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**ISLAM AND EMPIRE OBSERVED:
MUSLIMS IN THE VOLGA-URAL REGION
AFTER THE 1905 REVOLUTION**

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Clifford Geertz once said that in the comparative study of religion, we must distinguish between a religious attitude toward experience and the sorts of social apparatus that have customarily been associated with supporting such an attitude. Faith is sustained in this world by symbolic forms and social arrangements. What a given religion is – its specific content – is embodied in the images and metaphors its adherents use to characterize reality. A religion's historical course rests upon the institutions that render these images and metaphors available to those who thus employ them.¹

Recent historiography of the Russian Empire highlights the interaction between a religion and its believers on the one hand, and the imperial principle of the predominance of Orthodoxy and temporal power on the other.² As for the eastern frontier of European Russia, two works deserve particular attention. Paul Werth explored what the assignment of one or another religion by the state and the belonging of the people to one or another religion could mean for society and the rulers of multi-national and multi-confessional societies.³ Charles Steinwedel, who is interested in the ethnic and national organization of the empire, considers politics within a state to be a process of interaction and competition that generates its own type of culture.⁴

¹ Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia* (New Haven and London, 1968), pp. 2-3.

² Robert Geraci and Michael Khodarkovsky, eds., *Of Religion and Empire: Missions, Conversion, and Tolerance in Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca, London, 2001).

³ Paul W. Werth, *At the Margins of Orthodoxy: Mission, Governance, and Confessional Politics in Russia's Volga-Kama Region, 1827-1905* (Ithaca, London, 2002).

⁴ Charles Steinwedel, "Invisible Threads of Empire: State, Religion, and Ethnicity in Tsarist

This chapter aims to detect the specific content of Islam that Volga-Ural Muslims visualized in the social and political changes caused by the 1905 Revolution. The events of 1905 demonstrated to the central government that the construction of a powerful state depended on the subjects' active participation in civic life and the support of the people, which signaled the transformation of the empire into a national state (if not a nation) with direct rule of a population more equal in law.⁵ As Geertz tells us, the values one holds are grounded in the inherent structure of reality;⁶ thus, my analysis also concentrates on the interaction between the Muslims' understanding of Islam and the reality that appeared after the revolution.

Indeed, it was the mutual relationship with the imperial institutions that molded the Volga-Ural Muslims' concept of Islam and identification inside the empire. Allen Frank studied the historiography that had popularized the idea of a common Bulghar heritage for them. His interpretation of *Tawārīkh-i Bulghāriyya* shows that the new political relationship between the state and the local religious scholars, 'ulamā', which had begun in the reign of Catherine II, encouraged the identification of the Muslim community with the act of conversion to Islam in Bulghar. The geographical imagination of Bulghar corresponded to the jurisdiction of the Orenburg Spiritual Assembly, which had been established in 1788 in Ufa to mobilize the religious leaders for the state control of the Muslim population. This served to distinguish the community from other Muslim communities both within and outside the empire.⁷

The understanding of the Spiritual Assembly as a centre of the community, *millat*, is shared by Aidar Khabutdinov and Christian Noack. However, Khabutdinov, in spite of his rich knowledge of the interaction with the state since the end of the eighteenth century, regards the religious identity simply as a "medieval" proto-nationalism that was replaced by a "modern" Tatar nationalism in the process of the Jadid movement at the beginning of the twentieth century. His illustration

Bashkiria, 1773-1917" (Ph.D diss., Columbia University, 1999), p. 12.

⁵ Steinwedel, "Invisible Threads of Empire," pp. 4-6, 290-294.

⁶ Geertz, *Islam Observed*, p. 97.

⁷ Allen Frank, *Islamic Historiography and 'Bulghar' Identity among the Tatars and Bashkirs of Russia* (Leiden; Boston; Köln, 1998), pp. 61-62, 80-81, 85-86.

especially of Jadidism and Qadimism specifies how the model of Tatar nation-building has become a substitute for the Soviet evolutionist model of history.⁸ Criticizing this idea, Noack emphasizes that the Muslim identity provided the people with plausible frameworks of traditions, customs, and idioms that enabled them to cope with different stages of political development in the empire. While the Muslims in the era of the Great Reforms demanded the restoration of the confessional status quo ante, the 1905 Revolution challenged this established concept of deliberate self-isolation. Being a Muslim no longer meant mere self-affirmation as part of a stable community, but demanded social mobilization of the individual for the sake of the whole community.⁹

Questioning the cliché of the dichotomy between Jadidists and Qadimists in the historiography, Stéphane Dudoignon suggests that it be located in the concrete reality of the Russian Empire. He discovered political wrangling over the division of capital within *maḥallas*, parishes formed around the Friday mosque. Utilizing basically Muslim publications, he saw regional economic conditions as the crux of the politics inside the Muslim communities. The development of commercial and industrial activities among Muslims around the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries exacerbated the confrontation between the two parties especially in cities. Whereas Jadidists in need of their patrons welcomed the individual accumulation of property, Qadimists persisted in the communal redistribution of capital for fear of the subdivision of the *maḥallas*.¹⁰

⁸ A. Iu. Khabutdinov, *Millet Orenburgskogo Dukhovnogo Sobraniia v kontse XVIII- XIX vekakh* (Kazan, 2000), pp. 5, 145, and 158-159; idem, *Formirovanie natsii i osnovnye napravleniia razvitiia tatarskogo obshchestva v kontse XVIII – nachale XX vekov* (Kazan, 2001), pp. 32-33, 179-180, and 190.

⁹ Christian Noack, "State Policy and its Impact on the Formation of a Muslim Identity in the Volga-Urals," in *Islam in Politics in Russia and Central Asia (Early Eighteenth to Late Twentieth Centuries)*, ed. Stéphane A. Dudoignon and Komatsu Hisao (London, New York, 2001), pp. 4, 12-14, 19, 25.

¹⁰ Stéphane A. Dudoignon, "Qu'est-ce que la "Qadimiya"? Éléments pour une sociologie du traditionalisme musulman, en Islam de Russie et en Transoxiane (au tournant des XIXe et XXe siècles)," in *L'Islam de Russie*, ed. S. A. Dudoignon, D. Ishaqov, R. Mōhāmmātshin (Paris, 1997), pp. 207-225; idem, "Status, Strategies and Discourses of a Muslim 'Clergy' under a Christian Law: Polemics about the Collection of the *Zakāt* in Late Imperial Russia" in *Islam in Politics*, ed. Dudoignon and Komatsu, pp. 43-73.

Robert Crews, more directly interested in the interpenetration of the state and the Muslim communities, demonstrated the politics concerning “Islamic orthodoxy” defined by the support of the state. In mobilizing police power in practice, the state’s commitment to the interpretation of Islam made imperial officials and institutions pivotal actors in intra-communal struggles among Muslims over religious authority and orthodoxy. The Muslim clergy was charged with the task of regulating, according to Islamic and imperial law, family, marriage, divorce, inheritance and relations between parents and children. State officials reasoned that order, morality and discipline in the everyday life of the family contributed to the solidity of the empire as a whole¹¹. The officials also looked to lay members of local Muslim parishes as potential allies in regulating and disciplining a Muslim clergy. Muslims translated disputes about Islamic law, doctrine, ritual, and behaviour into terms that permitted the intervention of the imperial authorities. There emerged a specific legal consciousness among Muslims; they saw imperial law as well as state institutions and officialdom as a positive means of fulfilling God’s command.¹²

I have reviewed the preceding works in terms of what the imperial governance meant for the Muslim subjects. Since the manner of governance is inseparable from the nature of a regime, we must ask what kind of regime was born from the 1905 Revolution. Although the term “liberalism” is usually utilized to characterize the period, it fails to identify the specific functions of “liberalism” in the concrete context of the Muslim as well as the Russian society. That liberal ideas in Russia began to spread when the tsarist regime had not yet lost its ability to conduct reforms “from above” is generally agreed upon. Liberals strove to utilize the creative potential of the regime, which made “Russian liberalism” more conservative and monarchical than the western European

¹¹ In general, due to the inadequacies of the Russian legal system, the security police functioned as the chief arbitrator between husbands, wives, and children. Dominic Lieven, “The Security Police, Civil Rights, and the Fate of the Russian Empire, 1855-1917,” in *Civil Rights in Imperial Russia*, ed. Olga Crisp and Linda Edmondson (Oxford, 1989), p. 239.

¹² Robert Crews, “Allies in God’s Command: Muslim Communities and the State in Imperial Russia” (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1999); idem, “Empire and the Confessional State: Islam and Religious Politics in Nineteenth-Century Russia,” *The American Historical Review* 108:1 (2003), pp. 50-83.

model. However, most Russian authors continue in the following way: since the individual, who should have served as the buttress of liberalism, was “swallowed up” by both the state and the peasant communes, “Russian liberalism” remained only an idea in a narrow circle of intellectuals; it did not succeed in becoming a line of action for a wide range of sociopolitical groups.¹³

The negative description of “Russian liberalism” also defines the main idea of works on “Muslim liberalism.” Larisa Iamaeva admitted that the social stratum on which Muslim liberalism depended was limited to the Tatar intellectuals from the nobility, the religious men and partly the merchants. The retention of the social and mental “traditionalism,” that is, a “stable” religious consciousness and a collective psychology of *mahalla* prevented liberal ideas from finding supporters among the Muslims. She attributed this failure to the “incompleteness” of the Islamic reformation, which she thought should have emancipated the individual from “traditionalism” through *ijtihād*, an individual judgment of God’s command.¹⁴

However, it is worthwhile heeding how interested the popular masses were in the civil rights issue, “each with its own axe to grind.”¹⁵ The law of April 17, 1905, which revealed the government’s intention to review the existing Muslim administration, did not leave religious consciousness “stable;” the law served as a powerful spur to individual and communal activities aiming at the satisfaction of everyday religious needs.¹⁶ Iamaeva’s argument is similar to the “national” discourses of the secular intellectuals, who could not appreciate the logic of the “Mus-

¹³ V. V. Shalokhaev, “Russkii liberalizm kak istoriograficheskaja i istoriosofskaia problema,” *Voprosy istorii* 4 (1998), pp. 31-34, 36-38.

¹⁴ L. A. Iamaeva, *Musul'manskii liberalizm nachala XX veka kak obshchestvenno-politicheskoe dvizhenie* (Ufa, 2002), pp. 6, 116, 131-132, 257.

¹⁵ Linda Edmondson, “Was there a Movement for Civil Rights in Russia in 1905?” in Crisp and Edmondson, *Civil Rights...*, pp. 269, 282-283.

¹⁶ Andrew Verner suggests that Russian peasants’ petitions be seen as instruments for negotiation with actors both outside and inside their communes. This is instructive to the case of Volga-Ural Muslims, who were involved in the petition campaign more energetically than any other Muslims of the empire. Andrew Verner, “Discursive Strategies in the 1905 Revolution: Peasant Petitions from Vladimir Province,” *The Russian Review* 54:1 (1995), pp. 65-90.

lim" movement under the new regime.¹⁷ However "traditional" and "religious" it may look, it can be more positively evaluated as Muslims' reaction to and accommodation with "the epoch of liberalism".

In the pages that follow I describe how Islam in the Volga-Ural region and the nature of the new regime were related to each other. After the revolution, while the anxiety concerning defence of the empire's integrity occupied the minds of state officials, they were obliged to listen to the voices of the Muslim citizens, according to the principle of religious toleration. Taking advantage of the existing order, the Muslims strove to gain legal recognition for their requirements and to give them theological foundation. Especially in regard to daily concrete needs of faith, there was much room for negotiation with the government.¹⁸

Islam is a discursive tradition through which individual potentialities are realized by the designation of idioms, customs, rituals and symbols as Islamic to realize their potentialities. The boundary between what is considered Islamic or non-Islamic is not fixed by Islam, but rather constantly reinterpreted by Muslims themselves¹⁹. The specific nature of Islam in the Volga-Ural region consisted of the impossibility for both the Muslims and the temporal bureaucrats to divide the implementation of *shari'a* and the imperial administration. The following is one of the demands sent by the Kazan Muslims to Sergei Witte at the beginning of 1905:

"Our religious rigidity consists of the smallest deviation from the rules of the *shari'a* resulting in a grave sin for each true believer. In order to eliminate all temptations to sin (...), it is necessary to legislate secularly as well, so that all Islam-believers' rights concerning marriage, family and inheritance be regulated only by our religious law."²⁰

¹⁷ See my paper, "Predstavlenie Dzh. Validova o poniatii 'natsiia', *millät* posle Pervoi Rossiiskoi revolutsii," *Sbornik materialov itogovikh konferentsii molodykh uchenykh Instituta istorii imeni Sh.Mardzhani Akademii nauk RT za 2003-2004 gody* (Kazan, 2004), pp. 222-228.

¹⁸ This was especially the case with the financial management of *maḥalla*. See my "Molding the Muslim Community through the Tsarist Administration: Maḥalla under the Jurisdiction of the Orenburg Mohammedan Spiritual Assembly after 1905," *Acta Slavica Iaponica* 23 (2006), pp. 115-118.

¹⁹ M. Hakan Yavuz, "The Patterns of Political Islamic Identity: Dynamics of National and Transnational Loyalties and Identities," *Central Asian Survey* 14:3 (1995), pp. 341, 343.

²⁰ Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv (hereafter, RGIA), f. 821 (Departament dukhovnykh del inostrannykh isповedanii), op. 8, d. 631, l. 12.

In a report presented to the Special Conference on Muslim-Sunnite issues in 1906, even referring to a Quranic imperative to obey God, the Prophet and rulers,²¹ V. P. Cherevenskii wrote:

“The Russian governmental institutions also have to subject the resolutions (of the Muslim Spiritual Directorates – *N.N.*) to revision on the basis of the rules of the *Qur’ān* and *shari’a*. (...) It is not admissible in the order of the state administration that the supreme authority is deprived of the opportunity to observe the exact implementation (...) of Islamic law.”²²

A REVIVAL OF ISLAM

The law of April 17 and the Manifesto of October 17 in 1905, which promised freedom of worship and popular participation in the parliament, called forth Muslims’ aspiration for a pious life and the right to realize it. The Muslims, on the one hand, increasingly began to count on the Spiritual Assembly for its active arbitration of the religious disputes in *mahallas*. On the other hand, they tried to utilize the Muslim faction in the State Duma in order to secure their rights in a political way. The interpenetration of consciousness on faith and rights constituted a unique form of Islamic revival among the Volga-Ural Muslims.

The question of holidays in Kazan is one of the instructive proofs of the indivisible relationship between political and religious consciousness. In order to gain legal recognition of the right to hold Islamic holidays, the Kazan Muslims could rely on the City councillors from the coreligionists and the Muslim faction in the State Duma. As the quarrel intensified within the City Duma and in the streets, Russian residents often complained that while Muslims had opened their shops on Fridays before 1905, after freedom of worship, they began to insist on Fridays of rest, intending to earn on Sundays in place of Russians.²³ In 1914, when the City Duma, despite the opposition of the Muslim councillors, approved a municipal regulation that prohibited commercial activities on Sundays, a Kazan merchant, ‘Abd al-Raḥman Qūshāif made an appeal

²¹ *Qur’ān* (Cairo edition), 4th chapter, 59th verse.

²² RGIA, f. 1276 (Sovet Ministrov), op. 2, d. 593, l. 137.

²³ *Kamsko-Volzhskaiia rech’*, 8 January 1914; *Kazanskii telegraf*, 12 January 1914.

to the Muslim deputies of the State Duma for negotiations with the Ministry of the Interior. This effort resulted in the ministry's direction to cancel the municipal regulation.²⁴

The religious meaning of the question was also important for imperial governance, as it was an essential criterion as to whether the Russian Empire was *Dār al-Ḥarb*, the Abode of War, or *Dār al-Islām*, the Abode of Islam. Some labelled their homeland as *Dār al-Ḥarb*, pointing out that observance of holidays depended on the permission of the "infidel governors."²⁵ Another religious aspect was the Muslims' desire for the correct definition of holidays according to Islamic law. The *shari'a* order that the first thin crescent moon be observed by the naked eye made room for differences between observers. These differences were often caused by competition over religious authority among religious scholars. Some even thought it expedient to calculate months on the basis of observatory's data. While Muslims hoped that the Spiritual Assembly would actively involve itself in standardizing the Hegira calendar, voices of the Muslim press began to surpass Ufa's authority after 1905.²⁶

The multiplication of imams at the beginning of the twentieth century logically resulted from the development of Muslim capitalism and the patronage of community institutions in the framework of a specific Christian domination, which Dudoignon calls modernization through re-Islamization.²⁷ Assisted also by the manifestation of the toleration of faiths, an increasing number of aspiring mullahs made the journey to Ufa for the examination and to obtain a certificate of the Spiritual Assembly. In this trend, there were many aspiring teachers, *mu'allims*, who finished school under a new method, *uṣūl-i jadīd*. Since these schools did not have an official right to issue the certificate, inspectors of people's schools could force the teachers to leave and shut the schools down. The situation was all the worse because the authori-

²⁴ *Zhurnaly Kazanskoi gorodskoi dumy i doklady Upravy za 1914* (Kazan, 1914); *Yuldiz*, 13 August 1914, p. 4.

²⁵ *Din wa Ma'ishat* 11 (1912), p. 164.

²⁶ There was heated controversy between two Kazan Muslim newspapers in 1914; while *Yuldiz* supported a literal application of *shari'a*, *Qūyāsh* insisted on the validity of the "scientific" solution in terms of *shari'a*.

²⁷ Dudoignon, "Status, Strategies and Discourses," pp. 60-65, 71-73.

ties suspected that the existing system of the Assembly's examination contributed to the consolidation of the imperial Muslim population, thereby its "Tatarization."²⁸

In February 1910, Muslims in Ufa heard that the examination of *mu'allims* would be prohibited. Asking for an explanation of the Spiritual Assembly, they claimed that until then, it had issued the certificates as the sole Muslim institution acknowledged by the government. They demanded that the examination continue in accordance with the religion, *dīn*, and the legal order, *nizām-i qānūn*.²⁹ In general, the desire of the Muslims was so strong that the Muslim faction of the State Duma in 1914 prepared a bill on the right of the Spiritual Assembly to issue the certificate to teachers.³⁰

The increase in the number of imams was followed by the reinforcement of building mosques, which disturbed both the Orthodox and secular authorities. The situation became all the more serious after the law of April 17, because the "apostasy" of baptized Tatars and pagans in favour of Islam was regarded as being a result of their "Tatarization" and "Islamization."³¹ Since the law banned the mosque from tempting baptized Tatars, local missionaries thought it essential that the Orthodox authorities intervene in the construction of mosques, although this had been abandoned by the ukase of June 17, 1773.³²

The law of April 17 granted the right of exclusion from Orthodoxy to those who were ascribed as Orthodox, but who in reality confessed a non-Christian faith to which they themselves or their ancestors had belonged before their adherence to the Orthodoxy. The state wanted a controlled transfer of incorrectly ascribed religious populations. Thus, the new order represented an opportunity for church and state to reiniti-

²⁸ A. Arsharuni, "Iz istorii natsional'noi politiki tsarizma," *Krasnyi arkhiv* 35 (1929), pp. 111-112.

²⁹ Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv Respubliki Bashkortostan (hereafter, TsGIA RB), f. I-295 (Orenburgskoe Magometanskoe Dukhovnoe Sobranie), op. 11, d. 878, n. p. The petition is dated April 1, 1910 and written in *Türki*.

³⁰ L. A. Iamaeva, ed., *Musul'manskie deputaty Gosudarstvennoi dumy Rossii, 1906-1917gg. Sbornik dokumentov i materialov* (Ufa, 1998), pp. 235-238; *Millat* 7 (1914) (Russian and Tatar version), pp. 2-3.

³¹ RGIA, f. 821, op. 133, d. 576, ll. 319, 321ob.-327.

³² E. Malov, *O tatarskikh mechetiakh v Rossii* (Kazan, 1868), pp. 49-50.

ate the process of Christianization with those baptized Tatars who did not leave Orthodoxy.³³

It was the Spiritual Assembly that undertook the “legal Islami- zation” of baptized Tatars who had been only officially registered as Orthodox. Answering three mullahs whose parishes had “apostates,” the Spiritual Assembly on June 30, 1905 gave them permission to satisfy these apostates with Islamic rites. A state official contended that it was this resolution that had served to incite the widespread apostasy in the region.³⁴ Moreover, according to each apostate’s petition, the Spiritual Assembly asked volost directorates to inquire to which *mahalla* he or she wanted to belong, thereby ascribing the person correctly to the Muslim community.³⁵

The principle of the law of April 17 seems similar to that of the Muslim identity derived from the Bulghar historiography. In this tradi- tion, the community’s validity as a Muslim community depended not on the ethnic origin of the community’s ancestors, but on the ancestors’ conversion to Islam.³⁶ The local Orthodox missionaries in their turn intensified the application of Il’minskii’s method, utilizing the non-Rus- sians’ ethnicity in order to counteract the “Tatarization” and to further the spread of Orthodoxy.³⁷

RESULTS OF “RUSSIFICATION”

The Great Reform intensified the relations between Muslims and the imperial administration, which made the government consider it expedient to set the Russian language as an educational qualification for the post of mullah. For this purpose, two laws were issued on July

³³ Paul W. Werth, “The Limits of Religious Ascription: Baptized Tatars and the Revision of ‘Apostasy,’ 1840s-1905,” *The Russian Review* 59:4 (2000), pp. 509-511.

³⁴ TsGIA RB, f. I-295, op. 2, d. 276 (journal on June 30, 1905); RGIA, f. 821, op. 133, d. 625, ll. 47ob.-48.

³⁵ See the many papers left in the second half of TsGIA RB, f. I-295, op. 11, d. 803.

³⁶ Frank, *Islamic Historiography*, pp. 41, 62.

³⁷ Steinwedel, “Invisible Threads of Empire,” pp. 353-354.

16, 1888 and October 11, 1890.³⁸ Up to 1905, the regulations caused waves of protests from Muslims, even among the “progressive.”³⁹ However, after the revolution, they protested against the measures that the authorities began to take to keep secular subjects, including Russian, from their confessional schools. The change of both sides can be explained by the change of the nature of their interaction at the turn of the century.

The Great Reform appeared to the Muslim community an assault on their former guarantees of confessional autonomy granted by Catherine II,⁴⁰ which accounts for the rise in demand for the restoration of “lost” rights in 1905.⁴¹ Accordingly, even the most “progressive” representatives initially prioritised preserving past autonomy. As a result, in 1910, the Special Conference on Volga Muslim issues decided to abandon efforts to introduce Russian into the Muslim community.

As Robert Geraci argues, this decision can be interpreted in terms of the conference participants’ biased attitude toward the progress of the “East.”⁴² Another interpretation is possible in terms of Muslim identity. To be sure, this identity itself had been shaped by the interaction with the imperial institutions since the end of the eighteenth century. However, the Muslims’ articulation of their interests based on this identity was taken by the bureaucrats as proof of their closed attitude toward the “Russian” state. After 1905, the Muslim representatives began to convince the people of the necessity of the Russian language.⁴³ Their efforts were devoted to reconciliation between imperial citizenship, *Rūsīya ghrāzhdānlighī*, and nationality, *millīyat*.⁴⁴

³⁸ *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi imperii*, series 3, vol. 8 (1888) (St. Petersburg, 1890), no. 5419; *Sbornik zakonov o musul'manskom dukhovenstve v Tavricheskom i Orenburgskom okrugakh i o magometanskikh uchebnykh zavedeniakh* (Kazan, 1902), pp. 18-20.

³⁹ See a petition from Kazan representatives in RGIA, f. 821, op. 8, d. 631, ll. 11-16.

⁴⁰ Noack, “State Policy and its Impact,” pp. 12-13.

⁴¹ A criticism against such an attitude, Ridā'al-Dīn Fakhr al-Dīn, *Rūsīya muslimānlarining ihtiājları wa ānlar haqqında intiqād* (Orenburg, 1906), pp. 8-13.

⁴² Robert Geraci, *Window on the East: National and Imperial Identities in Late Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca, London, 2001), pp. 285-296.

⁴³ *Waqt*, 10 March 1907, pp. 2-3; *Ibid.*, 6 June 1914, p. 1.

⁴⁴ Jamāl al-Dīn Walidī, *Millat wa Millīyat* (Orenburg, 1914), p. 37.

The spread of Russian did make the Muslims and the Russians much closer, although it did not always alleviate the tensions between them. On the contrary, the wide consumption of the discourses on "Pan-Islamism" among both the Russians and Muslims jeopardized not only their mutual relationship but also the politics among the Muslims. In the post-1905 political environment, religious establishments began to define themselves as national institutions, or to be defined by others as such.⁴⁵ The 1910 Special Conference had the purpose of "the formation of measures toward counteracting the Tatar-Muslim influence in the Volga region."⁴⁶ It may not be accidental that in the same year, the Ministry of the Interior drew up a "Memorandum regarding the activities of the Catholic clergy, aimed at the subjection of the population of the Western territory to Polish influence, and regarding measures to combat these influences."⁴⁷

Faced with the challenge of nationalism in 1905 and the conservative constitutional revolutions in Iran and Turkey, Russian society forged a concept of the peril caused by the progress of the Muslims. Such discourses immediately circulated through the security police among Muslims, due to the traditional "alliance" between the police and the clergy. The lay Muslims as well as the mullahs took advantage of the Russian discourses in order to remove their rivals on a charge of "political disloyalty." Since the prejudice against the Muslim population and the traditional police intervention did not change, Muslim intellectuals felt themselves repressed and conflicts among Muslims were aggravated.⁴⁸

In spite of the absence of a Muslim ecclesiastical class as a distinctive estate either in Islam or in the imperial law *de jure*, the imperial administrative system *de facto* created the Muslim *dukhovenstvo* in the state. The paradox was brought home to state bureaucrats after 1905,

⁴⁵ Steinwedel, "Invisible Threads of Empire," p. 342.

⁴⁶ A. Arsharuni, "Iz istorii natsional'noi politiki tsarizma," *Krasnyi arkhiv* 35 (1929), pp. 107-127; *Ibid.* 36 (1929), pp. 61-83.

⁴⁷ Theodore R. Weeks, *Nation and State in Late Imperial Russia: Nationalism and Russification on the Western Frontier, 1863-1914* (DeKalb, 1996), p. 55.

⁴⁸ See my paper at the VII ICCEES World Congress in Berlin (July 28, 2005), "Political Reliability: The Kazan Provincial Governorship and the Control of the Muslim Clergies (1905-1917)."

when the Muslims tried to make their mullahs equivalent to the Christian clergy in terms of civil rights and privileges.⁴⁹ Policy makers attributed this “wrong” equalization and the birth of the Muslim ecclesiastical hierarchy to the bureaucratic logic in the unification of legal norms and the creation of the Spiritual Assembly.⁵⁰

The Muslims themselves seem to have taken the existence of their “ecclesiastical class” for granted. They called their clergy “spiritual,” *rūḥānīlār*, as they did Christian clergy, rather than “learned,” *‘ulamā’*, as is usual in other Muslim areas. However, this accepted fact sometimes caused serious controversy. In 1916, when mufti Ṣafā Bāyazīduf admonished the Muslims under his authority, asking them to support their “ecclesiastics” properly,⁵¹ those who challenged the mufti’s authority argued that the word “*rūḥānīlār*” was not found in the Sunna of the Prophet, and that its root “*rūḥ*” (spirit), which was associated with the birth of Jesus Christ, was valid only in his community, *umma*.⁵²

How others justified this usage by weaving the language of both the imperial practice and the Islamic dogma merits attention. In terms of the imperial order, the word “*dukhovenstvo*” had been rooted in the legal system since the establishment of the Spiritual Assembly. That *rauḥ*, a derivative of *rūḥ* meaning “refreshment,” made possible the application of *rūḥānīlār* to licensed mullahs, *ukaznoi mulla*, who were appointed by provincial governors after confirming that the candidates had been “cleared” of anything conflicting with the authorities. According to the *Qur’ān*, the Prophet was inspired by the Faithful Spirit, *rūḥ al-amīn*.⁵³ Hadīth tells us that the wives of the Prophet are the Mothers of the Muslims, that is, that Muhammad is their Father, and that *‘ālims*, i.e. religious scholars, are his inheritors. Therefore, *‘ulamā’* as such had to be the spiritual fathers, *rūḥānī ātā*, giving their parishioners the Islamic

⁴⁹ RGIA, f. 1276, op. 2, d. 593, l. 127.

⁵⁰ RGIA, f. 821, op. 133, d. 543, l. 20. Such “equalization” led by “unification” can be added to Miller’s analysis of “Russification” of state machinery. Aleksei Miller, “Rusifikatsii: klassifitsirovat’ i poniat’,” *Ab Imperio* 2 (2002), pp. 139-140.

⁵¹ *Waqf*, 10 August 1916, p. 2.

⁵² *Waqf*, 24 August 1916, pp. 2-3.

⁵³ *Qur’ān* (Cairo edition), 26th chapter, 193rd verse. The Faithful Spirit means the Angel Gabriel.

discipline.⁵⁴ Here again, we can see a discursive tradition of Islam among the Volga-Ural Muslims, which was molded within the framework of the Christian domination.

NATIONALISM FORGED BY THE CONFESSIONAL ADMINISTRATION

Since the regional identity of the Volga-Ural Muslims was formed with the Spiritual Assembly at the centre, the events of 1905, which dramatically made Muslims conscious of their relationship with the state and their own religious behavior, immediately made vital a redefinition of the roles that the Spiritual Assembly should play.⁵⁵ As Yavuz summarizes, nationalism tended to be articulated, diffused, and made part of the daily discourse through religious symbols and institutions.⁵⁶ The Volga-Ural Muslims' spatial images of the imperial Muslim population and the metaphors of their "national" identity were clearly demonstrated in the argument on the territory of the Spiritual Assembly's jurisdiction.

Neither was the Vaisov God's Regiment outside the scene. True, Frank says that the ideas of Bahā'al-Dīn Vaisov reflected an intellectual continuum of anti-mufti throughout the Volga-Ural '*ulamā*'.⁵⁷ However, that at least his son, 'Inān al-Dīn, did not deny the structure itself should be underlined. In 1905, a week after the law on the toleration of faiths, 'Inān al-Dīn asked the director of the Department of Religious Affairs for permission to organize their own spiritual directorate on the basis of the same statutes as sanctioned in 1872 for Trans-Caucasian Muslims.⁵⁸

The participants of the 1906 Special Conference feared the aspiration of "Tatars-Muslims" to make all the imperial Muslims into Tatars,

⁵⁴ *Waqf*, 4 September 1916, pp. 1-2; *Dīn wa Ma'īshat* 40 (1916), pp. 349-351; *Ibid.* 48-49 (1916), pp. 436-437.

⁵⁵ Rogers Brubaker suggests that nationalism be seen as an "event." See his *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 18-21.

⁵⁶ Yavuz, "The Patterns of Political Islamic Identity," p. 349.

⁵⁷ Frank, *Islamic Historiography*, p. 172.

⁵⁸ RGIA, f. 821, op. 8, d. 631, l. 53. The Transcaucasian model was also ideal for the participants of the Muslim Congress in 1914. *Millet* 13 (1914) (Russian version), pp. 5-8.

which motivated the idea on the subdivision of the Spiritual Assembly's jurisdiction. Calling Ufa's centralization the "Rome of the Muslims," Cherevenskii suggested that separate spiritual directorates be provided to the Bashkirs and Kazakhs. He even thought it necessary to nurse their culture and "nationalism" in order to guard them against "Tatarism".⁵⁹ A similar strategy was also taken against the Polish influence in Belorussian provinces: the establishment of schools using Belorussian as the language of instruction and of churches (including Catholic churches) using Belorussian.⁶⁰

The government's fear was not without foundation. The Tatars indeed tried to realize a unified administration for the Muslim population in the empire. When Bashkirs from Cheliabinsk District, Orenburg Province, demanded that one of three Qadis in Ufa be elected from their people, *Bāshqurd Tā'ifasī*, a Tatar newspaper, claimed that the subdivision of the Muslims under the Spiritual Assembly into Bashkirs, Mishars, Teptiars, Kazakhs and Tatars would devastate the common Muslim interest.⁶¹ When the reform of the juridical system in the Kazakh steppe was on the agenda, Tatar newspapers keenly propagandized the necessity of including the Kazakhs under the jurisdiction of the Spiritual Assembly. This would have brought order to their family affairs on the basis of *shari'a*, instead of the native custom, *'ādat*. In fact, the Kazakhs of the northern and western steppe showed a strong desire for inclusion under the Ufa's jurisdiction.⁶² Their attitude is explained by the Islamic revival among them over the course of the nineteenth century, which was led by economic integration into the imperial system and Sufi and scholarly networks between the steppe and inner Russia. In the whole process, the large commercial activities of the Volga-Ural Muslims played a crucial role.⁶³

⁵⁹ RGIA, f. 1276, op. 2, d. 593, ll. 8ob.-9, 58ob.-59ob., 114, and 140ob.

⁶⁰ Weeks, *Nation and State*, p. 66.

⁶¹ *Waqt*, 1 April 1908, p. 1.

⁶² RGIA, f. 821, op. 8, d. 631, ll. 3-4; *Waqt*, 24 June 1908, pp. 1-2; 25 June 1914, p. 1; 27 June 1914, p. 2; 1 July 1914, pp. 1-2. The Steppe Statute of 1868 excluded the Kazakh steppe from Ufa's jurisdiction.

⁶³ Allen Frank, "Islamic Transformation on the Kazakh Steppe, 1742-1917: Toward an Islamic History of Kazakhstan under Russian Rule," Tadayuki Hayashi, ed., *The Construction and Deconstruction of National Histories in Slavic Eurasia* (Sapporo, 2003), pp. 261-289.

The Tatars' plans to reform the Spiritual Assembly also took into account the subdivision of its jurisdiction, but they thought of it only in territorial terms for effective administration.⁶⁴ They even imagined that a unifying mufti would stand in St. Petersburg. Interestingly enough, in elaborating his plan, Sadri Maksudi, a deputy of the second and third State Duma referred to the "millet" system of the Greeks, Armenians and the Jews in the Ottoman Empire. He considered the religious institution a legal framework for the development of the nation. He saw in the hierarchy of 'ulamā' the indispensable roles in preventing the appearance of various conflicting schools, *madhhablar*, and in maintaining the original purity of Islam.⁶⁵

In the 1914 Special Conference, the discussion reached an impasse. The situation of the eastern frontier reminded the participants of that of the western frontier.⁶⁶ The subdivision of the Spiritual Assembly's jurisdiction under ethnic principles was abandoned for fear that the "nationalization" of each new institution would hinder cultural rapprochement with the Russians. The same reasoning had been used in the objection to the establishment of new Catholic episcopates in order to avert the Polish national movement. Moreover, they were obliged to accept the fact that the Tatars' influence was so immense among Muslim publications and intellectuals that "Tatarization" could not be stopped. The Vilna governor admitted in 1910 that the strength of Polish culture was such that a Catholic Belorussian peasant with pretensions to "bettering himself" immediately identified with the Polish nationality.⁶⁷ The government was forced to adhere to the status quo.

CONCLUSION

After 1905, while Catherine II, a founder of the tradition of toleration towards Islam, continued to be idealized as "Grandma-Empress,"

⁶⁴ *Waqf*, 1 February 1914, p. 1; 8 May 1914, p. 1.

⁶⁵ *Yılduz*, 4 May 1914, pp. 1-2; 18 May 1914, pp. 2-3.

⁶⁶ RGIA, f. 821, op. 133, d. 576, ll. 253 ob.-254 ob., and 256 ob.

⁶⁷ Weeks, *Nation and State*, p. 67. The same observation is in RGIA, f. 821, d. 576, op. 133, ll. 253ob.-254.

'*Abī Pādshāh*,⁶⁸ the new symbols, the law of April 17 and the manifesto of October 17, gave the Muslims a foundation to observe their religious duties more conscientiously and to involve the imperial administration in institutionalizing their confessional life. They located the Spiritual Assembly and the Muslim faction in the State Duma as legal representative bodies for "national" interests. At the same time, the Muslims dedicated their efforts to justifying the emerging reality by theological idioms. The political acquisition of the right to hold Islamic holidays was not separable from the correct calculation of the Hegira calendar according to *shari'a*. The presence of Muslim "ecclesiastics" was designated as Islamic in terms of imperial practice and Islamic knowledge. The intermingling principle of the legal and theological organization of the community was built in from the '*ulamā*'s and intellectuals' imagined community, *millat*, to the construction of parish life, *maḥalla*.

Faced with the serious challenges of nationalism, the Russian authorities began to categorize the population strictly, according to their own criteria of "Russianness."⁶⁹ Ascribing the Muslim elements of the baptized Tatars "correctly" to the Muslims, the government tried to unite the Christian elements with the Russian coreligionists. Although the interaction with the state had created the Muslim community throughout the nineteenth century, the government began to regard the Muslims' political manifestation as the emergence of "Pan-Islamism," which was usually equated with Tatar nationalism. The state officials even planned to leave the Muslim community as a "purely" religious one by depriving it of the opportunity to study Russian. They tried to use Il'minskii's idea in order to contain "Tatarization" by nursing the cultures and nationalisms of the peoples living side by side with the Tatars. However, by the beginning of World War I, the government was compelled to realize that setting various *nationalisms* against "Tatarism" would further alienate these peoples from "Russianness."

⁶⁸ *Qūyāsh*, 16 April 1914, p. 2.

⁶⁹ For a historical perspective, John W. Slocum, "Who, and When, Were the *Inorodtsy*? The Evolution of the Category of 'Aliens' in Imperial Russia," *The Russian Review* 57:2 (1998), pp. 173-190.