

*The «Renaissance»
foundation*





We have the historical mission to save what we have, to revive and pass it on to the future generations. Restoring the historical view of Bulgar and Sviyazhsk will become the largest joint project of the government, business, religious organizations and the public, whose name is the «Renaissance».





*I*n the Concept of the State National Policy of the Republic Tatarstan confirmed in 2008, the major priorities are stated as follows: «preserving intellectual, cultural and spiritual and moral heritage of the representatives of the peoples living on

the territory of Tatarstan, the development of local history and museum management, popularizing knowledge about the history and culture of mutual influence and interaction between peoples living in Tatarstan.



«The project of reviving outstanding historical and architectural monuments - Bulgar and Sviyazhsk, has great importance for present and future generations. In the same land, on the banks of the Volga we will see a clear example of peaceful co-existence of two religions, Islam and Orthodox Christianity»

M. Shaymiev





Continuing the long-term vigorous activity in the field of spiritual rebirth of the nation, strengthening inter-confessional unity and the inter-cultural dialogue. In 2010, the first President of the Republic of Tatarstan Mintimer Shaymiev formed the «Renaissance» Foundation. Its activities started with working out a unique project – «Cultural heritage of Tatarstan: the ancient cities Bulgar and Svijazhsk.»

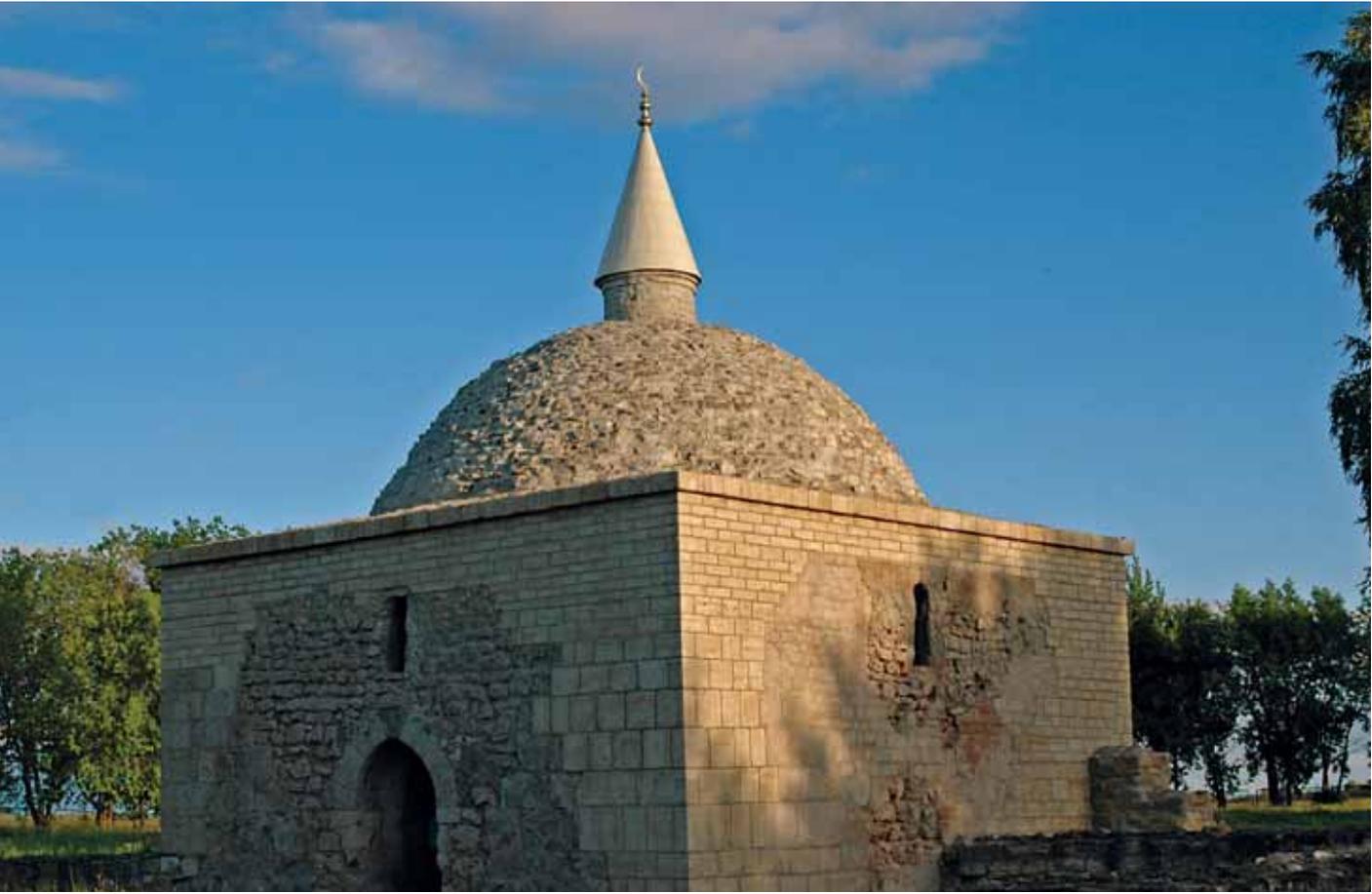
Restoration of ancient cities - centers of Muslim and Orthodox culture and faith, will be a milestone on the path of spiritual rebirth of the multinational people of Russia and Tatarstan. Monuments, history, symbols

of ancient traditions are a significant resource for the development of the region, helping to attract tourists and investors.

The confirmation of the unique nature of these objects came in 2000 when the Kazan Kremlin was included on the list of the World cultural and natural heritage adopted by UNESCO. Meanwhile, the Bulgar State Historical and Architectural Museum-Reserve and historical, architectural and natural landscapes of Svijazhsk (soon to be organized into the State Historical and Architectural Museum-Reserve the Island-city of Svijazhsk) were put on the waiting list.



The «Renaissance» foundation





The task set for the «Renaissance» foundation is truly revolutionary: within the next few years, the ancient cities must be not only restored, renovated, conducting systematic and extensive research, but also opened for tourists and pilgrims. While preserving the old world charm in Bulgar and Sviyazhsk, the towns must get modern tourist facilities, and match the level of latest architectural and technical thought.

The project involves the construction of infrastructure (berths, communications, hotels), which will create comfortable conditions for traveling, but will not affect the natural reserves. This will contribute to the archaeological excavation, which will ultimately ensure the careful restoration of ancient monuments.





*The ancient
city of Bulgar*







The city of Bulgar is a monument of ancient culture, located on the Volga river in a beautiful place on the crossroads of travel routes. In the year 922 Islam was accepted here as state religion. It occurred a few decades before Christianization of the Kiev Rus.

Historical data confirm the age of Bolgar to be more than 1100 years, making it the most ancient Bulgar-Tatar city of the Middle Volga. Later, there were new cities of the Bulgarians: Oshel, Kazan, Alabuga, Dzhuket-au, Nuhrat, Torts (Torchesk), Tuhchin.

In the first half of the 10th century, Bulgarians entered into active contact with the Muslim world. References to them started to appear in the medieval Arabic and Persian literature. Of particular value are «Risale» («The Message»), by Ibn Fadlan who was the Secretary of the Baghdad embassy in 922 AD, books by the Arab traveler Al Garnati (mid-12th century), works by representatives of the classical school of Arab geography of the 10th century: Al Balkhi, Al Masoudi, Al Istakhri, Ibn Hawqal, Al Mukadassi, the work of 11th century Arab historian Al Marvazi. They all contain information about the Volga Bulgaria and Bulgarians, their cities, lifestyles, external relations with countries and peoples of Eurasia. A lot of valuable information on the relationship between Russia and the Volga Bulgaria is available from Russian chronicles.





The city, known in medieval written sources as Bryahimov (a note in the Lavrenty Chronicle for the year 1164), Bolgar (Russian chronicles and Oriental authors) and Bolgar the Great (the only reference in the

Russian chronicles in 1374), is one of the few historical and archaeological sites of Volga Tatars, enjoying worldwide fame. The ruins of it, located in Spassky raion of Tatarstan 30 km from the mouth of the Kama River

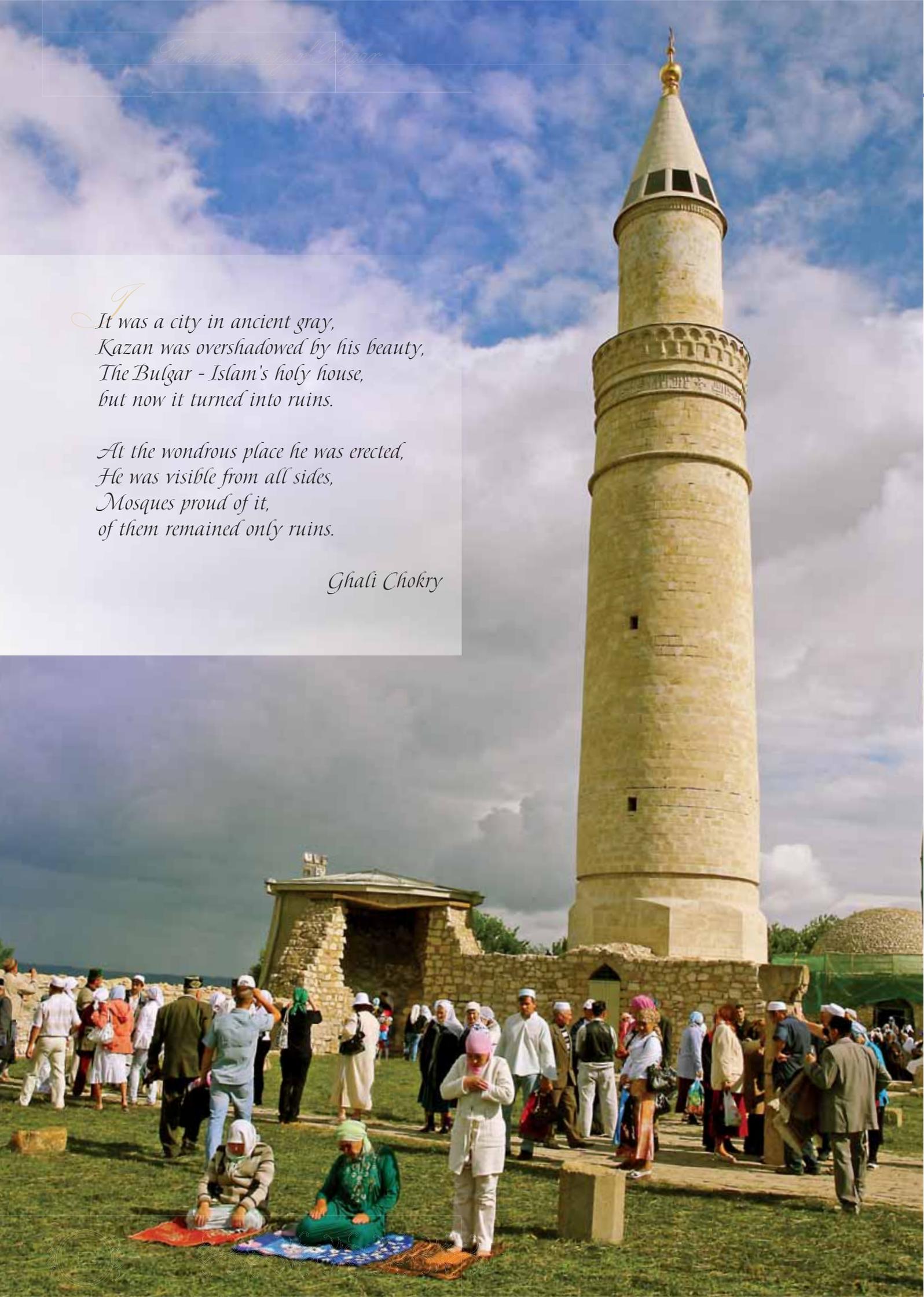




I
It was a city in ancient gray,
Kazan was overshadowed by his beauty,
The Bulgar - Islam's holy house,
but now it turned into ruins.

At the wondrous place he was erected,
He was visible from all sides,
Mosques proud of it,
of them remained only ruins.

Ghali Chokry





and 6 km from the Volga River (before the Kuybyshev reservoir was created) on the edge of the Volga terrace about 30 m high, turned into a place of pilgrimage for Muslims, became a kind of Mecca for generations of scholars and archaeologists.

Up to now some buildings bear witness of the centuries-old history of the ancient city: the Small minaret, the Black, White, and Red chambers, the Khan's tomb, the Cathedral mosque, the stone mausoleums, erected in XIII–XIV century.

Bulgarians was the name of the nomadic Turkic tribes, first mentioned

during the Great Migration in the Latin chronicle (354 AD). In the 630s Bulgarians, led by Khan Kubrat, established the State of Great Bulgaria.





After long wars Khazars formed a part of the people in the north of the Balkan Peninsula, the first Bulgarian Empire (681-1018) was started in Eastern Europe. Some of the Bulgarian tribes (Barandzhars, Barsils, Beeler, Savirs and others) moved from Khazaria to the Middle Volga. In late 9th or early 10th century, Bulgarians formed a state, known as Volga Bulgaria.

Bolgar city was the capital of the largest feudal state in Eastern Europe in the 10th–11th centuries. Later, in the 13th – 14th centuries, the city became the first capital of the Golden Horde, being located conveniently for trade, at the confluence of the Kama and Volga. Bolgar played a huge role for the peoples of the Volga and was significantly important in the history of Eastern Europe.

In 922 Bulgarians - the ancestors of Kazan Tatars - officially convert to Islam. In the 10th century the city began minting coins as a symbol of the new state. The coins bore emirs' names and the mark of the city.





Culture of the ancient city

*F*or the neighboring tribes and peoples, Volga Bulgaria was a center which had a strong cultural, scientific and technical impact on them.

Skilled craftsmen of Bolgar and other cities created wonderful objects, widely distributed throughout the Volga and Kama areas. The findings of modern archaeologists confirm the high level of culture of Volga

Bulgaria. The gold and silver ornaments, elegant stone products reveal the aesthetic culture of the nation.

Bulgarians had their own writing system. Numerous inscriptions on pottery and jewelry prove widespread literacy. Volga-Bulgarian language is known from epitaphs.

History has preserved the descendants of the ancient inventors of the alphabet, which later was used by the rulers of the Golden Horde in the creation of «imperial language»







*A*ncient Bulgarians not only had rich markets and caravans, but also those greatly skilled in art: musicians, scientists, philosophers and poets. History has preserved the names of the great poet Kul Ghali, who wrote a poem called «Yusuf and Zuleikha», of scholar and historian Yakub ibn Nugmana. Husayn al-Bulgari, a unique figure in his era, a favorite of kings and sultans, was greatly revered by his contemporaries. He created his doctor's school, and published (!) The Book about how to prepare miracle drugs. For the ancient world, it was a truly unique event. The healer had a lot of successors and admirers, his medical skill was rewarded by kings and noble people. A monument to the Bulgarian scientist has been erected in Afghanistan.

There are paintings by Shishkin and Sovrasov devoted to ancient Bulgarians. The great Tatar poet Mussa



Dzhalil has written a poem based on ancient legend, and composer N. Zhi-ganov has adapted it for an opera «Al-tyn chach» (“the woman with golden hair») about struggle of the Volga Bulgarians against the Mongol yoke. The history of the ancient monument is re-vised in the narrative.

Despite frequent clashes, strong relations between Bulgaria and Rus-sia persisted at all times. Volga Bul-garia in the XII century played a sig-nificant role in Russian diplomacy. Travelers wrote of Bolgar: «Bolgar is a huge city... People endlessly move all around and across it.” Bolgar’s culture

truly reflected the image of the city as the «crossroads of the world», it com-bined the best traditions of the East with Western influence.

Bolgar was a trade gateway of East-ern Europe to Central Asia. Via the city, northern hunter peoples shipped their products to the West. Best brand of leather in all markets of the Caliphate was known as «Bulgarian», and used for boot-making. Until now, Arabic lan-guage has a word ‘Al-Bulgari’ for high quality leather. The available archaeo-logical materials on the Bolgar hill fort of 10th–11th centuries show it as a fortified settlement, a successful newcomer to

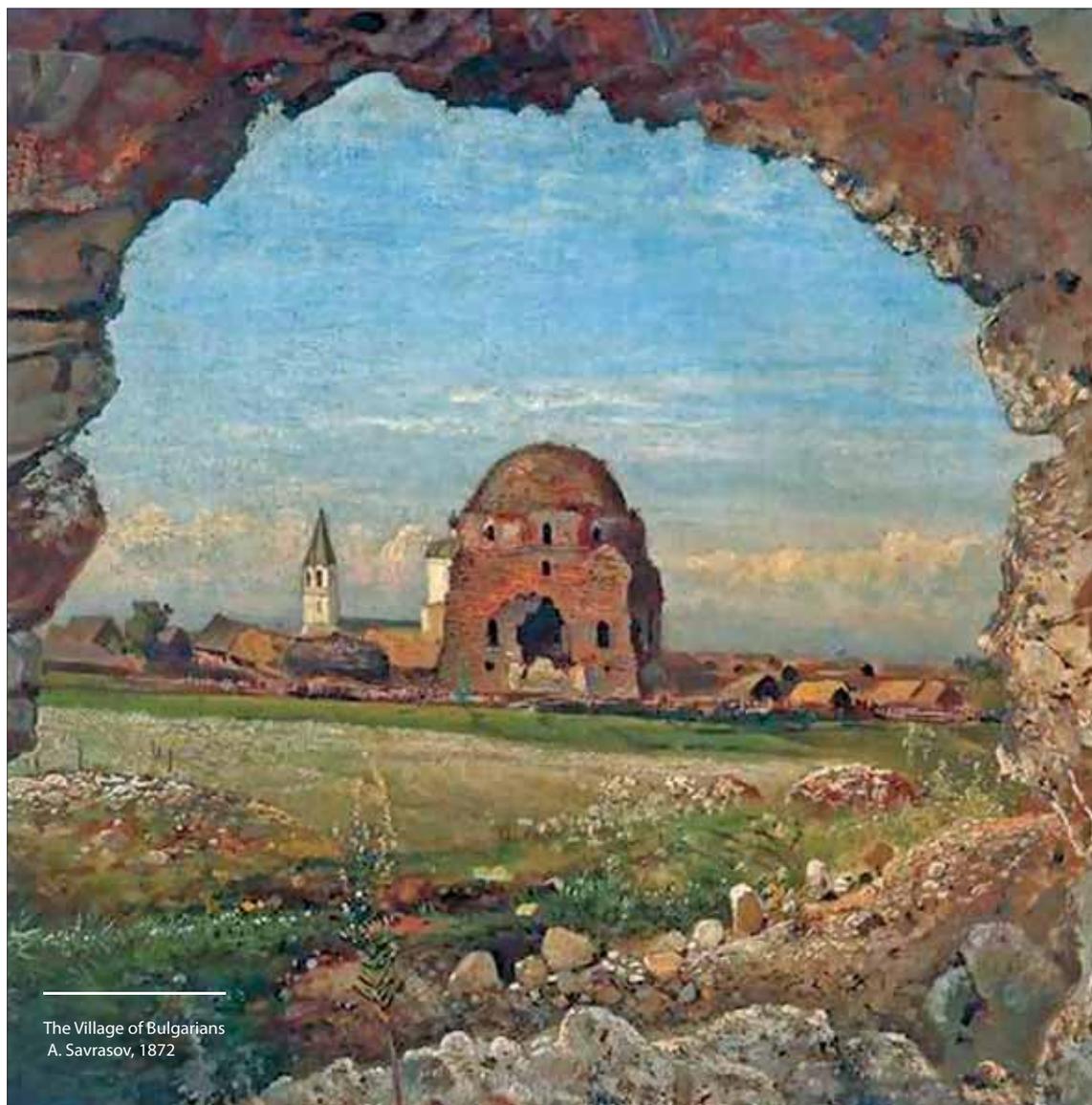
international trade due to its conve-nient geographical location on the banks of the Volga.

In the 12th century the Bol-gar, without losing its international market value, lost the capital status to Bilyar. It was probably due to repeated razing of the city in pre-Mongolian times, in the course of the struggle for the Volga trade route. Meanwhile, this period is marked by the growth of economy, crafts, in-creased trade links,



The Village of Bulgarians.
Small Minaret and the ruins of the White House
A. Savrasov, 1872-1874





The Village of Bulgarians
A. Savrasov, 1872

expansion of the city's territory, building of a new fort. The fortified part of the city already covered 24 hectares of land.

In 1236 the sky over the ancient capital was black from the charred ruins: Bolgar was taken by the Mongols. The city and the country fell, conquered by the Golden Horde. Several years later, Batu Khan chose Bolgar as his capital. The new era of recovery led to Bolgar becoming the most important city of the new state by the middle of 13th century.

By that point Bolgar started to play a central role in the Golden Horde. It was here that in the mid 1260s Berke Khan built a mosque, the first such building in Dzhychi.

Bolgar was the first city in the Golden Horde to start minting its own coins in 1250. In the same decade Berke Khan came to ask Batu Khan for the acceptance of his right for Russian, Armenian and Bulgarian principalities. For many years, during the reigns of Mengu Timur, Berke Khan and Uzbek Khan, Bolgar had remained one of the major economic, trade, cultural and religious centers of the Golden Horde.





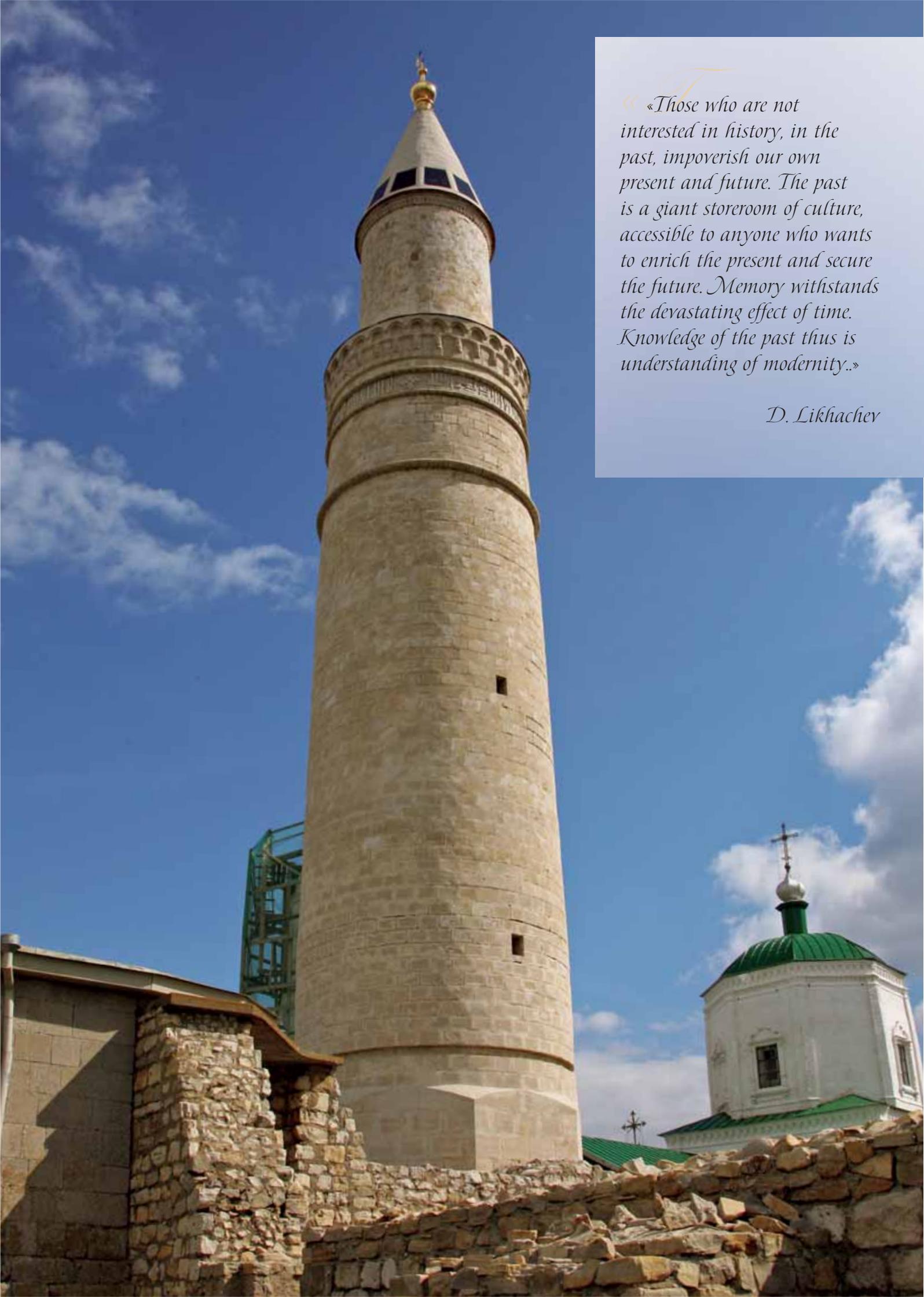
The city remained a strong cultural and commercial center of the empire until the XIV century, despite the fact that the capital of the Golden Horde had moved to the south. At this time, the city grew significantly, its fortified part was already 415 hectares large.

It strengthened trade ties with Iran, Khorezm, the Caucasus, Crimea and the Russian principalities. Thriving and diversified were handicrafts. Earlier than in Western Europe, pig iron production began. Unique buildings were constructed: palaces, country estates of the feudal nobility, caravanserai, where was the council mosque, school and madrasas, public baths, mausoleums. And today, our contemporaries can

imagine the grandeur of the North and East of the mausoleums, Black, White, Red, Eastern Chambers, Minor minaret, the Khan's tombs, the main mosque. Surprisingly, a lot of attention was paid to improvement of the city: bridges, waterworks, drainage systems were built.

The feudal unrest and weakening of the Horde (a campaign against the Bolgars, Timur the Great's invasion), attacks by the Ushkuyniki (river pirate gangs) and Russian princes in the XIV - early XV century, the army sent by Grand Prince Vasily II against Bulgaria in 1431, has led to the downfall of the city. Since then, Bolgar has left the political arena, but still remains a center of pilgrimage for Muslims.





«Those who are not interested in history, in the past, impoverish our own present and future. The past is a giant storeroom of culture, accessible to anyone who wants to enrich the present and secure the future. Memory withstands the devastating effect of time. Knowledge of the past thus is understanding of modernity..»

D. Likhachev





The capital of the Volga state was moved to Kazan. After the destruction, Bolgar has preserved its spiritual essence: the burial of esteemed Muslims still took place here, the place was inhabited by devout people and dervishes.

At the end of the Middle Ages, the land of the former Bulgarian state became part of the Russian empire. Tsar Feodor Alekseevich has ordered to describe the ancient stone buildings on the site of the Bolgar settlement. In 1712 clerk Andrey Mikhailov who has been working at the site of the settlement to establish an orthodox monastery there, mentioned about





more than 70 medieval buildings. The monastery was erected in the center of Bolgar on the spot of the Khan's former court yard and the Cathedral mosque. By the ruins of the Cathedral mosque ("the Quadrangle»), monks adapted the remaining mausoleums for their needs: one mausoleum (Eastern) has been converted into a small temple of St. Nicholas, the Northern one became monastic cells. In 1719 the monastery was visited and described in detail by the expedition of Danish scientist Daniel Gottlieb Messerschmidt sent by emperor Peter the Great to Siberia to perform its «physical description».

In 1722 the site of the ancient settlement was visited by Peter I himself. He gave an order to preserve the remaining stone constructions of an ancient city, and to collect and translate the texts of the epitaphs on old Bolgar gravestones.

A few years later a rich merchant of Kazan Ivan Mihlyayev built a church here «in the name of the Assumption of the Virgin». During the construction of the temple, stones from Bolgar ruins were used for its walls, and tombstones for its foundation. In such a way, in the old Bulgarian fort the history of two religions, Islam and Orthodox Christianity, got intertwined.





Monuments of old Bolgar made a big impression on Empress Catherine II during her 1767 voyage down the Volga. Her journey down the river began in Tver where she had arrived from Moscow with a huge retinue of 2000 persons. These also included foreign ambassadors who accompanied her to Kostroma as part of her flotilla consisting of 10 boats. In her letter to Voltaire, the Empress wrote: «During my journey down Volga I disembarked at the ruins of an ancient city, once built by Bulgarians... I have

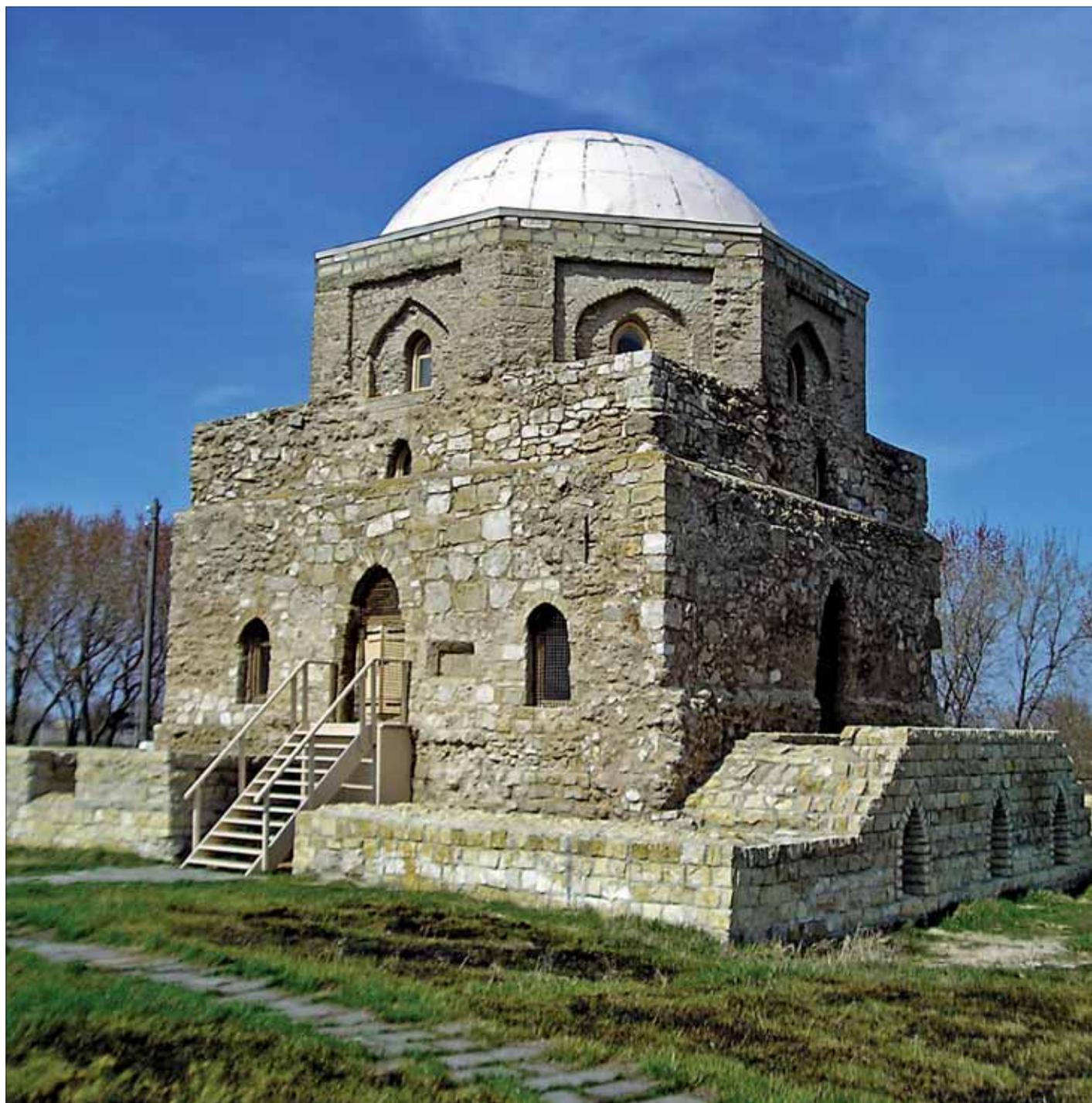


found here many stone buildings and nine minarets, very well constructed. I approached one of these ruins, and there stood forty Tatars, some of them praying. The governor of Kazan told me that the place is considered sacred by the Tatars: they come here for their prayers».

The monastery, as well as many others of that time, was closed at the end of 18th century, the village owned by the monastery was renamed Uspensky, later to receive back the name Bolgar. The building of a monastery

and the formation of a settlement within the former city walls have sped up the process decay and destruction. The local population took stones from ancient buildings for economic needs, dug the site over in search for treasure. If at the beginning of the 18th century 70 old constructions remained, only 44 of them remained standing at the end of the century. With unrequited bitterness, travelers described that see only heaps of stones could then be seen where once stood magnificent buildings.





*A*t this time, the Khan's courtyard, the Greek chamber and the chapel by the former Armenian cemetery, the residential area between Black chamber and the Small minaret, together with the complex of the mausoleums have all disappeared.

In 1841 the Grand minaret mosque collapsed. The fall was caused by treasure hunters, who dug a cavern in its foundation. At the very end of the enlightened century, the White Chamber collapsed.





The Bulgar - the name of the city inhabited by Christians and Muslims, the latter have a large mosque. Surrounding the mosque sturdy wooden houses in which residents pass the winter, in summer as live in tents and light wooden houses.

Al-Idrisi



Still, for many centuries Bolgar was a guiding star for historians and travelers, writers, poets, journalists, military leaders, architects, artists, local historians who made descriptions, drawings, plans of buildings and ruins of the ancient city.

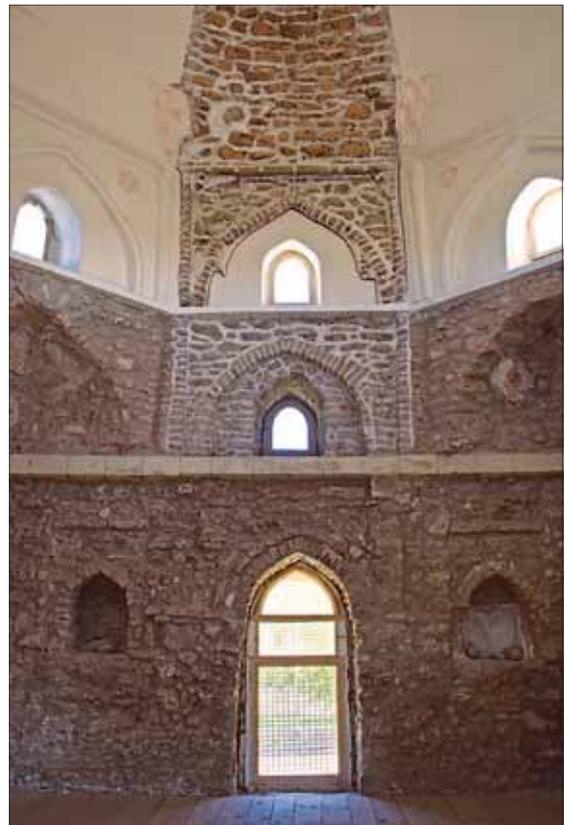
Archaeological research on the territory of Bolgar began in 1864 under the direction of V.G. Tizengauzen when some small excavation on the Woman's

hillock has been made. The 1877 Archaeological congress emphasized the need of constant supervision over monuments of Bolgar, entrusted to the Society for archeology, history and ethnography, which was created at Kazan university.

The Bolgar history and Archaeology Museum was opened in 1962, with the Bolgar historical and architectural reserve soon following.









Khan Palace

*F*or over a hundred years, scholars have been working laboriously in the search of the Khan's palace in Bulgar; its site had remained a subject of particular attention and disputes. Finally discovered by archaeologists, the site started to be investigated in 1997 by the Institute of history of Academy of Sciences of Tatarstan. By now, the area of 1300 sq.m. has been opened, revealing remains of a stone building at the level of the first row stones, really impressive in size. In

the excavations of 2010, incontestable proof was received of the site being used as the court of Batu khan (1208–1255), the ruler of Golden Horde since 1227), the son of Dzhuchi and grandson of Genghis Khan.

The architectural originality of the palace complex and the variety of finds testify to the site's great value. The stone monumental building of the palace ensemble has some features reminding similar complexes of Central Asia, Iran, India. Artefacts dated the middle of the 13th century, including coins minted by Batu Khan have been found here.



Why is it so important to preserve the Ancient Bulgar?

The historical and archaeological complex has no equivalents anywhere in the world as the valuable historical monument of the medieval states (the Volga Bulgaria, Golden Horde), preserving elements of their culture, ways of life and considerable impact they had in the 10th -15th centuries on the development of culture and architecture

Architectural monuments of this complex are the northernmost example of medieval Muslim architecture, as well as the unique sample of Bulgarian-Tatar architecture of mid-13th-14th centuries. The territory of the Bulgar historical and archaeological complex has the archaeological mark of the past which shows human presence from the middle of 1st millennium AD, an



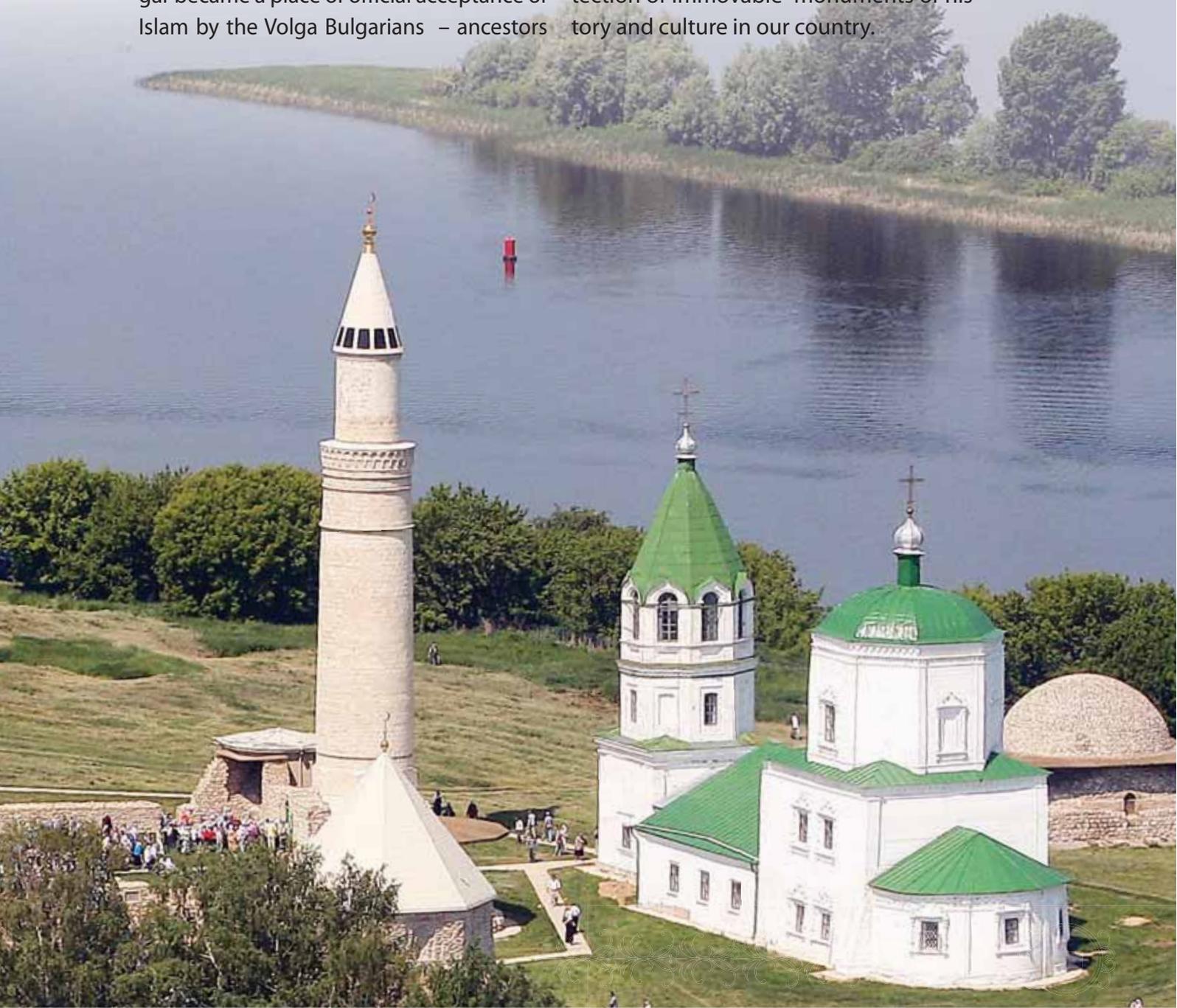


outstanding example of type of construction, the architectural and landscape ensemble illustrating some of the considerable periods in the history of mankind, an example of arrangement of people and territory settling. The earliest monuments date back to the mesolithic epoch. Around the natural boundary of Aga-market and the former Steppe lake, a series of monuments of an epoch of a neolith and bronze period are found. A number of finds concerns the period of early iron. In territory of the Bulgarian complex late Roman coins have been found at various times. Ancient Bulgar became a place of official acceptance of Islam by the Volga Bulgarians – ancestors

of the Kazan Tatars in the year 922. It is the center of cult worship, pilgrimage of Moslems to their relics.

Bulgar was the location of the first capital of Golden Horde and minting of the first Golden Horde's coins by Berke-khan in 1250s. The old city was one of the first places in the Russian empire, mentioned in connection with a problem of protection and preservation of monuments of history and culture at the state level.

Proof to that is the Decree of emperor Peter I about Bulgar, dated July, 2 (15), 1722 – one of the first documents on protection of immovable monuments of history and culture in our country.





OPERATIONAL HALL
RIVER STATION-MUSEUM



RIVER STATION
WITH MUSEUM FUNCTION



In 2010 by efforts of the Renaissance foundation, large-scale work on reconstruction and restoration began in Bolgar, together with building of new tourist and pilgrim platforms . At the same time, long-term work of Kazan archaeologists is going on. Scholars never tire of admiring the richest finds, telling the story of an ancient civilization.





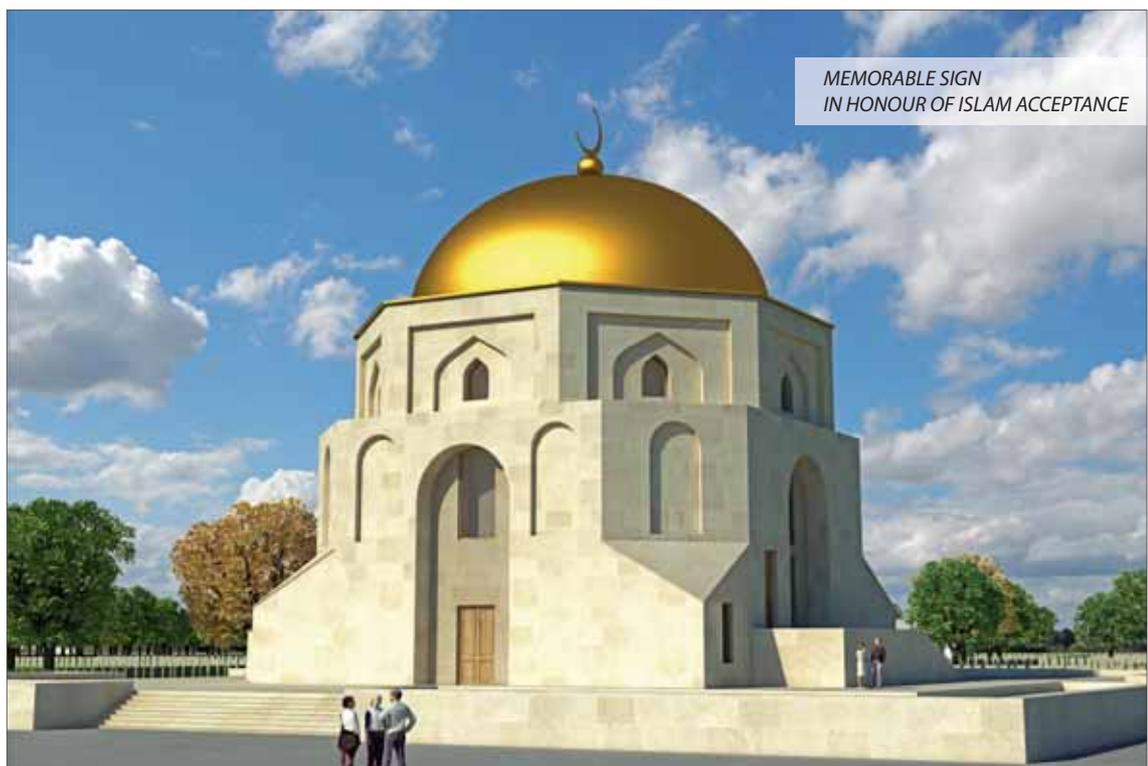
Majestic Bolgar will change even further in the nearest future. Travelers along the Volga will disembark at the river station, equipped by most modern technological standards and designed in the Bulgarian style. The large complex will include museums, trading pavilions, viewing points and walking terraces.

For Muslim pilgrims, all convenient services will be provided, including

residential tents and separate parking. A memorial will be constructed in Bolgar to honour the finding of faith.

Centuries of Muslim history will be commemorated in a majestic temple complex.

Here, in Bolgar, the young generation, and visitors of the 2013 Universiade in Kazan, can get acquainted with the history of Tatarstan's ancient land.



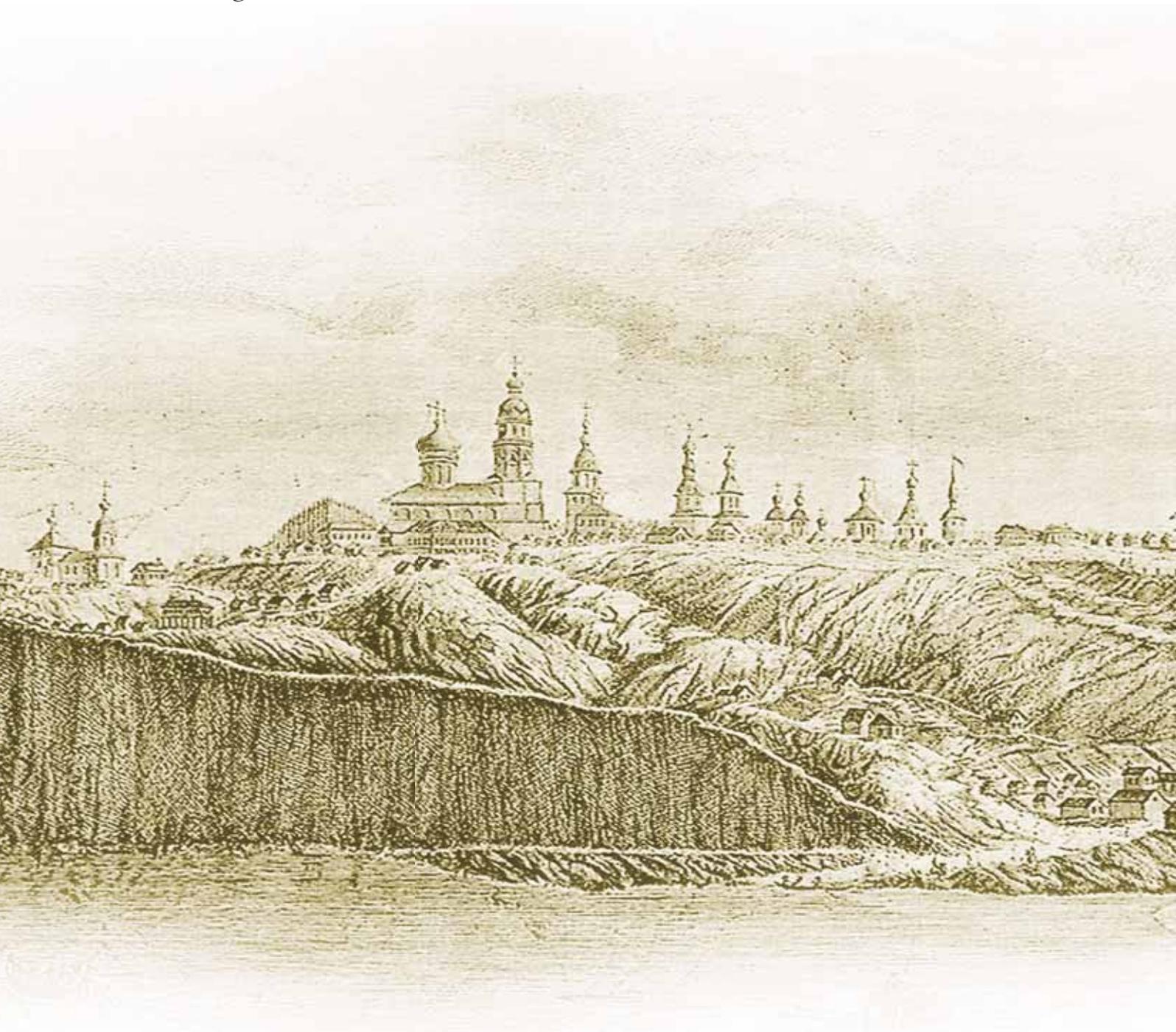
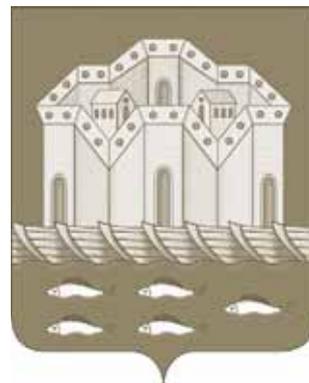
MEMORABLE SIGN
IN HONOUR OF ISLAM ACCEPTANCE







*Island-city
Sviyazhsk*



«The grand duke has ordered to build a city with wooden walls, towers, collars, beams and logs and mark all from top to bottom with assembly signs. Then this city has been disassembled, stored on rafts and sent down the Volga river, guarded by soldiers... This city is now occupied by Russian people and artillery and named Sviyazhsk»

Heinrich von Staden, «Notes about Moskovia»



«Quoth the merchants: If you please,
We have sailed the seven seas;
Peace reigns overseas, serene.
There, we saw this wondrous scene:
There's an island in the sea,
Shores as steep as steep can be;

Cheerless once, deserted, bare -
Nothing but an oak grew there.
Now it has a new-built city,
Stately mansions, gardens pretty,
Churches tall with domes of gold,
Fair and wondrous to behold.»

A.S. Pushkin,





*A*s known from his contemporaries, when Alexander Pushkin had seen the city of Sviyazhsk (and this was already after the composition of «The Tale of Tsar Saltan»), he was shaken, admitting to his companions that he saw exactly what he had imagined earlier - a fantasy

city on a wonderful island. Centuries have passed, but Sviyazhsk now still stronger reminds a fantasy island, being completely surrounded by water. It has a strong charm of its own, drawing visitors back again and again, to touch the past, and to think about the future.



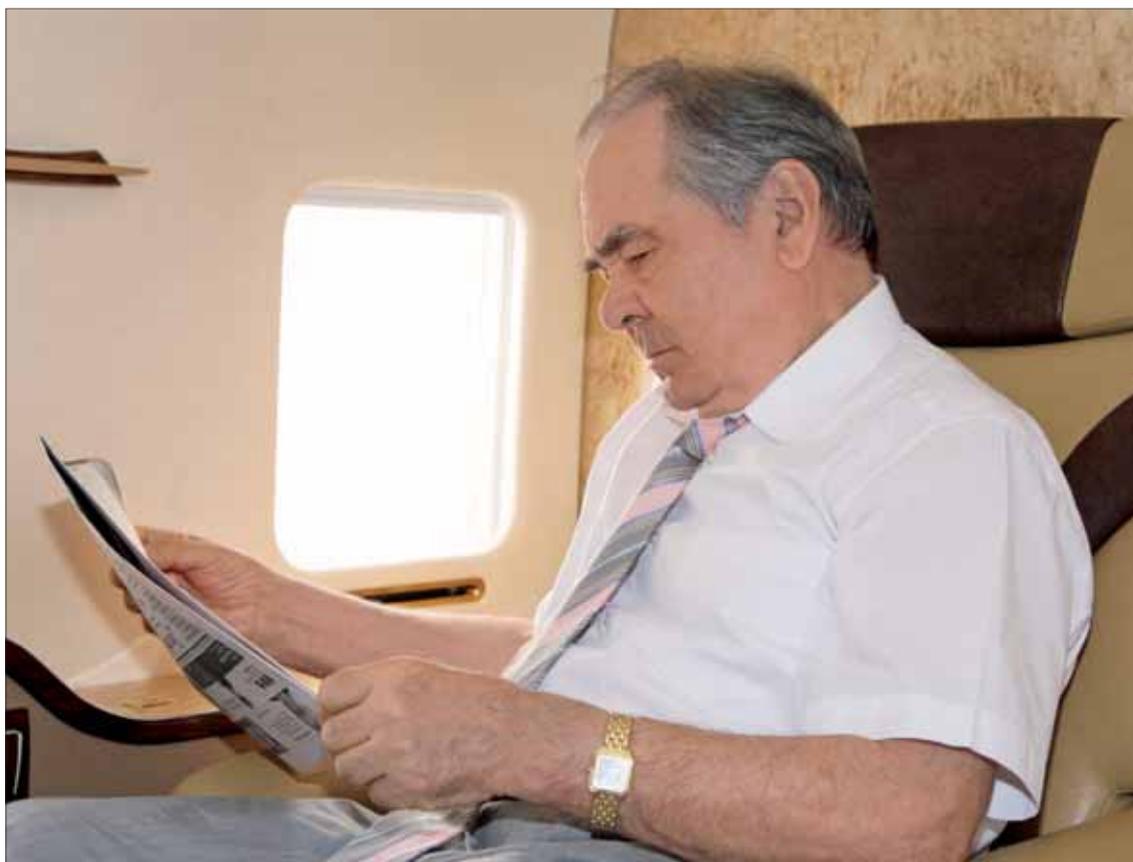


*P*ushkin was indeed right, «you can't find in this world» anything so «fair and wondrous» as the island city. There, the look of habitual things changes, refracting time and space. And the «time leap» happens, a usual phenomenon for this city, - streets which have kept imperial names, and wells, whence old men carry water, while talking on their cellphones.

Ask anybody, and they will tell you the history of the city. The islanders love their history.

Many interesting and unusual people live on the island now. For the recent years, many have been united by idea of revival of the Assumption monastery. Orthodox believers helped to restore the monastery as they could. The





«The revived historical monuments of Bolgar and Sviyazhsk should be the centers of a spiritual attraction of people at all times... Our joint noble work become adequately estimated contemporaries and descendants. I believe, if we undertook this, the success will come. We Will Do It!»

M. Shaymiev

monastery light is in the hearts of islanders and pilgrims which have deep, strong faith, adopting spiritual tradition of their ancestors.

Intelligentsia now forms a considerable part of the island's population, views of island inspire photographers, artists, poets and musicians. But not only beautiful landscapes attract travellers and modern artists.

Sviyazhsk preserves a special peace of natural beauty and Russian antiquity, it's not without reason that it has become a center of orthodox culture. Two roads lead from the town, one to Kazan, the other to Moscow. And it's deeply symbolic, too. The Moscow and Kazan legends are intertwined here.

The island-city founded in the middle of the 16th century had to play its own special part in the formation of the Russian Empire.





The city became a spearhead of geopolitical change on the Eurasian continent, and an outpost of the young Russian Empire.

Today on a tiny piece of land (it is possible to walk around the island in just an hour), 26 monuments of architecture of federal value are situated. All of them are masterpieces of old Russian Christian architecture.

In its size and strength the fortress didn't concede to Novgorod or Moscow Kremlin: walls 2,5 x 5 meters, 7 gates, 18 watch towers. 3 underground passages to the river bank. It is hard to believe, but the whole city was built in only 4 weeks!

In the middle of 16th century building in the city was started by an artel (team) of the Pskov masters, led by Postnik Yakovlev and his assistant Ivan Shiriay. Famous



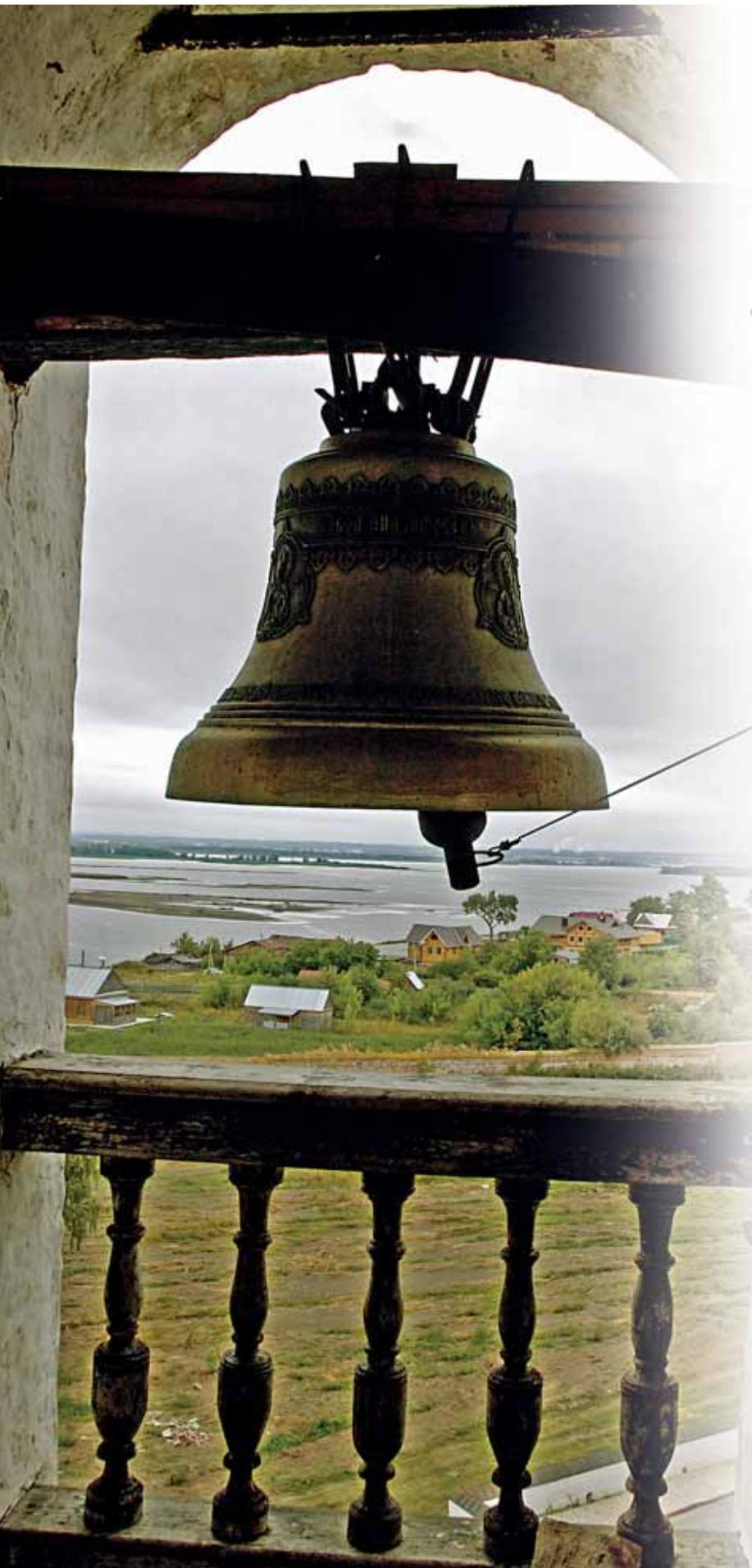


architects have begun to erect churches there immediately after the construction of the magnificent cathedral of the Annunciation in Kazan and the pride of the republic - the white stone walls of the Kazan Kremlin.

In the centuries to follow the island was considered the largest center of culture and Orthodoxy of the Volga region. The island, despite the years of stagnation, and

perhaps partly because of it, has kept the spirit of old times. The original wooden building still preserved in Sviyazhsk is the medieval Holy Trinity Church. Over time, many wooden temples in Sviyazhsk got a new stone «clothes» on the outside, and walls remained intact and survived the «wooden» century. The last mention of them was in 1703, when on his way «After the conquest of Kazan, the territory has





«After a capturing of Kazan, the territory has been divided into two districts - Kazan (a left bank of Volga) and Sviyazhsk (right bank), was managed by the Order of the Kazan palace. In 70-80th years of XVI century Sviyazhsk has served its purpose in suppression attacks of chirimisin's tribes. With disappearing of the Sviyazhsk fortress has lost meaning of the base area and became a colonization advanced post and Christianization on the attached territories. In the middle XVII-th century, with transfer of a part of military estate to Astrakhan, the population of Sviyazhiska it is sharply reduced, and in the beginning of a XVIII-th century because of decay the rests of strengthenings was disassembled.»





been divided into two districts - Kazan (commanding the left bank of Volga) and Sviyazhsk (the right bank), and the new dominion was managed by the Prikaz of the Kazan palace.

In 1570-80s, Sviyazhsk served its purpose in suppressing attacks of Cheremis (Mari) people. With the decay of the Sviyazhsk fortress, the town has lost its meaning as a military base and became an outpost for colonization and Christianization of the nearby lands. In the middle of the 17th century, with the transfer of a part of the town's garrison to Astrakhan, the population of Sviyazhsk was sharply reduced, and at the beginning of the 18th century whatever has remained of the fortifications was disassembled.»to Persia, Dutch painter Cornelius de

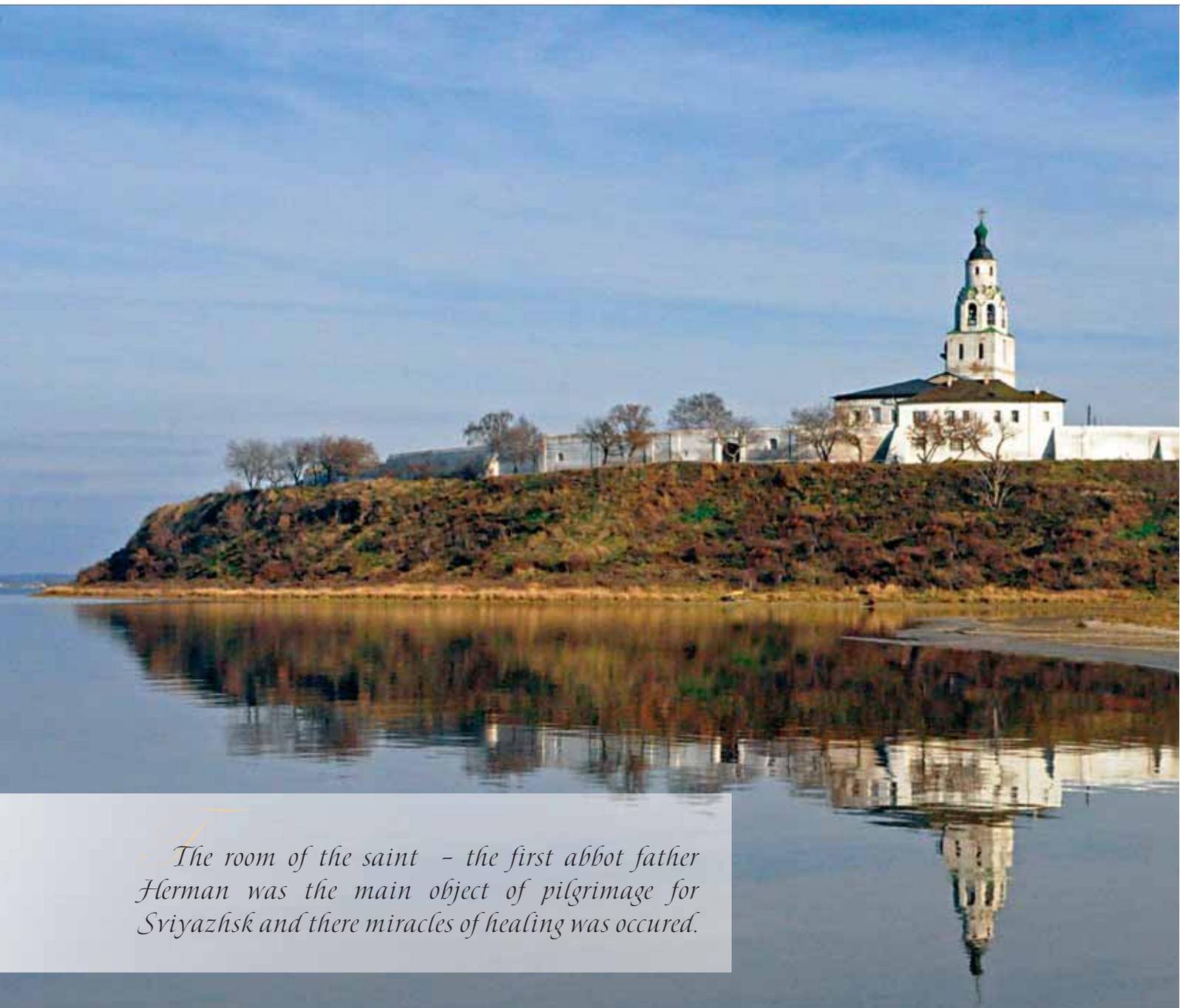
Bruin visited the city. He is also credited with the earliest surviving image of Sviyazhsk. In his notes, the Dutchman said that «the city lies on the mountain and has a kremlin. There are many stone churches and monasteries, but the walls and houses are made of wood». He published his description in 1711 in Amsterdam.

Approximately at the same time, the city was granted its own coat of arms, proudly depicting the image of the city sailing on a boat, in memory of how it was originally built.

Without any exaggeration, every stone in the city breathes history. And even if you accidentally stumble on the plain wooden peg sticking out of the ground, take a more careful look at it carefully – what if it is a «stranger» from the 16th century?...







The room of the saint - the first abbot father Herman was the main object of pilgrimage for Sviyazhsk and there miracles of healing was occurred.

*I*nvoluntary inhabitants of the island, the prisoners of the concentration camp located here on the monastery premises, in the terrible years of the 20th century, recalled how they heard sometimes wonderful singing in their cells. Perhaps it was the stranded soul of a monk praying about the holy monastery lying in ruins and its unfortunate prisoners...

Many long years the town was one of the four transit points of the Siberian Road, the bitterness of which, judging by legends, last Kazan queen Soyembike felt. Decembrists, Herzen, Radishchev were among the involuntary visitors of Sviyazhsk...







At the beginning of the 20th century, the construction of a huge cathedral in honour of the «All Grieving Pleasure» Icon of the Theotokos became a blessing on St John the Baptist nunnery in Sviyazhsk. Just like in Diveevo, there was a blossoming before destruction. The cathedral is built in the

Russian-Byzantine style. On the island, it is second in height after the Assumption monastery belltower (43 metres). The main dome - Byzantine, with a ring of 16 windows, the design of its layout and appearance of the temple took after the cathedral of St. Sophia in Constantinople.

A creation of well-known Kazan architect Malinovsky, the cathedral was the last great project of Kallist, the nunnery's Mother Superior, she is buried in the crypt underneath the cathedral. A surprising coincidence can be seen in that this cathedral and the nearby St. Sergius's church were both constructed shortly before the time of disasters, the former before the Russian Revolution, the latter before the Time of Troubles in the early 17th century. The image of the Lord Sabaoth with severe grief looks 30 meters down from the huge dome on those entering the temple. The dome and the arches send back bitter echoes of any steps in the emptiness of the church. The acoustics in the cathedral is magnificent, just as in any other church designed by F. Malinovsky.





*Why it is so important to preserve
and revive Iriyazhsk?*

*T*he island-city is a unique example of Old Russian wooden town-planning art, (assembled in advance in the woods of Uglich 800 km from its later location) wooden buildings and constructions. If we trust the chronicles, 75 thousand people have built the fortress in just 24 days. So for the pace of construction in old times, there was no competitors.

The island still has the remains of wooden and stone constructions of defensive, public, cult, residential and economic areas (the Kremlin walls and fortifications, tenements, water and sewage system, old roads, old estates, parish churches, and monasteries), objects of material and spiritual culture of Russian people of mid-16th century.

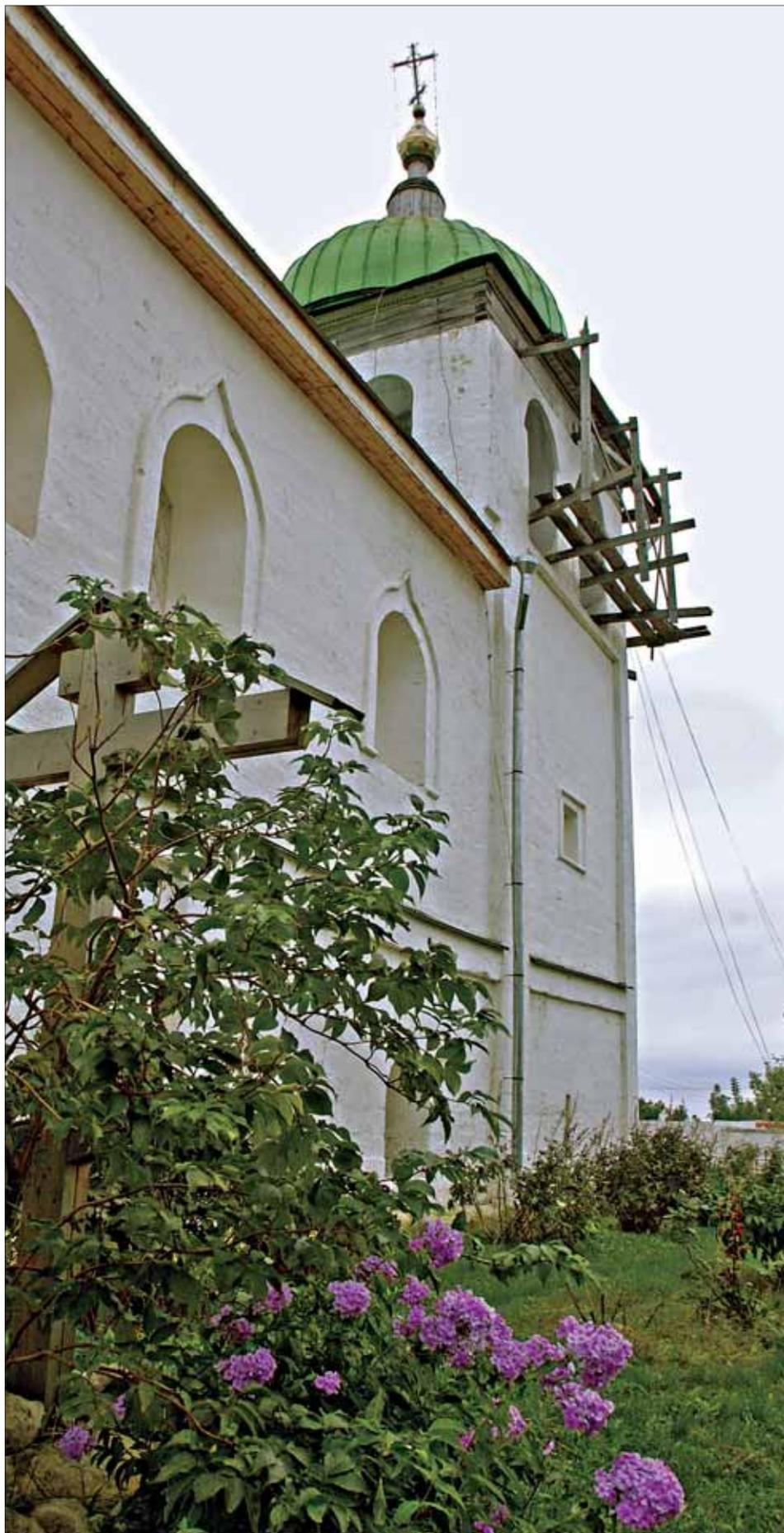


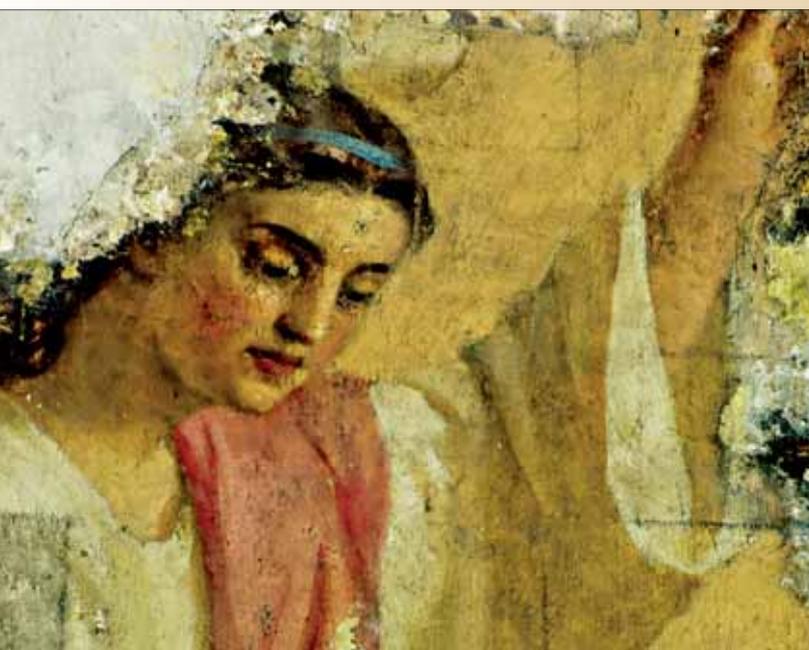


The cultural layer of the historic town Sviyazhsk is of great interest as a source of objective information about the level of spiritual, social, artistic, technological and scientific achievements of the 16th century. Sviyazhsk is unique from the standpoint of modern archeology due to the availability of the cultural layer because of the low density of development, preservation of landscape and soil characteristics in the town.

Murals of Sviyazhsk Assumption Cathedral (1080 sq.m.) are a unique ensemble of wall painting of the reign Ivan the Terrible, which has survived to our time and one of the most complete mural cycles, which has no full analogs in the manner of writing and the color among any of the ancient schools of fresco painting.

Restorers have already worked with these invaluable gifts of history. In the 17th century, a dining hall has been attached to the cathedral, a century later the dome was rebuilt, and the temple crowned with twelve figures. The lac silhouette of the Assumption Cathedral can be seen in the engravings of Sviyazhsk, done at the end of the 18th century. But this work must be continued...





«The painting of the Uspensky cathedral is dated roughly in 1561. The author is unknown. Because of bad safety of monuments of XVI century it is difficult to find analogies to frescos of the Uspensky cathedral that puts this original creation abreast curiosities of Old Russian art».

V. Nemptinova





A Kazan historian A.Roshchektaev wrote about the temple, «the cathedral is especially beautiful when seen from its altar part. Any old temple of Novgorod or Pskov could envy its three magnificent semicircular apses. The combination of the powerful stone semi-circles, with a typical Pskov-Novgorod carving on them, creates a surprising harmony of severity and elegance.

An open gallery-arcade on the southern and northern sides also gives the church an elegant and mysterious appearance. In the period before Peter the Great, the tradition of twin galleries was very common for Russian architecture. They have a special ancient atmosphere. All the best in the Russian architecture of 16th - 17th centuries has been spontaneously incorporated into the shape of this extraordinary temple-monument of prelate Herman».







*T*he overgilded iconostasis of the Assumption cathedral is one of few preserved carved iconostases of the 18th century. But a special miracle are the murals: gold and scarlet, emerald and sky-blue «stone» colors (old artists used special types of paint). Scholars know that a full cycle of murals of that period is extraordinary rare. Sviyazhsk's murals are admired far beyond Russia.





R. Safiullin

Sviyazhsk is a unique historical and cultural monument, a national treasure throughout Russia, accumulating four and a half centuries of cultural heritage. But the present-day island town has some historical and cultural layers, which date back long before the appearance of Ivan the Terrible. The river Sviyaga is a unique

phenomenon in itself, surviving from pre-historic times. Not everyone knows that the river Sviyaga starts in the territory of the Ulyanovsk oblast, which is located down the Volga River from Kazan, and flows into the Volga near Sviyazhsk located upstream the Volga. Isn't it a mystery for tourists?





Passing through the streets and squares Sviyazhsk, you can imagine yourself a guest of a typical provincial town with its shops, mansions. Without any exaggeration it is possible to call Sviyazhsk a pearl of the Volga region.

Sviyazhsk occupies the top of the former Round Mountain, now turned into a oval, slightly elongated in the south-west to north-east (approximately 900 meters in diameter) hill. Domes of the churches of the city can already be seen from the river, because of the tiny size of the island. It is impossible to lose your way in the city. In Soviet times Sviyazhsk was a small village, and thus escaped the renaming of streets, so historical names are preserved here. The Main Street - Uspensky crosses the island from the north-east to south-west, parallel to it run Trinity street (south) and St. Nicholas street (north), and almost in the middle of the island perpendicular to them is St. Alexander street.

The most considerable sights of Sviyazhsk are the Assumption Monastery and St. John the Baptist Nunnery (now united in a single monastery). Both are located in the western part of island and they are well visible from the water when a vessel is approaching from Kazan city.

Sviyazhsk become a place connected with the presence there of famous persons of the Russian and world history: Ivan the Terrible, Queen Suuyumbeki, St. Herman of Sviyazhsk (canonized in 1595 after the discovery of his relics), Empress Catherine II, Emperors Pavel I, Alexander I and Nicholas I, G.R. Derzhavin, A.S. Pushkin, F.I. Dostoevsky, L.N. Tolstoy and many others.







*T*he ensemble of the former city of the Sviyazhsk is of value as the largest fortified city of XVI century. The island complex has kept the size and the form of the initial town-planning idea. It is unique that initial constructions of the city – the

wooden Trinity church (1551), St. Nicholas church (1556) and the Assumption cathedral (1560) have been preserved. It is surprising that they haven't even undergone any influences of regional town-planning and architectural traditions.

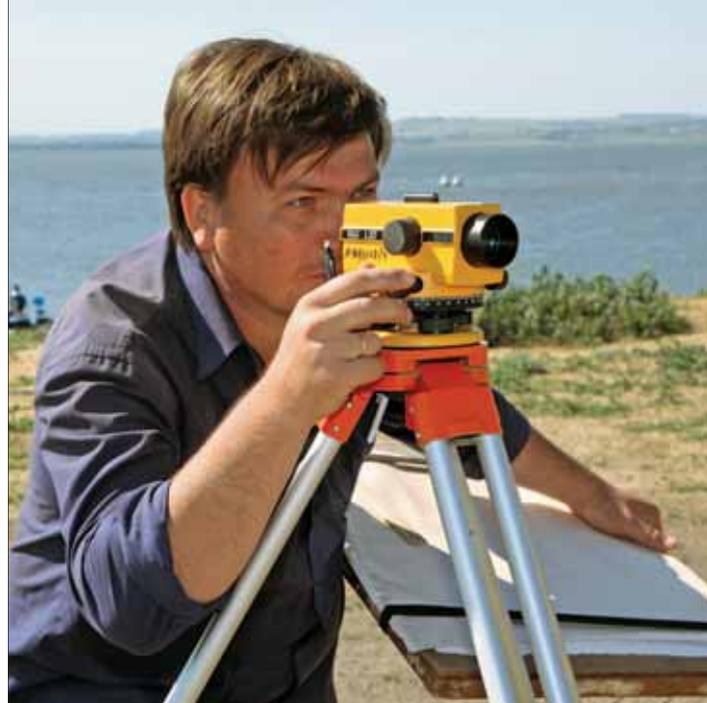




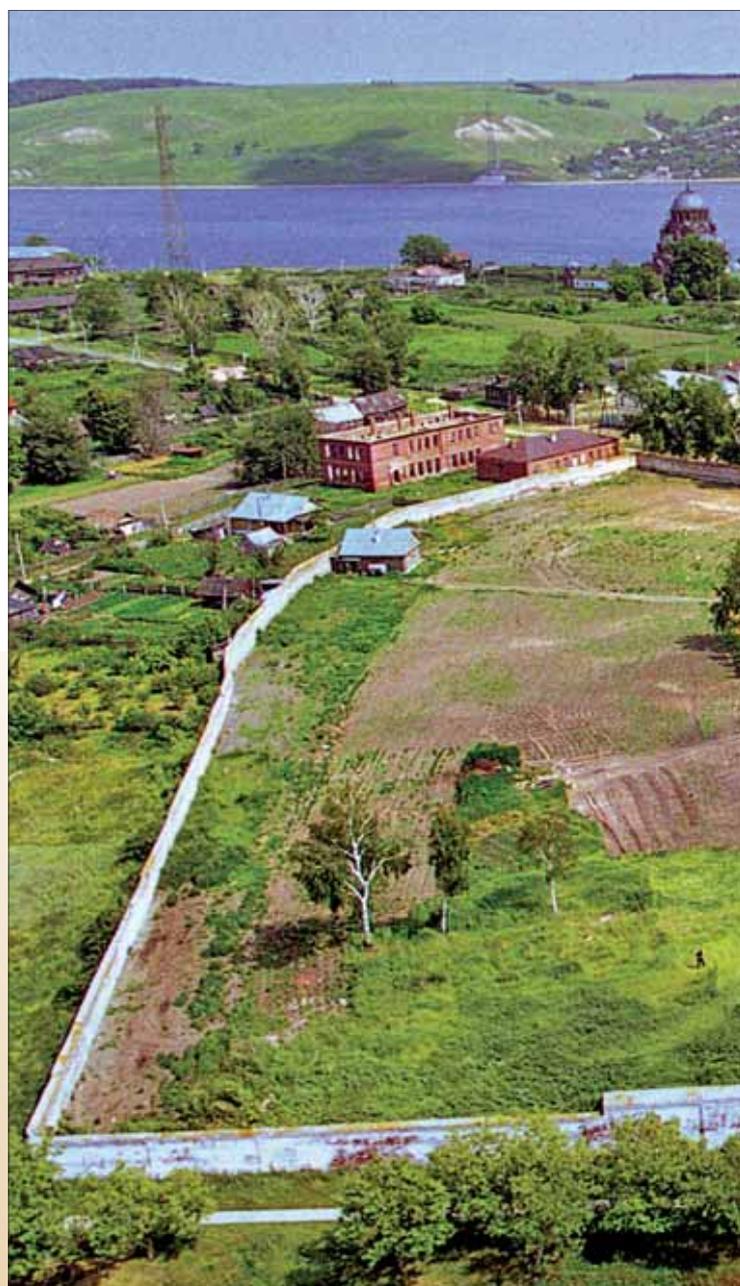
The Assumption Monastery deserves a separate page in the story of the island. Each monastery of Kazan diocese has its face and its mission, defined by God and history. But the keys to the gates of time are kept by the monastery of Sviyazhsk. For it is through love believers feel to their holy sites, that our contemporaries can look deep into centuries.

And today, as many centuries ago, from the height of the bell tower of St. Nicholas Church you can admire the view of the river surface. In general, centuries-old history of the wonderful island is a living testimony of history of the society in which the relation of the authorities and common citizens to traditions of their ancestors was established and reflected.





The presence of the Renaissance Foundation on the island is a symbol of our time. Today the foundation makes every possible effort to preserve the historical curiosities and cultural values of the ancient city for future generations.



«Today's the Bolgar and the Sviyazhsk city - are living witnesses of past days. Much need to equip here, need to create normal conditions for the people, to restore monuments, to make them accessible to tourists, a stream that is growing today. All over the world working like that.»

M. Shaymiev







«*Everything what will be done here, will be done qualitatively. I believe that this place will be known to all Russia, the whole world that will come here to touch history, culture, spirituality.*»

M. Shaymiev







THE MAIN FACADE OF RIVER STATION



In the summer of 2010, with the help from the Renaissance foundation, a time of great changes began in Sviyazhsk. The wondrous island was reborn. Construction began immediately on «all fronts.» On the bank of Sviyaga a dam was built, connecting the island with the mainland. The station square was cleared up and the building of the river station erected.



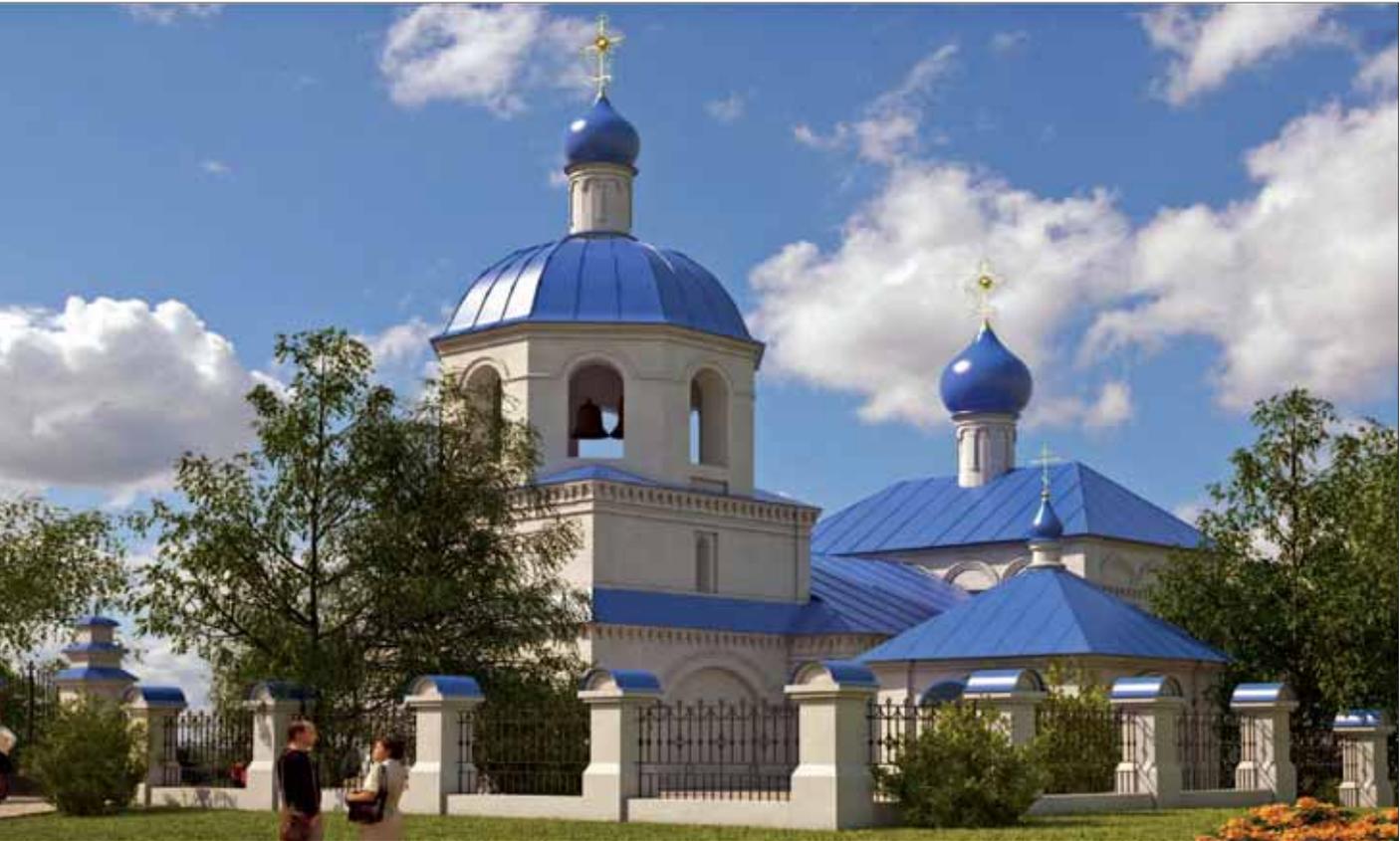


All the temples of the monastery are currently being reconstructed.

Together with the builders, archaeologists came to the island to do excavations. Very soon, a torrent of tourists and pilgrims will follow. Sviyazhsk will be the largest cultural and historical center of the Volga region.

The island will not just mindlessly and quickly overcome the ravages of time and rebuild historical





monuments of architecture. The motto of restorers is to preserve historical charm..

Best services will be provided for travelers and visitors: they will disembark at the modern port, live in a hotel, and driven around the island's cozy ancient small streets in horse-drawn vehicles.



THE MAIN FACADE OF THE STABLES





B By the plan worked out by the Foundation, many sharp social and housing problems of the islanders will also be solved. The local people – be they artists, fishermen, or monks - are not only live carriers of traditions, cultures and stories, but also citizens of Tatarstan, entitled to the same amount of social and economic rights as everybody else in the republic.



COURTYARD



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CULTURAL HERITAGE OF TATARSTAN

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Special photography by Mikhail Kozlovsky, Albert Takhaviev
Release coordinator: Maxim Andreev
Editor: Julia Andreeva
Layout Design: Alexander Derevenskov
Project material courtesy of GUP Tatinvestgrazhdanproekt

photographs courtesy of Rafael Makhmutov, Director of the Sh.Mardjani
Institute of History Museum with materials from the archive of Sviyazhsk Monastery
and ZAMAN publishing house



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