Becoming Muslim in Imperial Russia

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Perhaps because I grew up with both a Christian and a Muslim name and because I grappled from a very early age with different possible identities imposed by French schools or inherited from my parents’ Celtic Breton and Turkic origins, I grew fond of the nineteenth-century Christian Tatar community whose names could also be either Christian or Muslim, depending on time, place, and context. Fortunately, no one asked me to choose between the different layers of my personal identities, and I did not have to face the hardships that this community endured for their religious commitments. In my personal scholarly journey, I had the support of many who helped me enter the world of these villagers whose imagination, faith, and endurance inspire both my admiration and sympathy.

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