DOI: 10.23858/Waw/k/016/014

Elo-Hanna Seljamaa

University of Tartu

The presence of otherness, past and present: Bashkirs, Paldiski and Salavat Yulaev

Every year since 2000, the Estonian Ministry of Culture has organised theme years to draw attention to and popularise a chosen topic, realm or phenomenon, be it reading, music, digital culture or maritime culture. The year 2024 was dedicated to cultural diversity. "We recognise, value and appreciate the diversity of cultures of Estonian communities and peoples. This is the value that unites all of us who carry Estonia in our hearts", reads the blurb on the website of the Integration Foundation, the state organisation responsible for supporting the strengthening of social cohesion (*Teema-aasta* [Theme year] n.d.). The theme year celebrated the internal, regional and linguistic diversity of ethnic Estonian culture, on the one hand, and the diversity of ethnic minority cultures and languages to be found in Estonia, on the other (*Kultuuririkas Eesti* [Culturally rich Estonia] n.d.). "According to the 2021 census, representatives of 211 nationalities live in Estonia", boasted the organisers of the theme year, using a common Estonian parlance that equates "nationality" with ethnicity rather than citizenship (Cultural diversity n.d.).

At least half of these ethnic minorities came to be represented in Estonia during the Soviet era as a result of internal migration between the union republics and autonomous regions, which relied on and contributed to the Russian language functioning as the lingua franca of the Soviet Union. Most of these groups are very small with fewer than 100 representatives (Support for national minorities n.d.). Nurturing even very small ethnic minority cultures and languages has been post-Soviet Estonia's strategy for countering the influence of Russian language and culture, and for fending off claims to its numerous Russophone residents from the Russian Federation. Moreover, by strengthening the distinctiveness and entitativity of Belarusian, Chuvash or Georgian culture, Estonia has, at the same time, been cementing the distinctiveness and entitativity of ethnic Estonian culture and of ethnic Estonians as a group (Aidarov, Drechsler 2013; Seljamaa 2013).

Imagining the Soviet-era arrivals and later newcomers as belonging to and constituting Estonian culture, rather than existing alongside it or posing a threat to it, seems to be a trickier task, especially outside of celebratory venues such as the cultural diversity year. Only a select few of the 200+ nationalities claimed by Estonia are included in the permanent exhibitions of major cultural and historical museums, or else invited to participate in the public sphere as minorities (Seljamaa 2021). This increases the importance of the cases in which minority groups' past and present embeddedness in Estonia's history and territory is given a material form and put on public display.

This chapter revolves around one such instance, the bust of the Bashkir national hero Salavat Yulaev (1754–1800) found in the coastal town of Paldiski (Fig. 1). Located on the Pakri peninsula, Paldiski is one of the two former nuclear towns in Estonia and a former closed garrison town. Its military history begins with Peter I, who set out in 1718 to build a naval fortress and a military port connecting the Pakri peninsula and the adjacent island of Väike-Pakri. His successors continued this work, but despite claiming the lives of tens of thousands of forced labourers, this ambitious structure was never completed. Among those who perished and were buried in Paldiski was Salavat Yulaev, a Bashkir warrior and poet who was sentenced to life imprisonment and forced labour for his participation in the Pugachev Rebellion of 1773–1775. Named after its leader Yemelyan Pugachev (1742–1775), this large-scale uprising against the increasingly centralising absolutist regime of Catherine II began with Cossacks in Bashkiria and, through the involvement of Bashkirs, spread to affect large territories in the eastern regions of the Russian Empire (Steinwedel 2016, 69–70). Organised Bashkir resistance is said to have ended with Yulaev's capture in November 1774 (Steinwedel 2016, 73).

Fig. 1. Monument to Salavat Yulaev in Paldiski. Photo by Elo-Hanna Seljamaa, 2025.

Except for the tsar's prisoners in Paldiski, there is no information about Bashkirs in Estonia until the first Soviet census in 1959, which recorded 59 Bashkirs. Their numbers grew slowly but steadily during the Soviet years, from 126 in 1970 to 371 in 1989, but declined significantly in the 1990s: according to the first post-Soviet census in 2000, there were 152 Bashkirs left in Estonia (Ahmetov 1999, 60; Känd 2001, 64). Following the same routes as representatives of various other ethnic minorities in Estonia, Bashkirs came to Estonia to work in construction (hence the increase in numbers in the 1970s as Tallinn prepared to host the sailing events at the 1980 summer Olympics in Moscow) and mining; some stayed after completing their military service (Ahmetov 1999, 59). In the most recent census conducted in 2021, 112 residents of Estonia identified as Bashkir (Statistics Estonia RL21442). This is one person less than in the 2011 census (Tiit 2017, 177).

The number of Bashkirs living in Paldiski is small (e.g., Aitsam 2005), but Yulaev and his monument in the central part of the town attract visitors. Individuals and delegations come from Bashkiria and elsewhere to recite prayers from Quran and lay flowers at Yulaev's monument (Hairullina 2014, 155). Since the location of Yulaev's final resting place is unknown, the entire town of Paldiski is a sacred place for the Bashkirs (Aitsam 2005; Reisijuht 2012). In looking at Yulaev's monument in Paldiski and his connection to this town, I am interested in how Bashkirs, a statistically small minority in Estonia, are using Yulaev to establish their presence in and belonging to Estonia, and how this can be seen as a political act that broadens national imaginaries.

At the same time, the Bashkir-Yulaev case draws attention to the different ways in which Soviet ideological narratives and Russian geopolitical interests are intertwined and affect the minorities in contemporary Estonia. Soviet Marxist historiography characterised the Pugachev Rebellion and other popular revolts of the seventeen and eighteen centuries as peasant wars, and hailed their leaders as heroes who stood up to imperial tyranny, even though what they were fighting against was the Russian rule, and Yulaev's status as a Bashkir hero predates the Soviet rule. Yulaev's co-optation by Soviet propaganda and his connection to Estonia meant that he appeared from time to time in the Soviet Estonian press. I explore these earlier layers of Yulaev's presence in Estonia, asking how they are part of the context in which Bashkirs operate today.

These objectives derive from my long-term ethnographic research on and among ethnic minorities in Estonia. In many ways, this chapter is inspired by a concert that I attended at the Lindakivi cultural centre in Tallinn in April 2010 and that was organised by cultural associations of national minorities. Among the many performers was the Tallinn Bashkir Cultural Society *Agizel*, which performed an

excerpt from a play about a Bashkir who was a prisoner in Paldiski and died there. While confusing at the time, this piece of information confirmed the observation that I continue to explore in this chapter. I argue that Soviet-era newcomers seek to prolong the duration of their connection to Estonia by reaching back to a more distant past that would predate not only the Soviet Union but also the Republic of Estonia, into which they are forever expected to integrate (cf. Schinkel 2018).

Paldiski provides an appropriate setting for exploring such questions of Others and otherness, as its status in Estonia was liminal for much of the twentieth century, if not still today. Similarly to the many people who arrived in the Estonian SSR from other parts of the Soviet Union to lead their lives in a Russophone bubble, Paldiski, a largely Russian-speaking former nuclear town and closed military garrison, is still figuring itself out. It is small place dealing with large issues (cf. Seljamaa *et al*. 2017).

I begin with a brief overview of Paldiski's recent and earlier history, also exploring its image and representations as a cursed town. This serves as a segue into a discussion of Soviet-era and more recent tangible and intangible engagements with Yulaev, Bashkirs and Bashkortostan in Paldiski and, by extension, Estonia. I look at a 2014 book about Salavat Yulaev published on his 260th birthday by *Agizel* and a play included in this volume to analyse how the Bashkirs are positioning themselves in relation to Estonia and Bashkortostan before completing the chapter with some concluding remarks.

The blessing and curse of Paldiski

The first overview of Paldiski's military history in post-Soviet Estonia characterised it as "the least known town" in Estonia (Õun 1992). 30 years later, there are several publications about Paldiski's history up to the Second World War (e.g., Laar 1993; Odres 2003; 2004; Kats 2024; Õun 1993a; 1993b; 1993c), but its Cold War history remains understudied (cf. Pärn *et al*. 2006; Õun, Pärn 2022). Paldiski was the first town to be cleared of civilians when the Soviet Union occupied Estonia in 1940. Also emptied of residents were the adjacent islands of Suur-Pakri and Väike-Pakri or Stora Rågö and Lilla Rågö, which used to be inhabited by Swedish speakers. Unlike these islands, Paldiski was reopened during the subsequent German occupation of 1941–1944, but was gradually militarised and closed to the general population in the post-war years (Õun 1993c). The town and its surroundings became one of the most heavily militarised areas in Estonia. An extensive land-based nuclear submarine training facility, colloquially known as the "Pentagon", was opened in Paldiski in 1968, turning the place into a closed military garrison for almost 25

years. The first nuclear reactor was ignited in 1968, the second one in 1983, but both were switched off in 1989, allegedly following the tightening of regulations after the Chernobyl accident in 1986 (Pärn *et al.* 2006, 37–48; Õun, Pärn 2022).

As is typical of Soviet garrisons and military zones in Central and Eastern Europe, there is no clear overview of the number of troops and military personnel stationed in Paldiski (cf. contributions to Seljamaa *et al.* 2017) but estimates range between 4,000–5,000 persons. While Soviet troops withdrew from the rest of Estonia at the end of August 1994, the nuclear facility in Paldiski was handed over to the Estonian government and decommissioned a year later after the removal of equipment and the nuclear fuel. The number of Paldiski's residents decreased from up to 12,000 in 1975 to just under 3,800 in 1997 (Õun, Pärn 2022). Most of these people did not have Estonian citizenship and spoke little or no Estonian (Taklaja 1997, 27). Walking through Paldiski today, one notices illogically placed empty lots between apartment blocks where houses used to stand, abandoned buildings, patches of wasteland, and other traces that testify to the still recent presence of a foreign military. The reactors have been concreted over, and the plan is to start demolishing them in 2040, by which time most of the radioactive isotopes should have decayed (ERR 2023; Õun, Pärn 2022).

Russian presence in Rågervik or Rogerwiek, to use the older Swedish toponym for this deep bay with a steep limestone cliff, began with its victory over Sweden in the Great Northern War in 1710. Peter I sent an envoy to inspect the Estonian coast and to identify suitable sites for the construction of a military port. One reason for choosing Rogerwiek was that this bay rarely froze. The construction of the port began in 1718 using forced labour, continued intermittently for six decades and cost the lives of thousands of men, but was never completed. Legend has it that the town was cursed by Old Believers, who, as punishment for refusing to cut their beards, had been sentenced to forced labour in Paldiski and, according to some versions of this story, committed suicide (Õun 1992; 1993a).

Catherine II, who took the throne in 1762, renamed Rogerwiek into Baltiiski Port, which later transformed into Paldiski in Estonian, and continued to use prisoners to develop the town. Salavat Yulaev was captured in Bashkortostan in 1774 and sent to Paldiski along with his father Yulay Aznalin, also a warrior, and several other participants in the Pugachev Rebellion. Six of them were still alive in 1797, including Yulaev and his father. A report from this year describes the 45-year-old Yulaev as healthy and his father as weak and sickly. Yulaev died in 1800, having spent 25 years, most of his adult life, imprisoned at Baltiiski Port (Hairullina 2014, 30–32).

The chronicles of the town like to toy with the idea of Paldiski as a cursed place (e.g., Laar 1993, 24–35) or to muse on the reasons behind its unfortunate fate: why it never really prospered, despite its excellent potential and the many resources poured into its development. Matthias Johann Eisen (1857–1934), one of the founders of folklore studies in Estonia and a pastor, published a book about noteworthy places in Estonia in 1902, in which he described Paldiski as "a step-child among the towns", the future of which was in god's hands (Dr. Ise 1902, 228). *Äraneetud linn* [A cursed town], a 1996 documentary by the renowned Estonian filmmaker Andres Sööt about the withdrawal of Soviet military from Paldiski, opened with similar claims before recounting the story of the imprisoned Old Believers and their anathema (Sööt 1996).

In a similar vein, the public celebration of the 280th anniversary of the town of Paldiski in 1998 included a play where a monk named Zossima cursed the town before taking his own life (Fig. 2). Documentation of the 1998 anniversary celebration suggests that the play was preceded by a costumed procession featuring Peter I, his contemporaries and bearded monks in chains, as well as other characters (Vahtre 1988–1998). The play was staged in the bastion of the unfinished naval fortress, *Muula mäed* [Muula hills], which were used for communal gatherings and merrymaking already before the Second World War (*Harju Elu* [Harju Life] 1989, 3).

Fig. 2. Costumed procession celebrating the 280th anniversary of the town of Paldiski on July 18, 1998, featuring bearded Old Believers who are said to have cursed the place. Photo by Aivar Põldvee, 1998. University of Tartu Library, Fond 186.

The motif of the cursed town seems to have lost its potency since, and attention is instead drawn to epidemics and other conditions that must have contributed to the high mortality rates among the prisoners (Kats 2024, 230). However, a recent study suggests that (potential) visitors to Paldiski continue to associate this town, its built environment infrastructure and inhabitants with Soviet occupation. Recurrent keywords proposed by the participants in this study, irrespective of whether they had visited Paldiski or not, included "desolate", "USSR", "closed", "industry", "rocky", but also "beautiful nature", "sea", "fortress", and "coast" (Toom 2024, 62–63; cf. Demski 2017). Missing from this list, not surprisingly, were "forced labour", "the Pugachev Rebellion", and "Salavat Yulaev", which presumably say very little to an average Estonian tourist of today.

Salavat Yulaev in Soviet Estonia

The Pugachev Rebellion was a key event in Soviet historiography, as it demonstrated popular armed resistance to imperialist tsarist rule, and Soviet propaganda co-opted the Bashkir hero Yulaev. The Estonian cultural weekly *Sirp ja Vasar* [Sickle and Hammer], launched in 1940 when Estonia was occupied by the Soviet Union for the first time, in April 1941 published a gripping preview of the new film *Salavat Julajev* [Salavat Yulaev] by director Yakov Protazanov, which was about to be screened in Tallinn. The newspaper article included a photograph of a young and handsome actor on horseback with a sword in his hand and his mouth open for a battle cry (*Sirp ja Vasar* 1941, 8). This was the Bashkir actor Arslan Muboryakov. Muboryakov's performance of the Bashkir hero and his cone-shaped hat with a fur trim became iconic. There are no images of Yulaev, only a description of his mutilated face in prison (Hairullina 2014, 19), and nobody knows what he really looked like. The large monument of Yulaev in the Bashkir capital of Ufa from 1967 resembles a scene from the film, as do various other visual representations of this figure. Yulaev's bust in Paldiski has also been modelled after the character created by Muboryakov (ERR 2016).

There seems to have been a symbiotic relationship between the Pugachev Rebellion and Salavat Yulaev in the Soviet Estonian press, which must have echoed more general trends in late Stalinist mass media. Round anniversaries of the revolt provided opportunities to mention Yulaev and his links with Estonia, while Yulaev's heroic personality and tragic story helped to convey the intertwined ideas of class struggle and friendship of peoples. The 175th anniversary of the beginning of the Pugachev Rebellion in 1948 was discussed in the Soviet Estonian press, mentioning the rebels' ties to Estonia (Vares 1948). *Sirp ja Vasar* acknowledged the 200th

anniversary of Yulaev's birth in 1952 with several pieces, including a blurb about a "scientific session" held in Ufa on this occasion (*Sirp ja Vasar* 1952, 1). A longer article by an author named Filov explained how archival documents unearthed in Estonia had enabled Bashkir researchers to piece together the truth about Yulaev's final years, proving their hero to have been even more heroic than they had previously believed (Filov 1952). Also in 1952, the newspaper of the Harju region published a story by the same author about Yulaev's forced labour in Paldiski (*Harju Elu* 2011, 2). Estonian readers were informed about the preparations for the opera *Salavat Yulaev* by Bashkir composer Zagir Ismagilov at the Bashkir State Opera and Ballet Theatre (*Sirp ja Vasar* 1954, 3) and about the performance of this opera in Moscow a year later (*Sirp ja Vasar* 1955, 1). The attention given to the translation of Stepan Zlobin's historical novel *Salavat Julajev* into Estonian 1965 was already more modest, both in terms of quantity and tone (*Sirp ja Vasar* 1965, 8).

Salavat Yulaev and Bashkortostan in (post-)Soviet Paldiski

Little can be said about how many cultural opportunities revolving around Yulaev were received in Soviet Estonia. However, relations between Paldiski and the then Bashkir Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic deepened over time. Like the press coverage, these interactions could be synced (cf. Zerubavel 2003) to the anniversaries of Salavat's birth and the Pugachev Rebellion. For example, students from the Russian-language secondary school in Paldiski travelled to Yulaev's birthplace and hosted guests from Bashkiria in 1983, which marked the 210th anniversary of the Pugachev Rebellion (Hairullina 2014, 160). The local history museum opened in this same school in 1986 displayed artefacts and artworks from Bashkiria and materials collected by pupils on Yulaev's life, his participation in the Pugachev Rebellion and his later life in Paldiski (Luide 1986).

In 1989, Bashkiria presented Paldiski with a bust of Salavat Yulaev created by Tamara Nechayeva (1922–2003), People's Artist of the Bashkir ASSR. The monument is said to have been the initiative of the director of a school museum in Ufa, who also organised the donation of Bashkir artefacts and artworks to Paldiski (Hairullina 2014, 176). The bust, made of copper plate and hollow inside, was stolen by metal thieves in 1991, only to be discovered abandoned and crushed soon after (Laar 1993, 31–33). Bashkirs delivered a replica of the original sculpture to Paldiski in 1998 (*Eesti Päevaleht* [Estonian Daily] 1997; Aitsam 2005), but it corroded, so another copy was made in 2016, this time of cast iron. Like its predecessors, this latest monument, donated by the National Museum of the Republic of Bashkortostan (ERR 2016), stands on a little square at the corner of Rae and Pakri

streets, next to some mountain pines. The inscription on the granite pedestal of the monument gives the name of the Bashkir hero in Latin script and in Cyrillic, as well as the years of his birth and death.

A street in Paldiski was named after Salavat Yulaev in 2004, on the 250th anniversary of Yulaev's birth, allegedly at the request of the Republic of Bashkortostan. However, it is not the same street that was named after him in Paldiski in the Soviet times (Õun, Pärn 2022). Contacts between Paldiski and Bashkortostan seem to have been particularly active in the late 2000s and 2010s. Municipal and regional press reported frequent visits by local politicians and entrepreneurs to and from Bashkortostan to develop economic and cultural cooperation. Plans were made to open a museum dedicated to Salavat Yulaev (e.g., Kallas 2012), even though Paldiski's own museum had closed and was struggling to reopen (*Paldiski Linnaleht* [Paldiski Town Gazette] 2013b, 5). Annual celebrations of the town's anniversary, Paldiski Days, would showcase Bashkir folk culture and artists from Bashkortostan (e.g., Amor 2008; *Paldiski Linnaleht* 2013a, 3; Toonverk 2014; Villmann 2017).

In July 2012, Paldiski hosted the official delegation of the Republic of Bashkortostan, including its deputy prime minister. In addition to business meetings, the guests were taken to the places where Yulaev is known or believed to have laboured, including the Paldiski Church of St. George. The priest of this Estonian Apostolic Orthodox congregation treated the Bashkir delegation to a speech the shortened version of which was published in municipal press. The priest described Salavat Yulaev as God's favourite, who helped to build the Paldiski Church of St. George and donated secretly a large sum to this cause. He described further how Yulaev, a Muslim, had been seen praying on the site before a church was built there (*Paldiski Linnaleht* 2012, 5). According to the report published in the local paper following this meeting, the priest "told the guests about hitherto unknown circumstances regarding the time the national hero of Bashkortostan spent in the Baltiiski fortress doing forced labour" (Hamitova 2012, 4).

The priest's speech and the coverage of the 2012 visit of the Bashkir delegation in municipal press make for an astonishing, almost unfathomable read as they resemble so much the rhetoric used to describe Yulaev in the 1950s Soviet press. Bashkortostan's conspicuous presence in Paldiski coincided with a turbulent period in which, some have argued, the town's municipal politics were dominated by the competing business interests of the two large ports and their owners (Koch 2013; Brinkmann 2014). A shift seems to have occurred when, following a major administrative reform in 2017, Paldiski and three other municipalities merged to form a new Lääne-Harju parish led by a single municipal government. In addition, Russia's full-scale war in Ukraine has dramatically altered the relationship

between Estonia and Russia in all spheres of life and society, which affects Estonia's national minorities with ties to the subjects of the Russian Federation, such as the Republic of Bashkortostan.

Paldiski's 300th anniversary in 2018 was celebrated for three days, one of which was dedicated to ethnic minorities. The programme mentions two Russian choirs and one Ukrainian choir, and an "area of national cultures" where "the clothes of different cultural spaces are worn, handicrafts are sold, traditions are introduced, and cafes of different nationalities are opened" (*Lääne-Harju Valla Leht* [Lääne-Harju Parish Paper] 2018, 5). Such dedicated areas within a larger festival site are common in public celebrations of this kind, resembling *Etnolaat* or Ethnofair in Tallinn's Town Hall Square, one of the main events of the annual National Minorities Days celebrations in September. What is unusual is the heightened attention that Paldiski has paid to Bashkiria in its annual celebrations for many years. Bashkirs, along with several other ethnic minorities, took the stage again in 2018, although they were not mentioned in the programme. A news report on the jubilee of Paldiski described the musical performance by the Tallinn Bashkir Cultural Society and the Bashkirs' special relationship to Paldiski: "For the Bashkirs, a piece of sacred land is located in Paldiski, because their national hero Salavat Yulaev was sent here for forced labour in the mid-nineteenth century" (Amor 2018). The journalist describes how the performer, a young man, had given a gift to the prime minister, who was attending the celebrations:

> The young Bashkir did not hesitate for a moment, but after his performance went up to the prime minister Jüri Ratas to present him with the book *Salavat Yulaev. Estonia remembers* (Amor 2018) (Fig. 3).

Remembering Yulaev on behalf of Estonia

The Tallinn Bashkir Cultural Society *Agizel*, the only organisation in Estonia representing exclusively Bashkirs, was visibly involved in many of the celebrations and events in Paldiski in the 2000s and 2010s. *Agizel* was founded in 2000 on the initiative of Fljuza Hairullina and is a member of *Eestimaa Rahvuste Ühendus* [the Association of Estonian Nationalities], one of the two major umbrella organisations of national minorities in Estonia. In 2014 the society published a bilingual volume in Estonian and Russian about Yulaev's life and literary works, dedicating it to the 260th anniversary of the birth of its hero (Hairullina 2014). The cover depicts a photo of Yulaev's bust in Paldiski.

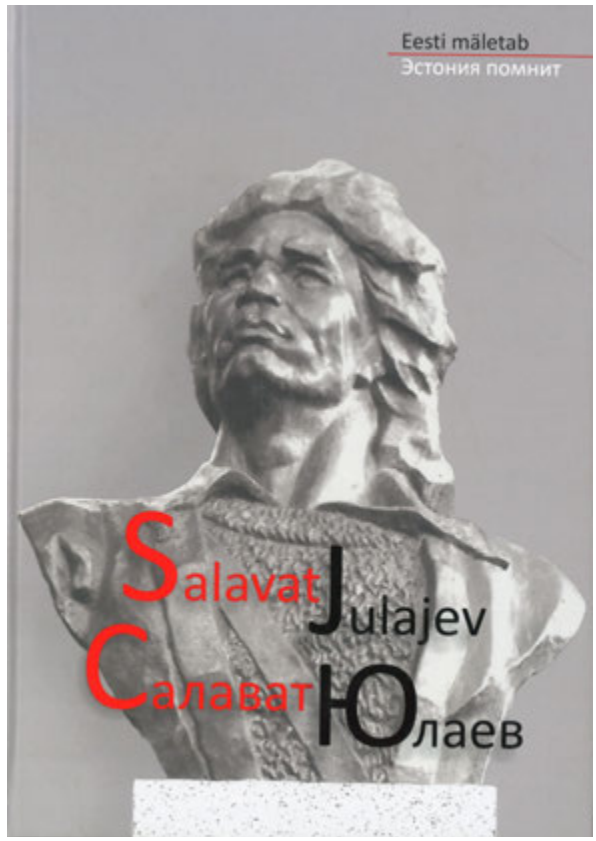

Fig. 3. *Salavat Yulaev: Estonia remembers.* Cover of the bilingual book published by the Tallinn Bashkir Cultural Society *Agizel* in 2014 on the 260th anniversary of the birth of Yulaev.

The book opens with short greetings from the Estonian minister of culture and a renowned Bashkir historian, and includes translations of Yulaev's poems into Estonian by the Estonian poets Ly Seppel and Andres Ehin, first published in the leading Estonian literary journal *Looming* [Creation] in 2012. Also included is a modified version of a play about Yulaev's life written by the Bashkir writer Mustai Karim (1919–2005). It is the same play that I saw a passage of in Tallinn back in 2010 and that sparked my interest in the connection between Bashkirs and Paldiski. The version of the play included in the book ends with local Estonian peasants, Yulaev and other Bashkir prisoners celebrating summer solstice together only to be interrupted by a punishment squad member, who tells the prison guards to expel locals from their homes. Yulaev commits suicide by walking into the sea, thinking of the Estonian woman, Anu, who had confessed her love to him, and of his native land (Hairullina 2014, 95–102).

This finale comes across as a quirky synthesis of stereotypical motifs from Yulaev's life, the history and folklore of Paldiski, and Estonian folk culture. Estonian folklore associates the summer solstice, the brightest time of the year in Estonia, with romantic opportunities and communal celebrations. In this case, however, the celebration is cut short because history repeats itself and Pakri peninsula is cleared of civilians, while the Baskhir hero ends his life in the same way as the Old Believers in the legends about the origins of Paldiski's problems. The ending of the play is ultimately a story about the importance of good relations between different peoples occupying the same territory and about those in power getting in the way of such neighbourliness: ordinary Estonians accept the presence of Bashkirs and want to break bread with them, but powerful people punish them for their good intentions and ruin everyone's lives.

It is not at all common in Estonia for a small – or even larger – cultural association of an ethnic minority to publish such a thick hardback volume in colour printing and with the blessing of the minister of culture. The phrase *Eesti mäletab/ Эстония помнит* [Estonia remembers] is printed on the cover and the title page of the book, presumably to state that Estonia remembers Salavat Yulaev on the 260th anniversary of his birth. This is an illocutionary act that allows Bashkirs to make a pledge on behalf of Estonia: Estonia remembers because the Tallinn Bashkir Cultural Society *Agizel* remembers and commemorates Yulaev with this book. In making this claim, *Agizel* also expands the idea of Estonia's history and who is or could be part of it, drawing attention to events, people and ethnic groups who do not belong to dominant imaginations of Estonia. The Bashkir hero Salavat Yulaev is part of Estonia because he died in Estonia while building the town of Paldiski, and commemorating him enables Bashkirs in Estonia to establish a direct, exclusive relationship with the country's past – to walk up to the prime minister if the opportunity arises.

Consequently, this volume about Yulaev is as much about the efforts of Bashkirs in Estonia to keep their hero's memory alive outside Bashkortostan as it is about their efforts to assert themselves in Estonia. They need Yulaev, the book and the statue. The photographs in the final section of the book vividly capture the central role of Yulaev's monument in these intertwined efforts and in the communal and ritual life of the Bashkirs in *Agizel*. Imagined communities feed on heroes, on anniversaries and monuments. Like the anniversaries of the heroes (Zerubavel 2003), "monuments of predecessors are organizers of continuity, fictitious indicators of the uninterruptedness of time and, simultaneously, the presence of an origin" (Yampolsky 1995, 103–104).

Concluding remarks

The monument to the Bashkir national hero Salavat Yulaev in Paldiski is a resource available to Bashkirs seeking to make their history and culture visible in post-Soviet Estonia, and they seem to have made the most of it. Yulaev had a special place in the Soviet narrative of the Pugachev Rebellion, but it would be a futile exercise to try to separate the Soviet layers from the non-Soviet ones for what would be left of the bust in Paldiski if Arslan Muboryakov's iconic representation of Yulaev was removed? However, the relationship between Yulaev, the Bashkirs, and the Soviet regime was strained from the outset if one assumes or accepts that Yulaev and his followers were fighting for their lands, for "religious freedom, and minimal state interference in Bashkir communities" (Steinwedel 2016, 74), none of which was granted by the Soviet Union. There is more to Yulaev for the Bashkirs, and his birthdays have eclipsed the commemoration of the beginning and end of the Pugachev Rebellion. Whereas religion was not part of the Soviet narrative of Yulaev, one way in which members of the Estonian Bashkir organisation *Agizel* honour Yulaev is by reading prayers on his grave during Ramadan, his birthday and on other occasions.

The relations between the various political and economic actors, the Republic of Bashkortostan, the Russian Federation, and the Bashkirs in Estonia is a similarly delicate and complex issue, of which this chapter could only scratch the surface. A gift from the Russian Republic of Bashkortostan, the (third) Yulaev monument that stands in Paldiski today could be regarded as a tool of Bashkortostan's cultural diplomacy and/or of Russia's soft power, but it is certainly an important memory site for Bashkirs in Estonia and beyond.

It is equally difficult to put one's finger on the reasons for the attention paid to Bashkortostan, Bashkir culture and consequently also to the memory of Salavat Yulaev by successive municipal governments of Paldiski: who was courting whom and why and whether it had anything to do with the Bashkirs in Estonia. The more important takeaway message from the perspective of ethnic minorities in Estonia seems to be that they can easily find themselves in a precarious situation. While Estonia has encouraged the minority organisations to foster good relations with their "ethnic homelands" and to seek for their support, it also expects them to prove their loyalty to the Estonian state, and this may sometimes be an impossible combination. This highlights how the organisations and individuals representing ethnic minorities, by virtue of their transnational ties, are not only cultural and possibly economic intermediaries, but also political actors with their own views and agendas regarding both Estonia and their other homeland(s). Not necessarily

political in the sense of party politics, but rather in the sense of engaging Others, influencing one's surroundings and making agreements, and acquiring and using power, including symbolic power. This is what the book published by the Tallinn Bashkir Cultural Society *Agizel* about Yulaev and his ties to Estonia does. It aims to make readers see and understand that the Bashkir presence in Estonia goes back several centuries and that Bashkirs have a unique, direct relationship with Estonia that does not depend on any state. Yulaev's monument is an important tangible token of this presence and relationship, but the whole town of Paldiski serves as *lieu de mémoire*. If the Bashkirs of Estonia remember Salavat Yulaev, then Estonia remembers him.

Bibliography

Archival sources

Vahtre, Sulev. Personal Archive. Sulev Vahtrele saadetud ja tema poolt kogutud materjalid Paldiski ja Paldiski päeva (18. juuli 1998) kohta 1988–1998 [Materials sent to and collected by Sulev Vahtre about Paldiski and Paldiski Day (July 18, 1998) 1988–1998]. Fond 186. University of Tartu Library.

Press articles (anonymous)

Eesti Päevaleht 1997. Bashkiirlased tahavad taastada Salavat Julajevi ausamba Paldiskis [Bashkirs want to restore the statue of Salavat Yulaev in Paldiski]. December 8. https://epl.delfi.ee/artikkel/50742531/eesti-uudiseid, accessed January 31, 2025.

ERR 2016. Paldiski saab Venemaa Baškortostanilt uue Salavat Julajevi kuju [Bashkortostan presents Paldiski with a new statue of Salavat Yulaev]. April 14. https://www.err.ee/557946/paldiski-saab-venemaa-baskortostanilt-uue-salavat-julajevi-kuju, accessed January 31, 2025.

ERR 2023. Paldiski Soviet-era former reactor has traces of radiation, no nuclear fuel. November 23. https://news.err.ee/1609172956/paldiski-soviet-era-former-reactor-has-traces-of-radiation-no-nuclear-fuel, accessed January 31, 2025.

Harju Elu 1989. Kutsute appi? [Calling for assistance?]. July 27, 3.

Harju Elu 2011. *Harju Elu* aastal 1952 [*Harju Elu* in 1952]. January 6, 2.

Lääne-Harju Valla Leht 2018. Paldiski 300 – suur pidu linlastele ja külalistele [Paldiski 300 – a big celebration for the townspeople and guests]. June 21, 5.

Paldiski Linnaleht 2012. Kõne Baškortostani Vabariigi delegatsioonile 13. juulil 2012. aastal kohtumisel Püha Georgi Pühakojas [Speech to the delegation of the Republic of Bashkortostan on July 13, 2012 at a meeting in the Church of St. George]. 7/108, 5.

Paldiski Linnaleht 2013a. Paldiski Linnapäevad 2013 [Paldiski days 2013]. June–July, 3.

Paldiski Linnaleht 2013b. Linnamuuseum avab külastajatele uksed [Town museum opens to visitors]. June–July, 5.

Reisijuht 2012. Bashkiirlaste jaoks Paldiski linn püha koht [The town of Paldiski is a sacred place for the Bashkirs]. August 5. https://reisijuht.delfi.ee/artikkel/64361387/bashkiirlaste-jaoks-paldiski-linn-puha-koht, accessed January 31, 2025.

Sirp ja Vasar 1941. Salavat Julajev. May 4, 8.

Sirp ja Vasar 1952. Salavat Julajevi 200. sünniaastapäevale pühendatud teaduslik sessioon [A scientific session dedicated to the 200th anniversary of Salavat Yulaev]. June 20, 1.

Sirp ja Vasar 1954. Uusi nõukogude oopereid [New Soviet operas]. September 17, 3.

Sirp ja Vasar 1955. Baškiiri kirjanduse ja teatri dekaad [A ten-day celebration of Bashkir literature and theatre]. May 20, 1.

Sirp ja Vasar 1965. Uusi raamatuid [New books]. September 3, 8.

Literature

Ahmetov D. 1999. Baškiirid [Bahkirs] [in:] J. Viikberg (ed.), *Eesti rahvaste raamat: rahvusvähemused, -rühmad ja -killud* [The book of Estonian peoples: national minorities, groups and particles]. Eesti Entsüklopeediakirjastus, 59–61.

Aidarov A., Drechsler W. 2013. Estonian russification of non-Russian ethnic minorities in Estonia? A policy analysis. *Trames. Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences* 17, 103–128. DOI:10.3176/tr.2013.2.01

Aitsam V. 2005. Paldiskis on Püha Maa [There is sacred land in Paldiski]. *Maaleht* [Country Paper] July, 14. https://archive.ph/20130701071556/http://www.maakodu.ee/index.php?page=&grupp=artikkel&artikkel=3252, accessed January 31, 2025.

Amor K. 2008. Paldiski Linna Päevad. Paldiski sai 255 aastat tagasi linna õigused [Days of Paldiski. Paldiski received town charter 225 years ago]. *Harju Elu* July 18, 6–7.

Amor K. 2018. 300aastase Paldiski linna rikkus peitub lastes [The wealth of the 300-year-old town of Paldiski lies in its children]. *Maaleht* July 22. https://maaleht.delfi.ee/artikkel/83118013/suur-fotogalerii-300aastase-paldiski-linna-rikkus-peitub-lastes, accessed January 31, 2025.

Brinkmann K. 2014. Äriga põimunud poliitika [Businesss intertwined with politics]. *Äripäev* [Business Daily] May 26, 1, 4–5.

Cultural diversity. n.d. Integratsiooni Sihtasutus [Integration Foundation]. https://www.integratsioon.ee/en/thematic-year/cultural-diversity, accessed January 17, 2025.

Demski D. 2017. Values, substantiality, and passage of time: Representations and reinterpretations of military heritage. *Folklore: Electronic Journal of Folklore* 70, 171–192. DOI:10.7592/FEJF2017.70.demski

Dr. Ise. 1902. *Kodumaa tähtsad lood endisest ajast* [Important stories of the homeland from bygone days]. J. Ploompuu raamatukaupluse kuluga trükitud.

Filov V. 1952. Salavat Julajev — Baškiiri rahva esimene poeet [Salavat Yulaev – the first poet of the Bashkir people]. *Sirp ja Vasar* December 1, 3.

Hairullina F. 2014. *Salavat Julajev: 260 aastat Salavat Julajevi sünnist = Салават Юлаев: 260-летие Салавата Юлаева* [Salavat Yulaev: 260 years from Salavat Yulaev's birth]. TEA Kirjastus.

Hamitova R. 2012. Baškortostani koostöö Paldiski linna ja Eesti Vabariigiga jätkub [Bashkortostan's cooperation with town city of Paldiski and the Republic of Estonia continues]. *Paldiski Linnaleht* 7/108, 4.

Kallas K. 2012. Lahendamata probleemid ei jää [Problems will not remain unresolved]. *Paldiski Linnaleht* 6/107, 2.

Känd K. 2001. *2000. aasta rahva ja eluruumide loendus: Kodakondsus, rahvus, emakeel ja võõrkeelte oskus / 2000 population and housing census: Citizenship, nationality, mother tongue and command of foreign languages.* Statistikaamet.

Kats J. 2024. *Endisaegne Paldiski ja tema inimesed* [Old Paldiski and its people]. MTÜ Pakri Käsitöö ja Koduloo Koda.

Koch T. 2013. Võitlus pärast võimuvõttu [Struggle after the takeover]. *Postimees* September 30, sec. Poliitika. https://www.postimees.ee/2091046/voitlus-parast-voimuvottu, accessed January 31, 2025.

Kultuuririkas Eesti [Culturally rich Estonia] n.d. Integratsiooni Sihtasutus [Integration Foundation]. https://www.integratsioon.ee/kultuuririkkuse-aasta/kultuuririkkas-eesti, accessed January 17, 2025.

Laar H. 1993. *Paldiski militaarmooloki haardes* [Military Moloch's grip on Paldiski]. Olion.

Luide S. 1986. Avati kooli koduloomuuseum [Local history museum opened at the school]. *Harju Elu* May 22, 3.

Odres L. (ed.) 2003. *100 pilti Vana-Paldiskist* [100 pictures from the old Paldiski]. Paldiski Linnavalitsus, L. Odres.

Odres L. 2004. *Vana Armas Paldiski* [Dear old Paldiski]. Maalehe Raamat.

Õun M. 1992. Paldiski: Sõjaajaloolase märkmeid Eesti tundmatuimast linnast I [Paldiski: War historians' notes from Estonia's least known town]. *Sõdur* [Soldier] 1, 28–32.

Õun M. 1993a. Paldiski: Sõjaajaloolase märkmeid Eesti tundmatuimast linnast II [Paldiski: War historians' notes from Estonia's least known town]. *Sõdur* 1, 30–34.

Õun M. 1993b. Paldiski: Sõjaajaloolase märkmeid Eesti tundmatuimast linnast III [Paldiski: War historians' notes from Estonia's least known town]. *Sõdur* 2, 30–32.

Õun M. 1993c. Paldiski: Sõjaajaloolase märkmeid Eesti tundmatuimast linnast IV [Paldiski: War historians' notes from Estonia's least known town]. *Sõdur* [Soldier] 3, 28–32.

Õun M., Pärn J. 2022. Paldiski. Eesti sõjaajaloo teejuht [A guide to Estonian military history] January 22. https://teejuht.esap.ee/pohja-eesti/paldiski/, accessed January 17, 2025.

Pärn J., Hergauk M., Õun M. 2006. *Punalaevastik Eestis 20. sajandi lõpukümnendeil* [The Red Fleet in Estonia in the last decades of the 20th century]. Sentinel.

Statistics Estonia RL21442: Population by ethnic nationality, mother tongue, citizenship, sex, age group and place of residence (settlement region), December 31, 2021. Statistical database: https://andmed.stat.ee:443/pxweb/en/stat/stat__rahvaloendus__rel2021__rahvastiku-demograafilised-ja-etno-kultuurilised-naitajad__rahvus-emakeel/RL21442.px/, accessed January 17, 2025.

Schinkel W. 2017. *Imagined societies: A critique of immigrant integration in Western Europe*. Cambridge University Press.

Seljamaa E-H. 2013. Boosting similarity and difference or only difference? Soviet nationality policies and integration in post-communist Estonia [in:] K. Cordell, T. Agarin, A. Osipov (eds), *Institutional legacies of communism: Change and continuities in minority protection.* Routledge, 186–199.

Seljamaa E-H. 2021. Diversities claimed, displayed and silenced: Encounters at the new Estonian National Museum. *Ethnologia Europaea* 51, 72–98. DOI:10.16995/ee.1903

Seljamaa E-H., Czarnecka D., Demski D. (eds) 2017. *Small Places, large issues.* Special issue of *Folklore: Electronic Journal of Folklore* 70. https://www.folklore.ee/folklore/vol70/index.html

Sööt A. (dir.) 1996. *Äraneetud linn* [The cursed town]. Eesti Kroonikafilm. https://arkaader.ee/landing/bc/rHczO7kKnl/fmLbuHDHFTo

Steinwedel C. 2016. *Threads of empire: Loyalty and tsarist authority in Bashkiria, 1552–1917*. Indiana University Press.

Support for national minorities and compatriots. n.d. Kultuuriministeerium [Ministry of Culture]. https://www.kul.ee/en/cultural-diversity-and-integration/support-national-minorities-and-compatriots, accessed January 17, 2025.

Taklaja A. 1997. Paldiski praegu – läbi linnaosa staatuse taas omavalitsuseks [Paldiski now – through district status back to municipality] [in:] *Paldiski linna areng – tänapäev ja tulevik. 10. september 1996. Konverentsimaterjalide kogumik* [The development of the town of Paldiski – today and in the future. 10 September 1996. Conference proceedings]. Jaan Tõnissoni Instituut, 26–31.

Teema-aasta [Theme year]. n.d. Integratsiooni Sihtasutus [Integration Foundation]. https://www.integratsioon.ee/teema-aasta, accessed January 17, 2025.

Tiit E.-M. 2014. *Eesti rahvastik: Hinnatud ja loendatud* [Estonian population: Estimated and counted]. Statistikaamet.

Toom J. 2024. Pärandi ja turismi seosed Paldiski linna näitel [Symbiosis of heritage and tourism. Case study Paldiski]. MA thesis, Estonian Academy of Art. https://digiteek.artun.ee/fotod/loputood/magister/event_id-942

Toonverk E. 2014. Nädala sündmus [The event of the week]. *Harju Elu* July 11, 3.

Vares O. 1948. 175 aastat Pugatševi ülestõusu algusest. Pugatševi ülestõusust osavõtjad Eestis [175 years since the beginning of the Pugachev Rebellion. Participants of the Pugachev Rebellion in Estonia]. *Edasi* [Forward] September 28, 2.

Villmann E. 2017. Paldiski linn on 299-aastane! [The town of Paldiski is 299!] *Paldiski Linnaleht* September 2017, 1.

Yampolsky M. 1995. In the shadow of monuments [in:] N. Condee (ed.), *Soviet hieroglyphics: Visual culture in late twentieth-century Russia*. Indiana University Press, 93–112.

Zerubavel E. 2003. *Time maps: Collective memory and the social shape of the past*. University of Chicago Press.