



Emir's palace in Bukhara. pre-1914.
Prokudin-Gorskii Collection (Library of Congress).
ID [prok.01871](#).via Wikimedia Commons [Public Domain]

ISLAMIC MOVEMENTS IN THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE DURING AND
AFTER THE FIRST WORLD WAR

AUTHOR(S)	Andrei Zamoiski
COLLABORATOR(S)	
THEMES	World War I
PERIOD	1914-1921

CONTENTS

6 ISLAMIC MOVEMENTS IN THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE DURING AND AFTER THE FIRST WORLD WAR

6 ABSTRACT

6 INTRODUCTION

7 MAJOR RESEARCH ISSUES

7 MUSLIM QUESTION IN THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE

Spiritual life of Muslims in the Russian Empire

Political activity of the Muslim population in the Russian Empire

9 THE MUSLIM QUESTION IN THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE IN DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

Studying Islam and Muslim population in the Russian Empire

Jadidism in the Russian Empire

Muslim schooling

Muslim charity

Suppression of Muslim activities by the Tsarist administration and Russian secret services

Muslim military units in the Russian Imperial Army

The Anti-Russian 1916 Uprising

13 PARTICIPATION OF MUSLIMS IN POLITICAL LIFE DURING THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

Soviet policy towards Muslim people in the period of the Russian Civil War

Muslim “national communism”

Muslim military units in the Red Army

National autonomy according to the Soviet model

16 ISLAM IN THE CAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIA

Situation in the Caucasus

Political Situation in Turkestan

18 ACTIVITY OF MUSLIM PEOPLE IN THE ANTI-BOLSHEVIK RESISTANCE

Soviet repressions of Islamic movements

Muslim leaders in emigration

21 RESOURCES

Primary sources

Published sources

ISLAMIC MOVEMENTS IN THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE DURING AND AFTER THE FIRST WORLD WAR

ABSTRACT

The Russian Empire controlled vast territories populated with Muslim people. The numbers of Muslim believers increased due to the annexation of lands in Central Asia. The Muslim question played a significant role in the Russian Empire. In the period of the First World War, Muslim intellectuals in the Russian Empire were involved in various national movements. Religious and secular reformism, liberal and revolutionary ideas reached and affected the lives of Muslims communities. Islamic movements in the Russian Empire and during the Russian Civil war in 1918-1920 were closely related to national movements of Muslim people (Tatars, Azeri, Kazakhs, Bashkirs and others). There were both supporters and opponents of the revolutionary changes in the post-imperial political landscape. The Soviet leaders used anti-colonial sentiment among Muslim groups to win their support in their bid for power.

INTRODUCTION

Muslims constituted a considerable part of the population of the Russian Empire. According to some estimates, the number of Muslims in the Russian Empire in 1916 reached 20 million. Muslim believers were concentrated mostly in the region of the Volga, the Urals, the Crimea, Siberia, and the Caucasus. These territories were gradually annexed or conquered by the Russian state. In the second half of the 19th century the vast territories known as Russian Turkestan were occupied by the Russians. The two Central Asian states the Emirate of Bukhara and the Khanate of Khiva became the protectorates of the Russian

Empire. Muslim communities within the Russian Empire shared a sense of unity with the world of Islam, and the affinity of Turkic languages and the development of a Muslim press promoted these ideas.

The Russian authorities had a certain awareness of the processes unfolding in Islamic spiritual and social life, which generally supported conservative circles within the communities. Meanwhile, they expressed their concern on impact of modernization on Muslim political and public life. On the eve of the First World War, modernization was affecting all the peoples of the Russian Empire. The Westernized Muslim intellectuals



Prison (zindan) in Central Asia (pre-1914), Sergei Prokudin-Gorskii Collection (Library of Congress). [ppmsc. 04416](#). Image via Wikimedia Commons [Public Domain]

(mostly Tatar intelligentsia) became the active supporters of new trends known as Jadidism. The Russian Empire faced a knot of ethnic and religious problems. For instance, local Muslim populations were dissatisfied with the fact that Russian settlers fled to Turkestan. The First World War negatively impacted ethnic relations in Turkestan and the Caucasus.

The collapse of the Russian Empire created new opportunities for Muslim groups. Their activity focused on reforming spiritual bodies, and establishing new public organizations and schools. The period of political liberalism ended when the Bolsheviks seized power. The existence of nation states combining nationalism and Islam was brief. The Soviet regime with help of the Red Army came to the territories populated by Muslim people with populist slogans of anti-colonial struggle and social reforms. At the beginning, the Soviet religious policy concerning Islam was more lenient compared to that directed toward the Christian population. In the revolutionary years, the Bolsheviks attempted to attract Muslims to the struggle against the common enemy – the White armies. Under Soviet rule, the Muslims were involved in active national-building processes. They were granted certain cultural autonomy within newly established national units – autonomous regions and republics. Yet under Soviet rule, destruction of Islamic traditions and norms started too. The revolts of Muslim groups against the Russian Bolsheviks spread over the territories populated by Muslim believers. However, the Soviet authorities managed to put down rebellions under the banner of Islam. The Islamic movements in the Russian Empire and in the Soviet republics affected Muslim communities abroad. Ideas of combining Islam and socialist or communist ideas were shared by some Muslim activists and were widely used in the 20th century.

This ARG aims to demonstrate how dispersed archival collections for research on the Islamic movements in the Russian Empire can be found within various archival institutions. The majority of documents are to be found in the central and provincial archives of the Russian Federation. Highly important records are preserved in the national archives of Muslim republics within the Russian Federation (Tatarstan, Bashkortostan). One can find relevant materials in the state archives of states that gained their independence in 1991. Archival collections in European countries where the Muslim emigrants settled can also be of use.

MAJOR RESEARCH ISSUES

MUSLIM QUESTION IN THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE

The majority of Muslims in the Russian Empire confessed Islam in its Sunni form. Shiite Muslim communities existed in the territory of present-day Azerbaijan and among some groups in Tajikistan, mainly the Pamiri people. The Muslim question was crucial for the Russian state for external and internal political reasons. Muslim groups lobbied for political recognition but the Tsarists administration was not prepared to provide it. They took into consideration the conflicts between Russian settlers and local Muslim groups for land and water resources, envy toward the success of the Muslim bourgeoisie, etc. Russians feared that Muslims all over the Empire would express their loyalty to the Sultan, the head of the Ottoman Empire, who as a caliph claimed to be the leader of the worldwide Sunni Muslim community.



Tajiks during the Islamic Wedding Ceremony. Library of Congress, LC-DIG-ppmsca-14440. Image via Wikimedia Commons [Public Domain]

Spiritual life of Muslims in the Russian Empire

The Russian authorities tried to administer the spiritual life of Muslim believers and the activities of the Muslim clergy. Muslim religious assemblies were introduced to put the spiritual practices of Muslim communities under state control. The Orenburg Muslim Spiritual Assembly was established in the end of 17th century. The functions of the body included: control of religious practices and the observance of duties of the clergy; building, opening and maintaining mosques and Islamic schools. The Spiritual Assembly

had the duty to register the birth and death of parishioners, marriages and divorces. The activity of the Spiritual Assembly covered the entire territory of the Russian Empire, except the Taurida Governorate, the Caucasus, Poland and Turkestan. The Taurian Mohammedan Spiritual Assembly dealt mainly with the spiritual practices of the Crimean Tatars and Muslims of the western provinces of the Russian Empire.

Central State Historical Archives of the Republic of Bashkortostan

- [The Orenburg Muslim Spiritual Assembly](#)

State Archive of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea

- [The Taurian Mohammedan Spiritual Assembly](#) in Simferopol

In the Transcaucasian region Spiritual administrations both for Sunni and Shiite Muslim communities were established by Emperor Alexander II in 1872. Spiritual jurisdiction of these institutions extended to Muslims of Baku, Yelisavetpol, Tiflis and Yerevan provinces.

State Historical Archives of the Republic of Azerbaijan

- [The Transcaucasian Shiite Spiritual Administration](#) in Tiflis
- [The Transcaucasian Sunni spiritual Administration](#) in Tiflis

The Tsarist administration received propositions to establish a Special Spiritual Administration (muftiate) for Muslims of the North Caucasus.

Central Historical Archive of Georgia

- [The Office of the Viceroy of the Caucasus](#) in Tiflis

The general supervision of the activity of non-Russian Orthodox Church communities, as well as such denominations as Islam, Judaism and others were subordinated to a special body under the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Empire.

Russian State Historical Archive

- [The Department of Religious Affairs of Foreign Confessions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs](#)

The Russian authorities even in the regions where Muslims constituted a small percentage of the population put their spiritual activities under their own control, including, for example, the annual Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj).

Russian State Historical Archive of the Far East in Vladivostok

- [Office of the Governor-General of Priamur in Khabarovsk](#)

Political activity of the Muslim population in the Russian Empire

In the years of the First Russian Revolution of 1905-1907, the Muslim population found encouragement in the political changes. Representation in the Russian Parliament (State Duma) gave political voice to representatives of Muslim communities, who petitioned to the Russian authorities for recognition of their religious and economic rights. The Muslim communities enjoyed their own newspapers, which were published in Kazan, Sankt-Petersburg and other cities.

Central State Historical Archives of the Republic of Bashkortostan

- [The Ufa provincial committee on elections to the State Duma](#)
- [Ufa Provincial Administration](#)

State Historical Archives of the Republic of Azerbaijan

- [The Office of the Viceroy of the Caucasus](#) in Tbilisi

The Muslim question in the Russian Empire in diplomatic relations

Islam and the numerous Muslim communities in the Russian Empire played a crucial role in the relations between Sankt-Petersburg and Istanbul. Some Muslim peoples (Crimean and Volga Tatars, Azerbaijanis, and people of Turkestan) expressed not only religious affinity with the Ottoman Turks, but also feelings of shared ethnic kinship, historical and cultural inheritance.

Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire

- [The Embassy of the Russian Empire in Constantinople](#)
- [Central Asian Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Empire](#)

Within so-called the Great Game (the rivalry between London and Saint Petersburg in Central Asia), the Russian Empire managed to control the foreign policy and even some aspects of internal life of two protectorates: the Emirate of Bukhara and the Khanate of Khiva.

Central State Archive of Republic Uzbekistan

- The Office of the Governor-General of Turkestan in Tashkent

Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire

- The Secret Archive of the Minister of Foreign Affairs

Studying Islam and Muslim population in the Russian Empire

The history of Muslim people attracted some Russian scholars, who were studying the history, languages, cultural and social life of Muslim communities in Central Asia. The interest in Muslim communities also resulted from the colonization of vast territories of Russian Turkestan. Scholars managed to collect rich data on the history and culture of Turkic peoples. The Asiatic Museum under the Imperial Academy of Sciences in Sankt-Petersburg played an important role in initiating research. Such prominent scholars as Wilhelm Bartold were engaged in research on problems of the Muslim population of the Empire.

St. Petersburg Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences Archives

- Bartold Vasily (Wilhelm) (1869-1930), orientalist, academician

Jadidism in the Russian Empire

In the Russian Empire an indigenous Russian variant of Muslim modernism occurred, which was a part of the broader ideology and practice among Muslims communities worldwide. The start of Jadidism could be linked to the activity of Ismail Gasprinski, who was a prominent Tatar modernist and reformer advocating the modernization of the Tatar community. Proponents of Jadidism (Jadids) aimed not only to defend the interests of the Muslim population, especially in the field of education, they were propagating new modern methods of training in Tatarstan, Turkestan and other regions of the Empire with Muslim population.

- Collections of the Department of Rare Books and Manuscripts of the Lobachevsky Library, Kazan State University

Central State Archive of Republic Uzbekistan

- Direction of educational institutions of Turkestan in Tashkent

Muslim schooling

Many Russian Muslim intellectuals (especially Tatars) were deeply involved in the reforming of traditional education within the Jadidism movement. Muslim intellectuals in the Urals, the Caucasus, Siberia and Turkestan took the initiative to open schools and to support the development of public education. Schools for girls were established in Tatarstan, the Caucasus and other regions. These schools were sponsored by the rich Muslim families, for instance by Tatar merchants and traders. After the Russian revolution of 1905 the number of reformed schools continued to grow rapidly.

Central State Archive of the Republic of Dagestan

- The Office of the Military Governor of the Dagestan

National Archives of the Republic of Tatarstan

- Tatar family Aitovs Suleiman and Fatikha

Muslim charity

Societies of Muslim believers were widespread in the Russian Empire to provide charitable assistance and education to poor Muslims, orphans as well as children from poor families. After the outbreak of the First World War, leaders of Muslim communities attempted to organize aid to refugees and wounded soldiers. For example, in Tatarstan in summer 1914 the mullah of a local mosque in Kazan, Sadiq Imankulov and editor of a Tatar newspaper, “Yulduz” Ahmed Maksudov petitioned to the governor to establish the Islamic Committee to raise funds for wounded soldiers. The Tsarist administration generally expressed hostility towards the activity of Muslim philanthropic organizations.

State Archives of the Irkutsk region

- The Irkutsk Society of Muslim believers

National Archives of the Republic of Tatarstan

- The Office of the Kazan Governor

Suppression of Muslim activities by the Tsarist administration and Russian secret services

Objections among the Russian administration to Muslim societies and press were rooted deeply in the fear that the numerous Muslim population would lose its loyalty to the Russian authorities. Some Russian officials as the Procurator of the Most Holy Synod Konstantin Pobedonostsev even petitioned to Tsar Nicolas II with demands to restrain the activity of the Muslim population.

Russian State Historical Archive

- Archival fond of Pobedonostsev Konstantin Petrovich (1827-1907), Procurator of the Synod, member of the State Council

Russian local authorities aimed in every way to hinder the development of Muslim organizations and schools propagating secular knowledge. Before and during the First World War, the most active members of Muslim communities were kept under strict control by the police and the Tsarist secret services. Some of them were arrested and exiled to Siberia or to the North of Russia.

State Archive of the Russian Federation

- The Department of State Police of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Empire

Central State Archive of Republic Uzbekistan

- The Turkestan Regional Security Department in Tashkent

Muslim military units in the Russian Imperial Army

Most Muslims in the Russian Empire had no right to serve in the Russian Army; exception was made only for the people of the Caucasus. With the outbreak of the First World War by consent of Tsar Nicolas II, the Savage Division was formed, consisting of three brigades of six cavalry regiments: Ingush, Circassian, Chechen, Kabardian, Tartar (consisting of Azerbaijanis) and Dagestan. Later the Division included as well the Ossetian Infantry Brigade and Don Cossack Artillery Battalion. Except Don Cossaks, Ossetians and some Abkhazians, the Muslims constituted a majority in the Savage Division. Without any obstructions they were allowed to observe their own religious holidays. Many Russian aristocrats such as Grand Duke Michail Alexandrovich believed honorable to be the commanders of this military unit. For religious reasons, the Muslims in the Russian Imperial Army could not fight against the Ottoman Empire on the side of the non-Muslim state. Therefore, they were sent to the European Theater of the First World War.

Naturally enough the Savage Division was not able to influence the course of the big military campaigns. For three years of the war, the division hosted more than 7 thousand cavalrymen, natives of the Caucasus. However, they were distinguished by their desperate horse attacks and some discipline problems (requisitioning and looting were seen by them as military prowess). Meantime the Division experienced no desertion at all. The Russians noted numerous examples of personal heroism of horsemen – more than half of the division soldiers received military awards. In August 1917, the Savage Division was reorganized into the Caucasian Native Cavalry Corps, consisting of the 1st and the 2nd Caucasian native cavalry divisions. This military unit acted as part of the 8th and 9th armies of the Russian Northern Front. The corps also included the Ossetian Infantry Brigade formed in the summer of 1916. In 1918 all national irregular units were disbanded by the Soviet military authorities. Many former cavalrymen later struggled against the Bolsheviks within the White Army troops.

The Russian State Military History Archive

- [Caucasian Native Cavalry Corps](#)
- [Chechen Cavalry Regiment](#)

Central State Archive of the Archive Services of the Kabardino-Balkar Republic

- [Kabardian Cavalry Regiment](#)

The Anti-Russian 1916 Uprising

On 25/06/1916 Tsar Nicholas II signed a decree mobilizing the Muslim population of Turkestan and the Steppe region (present-day Kazakhstan) to the front line. Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Uzbeks, Tajiks and Turkmen between the ages of 19 to 43 years old were mobilized to dig trenches in the Eastern Front areas (in Russian known as the Western Front). This order was seen as an offense since it came in the midst of agricultural work and on the eve of the holy Muslim month of Ramadan. The local Muslim population responded with a coordinated uprising against Tsarist administration as well as all Russian settlers who were treated as colonizers. During the uprising and its further suppression, thousands of people were murdered both among local Muslim residents and Russian colonists. Tens of thousands of nomads fled to neighboring Eastern Turkestan in China. In the Kyrgyz national memory this event is known as the Urkun uprising. Under the Soviet times, commemoration of the rebellion against the Russian rule was strictly forbidden.

Central State Archive Republic of Kazakhstan

- [Zharkent district military commander of the Turkestan Military District](#)
- [Records of the Semirechensky Regional Committee for clarification and compensation for damages caused to civilians by the Kyrgyz uprising in 1916 in the town of Verny of Semirechensk province.](#)

PARTICIPATION OF MUSLIMS IN POLITICAL LIFE DURING THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

The collapse of the Russian Empire encouraged Muslim groups. All legal restrictions based on religion and nationality were removed by the decrees of the Russian Provisional Government. The representatives of the Muslim communities were involved in the political life of the Russian republic in the period between the Russian February Revolution of 1917 and the October Revolutions. Muslim delegates actively participated in elections to the All-Russian Constituent Assembly in 1917. However, after the Bolsheviks gained power in November 1917, the activity of these groups was abolished.

State Archive of the Russian Federation

- [The All-Russian Commission for Elections to the Constituent Assembly \(Vsevybory\)](#)

National Archives of the Republic of Tatarstan

- [The Kazan district Commission for Elections to the All-Russian Constituent Assembly](#)

The political transformations had strengthened the influence of the Islamic clergy, leaders of Muslim communities, who intended to unite their forces to attain cultural-national autonomy for the Muslim population in the democratic Russian Republic. The All-Russian Congress of Ulems (Islamic scholars and clergy) was opened in Kazan on 20/07/1917, where the representatives of Muslim clergy of Tatarstan, Bashkirs communities, the Crimea, the Caucasus, Turkestan, Kazakhstan, and Siberia gathered to discuss pressing problems of Muslim spiritual life. The management of spiritual life was reformed as well.

[State Archives of the Irkutsk region](#)

- [The Central Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Inner Russia and Siberia](#)

The All-Russian Muslim Council (Milli Shuro) was established on 11/5/1917 at the First All-Russian Muslim Congress in Moscow. Among the tasks of the Executive Committee of the Council were to provide assistance to local Muslim organizations in Russia, supervision on the activities of the Muslim Congresses and distribution of Islamic literature. The All-Russian Muslim Council was dismissed in March 1918.

[State Archive of the Russian Federation](#)

- [The Executive Committee of the All-Russian Muslim Council](#)

Soviet policy towards Muslim people in the period of the Russian Civil War

The relation to Islam was one of the most important questions in the national policy of the Soviet regime. The Muslims were considered as the oppressed peoples during the Tsarist regime. The position of the Bolsheviks was declared officially on 20/11/1917 in a document “To All the Working Muslims of Russia and the East”, signed by Vladimir Lenin and Joseph Stalin, the Head of the People’s Commissar for Nationalities. The Bolsheviks established different bodies within the Communist party and Soviet state institutions to control the Muslim activities and to sovietize the Muslim population. The struggle for their loyalty included a massive propaganda campaigns, which covered areas where Muslims dominated (Tatarstan, the Caucasus, Turkmenistan).

[Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History](#)

- [The Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party](#)
- [The Central Bureau for agitation and propaganda among the Turkic peoples under the Russian Communist Party \(Bolsheviks\)](#)

[Central State Archive of Historical and Political Documentation of the Republic of Tatarstan](#)

- [Kazan provincial committee of the RCP\(b\) \(gubcom\)](#)

The Bolsheviks established special bodies (revolutionary and Soviet executive committees) to enhance the revolutionary transformations and reforms in Turkestan.

[Central State Archives of Turkmenistan](#)

- [Transcaspiian Regional Revolutionary Committee in Ashgabat](#)

[Central State Archives of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan](#)

- [Pishpek district executive committee](#)

The delegates from Muslim communities as well as representatives of other oppressed national minorities of the Russian Empire (Germans, Poles and others) were involved in activities of various Soviet institutions and into different public events (meetings, congresses). Muslim delegates from different regions of Asia participated in the work of the Congress of the Peoples of the East in Baku (1920).

[Central State Archive of Historical and Political Documentation of the Republic of Tatarstan](#)

- [Collections of pictures and documents on the role of Tatar communists](#)

[Bundesarchiv](#)

- [The Communist Party of Russia, The Central Office of the German Section](#)

The Bolsheviks widely used trains and steamers for agitation and propaganda, so-called agit-prop. during the Russian civil war the “agit-trains” operated in different part of the former Russian Empire. In 1920 the train “The Red East” operated in Central Asia, provided the local Muslim population with the latest information on political events and visual materials (exhibitions and etc.).

[Russian State Archive of Documentary Films and Photographs](#)

- [Collection of Agitation train “The Red East”](#)

Muslim “national communism”

The idea to combine “Muslim nationalism” and communism was shared by some Tatar communists. One of the prominent ideologist of so-called Muslim national communism was Mirsaid Sultan-Galiev (Mirza Sultan-Galiev, 1892–1940), though he was repressed by the Soviet authorities. His name was used by Soviet propaganda as symbol of rabid nationalism.

[Central State Archive of Historical and Political Documentation of the Republic of Tatarstan](#)

- [Documents of Mirsaid Sultan-Galiev](#)

Muslim military units in the Red Army

In the years of the Russian Civil War, the Bolsheviks used the Muslim population for their political and military purposes. Tatars, Bashkirians and other Muslim people served in the Red Army. On 17/01/1918, the military department of the Central Commissariat for Muslim Affairs of the People's Commissariat of Nationalities was established. Later, it was transformed into the Central Muslim Military Collegium, subordinated directly to the Council of People's Commissars. During the Russian Civil War many Muslim officers joined the ranks of the Red Army.

Russian State Military Archive

- [The Central Muslim Military Collegium under the People's Commissariat for Military Affairs](#)

The National Archives, Kew

- [Movements of pro-Bolshevik Turkish Officers from Azerbaijan to Tashkent](#)

National autonomy according to the Soviet model

On the foundation of socialist reconstruction and modernization of “backward” territories, the Bolsheviks aimed to solve a wide range of social and economic problems among the Muslim population. A certain degree of attention was paid to nation-building among them. This campaign included active propaganda among Muslim communities to demonstrate the advantages of the Soviet national policy. The Tatar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic was established in 1920.

Central State Archive of Historical and Political Documentation of the Republic of Tatarstan

- [Sviyazhsk county committee of the RCP\(b\)](#)

Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History

- [The Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party in Moscow](#)

ISLAM IN THE CAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIA

Situation in the Caucasus

The role of Islam in the political life of the Caucasus grew during the First World War. The collapse of the Russian Empire and the Russian Imperial Army had reinforced the position of Muslim groups. Many Muslim believers were ready to fight against both Russians and Armenians. The leaders of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (ADR) presented themselves as a secular authority. In October of 1918, in the Ministry of Social Protection and Beliefs was formed (subordinated to the Azerbaijani National Council), dealing with spiritual life of the Muslim community.

State Archives of the Republic of Azerbaijan

- [The Parliament of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic](#)

Ottoman Achives of the Office of the Prime Minister (Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivleri)

- [Political Section of the Foreign Ministry \(Hariciye Nezâreti Siyasî Kısım\)](#)

In the military sphere, the authorities of the new republic collaborated with the Ottoman Empire. The Turkish state promised to provide military assistance to the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. In military units stationed in Azerbaijan all Russian officers were replaced by Turkish ones. The supporters of Pan-Turkic ideas in the South Caucasus (Azeris, Turks, people from Dagestan) joined the ranks of the Army of Islam formed by Turkish officers. The Army of Islam, serving as a military corps of the Ottoman Empire, struggled against the Russian Red Army, as well as against British and Armenian troops.

State Archive of the Russian Federation

- [Commandant of county of Shusha in Azerbaijan](#)

Political Situation in Turkestan

Different political forces aimed to control the situation in Turkestan. The city of Tashkent became a center of Soviet revolution in Russian Turkestan because of the activity of the Russian proletariat there and the strong Red Army presence. Supporters of communist ideas could join the ranks of the Bolsheviks there.

The National Archives, Kew

- [Movements of pro-Bolshevik Turkish Officers from Azerbaijan to Tashkent](#)

The Emir of Bukhara Mohammed Alim Khan faced attacks from the young Muslim reformist group (Jadids), which aimed to modernize the community. The political changes in the former Russian Empire gave them the chance to be involved in political debates, resulting in the Emir's deposing. Struggles between his supporters and the Jadids led to a split within the Muslim community and the intensification of Civil War in the region. Soviet leaders used the situation to annex the territory. The Emirate of Bukhara was conquered by the Red Army. Subsequently a Moscow-dependent Bukharan People's Soviet Republic was proclaimed. Following a similar scenario, the Khanate of Khiva was abolished and replaced with the Khorezm People's Soviet Republic.

The National Archives, Kew

- [Negotiations of the Shah of Bukhara with the Turks](#)
- [Appointment of Diplomatic Representative to Turkestan Government](#)



The Emir of Bukhara, Mohammed Alim Khan.
Sergei Mikhailovich Prokudin-Gorskii Collection (Library of Congress). ppmsc.21887,
Image via Wikimedia Commons [Public Domain].

ACTIVITY OF MUSLIM PEOPLE IN THE ANTI-BOLSHEVIK RESISTANCE

The Russian Civil War of 1918-1920 split the Muslim communities. Some Muslim officers and soldiers joined the White Army in the Caucasus, struggling against the Bolshevik groups and the Red Army. For instance, the Circassian and Kabardian Cavalry Divisions were among integral parts of the the Volunteer Army in South Russia during the Russian Civil War of 1918–1920. The Soviet leaders skillfully used national and religious contradictions in the North Caucasus for their political goals. The Caucasian mountain peoples (Chechens and others) were invited by the Communists to attack the Russian Cossacks, who were portrayed as supporters of the White Army troops of Anton Denikin. The Muslim poor were attracted by the land reform of the Bolsheviks and lured by plots of land from repressed Cossack families. The ideology of Islam was shared by some leaders of the proclaimed Mountainous Republic of the Northern Caucasus Temir-Khan-Shura.

Central State Archive of the Archive Services of the Kabardino-Balkar Republic

- [The Governor of Kabarda](#)

Russian State Military Archive

- [The Headquarters of the Circassian Cavalry Division](#)

In Turkestan different political forces united their efforts in the struggle against the Bolsheviks. The Transcaspian Government based at Ashgabat had representatives of socialist and nationalist groups, supported by the British corps. However, after the withdrawal of British forces in 1919, the Bolsheviks and the Red Army managed to defeat their political opponents in the Transcaspian region.

Central State Archives of Turkmenistan

- [The Office of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the White Transcaspian Government](#)

Many Muslims in Turkestan joined the Basmachi movement. Soviet social and anti-religious policy contributed to the growth of Islamic resistance in many regions of Central Asia. The Bolsheviks met far stiffer resistance than expected in the Ferghana Valley and other regions of Central Asia. The Basmachi drew on Pan-Turkic and Pan-Islamic ideologies to attract Muslims into their ranks. Not all of the Basmachi came from the local aristocracy and the Muslim clergy, which were suppressed by the Bolsheviks. Some poor farmers (dekhans) joined the rebels as well, and Islam played a crucial role in their consolidation. Insurgents attacked not only the Red Army troops but also persecuted local civilians: Russian colonists and native supporters of the Soviet regime. A prominent role in the anti-Bolshevik resistance was played by the Turkish General Enver Pasha, who tried to unite the disparate parts of Basmachi units and to struggle against Soviet regime. The Basmachi movement in Turkestan was suppressed by the Red Army and Soviet activists only in the 1920s.

The National Archives, Kew

- [Activities of Enver Pasha and Russians in Turkestan](#)

The Civil War in Turkestan had completely ruined the local economy. Hunger caused by requisitions and disease spread across the region; this also contributed to the radicalization of local Muslim populations.

The National Archives, Kew

- [Economic situation in Turkestan](#)

Soviet repressions of Islamic movements

All supporters of Islamic movements were considered by the Bolsheviks to be counterrevolutionary forces. The Red Army troops headed by commander Mikhail Frunze and local military units of the Soviet police (militia) suppressed anti-Soviet uprisings, Basmachi activity. Some years later, Frunze would actively participate in reestablishing Soviet-Turkish relations in the field of military collaboration.

Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History

- [Collection of Mikhail Frunze](#)

Russian State Military Archive

- [The Command of armies of the Turkestan Front](#)

Central State Archives of Tajikistan

- [The Police Commissioner of town of Khujand](#)

Muslim leaders in emigration

Some leaders of Muslim communities had to leave the Soviet republics because of the risk of Bolshevik persecution. They moved to the states of Central and Western Europe, where they were engaged in active public activities. A prominent Kazakh political activist Mustafa Shokay (Moustapha Chokay Bey) emigrated to Turkey and later to Europe. The private collections of some activists of national and religious movements can be found within different archival institutions.

Bibliothèque interuniversitaire des langues orientales, Paris (The Interuniversity Library of Oriental Languages)

- Archives of Moustafa Tchokay Bey (L’Archive de Moustapha Chokay Bey)

National Archives of the Republic of Tatarstan

- The collection of documents on the history of Tatarstan, received from the archives of Russia, the CIS and foreign countries

RESOURCES

Primary sources

List of archival institutions and libraries holding the relevant collections on the history of the Islamic movements in the Russain Empire and Soviet republics.

Armenia

National Archives of Armenia

Azerbaijan

State Historical Archives of the Republic of Azerbaijan

State Archives of the Republic of Azerbaijan

Georgia

Central Historical Archive of Georgia

Germany

Bundesarchiv

France

Bibliothèque interuniversitaire des langues orientales, Paris (The Interuniversity Library of Oriental Languages)

Kazakhstan

Central State Archive Republic of Kazakhstan

Central State Archives of Films, Photographs and Sound Recordings of the Republic of Kazakhstan

Kyrgyzstan

Central State Archives of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan

Russian Federation

Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire

Russian State Archive of Documentary Films and Photographs

Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History

Russian State Historical Archive

Russian State Historical Archive of the Far East in Vladivostok

Russian State Military Archive

Russian State Military History Archive

State Archives of the Irkutsk region

State Archive of the Russian Federation

St. Petersburg Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences Archives

The Kabardino-Balkar Republic

Central State Archive of the Archive Services of the Kabardino-Balkar Republic

The Republic of Bashkortostan

Central State Historical Archives of the Republic of Bashkortostan

The Republic of Dagestan

Central State Archive of the Republic of Dagestan

The Republic of Tatarstan

National Archives of the Republic of Tatarstan

Central State Archive of Historical and Political Documentation of the Republic of Tatarstan

Tajikistan

Central State Archives of Tajikistan

Turkey

Ottoman Achives of the Office of the Prime Minister (Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivleri)

Turkmenistan

Central State Archives of Turkmenistan

Ukraine

State Archive of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea

United Kingdom

The National Archives, Kew

Uzbekistan

Central State Archive of Republic Uzbekistan

Published sources

Published collections of primary sources

Azerbajdzhanskaja Demokraticheskaja Respublika (1918-1920). Parlament. (Stenograficheskie otchety) (Baku, 1998)

C. M. Iskhakov, ed., *Iz istorii azerbajdzhanskoi emigracii. Sbornik dokumentov, proizvedenij, pisem* [From history of Azerbaijani emigration. Collection of documents, works, letters] (Moscow, 2011)

Inostrannaja voennaja intervencija i grazhdanskaja vojna v Srednej Azii i Kazahstane [Foreign military intervention and civil war in Central Asia and Kazakhstan], (Eds. T.E Eleiov, H. Sh Inayat, Vol. I (Alma-Ata, 1963)

Vosstanie 1916 g. v Turkmenii. Dokumenty i materialy [Revolt of 1916 in Turkmenistan. Documents and materials] (Ashgabat, 1938)

Mirsaid Sultan Galiev, *Izbrannye trudy* [Selected Works] (Kazan 1998)

Osmanlı Belgelerinde Kazan [Kazan in Ottoman documents] (Ankara 2005)

Secondary sources

Zaynabidin Abdirashidov, *Ismail Gasprinskij i Turkestan v nachale XX veka: svjazi-otnoshenija-vlijanie [Ismail Gasprinskii and early 20th century Turkestan: Communication–relations–influences]* (Tashkent, 2011)

Seymour Becker, *Russia’s Protectorates in Central Asia: Bukhara and Khiva, 1865–1924* (New York, London, 2004)

Alexandre A. Bennigsen, S. Enders Wimbis, *Muslim National Communism in the Soviet Union: A Revolutionary Strategy for the Colonial World* (Chicago, 1980)

Vladimir Bobrovnikov, *Islam in the Russian Empire*, in: The Cambridge History of Russia. Vol. II. Imperial Russia, 1689–1917, Ed. by D. Lieven (Cambridge, 2006): 202-223

Daniel Brower, *Turkestan and the Fate of the Russian Empire* (New York, London, 2003).

Elena I. Campbell, *The Muslim Question and Russian Imperial Governance* (Bloomington, 2015)

Edward J. Erickson, *Order to Die: A History of the Ottoman Army in the First World War* (Westport, 2001)

Doğan Gürpınar, *Ottoman Imperial Diplomacy: A Political, Social and Cultural History* (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2013).

Sarfraz Khan, *Muslim Reformist Political Thought: Revivalists, Modernists and Free Will* (New York, 2003)

Hakan Kırımlı, *National Movements and National Identity Among the Crimean Tatars 1905-1916* (New York, Köln, 1996)

Igor Kuchumov (ed.), and A. Validi, *Bashkir national movement 1917-1920* [Bashkirskoe nacional’noe dvizhenie 1917-1920 gg. i A. Validi] (Ufa, 1997)

Edward J. Lazzerini, “The Archive of Mustafa Chokay Bey : An inventory”, in: *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique*, Vol. 21 (2) (Avril-Juin, 1980): 235-239

James H. Meyer. *Turks Across Empires: Marketing Muslim Identity in the Russian-Ottoman Borderlands, 1856-1914* (Oxford, 2014)

Firouzeh Mostashari, *On the Religious Frontier: Tsarist Russia and Islam in the Caucasus* (New York, London, 2006)

Naganawa Norihiro, “Molding the Muslim Community through the Tsarist Administration: Mahalla under the Jurisdiction of the Orenburg Mohammedan Spiritual Assembly after 1905”, in: *Acta Slavica Iaponica*, Vol. 23: 101-123

Martha Brill Olcott, *Roots of radical Islam in Central Asia* (Washington, 2007).

Rasim Dirsehan Örs. *Rus Basininda Kurtuluş Savaşı ve Atatürk* (Istanbul, Cumhuriyet Kitapları, 2010)

Stefan Reichmuth, “Der Erste Weltkrieg und die muslimischen Republiken der Nachkriegszeit” [The First World War and the Muslim Republics of the Post-War Period], in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 40, 2014, Heft 2: 184-213

Michael A. Reynolds, *The Clash and Collapse of the Ottoman and Russian Empires, 1908–1918* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011)

Glenn L. Roberts, *Commissar and Mullah: Soviet-Muslim Policy from 1917 to 1924* (Boca Raton, 2007)

Henry Francis Skrine, Edward Denison Ross, *The Heart of Asia. A History of Russian Turkestan and the Central Asian Khanates from the Earliest Times* (New York, London, 2004)

Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan, 1905-1920. The Shaping of a National Identity in a Muslim Community* (Cambridge, 2004).

Paul W. Werth, *The Tsar’s Foreign Faiths Toleration and the Fate of Religious Freedom in Imperial Russia* (Oxford, 2014)

Galina Yemeljanova, *Russia and Islam: A Historical Survey* (London, 2002)

Related Archival Research Guides

- [Archival Research Guide On the ruins of the Russian Empire: Establishment of New States in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, 1917-1921](#)
- [Archival Research Guide The Fall of the House of Romanov](#)

Encyclopedic Entries

- [Alexandre Sumpf, Russian Civil War](#)
- [Hans-Lukas Kieser, Minorities \(Ottoman Empire/Middle East\)](#)
- [Wolfram Dornik, Occupation during and after the War \(Russian Empire\)](#)
- [Ronald Grigor Suny, Armenian Genocide](#)

Extra links

- [The collection of the Muslim newspapers “Muslims in Russia Online” by BRILL](#)
- [The project “Kyrgyz Photo Archive”](#)
- [Sultan Galiev - a forgotten precursor Socialism and the National Question](#)
- [Kyrgyz Mark 1916 Anti-Russian Uprising](#)
- [М.Султан-Галиев: «Освободительное движение существует, прогрессирует и развивается» \(Text of Sultan Galiev in Russian\)](#)
- [Manifesto of the Congress to the Peoples of the East. Congress of the Peoples of the East \(Baku, 1920\)](#)