



## Individual Advanced Research Opportunities Program

### Research Report

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***A Search for Embeddedness: “Pan-Turkism” and the Russian Roots of Turkish Nationalism***

#### **Topic of Research**

From July 8 to November 14, 2004, I undertook dissertation research in Azerbaijan under the auspices of an IREX IARO grant. My project, entitled *Turkic Worlds: Community Identity and Cultural Reform in the Russian and Ottoman Empires*, is a social and cultural study of a “failed” nationalist movement, the “panturkist” movement of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

“Panturkism” is generally described as an intellectual movement and as a precursor to the Turkish nationalism of the Turkish Republic. However, rather than crafting, as earlier historiography has done, a coherent narrative depicting the ‘rise’ of panturkism and subsequent Turkish nationalism, my research emphasizes the role of discontinuity, discord and contingency in the sudden conversion to panturkism of the Russian-born Muslim intellectuals shortly after their move to Istanbul in 1908-1909.

Focusing less upon the rise of panturkism in particular and more upon the development of community identity formulations more generally [such as those of the ‘Tatars’, ‘Caucasian Muslims’, and ‘Russian Muslims’], my study begins with an overview of the economic and social changes occurring in Muslim communities in Russia in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century that contributed to the development of modern community identity formation. I then look at the cultural civil wars that accompanied the modernist ‘Jadid’ reform movement in the Crimea, the Volga region, and the Caucasus and discuss the importance of this movement to the later careers of the Russian-born panturkists: Yusuf Akcura, Ahmet Agaoglu, Ali Huseinzade, and Mehmet Emin Resulzade.

The final part of my study then investigates the activities of the Russian-born panturkists after their arrival in Istanbul and the beginning of the publication of their journal, *Turk Yurdu* [Turkish Homeland].

## **Relevance and Contribution to the Field**

My project marks a contribution not only to historiography regarding the development of Turkish nationalism, but also more broadly to scholarship which investigates the relationship between nationalism and Islam, and the development of modern forms of community identity in general. Moreover, whereas most historiography of so-called 'borderland' regions such as Azerbaijan tends to discuss the formation of community identity in terms of present-day communities whose prior coherence is imposed retroactively onto the past, my study emphasizes the severe divisions which existed within what would later come to be seen as a 'community'.

The theme of intra-community conflict and the parallel exercise of defining the parameters of a community while speaking in its name play a large role in my discussion of the reform movement. This part of my study also explores the many coalitions which existed between Muslims and Russians in both the reformist and anti-reformist camps. My project thus differs from most discussion of community identity development in that, rather than emphasizing inter-community antagonisms in the development of community identity (such as Muslims versus Russians), my study demonstrates that, as late as 1913, intra-community antagonisms within the Muslim community were far more important in the shaping of community identity. Additionally, my project also differs from much of the existing historiography in that it emphasizes Russian/Muslim coalitions which existed among both conservatives and reformers.

## **Research Methodology**

Research for my project has been undertaken in Russia and Azerbaijan, and after the conclusion of my research in Azerbaijan will also take place in Turkey. In both Russia and Azerbaijan I have concentrated on three major types of sources: archival materials, scholarly literature, and periodical literature from the late 19<sup>th</sup>/early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In Baku, I have researched archival material in both the Central State Archive [imperial history], the Central State Historical Archive [archive of the Azerbaijani Democratic Republic, 1918-1920], and the Manuscript Institute. Scholarly literature was researched at the library of the Central State Archive, the library of the Academy of Sciences, and the Akhundov [National] Library. Periodical literature in both Russian and Azeri was read at the library of the Central State Archives and the library of the National History Museum of Azerbaijan.

## **Summary of Research Findings and Preliminary Conclusions**

First of all, it has become clear that 'Turkism' did not exist as a large-scale community identity option for Turkic communities in the Russian Empire prior to World War I. Indeed, even those individuals who were later to become known as 'panturkists' tended to speak in the name of other forms of community, such as 'Russian Muslims', 'Tatars', or 'Caucasian Muslims'.

Secondly, there was far more factionalism within Muslim communities in the Russian Empire than has typically been described in historiography devoted to these

issues. Divisions within the Muslim communities tended to form over cultural and ideological issues, such as the proper role for women in society and educational issues. Community identity was frequently invoked during debates over these issues, but discussion of community identity tended to play a secondary role to ideological and cultural issues. Within the Russian Empire, conceptions of community identity beyond that of 'Russian Muslim' or 'Caucasian Muslim' tended to be quite weak.

Thirdly, differences between conservative and reformist Muslims tended to parallel differences between conservative and reformist Russians with regard to the manner in which the relationship between ruler and ruled was imagined. This led to a number of coalitions between Muslims and Russians among conservatives, liberals, and revolutionaries.

Finally, whereas Turkism has traditionally been presented as a precursor to the Turkish Nationalism of the Turkish Republic, substantial differences exist with regard to the role of Islam in these community identity formulations. Whereas the Turkish Nationalism of Mustafa Kemal (Ataturk) tended to present itself in opposition to Islam, the Turkism of the pre-WWI Turkists was bound up entirely with Islam.

### **Suggestions for Future Research Agendas**

Two areas for future research regarding Azerbaijan include the following topics: emigration/immigration of Muslims between Azerbaijan and the eastern Ottoman Empire, and the political role of the Sheyh-ul Islam between the Muslim community and the Tsarist authorities.

### **Policy Recommendations**

If my project has any policy value at all, it would lie in two areas: in its findings that the national and religious identity formulations of the Turkists held a symbiotic relationship with one another; and in its findings that intra-community disputes played a larger role than inter-community disputes in shaping identity among Muslims in Russia.

Whereas the pre-WWI years in both the Russian and the Ottoman empires tend to be treated as the moment in which national and religious hatred were pushed over the precipice, my research indicates that these 'communities' were indeed far less stable and cohesive than they are generally imagined to have been. A number of factions existed within the Muslim communities of Russia and, particularly among the most conservative of these factions, a determined interest in establishing and maintaining political ties with conservative Russian groups and with the Tsarist authorities remained a consistent feature of late imperial Russian history. With this in mind, I believe that my research demonstrates the viability, even the necessity, of cross-community coalitions in the formation of modern political societies.