

ALFRID BUSTANOV, DARIA DORODNYKH

Jadidism as a Paradigm in the Study of Islam in the Russian Empire

Translation by Markian Dobczansky

DOI: 10.22394/2311-3448-2018-5-1-64-81

Alfrid Bustanov — European University at Saint Petersburg (Saint Petersburg, Russia), University of Amsterdam (Amsterdam, the Netherlands). abustanov@eu.spb.ru

Daria Dorodnykh — European University at Saint Petersburg (Saint Petersburg, Russia). ddorodnyh@eu.spb.ru

This article is devoted to problematizing the research focus of academic literature on Islamic reformers in the Russian Empire. Studies of the late imperial period typically devote most of their attention to modernity. Jadidist reformers are considered the key protagonists and engines of history. The typical narrative about Jadids includes several elements: political activity, educational reforms, the flourishing of journalism, the renewal of religion, and the “female question.” In this article we consider Jadidism as a narrative about backwardness and progress, which is uncritically reproduced in academic literature. Relying on the memoirs of Gabdulla Bubi, we offer a revision of the framework that is generally applied to describe the intellectual history of Muslims in Russia. We classify Bubi’s narrative as a language ideology and place it within the framework of his own “imperial project.” We do so to offer an alternative to Jadidism as an explanatory model.

Originally published in Russian as: Bustanov, Alfrid & Dorodnykh, Daria (2017) “Dzhadidizm kak paradigma v izuchenii islama v Rossijskoj imperii,” *Gosudarstvo, religija, tserkov’ v Rossii i za rubezhom* 35(3): 112–133.

This work was carried out through the support of the RFBR research program no. 17-81-01042 a(ts), “The Politicization of the Language of Religion and the Sacralization of the Language of Politics during the Civil War Era.” This article was written in the framework of the NWO research program “The Russian Language of Islam” (project no. 360-70-490). The authors are grateful to Irina Starodubovskaia, Alexander Agadjanian, Vladimir Bobrovnikov, and the anonymous reviewers for their thought-provoking notes and comments on this article.

Keywords: Islam in Russia, Islamic modernism, Jadidism, imperial project.

Introduction

PRIOR to the beginning of the 20th century, several million Muslims lived across practically all regions of the Russian Empire and had extensive experience of interaction with the imperial authorities within a multi-national and multi-confessional context (Prozorov 1998–2012; Abashin and Babadzhanov 2011; Bobrovnikov and Babich 2007; Babadzhanov and Kotiukova 2016; Abashin et al. 2008). Our article examines how this experience is understood in the academic literature and how academic concepts are related to voices that emerge from primary sources.

Even after the archival revolution of the 1990s,¹ the history of Jadidism still lies at the core of our perception of Islam in the Russian Empire. Debates around the concept of modernity shaped the scholarly language in this area. In fact, what is at issue here is exclusively the relationship between modernity and Muslims (e.g., Tuna 2015). Thus for many decades now — with all the appropriate caveats and conventions — academic discourse has depicted Jadids as admirers of European progress and has portrayed traditionalists as “moss-covered” lovers of antiquity and exotic Muslim cultures.² It is difficult to find a more politicized and pervasive misconception than the narrative of Jadidism as a triumphant struggle of enlighteners for progress against backwardness, for a secular world against religious obscurantism, for a printed book against ancient manuscripts. Historians and the Jadids themselves tell the same narrative: in the depths of “traditional” society — exhausted by ignorance and darkness — there emerged new people who boldly engaged with progressive Western ideas in Russian or Ottoman translation, and in doing so advanced the inevitable modernization and Europeanization of society. The reception of “European” ideas becomes a temporal division that separates the traditional past from the modern present/future (Abashin 2015, 9–15). The ideal “progressive” is clean-shaven, wears a European-style suit, hat, and glasses, cares about the interests of the nation, and speaks Russian well. The

1. For an overview of the achievements of the archival revolution for the study of Islam in Russia, see the special issue of *Ab Imperio* (2008), no. 4.
2. A detailed analysis and critique of this dichotomy can be found in Eden, Sartori, and DeWeese (2016).

“accursed traditionalist” wears an enormous turban, a Bukharan robe, and has leftover pilav³ in his beard. Like it or not, readers will inevitably encounter these caricatures when getting to know the history of Muslims in Russia at the beginning of the 20th century. This lens portrays the late imperial period as a time of the blossoming of Islamic culture through its increasing proximity to European educational models and the articulation of political ideas.

The central problems on which the historiography of Islam in the Russian Empire have previously focused are integration, secularization, and modernization, on the one hand, and resistance to imperial power — the mirror image of these processes — on the other. One can briefly summarize this narrative as the story of how the exotic and little understood world of Muslims became intelligible and familiar for imperial observers. The empire demonstrably sought the homogenization of its population, and for this reason the best fate for Muslims in Russia would be their complete dissolution and merger into the categories, practices, languages, and institutions prescribed by imperial scenarios of power. In other words, the binary of integration and resistance to a large extent deprives Muslims of their subjectivity,⁴ the right to their own place in history, and their own interpretation of events. Imperial knowledge focuses on Muslim groups only when they enter the field of ideas and practices as defined by the imperial context. In other situations and contexts, Islam is not of interest to outside observers. For this reason, the question of integration has divided historians into two camps (Sartori 2017).

The first camp bases its research program primarily on Russian-language administrative sources from which it follows that Muslims in the Russian Empire were certainly included in the discussions about practices of subordination and opposition to the imperial authorities.⁵ The imperial archives reveal, as described in categories intelligible to Russian officials, the various hopes and fears regarding Russian Muslims. This paradigm produced ideas about the acceptance of imperial “rules of the game” by Muslims (Crews 2006; Meyer 2013), as well as the narrative about the eternal struggle of Muslims for independence and for the creation of a Sharia-based state (Zelkina 2000). These

3. Pilav — a rice dish originating in Central Asia. (Ed.)

4. In essence, a similar problem exists in the study of Stalinism and Soviet subjectivity, as in Gerasimov (2017).

5. The historiography of “Soviet Islam” predominantly displays this tendency of giving full credence to the imperial archives. For example, see Arapov and Kosach (2007), Guseva (2013), Arapov and Kosach (2010–2011), and Ro'i (2000).

hopes and fears arose and were discussed within the educated imperial elite, which was uninterested in the plans and ideas of Muslims themselves. Orientalists were supposed to tell administrators what Muslims were “really” about, and imperial authorities projected their own concepts onto the eastern borderlands and enthusiastically discussed the “Muslim Question” (Campbell 2015; Tol’ts 2011, 111–67).

Another camp of historians of the era of the archival revolution chooses rather to describe the experiences of Muslims within the Russian Empire in an isolationist mode. For a very long period of time, the language of Islamic discourse (Kemper 1998; Kemper 2005) allowed Muslims to articulate problems only tangentially related to those “imposed” by the imperial paradigm. These discussions, for the most part, emerged from the array of “eternal” theological debates over legal categories (see Shamil’ Shikhaliev’s contribution to this issue), as well as religious practices and historiographic traditions (Frank 1998; Frank 2001; Frank 2012) that had little in common with the surrounding world. The isolationist paradigm is based on the voices of Muslims themselves and posits their separateness and differentiation from dominant imperial discourses. The emphasis on the self-sufficiency and uniqueness of the culture of Russian Muslims allows this group of researchers to consider transnational contacts and the circulation of Islamic knowledge with little concern for the imperial context.

Of course, between these two extreme camps there is room for experiments with various sources and methods. One sees this, for example, when examining the biographies of Islamic actors who at various times participated in resistance to the empire as well as in the workings of the imperial administration (Bobrovnikov 2010) or those who discussed compulsory religious practices (the Hajj) at the intersection of imperial policies and the narratives of Islamic authors (Sibgatullina 2010; cf. Kane 2016). Or one can see it in studies of nation-building, which reveal that occasionally Islamic thinkers could be effective actors in the political sphere and actively participate in the development and realization of political projects (Khalid 2015).

In addition, the spatial perspective strongly influences our ideas about the relations between Muslims and the empire. Often this is seen when dealing with regional approaches, which trace isolated enclaves (Turkestan, Dagestan, the Volga region) with their own Islamic traditions on an imagined map. Such an approach can hold great interest when it reveals the worldviews of the regional actors themselves (Brophy 2016; Schluessel 2014). Transregional studies, with few exceptions (Meyer 2014), remain marginal and do not go beyond

the confines of a mechanical combination of microhistories (Miller 2008, 9–33).

Thus, for the last quarter century, several approaches to telling the story of the Muslims of Russia have developed in the historiography. Some, relying on administrative documents, talk about strategies of resistance and accommodation. Some show the complex and multi-faceted yet in many ways isolated life of elites, and some write about regional history through the prism of the nation. We propose a somewhat different view of Islamic texts in Russia: to not study Jadidism as a *historical phenomenon*, but rather to examine the *narrative* of Jadidism found in the primary sources themselves. We hope that studying the structures of the language of Jadidism will generate a better understanding of what stands behind this narrative. In this article, we present an analysis of one source, the author of which is usually marked as an Islamic reformer.

The Imperial Narrative of Gabdulla Bubi

The search for a suitable analytical language for describing the intellectual life of Muslims is acknowledged as an important problem for the study of Islam in Russia (Naganawa 2017). Which scholarly tool kit should be used? Taking into account the marginal status of the field, where should researchers look for processes and methods? Through which lens should they approach the sources used to construct the narrative of progressive reformers and backward traditionalists?

One particularly rich source around which one can build a narrative about progressive Muslims is the memoir of Gabdulla Bubi (1871–1922). He was director of and a teacher at the Izh-Bubi madrassa in Viatka governorate. In 1911 he was imprisoned along with his brother on charges of pan-Turkism. Upon his release in 1913, he left for Ghulja⁶ (Eastern Turkestan). Here an opportunity presented itself to create and run a new madrassa. In 1917 he returned to Russia, to Troitsk, where he also ran a local madrassa. Bubi worked to organize schools everywhere that it was possible, and in 1917 he regretted not staying in Tashkent, where he was offered the chance to run an educational institution. Clearly, his major ambition was the creation of the ideal madrassa. Such an assumption, which appears self-evident, would seem to be an excellent way to link up to the story about heroic enlighteners, who were leading the people out of the darkness of ignorance into the brightness of enlightenment, a narrative that fits well into the discourse about Jadidism

6. Currently called Yining, a city in northwest China. (Ed.)

(Makhmutova 1997; Makhmutova 2005; Gimazova 2004; Akhunov and Minnullin 2013). Can we propose an alternative interpretation?

Bubi's memoirs are a motley collection of notes that include the history of the madrassa in Izh-Bubi, travel notes about his journey to Ghulja in 1913, a detailed description of his life in Ghulja, as well as personal correspondence with various individuals. The three-volume manuscript made up of 636 pages is kept in the Oriental section of the Manuscript and Rare Books Division of the Scientific Library of the Kazan Federal University. The text is written in literary Tatar of the early 20th century, in Arabic script of the *naskh* style. The lack of ink blots and corrections, which are characteristic of diaries, indicates that the manuscript is a final draft of memoirs, possibly intended for publication (ORRK NB KFU, Ms. 207 T-208 T).⁷

The structure of the narrative itself resembles a kaleidoscope of stories, which are laid out not on a chronological basis but as scenes from a life story: the anecdote about the Turkish teacher, the founding of the Islamic association, the temperance society, the speech of a Chinese bureaucrat, the collecting of donations. The notes about his life in Ghulja have thus far attracted almost no attention from historians, who have been rather more interested in the story of the madrassa in Izh-Bubi and the demonstrative arrest of the Bubi brothers, which was important in the formation of their image as fighters for enlightenment. Nevertheless, it is the case that the story of the madrassa was written retrospectively from Ghulja and it does not occupy a central place in the three-volume manuscript. The episode of the madrassa, in fact, serves to introduce the scenes taking place in Ghulja. In any case, it is not the "reality" of the described events that is of interest, as much as it is the language of the narrative along with its structure.

The language of Gabdulla Bubi's memoirs can be characterized as a language ideology (Freeden 2005), which developed into the special skill of "speaking Jadid," that is, creating a discourse about the necessity of education and progress for the improvement of the lot of Muslims. This skill shapes the image of Jadids as progressive-minded people, fighters against backwardness and the remnants of religion. The language ideology of Bubi is versatile, changes depending on the conversational context, and includes key concepts that make up the "political lexicon of the era" (Potapova 2015, 180).

7. The Manuscript and Rare Books Division of the Scientific Library of Kazan Federal University will hereafter be referred to as ORRK NB KFU. For a full paleographic description and a brief summary of the manuscript's contents, see Fätkhi 1962, 11–18.

In choosing to characterize Bubi's memoirs as a language ideology, we designate that ideology an "imperial project." An important element of this type of project is its civilizing function; the ambition to carry out this function, in turn, characterizes the imperial subject. This subject echoes the language of colonial authorities when discussing backward Muslims whom it is necessary to civilize, and thereby fuses the adopted argument about Muslim backwardness with imperial rhetoric about "former greatness" and the Golden Age of Muslims. In any case, the words and themes that Bubi articulated serve the cause of constructing an imperial project that was conceptualized alongside that of the Russian Empire.

When news reached Ghulja from Beijing about the opening of an Islamic association there, Bubi said, "The Lord has given on earth that which I sought in the heavens" (ORRKNB KFU, Ms. 207 T, 112a). Any opportunity to preach ideas of unity brought him happiness and any form that allowed him to do so was useful. Education or "enlightenment" was not only a task for the madrasa, that is, not only for the rising generation, but also applied to adults. For this reason, Bubi received the news of an Islamic association that presumed to include adults with great enthusiasm. He delivered a lengthy speech at the opening of the Islamic association:

I want to tell you a little about the necessity [*luzumiyyat*] and importance of this association [*jam'iyyat*] from the point of view of Sharia and its obligation [*fard*]. The most indispensable and necessary thing in Sharia is the unity of Muslims [*ahle islamnyng ittifaq[y]*] and their education. The main mission of the Prophet, peace be upon him, was to lead the ignorant Arabs onto the path to enlightenment, to make them equal and unite them with everyone, who found themselves under the banner of Islam: white and black, Arab and non-Arab. "The violation of unity — is an indication of hypocrisy" [*khuruj al-ittifaq 'alamat al-nifaq*], in other words, leaving behind unity and Islamic society and separation is a sign of hypocrisy and unbelief [*kofer*]. These truthful and holy words, and also the words of Allah in the Holy Quran (إِنَّ الَّذِينَ فَرَّقُوا بَيْنَهُمْ وَكَانُوا شِبَعًا لَسْتَ مِنْهُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ) (Quran 6:159), in other words, "those, who divide religion [*din*] and humility [*ita'a*] into different forces and divide themselves into different groups [*firqa*] — they are not with you and you are not with them": these words are enough to understand the necessity of connection with this association and community. As you see, Allah commands Muslims to be part of one association and community. He calls one who leaves it not a Muslim [*mu'min*], but an unbeliever [*kafir*]. [. . .] This association, similar to a message [*ilham*,

wahi] from Allah, will take you out of the baseness and abjectness of today, it will make you a true community and people [*millät*] of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him. Thanks to this blessed association you will be adorned with learning and enlightenment [*golum vā māgarif*], handicrafts and art will spread among you. Only in this way will you rid yourselves of today's indignities and impoverishment and be lifted above the wealthy, happy other peoples [*millätlär*] (ORRK NB KFU, Ms. 207 T, 124b–126a).

And he said all this in the presence of a Chinese bureaucrat who had come for the official opening of the association! Analyzing Bubi's fate through the prism of an "imperial project" allows one to interpret it not as the story of a man of the peripheral borderlands and subjugated groups, but as the story of a person who finds himself at the center of his own world — a world he considers the outcome of his own efforts. Just as the Holy Roman Empire promised to unite and defend all Catholics, Bubi and many of his contemporaries wanted to unify and defend all Muslims in the way that seemed most effective. Several authors have already written about the elements of imperial ideology found in Islamic texts. Stephen Kotkin, among others, notes that the "Tatars imagined, and tried to realize, an imperial project before and then within the broad expanse provided by the Russian empire and the Soviet Union" (Kotkin 2007, 517). By pointing to the struggle between "Tatar-Muslim and imperial strategies around the question of the formation of the local population's identities" in the Volga-Ural region, Alexei Miller implicitly casts this as a struggle of imperial ambitions (Miller 2006, 22).

A spatial vision and the choice of setting are very important in Bubi's narrative. In departing for Ghulja, Bubi does not see that city as a goal in and of itself; he is interested, rather, in schools, the templates of which could be spread after the successful conclusion of the experiment:

As soon as I get out of prison, I need to go to China, to Ghulja. To take one school there and to fix it, so that teachers and imams appropriate to the times can be produced. To open a school for girls that would be able to produce teachers to gradually send there all who worked in Izh-Bubi. To create in Ghulja a center for the spread of knowledge in Turkestan, and if possible to organize artistic and artisan associations among the people (ORRK NB KFU, Ms. 207 T, 96a).

Thus, Ghulja is for him a center of sorts in Turkestan. Although formally the city was part of the Chinese republic, Bubi sees it as belonging

to Muslim territories. Of course he does not “discover” Ghulja; he arrives where there is already a foundation — Muslim communities that were well-established prior to his arrival (Usmanov 1998; Light 2012). In his travel notes, Bubi writes about Troitsk, Samara, Yarkand, Bishkek, Tashkent, and Kashghar, and in each city he finds like-minded people who help him.⁸ Bubi’s goals resonated and he was always accompanied by affluent merchants willing to support him (or whom he coaxed into doing so). In his story, cities and people are connected above and across administrative boundaries; he links these points on the basis of his own conception of their importance as centers. Bubi saw himself as a missionary of a vitally important association, and his goal was the diffusion of such ideas. Allen Frank speaks of Bubi, during his travels in the vicinity of the Kazakh steppe, addressing two questions to the population about their historical role in Xinjiang: “These were education (including among girls) and the spread of modern ideas and technologies among local Muslims, that is, a sort of civilizing mission” (Frank 2011, 463).

The imagined “empire of Muslims,” in Bubi’s vision, stretches from Viatka governorate to Western China and the inhabitants of this empire included Nogais, Taranchi, Dungans, Kazakhs, Sarts, Russians, Chinese, and Turks. This world was diverse, motley, and disparate, on the one hand, but united into a single whole, on the other. Individuals such as Bubi tied this region together; moving from place to place, he created new connections and strengthened old ones, and he collected money for madrassas and mosques from wealthy merchants.⁹ With the like-minded, he discussed social problems, questions of backwardness or flourishing, as well as questions of subjugation or dominance. Bubi was concerned with the preservation of the Muslim heritage, he worried about the destiny of the “former greatness.” He wanted to preserve this cultural foundation.

The Structure of Gabdulla Bubi’s Narrative

The key concepts in Bubi’s story include, among others: the people (*millät*), advanced people (*alga khalyq*), freedom (*hurriyyat*), education (*ma’rifat*), and progress (*taraqqiyyat*). *Millät* appears in reference to the condition of Muslim peoples as a whole: “to what depths do ignorance, baseness, and incomprehension of religion plunge man and even

8. Such networks of acquaintances were not specific to Bubi but rather were common among travelers from within Russia. See Brophy (2014).

9. On Islamic charity in this period, see Ross (2017).

the whole *people*"; "this situation burns the souls of Muslims who betrayed their *people*"; "yet where is there a place of tranquility for those who wish to serve the *people*"; "only having rid oneself of today's debasement and impoverishment will it be possible to rise above other prosperous and happy *peoples*" (ORRK NB KFU, Ms. 207 T, 97b, 98a, 99b, 102a, 126a). The unification of Muslims is a leading theme in his narrative, and the struggle for unity aided by progress is one of Bubi's key goals.

Bubi speaks and acts precisely like an imperial civilizer, organizing schooling, societies, and meetings, and demonstrating the backwardness of earlier forms and calling for facing new challenges. These challenges lie both within Muslims themselves, who have distorted or even left their religion behind, and in the "civilizational" superiority of their neighbors. He sees this superiority here and now: in Russian schools, and in his brethren who serve the "Russians" and don't recognize the values of history and religion, in a changing urban landscape:

In Tashkent we visited akhund Akhtiamov. However, I am disappointed; I did not see things among our Sart brethren that gave me hope. In Tashkent there are two parts: the new Tashkent and the old Tashkent. If one can compare the former with heaven, the latter can be likened to hell. (ibid., 96b)

In describing Tashkent, Bubi creates a dramatic image of decline: the mosque of Khwaja Ahrar in disrepair, the shiny new cupolas of churches rising above the city, and local indigenous schools destroying religion among the children. Children symbolize the future, and Bubi seems to predict it in describing the state of local schools. But he does offer hope by proposing the only means for avoiding the spiritual death of the "people's" children: to organize one's own schools and enlighten the population. Bubi wants to give knowledge, to enlighten, so as to give people power over their own lives, to unify them, and deliver them from subordination to the "Russians" — this is also one of the tasks of his imperial mission.

There is a great deal of anti-colonial rhetoric in the manuscript's text (see Bustanov 2016), but close attention to how Bubi uses the word "predator" to generalize Russians suggests that he has in mind the bureaucratic apparatus and the state. All the more so when, in response to the February Revolution, he rejoices at the "days of freedom" that have come for Muslims and for Russians.¹⁰

10. In Islamic texts of the time the February Revolution was often called *khōrriiat*, an Arabic word meaning "freedom."

The special associations that he endeavored to support or create were supposed to be responsible for religious “enlightenment.” For example, with help of the “temperance society,” he planned

to end or reduce the use of alcoholic beverages, because, after all, they are the reason for the birth of weak and drunken children, they damage health, they are what takes away what is most valuable to us — our intellect, in so far as vodka, beer, and similar beverages are forbidden [*kharam*] from the legal point of view [*shari’a*], and it is precisely because they harm the intellect and are harmful in general. Each believer of a sober mind ought to become a member of this association. (ORRK NB KFU, Ms. 207 T, 110a)

In the matter of education, there were also “enemies,” those who did not wish to “enlighten” people, those who sought only profit. Those Muslims, Bubi is convinced, are the true reason for difficulties — it is exactly due to their negligence that Allah has sent punishment. Some write denunciations, some engage in “fraud,” and they harm their own people. It is precisely in this mode that he interprets the arrival of Shami damulla in Ghulja in 1916.¹¹ The denunciation begins with a reproach for greed:

In these places he describes himself as a person whom the Turkish side has sent to collect money and donations. He visited many cities ruled by the Chinese and collected a great deal of money. (ORRK NB KFU, Ms. 208 T, 131a)

Bubi did not know that he had in fact been chased out of the Ottoman Empire over allegations of “Wahhabism” (Babadzhanov, Muminov, and fon Kiugel’gen 2007, 58). It should be noted that Bubi himself was forced to leave Ghulja soon after the February Revolution, as he was alleged to be an unbeliever by local scholars and faced real danger. Shami damulla showed Bubi records that indicated that he was an emissary of the sultan:

11. For more details on him, see Muminov (2005). At the beginning of the 1920s, Shami damulla was chosen by the Soviet authorities as a “progressive” theologian, who would support the ideas of Islamic socialism and struggle against “obscurantism.” One of Shami damulla’s most famous students was Ziya al-Din Babakhan, the mufti of SADUM, Central Asian Muftiate, from 1957 to 1982. This connection supports the opinion of our colleagues that fundamentalism lay at the core of Soviet Islamic discourse and did not come from abroad, but rather was developed as a response to the times and by Soviet power. Sartori (2010).

In so far as he was regarded as a representative of Chinese Turkestan in Istanbul, the sultan sent a holy lock of the Prophet's hair to the Muslims of Chinese Turkestan in his care. He brought this hair to Altishahr, people began to travel there, and he collected a great deal of money. (ORRK NB KFU, Ms. 208 T, 131a)

Drawing on the image of Shami damulla, the author caricatures the scholars of Kashgar:

The ulamas of Kashgar raided that site, took the sacred hair, and removed it to another mosque, and people began to go there. In order to retrieve the Prophet's hair, Shami damulla went to various villages and collected petitions to the sultan and the Sublime Porte. It is clear that the "sacred hair" was the choicest scrap that had fallen into Shami's mouth. (ibid.)

Bubi writes disapprovingly about his "entrepreneurial" activity, charging Shami damulla with deceit and self-interest:

He has gathered old manuscripts and money and sold all of these things to European museums. He told me himself that he worked for one Orientalist who arrived in Altishahr with this goal. This person became the reason that old Turkic and Islamic works that had belonged to Muslims fell into the hands of Europeans. He helped them a great deal. (ibid., 150a)

Caricaturing those who use the image of the sacred for private gain, Bubi again demonstrates the necessity of changes — enlightenment and the exposure of fraudsters, who in this case were Shami damulla and the ulamas who had taken the hair. Apart from the fact that uneducated people were being cheated, that is, forced to pay for a fake, from a historical perspective, they are also being robbed of their own heritage. Bubi's task is thus to expose the saboteurs who were interfering in the task of enlightening. He not only identifies those self-interested wreckers like Shami damulla, but he also implicitly carries on an argument with those who oppose new madrassas and his vision for religious renewal. This makes him continually demonstrate, explain, and justify his position. The arguments are constructed according to the dichotomies of "ignorance/backwardness" versus "knowledge/progress." It is ignorance that draws the ire of Allah with the consequences of sad life circumstances, poverty, and subjugation:

When they (Kazakhs) themselves kept hens, they never saw eggs; no matter how many cows, there was no milk or butter. Over the course of their lives they did not gather a single stack of hay. After they gave the Ukrainians all of their land, they tend the hens of others very well, they gather their eggs, they prepare butter and milk with great care. And when it belonged to them, they did not do any of these things. They tend pigs with great care. Verily the earth is tended by worshippers [of Allah]. O, Islam, Islam! You have come to the point of changing from safety, sloth, and unconsciousness of the people who raised your flag and said “we follow you, Islam.” Was it so that Islam entered and left the heart of our beloved Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him? (ORRK NB KFU, Ms. 207 T, 100a)

In addition to the need to better people through enlightenment and education, it was also necessary to return Islam to their hearts. But what kind of Islam, if people had abandoned its foundations? How to move forward, toward “progress,” and at the same time to return to the ideal of the past? How could “progress” (*taraqqiyyat*), a key concept in his narrative, be combined with a return to pure Islam and the “improvement” of society?

The story of the reformers commonly begins with the desire for progress. When the motif of the necessity of “progress” is encountered in the sources, it is translated as “progress” in its modern meaning. The image of reformers as enlightened young people, who aspire to a new order of things, is built on this foundation. It is exactly on this point that they differ from the old clerics, mired in ignorance and stuck in the past. However, in Bubi’s story, *taraqqiyyat* is related closely to the idea of the necessity of embracing the latest scientific advances as well as the theme of returning to the past, that is, the Golden Age of Muslims. *Taraqqiyyat* is thus indispensable for both a return to pure religion and for reaching the level of Western civilization. In other words, interpreting *taraqqiyyat* only as Westernization (Tuna 2011) and a linear forward progression is misleading when it comes to Bubi’s narrative. For him progress is not simply movement toward the future; it is also a movement backward toward an idealized past.

By all appearances, this concept itself did not have any rigorously defined content in Bubi’s rhetoric. For example, in the dictionary of the Muhammadiyya madrasa teacher Tahir Ilyasi (1881–1933), *taraqqiyyat* is defined as follows: “to develop, to grow, to render the words of another person” (Ilyasi 1912, 447b). Bubi notes Kazakh paupers and the ruined mosques and madrasahs of the Sarts; and he sees Ukrainians with well-constructed homes, prosperous farms, and clean,

well-maintained roads. It is not so much the “colonizers” who are to blame for this state of affairs as it is the Muslims themselves, who have forgotten Allah’s injunctions. For Bubi religion is not something separated from life; not following religious instructions is in fact a cause of material misfortunes in this life as much as for punishment after death. For this reason, Bubi thinks of education as a combination of schools and enlightenment societies. Increasing school hours devoted to the natural sciences and decreasing those for religious instruction (if one believes the curricular tables) does not imply the secular transformation of education. When combined with conscious religiosity, Bubi’s school program was aimed at comprehensive “progress,” which was meant to help achieve an ideal in religion as well as in the attainment of equal development with the “leading nations.” Within the framework of ideas about progress, he carries out a project of codifying knowledge, searches for a universal educational framework, and this is likewise one of the important tasks of empire — normalizing scattered territories and peoples according to a common denominator (Sartori and Shablei 2015).

Conclusion

Even a cursory overview of our knowledge about Islam in the late Russian Empire demonstrates that, in spite of the recent boom in research, the paradigm of the inevitable “integration” of Muslims in the imperial context serves as a barrier to seeing the various modes of Muslims’ self-description and the formation of their subjectivity. One can hear the language of colonial power in Bubi’s references to the backwardness of Turkic Muslims: he has adopted the descriptions of Central Asian society as backward and in need of “European enlightenment.” This narrative, of course, is connected to Orientalism and converges with the rhetoric of imperial Orientalists when it comes to the use of terms such as “Central Asian backwardness” and “European enlightenment.”¹² The narrative repeats clichés about “bringing European civilization and progress” to the “backward” Central Asian peoples, making a claim to legitimacy through its professed ideas about inevitable change and progress (Gorshenina 2007, 292; Geraci 2001).

12. On the mutual influences of Orientalism as an academic discipline and the discourses of “European enlightenment” among leaders of communities studied by Orientalists themselves, see Frank (2012), 163, and Campbell (2002).

When Bubi speaks about the backwardness of the Kazakhs and Sarts, he reproduces these clichés, but he changes the ideology's actors: in his telling, the “enlightened” Turks, having mastered the European system of education, ought to become the *Kulturträger*, the new imperial civilizers. This “civilizing mission” passes from Europeans (Russians) to Muslims themselves, endowing them with their own will and capacity for transformation. Yet the principal civilizers in his telling are Bubi himself and also his rather narrow “elite” circle, whose mission is to elevate the illiterate masses. Muslims are “colonized” in this narrative, appearing in the role of object of reform. It is necessary to civilize them for their own good; after all, without dedicated leadership they could not become a “happy people.”

His imperial project belongs neither to the Russian nor Ottoman Empires. Bubi appears in his narrative as an independent imperial subject, despite the fact that his rhetoric is often built on a comparison with other “happy peoples,” including “Russians.” He is not an intermediary between different empires; he has his own plan for the development of Muslim society. Having absorbed ideas about backwardness, he fights for the happiness and flourishing of Muslims. He strives to create new, educated, competitive people according to the model he regards as ideal. He does this within the space of his own empire, in every place where his influence allows him to carry out this project. In his narrative, of course, imperial officials appear and create difficulties or assist him, such as the Chinese official with the Muslim association. But these officials quickly assume a secondary importance and Bubi continues working on his romantic project.

References

Primary sources

- “Vospominaniia Gabdully Bubi” [Memoirs of Gabdulla Bubi]. Manuscript and Rare Books Division, Scientific Library, Kazan Federal University (ORRK NB KFU), manuscripts 207 T-208 T.

Secondary Literature

- Abashin, Sergei N. 2015. *Sovetskii kishlak: Mezhdú kolonializmom i modernizatsiei* [The Soviet “Kishlak”: Between colonialism and modernization]. Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie.
- Abashin, Sergei N., and B. M. Babadzhanov [Bakhtiër Bobozhonov], eds. 2011. *Rossiiá — Sredniaia Aziia: Politika i islam v XX–nachale XXI vv.* [Russia — Central Asia: Politics and Islam in the XX–early XXI century]. Volume 2. Moscow: Lenand.
- Abashin, Sergei N., et al. 2008. *Tsentrál'naia Aziia v sostave Rossiiskoi imperii* [Central Asia in the Russian Empire]. Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie.

- Akhunov, Azat, and Zavdat Minnullin, eds. 2013. *Znamenitye lichnosti: Istoriko-biograficheskii sbornik* [Famous personalities: A historical and biographical collection]. Kazan: Jien.
- Arapov, Dmitrii Yu., and G. Kosach. 2007. *Islam i musul'mane po materialam Vostochnogo otdela OGPU: 1926* [Islam and Muslims according to materials of the eastern department of the OGPU: 1926]. Nizhnii Novgorod: Medina.
- Arapov, Dmitrii Yu., and G. Kosach, eds. 2010–2011. *Islam i sovetskoe gosudarstvo: Sbornik dokumentov* [Islam and the Soviet state: A collection of documents]. 3 vols. Moscow: Mardzhani.
- Babadzhanov, B. M. [Bakhtiër Bobozhonov], A. K. Muminov, and Anke von Kiugel'gen [Anke von Kigelgen]. 2007. *Disputy musul'manskikh religioznykh avtoritetov v Tsentral'noi Azii v XX veke* [Debates among Muslim religious authorities in Central Asia in the XX century]. Almaty: Daik-Press.
- Babadzhanov, B. M. [Bakhtiër Bobozhonov], and Tatiana V. Kotiukova, eds. 2016. *Turkestan v imperskoi politike Rossii: Monografiia v dokumentakh* [Turkestan in Russian imperial policy]. Moscow: Kuchkovo pole.
- Bobrovnikov, Vladimir O. 2010. "Istoriik dzhikhada Khadzhi-Ali Chokhskii: Opyt kriticheskoi biografii" [The historian of jihad Haji-Ali Chokhskii: An attempt at a critical biography]. *Uchenye zapiski Instituta istoriit kul'tur* (1): 71–93.
- Bobrovnikov, Vladimir O., and Irina L. Babich, eds. 2007. *Severnnyi Kavkaz v sostave Rossiiskoi Imperii* [The North Caucasus in the Russian Empire]. Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie.
- Brophy, David. 2014. "A Tatar Turkist in Chinese Turkistan: Nushirvan Yavshef's Travels in Xinjiang, 1914–1917." *Studies in Travel Writing* 18 (4): 345–56.
- Brophy, David. 2016. *Uyghur Nation: Reform and Revolution on the Russia-China Frontier*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bustanov, Alfrid. 2016. "The Bulghar Region as a 'Land of Ignorance': Anti-Colonial Discourse in Khvārazmian Connectivity." *Journal of Persianate Studies* 9 (2): 183–204.
- Campbell, Elena. 2002. "On the Question of Orientalism in Russia (in the Second Half of the 19th–Early 20th Centuries)." *Ab Imperio* 3 (1): 311–22.
- Campbell, Elena I. 2015. *The Muslim Question and Russian Imperial Governance*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Crews, Robert D. 2006. *For Prophet and Tsar: Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Eden, Jeff, Paolo Sartori, and Devin DeWeese, eds. 2016. "Beyond Modernism: Rethinking Islam in Russia, Central Asia and Western China (19th–20th Centuries)." Special issue, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 59.
- Frank, Allen J. 1998. *Islamic Historiography and "Bulghar" Identity among the Tatars and Bashkirs of Russia*. Leiden: Brill.
- Frank, Allen J. 2001. *Muslim Religious Institutions in Imperial Russia: The Islamic World of Novouzensk District and the Kazakh Inner Horde, 1780–1910*. Leiden: Brill.
- Frank, Allen J. 2011. "Tatar Memoirs of Republican-Era Xinjiang." In *Central Eurasian Studies: Past, Present and Future*, edited by Hisao Komatsu, Şahin Karasar, Timur Dadabaev, and Güljanat Kurmangaliyeva Ercilasun, 461–66. Istanbul: Maltepe University.
- Frank, Allen J. 2012. *Bukhara and the Muslims of Russia: Sufism, Education, and the Paradox of Islamic Prestige*. Leiden: Brill.
- Freedon, Michael. 2005. *Liberal Languages: Ideological Imaginations and Twentieth-Century Progressive Thought*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

- Fätkhi, A. 1962. Tatar ädipläre häm galimnärneng kul'iazmalary: Ikenche bulek [Descriptions of manuscripts of Tatar writers and scholars. Second volume]. Kazan.
- Geraci, Robert P. 2001. *Window on the East: National and Imperial Identities in Late Tsarist Russia*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Gerasimov, Ilya. 2017. "Becoming a Soviet Plebeian Subject: The Story of Mark Miller Narrated by Himself." *Ab Imperio* 18 (1): 183–210.
- Gimazova, Rafilia A. 2004. *Prosvetitel'skaia deiatel'nost' Nigmatullinykh-Bubi (konets XIX–nachalo XX vv.)* [Educational Activities of Nigmatullin-Bubi (the end of 19th–beginning of 20th centuries)] Kazan: Pechatnyi Dvor.
- Gorshenina, Svetlana. 2007. "Krupneishie proekty kolonial'nykh arkhivov Rossii: Utopichnost' ekzostivnoi Turkestaniki general-gubernatora Konstantina Petrovicha fon Kaufmana" [The biggest projects of Russian colonial archives: The utopian exhaustive 'Turkestanica' of General Governor Constantine P. von Kaufman]. *Ab Imperio* 8 (3): 291–354.
- Guseva, Iuliia. 2013. *Rossiiskii musul'manin v XX veke (na materialakh Srednego Povolzh'ia)* [The Russian Muslim in the 20th Century (on materials from the Middle Volga region)]. Samara: Ofort.
- Ilyasi, Tahir Äkhmääd. 1912. *Al-Mufida* [Profitable]. Kazan: Millat.
- Kane, Eileen. 2016. *Russian Hajj: Empire and the Pilgrimage to Mecca*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Kemper, Michael. 1998. *Sufis und Gelehrte in Tatarien und Baschkirien: Der islamische Diskurs unter russischer Herrschaft*. Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag.
- Kemper, Michael. 2005. *Herrschaft, Recht und Islam in Daghestan: Von den Khanaten und Gemeindefürsorge zum ğihād-Staat*. Caucasian Studies 7. Wiesbaden: Reichert-Verlag.
- Khalid, Adeeb. 2015. *Making Uzbekistan: Nation, Empire, and Revolution in the Early USSR*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Kotkin, Stephen. 2007. "Mongol Commonwealth?: Exchange and Governance across the Post-Mongol Space." *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 8 (3): 487–531.
- Light, Nathan. 2012. "Muslim Histories of China: Historiography across Boundaries in Central Eurasia." In *Frontiers and Boundaries: Encounters on China's Margins*, edited by Zsombor Rajkai and Ildikó Bellér-Hann, 151–76. Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz.
- Makhmutova, A. Kh. 1997. "Gabdulla Bubi o despotizme." In *Intelligentsiia Tatarstana v period reform i revoliutsii pervoi treti XX v.* Kazan: Ispolkom.
- Makhmutova, A. Kh. 2005. "Gabdulla Bubi (1871–1922). In *Tatarskie intellektualy: Istoricheskie portrety*, edited by R. Mukhametshin. 2nd edition. Kazan: Magarif.
- Meyer, James H. 2013. "Speaking Sharia to the State: Muslim Protesters, Tsarist Officials, and the Islamic Discourses of Late Imperial Russia." *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 14 (3): 485–505.
- Meyer, James H. 2015. *Turks across Empires: Marketing Muslim Identity in the Russian-Ottoman Borderlands, 1856–1914*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Miller, Aleksei I. [Alexei Miller]. 2008. *Imperiia Romanovykh i natsionalizm: Esse po metodologii istoricheskogo issledovaniia* [The Romanov empire and nationalism: Essays in the methodology of historical research]. Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie.
- Muminov, A. K. 2005. "Shami-damulla i ego rol' v formirovanii 'sovetskogo islama'" [Shami-damulla and his role in creating 'Soviet Islam']. In *Islam, identichnost' i politika*.

- ka v postsovetskom prostranstve*, edited by R. S. Khakimov and R. M. Mukhametshin, 231–47. Kazan: Master Lain.
- Naganawa, Norihiro. 2017. “Transimperial Muslims, the Modernizing State, and Local Politics in the Late Imperial Volga-Ural Region.” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 18 (2): 417–36.
- Potapova, Natalia D. 2015. *Lingvisticheskii povorot v istoriografii* [The linguistic turn in historiography]. St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo Evropeiskogo universiteta.
- Prozorov, Stanislav M., ed. 1998–2012. *Islam na territorii byvshei Rossiiskoi imperii: Entsiklopedicheskii slovar'* [Islam in the former Russian Empire: An encyclopedic dictionary]. Vols. 1–5. Moscow: Vostochnaia literatura.
- Ro'i, Yaacov. 2000. *Islam in the Soviet Union: From the Second World War to Gorbachev*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Ross, Danielle. 2015. “Caught in the Middle: Reform and Youth Rebellion in Russia's Madrasas, 1900–10.” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 16 (1): 57–89.
- Ross, Danielle M. 2017. “Muslim Charity under Russian Rule: Waqf, Sadaqa, and Zakat in Imperial Russia.” *Islamic Law and Society* 24 (1–2): 77–111.
- Sartori, Paolo. 2010. “Towards a History of the Muslims' Soviet Union: A View from Central Asia.” *Die Welt des Islams* 50 (3–4): 315–34.
- Sartori, Paolo. 2017. “Exploring the Islamic Juridical Field in the Russian Empire: An Introduction.” *Islamic Law and Society* 24 (1–2): 1–19.
- Sartori, Paolo, and Pavel Shablei. 2015. “Sud'ba imperskikh kodifikatsionnykh proektov: Adat i shariat v Kazakhskoi stepi” [The fate of imperial codification projects: Adat and Sharia in the Kazakh steppe]. *Ab Imperio* 16 (2): 63–105.
- Schlüssel, Eric T. 2014. *The World as Seen from Yarkand: Ghulām Muḥammad Khān's 1920s Chronicle Mā Tītayniḥ wāq'asi*. Tokyo: NIHU Program Islamic Area Studies.
- Sibgatullina, Al'fina. 2010. *Kontakty tiurok-musul'man Rossiiskoi i Osmanskoi imperii na rubezhe XIX–XX vekov* [Contacts between Turks-Muslims of the Russian and Ottoman Empires at the turn of the XIX–XX centuries]. Moscow: Istok.
- Tol'ts, Vera [Vera Tolz]. 2013. “Sobstvennyi Vostok Rossii”: *Politika identichnosti i vostokovedenie v pozdneimperskii i rannesovetskii period* [“Russia's Own Orient”: The Politics of Identity and Oriental Studies in the Late Imperial and Early Soviet Periods]. Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie.
- Tuna, Mustafa. 2011. “Madrasa Reform as a Secularizing Process: A View from the Late Russian Empire.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 53 (3): 540–70.
- Tuna, Mustafa. 2015. *Imperial Russia's Muslims: Islam, Empire, and European Modernity, 1788–1914*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Usmanov, Mirkasim. 1998. “Tatar Settlers in Western China (Second Half of the 19th Century to the First Half of the 20th Century).” In *Muslim Culture in Russia and Central Asia from the 18th to the Early 20th Centuries*. Vol. 2, edited by Anke von Kügelgen, Michael Kemper, and Allen J. Frank, 243–70. Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag.
- Zelkina, Anna. 2000. *In Quest for God and Freedom: Sufi Responses to the Russian Advance in the North Caucasus*. New York: New York University Press.