1 A world of Muslims

> The number of books that I have copied has reached two hundred twenty three volumes with this one. I started copying books when I was twenty. Now I have reached the age of ninety-five. I never wore glasses. I burned burning sticks and wrote. Indeed, something called "candle" has become available nowadays, but I don't have the money to buy even one night's supply of candles. I have gotten old now; maybe I won't have the power to write after this![1] an Islamic scholar from a village in the Cheliabinsk District, died in 1841

İşmuhammed bin Zâhid was born in 1740 in a Muslim village located midway between the cities of Orenburg and Kazan. He led a vagrant life as a young man. His voice was beautiful. He liked to sing, dance, and drink. He made a name for himself with his singing and dancing at the drinking parties that he frequented, but he remained an inauspicious figure – the Volga-Ural Muslims at best tolerated the habitual drinker and merrymaker that he was.[2] He married around the age of twenty-two, and one day, shortly after getting married, he walked away from his village without informing anybody. None could have guessed what happened to him until he returned as a learned scholar of Islam twenty-five years later. He had first gone to Mecca and performed the Hajj. Following this, he had studied in the madrasas of Cairo for eight years, and then traveled and studied in various other cities of the Ottoman Empire for several years. Finally, he had decided that it was time to settle down, and here he was, back in his village. We don't know what happened

[1] Rızâeddin bin Fahreddin, *Âsar: Üz Memleketimizde Ulgan İslâm 'Âlimleriniñ Tercüme ve Tabaqaları, 2 vols*. (Kazan: Tipo-litografiia imperatorskogo universiteta, 1900–8), vol. 1, 456.

[2] On the attitudes of Volga-Ural Muslims about drinking, see National Archive of the Republic of Tatarstan (NART), f. 1, op. 3, d. 7797, ll. 1–6; Fahreddin, *Âsar*, vol. 1, 233 and 376–77 and vol. 2, 200–01, 337–38, 357–58, and 384–86, *Sbornik tsirkuliarov i inykh rukovodiashikh rasporiazhenii po okrugu Orenburgskogo Magometanskogo dukhovnogo sobraniia 1841–1901 g.*, Russian-language part ed. (Ufa, 1902), 95–97, and Ğabdürreşîd İbrâhîmof, *Tercüme-yi Hâlim yaki Başıma Kilenler* (St. Petersburg: Elektro-pechati A. O. Ibragimova), 3.

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to his first wife. He married a second time after his return and had several children. He earned his living by reciting the Qur'an in religious gatherings and by teaching. He became famous in the Volga-Ural region as an accomplished Islamic scholar and reciter. All of his four sons became scholars following their father's example, and his daughters married either scholars or notable persons. He died in 1840 at the age of one hundred.[3]

İşmuhammed bin Zâhid's remarkable transformation while away from his village catapulted him from the Volga-Ural Muslims' boundaries of tolerance to a model, ideal figure: an Islamic scholar. When he left for Mecca, he traveled away from the physical space where his community was located, but he moved closer to the center of an extra-spatial medium of exchange, a Muslim domain, where Muslims connected to one another across time and space and negotiated their shared norms and imaginaries. Islamic scholars had a central role in this exchange as its primary negotiators thanks to their skills and privileges in transmitting, interpreting, and authorizing the Islamic traditions and their ability to connect otherwise insulated Muslim communities to other Muslims in distant locations.

The ability of Islamic scholars to connect to a broader Muslim universe had a critical significance for the Volga-Ural Muslims due to the absence or paucity of other agents who could have shared in this role. The Volga-Ural Muslims were the subjects of an Orthodox Christian-ruled empire, their nobility was incapacitated by the Russian occupation, and they had very few big merchants until the late nineteenth century. They predominantly lived in the countryside as agricultural peasants or seasonal nomads until the collectivization campaigns of the early Soviet period,[4] and they rarely ventured beyond the surrounding area of their villages or market towns.[5] Islamic scholars, on the other hand, traveled extensively, especially during their years of education as

[3] Fahreddin, *Âsar*, vol. 1, 448–53.

[4] See the statistics in Henning Bauer, Andreas Kappeler, and Brigitte Roth, *Die Nationalitäten des Russischen Reiches in der Volkszählung von 1897*, vol. 1 (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1991), Table 1, pp. 69–72, Table 6, pp. 77–78, and Table 40, pp. 214–230; and Noack, *Muslimischer*, 49–54.

[5] A few possible exceptions to this rule were Hajj trips for a select group of Muslims who could afford it, occasional visits to shrines, marrying men from distant places and moving to their communities for some women, and military service for a very small number of male Muslims although most of the conscripts never returned due to the long duration of service. See Battal-Taymas, *Kazan Türkleri*, 69; Allen J. Frank, "Islamic Shrine Catalogues and Communal Geography in The Volga-Ural Region: 1788–1917," *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 1996 7(2): 265–86; and Kefeli-Clay, "Kräshen Apostasy", 206–29.

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madrasa students. Mobility and the long years of camaraderie in madrasa hostels enabled them to forge lasting connections with each other. They weaved these connections into scholarly networks through kinship ties, letters, Sufi associations, and debates over the controversial issues of religion. And they tapped into a broader, transregional network of Islamic scholars that extended primarily to Transoxiana but also to Daghestan, Afghanistan, India, and, increasingly in the late nineteenth century, to the Ottoman territories and Egypt. It was mainly the Islamic scholars who reached beyond local Muslim communities in the Volga-Ural region, and the extent of their reach played a decisive role in shaping the way Volga-Ural Muslims interpreted and responded to the larger world until the Soviet regime liquidated Islamic scholars in the 1930s.[6] Hence, tracing the stories of these scholars can open windows into the experience and imaginaries of Volga-Ural Muslims, and thankfully, we have a number of biographical dictionaries, *ṭabaqāt* books as they are commonly known in the Islamic literature, that provide us those stories.[7]

A remarkably comprehensive biographical dictionary written in the Volga-Ural region is the work of Rızâeddin bin Fahreddin.[8] With a profound interest in history, Fahreddin had organized the archive and library of the Orenburg Spiritual Assembly while working there as a high-ranking official (*qadi*) in the 1890s. The works and official records of thousands of scholars that had accumulated at the building of this institution in Ufa since its foundation in the late eighteenth century provided Fahreddin with the initial material he needed to start working on a biographical dictionary. In 1900, he prepared a short fascicule with thirty entries and published it under the title *Âsar*, meaning "traces." Shortly after this fascicule appeared in the bookstores and market stalls of the Volga-Ural region, he started receiving letters from Muslims in various parts of the Russian empire with further information and documents about other scholars to be included in the following fascicules of

[6] On the "ulama," see *Encyclopedia of Islam*, New Edition, s.v. "ulama"; R. Stephen Humphreys, *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 187–88; Frank, *Islamic Historiography*, 21–46; and Frank, *Muslim Religious Institutions*, 106–50.

[7] On a general discussion of biographical dictionaries in Islamic historiography, see Humphreys, *Islamic History*, 186–208. On a short note about biographical dictionaries written in the Volga-Ural region, see, Allen J. Frank and Mirkasyim A. Usmanov eds., *An Islamic Biographical Dictionary of the Eastern Kazakh Steppe, 1770–1912* (Boston: Brill, 2005), xviii–xx.

[8] On the assembly, see Alan W. Fisher, "Enlightened Despotism and Islam under Catherine II," *Slavic Review*, 1968 (4): 542–53; Azamatov, *Orenburgskoe*; and Crews, *For Prophet*. Later, in the Soviet period, Fahreddin would serve as the head (*mufti*) of this assembly too.

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the dictionary. As a result, what started as Fahreddin's personal project turned into a collective effort among Volga-Ural Muslims to document the lives of their past scholars and, occasionally, a few prominent lay persons. Fahreddin painstakingly compiled and published his fascicules for eight years. He organized the entries according to the death dates of the scholars. By 1908, he had published 565 entries and reached the 1870s. Many of his entries included copies of personal letters, notes, or legal opinions (*fatwa*s) written by various scholars, in addition to biographical information about their genealogies, marriages, children, teachers, students, and places of study or residence.[9] What follows in this chapter is an outline of some of the central exchange relations that shaped the Volga-Ural Muslims' world from the mid eighteenth to the late nineteenth centuries as those relations emerge primarily from this extraordinary compilation of biographies. It cannot do justice to the individual experiences of millions of Muslims who lived and died in that world, but it provides a look, albeit a telescopic one, into the contours of their collective experience.[10]

The geography of studying

As among most other Muslim peoples, Muslims of the Volga-Ural region had a widespread system of elementary religious education. Mosque imams, or "*mullahs*" in Volga-Ural Turkic, taught the boys in their neighborhood while their wives taught the girls. If the children were young enough, either the mullah or his wife could teach both sexes too. Sometimes, the parents constructed a separate building for instruction, but in many cases, the mosque or the mullah's house served that purpose. Almost all Muslim children studied subjects such as the basics of Islam and Qur'anic recitation for a few years in these classes known as

[9] Liliia Baibulatova, *Asar Rizy Fakhreddina: istochnikovaia osnova i znachenie svoda* (Kazan: Tatar. kn. izd-vo, 2006) is a useful introduction to *Âsar*. 260 more biographical entries that Rızâeddin bin Fahreddin wrote after 1908 remained unpublished. The manuscripts of these entries are preserved at the Scientific Archive of the Ufa Scientific Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Ufa. An earlier biographical dictionary by Şihâbuddin Mercânî is also worth mentioning here: Şehabeddin Mercani, *Müstefad'ül-Ahbar Fi Ahval-i Kazan ve Bulgar*, 2 vols. (1900; reprint Ankara: Türk Kültürünü Araştırma Enstitüsü Yayınları, 1997). However, I relied primarily on *Âsar* because of the collective effort involved in its production and because Fahreddin had partly incorporated *Mustafād al-akhbār* in *Âsar*.

[10] My purpose in this chapter is to outline exchange relations and not to provide an ethnographic description of the world of the Volga-Ural Muslims. Two helpful sources for more ethnographic insight are Frank, *Muslim Religious Institutions*; and Kefeli-Clay, "Kräshen Apostasy", especially 93–234. For major issues of debate among the region's Islamic scholars, see Kemper, *Sufis und Gelehrte*.

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maktabs. Then, a small number of male students who wanted to acquire a degree of knowledge that would entitle them to be recognized as scholars continued their studies in higher educational institutions, called madrasas, for approximately fifteen to twenty years.[11]

Madrasas of the Volga-Ural region were often small, poor, and short-lived. In Muslim-ruled countries, such as the Ottoman Empire or the Bukharan Emirate, charitable endowments protected by law, called *waqfs*, provided stable income and organizational continuity to the madrasas.[12] The Russian administration, however, destroyed the Volga-Ural Muslims' waqfs following the invasion of Kazan in 1552.[13] One could still endow the building of a village mosque, a few shops, some land, or even books, but these small endowments were not protected by law, and they did not compare with the large, income-producing waqfs of the Muslim-ruled countries.[14] Only in the nineteenth century did the registering of waqfs officially become possible in the Volga-Ural region and, paralleling the improvements in the Muslim population's economic conditions, only in the last decades of the imperial regime did wealthy Muslims start to create large endowments.[15] Until then, a madrasa in the Volga-Ural region was usually comprised of a scholar who offered regular

[11] For a short description of Volga-Ural maktabs and madrasas, see NART, f. 142, op. 1, d. 39. Also see Iakov Dmitrievich Koblov, *Konfessional′nyia shkoly kazanskikh tatar* (Kazan: Tsentral′naia tip., 1916).

[12] On the role of charitable endowments in Muslim-ruled countries, see Jonathan Porter Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo: A Social History of Islamic Education* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 6–9 and 44–94; Hasan Akgündüz, *Klasik Dönem Osmanlı Medrese Sistemi* (Istanbul: Ulusal Yayınları, 1997), 349–50, 472–74, and 479–92; and Adeeb Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 31–32.

[13] For the destruction of Muslim political elites and religious institutions after 1552 and the incorporation of Transoxiana into the Russian empire in the nineteenth century, see Rızâeddin bin Fahreddin, "Millî Matbu'âtımız," *Şûra*, 1908 (10): 324–26, and (17): 525–27; Ravil Emirhan, *İmanga Tugrılık* (Kazan: Tatarstan Kitap Neşriyatı, 1997), 17–26; Frank T. McCarthy, "The Kazan Missionary Congress," *Cahiers du monde russe et sovietique*, 1973 14(3): 311; Michael Khodarkovsky, "'Not by Word Alone': Missionary Policies and Religious Conversion in Early Modern Russia," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 1996 38(2): 274–279; Türkoğlu, *Rızaeddin Fahreddin*, 26–30; Frank, *Muslim Religious Institutions*, 165–76; and Khalid, *Jadidism*, 83–84.

[14] For examples of such small endowments, see Fahreddin, *Âsar*, vol. 1, 298–309 and vol. 2, 47–49, 457–59, and 494–95; Noack, *Muslimischer*, 75–76; Frank, *Muslim Religious Institutions*, 232–36; and Liudmila M. Sverdlova, *Kazanskoe kupechestvo: sotsial′no-ekonomicheskii portret* (Kazan: Tatarskoe Knizhnoe Izdatel′stvo, 2011), 276–78.

[15] Daniel D. Azamatov, *Iz istorii musul′manskoi blagotvoritel′nosti: vakufy na territorii evropeiskoi chasti Rossii i Sibiri v kontse XIX – nachale XX veka* (Ufa: Bashkir University, 2000), 4–24; and Daniel D. Azamatov, "Waqfs in the European Part of Russia and Siberia in the Beginning of the XXth Century," in *Islamic Civilisation in the Volga-Ural Region*, ed. Ali Çaksu and Rafik Muhammetshin (Istanbul: Organisation of the Islamic Conference, 2004), 257–60.

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instruction at the madrasa level and, perhaps, some boarding arrangements for the students. Only rarely did the continuing support of a village congregation or wealthy family provide some sort of organizational continuity to the Volga-Ural madrasas.[16]

Madrasas of the Volga-Ural region followed a curriculum that was commonly used by the scholars of the Hanafi legal school.[17] While the institutionalized madrasas in Muslim-ruled countries could employ several instructors and offer advanced courses for the entire Hanafi curriculum, or at least for a majority of its subjects, most of the madrasas in the Volga-Ural region had only one instructor. No matter how erudite this single scholar was, it was practically impossible for him to provide training in all fields of Islamic scholarship. Each scholar specialized in teaching one or a few subjects and, sometimes, just a single book.[18] Some scholars did not hold classes at all. They assigned books to their students, the students read these books on their own or with other students, and the scholar reviewed the progress of each student on the assigned book from time to time.[19] An ambitious student who wanted to excel in one of the fields not offered at the advanced level at his current madrasa would have to find the specialist of that field and move on to *his* madrasa.

The need to seek different instructors in order to cover all fields of study required students to move from one madrasa to another as they advanced in their studies. Cârullah bin Bikmuhammed (1796–1869), for instance, changed locations seven times before he finished studying and found a job as a village mullah.[20] Sometimes, a student could finish his studies without changing madrasas so frequently, especially if he entered the madrasa of a relatively more knowledgeable scholar early in his

[16] For helpful descriptions of Volga-Ural madrasas, see NART, f. 92, op. 1, d. 10464, ll. 16–22 and İbrâhîmof, *Tercüme-yi Hâlim*, 4–15. For the makeshift nature of Muslim educational institutions in the Volga-Ural region, see NART, f. 92, op. 1, d. 10464, ll. 4–9, 16–22, and 51–59 and NART, f. 322, o. 1, d. 46. For two examples of scholars opening their madrasas see Fahreddin, *Âsar*, vol. 1, 330–31 and vol. 2, 72–74. On three major villages with a tradition of scholarship, see Muhammed Şakir Mahdum Tuqayef, *Tarih-i İsterlibaş* (Kazan: B. L. Dombrovskogo Tipografiyası, 1899); Zäki Zäynullin, "Ästärlebaş Mädräsäse," in *Mädräsälärdä Kitap Kiştäse*, ed. Röstäm Mähdiev (Kazan: Tatarstan Kitap Näşriyatı, 1992), 175–85; Mutahhir ibn Mulla Mir Haydar, *İski Qışqı Tarihi* (Orenburg: Din ve Ma'îşet Matbaası, 1911), 17–21 and 41–42; Gasim Lotfi, "Kışkar Mädräsäse," in *Mädräsälärdä Kitap Kiştäse*, ed. Röstäm Mähdiyäv (Kazan: Tatarstan Kitap Näşriyatı, 1992), 150–71; and İbrâhîmof, *Tercüme-yi Hâlim*, 11–15.

[17] Muhammed Kemal Muzafferof, "Bizde Şâkirdler Sabırlılar," *Şûra*, 1912 (18): 568–69; Kemper, *Sufis und Gelehrte*, 215–17; and Frank, *Muslim Religious Institutions*, 243–46.

[18] For examples of scholars specializing in the instruction of specific texts or topics, see Fahreddin, *Âsar*, vol. 1, 272–75 and vol. 2, 41–42, 313, 400–02. İsterlibaş Madrasa provided comprehensive instruction in the Hanafi curriculum, but this was one of the exceptions that proved the rule. See Tuqayef, *Tarih-i İsterlibaş*, 10–11.

[19] İbrâhîmof, *Tercüme-yi Hâlim*, 11–15.

[20] Fahreddin, *Âsar*, vol. 2, 488–89.

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educational career. Rızâeddin bin Fahreddin, for instance, never switched madrasas,[21] but in general, students traveled as they studied. While most of them circulated among Volga-Ural madrasas, a small group of students who could afford long-distance travel went to major centers of Islamic scholarship outside of the Russian empire too.

The Bukharan Emirate in Transoxiana was the most familiar and preferred destination for students from the Volga-Ural region until the late nineteenth century. They went to other Transoxianian cities like Samarqand and Khiva too, but Bukhara was a more prominent and revered center of scholarship, and Russia's Muslims used its name to refer to the Transoxianian scholarly traditions in general.[22] The descendants of a seventeenth-century scholar, Yûnus bin İvanay (b. 1636), claimed that their ancestor was the first scholar from the Volga-Ural region who had studied in Bukhara. Since the Russian invasions following the fall of Kazan in 1552 seem to have interrupted the transmission of knowledge among the Volga-Ural ulama, it is possible for scholars like Yûnus bin İvanay to have revived Islamic scholarship in the region after an interlude, and the madrasas, libraries, and traditions of Bukhara are likely to have guided them in this restoration.[23]

Yet, going to Bukhara was a demanding enterprise. One had to cross the Qizilqum Desert. Every year, merchants organized caravans between Bukhara and major cities in eastern Russia, such as Petropavl, Troitsk, and Orenburg. Nizhny Novgorod's large trade fair, located about 250 miles to the east of Moscow, was also connected to Bukhara through caravans.[24] Students from the Volga-Ural region had to wait for the travel season and join a caravan in order to go to Bukhara or return from it. The journey from Orenburg to Bukhara took one to two months. Therefore, depending on where a student started his journey, he would have to travel up to several months in order to reach Bukhara. This was an expensive trip. One had to save money for the road and the expenses

[21] Türkoğlu, *Rızaeddin Fahreddin*, 26–30. Also see Fahreddin, *Âsar*, vol. 2, 229–30.
[22] Frank, *Bukhara*, especially 27–75.
[23] Fahreddin, *Âsar*, vol. 1, 38–40 and vol. 2, 479–81. For other examples of the scholars who studied in Bukhara, see Fahreddin, *Âsar*, vol. 1, 32, 38–40, 44, 249, 250, 258–60, 272, 414–15, 458–69, and 471–72 and vol. 2, 7, 105, 114–15, 120, 162–63, 177–79, 192, 203, 209–10, 216–17, 218–20, 236, 239–40, 248–49, 254–56, 258–59, 265–66, 290, 312, 326, 333–35, 393, 397, 402–4, 443, 450, and 461.
[24] On Bukharan merchants at the Nizhny Novgorod Fair, see "Mekerye Bazarından Mektub," *Tercüman*, 25 August 1883. For trade between Transoxiana and Russian towns in general, see Ahmed Zeki Velidi Togan, *Bugünkü Türkili: Türkistan ve Yakın Tarihi* (Istanbul: Arkadaş, Ibrahim Horoz ve Güven Basımevleri, 1942), 212–13 and Audrey Burton, *Bukharan Trade, 1558–1718* (Bloomington: Indiana University, Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 1993), 6–8 and 66–85.

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in Bukhara or else find support from a benefactor. Many of the scholars who studied in Bukhara initially worked as village mullahs and saved some money before they could take the long journey.[25]

Once in Bukhara, students needed to find connections and settle in one of the madrasas of this town. Many of them earned their livelihood by working at ad hoc jobs as they studied. Additionally, local rulers and notables offered scholarships and charity money, and from the late eighteenth century on, the cells that students could rent or purchase in Bukharan madrasas entitled them to a share of the institution's *waqf* income.[26] Yet, finding a cell was not easy, even if one had the money to rent or purchase it. Typically, students who traveled to Bukhara from Russia would first need to find an acquaintance who had come earlier. This acquaintance would then help them locate a cell and join the classes of a madrasa instructor.[27]

Since Islamic scholarship in the Volga-Ural region was modeled after Bukharan scholarship, education in the madrasas of Bukhara was not too different from that of the Volga-Ural madrasas. The books used in Islamic education were predominantly in Arabic, both in Russia and in Transoxiana, and the Turkic dialects spoken in both places were mutually intelligible to their speakers although not identical. Students in Transoxiana had to familiarize themselves with Persian too since this was the predominant language in the urban centers of the region. Some madrasa instructors gave regular lectures, that is, one of the students read from a book, and the instructor commented as he deemed necessary or supervised a discussion of the topic by the students. Other instructors did not give lectures but only assigned books to the students and coached them as they read through those books. Students progressed at their own pace. Attendance was not required, and students could attend the lectures of any instructor who accepted them to his class, often in return for a small gift.[28]

However, Bukhara also offered opportunities that were not available in the Volga-Ural region such as the agglomeration of several madrasas and instructors in a single city and the availability of a large collection of

[25] For a detailed account of the Volga-Ural Muslims' relations with Bukhara, see Frank, *Bukhara*, 95–150. For examples of individual scholars traveling to Bukhara, see Fahreddin, *Âsar*, vol. 1, 453–56 and vol. 2, 497–502; Rızâeddin bin Fahreddin ed. *İsmâ'îl Seyahati* (Kazan: Tipo-Litografiia İ. N. Kharitonova, 1903), 7; and İbrâhîmof, *Tercüme-yi Hâlim*, v. The Transcaspian railway, constructed in the 1880s, shortened the travel time to Bukhara from Russia, but it was mainly used for state purposes. See Seymour Becker, *Russia's Protectorates in Central Asia: Bukhara and Khiva, 1865–1924* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), 125–28 and 188–91.

[26] Khalid, *Jadidism*, 31–32, and Sadriddin Aini, *Pages From My Own Story* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Pub. House, 1958), 29–66.

[27] Fahreddin, *Âsar*, vol. 1, 453–55.

[28] Khalid, *Jadidism*, 29–31, and Aini, *Pages*, 12.

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books in the libraries, private collections, and markets of the emirate for reading, copying, and purchasing. The gathering of several instructors and a high number of students in the same location created an environment of scholarship that encouraged the students to study intensively and also allowed them to follow the lectures of different instructors without having to move from one place to another. The availability of a variety of books was also crucial for the scholarly development of a student at a time when copying by hand was the only way to reproduce books. Obtaining books attracted both students and older scholars to Bukhara.[29] Books printed in Egyptian and Ottoman print houses as well as in Kazan and St. Petersburg became increasingly more available in the Russian empire throughout the nineteenth century and changed the intellectual range of its Muslims, but copying by hand never lost its scholarly importance.[30]

Afghanistan and India were also within the geographical scope of the Volga-Ural Muslims. A significant number of students either studied in Kabul or spent some time there while studying in Bukhara. It seems that the Sufi circles of Afghanistan, especially the famous Naqshbandi Sheikh Fayḍhan bin Hiḍrkhan of Kabul (d. 1802), attracted Muslims from the Russian empire in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[31] The relations between Bukharan and Indian Muslims were crucial in connecting the Islamic scholars of the Volga-Ural region to India. Indian Muslim students came to Bukhara to study, as caravans regularly traveled between India and Transoxiana, and Russian Muslims also organized caravans to trade with India.[32] Some students who went to

[29] For the availability of books in Bukhara see Fahreddin, *Âsar*, vol. 1, 453–55 and vol. 2, 457–59. For the scholarly environment of Bukhara, see Munir Yusupov, *Galimdzhan Barudi* (Kazan: Tatarskoe Knizhnoe Izdatel′stvo, 2003), 34–43. For the importance and difficulty of copying and collecting books, see Fahreddin, *Âsar*, vol. 1, 267–68, 279–81, and 394–95 and vol. 2, 255, 64–65, and 443.

[30] Fahreddin, *Âsar*, vol. 1, 303 and vol. 2, 375–78, 440–43, 457–59. On the development of a Muslim print media and the circulation of Ottoman and Egyptian publications in the Volga-Ural region, see Muhamed Kh. Gainullin, *Tatarskaia literatura XIX veka* (Kazan: Tatarskoe Knizhnoe Izdatel′stvo, 1975); Gainullin, *Tatarskaia literatura*, 183–88; A[brar] G. Karimullin, *U istokov tatarskoi knigi: ot nachala do 60-kh godov XIX veka* (Kazan: Tatarskoe Knizhnoe Izdatel′stvo, 1992); Türkoğlu, *Rızaeddin Fahreddin*, 41–42; and R[ezeda] R. Safiullina, *Istoriia knigopechataniia na arabskom iazyke v Rossii i musulman Povolzh'ia*. (Kazan 2003), http://www.tataroved.ru/publication/nacobr/7.

[31] For examples of Volga-Ural Islamic scholars with Sufi connections to Afghanistan, see Fahreddin, *Âsar*, vol. 1, 67, 140, 146–49, 177–79, 183–84, 207–8, 219, 272–75, 317, 327–28, and 471–72 and vol. 2, 203, 344, and 389–92. Also see Kemper, *Sufis und Gelehrte*, 92–97; and Crews, *For Prophet*, 32–33.

[32] İbrâhîmof, *Tercüme-yi Hâlim*, v and Togan, *Bugünkü Türkili*, 110–13 and 223–24. Scott Cameron Levi, *The Indian Diaspora in Central Asia and Its Trade, 1550–1900* (Leiden: Brill, 2002) is an informative work on Indian merchants in Transoxiana.

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Bukhara from the Russian empire in order to study continued on to India mostly to seek Sufi guidance or to travel further to Hijaz via the sea.[33] The number of students from the Volga-Ural region that are recorded in *Âsar* as having studied in India is low.[34] But even though a small number of Islamic scholars from the Volga-Ural region seem to have maintained direct contact with India in the nineteenth century, the influence of Indian Muslims on the Muslims of the Volga-Ural region can hardly be exaggerated, considering the prominent role of the Indian-origin Mujaddidi branch of the Naqshbandi Sufi order in the Volga-Ural region.[35]

Daghestan was another well-known center of scholarship for Islamic scholars from the Volga-Ural region. At least one Daghestani scholar, Muhammed bin ʻAli el-Daghestani (d. 1795), settled in Orenburg in the early nineteenth century and taught in what Fahreddin calls the "Daghestani way."[36] Fahreddin also records five Volga-Ural scholars who had traveled to Daghestan in the early nineteenth century to study. Interestingly, four of them continued further after Daghestan to the Ottoman territories.[37] The Daghestani scholar Nadhīr al-Durgilī (1891–1935) mentions three more scholars from the Volga-Ural region in his biographical dictionary of Daghestan, and he explains that students from the Volga-Ural region went to Daghestan especially to improve their Arabic-language skills.[38] Finally, the Russian state exiled a number of Daghestani Sufi *sheikh*s to the Volga-Ural region in the late nineteenth century, which also fostered connections between the Islamic scholars of the Volga-Ural region and Daghestan.[39]

The Ottoman territories were also a part of the Volga-Ural Muslims' geographical imagination. Hijaz was definitely their most important destination in the Ottoman Empire. Muslims from all over the world, including Russia, went to Hijaz in the Arabian Peninsula to perform the Hajj in Mecca and visit the tomb of the Prophet Muhammad in

[33] Fahreddin, *Âsar*, vol. 1, 178–79, and 272–75 and vol. 2, 267–79, 393–95, and 487; İbrâhîmof, *Tercüme-yi Hâlim*, 68–69; and Togan, *Bugünkü Türkili*, 223–24.

[34] Fahreddin, *Âsar*, vol. 1, 178–79, and 272–75 and vol. 2, 267–79, 393–95, and 487. This might partly be due to the weakening of trade relations between India and Transoxiana after the conquest of Transoxiana by the Russian empire. See Levi, *Indian Diaspora*, 223–60.

[35] See Kemper, *Sufis und Gelehrte*, 81–212.

[36] Fahreddin, *Âsar*, vol. 1, 66–68.

[37] Fahreddin, *Âsar*, vol. 1, 226, 231–33, 238–40, 337–38, and 412.

[38] Michael Kemper, *Muslim Culture in Russia and Central Asia. Vol. 4, Die Islamgelehrten Daghestans und ihre arabischen Weke* (Berlin: Schwarz, 2004), 34–35.

[39] Frank, *Muslim Religious Institutions*, 156–57 and Michael Kemper, "Dahestani Shaykhs and Scholars in Russian Exile: Networks of Sufism, Fatwas and Poetry," in *Daghestan and the World of Islam*, ed. Moshe Gammer and David J. Wasserstein (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 2006), 95–107.

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Medina.[40] Many scholars whose biographies are recorded in Fahreddin's *Âsar* also took this journey.[41] However, before at least the second half of the nineteenth century the Hajj journey or going to the Ottoman territories to study were even more arduous and expensive enterprises than traveling to Bukhara. As scholars and lay Muslims who performed the Hajj related their experience back in Russia, Ottoman madrasas entered within the range of options for Muslim students from the Volga-Ural region, but few students actually traveled there to study until the late nineteenth century.

By the late 1800s, steamboats carrying passengers between the Russian port cities and Istanbul or even Jeddah made traveling to the Ottoman territories significantly easier for Russia's Muslims. This increased the number of students and Hajj travelers from the Volga-Ural region who traveled to the Ottoman Empire so much that special hostels were opened for them in Istanbul, Mecca, and Medina. While going to Medina in 1879, as a young and poor student, Ğabdurreşîd İbrâhîm (1857–1944), who would later become a prominent political activist among Russia's Muslims, stayed in one of these hostels for about fifty days. He did not have to pay for his room. The caretaker of the hostel, Muhammed Efendi from Kazan, even provided him with food and clothing.[42] When Ğabdurreşîd İbrâhîm arrived in Medina, there were four hostels for Russian Muslims in the city, and İbrâhîm wrote that there were hostels located in Mecca as well. The hostels in Medina filled during the Hajj season, but when the Hajj travelers left, only four married Russian Muslims and fourteen single students, including Ğabdurreşîd İbrâhîm, remained behind.[43]

[40] See Daniel Brower, "Russian Roads to Mecca," *Slavic Review*, 1996 55(3): 567–84; and Alexandre Papas, Thomas Welsford, and Thierry Zarcone eds., *Central Asian Pilgrims: Hajj Routes and Pious Visits between Central Asia and Hijaz* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2012); especially Norihiro Naganawa, "The Hajj Making Geopolitics, Empire and Local Politics: A View from the Volga Ural Region at the Turn of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," in *Central Asian Pilgrims: Hajj Routes and Pious Visits between Central Asia and Hijaz*, ed. Alexandre Papas, Thomas Welsford, and Thierry Zarcone (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2012), 168–98.

[41] For some examples, see Fahreddin, *Âsar*, vol. 1, 26, 31, 33–36, 38–40, 89, 150, 200–1, 213–14, 297, 299, 334–35, and 414–15 and vol. 2, 119–20, 143–44, 175–76, 179, 218–19, 222, 239–40, 252, 254, 326, 344, 393–95, 397, 399–400, 404–5, 410–12, and 461.

[42] İbrâhîmof, *Tercüme-yi Hâlim*, 56–59. While Ğabdürreşîd İbrâhîm stayed in this *tekke*, a wealthy businessman from Kazan, İshaq Hacı Apanayef, came to Istanbul and bought another building to endow as a hostel for Russian Muslims. For information about another *tekke* purchased in Istanbul in 1877 for Russian Muslims, see Fahreddin, *Âsar*, vol. 2, 319–20. About the increase in the number of Hajj travelers from the Russian empire, see Brower, "Russian Roads", 571–73.

[43] İbrâhîmof, *Tercüme-yi Hâlim*, 68–69 and 95. Also see Fahreddin, *Âsar*, vol. 2, 247.

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Students coming from the Russian empire could study in a variety of places in the Ottoman territories. One early example, Ğabdulhâlıq bin Ğabdulkerîm (1771–1844) from the Ufa Gubernia, went to Istanbul in 1798 with the apparent intention of performing the Hajj. He indeed wanted to perform the Hajj, but his real plan was to study in a Muslim-ruled country. From Istanbul, he wrote to his relatives that he considered the options for a long time and decided to go to the famous Hâdim Madrasa in Konya to study with the city's mufti, Muhammed Emin Hâdimî. After studying there for six years and also receiving initiation into the Naqshbandi Sufi order, he went to Mecca to perform the Hajj. He did not leave Mecca right away but remained there for a while to study. Following this, he traveled to Medina, Cairo, Jerusalem, and Damascus, studying with the scholars of these cities too. Finally, he returned to Ufa in 1808 and opened his own madrasa.[44] The cities that Ğabdulhâlıq bin Ğabdulkerîm visited, as well as some others like Diyarbakır and Baghdad, in the Ottoman territories, were all common destinations for Muslim students from the Volga-Ural region.[45]

Ulama as network

Traveling was only one of the ways in which Islamic scholars covered a wide geography and connected their fellow Muslims to the larger world. Once students finished studying and settled in particular locations as scholars, they traveled significantly less, and some of them did not travel at all. But they still remained connected beyond their local communities through kinship ties, letters, Sufi associations, and debates over the controversial issues of religion both within Volga-Ural scholarly networks and beyond, extending to a broader area that paralleled the students' geographical range of study.[46] While the mobility of scholars, especially in their student years, was crucial in determining the scope of their geographic reach, their participation in scholarly networks gave permanence to their connectivity.

When a madrasa student finished his studies, he would typically start looking for a position as the mullah of a mosque. Graduates of Bukhara and other prominent centers of Islamic scholarship often found good jobs in mosques with wealthy congregations. Those with better qualifications could open madrasas and start training students in addition to serving

[44] Fahreddin, *Âsar*, vol. 2, 96–102.
[45] For other examples, some of whom are from later dates, see Fahreddin, *Âsar*, vol. 1, 226, 292, 412, 448–53, 455–56, and 476–78 and vol. 2, 96–102, 163–75, 188, 213, 267–79, 389–92, 457–59, and 461.
[46] Crews, *For Prophet*, 105–6 examines some of these connections among the ulama.

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as mullahs, and those with the best credentials could even forego the position of mullah and focus on teaching alone.[47] Those who left their education at a relatively early stage could still take up positions as adhan callers.[48] And finally, since the region had more madrasa graduates than needed, especially in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, some students could never find religious positions upon finishing their studies.[49] They would continue their lives as clerks, peasants, merchants, or something else that the possibilities of the region allowed.[50]

Regardless of the position that a madrasa graduate took, the knowledge that he accumulated provided him with a distinctive and respected status in the Muslim community.[51] He became an *ʿālim,* or "scholar" as it is often translated, which literally means, in its Arabic origin "one who knows." "Ulama (*ʿUlamāʾ*)" is the plural of "*ʿālim*," but it implies more than "scholars" in the plural. It is a collective name for the network that the Islamic scholars constituted – not only at a given time and place, through personal connections, as we shall see below, but also across time and space, through the transmission of knowledge. Thus, by becoming an Islamic scholar, the madrasa graduates would acquire the authority of both the knowledge that they had accumulated and of the "ulama" as an influential and respected segment of the Muslim Ummah.

Several factors forged the aggregate of individual Islamic scholars into a cohesive network in the Russian empire. The mobility of madrasa students helped them meet many other students and scholars. When they switched to a more stable way of life upon finishing their studies, they continued to communicate with some of their acquaintances through occasional visits and letters. For instance, İbrâhîm bin Hocaş (d. 1825) had studied in Daghestan and Anatolia before settling in Bugulma. As a scholar, he continued to communicate with other scholars in these two regions and asked their opinions about controversial issues of religion, such as the performance of night prayers in northern territories where the sun did not set during summer nights.[52] In a society where functional literacy was a rarity, the ability to read and, more importantly, to write was a distinguishing quality. It helped members of the ulama to

[47] Most scholars mentioned in *Âsar* opened their own madrasas.

[48] Frank, *Muslim Religious Institutions*, 146–51; and Mir Haydar, *İski Qışqı*, 40–43.

[49] Iakov Dmitrievich Koblov, *O magometanskikh mullakh: religiozno-bytovoi ocherk* (Kazan: Izdatel'stvo Iman, 1907; reprint 1998), 6; and "Mullalıkdan Küñil Suvunuvı ve İşbu Haqda Sualler," *Şûra*, 1914 (1): 18–20 and (2): 47.

[50] For examples of a few scholars who *chose* not to take religious positions, see Fahreddin, *Âsar*, vol. 1, 422–24 and vol. 2, 189–90, 204, and 331–32.

[51] İşmuhammed bin Zâhid's story is an illustrative example of how knowledge earned respect and status. Fahreddin, *Âsar*, vol. 1, 448–53.

[52] Fahreddin, *Âsar*, vol. 1, 227.

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keep in touch with the wider world, especially with other scholars in distant locations, through letters.[53]

Until the end of the nineteenth century most of these scholars relied on the services of occasional travelers rather than the imperial postal system to convey their letters.[54] It seems that there were enough travelers among Russia's Muslims to enable the emergence of reliable communication patterns as early as the beginnings of the eighteenth century. The letters that a scholar from Kazan, Seyfeddin bin Ebubekir, exchanged during his Hajj journey in 1824 with Ercümend Kirmanî of Ufa are revealing in this respect. According to the arrangement between Seyfeddin and Kirmanî, Kirmanî would move to Kazan and maintain Seyfeddin's madrasa during the latter's Hajj journey. Seyfeddin started his journey from the city of Kazan. When he arrived in Astrakhan, he received a letter from Kirmanî. Seyfeddin did not have an address in Astrakhan, but apparently a contact person in this city received letters and parcels coming from other parts of the Volga-Ural region, and travelers went to this person in order to check if there was anything sent in their name. Seyfeddin responded to Kirmanî's letter from Astrakhan and instructed him to send his next letter to Anapa with other Hajj travelers. It seems that these patterns were so reliable that Seyfeddin could comfortably expect to receive in another city on his route a letter that Kirmanî would give to Hajj travelers from Ufa or Kazan.[55] Similarly, hostels that Volga-Ural Muslims maintained in Istanbul, as well as a few individual Volga-Ural Muslims who resided in this city, facilitated communication for travelers. For instance a certain Muhammed Kerîm from Kazan, who had settled in Istanbul in the 1850s, served as the contact person for the Volga-Ural Muslims who traveled to Istanbul in the 1860s.[56]

Kinship was another factor that contributed to the existence of an ulama network. The sons of scholars often adopted the profession of their fathers.[57] This was such a common practice that the inability of a scholar's son to become a scholar as well or his choice not to become one

[53] For sample letters or information about letters, see Fahreddin, *Âsar*, vol. 1, 34–35, 140, 224–25, 268, and 375–420 and vol. 2, 96–102, 339–43, and 472–78. For an explanation of functional literacy and how it could be separate from the ability to write, see Khalid, *Jadidism*, 24–25.

[54] Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the Russian state permitted Islamic scholars to use the imperial postage system free of charge in their official correspondence. *Sbornik tsirkuliarov*[Russian section], 63.

[55] Fahreddin, *Âsar*, vol. 1, 224–25.

[56] Fahreddin, *Âsar*, vol. 2, 410–12 and 62–69.

[57] For some examples see Fahreddin, *Âsar*, vol. 1, 161–173, 252–55, 262, 297, 427–29, 448–53, 458–69, and 469–70 and vol. 2, 72–74, 108–9, 121, 152, 162–63, 175–76, 203, 205–6, 221–22, 226, 235–36, 310, 312, 334–35, 337–38, 345, 405–7, 431–32, and 478.

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would trouble the father.[58] Moreover, many scholars arranged marriages between their daughters and promising students.[59] While these kinship connections did not grow into a caste system and scholarship remained open to all who were willing and able to acquire knowledge, they did create an environment where a scholar was very likely to have other scholars among his relatives. As a result, the familial relations of these scholar relatives simultaneously intensified interactions among the ulama.

Sufism also played a significant role in weaving scholarly networks in the Volga-Ural region. The practice of Sufism, by nature, connects individuals through submission to a sheikh and membership in a brotherhood. Until the utilization of printed and audiovisual mass media in the twentieth century,[60] personal training for initiation into an order and visits thereafter were the essential forms of relations between Sufi sheikhs and their followers.[61] Not all scholars were Sufis, but many were, and they kept traveling to visit their sheikhs. Sufism connected scholars of the same Sufi order (*ṭarīqah*) closely to one another as well as to the lay affiliates of that order since lay Muslims could also partake in the Sufi practice.

The Naqshbandi Sufi order had an especially noticeable presence among the scholars of the Volga-Ural region in the nineteenth century. It is difficult to estimate when and how this order entered the region, but Fahreddin records several Volga-Ural scholars as having received initiation into the Mujaddidi branch of the Naqshbandi Sufi order from Fayḍhan bin Hiḍrkhan of Kabul or Sheikh Niyazqul el-Türkmânî of Bukhara (d. 1820) in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This, it seems, was key in the evolution of the Volga-Ural region's Sufi networks in the early nineteenth century.[62] Then, a new branch of the

[58] Fahreddin, *Âsar*, vol. 2, 104–7 and 219–20; and "Mullalıkdan Küñil", 1913 (20): 622–23.

[59] For examples, see Fahreddin, *Âsar*, vol. 1, 275, 327–29, and 458–69 and vol. 2, 72–74, 121, 146, 152, 205–6, 312, 337–38, 396, 402, 406, 471.

[60] Carl W. Ernst, "Ideological and Technological Transformations of Contemporary Sufism," in *Muslim Networks from Hajj to Hip Hop*, ed. Miriam Cooke and Bruce B. Lawrence (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 191–207.

[61] This was the situation for the many scholars who are recorded to have Sufi connections in Fahreddin's *Âsar*. Zeki Velidi Togan relates his father's annual visits to his sheikhs too. Zeki Velidi Togan, *Hatıralar: Türkistan ve Diğer Müslüman Doğu Türklerinin Milli Varlık ve Kültür Mücadeleleri* (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfi Yayınları, 1999), 30–31.

[62] For disciples of Niyazqul el-Türkmânî, see Fahreddin, *Âsar*, vol. 1, 124, 280–91, and 476–78 and vol. 2, 77–93, 108–9, 140–42, 180–81, 250, 264, and 333–34. Especially Devletşah bin Ğadilşah (died in 1812), one of Türkmânî's disciples, became very famous in the Volga-Ural region and initiated many other disciples. See Fahreddin, *Âsar*, vol. 1, 280–91 and vol. 2, 176–77 and 211–12. For other Russian Muslim scholars who entered

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Naqshbandi Sufi order, the Khalidiyya, also entered the region in the second part of the nineteenth century. The first Khalidis came from Daghestan, but it was the disciples of Ahmed Ziyaüddin Gümüşhânevî from Istanbul (1819–99) who really made a significant impact.[63] One of Gümüşhânevî's disciples in particular, Sheikh Zeynullah Rasûlî of Troitsk (1835–1917), gathered a huge following; three thousand of his disciples were reported to have assembled in Troitsk to see him in one event. Fearing the size of his following, imperial authorities exiled Rasûlî to Siberia in 1873. But when he ultimately returned to Troitsk in the 1880s, the number of his disciples grew still higher, and he became one of the most popular Sufi sheikhs in the region.[64]

Finally, debates over controversial religious questions, especially theological problems, also helped coalesce Russia's Islamic scholars – both as allies and opponents. Some issues of controversy were the necessity of

Sufism in Bukhara, see Fahreddin, *Âsar*, vol. 1, 295 and vol. 2, 114, 162–63, 203–4, 266–67, and 326. For disciples of Fayḍhan bin Hiḍrkhan, see Fahreddin, *Âsar*, vol. 1, 67, 140, 177–79, 183–84, 207–8, 219, 272–75, 317, 327–28, and 471–72 and vol. 2, 203, 344, and 389–92. Also see Hamid Algar, "The Naqshbandi Order: A Preliminary Survey of Its History and Significance," *Studia Islamica*, 1976 (44): 123–52; Kemper, *Sufis und Gelehrte*, 82–98; Baxtiyor M. Babadžanov, "On the History of the Naqšbandīya Muğaddidīya in Central Māwarāannahr in the Late 18th and Early 19th Centuries," in *Muslim Culture in Russia and Central Asia from the 18th to the Early 20th Centuries*, ed. Michael Kemper, Anke von Kügelgen, and Dmitriy Yermakov (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1996), 386–413; Michael Kemper, "The History of Sufism in the Volga-Urals," in *Islamic Civilisation in the Volga-Ural Region*, ed. Ali Çaksu and Rafik Muhammetshin (Istanbul: Organisation of the Islamic Conference, 2004); Azamatov, *Orenburgskoe*, 22; and Khalid, *Jadidism*, 32.

[63] On the Khalidi sub-branch of the Naqshbandi Sufi order in the Ottoman lands, see Butrus Abu-Manneh, "The Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiyya in the Ottoman Lands in the Early 19th Century," *Die Welt des Islam*, 1982 22(1): 1–36; and Hür Mahmut Yücer, *Osmanlı Toplumunda Tasavvuf [19. Yüzyıl]* (Istanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 2003), 73 and 853. On Gümüşhânevî, see İrfan Gündüz, *Gümüşhânevî Ahmed Ziyâüddin (ks): Hayatı-Eserleri-Tarîkat Anlayışı ve Hâlidiyye Tarîkatı* (Ankara: Seha Neşriyat, 1984). On Gümüşhânevî's impact in the Volga-Ural region, see Mustafa Kara, "Ahmed Ziyaüddin-i Gümüşhanevî'nin Halifeleri," in *Ahmed Ziyaüddin Gümüşhanevî Sempozyum Bildirileri*, ed. Necdet Yılmaz (İstanbul: Seha Neşriyat, 1992), 121–29; and Frank, *Muslim Religious Institutions*, 152–53.

[64] Hamid Algar, "Shaykh Zaynullah Rasulev: The Last Great Naqshbandi Shaykh of the Volga-Ural Region," in *Muslims in Central Asia*, ed. Jo-Ann Gross (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), 112–33; İbrahim Maraş, "İdil-Ural Bölgesinin Cedidci Dinî Lideri Zeynullah Rasûlî'nin Hayatı ve Görüşleri," in *Dinî Araştırmalar*, 1998 1(1): 76–92; Azamatov, *Orenburgskoe*, 173–75; and I. R. Nasyrova ed. *Sheikh Zeinulla Rasuli (Rasulev) an-Nakshbandi: izbrannye proizvedeniia* (Ufa, 2001). In addition to being a popular Sufi sheikh, Zeynullah Rasûlî was a strong supporter of educational reform. In addition to the above cited sources, see Zeynullah Rasûlî, *Troyski Ğuleması ve Usûl–i Cedîde* (Orenburg: Kerimof Hüseynof Matba'ası, 1907). For examples of other Sufi sheikhs with a considerable following in the Volga-Ural region, see Fahreddin, *Âsar*, vol. 1, 177–81, 249–50, 280–91, and 335–36 and vol. 2, 180–81, 389–92, and 487; and Frank, *Muslim Religious Institutions*, 153–57.

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performing night prayers during the short summer nights, the relation of God's attributes to God's self, the possibility of considering the Russian empire as "land of Islam" (*dār al-Islām*), and related to this last question, the conditions of performing the congregational Friday prayers.[65] Some scholars, such as Ebunnasr Ğabdunnasîr el-Qursâvî (1776–1812) and Ğabdurrahîm bin Ğusman Utız İmenî (1754–1835), were so forceful in their treatment of these issues that whether a scholar supported or opposed their views came to clarify that scholar's position among the ulama of the Volga-Ural region.[66] Qursâvî especially, who criticized the theologians of Bukhara and wrote a number of thought-provoking treatises, inspired many scholars among Volga-Ural Muslims. His ideas would have a strong influence on the proponents of renovation in religious thinking in the latter part of the nineteenth century too.[67] Utız İmenî was also proficient at writing and distributing short but compelling pamphlets about controversial subjects.[68] Throughout the nineteenth century many other scholars wrote pamphlets (*risâle*s) on these issues. Their works circulated in the region mostly in handwritten manuscripts and helped the members of the ulama to engage in a regional debate.[69]

Conclusion

In his memoirs, Ğabdürreşîd İbrâhîm narrates how in his youth he saw a camel for the first time while traveling south in the snow-covered Kazakh Steppe on a moony night and how he was awed thinking that this was a genie. Then, he comments that had he had access to books with pictures, he could have recognized the camel.[70] Maps, pictures, photographs, and

[65] See Fahreddin, *Âsar*, vol. 1, 261–62, 305–16, 331, and 467 and vol. 2, 72, 193–94, 234, 267–68, and 479–81.

[66] For Ebunnasr Ğabdunnasîr el-Qursâvî see Fahreddin, *Âsar*, vol. 1, 95–130 and for Ğabdurrahîm bin Ğusman Utız İmenî see Fahreddin, *Âsar*, vol. 1, 300–316. Also see Michael Kemper, "Entre Boukhara et la Moyenne-Volga: ʿAbd an-Naṣīr al-Qursāwī (1776–1812) en conflit avec les oulémas traditionalistes," *Cahiers du Monde Russe*, 1996 37(1–2): 41–51; and Kemper, *Sufis und Gelehrte*, 172–212 and 225–13.

[67] Some scholars who supported Ebunnasr el-Qursâvî's ideas are recorded in *Âsar* as follows: Fahreddin, *Âsar*, vol. 1, 290, 469–70, and 476–78 and vol. 2, 75, 105, 146–51, 218, 267–79, 320, 341, 432, 461, and 471. For some of his opponents see Fahreddin, *Âsar*, vol. 2, 15–16, 72, 234, 393–95, and 407–8. Also see Michael Kemper, "Šihābaddīn al-Marğānī über Abū n-Naṣr Qūrsāwīs Koflikt mit den Gelehrten Bucharas," in *Muslim Culture in Russia and Central Asia: Arabic Persian and Turkic Manuscripts (15th-19th Centuries)*, ed. Anke von Kügelgen, Aširbek Muminov, and Michael Kemper (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2000), 353–71.

[68] Fahreddin gives a list of Utız İmenî's supporters: Fahreddin, *Âsar*, vol. 1, 331.

[69] For two very good analyses of these debates, see Kemper, *Sufis und Gelehrte*; and İbrahim Maraş, *Türk Dünyasında Dinî Yenileşme, 1850–1917* (Istanbul: Ötüken, 2002).

[70] İbrâhîmof, *Tercüme-yi Hâlim*, 35–36.

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journalistic descriptions of different phenomena from around the globe became available in mass print to the Volga-Ural Muslims at the turn of the twentieth century, and the popularization of this material continued into the Soviet period. Until then, the region's Muslims imagined the larger world based on the oral traditions of past generations, the narratives of those who traveled and actually saw far-away places, and occasionally, on a limited number of mostly religious texts. Typically, Muslim communities in the Volga-Ural region turned to Islamic scholars for the transmission and interpretation of those narrations and texts. The Islamic scholars were literate, they had the skills and privilege to authorize Islamic traditions, and they were actually connected beyond their local Muslim communities.[71] All of these distinctions located Islamic scholars at the center of an exchange of ideas and influence among Volga-Ural Muslims as well as between the Volga-Ural Muslims and the larger world. From that exchange emerged a transregional Muslim domain: a metaspace belonging primarily to Muslims: a world where Muslims felt familiar and comfortable.

One can find parallels to the above-explained patterns of travel, communication, and interconnectivity among many other Muslim communities, and therefore these patterns indicate the involvement of Volga-Ural Muslims in a characteristically Muslim domain that did not owe its existence to the Russian empire. However, it would still be misleading to assume that the ulama or the Muslim communities of the Volga-Ural region existed in isolation from the Russian state. At least since the late sixteenth century, the mosques in which the Islamic scholars of the Volga-Ural region served as mullahs existed under the jurisdiction of Russian imperial laws or they were destroyed as a result of the decisions of Russian imperial authorities.[72] Imperial authorities did not establish or control Sufi networks, but they still influenced them by measures such as exiling Daghestani Sufi sheikhs to the Volga-Ural region. It was the Russian state that destroyed income-producing *waqfs* in the Volga-Ural region. The steamboats that carried Hajj travelers and students from Russian Black Sea ports to Istanbul and Jeddah belonged to companies that were incorporated according to Russian imperial laws.[73] And finally, aside from

[71] Merchants and lay intellectuals would start to rival Islamic scholars in these regards in the late nineteenth century. See Chapters 5–8.

[72] On mosques in the Volga-Ural regions, see Efimii Malov, "O tatarskikh mechetiakh v Rossii," in *Pravoslavnyi sobesednik*, 1867 (3): 285–320 and 1868 (1): 3–45; and Frank, *Muslim Religious Institutions*, 163–83.

[73] See "Russian Steamship Transportation and Trade Company," *Tercüman/Perevodchik*, 25 January 1902 and 20 December 1902; "Hajj Steamship," *Tercüman/Perevodchik*, 30 September 1905 and 16 October 1907.

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these limited and indirect sources of influence, imperial authorities directly contacted and tried to regulate Islamic scholars in the Russian empire with the purpose of benefiting from their services in the administration of the empire's Muslim communities.[74] Indeed, as we shall see in the next chapter, a process that Catherine II initiated in the 1780s created an institutionalized bond between Volga-Ural Muslims and the Russian state by incorporating the region's Islamic scholars into the imperial state apparatus.

[74] For early examples of this cooperation, which involved primarily the employment of scholars from the Volga-Ural region to manage Kazakh tribes further east, see Gulmira S. Sultangalieva, "The Russian Empire and the Intermediary Role of Tatars in Kazakhstan: The Politics of Cooperation and Rejection," in *Asiatic Russia: Imperial Power in Regional and International Contexts*, ed. Tomohiko Uyama (New York: Routledge, 2012), 58–62.

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