ziuri village.*

Translation from the Russian: Vera Sepeshvari.