

Translators' News

Institute for Bible Translation

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A representative of the Tatar President receives the New Testament

God of the Tatars too

The Tatar New Testament, "Inzhil", presented in Tatarstan 20-21 October 2001

Since the time the Tatars were conquered by Ivan the Terrible in 1552, they have been adamantly opposed to Christianity. Ivan the Terrible saw himself as a missionary, extending the boundaries of Christendom. He brought the Tatar nobility back to Moscow, imprisoned Tatar women, and had them forcibly baptized. As for the Tatar men, one source records that, to the joyful clanging of church bells, he had their heads chopped off.

As a result the Tatar word for *to baptize*, *chukyndyru*, means *to curse*.

In July 2001 the New Testament was published in Tatar. A new solution for the word *to baptize* has been found - *chumdyru*, which means *to immerse*. Therefore John the Baptist says: *I immerse in water but the one who comes after me will immerse in the Holy Spirit.*

The Tatars are the second largest people group in the Russian Federation

In the Russian Federation the Tatars are second only to the Russians in number. They have their own Republic, Tatarstan,

Joy and Grief

On my visit to Kazakhstan in September, I was able to bring some freshly printed Kazakh Children's Bibles with me. I showed the book to one of the first Kazakhs I saw. He exclaimed: "I saw this book in Russian when I was in the army. Since then I have been wishing that we had it in Kazakh – and now, here it is!" Joy!

A Christian worker in Kazakhstan wrote: "We did not have a key to the hearts of these people. Now we have one." Joy!

A month later I was on my way to Tatarstan for the presentation of the Tatar New Testament. A Tatar woman in the train said: "The New Testament in Tatar?! Why?" A very interesting conversation ensued. Joy!

The Bible touches the depths of the human heart! With your help IBT can print thousands of books every year. Thousands of lives are being touched and transformed. The effects are multiplied and spread out - we have seen that again and again. Joy!

My grief stems from the fact that we are forced to slow down our work due to lack of funds. This is not right at a time when the world needs the message of the Bible more than anything else. Does this touch your heart? Can you give an extra gift in December? There is a longing for God's Word, and we can only meet this need together. Thank you for standing with us in this work!



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"I want to thank God that he did not forget our people"

which straddles the Volga river in Central Russia. Their capital city, Kazan, is increasingly taking on the appearance of a worthy capital of a proud people with a long history.

The NT translation began in the mid-1970s

Institute for Bible Translation took up the challenge, and in the mid-1970s, during the dark ages of communist power, began translating the New Testament into Tatar. However it was not until the 1990s, with the advent of *glasnost* and *perestroika* that the work really got off the ground. Other international Bible translation organisations joined forces with IBT and together they built up an impressive team of Tatar translators, checkers and editors, who worked thoroughly and painstakingly on the text of the New Testament. The translation team was supervised by a Translation Committee, which consisted of Tatar church leaders.

Christianity was for Russians, not for Tatars

There are not many Tatar church leaders. From before the days of Ivan the Terrible, Tatars viewed Christianity as the Russian religion - and it was not for them, the Tatars. That is still the feeling today. There are over seven

million Tatars, worldwide, and perhaps as many as 700 are Christians. Of those 700, perhaps only 70 actually speak the language and understand the Tatar culture.

All who worked on the New Testament translation were not Christians. It is hard to find suitably qualified people from such a small pool of believers. The Tatar woman who translated most of Paul's epistles was not a believer. She could translate the words, *I have been crucified with Christ: the life I now live is not my life, but the life which Christ lives in me* — but she had never experienced their reality. But now she can say these words — and does so with rejoicing! She is presently attending a small Tatar fellowship and her baptism is not a curse, but immersion in water to show her immersion in Christ.

"God of the Tatars too"

The New Testament, or *Inzhil* as it is known in Tatar, has a deep green cover with gold lettering and adornments, as is appropriate for a religious book in the Tatar culture. It was printed in Kazan, the Tatar capital. At the end of October, two celebrations in Kazan marked the entry of the New Testament into the Tatar culture.

On Saturday, October 20, 2001, Christian Tatars gathered in a church in Kazan in order to celebrate the inauguration of the *Inzhil* in Tatar. "I want to thank God that he did not forget our people," said a young Tatar lady with tears in her eyes, clutching the *Inzhil*. "He sent his children to us. Some came to us and learned our language, and gave many years of their lives. I also thank God for all the others who worked on this text so that our people could have His Word." Representatives of the churches followed, committed to using the *Inzhil* to reach their fellow countrymen: "God is not only God of the Russians; he is my God, God of the Tatars too." Lena Shatilova, IBT's coordinator for the Tatar project, said: "It was so wonderful to see the great joy of the Tatar



Christian Tatars gathered in order to celebrate the inauguration of the Tatar Inzhil



Work on the Tatar Old Testament is in progress

believers when they received the Inzhil. For me it is such an encouragement, and it strengthens my motivation to the work on the Old Testament.”

“The Inzhil is a Holy Book”

On Monday, October 22, it was time for the official presentation of the Inzhil, with representatives of Christians and Muslims, governmental authorities, the cultural elite, scientists, and the media. Several speakers said that the Inzhil would help deepen understanding, promote peaceful relations, create mutual respect, trust and cooperation among followers of different religions in Tatarstan. “The government cannot be indifferent to the spiritual and moral development of its people. Therefore it takes an interest in seeing books such as this published and distributed, so that our people can read holy literature in their mother tongue”, said a representative of the president of Tatarstan. The director of the Department for literature and language at the Tatar Academy of Sciences, himself a Muslim, said: “The Inzhil is a holy book. We Muslims are grateful to the Institute for Bible Translation that the Tatars have received this book. Now we need the Old Testament as soon as possible. That will make this book even more appreciated and read.”

Message of love to the Tatars

Some believers performed Tatar songs, and a young woman, dressed in traditional Tatar dress, turned the whole presentation into a relaxed event through her beautiful, expressive singing. Without knowing about each other, several of the speakers had prepared texts expressing the message of love in the Bible, and two Tatar women read from Luke 6 and 1 Corinthians 13.

Three TV channels made interviews and several journalists were present. The next day, news of the presentation was spread both in local broadcasting and throughout Russia.

Afraid to become influenced

One member of the translation team has put up a Christian book table at the local market in Kazan. He even gets a cost reduction, because he is selling holy books. The Inzhil, with its beautiful green color, and golden Tatar style ornaments, attracts attention. “I feel like a pastor”, he says. “People know that I come here regularly, and they return to read, ask questions, or to buy a book. The people have many questions and concerns that they want to talk about. Most of them know very little about the Koran or the Inzhil, but I can always find a way to tell them the Good News. Some Muslims seem to be trained in arguing, but when I read to them from the Inzhil, they walk away. Once I asked one of them to read the Inzhil, but he refused, and admitted that he was afraid to become influenced. We should have Genesis and Psalms in Tatar, as these books are well known to Muslims.”

Facts about Tatarstan

- Tatarstan is a republic with its own president and parliament, within the Russian Federation.
- The capital, Kazan, is situated about 700 km Southeast of Moscow.
- President Mintimer Shaimiev was elected in 1991 and has recently been reelected.
- In 1990 Tatarstan declared itself an autonomous state, and in 1994 entered an agreement with Russia, giving Tatarstan far-reaching autonomy.
- The Tatars number about 7 million. The Tatar language belongs to the Turkic language group. Most Tatars are Sunni Muslims. There are also 100-200,000 Orthodox Christian and a growing group Evangelical Christian Tatars.
- Tatarstan forms a border between Christianity and Islam. The desire is for an open, multi-ethnic society to emerge, a society where people can live in peace, despite differences in faith and opinions.
- IBT’s translation into Tatar started in 1974. The book of Genesis in Tatar will be printed in 2002, and the Book of Psalms is now being translated.

The following books have been printed January – November 2001

New Testaments

Georgian NT & Psalms, pocket	67,000 copies
Georgian NT & Psalms, standard	97,200 copies
Tatar NT	25,000 copies
Tuvin NT	15,000 copies

Bible portions

Even Luke	2,500 copies
Komi-Permyak Matthew	3,000 copies
Kumyk Luke	2,500 copies
Rushani portions of Luke	1,000 copies
Shugni portions of Luke	2,000 copies
Wakhi portions of Luke	1,500 copies
Yazguliami portions of Luke	1,000 copies

Children's Bibles

Kazakh	23,000 copies
Tuvin	5,000 copies
Udmurt	10,000 copies

Stories about Jesus

Karakalpak	5,000 copies
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Bible stories

Mari	10,000 copies
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Life of Jesus

Karelian (Tver)	2,500 copies
Karelian (Olonets)	3,000 copies

Project of the Month

Very soon **the New Testament in Tuvin** will be delivered from the printing house! This means that **three New Testaments are ready** in the series of 15 NTs, which IBT is planning to print by the year 2005 (Kurmanji-Kurdish, Tatar and Tuvin). We welcome your support and help to complete the remaining 12 New Testament translations!



The Tatar New Testament

Institute for Bible Translation

Institute for Bible Translation was founded in Stockholm, Sweden in 1973, its main task being to publish Bibles for “non-Slavic peoples in Slavic countries.” In the CIS 130 different languages are spoken. Since then we have worked on Bible translation into more than 80 of these languages. We have printed the Bible or portions of it in about 50 languages, including two first whole Bibles, in Moldavian and Tajik, and 14 New Testaments. We welcome your support for our continuing efforts in bringing the Word to those in the former Soviet nations. All peoples of the world should have the Bible available in their native language.

We sincerely invite you to support Bible translation work.

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