The various modes of worship, which prevailed in the Roman World, were all considered by the people, as equally true; by the philosopher, as equally false; and by the magistrate, as equally useful.

Edward Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776).

At the end of the nineteenth century, a “Muslim question” confronted the tsarist regime. Islam provoked intense anxieties among Russian elites about political loyalty and social integration. Many conservatives identified a diverse population of some 20 million Muslim subjects—a total exceeding the number of Muslims under the rule of the Ottoman sultan—as a particular threat to the domestic order. Spread throughout the Volga River and Ural Mountains regions, the Crimea, Siberia, the Caucasus, the north Caspian steppe, and Transoxiana, Muslims appeared to present a danger to the stability and integrity of this vast empire.¹ Echoing earlier charges directed at Jews, critics such as E. N. Voronets claimed in 1891 that Muslims acted as a “state within a state.”² Moreover, they maintained ties to millions of co-religionists in states adjoining Russia’s southern borderlands. In an era when the Ottoman sultan Abdülhamid II asserted himself as the caliph of all Muslims, the Ministry of the Interior in St. Petersburg warned local Russian police to monitor Muslim subjects for signs of sympathy with the “idea of a world-wide Muslim kingdom with the sultan at the head” and for evidence that they “pray for the former, and not for the Sovereign Emperor.”³

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¹ In 1897, the first all-imperial census counted some 14 million Muslims (out of a total population of 150 million subjects), although officials conceded that they undercounted Muslims. While estimates ranged as high as 40 million, most Muslim commentators arrived at the figure of 20 million. See S. Rybakov, “Statistika musul’man v Rossi,” *Mir Islama*, 2, no. 11 (1913): 757–63. In the same year, the Ottoman census counted 14.1 million Muslims in the Ottoman Empire. Bilal Eryilmaz, *Osmank Devletinde Gayrimuslim Teb’annun Yönetimi* (Istanbul, 1990), 81.


Muslim intellectuals such as Ismail Bei Gasprinskii rejected charges of disloyalty but shared Russian conservatives' critique of an ostensibly isolated and inward-looking Muslim community, claiming that it "vegetates in the narrow, stifling realm of its old ideas and prejudices, as if isolated from the rest of humanity." Appropriating the language of "reform" and "progress," Gasprinskii condemned his opponents as obscurantists and self-appointed guardians of Islam who rejected participation in the social and institutional life of the empire. The reformers set out to transform Islamic education and legal interpretation and looked to the state to advance science and the Russian language among Muslims. However, the regime remained suspicious of their overtures and continued to regard them as part of a broader scheme sponsored by foreign powers to weaken the Russian state in its Muslim regions.

The categories of these late nineteenth-century actors have largely determined how historians have approached the study of Islam in modern Russia. Reading these conflicts back into the distant past, scholars have tended to replicate the image of a conflict defined, on the one hand, by Muslim struggles against the regime and, on the other, by an internal tension between Muslim "reformers" and Muslim "traditionalists." Whereas alienist historians view the faith as an impregnable barrier against external threats to community and tradition, mainstream Russian historiography maintains that even Muslims who did not openly embrace jihad against the Russians nonetheless stood against, or apart from, the state. In most accounts, only the appearance of Muslim "modernist reformers" (Jadids) in the 1880s disrupts this story of cultural preservation and continuity.

Such interpretations capture an important aspect of the controversies facing imperial and Muslim elites at the fin de siècle but obscure more complex patterns of interaction between Muslim communities and the tsarist regime in the long nineteenth century. From the reign of Catherine the Great, Muslims sometimes resisted or fled Russian military expansion under the banner of Islam. Many actors on both sides represented these clashes as essentially religious in nature. Yet resistance and flight to a neighboring Muslim land (the hıjra) were not the only responses available to Muslims. Nor was the regime exclusively concerned with expelling or converting its Muslim subjects. Even amid the brutal war waged for

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6 For a recent account of Russian military campaigns in the Caucasus that highlights the goal of mass expulsions, see Peter Holquist, "To Count, to Extract, and to Exterminate: Population Statistics and Population Politics in Late Imperial and Soviet Russia," in A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin, Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin, eds. (Oxford, 2001), 111–44; on the Muslim resort to jihad, see Moshe Gammer, Muslim Resistance to the Tsar:
over a quarter century by tsarist forces against the mountain peoples of the north Caucasus, Russian administrators and Muslims frequently found themselves united against common foes. Developed first, and most intensively, in the eastern provinces stretching from the Volga River and Ural Mountains into the steppe, these tactical alliances bound Muslims to tsarist institutions by offering protection to the defenders of "true religion" against "schismatics," "heretics," and others whose errors and innovations might corrupt the faithful. Over the course of the nineteenth century, the regime extended this patronage of Islamic orthodoxy to each newly conquered territory.

The tsarist regime achieved relative stability in managing these large Muslim populations on its southeastern frontiers not by repressing or ignoring Islam but by assuming responsibility for its policing. This article draws on court records, petitions, and denunciations from central and regional state archives as well as local Muslim accounts to show how the Russian state governed as patron and guardian of the faith of its Muslim subjects. Recent interpretations of the empire highlight the tensions between Russia’s imperial and national identities, principally by exploring tsarist policy and educated Russians’ images of non-Russians. This article seeks to shift attention from questions of administration and representation to state-mediated conflicts among Muslims and other groups. The first part of this essay traces Russia’s path to a confessional state committed to backing the construction and implementation of “orthodoxy” within each recognized religious community. Comparisons among Muslims, Protestants, Jews, Buddhists, and other groups suggest a broader pattern of interdependence between religious and state authorities. From the late eighteenth century, despite the close association between the Romanov dynasty and the Orthodox Church, these ties cut across confessional lines and endured into the early twentieth century, when they provided a crucial—but long overlooked—source of cohesion for a diverse polity confronted by divisive secular ideologies. The second part examines these developments more closely with respect to the Muslims of European and southeastern Russia, especially in the

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8 See the innovative studies by Yuri Slezkine, Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small Peoples of the North (Ithaca, N.Y., 1994); Mark Bassin, Imperial Visions: Nationalist Imagination and Geographical Expansion in the Russian Far East, 1840–1865 (Cambridge, 1999); Robert P. Geraci, Window on the East: National and Imperial Identities in Late Tsarist Russia (Ithaca, 2001); Theodore Weeks, Nation and State in Late Imperial Russia: Nationalism and Russification on the Western Frontier, 1863–1914 (Dekalb, Ill., 1996); Austin Jersild, Orientalism and Empire: North Caucasian Mountain Peoples and the Georgian Frontier, 1845–1917 (Montreal, 2002); and Andreas Kappeler, Russland als Vielvölkerreich: Entstehung, Geschichte, Zerfall, 2d edn. (Munich, 1993).
provinces straddling the Volga River and Ural Mountains. It tells the story of how adherents of one religious tradition attempted to deploy the power of the state against their co-religionists to redefine the understanding of community and the content of religious orthodoxy. My aim is to illustrate how various actors understood—and competed to define—true religion and community in dynamic exchanges with the state, not prior to, or apart from, the imperial context but firmly within it.

Muslims seeking endorsement for their own views of religious orthodoxy found

supporters in secular officials who valued Islam as a monotheistic source, albeit inferior to Orthodox Christianity, of stability, discipline, and order. Like the Muscovite litigation of honor disputes, the pursuit of religious struggles here forged a dynamic relationship between local communities and the judicial and policing institutions of the state.\(^{10}\) But in the late eighteenth century, the state mediation of confessional differences formed a new instrumentality of imperial rule, not only over Muslims but over nearly all other non-Orthodox subjects.

While nationalist teleologies have tended to reduce imperial politics to a struggle between empire and the "nation," a closer examination of religious politics reveals a realm of imperial consciousness and state practice obscured by national frameworks and an anachronistic focus on "minorities." Diverse actors deployed police power to refashion non-Orthodox faiths as imperial traditions. Where non-Russians may have on occasion resisted tsarist taxation and conscription, the struggle for true religion established common interests between pious activists and the police. The faithful remade their communities by advancing new visions of religious orthodoxy and by deepening their integration in, and subordination to, the expanding institutions of the empire. Thus Muslims did not inhabit the static and isolated world depicted by Russian critics and reformers like Gasprinskii. Nor did they live within the confines of an unchanging Muslim tradition represented by clerics defending the faith against unlawful "innovation" (\(\textit{bida}\)). The intense controversies that raged among Muslims over religious interpretation and identity extended beyond the elite circles that are so commonly the domain of Islamic history; indeed, as I will show, these conflicts not only engaged laypeople but also drew representatives of the tsarist regime into mediation of disputes over the meaning of Islamic tradition. The adjudication of intracommunal conflicts became a singularly important vehicle for the extension of state power into local life. Neither Islam nor any other religious tradition remained isolated or escaped entanglement with the regime, notwithstanding later nationalist claims that ethnicity served as a refuge against the incursions of the Russian government.

Tsarist religious politics took shape in the competitive international context of empire-building. Religious identities took on new meanings where states pursued imperial expansion as the extension of protection to co-religionists. Both the Orthodox tsar and Muslim sultan devised novel ways to accommodate subjects who shared the faith of their neighbors and European rivals. Ottoman attempts to counter European encroachment brought dramatic reforms in 1839 and 1856 designed to establish legal equality for Muslims and non-Muslims and to cultivate a supraconfessional loyalty to "Ottomanism" (\(\textit{Osmanlılık}\)).\(^{11}\) New European approaches to the utility of religion for state-building proved no less far-ranging in metropole and colony alike. Drawing on contemporary anthropology, many European elites shared the view that "religion" represented a universal determinant of human experience, which imposed certain moral constraints, to varying degrees, on its adherents everywhere. In the view of many late eighteenth and early nineteenth-

\(^{10}\) Nancy Shields Kollmann, \textit{By Honor Bound: State and Society in Early Modern Russia} (Ithaca, N.Y., 1999).

century European officials, states could look to religious elites of diverse faiths as extensions of state authority, to instill moral behavior, social discipline, and submission to the general laws.  

Official backing for particular religious norms appeared to guarantee public order and personal morality, even while “superstitious” elements might simultaneously be selected for “reform.” British Evangelicals sought out converts and the extirpation of “heathen” creeds in diverse imperial settings; however, many colonial administrators in India preferred to act as patrons of local shrines and mosques and undertook the scholarly study and codification of Hindu and Muslim legal traditions as the basis for personal status law.  

Elsewhere, state recognition and incorporation of Jewish and Protestant consistories in France, the Jewish community in Habsburg Trieste, and the “four millets” in the Ottoman Empire provided these regimes with intermediary bodies that facilitated the expansion of centralizing regimes into local life and their colonization of the disciplinary functions of


13 The British remained implicated in the patronage of Muslim, Hindu, and other non-Christian religious institutions in India even after the colonial government responded to missionary pressure by affirming its policy of “non-interference” in law in 1863. See Peter van der Veer, Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain (Princeton, N.J., 2001), 21-23.
religious institutions. Although the local configuration of these arrangements varied from state to state in the nineteenth century, the official institutionalization of religious difference frequently formed a useful modality of both imperial rule and nation-state formation. In turn, elites within these communities looked to the state to acquire new means to police communal boundaries and compel conformity. Where such overtures achieved official intervention, new conceptions of religious identity advanced with the expansion of the state. In place of the romantic ideals of communal preservation and solidarity that historians tend to impose on their subjects, emerging notions of orthodoxy frequently forged ties between pious activists and the state and redrew the boundaries of community.

In Russia, these strategies inspired official sponsorship of an Islamic hierarchy. Drawing on the model of both the Orthodox Church and the Islamic establishment in the Ottoman Empire, Russian officials envisioned a domestic organizational structure for Islam that would lend religious authority to imperial policy and break Muslim ties to co-religionists abroad. In 1788, Catherine founded the Orenburg Muhammadan Ecclesiastical Assembly, headed by a mufti (Islamic jurisconsult), in Ufa to assume responsibility for the administration of mosque communities throughout the Volga and Urals regions, Siberia, the capitals, and the steppe. Muslim marriage, divorce, inheritance, clerical appointments, and other matters relating to Islamic law became objects of bureaucratic regulation. The regime looked to the Orenburg Assembly to bind Muslims through their faith to the Russian fatherland and Romanov dynasty but soon discovered that this hierarchy exercised authority over other Muslims only with the support of the state.


16 Eighteenth-century Russian representations of Islam drew on Orthodox ecclesiology and, following European images, equated contemporary Ottoman institutions with Islamic norms. See F. A. Emin, Kratkoe opisanie drevneishego i noveishego sostoiatia Ottomanskoj Pory (St. Petersburg, 1769); and an anonymous European work translated from Latin, Sokrashcheni Magometanskoj very (Moscow, 1784). Nineteenth-century Muslims also acknowledged the Ottoman model for the tsarist Islamic hierarchy. See Şihabeddin Marjani, Motsafadel-ikhhbar fi ikhvali Kazan va Bolgar (Kazan häm Bolgar khâllere turinda faydalantigan khâbârlar), A. N. Khâyûrullin, ed. (Kazan, 1989), 209.

17 For a thorough study of this institution, see D. D. Azamatov, Orenburgskoe Magometansko Dukhovnoe Sobranie v kontse XVIII–XIX vv. (Ufa, 1999). Known in Russian as the Orenburgskoe Magometansko Dukhovnoe Sobranie, Tatar sources referred to it variously as the Orenburg idar-i shariyya (Orenburg Shari‘a Administration), Orenburg mahkemesi (Orenburg Court), or Orenburg sobraniesi (Orenburg Assembly). It later served as a model for a regional hierarchy for the Crimean in 1794 and two separate administrations for Sunnis and Shi‘ites in the Caucasus in the nineteenth century. On the latter institutions, see Mostashari, “Colonial Dilemmas.” However, the regime retreated from this policy in the conquest and administration of the Muslims of Turkestan after 1865.
The formalization of these arrangements under Nicholas I yielded unintended consequences for Muslims and tsarist officials alike. Provisional alliances frequently rested on the imaginative translation of religious concepts from one tradition to another. Russians could see in Islam a familiar, if imperfect, faith that recognized “eight commandments” and the “Seven Deadly Sins,” while Muslim petitioners could appeal to an image of a state that had offered them “protection” for 300 years and had always afforded them “freedom of religion, without the slightest constraint.” Muslim calls for state intervention in intracommunal disputes yielded a crucial mechanism for state expansion but also made Russian officials responsible for backing Islamic doctrine and propping up Muslim authorities whom they often mistrusted. Crossing confessional lines on behalf of true religion, Muslim activists drew the state deeper into local life. These exchanges among elites, laypeople, and state officials undermined and reconfigured the boundaries between state and society. Muslim subjects created novel forms of community not against but with the state. On occasion, Muslim villagers and townspeople warned that their Christian rulers threatened the survival of the faith by supporting Orthodox missions. But more frequently, the threat to true religion came from within the camp of the believers themselves. Rather than disrupt imperial rule, the pursuit of Islamic orthodoxy formed an essential foundation of tsarist state-building on the southeastern frontiers of the empire.

Formal protections for Islam and other non-Orthodox faiths came only under Catherine II, who introduced a new paradigm of toleration designed to make religious discipline useful to the empire and to project imperial power on its frontiers. But this mode of toleration did not mean official indifference or neutrality toward non-Orthodox religious affairs. In the tradition of the “well-ordered police state” (Polizeistaat), the regime became directly involved in the regulation of central aspects of religious life in nearly every community. For Catherine and her successors, the treatment of each faith depended on its utility to the state; its contribution to the maintenance of empire defined the scope of toleration. The tsars increasingly relied on Orthodoxy as a symbol of the national character of the monarchy, and some bureaucrats shared the church’s view that conversion to the tsar’s religion represented a testament of loyalty to the state. But in the wake of

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18 Sokraschechenie Magometsanskoi very; Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Istoriicheskii Arkhiv (hereafter, RGIA), f. 821, op. 8, d. 1078, ll. 445–445 ob. For similar language, see the petition reprinted in Materiały po istorii Tatarii vtoroi poloviny XIX veka: Agrarnyi vopros i krest’ianskoe dvizhenie 50–70-kh godov XIX v. (Moscow and Leningrad, 1936), 166.

19 See Werth, *At the Margins of Orthodoxy*; and Geraci and Khodarkovsky, *Of Religion and Empire*.


21 Tsarist law backed the monopoly of the Orthodox Church on proselytization and obliged its monarchs to profess Orthodoxy. It permitted only Protestants and Catholics to convert non-Christians under specific circumstances and with explicit state approval. See *Svod zakonov Rossiiskoi imperii*.  

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revolutionary events in Europe, the regime looked to compulsory submission to state-regulated religious institutions, even in non-Orthodox forms, as a safeguard against revolution in Russia, viewing religious conformity as the cornerstone of morality and public order and as a measure of its subjects’ political attitudes. Unlike elsewhere in Europe, tsarist law never permitted its subjects to renounce confessional allegiance and declare themselves “without a confession” (konfession-slos). Obligatory enrollment in a religious community brought nearly all subjects under the bureaucratic supervision of an official hierarchy. The policing of morality thus remained the responsibility both of officially recognized ecclesiastical authorities and of the state. As Mikhail Speranskii, the influential adviser to Alexander I, noted in 1803, in ancient Rome, and “everywhere in well-ordered states,” “preventive police” concerned themselves with censorship, public decorum, the suppression of “rumors and interpretations harmful to the government,” and “the safeguarding of the rites of religion and the curbing of schisms.”

Under Nicholas I, new legal codes declared Orthodox Christianity the “preeminent and predominant” faith of the empire but also systematically backed other religions on the premise that “all peoples inhabiting Russia praise Almighty God in different languages according to the creed and confession of their forefathers, blessing the reign of the Russian Monarchs, and praying to the Creator of the universe for the increase of the prosperity and strengthening of the power of the Empire.” Court records, petitions, and denunciations reveal how, in largely secret proceedings, the state became deeply enmeshed in intraconfessional disputes as the guardian and patron of religious “orthodoxy” for the tolerated faiths of Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Judaism, Buddhism, and both branches of Armenian Christianity. As Laura Engelstein has shown, Nicholas’s government here acted as “the defender of absolute values in a world of revolutionary change.” Like the regime’s new efforts aimed at “disciplining the boundaries of true belief” among the

izdania 1857 go-da, vol. 1, part 1 (St. Petersburg, 1857), 6. The state also backed Orthodox claims of church unity against the Uniate Church, which St. Petersburg absorbed into the state church in 1839; however, the Uniate Church in Poland was not affected until 1875. See Theodore R. Weeks, “Between Rome and Tsarigrad: The Uniate Church in Imperial Russia,” in Geraci and Khodarkovsky, Of Religion and Empire, 70–91.

22 Paul I extended his patronage to the Jesuit order “to arrest the flood of impiety, illuminism, and ... Jacobinism.” Without a Jesuit education for his subjects, the tsar warned, “everything will collapse, and there will not remain either religion or government.” Quoted in William A. James, “The Jesuits’ Role in Founding Schools in Late Tsarist Russia,” in Religious and Secular Forces in Late Tsarist Russia: Essays in Honor of Donald W. Treadgold, Charles E. Timberlake, ed. (Seattle, 1992), 59.

23 Tsarist law recognized “paganism” (iazychestvo) as a tolerated faith but declined to lend institutional support to these communities or protect them from Orthodox proselytism. Dissenters from the Orthodox Church also formed an exception to this pattern, although officials proposed various schemes to subject them to hierarchical organization. See also Laura Engelstein, “The Dream of Civil Society in Tsarist Russia: Law, State, and Religion,” in Civil Society before Democracy: Lessons from Nineteenth-Century Europe, Nancy Bermeo and Philip Nord, eds. (Lanham, Md., 2000), 23–41.

24 M. M. Speranskii, Proekty i zapiski (Moscow, 1961), 92–94.

25 Svod zakonov Rossiskoi imperii, vol. 1 (St. Petersburg, 1832), xvii–xviii.

26 Svod zakonov Rossiskoi imperii, xvi; and Svod zakonov Rossiskoi imperii, 1857 edn., vol. 11, part 1 (St. Petersburg, 1857), 5. By 1858, Muslims (with a population well over 4.1 million) likely outnumbered Catholics as the largest non-Orthodox community in the empire. This conservative estimate includes partial figures on Kazakh nomads but largely excludes the Muslim population of the Caucasus, based on V. M. Kabuzan, Narody Rossii v pervoi polovine XIX v.: Chislennost’ i etnichestv sostav (Moscow, 1992).
Orthodox, its adoption of regulatory measures to ensure conformity in other communities made up another dimension of the tsarist “project of administrative modernization.”

Officials endorsed other faiths’ capacity to order the family, instill morality, and guarantee the overlap of religious and worldly sanction for transgressions against temporal authority. Confessional communities that subjected followers to divine as well as monarchical judgment provided useful forms of social discipline to complement the will of the sovereign. Despite rebellion in 1830–1831 in Poland, for example, F. F. Berg, the governor-general of the Kingdom of Poland and a Protestant, continued to regard Catholicism as “sometimes very useful for the government, because it helps it keep the people in check.” The Digest of Laws made this connection between religious orthodoxy and political loyalty clear in its instruction to rabbis “to explain to Jews their law . . . and make them understand . . . [its] true meaning” and to “direct Jews to observe moral obligations [and] to obey the general state laws and established authorities.” Moreover, the state appointed mullahs, priests, pastors, and rabbis to attend to the spiritual needs (and obligations) of non-Orthodox soldiers, sailors, and prisoners.

In extending toleration, Russian bureaucrats nonetheless retained the authority to intervene in areas that they claimed in the name of the state, including questions of dogma, ritual, and ecclesiastical organization. Polizeistaat toleration supported

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28 The Orthodox leadership and some secular officials remained critical of state policy, but many Russians were inclined to stress the commonalities rather than the differences between Catholicism and Orthodoxy. The extent of rapprochement ranged from mixed marriages and the conversion of aristocratic men and women to Catholicism to proposals for union between the churches. A. I. Turgenev, the first director of the Department of Religious Affairs of Foreign Confessions and a graduate of the Protestant university at Göttingen, harbored aspirations to make Orthodox and Protestants feel themselves “citizens of one world, one church.” Such sentiments found expression in Alexander I’s decree directing all Protestants to commemorate the Reformation on the tercentenary of Martin Luther’s Ninety-Five Theses in 1817; and as in Prussia, the occasion marked the ascendency of those in favor of unifying the Protestant churches. See L. E. Gorizontov, Paradoski imperskoi politiki: Poliaki v Rossii i russkie v Pol’she (Moscow, 1999); Albert M. Ammann, Abriss der ostslavischen Kirchengeschichte (Vienna, 1950); Igor Smolitsch, Geschichte der russischen Kirche, vol. 2, Gregory L. Freeze, ed., Forschungen zur Osteuropäischen Geschichte, vol. 45 (1991); E. A. Vishlenkova, Religioznaia politika: Ofitsial’niy kurs i ‘obschee mnenie’ Rossii aleksandrovskoi epokhi (Kazan, 1997), 138; and Erik Amburger, Geschichte des Protestantismus in Russland (Stuttgart, 1961), 68.

29 Blaming the “disturbances” of 1848 in Europe on “the lack of religion,” Nicholas I encouraged Catholic bishops to “work to instill the faith” against the evils of civil unrest and divorce. “Ecclesiastical authority is separate from temporal [authority],” he added, “but I do not want to limit [the former], on the contrary I desire that it function in all of its power.” Gorizontov, Paradosky, 81–82, 238–39. After the government implicated Catholic clergy in the rebellion of 1863, repression focused primarily on the “Polish element”; the Ministry of the Interior took care to restaff this clergy, though with German seminary students. Izvlechenie iz ocheta Ministra vnuttrennikh del za 1861, 1862 i 1863 (St. Petersburg, 1865), 187–88.

30 Svod zakonov, vol. 11, part 1, 201. The 1836 statute for the Armenian Gregorian Church instructed its archbishops to “monitor the religious behavior of their subordinates and parishioners to assure that it corresponds to the teachings of the gospels” and to “encourage good acts among their subjects, filing them with the spirit of Christ.” Russia and the Armenians of Transcaucasia, 1797–1889: A Documentary Record, trans. and commentary by George A. Bournoutian (Costa Mesa, Calif., 1998), 359.
religion only in its canonical and, where appropriate, “enlightened” forms. The law excluded sectarians, atheists, and “free-thinkers,” as well as those who exceeded the boundaries of “moderation” in their piety. The architects of the first Islamic hierarchy assigned it the task of monitoring the “Muhammadan law” so that “superstition and other abuses, which cannot be tolerated, do not creep into” its affairs. The criminal code protected official non-Orthodox rites from interference, but religion that strayed beyond clerical direction and the approved canon of texts, prayers, and songs threatened the moral and social order. Who determined the content of “orthodoxy” within each tradition and who figured as a “heretic” became a matter of critical importance for imperial officials, religious authorities, and laypeople.

Such policies of toleration figure prominently in analyses that attempt to account for the durability and relative strength of the empire. Andreas Kappeler argues that, from the Muscovite period well into the nineteenth century, the tsars maintained a pragmatic regard for the status quo by coopting indigenous elites into the ruling apparatus and accommodating local customs, beliefs, and laws. Kappeler’s influential view of the accommodationist imperial ethos reflects accurately the intentions of Russian authorities. But the perspective of the communities themselves suggests that the institutional and legal architecture for toleration did not simply confer and maintain the autonomy of established elites. Officials sought out for cooptation individuals whom they took to be the leaders of these communities; however, the search for cooperative elites embroiled them in questions of dogmatic, ritual, and legal interpretation. The prospect of support for particular positions initiated intense competition for patronage within these divided communities. Indigenous mediators between community and state who earned official backing often lacked legitimacy within their own communities. The state did not confirm religious notables in traditional roles as much as it created new elites. State backing confirmed some customary prerogatives, but many of the “traditional” rights for which clergies sought support were, in fact, novel. Patronage enabled Muhammadzhan Husainov, the first mufti, Stanislaus Siestrzeniecwiez, the Catholic metropolitan, and Iraklii Lisovskii and Joseph Semashko, metropolitan of the Uniate Church, as well as the Armenian primates Ep‘rem and Hovhannêes to claim an unprecedented degree of power over their rivals and competing interpretations of their faiths. Confronted with the opposition of other clergies, laypeople, and

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31 In this vein, the state instructed official prelates to “avoid intolerance and undue strictness.” See Bournoutian, Russia and the Armenians, 359. “Excessive” piety also met with police intervention elsewhere in Europe. See Ruth Harris, Lourdes: Body and Spirit in the Secular Age (New York, 1999); David Blackburn, Marpingen: Apparitions of the Virgin Mary in Bismarckian Germany (Oxford, 1993); and, more generally, Werner Conze and Helga Reinhardt, “Fanatismus,” in Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: HistorischesLexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland, Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Kosseleck, eds., Band 2 (Stuttgart, 1975), 303–27.


33 Thus Protestants could gather for “private prayer assemblies,” but only with the permission of ecclesiastical and civil authorities. They had to forego preaching and sacraments and confine themselves to “the reading of Holy Scripture without any commentary . . . and the singing of religious songs, or the saying of prayers, . . . approved by the Consistories” to avoid giving cause to “reprehensible schisms in Christian society.” Svod zakonov, vol. 11, part 1, 34.

34 Kappeler maintains that the “closed social- and value-systems [of non-Russians] remained largely intact into the nineteenth century even after centuries of Russian rule and despite close interactions with Russians.” Russland als Vielvölkerreich, 137.
superiors in Rome, Jerusalem, and elsewhere, the authority of these new elites rested less on clerical or lay consensus than on police power.\footnote{On the first mufti’s efforts to overcome Muslim opposition to the authority of this new institution, see Gosudarstvenniy Arkhiv Orenburgskoi Oblasti (hereafter, GAOO), f. 6, op. 3, d. 4744, d. 2411, and d. 3277. See also Bournoutian, \textit{Russia and the Armenians}, 74–77, 197–98, and 342–43; and N. Varadinov, \textit{Istorija Ministerstva vnitrennikh del}, part 2, book 1 (St. Petersbg, 1859), 411–14. Albert M. Ammann places Lisovskii alongside Sierstzenewicz as representatives of “Gallican-Josephinist” thought. \textit{Abris}, 467.}

The regime conferred new privileges on each confessional elite while subjecting it to more formal supervision. Following the consistorial model established in Napoleonic France, Russian officials sought to maximize the contribution of religion to morality and respect for authority by incorporating its leadership directly into the state. In 1810, Alexander I created the Main Administration of the Religious Affairs of Foreign Confessions. This office (later a department in the Ministry of the Interior) took on the arbitration of controversies within “foreign” faith communities and bolstered the authority of state-approved clergies as the guardians of morality, the presumed foundation of public order.\footnote{In 1817, this body merged with the Ministry of Education to form the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Education; from 1832, it functioned as a department in the Ministry of the Interior. Erik Amburger, \textit{Geschichte der Behördenorganisation Russlands von Peter dem Großen bis 1917} (Leiden, 1966), 176–77; and Vishlenkova, \textit{Religioznaia politika}. On challenges to established traditions, see Michael Kemper, \textit{Sufis und Gelehrte in Tatarien und Baschkiren}, 1789–1889: Der islamische Diskurs unter russischer Herrschaft (Berlin, 1998); Werth, \textit{At the Margins of Orthodoxy}; Eli Lederhendler, \textit{The Road to Modern Jewish Politics: Political Tradition and Political Reconstruction in the Jewish Community of Tsarist Russia} (New York, 1989); and Amburger, \textit{Geschichte des Protestantismus}.}

To this end, many members of these new “clergies” received exemption from corporal punishment. The state imposed financial obligations on them but also created new positions of power and cultural control, such as the censorship of religious literature.\footnote{The privilege of exemption for Muslim clergies was limited to the mufti and highest officials of the Islamic hierarchies. In 1835, Jewish rabbis who had fulfilled their duties “without reproach” for a three-year period were freed from corporal punishment; however, in the Crimea, only the head of the Karaim (Turkic-speaking Jews) was exempt. From 1853, the Buddhist “clergy” was also freed from the knout. Even though few non-military clergies received a state salary, the regime made their communities responsible for paying taxes and other obligations for them. Svod zakonov, vol. 11, part 1, 203, 206. On censorship, see A. G. Karimullin, \textit{U istokov tatarkoi knigi} (ot nachala vozniknoveniia do 60-kh godov XIX veka) (Kazan, 1971); NART, f. 1, op. 2, d. 483; Lederhendler, \textit{Road to Modern Jewish Politics}, 49; and N. Barsov, “Katolicheskaia tserkov’ v sovremennoi Rossii,” \textit{Entsiklopedicheskii slovar’ Brokgauz-Efrona}, vol. 14 (1895), 740. Orthodox censors also monitored literature that polemized with the Orthodox or supported proselytization. See A. Kotovich, \textit{Dukhovnaia tserznya v Rossii} (1799–1855 gg.) (St. Petersbg, 1909), 520–23.}\footnote{Lederhendler, \textit{Road to Modern Jewish Politics}, 48–50; and Michael Stanislawski, \textit{Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews: The Transformation of Jewish Society in Russia, 1825–1855} (Philadelphia, 1983).}

To this end, many members of these new “clergies” received exemption from corporal punishment. The state imposed financial obligations on them but also created new positions of power and cultural control, such as the censorship of religious literature.\footnote{It enlisted Jewish communal government, the \textit{kahal}, in the enforcement of laws against the contraband, even permitting the imposition of the rabbinic ban (the \textit{herem}, formally prohibited in 1804) against smugglers. In 1827, the government capitalized on religious and communal bonds by making the \textit{kahal} responsible for the selection of recruits because, as Eli Lederhendler observes, the authorities assumed that Jews “could be expected to heed their own rabbis and leaders even when they disregarded the laws of the Christian state.” Like the Orthodox clergy, these clergies acted as adjuncts of state authority, discharging bureaucratic duties and performing the “useful” task of preaching submission to Russian law.}

Under Nicholas I, the state consolidated a multiconfessional elite that shared significant resources and ambitious plans for amplifying the powers of central
authorities to discipline religious life through bureaucratic and police controls. The regime acquiesced to the mufti’s claim that his judicial opinions (fatwas) bound all Muslims. When the state empowered Jewish lay and rabbinic elites to implement the conscription of Jews, many used their new power to advance the cause of piety, targeting vagrants, poor families, as well as violators of Jewish law for the draft. State-sponsored reorganization tended toward the centralization of ecclesiastical authority, religious opinion, and wealth, paralleling the institutional transformation under way in the Russian Orthodox establishment and in other churches throughout Europe.

The state benefited from internal contests for religious authority and local initiatives for state patronage against rivals. The regime found Catholics willing to reorganize the church to resemble the French and Habsburg churches, which enjoyed significant independence from the Holy See. Rivalries for supremacy within the Armenian Church involved clerics in Russia, the Ottoman Empire, India, and Iran. In supporting candidates to the office of the patriarchate at Etchmiadzin, tsarist diplomats saw an opportunity not only to cultivate notables with pro-Russian sympathies but also to create an institution with authority over Armenians in neighboring states. St. Petersburg backed local claims to represent “the entire Armenian nation” against skeptical subordinates in Russia and competitors in Jerusalem and Istanbul.

Similarly, the regime assembled the varied Protestant churches in the empire under an “Evangelical Church,” although it favored the Lutheranism of the Baltic German nobles. The statute of 1832 created a general consistorial regime but only intensified local doctrinal and social conflicts. Its endorsement of Lutheran dogma

39 In 1815 and 1818, the first mufti, Muhammadzhan Husainov, asserted in reports to Russian authorities that “whoever scorns the decision and fatwa of a mufti should not be considered a Muslim.” GAOO, f. 6, op. 4, d. 8085, l. 49–49 ob. and 69 ob. See also the exhortations from Muslim authorities in Sbornik islikulariow i inykh rukovodiashchikh rasporizhzenii po okruzi Orenburgskogo Magometans-kogo Dukhovnogo Sobraniiia 1836–1903 g. (Ufa, 1905).

40 Stanislawski, Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews, 29.


42 Without consulting Rome, Catherine elevated Stanislaus Sierstrzeńczewicz to the post of “bishop of all Catholics in Russia.” She also ignored the papal decree of 1773 dissolving the Jesuit Order, making Russia a refuge for Jesuits fleeing other lands. In 1815, St. Petersburg expelled the order from the capitals and banned them from the empire in 1820 (with the exception of the Kingdom of Poland) after Orthodox nobles converted to Catholicism under their direction. Catholics also differed over the printing and distribution of vernacular editions of the Bible by the supra-confessional Russian Bible Society. Pius VII not only declined the tsar’s invitation to join the Holy Alliance but also rebuked Sierstrzeńczewicz for permitting Bibles in Polish without annotations prescribed by the Council of Trent. Dmitrii A. Tolstoi, Rimskii Katolitsism v Rossii: Istoriicheskie izsledovanii, vol. 2 (St. Petersburg, 1876), 157–60; Vishlenkova, Religioznaya politika, 156–58; Ammann, Abriss, 440–41, 457–58, and 461–66; Smolitsch, Geschichte der russischen Kirche, 365; and Judith Cohen Zacek, “The Russian Bible Society and the Catholic Church,” Canadian Slavic Studies 5, no. 1 (Spring 1971): 35–50.

sparked controversy in mixed Lutheran and Reformed communities on the Volga and in southern Russia, dividing congregations over the form of altars, crosses, and the singing of prayers. Against this consistorial system and the standardizing texts and liturgy of the 1832 statute, charismatic preachers inspired movements that broke away in anticipation of Christ's imminent second coming and the end of the world. To counter these “separatists” and “superstitious sects,” Nicholas backed the Protestant “orthodoxy” defined by the general consistory.

And while the state supported Orthodox missions to dissenters, Muslims, and “pagans” from the late 1820s, conversionary efforts principally targeted apostates from Orthodoxy. Buddhists, Muslims, and Jews who engaged in religious disputes with their co-religionists continued to seek—and receive—support for their views within the bureaucracy. In the case of Buddhism, alliances between officials searching for loyal authorities approximating a “church” and monastic elites seeking state backing transformed local hierarchies. In 1853, Nicholas I approved a centralized apparatus in Eastern Siberia to oversee these temples and their “clergy.”

The implications of such measures proved most dramatic for traditions that did not depend on an internally established hierarchical organization. For the Ministry of the Interior, determining what constituted “orthodox” opinion proved even more difficult when its officials could not look to an institution resembling a church structure. Judaism and Islam presented the state with very similar dilemmas. Officials scrutinized Jewish affairs with an eye to cultivating a form of Judaism that would be “useful” to both the Jews and the state. The Nicholaevan regime thus took steps to educate and institute an enlightened rabbinate. Reared in state institutions, “learned Jews” (uchenye evrei) and crown rabbis would supply officials with authoritative knowledge about Jewish law and perform some of the same disciplinary tasks as Muslim clerics. A Rabbinical Commission established in 1848 acted, like the Orenburg Assembly, as the highest authority on the religious law. In Muslim communities, legislation inspired by Orthodox ecclesiology set apart an ecclesiastical elite from lay society and extended the power of the former over the latter. In each “parish” (prikhod), the regime aimed at consolidating a formal “Muhammadan clergy” (dukhovenstvo) from among a group of men previously

44 Amburger, Geschichte des Protestantismus, 88–89, 178–79.

45 In the mid-1840s, the dependence of the Evangelical Church on the regime was demonstrated when the government broke from Lutheran opinion by accommodating separatists and by permitting the Orthodox archbishop of Riga to convert some 100,000 Latvian and Estonian peasants. Over the protests of the general consistory, the state recognized the Württembergers; it also confirmed toleration for Mennonites and extended it to the Baptists after 1879. Amburger, Geschichte des Protestantismus, 88–95; and Izvlechenie iz otecheta Ministra vnoutrennikh del za 1835 god (St. Petersburg, 1836), 49–50.

46 See the insightful Werth, At the Margins of Orthodoxy.

47 In Transbaikal, the empress Anna had cultivated a church-like office, a “head” for Buriat lamas accountable to St. Petersburg rather than to Mongolia, Tibet, or China; the measure increased rivalries among local temples. See K. M. Gerasimova, Lamas i nasional`no-kolonija nata politika tsarizma v Zabaikal’e v XIX i nachale XX vekov (Ulan-Ude, 1957); E. S. Safronova, Budizm v Rossii (Moscow, 1998), 44; Dittmar Schorkowitz, Staat und Nationalitaten in Russland: Der Integrationsprozess der Burjaten und Kalmücken, 1822–1925 (Stuttgart, 2001); and Varadinov, Istoria Ministerstva vnoutrennikh del, part 3, book 2 (1862), 256–59. For criticism of state policy toward Buddhism, see Evstafii Voronets, Russkim-li pravitel’stvom uzakonenno inozemnoe idolopoklonicheskoe lanstvo v pravoslavnoi Rossii? (Khar’kov, 1889).
distinguished only by their learning and their standing in the eyes of local communities. The state assigned monopolies over the performance of marriage and divorce, the rites of burial, and the administration of oaths for state service, legal transactions, and witness testimony. Prohibitions against involvement in trade and other activities formalized and professionalized the clerical status of mullahs and rabbis. Some of these newly appointed clerics evaded attempts to limit their livelihoods, while others welcomed assistance against laypeople (and lower clerics) who performed marriages, burials, or other duties outside of their legal purview.

Non-Orthodox clerics likewise fulfilled a wide range of bureaucratic and social functions that complemented state undertakings in the realm of charity, welfare, and education, overseeing poorhouses, soup kitchens, orphanages, and hospitals. Confessional schools and religious courts played a pivotal role in the imperial educational and judicial systems. Like Islamic courts, the Jewish *beth-din* dealt with marriage, divorce, inheritance, commerce, and contracts. Such institutions administered oaths to soldiers, witnesses, and litigants, demonstrating that the Orthodox creed was not the only pledge of political loyalty recognized by the state. For criminal offenses, subjects answered to both state and ecclesiastical officials; they were subject not only to secular punishment but to “penitence,” “admonition,” and other sanctions administered by religious personnel.

The non-Orthodox faiths played a critical role in disciplining the family. Just as the Orthodox Church regulated marriage to ensure domestic tranquility as a foundation of the political order, the Ministry of the Interior expected non-Orthodox leaders to exert similar controls. Endowed with unprecedented police powers, the new clergies monitored compliance with statutes establishing minimum

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48 A system of licensing circumscribed membership in a male clerical estate. The hierarchy tested the qualifications of prayer-leaders, judges, teachers, and other mosque functionaries. Only clerics with a license (*ulkaz*) from the assembly and the approval of Russian officials were permitted to perform these functions legally. Nonetheless, many itinerant prayer-leaders, preachers, and Sufi guides remained beyond the control of this system. In 1829, fewer than half of the imams in the 129 mosques of the district of Kazan had a license. Kemper, *Stifte und Gelehrte*, 43. Similar regulation came later to Jewish communities. From 1857, only graduates of government schools could be legally selected as rabbis, but unofficial rabbis continued to officiate.

49 See Rizaeddin Fahreddin, *Menashi-i diniye* (Orenburg, 1910), for an influential jurist’s statement of the exclusive rights and duties of licensed Muslim clerics.


ages for marriage, as well as questions of legitimacy, fidelity, incest, and the submission of children to parents. Far from autonomous actors, these authorities remained vulnerable to challenges from both the state and the laity. Officials intervened in marriage disputes at the request of dissatisfied litigants and overturned the rulings of these authorities. Through these new instruments and the appellate mechanisms that linked them to central judicial organs, religious and secular authorities expanded their power to regulate family life. At the same time, this mediating role increased their knowledge about, and access to, local communities, enabling them to police many contacts between confessional groups and proscribe most kinds of intermarriage.

While the administration provided new mechanisms of social control, the law reinforced clerical dependence on secular power by prohibiting existing mechanisms for compelling conformity, such as the rabbinic resort to punishment “by fines, curses, and expulsion from the community.” Similarly, the state denied Muslim clerics the use of corporal punishment, abrogating a range of Qur’anic punishments for theft, adultery, alcohol, and other offenses against religion. Thus a basic tension marked sponsorship of non-Orthodox hierarchies and their disciplinary powers: the law forged interdependence between clerics and state officials by expanding clerical authority in some areas and limiting it in others.

While Russian officials thus sought to establish a clear chain of command running from St. Petersburg into the local parish, mosque, or synagogue community, they also remained responsive to challenges from below. Officials looked to lay initiative to keep clerical abuses in check. They proved sympathetic to lay reformers who admonished mullahs who drank wine or priests who seduced parishioners. Charges of “false teaching” and the exercise of miraculous powers suggested subversion and prompted police investigations. Despite the many shortcomings of the tsarist legal system and threats from co-religionists ranging from social ostracism to murder, laypeople continued to look to the tsar’s justice to overturn religious judgments. Clerical sanction alone remained insufficient to maintain the absolute power of informal religious courts, which relied on state authorities to implement controversial rulings.

Successful overtures to Russian officials depended on the litigants’ ability to translate internal disputes into tsarist political categories. In constructing their

of the Digest of Laws compiled legislation on the organization of familial relations within each non-Orthodox confession.

54 See, for example, RGLA, f. 821, op. 8, d. 951. ChaeRan Y. Freeze has richly documented this pattern of intervention in “The Litigious Gerasha: Jewish Women and Divorce in Imperial Russia,” Nationalities Papers 25, no. 1 (1997): 89–101.

55 See, for example, the intervention of the Ministry of the Interior in preventing marriages between Muslims and Christians in Orenburg province in 1821 in GAOO, f. 6, op. 4, d. 7601.

56 Svod zakonov, vol. 11, part 1, 203.

57 The practice continued in some communities in secret. See, for example, the accusations against a village imam in 1871 in TsGIA RB, f. 1–295, op. 2, d. 122, ii. 59 ob.–60.

58 The first multi-solicited multiple police investigations of rival Sufis. See GAOO, f. 6, op. 2, d. 724 and d. 1026. For Jews, “complaints from the community” served as grounds for investigating rabbis charged with violating the prerogatives of their office. Svod zakonov, vol. 11, part 1, 203. Communal leaders in Minsk took on this challenge by discouraging appeals to outside powers: “No Jew is to testify in favor of a recalcitrant who brought his case to a non-Jewish court, but everyone is bound to testify all he knows in favor of his opponent.” Levitats, Jewish Community in Russia, 202–03.
complaints and denunciations, contestants confronted the challenge of casting their opponents’ views and actions as “heresy”—and thus beyond the scope of official toleration. Heresy in any community constituted a political issue in tsarist Russia: to the police, religious dissent and heterodoxy almost invariably involved a broader challenge to the existing order. When a new “rationalist” hymnal appeared among reformist Protestants in 1819, the tsar condemned the book, vowing to “protect” the Evangelical Church from “rules deviating from Christian morality.”

In 1823, the Ministry of the Interior acquiesced to the Catholic hierarchy’s request to suppress the champions of heterodox doctrine such as Ignace Lindl (who rejected the pope, the cult of the saints, and the Virgin Mary) by expelling the German mystic. Jews, too, looked to tsarist police to aid them against opponents and often represented religious differences as political crimes. From the late eighteenth century, the Talmudic elite in Lithuania drew Russian police into conflicts between them and the hasidim, adherents of a new pietistic movement. Based on Jewish denunciations, police arrested some prominent Hasidic leaders and placed others under surveillance. Hasidim such as the Jews of Rogachev of Mogilev province responded by warning the minister of the interior that their antagonists, such as the “learned Jew” Moisei Berlin, “not only did not come up to the goals and expectations of the government, but served as an example of depravity and the slackening of the fulfillment of God’s law and the dogma of our religion for youth.”

Concern for policing orthodoxy was not limited to the Ministry of the Interior or even to clerical elites. Laypeople also calculated that heresy left unchecked would undermine the community from within. Spokesmen for the Jewish Enlightenment (Haskalah) turned to the regime, seeking patronage for their vision of a religion compatible with “civic responsibilities to the tsar and motherland” as well as “respectable and useful labor in all branches of the crafts, commerce, and

59 When the tsar appointed Count Karl von Lieven to draw up plans for a Protestant consistory and bishopric, local constituencies petitioned to voice fears that the proposal would impose Orthodox and Catholic institutions and rites. However, the appearance of separatist movements, like the Württemberg Confession, persuaded Protestant elites in the 1820s to cooperate with plans for a hierarchy to combat such “sects.” See Varadinov, Istoria Ministerstva vnitrennikh del, part 2, book 1, 627–31, part 2, book 2, 149–50, and part 3, book 3, 110, 276.


62 Deich, Tsarskoe pravitel’stvo, 9.

63 Some activists may have feared that such scandals would also endanger the reputation of the community and the privilege of toleration. On this fear in Europe, see Elisha Carlebach, The Pursuit of Heresy: Rabbi Moses Hayyim and the Sabbatian Controversies (New York, 1990); and in Russia, Deich, Tsarskoe pravitel’stvo, esp. 20–21.
agriculture." Like the hasidim and their foes, proponents and critics of the Haskalah did not shy away from denouncing their opponents.

For Jews and Muslims, toleration circumscribed religious autonomy while linking confessional disputes to state patronage and policing. Despite the conservative aims of officials, support for novel forms of bureaucratic organization and doctrinal emphasis brought change to every community. Ceremonies and liturgies integrated tsar and fatherland, while the rites of marriage, divorce, and death became the business of new hierarchies as well as of the Ministry of the Interior. Religious authorities adopted statutes, archives, examinations, and inspections as measures of internal social control. The recording of marriages, births, divorces, and deaths facilitated a more systematic and uniform application of canon law in Christian confessions, aided in establishing religious norms to govern the inner life of the family and community in others, and assisted the government in the levying of taxes and recruits. Police intervention became a dynamic agent of communal transformation, suppressing particular interpretations of the faith and advancing others. However, this kind of intervention did not emerge as a result of a concerted policy of "divide and rule" or a grand integrative strategy from above. Legislation and institutions governing the non-Orthodox often took shape as ad hoc responses to initiatives from members of these groups. Muslims, Jews, and others themselves shaped this process by initiating and placing limits on contacts with tsarist authorities.

A closer examination of the expansion of the state into the lives of Muslim men and women on the southeastern frontier reveals how the interdependence of Muslim communities and the regime grew out of the practice of Polizeistaat toleration and the collective pursuit of religious orthodoxy. From the fifteenth century, when Russia first acquired Muslim-populated lands, Muscovite rulers accommodated Muslims informally. In the next century, Russian expansion into the Volga and Urals regions put an end to local Muslim dynasties. Islamic institutions continued to exist beyond the purview of the state but remained subject to periodic assault at the hands of Orthodox militants, who leveled mosques and schools. As in other Muslim societies, learned men and women assumed positions of religious leadership outside the auspices of formal hierarchies. No single authority either defined or enforced a particular interpretation of Islamic orthodoxy, and Muslims

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64 Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, eds., The Jew in the Modern World, 2d edn. (New York, 1995), 385. For Judah Leib Gordon, the Enlightenment educator and Hebrew poet, the government appeared as an ally of the Jews, who in turn had "the duty to obey in all sincerity . . . [the tsar's] orders and desire, and to be faithful and eager servants, so that the friends of the Jews will not be swayed from their course." Quoted in Michael Stanislawski, For Whom Do I Toil? Judah Leib Gordon and the Crisis of Russian Jewry (New York, 1988), 30. The pivotal role of the local administration in supporting the Haskalah is highlighted in Steven J. Zipperstein, The Jews of Odessa: A Cultural History, 1794–1881 (Stanford, Calif., 1985), 41–69.

65 In 1870, Moshe Rosensohn defended "upholders of the Torah of Moses" against reformist rivals who, he claimed, sinned "against justice, against God, against his king, against the Torah and his own faith," Lederhendler, Road to Modern Jewish Politics, 90–91, 95–100, 195.
engaged in debate largely without recourse to enforcement beyond the pressures of local, close-knit communal life.\textsuperscript{66}

However, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the regime transformed the foundations of Islamic culture in the empire by extending its patronage to Islamic institutions, including generous state subsidies for mosques, the printing of the Qur’ān and other religious texts, and, most important, the creation of a centralized hierarchy.\textsuperscript{67} The Orenburg Assembly used its regulatory and investigative authority to oversee religious life in each mosque community by administering clerical examinations, licenses, visitations, and the archival recording of judicial decisions.\textsuperscript{68} Through these new instruments, state-appointed Islamic authorities advanced novel understandings of the shari’a, which encompassed the norms, obligations, and rights enjoined by God’s will for all the faithful. While following the directives of St. Petersburg, the mufti and judges (kadis) of the assembly capitalized on official support to pursue their own agenda. They relied on the police to secure the uniform application of a more narrow and, in their view, more “orthodox” range of opinions of the Hanafi school of law (one of the four established Sunni legal traditions) and Naqshbandi Sufi order.\textsuperscript{69} Under Mufti Abdulvakhid Suleimanov, for example, the assembly utilized the Saratov provincial administration to pursue a disputed issue within Sufism about the legality of performing the rite of remembrance of the name of God (zikr) silently or vocally. In 1862, it ordered Muslims in the village of Tatarskie Kanadi to desist from “pronouncing prayers aloud,” declaring that those who did not refrain from vocal zikr would be barred from the mosque as “apostates from the shari’a” (ostupniki ot Sharigata).\textsuperscript{70} Armed with the tools of a modernizing regime, they combated similar departures from Naqshbandi positions and other regional variations in Islamic legal interpretation arising from the varied customs and social conditions of local


\textsuperscript{68} By 1835, the Orenburg Assembly administered 3,036 mosque communities and 4,781 licensed clerics serving a population of 1,034,976 Muslims in sixteen provinces. \textit{Izvlechenie iz otecheta Ministra vnuitenikh del za 1835 god}, n.p. By 1849, these figures had increased to 3,255 mosques with 5,397 licensed clerics, and by 1858, 3,750 mosques, 1,569 schools, and more than 2 million Muslims. RGIA, f. 821, op. 8, d. 999, ll. 5 ob–6; and Marjanii, \textit{Müstafâdel-âkbar}, 210.

\textsuperscript{69} Here, my interpretation differs from the excellent studies by Allen J. Frank, \textit{Muslim Religious Institutions in Imperial Russia: The Islamic World of Novouzensk District and the Kazakh Inner Horde, 1780–1910} (Leiden, 2001); and Noack, \textit{Muslimischer Nationalismus}, which tend to understand the Orenburg Assembly as a more autonomous institution and the expression of “toleration” in the modern liberal sense. One of its most controversial functions included the arbitration of conflicts about the timing of dawn, dusk, and nighttime prayers and holidays in the short winter days and white nights of the northern latitudes of Eurasia. In 1802, the assembly removed an imam for beginning holiday prayers before the time it had appointed. He nonetheless went on to become the second mufti. See Danil’ Azamatov, “Gadbrikhimov, Gabdessalam,” in \textit{Islam na territorii byysheh Rossiiskoi imperii: Entsiklopedicheski slovar’}, vol. 1 (Moscow, 1998), 27. His name also appears in some sources as “Abdusalam Abdarkhimov,” which I will use hereafter.

\textsuperscript{70} TsGARF, f. I–295, op. 3, d. 5048, ll. 9–9 ob.
communities, broad clerical discretion, and the circulation of diverse texts with a plurality of accepted opinions on particular issues.

In sponsoring the mufti, the state gained a voice who recognized the empire as the “House of Islam” (dar al-Islam), a territory where Muslims could fulfill their religious duties. Muslim authorities represented such a potentially valuable resource for the government because they claimed guardianship of an array of legal matters that European jurisprudence would elsewhere break up into “civil,” “criminal,” “ecclesiastical,” or “commercial” law. In determining the religious legality of personal behavior, the men of learning and piety (ulama) interpreted a vast body of sources, including the Qur’an, the sayings and acts of the Prophet, and various legal commentaries. The ulama claimed textual authority in the name of protecting the community against error and irreligion. Prayer-leaders exhorted villagers and townspeople who neglected communal prayer. They reconciled quarreling husbands and wives, educated the youth, and guided Muslims to live pious lives according to the shari’a. At the same time, the muftis cooperated with provincial officials who requested fatwas defining the instructions of secular officials as sacred obligations. Fatwas penned by the second mufti, Abdusalam Abdarkhimov, directed Muslims to send their children to Kazan University for medical training in 1831 and, wielding citations from the Qur’an and other sources, exhorted peasants in 1832 to labor diligently in the fields, sowing and harvesting at the appropriate times, as a defense against poverty and the pleasures of sin. Recognized by the tsar with the award of a gold medal, Abdarkhimov demonstrated his value again in 1836 when he reminded his charges that “each orthodox Muslim is obliged to obey the authorities and the laws” and to avoid sin, which invokes “God’s anger and punishment.” In sermons, treatises, oaths, and prayers for the imperial family, official ulama enjoined obedience, loyalty, and patriotism. They aided the state in carrying out conscription and other administrative functions and preached the submission of children to their parents—and of Muslims to the regime.

Although officials expected the ulama to assist the insertion of the political order into each locale, these Muslim scholars did not necessarily enjoy unbounded authority in their own communities. Even after the introduction of the official hierarchy, their powers still depended on the opinion of the local lay community who elected them and could later petition the state for their removal. Contemporary biographical literature compiled by Muslim scholars celebrated the exemplary lives of those whose reputations for learning and piety empowered them to correct the religion of the people. Notable scholars gained renown for study in cosmopolitan centers of Islamic scholarship such as Bukhara, Kabul, Baghdad, Cairo, and Istanbul, or, closer to home, in the village of Tatarskaia Kargala on the steppe frontier of Orenburg province, and many imams earned (or inherited from their

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71 The first mufti actively campaigned in the borderlands to persuade his co-religionists to seek the protection of the empress. See his letters of 1801 to Kazakhs on the southeastern frontier in GAOO, f. 6, op. 2, d. 724; and on his activities on behalf of the empire in the north Caucasus, V pamiat’ stoletiiia Orenburgskogo magometanskogo dukhovnogo sobraniiia, uchrezhdennogo v gorode Ufe (Ufa, 1891), 40–41.

72 Kemper, Sufis und Gelehrte, 70–73; and Sbornik tsirkuliariov, 3–4.
fathers) a name for being “gentle and gracious” in their relations with members of the mosque community. Still others were remembered for their acerbic wit. Gabbas b. Gabderrāshīd al-Kūshārī once confronted the prayer-leader of the village of Shashī, who had placed the niche marking the direction for prayer on the wrong side of the mosque. When the prayer-leader defended his mistake by citing a text of foreign origin (A Collection of Signs) pointing to Mecca in the West, Kūshārī retorted, “Hey, stupid, was A Collection of Signs written in your Shashi?” Clerics like the unfortunate imam of Shashī became increasingly exposed in the nineteenth century to ridicule and other challenges from scholars and laypeople who could now turn to state institutions to “correct” what they held to be unorthodox practices.

In turn, the fragile position of Muslim clerics forced them to seek out closer association with officials to back their authority. Village prayer-leaders combating debauchery, the refusal to attend prayers, the celebration of “un-Islamic” holidays, and competition from unlicensed rivals frequently had to resort to denouncing their parishioners not only to the Islamic hierarchy but to local police. As the imam Mukhamet’zhan Kuziakhmetov warned his flock in 1871, “for insubordination and non-fulfillment” of the shari’ā, “[you] may be punished by God and the civil court.” The instruments of the modern state became essential to “orthodox” claims about the fulfillment of God’s will.

Recent research has pointed to the intense debates among Muslim scholars in Russia about interpretation of the shari’ā, or divine law. By tracing the contours of these conflicts among Muslim elites, these studies challenge the image of a monolithic and timeless Islam. But the dynamism of these conflicts owed much to the fact that the contest for religious authority extended beyond the elites. Reformist Muslim scholars such as Rizaeddin Fahreddinov wrote numerous treatises defending clerical authority over lay Muslims and the power of men over women who stood to receive a “terrible punishment” in the afterlife for disobeying their husbands. But the licensed keepers of Islamic knowledge were not the only ones committed to correcting those who had ostensibly strayed from the true path. Lay and clerical opponents of the interpretive monopoly of elites relied on a tradition in which interpretation of the shari’ā potentially produced multiple solutions to a wide array of specific problems, ranging from divorce to commercial

73 See the praise offered by one community for its imam in TsGIARB, f. I–295, op. 3, d. 5567, ll. 113 ob.–15 ob.; and on the biographies of regional scholars, Mārjānī, Mōṣṭafādāl-ākhbār, 309–10.
74 Mārjānī, Mōṣṭafādāl-ākhbār, 309–10.
75 TsGIARB, f. I–295, op. 3, d. 122, l. 431 ob. See this file for further clerical denunciations of unruly parishes, including charges that parishioners regularly threatened the imam, became drunk, and refused to attend communal prayers. See also f. I–295, op. 3, d. 1830; and on a cleric’s denunciation of an unlicensed preacher, f. I–295, op. 3, d. 5698.
76 These conflicts propted proponents of the exercise of independent reason (iḥyāḥ) against defenders of the imitation (taqlīd) of the sources of the law. See the learned studies by Stéphane A. Dudoignon, “Dijadisme, mirasisme, islamisme,” Cahiers du monde russe 37, nos. 1–2 (1996): 13–40; and Kemper, Sufis und Gelehrte. Elsewhere, Wael B. Hallaq has questioned the tendency to treat taqlīd and iḥyāḥ as antithetical practices by identifying a wide range of interpretive activity in the exercise of taqlīd, especially among Hanafis, the dominant legal school in the Russian Empire. Hallaq, Authority, Continuity, and Change in Islamic Law (Cambridge, 2001).
77 Fahreddinov, Menasb-i diniye; and Terbiyeli khatun (Kazan, 1899), 6. See also the defense of clerics against the “slander” of laypeople in Mārjānī, Mōṣṭafādāl-ākhbār, 312–14.
transactions. Until the modern era of nation-states and legal codification, Islamic law did not reside in a single text or authority. Indeed, most Muslim scholars regarded fatwas as mere opinions—not binding rulings, except where temporal authorities backed their writ. In a legal tradition that relied on numerous authoritative sources and entertained the possibility of varied outcomes depending on the local social context, determining a single, uniform “orthodoxy” for police enforcement unleashed intense conflicts.

Official endorsement of orthodoxy meant that, in practice, the police became responsible for enforcing Islamic judicial decisions. In an influential study of Islamic law, Lawrence Rosen has highlighted the role of the Islamic judge as a mediator, a facilitator of “social bargaining,” whose aim “is to put people back in the position of being able to negotiate their own permissible relationships without predetermining just what the outcome of those negotiations ought to be.” Under the Orenburg Assembly, prayer-leaders and judges assumed this role in formal legal proceedings and informally outside the mosque courtyard. Many of their decisions

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78 On criticism by regional ulama of the Orenburg Assembly and some of its muftis, see Kemper, *Sufis und Gelehrte*, 50–61, 66–70, 290–99; and TsGIARB, f. 1–295, op. 2, d. 43.

fitted with "the cultural concepts and social relations to which they were inextricably tied." But, equally important, parties to disputes often eschewed mediation and opted for direct state intervention instead. When litigants turned to the police, debates over the shari'a shifted from the local social environment, where neighbors

80 Rosen, Anthropology of Justice, 18.
and spouses might bargain and reconcile, toward coercive settlement of intractable differences under state control. Police involvement in returning wives who had fled their husbands, removing children from divorced spouses, or restraining controversial preachers did not facilitate negotiation but brought a bureaucratic finality to contested cases.

Lay Muslims thus looked to the institutions of the empire to insist on their own interpretations of God’s law. Armed with knowledge acquired in a vast network of Qur’anic schools as well as through poetry, pilgrimage, sermons, and the circulation of printed and manuscript tracts, men and women pointed out the errors of clerics, relatives, and neighbors who avoided the mosque, drank wine, sang prayers, beat their wives, or committed adultery. They even attacked prayer-leaders who failed to perform the rites, such as communal prayer, burial of the dead, and the celebration of holidays, that dramatized the bonds of community. Mediated by translators, scribes, and bilingual informants, calls for state involvement made explicit references to imperial statutes and decrees. Muslims developed novel rhetorical strategies to press their cases, integrating tsarist law codes, decrees, and procedure alongside appeals to the tsar and imperial family, the Qur’an, the sayings and acts of the Prophet, and other Islamic legal literature. Denunciations that translated local conflicts over spiritual authority and theological interpretation into the vocabulary of tsarist law and the Orthodox Church proved most successful in launching police investigations. The criminal code became a valuable tool in the hands of Muslims who learned to cast their opponents as self-styled “saints,” “pretenders,” and “schismatics” (raskol’niki) or to connect them with inciting conversion to Islam.

For the seekers of true religion, like the villagers of Bazitamak in Orenburg province who denounced their imam to Tsar Nicholas in 1849, intervention became a catalyst for strengthening the community and a guarantor of Islamic orthodoxy. They argued that the state, too, benefited from true religion and suffered from its neglect; in the absence of prayers led by the imam, “the Muhammadan people [had] almost begun to forget its faith,” and youth strayed toward criminality “without reproach from the imam about fear of God.” In Kazan, Muslims tried to solicit police intervention “in accordance with both the shari’a and the civil law” against

81 From the earliest period of Islamic history, Muslim scholars have identified the moral obligation to “command right and forbid wrong” as a duty incumbent on every Muslim. On the development of this doctrine, see Michael Cook, Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought (Cambridge, 2000).

82 See, for example, petitions that cited volume 11 of the Digest of Laws and other official texts in NART, f. 1, op. 3, d. 7615, ll. 12–12 ob.; RGIA, f. 821, op. 8, d. 775, ll. 1–8, d. 1078, ll. 445–47, and d. 614, ll. 15–82. On similar strategies among Russian peasants, see David Moon, Russian Peasants and Tsarist Legislation on the Eve of Reform: Interaction between Peasants and Officialdom, 1825–1855 (Basingstoke, 1992).

83 Mufti Husainov artfully employed this language in the early nineteenth century. GAOO, f. 6, op. 2, d. 724, ll. 135–135 ob. See also a representative case from the late 1850s: RGIA, f. 821, op. 8, d. 995. Articles 1159–64 of the criminal code defined such acts as offenses in Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiskoi imperii, vol. 20, no. 19, 283 (August 15, 1845) (St. Petersburg, 1846), 817–18. Tsarist officials also commented on Jewish knowledge of criminal law in making their accusations against co-religionists. See, for example, Deich, Tsarskoe pravitel’stvo, 46.

84 TsGIARB, f. 1–295, op. 2, d. 43, ll. 1215 ob.–1216.
Muslim women who appeared in public with "open faces" and engaged in prostitution.\(^{85}\)

When Muslim peasants in Orenburg province addressed a petition to Nicholas I in 1833 to seek his help in ridding the village of their prayer-leader, they were motivated not by feelings of ethnic solidarity but by the conviction that the state would serve the cause of piety by punishing their imam, Sharafutdin Rakhimov. For these peasants, the conflict with Rakhimov represented a struggle to live according to God's law and to remove the polluting influence of an imam who refused to lead the community in worship, tormented the souls of the dead by neglecting their burial, and even beat one of his denunciators to a state of "great ill-health." Acting on their denunciation, the local police removed the imam from his position for "deeds carried out not only against the Muhammadan religion and its rules but also imperial statutes" and thereby affirmed these petitioners' vision of the regime as the disciplinary instrument of a community governed by the sacred law.\(^{86}\)

Similarly, in February 1832, peasants in the district of Kazan gathered to condemn their mullah for provoking God's punishment, but they did not confine themselves to the rough justice of the village. The men of the community turned against Mullah Lupman Fatkullin to the township administration, seeking his removal and expulsion from the village. They informed local authorities that Fatkullin violated the shari'a by ignoring the five daily prayers, disregarding his obligation to instruct the children, and subjecting especially pious men—and even women—to "foul insults." The villagers echoed many Muslims who complained that the failings of their prayer-leaders had led to the decline of morals and the corruption of youth. Their denunciations drew on established anti-clerical tropes about greedy and self-interested mullahs. But pious concern for the collective obligations of the divine law may also have reflected local adaptation of new forms of Sufi thought transmitted orally by scholars and in manuscripts that circulated throughout the empire.\(^{87}\) By appealing to authorities outside of their own village, and beyond the Muslim community, these locals effectively challenged the licensed ulama; they looked to the regime to restore "collective prayer" and spare the community from "the shudder of divine punishment," which the villagers saw in "the recent [outbreak of] the dangerous disease of cholera near our village."\(^{88}\)

Notwithstanding the ambiguous status of appeal in the Islamic tradition, Muslims embraced the practice in Russia as a means to challenge the outcome of Islamic law court cases and safeguard the rights and obligations that they understood as essential components of the shari'a.\(^{89}\) Laypeople challenged prayer-

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\(^{85}\) NART, f. 1, op. 3, d. 7615, l. 12 ob.

\(^{86}\) TsGIARB, f. I–295, op. 3, d. 625, ll. 5–15. For further examples of tensions between prayer-leaders and parishioners, see RGIA, f. 821, op. 8, d. 615; TsGIARB, f. I–295, op. 3, d. 910, d. 5185, and d. 5698; and Frank, Muslim Religious Institutions, chap. 4.

\(^{87}\) Dudoignon, "Djadidisme, mirasisme, islamisme"; and Kemper, Sufis und Gelehrte.


\(^{89}\) Evidence of appeal in other Muslim societies has emerged in a number of recent studies. See David S. Powers, "On Judicial Review in Islamic Law," Law and Society Review 26, no. 2 (1992): 315–41; and on women, Fariba Zarinebaf-Shahr, "Ottoman Women and the Tradition of Seeking Justice," in Women in the Ottoman Empire: Middle Eastern Women in the Early Modern Era, Madeline C. Ziffi, ed. (Leiden, 1997), 253–63. First introduced to Islamic law courts in the north Caucasus under Shamil's imamate, the principle of appeal became a central aspect of tsarist administration through "customary law" in the region as well as in Turkestan from the 1860s. Bobrovnikov, Musul'mane
leaders and judges by looking beyond the village or town mosque community to the police, the Orenburg Assembly, and the minister of the interior, whom a petition from mullahs in Orenburg province in 1863 styled the “Minister of Interior and Muslim Religious Affairs [sic].” Similar appellate mechanisms appeared in other empires, but tsarist officials defended “orthodox” interpretation of the shari’ā more consistently than their British or French counterparts. Where European judges incorporated considerations of “equity” and Roman legal principles, Russians looked almost exclusively to authoritative interpretation of the Islamic tradition. In the tsarist setting, Muslims had access to two interrelated modes of appeal. In the first, aggrieved parties, as individuals or as kin groups, contested the resolution of divorce, inheritance, and other disputes by asking the Orenburg Assembly to review the case. In the second, litigants petitioned Russian officials ranging from the local bailiff to the emperor to overturn the rulings of local ulama, to compel husbands to refrain from beating their wives, or otherwise commit themselves to live “in accordance with the shari’ā.” In both types of appeal, the process began with the composition of a petition or complaint (usually on the basis of oral testimony) at the offices of the local police; the police investigated claims about the violation of the shari’ā, gathered evidence, and then oversaw the execution of the final judgment. Litigants might simultaneously pursue both strategies or, after exhausting the first option, turn to the tsar with confidence that the laws of the empire supported God’s law.

Both state archival records and Muslim historical sources show how contests over religious authority quietly transformed these small, face-to-face communities and their relationship to the state, as men and women adopted the practice of soliciting intervention to contest the outcomes of divorce, inheritance, and other cases involving the shari’ā. In 1820, Bibi Kiz Bike petitioned the mufti to secure maintenance (nafaqa) from her husband. In the same year, a villager named Sayyid from the Volga province of Simbirsk abrogated a marriage contract with his future son-in-law, Mecid, by refusing to permit his daughter Bibi Habibe to marry her fiancé. Mecid charged Sayyid with violating an agreement sanctioned by the shari’ā and turned to the district police chief, who organized an investigation and gathered testimony from the villagers. After consulting the Orenburg Assembly, the police instructed local mullahs to assist in determining the legality of the contract on the basis of Islamic law. The mullahs apparently tried to reconcile the families of the betrothed, but, when mediation failed, the mufti Husainov put an end to the case by ruling that Sayyid was obliged to turn his daughter over to Mecid—a judgment to be delivered to the litigants and carried out jointly by the mullahs and the police. By the second quarter of the century, Muslims in over a dozen provinces had learned to act on the social and religious obligation to discipline co-religionists

Severnogo Kavkaza, 154–66; and Robert D. Crews, “Allies in God’s Command: Muslim Communities and the State in Imperial Russia” (PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 1999), chap. 5.

90 Materiały po istorii Tatarii, 166.


92 This paragraph is based on a reprint of the original correspondence of the mufti in Tatar and Persian in Rizaeddin Fahreddinov, Asar, vol. 4 (Orenburg, 1903), 190–91. The document refers to the official by his first name and patronymic, Nikolai Fedorovich.
by turning to the regime and its Islamic institutions to restore the communal religious standards and the purity of the faith commanded by God's law.

While recourse to tsarist law became an essential tool in the hands of Muslims whose competing visions of the shari'a animated clerical rivalries and village feuds, men and women also looked to the state to compel their spouses to live “according to the shari'a.” As in other Muslim societies, women emerged as particularly active litigants. Often assisted by guardians and kin, they utilized courts and appeals to restrain abusive husbands, defend their honor, and even initiate divorce based on the claim that the shari'a accorded them these rights. Women such as Khamida Salikhova, from the village of Novoe-Baltachevo in Orenburg province, turned to Nicholas I to protest the brutality of their husbands, asserting in petitions that physical abuse justified the awarding of a divorce “in accordance with the Muhammadan faith.” Invoking the protection of imperial law and officials, appeals from disgruntled wives, disappointed husbands, and frustrated prayer-leaders seeking justice and fulfillment of the divine will made the tsarist police arbiters of the most intimate of religious and familial disputes.

At mid-century, the crisis of the Crimean War and fighting against the Ottomans provoked doubt in the minds of provincial officials and many Muslim peasants and townspeople about the continued convergence of interests between Muslims and their Christian rulers. Rumors of forced conversion on the Volga led some Muslim villagers to conclude, according to a local investigation of Muslim attitudes in Samara province, that the war with the Ottomans would endanger toleration, reckoning that, since “Christians suffer oppression in Turkey,” then “our government, too, will do the same with the followers of Islam [islamizm].” Increasingly anxious about “fanaticism,” provincial officials were also disconcerted by reports that Muslims collected money and offered prayers for the victory of the sultan, in addition to proselytizing among their non-Muslim neighbors and storing gunpowder for a rebellion. But whereas the regime resorted to mass expulsions and encouraged flight from the militarily sensitive borderlands of the Caucasus and the Crimea in the wake of the war, it discouraged emigration from other regions and

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93 Allen Frank reconstructs the story of a communal defense of a woman’s honor in *Muslim Religious Institutions*, 141–42. The criminal code also prohibited husbands’ “cruel treatment” of their wives but left “injury,” “blows,” and “abuse” ill-defined. Mufti Suleimanov affirmed this representation of rights within the shari'a in his instructions to judges in 1840: “according to Islamic law, men are not permitted to subject their wives to beatings leading to the drawing of blood and the breaking of bones and pull their hair.” TsGIARB, f. I–295, op. 3, d. 1096, ll. 29–29 ob. Women frequently initiated divorce by *khul*, whereby they received the husband’s permission to dissolve the marriage, often in exchange for the payment of a compensation. Of 3,836 recorded Muslim divorces in Ufa province between 1866 and 1868, 81 percent were by *khul*. A. Z. Asfandiarov, *Bashkirskaiia sem’ia v proshlom* (XVIII–pervaiia polovina XIX v.) (Ufa, 1997), 72–73. On similar strategies in Ottoman courts, see Ronald C. Jennings, “Women in Early 17th Century Ottoman Judicial Records—The Sharia Court of Anatolian Kayseri,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 18 (1975): 53–114.

94 TsGIARB, f. I–295, op. 3, d. 1749. Of the roughly 1,200 cases that the Orenburg Assembly handled annually in the 1880s, the largest number (200–250) involved inheritance disputes, followed by divorce cases (up to 150). *V’pamiat’,* 36.

95 Materialy po istorii Tatarii, 156–64.
attempted to dispel rumors that agitated mullahs and Orthodox priests alike. Ofﬁcials in St. Petersburg remained committed to the common moral language of sin and divine punishment that continued to make Islam useful in administering these provinces, despite warnings of “fanaticism” from local governors and bishops.

In the postwar reform era, the central government accommodated these protests by imposing more restrictions on the autonomy of Muslim authorities. The Ministry of the Interior increasingly subjected local appeals to the scrutiny of non-Muslim scholars trained in the newly established disciplines of Oriental studies. The regime took these figures to be not only more trustworthy in their devotion to the state but truer to the “correct” meaning of the Islamic tradition that they derived from their study of texts. Russian ofﬁcials thus assumed greater responsibility for deﬁning and enforcing Islamic “orthodoxy,” even as they registered growing skepticism about the competence and reliability of its traditional spokesmen. In reviewing appeals for the ministry, scholars such as the St. Petersburg University professor Alexander Kazem-Bek frequently called the decisions of the Orenburg Assembly into question. In 1865, the appointment of Selim-Girei Tevkelev to the post of Orenburg mufti bolstered the authority of Orientalist “experts.” A retired staff cavalry captain, nobleman, and decorated veteran of campaigns against both the Ottomans and the rebellious Poles, Tevkelev lacked systematic training in the Islamic tradition. Through consultation on speciﬁc cases, Orientalists interpreted the shari‘a in new ways. Removing the process of disputation and discretionary interpretation from the social environment of the mosque community, they established binding precedents and limited the range and ﬂexibility of Islamic interpretation by privileging a handful of legal texts that summarized major opinions of the Hanafi school of law. Scholars built on the “orthodox” agenda of the Orenburg Assembly by narrowing the latitude of Islamic jurisprudence but simultaneously undermined its authority by shifting ﬁnal control over Islamic law judgments to the upper echelons of the appellate hierarchy in St. Petersburg. Kazem-Bek in particular contributed to the ofﬁcial redeﬁnition of the shari‘a as a species of positive law, reducing the range of outcomes to a single judgment on a uniform basis.

While Russian nationalists, Orthodox bishops, and Orientalists threatened the

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66 According to Bedri Habıoğlu, between 1855 and 1907, some 600,000 emigrants from the Caucasus region reached Ottoman lands, and many hundreds of thousands more may have died on the way. Relocations and expulsions had been a strategy of Shamîl’s forces and, on a broader scale, those of the tsarist army in the northwest Caucasus. Like the Russian forces, Ottoman diplomats (including those whose families traced their origins to the region) encouraged the migrations, promising assistance in resettlement. The Ottoman press cast this development as the religious obligation of hijra to a Muslim land (hıcre etme), a characterization that remains alive in popular memory. On the varied motivations of the migrants, or muhacir, see Habıoğlu, Kafkas’dan Anadolu’ya Göçler ve İskanlar (Istanbul, 1993), esp. 67–73. On Muslim expulsions and transfers of other Muslims in the region, see Rukiya Ş. Sarafutdınova, “Zwei wiedereinrückte arabische Dokumente aus der Zeit des Kaukasuskrieges,” in Muslim Culture in Russia and Central Asia, vol. 3, Anke von Kügelgen, Asırbek Muminov, and Michael Kemper, eds. (Berlin, 2000), 525–26; and Bobrovnikov, Musulmane Severnogo Kavkaza, 17–19, 22–23.

67 The position of Islamic clerics came to resemble that of Brahmin pundits in colonial India. Their authority, Lata Mani argues, “was problematic: the fact of being native simultaneously privileged and devalued them as reliable sources. The pundits were essential to ‘unlocking’ the scriptures for ofﬁcials. But they were also believed by ofﬁcials to be the ‘devious minority’ against which it was the mission of colonization to protect the ‘simple majority.’” Mani, “Contentious Traditions,” 135.

68 V pamiat’, 43–45; and Danil’ D. Azamatov, “The Muftis of the Orenburg Spiritual Assembly in the 18th and 19th Centuries: The Struggle for Power in Russia’s Muslim Institution,” in Muslim Culture in Russia and Central Asia from the 18th to the Early 20th Centuries, vol. 2, Anke von Kügelgen, Michael Kemper, and Allen J. Frank, eds. (Berlin, 1998), 355–84. See also M. Kazem-Bek, Izbrannye
power of the ulama, they did not displace Islamic law from its pivotal position at the
nexus of state administration and the life of the local mosque community. Indeed,
the rise of Orientalist scholarship gave laypeople new venues—and new langua-
ages—for advancing their understandings of the sharī'a. Despite the change in tone of
many provincial officials, laypeople continued to look to the state as a force for
salvation. In 1862, the peasant Khasan Ishmukhametev of Kazan province turned to
the emperor “Alexander Nikolaevich” for justice. He sought his intervention in a
bitter conflict with the local mullah, who refused to confer a name on his newly born
son and pray for his sick daughter, who was also then absent at her burial, and,
finally, who snubbed Ishmukhametev before the entire community at the celebra-
tion ending Ramadan. 99 Similarly, in 1865, the family of a Bashkir woman named
Shagimardanova pursued a case against local ulama and the Orenburg Assembly all
the way to the minister of the interior. In a petition to Peter Valuev, her father
complained that his son-in-law had abused his daughter, accusing her of leading a
“dissolute life” and cursing her mother with “impermissibly foul language.” He
argued that the “words of the Holy Law on the insulting [things said] in relation to
my wife and daughter give me the boldness to ask Your Excellency to order the
investigation of this case and to give my daughter a divorce according to our
religion.” Challenged by the scholar Kazem-Bek, who backed the ruling of the
assembly, Shagimardanova and her father failed to win state backing for their views
about the role of Islamic tradition in sanctifying the honor of their family. 100
Nonetheless, such appeals continued, guaranteeing the implication of the regime in
the mediation of some of the most fundamental conflicts regarding religious
authority and interpretation in Muslim communities.

The Muslim expectation that the tsarist police functioned as guardians of
Islamic orthodoxy persisted despite challenges from provincial and church officials
who sought to confine police support to the Orthodox faith alone as the pillar of the
empire. In 1869, the governor-general of Orenburg province, N. A. Kryzhanovskii,
protested a request to the police from the Orenburg mufti Tevkelev. The mufti had
instructed the police in provinces inhabited by Muslims to distribute a circular
requiring clerics to sign pledges that they would lead moral lives according to the
sharī'a, root out sin, and “serve as an example [to parishioners] in their lives,”
inspiring them to fulfill “the obligations of a citizen, not only with respect to religion
but in relation to obligations toward the authorities [nachal'stvo].” 101 Kryzhanovskii
refused Tevkelev's request, claiming that none of the “foreign confessions” had this
right, adding that “to compel the Russian police to affirm and spread the sharī'a in
Russia, to drive the people into the mosques and invite parishioners to make
monetary payments for the benefit of fanaticism [izuverstvo], in truth, may be taken
for mockery of the Russian authorities.” While Kryzhanovskii balked in the name
of safeguarding the “state interest in relation to the Muhammadan religion,” the
governors of Astrakhan, Samara, Simbirsk, Viatka, Perm, Semipalatinsk, Nizhnyi
Novgorod, and Tobol'sk provinces had already complied with Tevkelev’s request,
apparently in agreement with the mufti’s representation of the mandate of his

100 RGIA, f. 821, op. 8, d. 964, ll. 1 and 18–ob. 19.
101 RGIA, f. 821, op. 8, d. 609, l. 7.
Figure 5: A lithograph representing the Tatars of Kazan. F. K. Pauli, Description ethnographique des peuples de la Russie (St. Petersburg, 1862). Courtesy of the Library of Congress.
Figures 6 and 7: A decree of 1844 established model mosque designs inspired by contemporary church architecture. However, this attempt to manage and contain the symbolic expression of Islam and impose a uniform imperial aesthetic on mosque construction proved impractical. In 1862, the government abandoned the obligatory model plans shown here but still required that drawings for mosque plans be approved in advance by Russian provincial officials. Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi imperii, vol. 19 (St. Petersburg, 1845). Courtesy of the Library of Congress.
institution: “Strictly prosecuting the sins and constantly caring for the moral education of the people, it fulfills its religious and civil duty, always with the view that good morality, following the path of the law, and irreproachable behavior serve as a pledge of the best civic virtues.”

The minister of the interior admonished Tevkelev to use “moral influence, and not police measures,” but the assembly’s own archival records show that resort to police intervention remained a basic component of its procedure. Indeed, dependence on state institutions endured as a fundamental aspect of Islamic legal practice in the empire, even among Muslims who were divided on other questions of interpretation. In 1891, the same year that the critic of state policy E. N. Voronets charged Muslims with acting as a “state within a state,” the reformer Gasprinskii published an editorial in his newspaper defending a recent decision by the Senate confirming Muslims’ right to litigate inheritance disputes in state courts according to the shari’ā. Responding to critics of the Senate’s interpretation of the law, Gasprinskii argued against permitting Muslims to opt out of their religious law in state courts: “To grant Muslims the right to divide inheritance according to both civil and shari’ā laws would mean purposefully to introduce discord into the Muslim family, and to make mandatory division only according to civil laws would be a restriction in the use and fulfillment of religion, and this is completely alien to the spirit and letter of Russian state laws.” Like their opponents, Gasprinskii and other reformers assimilated the legal language and bureaucratic practices of the state within their own competing interpretations of the faith, pressing the regime to stay true to its promise of toleration by safeguarding the divine law against its enemies both outside and within the Muslim community.

Like Alexis de Tocqueville’s ancien régime, the tsarist state assumed an indispensable role in the minds of its Muslim subjects. In turn, the adjudication of Islamic disputes shaped the basic legal and institutional structures of the state by linking the struggle for the shari’ā to the expanding power of local policing and judicial institutions. The Islamic hierarchy experienced only relative success in mobilizing religious authority in support of empire. But a broader, and largely unintended, pattern of integration emerged from below: through the everyday mediation of Islamic legal disputes, Muslim litigants incorporated tsarist law and institutions into their pursuit of the obligation to “enjoy good and prohibit evil.”

For Muslims and tsarist officials alike, imperial politics retained a critical confessional dimension into the early twentieth century. The “Muslim question” divided government ministers on the question of continued state patronage of Islam while supplying local Muslim factions with new labels such as “Pan-Islam” to castigate their foes before tsarist officials. But the state confronted in Islam neither a “minority” nor a “nationality” problem. These concepts entered the vocabulary

102 RGIA, f. 821, op. 8, d. 609, ll. 2 ob.–3, 6, and 13 ob.–15. See also ChaeRan Y. Freeze’s discussion of like-minded Orthodox Jewish leaders, Jewish Marriage and Divorce in Imperial Russia (Hanover, N.H., 2002), esp. 247–55.
103 RGIA, f. 821, op. 8, d. 609, I. 9 ob. But see also TsGIARB, f. I–295, op. 2, d. 122, I. 432 ob.
104 Tercüman/Perevodchik, August 21, 1891. The Tatar version of this text is even more explicit, calling on Russian courts to guarantee “shares according to Islamic law” (ser’i hisseleri).
106 Concern with “minorities” and “minority rights” became a central constitutional issue in
of officialdom only in the last years of the regime and had a very limited impact on state policies and popular politics. As in other communities, some educated Muslim elites imagined their co-religionists as a “nation” (millet). But relatively few Muslims adopted the language of nationality. From the perspective of the regime, too, religious affiliation endured, alongside “estate” (soslovie), as the most basic official social category.

The story of Islam and other non-Orthodox faiths in nineteenth-century Russia suggests the extent to which the tsarist regime and empire rested on confessional foundations. Muslims and Jews shared more than legal disabilities such as restrictions on admission to the legal profession in the last decades of the old regime. Religious institutions and personnel performed essential tasks on behalf of the local organs of government, administering justice, welfare, and education. In regulating the family and moral lives of the tsars’ subjects and linking religious rituals to imperial themes, state-sponsored clerics constructed the moral order that underpinned the empire. A supraconfessional elite cultivated an imperial consciousness that cannot be reduced to “some other history,” that of the “nation” or even of “ethnicity.” Imperial confessional identities were reshaped through the pursuit of religious goals within the framework of tsarist laws and institutions. By assuming the role of a confessional state and deploying police power on behalf of orthodoxy in each of the tolerated faiths, the regime deepened its regulatory and disciplinary reach into non-Orthodox communities. Religious controversies molded the local contours of the state, and pious activists succeeded in building the state from below. Police intervention on behalf of the state and true religion bound Muslims and other non-Orthodox to the tsarist political order, transforming both Islam and the empire.

European law only at the conclusion of World War I. On the incompatibility of “minorities” and imperial conceptual frameworks, see Aron Rodrigue, “Difference and Tolerance in the Ottoman Empire, Interview by Nancy Reynolds,” Stanford Humanities Review 5, no. 1 (1995): 81–90. In Russia, Muslim elites first deployed the results of the census of 1897 in debates about representation in the Duma and the use of language in localities where Muslims formed the “predominant people” (galip kavim, also translated into Russian in a footnote as preobladaiushchaa narodnost’). See Musi Bigiieff, Rusya muslimlara titfagın programı (St. Petersburg, 1906), 18.


Ranajit Guha, Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India (Durham, N.C., 1999), 4.

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