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Original paper



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“Tarrakion Islamiya” Society: Truth or Fiction?

Abstract

The relevance of this study lies in the growing interest in the modernization processes within the Tatar Muslim community at the beginning of the twentieth century, which stirred the Tatar intellectual elite. Tatar intellectuals actively examined both foreign experience and the experience of countries undergoing catch-up modernization. Particular attention was paid to the Ottoman Empire, which, in their opinion, blindly copied European models, and to Japan, which managed to preserve its cultural identity while pursuing active technological modernization. The intellectual discourse of Tatar modernists was reflected in the liberal newspaper *Waqyt*, which was closely monitored by officials of the Gendarmerie Directorate of Russia. In their perception, concepts of “Pan-Islamism” and “Pan-Turkism” were being formed with agents recruiting members of Tatar charitable and educational societies into branches of the Turkish organization “Tarrakion Islamiya” (“Progress of Islam”). The purpose of this



article is to determine, on the basis of materials produced by Tatar journalists working in Istanbul in 1912–1913, whether the claims made by gendarmerie officials regarding the existence of an extensive network centered in Istanbul — the organization “Tarrakion Islamiya” (“Progress of Islam”) — had any real foundation, and whether the individuals mentioned in the memorandum of the Directorate were in fact connected with this organization. The study demonstrated that officials of the Gendarmerie Directorate closely observed the activities of liberal Young Turk organizations. At times, informants seeking favor exaggerated the threat posed by the ties between the Tatar intelligentsia and the Young Turks. In an effort to demonstrate active work in their “exposure”, they constructed imaginary networks and agents, presenting these fabrications as genuine intelligence activity. This resulted in increased surveillance of “politically unreliable” Tatar intellectuals in areas of concentrated Muslim settlement throughout Russia.

Keywords:

Tarrakion Islamiya (Progress of Islam); Möselman Täräqqiypärwärläge (Muslim Progress); Türk Ocağı/Ocakları (Turkic Hearth(s)); Ottomanism; Turkism.

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Introduction

In November 1913, a document emerged from the Gendarmerie Directorate of the Orenburg Governorate of Russia indicating that a certain organization called “Tarrakion Islamiya” was allegedly operating actively within the territory of the Russian Empire, with its center located in Istanbul, the capital of the Ottoman Empire.

A certain “Sheikh ul-Islam Mahmud Askhada” was identified as the leader of this organization, who allegedly traveled to Russia for the purpose of establishing branches of the aforementioned Society¹. However, biographical references concerning this statesman (Mahmud Esad Efendi, 1856–1918) do not mention that he ever headed an organization called “Tarrakion Islamiya”, nor is there any evidence that he ever held the office of Sheikh ul-Islam. In the summer of 1913, while serving as Minister of the Cadastral Department, Mahmud Esad did indeed travel to Russia, visiting a number of cities. It should also be noted that, while meeting with representatives of the Russian Muslim intelligentsia, he remained under close surveillance by the authorities, including high-ranking police officials². Under such circumstances, it is unlikely that he could have engaged in unlawful activities directed against the foundations of the Russian state.

At the same time, it should be emphasized that a number of publications treat information from gendarmerie documents of both the Orenburg and Kazan administrations concerning the activities of the “Tarrakion Islamiya” organization as indisputable fact³. Did an extensive network centered in Istanbul truly exist within the territory of Russia? Or were the scale and scope of its activities exaggerated? It should also be noted that the gendarmerie document dated Novem-

¹ Государственный архив Оренбургской области (ГАОрО). Ф. 21. Оп. 2. Д. 618. Л. 341–342.

² Сибгатуллина А.Т. Контакты тюрок-мусульман Российской и Османской империй на рубеже XIX–XX вв. М.: 2010. 257 с.

³ Сенюткина О.Н. *Тюркизм как историческое явление (на материалах истории Российской империи 1905–1916 гг.): Монография / Под общ. ред. акад. О.А. Колобова. Н. Новгород: Изд-во НГЛУ, Изд. дом «Медина», 2007. 520 с.; Ахтямов К.Ш. О некоторых проблемах становления ислама в Поволжье // Вестник ОГУ. 2012. № 5 (141). С. 135–141.*



One of the first issues of the «Vakyt» newspaper, 1906.
 From open sources

ber 14, 1913 contains no information regarding any specific criminal activity carried out by this organization against the Russian state.

In this article, we compare the data contained in the gendarmerie document with materials produced by Tatar journalists working in the Ottoman Empire shortly before the appearance of the aforementioned document concerning “Tarrakion Islamiya”. One of the active Tatar public figures who maintained close contact with Turkish liberal politicians was Fatikh Karimi, editor of one of the most influential publications among Russian Muslims — the newspaper *Waqyt* (*Time*). The newspaper was published in Orenburg from February 1906 to January 1918. During this period, Ottoman-Turkish themes occupied a leading place in the Tatar press. Newspapers and journals



Fatih Karimi. Photo from the 1880s.

From open sources

published in the Tatar language vividly covered events taking place in the Ottoman Empire. In 1908–1909, Tatar intellectuals enthusiastically welcomed the Young Turk Revolution. During the Italo-Turkish War of 1911–1912, when Italy launched a military campaign to seize the last Ottoman possessions in Africa — Tripolitania and Cyrenaica (present-day Libya) — Tatar publications wrote sympathetically about the Turkish side. However, the events connected with the Balkan Wars of 1912–1913 generated the greatest resonance in the Tatar press. The First Balkan War began with a series of severe defeats for the Ottoman army. The Tatar public followed developments at the front with great concern as the allies (Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Montenegro) inflicted one blow after another upon Turkey.

Some of the most widely read publications decided not to limit themselves to reprints and references from Russian and foreign newspapers, but instead sent their own correspondents to the combat zone. The Tatar journalists who arrived in Turkey began describing not only military operations. They found themselves immersed



Galiäsgar Kamal.
From open sources

in the turbulent social and political life of the Ottoman Empire. For example, Ğaliäsğar Kamal — Editor-in-Chief of one of Russia’s leading Muslim newspapers, *Yoldyz*, and the founder of Tatar dramaturgy — presented his own interpretation of events. Like Fatikh Karimi, he was in Istanbul from November 1912 to January 1913. Thus, the two editors of the leading Tatar liberal newspapers became witnesses both to the confrontation among Turkish elites and to the development of socio-political thought during the final years of the Ottoman Empire.

Materials and Methods

The principal methodological approach employed in this study is the principle of **historicism**, which made it possible to examine events and processes within their historical context. This approach enabled the introduction of archival materials into scholarly

circulation and allowed for an objective assessment of their representativeness. The **biographical method** was applied in analyzing facts reflected in narrative sources such as Fatikh Karimi's *Istanbul Letters*. This method made it possible to compare information from gendarmerie documents with independent sources in order to identify possible falsifications or erroneous interpretations of facts. The **analysis of archival documents** included the examination of gendarmerie materials relating to the Tatar intelligentsia and their alleged connections with Ottoman and Japanese modernization projects. **Critical source analysis** made it possible to evaluate the reliability of gendarmerie reports and to identify possible distortions associated with the construction of the concepts of "Pan-Islamism" and "Pan-Turkism".

Taken together, these methods enabled the authors to conduct a comprehensive study and to draw conclusions regarding the nature and reliability of the accusations directed against Tatar intellectuals.

The topic of the activities of Tatar journalists in the Ottoman Empire during the Balkan Wars has repeatedly been addressed in the works of Tatar scholars. In the introductory article to the scholarly biographical collection dedicated to Fatikh Karimi, Academy member M.A. Usmanov, assessing his *Istanbul Letters*, emphasized that as early as 1913 the Tatar journalist had recognized the bankruptcy of the imperial ideology of "Ottomanism"⁴. In recent years, the subject of Tatar newspapermen in Istanbul has also been examined by Alfiina Sibgatullina: "People such as Fatikh Karimi were considered 'their own' in Turkey, yet at the same time they possessed a distinctive 'outside perspective' on the events taking place in the Ottoman Empire. These were people who knew Turkey from within, but who were nevertheless capable of viewing it from the outside—that is, more objectively and broadly, taking into account the international position of the country during an era of wars and uprisings. This explains the originality of F. Karimi's *Letters*"⁵.

⁴ Фатих Карими: Научно-биографический сборник. Казань, 2000. С. 12.

⁵ Сибгатуллина А.Т. Контакты тюрок-мусульман Российской и Османской империй на рубеже XIX–XX вв. М.: Исток, 2010. С. 146.



Discussion

At the beginning of the First Balkan War in November 1912, Fatikh Karimi was sent to Istanbul by the publisher of the newspaper, the prominent industrialist Muhammadzakir Rameev, in order to report on the military events. Karimi remained in Istanbul until March 1913 and, later that same year, published a book entitled *Istanbul Letters* based on the materials he had sent to the newspaper⁶.

When Fatikh Karimi was in Istanbul, Ottoman Turkey was experiencing one of the most dramatic episodes in its history. The severe defeats suffered in the first days of the Balkan War were compounded by an extremely tense domestic political situation. Several months earlier, taking advantage of the Ottoman Empire's defeat in the war with Italy, the political opponents of the Young Turks (the Committee of Union and Progress, *Ittihad ve Terakki*) carried out a coup in July 1912. The coup was led by the party Hürriyet ve İtilaf (Freedom and Accord Party), established in November 1911, which united many opposition parties and groups. Hürriyet ve İtilaf represented a rather complex phenomenon and included representatives of a wide variety of political views: nationalists, liberals, Westernizers, secularists, and others. In addition, its ranks included not only Muslim Turks but also representatives of the non-Muslim peoples of the Ottoman Empire⁷.

In August 1912, supporters of Hürriyet ve İtilaf also succeeded in dissolving parliament, where the Young Turks had previously held the majority. Having suffered defeat, the Young Turks began preparing for political struggle under new conditions. Their opponents exploited the wartime situation and unleashed repressions against their political adversaries. Many active members of the Unionists (Young Turks) were arrested⁸. However, the Young Turks did not reconcile themselves to political defeat and continued the struggle for political

⁶ Ахсанов К.Г. Балканская война 1912–1913 гг. и татарская общественно-политическая мысль / Ученые записки Казанского государственного университета. Т. 149. Серия: Гуманитарные науки. Кн. 4. Казань, 2007. С. 181.

⁷ Genel Türk tarihi. Cilt 7. Osmanlı. 2002. Ankara. S. 352s.

⁸ Петросян Ю.А. Османская империя: могущество и гибель. Исторические очерки. М.: Эксмо, 2003. С. 375.

survival. Taking advantage of the failures of the new government during the Balkan War, they succeeded in regaining power at the beginning of 1913.

As already mentioned, Fatikh Karimi, Editor-in-Chief of the Orenburg-based Tatar-language newspaper *Waqyt*, stayed in the Ottoman capital from the autumn of 1912 until the beginning of spring 1913. During this period, he met and conducted interviews with many politicians, statesmen, and writers. With regard to the question of the existence of “Tarrakion Islamiya”, special attention should be paid to Karimi’s meeting with Hilmi Bey, editor of the Istanbul newspaper *Hükümet* (*Government*) and at the same time a lecturer at the Darülfünun (Istanbul University).

In his *Istanbul Letters*, Fatikh Karimi reports that the editor of the newspaper *Hükümet*, Hilmi Bey, intended to found a new party called “Muslim Progress” (Möselman Täräqqiypärwärlege). He had already begun publishing the party program in the form of serialized articles. Karimi provides a detailed description of the politician. He writes that Hilmi Bey was a man who had received an excellent European education while also being well acquainted with the Muslim scholarly tradition. He was highly knowledgeable in matters of religion, philosophy, and Sufism, and taught philosophy at the Darülfünun. “He looks like the philosophers of Ancient Greece. His hair is cut short at the back. A shining bald spot is visible in front. His mustache merges into his beard”⁹.

Fatikh Karimi openly writes that he visited Hilmi Bey in order to ask him about the “Muslim Progress” party he intended to establish and that he was received at the editorial office of the newspaper *Hükümet* in Cağaloğlu.

According to Hilmi Bey, Muslims could achieve progress and civilization only through the unity of faith and education. “European education and culture are excellent, but they must be merged with our Islamic faith; otherwise, the desired result will not be achieved. Mere imitation of Europe will bring no benefit. The fault of the Unionists (the Young Turks. — K.A.) was that they acted without understanding

⁹ Кәримми Ф. Истамбул мәктүпләре. Оренбург, 1913. С. 119.

the moral condition of the people. Anyone who wishes to spread enlightenment and culture among the contemporary Muslim population and acts in this direction must necessarily possess deep knowledge of Islam and, when needed, be able to deliver sermons like imams and mudarrises in mosques. Otherwise, it is extremely difficult to lead the Muslim people toward culture and explain to them the importance of educational reform”, the politician believed¹⁰.

Thus, Hilmi Bey thought that the combination of the high morality provided by Islam with European education would make Muslim peoples civilized and rescue them from the deadlock in which they had found themselves. As he himself explained to Fatikh Karimi, he preferred engaging in science and education rather than politics, but in a country where there was no place for scholarly and legal thought, it was impossible to abandon politics entirely and devote oneself solely to intellectual life. For this reason, he decided to establish a political party: “Turkey, the Turks, and the Islamic world as a whole have found themselves in a dangerous and ruinous situation; all our hopes for progress and advancement are collapsing. Therefore, setting aside scientific and educational pursuits for a while, it became necessary to engage in politics”¹¹.

It should be noted that the name of the party in Fatikh Karimi’s text, “Möselman Täräqqiypärwärlege” (“Muslim Progress”), is not completely identical to the name “Tarrakion Islamiya” found in the gendarmerie document. Nevertheless, the very idea of introducing Muslims to progress — understood specifically as the adoption of the achievements of European civilization — is clearly evident.

An important event that attracted the attention of the Muslim public and the press was the return from Tripolitania, which had been seized by the Italians, of one of the leaders of the Young Turks, Enver Bey. Literally one month later, he would lead a military coup, restore his party to power, and subsequently become one of the de facto rulers of the Ottoman Empire as the powerful Minister of War, Enver Pasha. Both Fatikh Karimi and Ğaliäsğar Kamal attempted to

¹⁰ Ibid. C. 120.

¹¹ Ibid.



Enver Bey (also known as Enver Pasha).
From open sources

meet him and conduct an interview. Fatikh Karimi met with Enver on December 14, 1912. Ğaliäsġar Kamal, however, was unable to do so; he only managed to visit Enver's home in his absence and speak with his father. Kamal described the interior of the apartment and noted the abundance of images of Napoleon Bonaparte. Apparently, as Kamal writes, Enver Bey admired this historical figure¹².

The document from the Orenburg Gendarmerie Directorate mentions the prominent religious and socio-political figure among Russian Muslims, Abdurreshid Ibrahim (Rus. *Abdurashid Ibragimov*), who was in Istanbul during the same period as Fatikh Karimi, as one of the active supporters of "Tarrakion Islamiya"¹³.

We shall focus on two episodes in which the paths of Fatikh Karimi and Abdurreshid Ibrahim intersected. In Istanbul, Karimi met with a prominent Young Turk leader, Mehmed Said Halim Pasha.

¹² Йолдыз. 1912 (newspaper in Old Tatar language, Arabic script).

¹³ ГАОРО. Ф. 21. Оп. 2. Д. 618. Л. 342.



Abdurashid Ibragimov.
From open sources

Halim Pasha, the grandson of the ruler of Egypt Muhammad Ali Pasha (an Albanian by origin), was known as a wealthy and influential man who owned numerous palaces along the Bosphorus. Later, after the Young Turks returned to power, Said Halim Pasha would even become Grand Vizier. Fatikh Karimi describes him as an “Egyptian prince”, although Muhammad Ali himself was not Egyptian, much less an heir to the throne. Accompanied by Abdurreshid Ibrahim, who was acquainted with Halim Pasha, Fatikh Karimi visited his luxurious mansion in Yeniköy.

During the meeting, Halim Pasha showed interest in the lives of Russian Muslims, asking questions about their education and social conditions. He also expressed his views on the political situation in Turkey, considering the party Ittihad ve Terakki to be the only force capable of saving the country. In his opinion, the party had originally acted for the good of Turkey but encountered resistance from both internal and external enemies who used material and ideological means to weaken it. Halim Pasha emphasized that the lack of



Said Halim Pasha.
From open sources

education and national consciousness among the Turkish people made them vulnerable to manipulation. Had the Turks possessed sufficient education and patriotism, they would have been able to resist hostile forces, but unfortunately this had not occurred. During the meeting, Fatikh Karimi and Halim Pasha also discussed the causes of the Ottoman Empire's defeat in the Balkan War and the consequences of the overthrow of Ittihad ve Terakki. Halim Pasha stressed that external powers had played a significant role in these events, while also pointing to internal problems such as the absence of qualified leadership and the incompetence of the new authorities. He argued that the overthrow of the party had undermined public confidence in the government and weakened the morale of both the army and the civilian population. Unlike during the Tripolitanian War, when the people had been inspired by the leaders of Ittihad ve Terakki, the Balkan War was marked by apathy and hopelessness, which, in Halim Pasha's opinion, became one of the causes of failure. He emphasized the importance of political stability and public trust for the successful



Yusuf Akchura.
From open sources

conduct of war and also pointed to the negative effects of internal intrigues and foreign interference on the fate of the state.

Thus, Said Halim Pasha, one of the leaders of the Young Turks, criticized the Ottoman government for its inability to inspire the people and the army during wartime, which he regarded as one of the reasons for defeat. He saw the future of Turkey only in the return of the Young Turks to power, believing that they alone could correct past mistakes and save the country from collapse. Fatikh Karimi highly regarded Said Halim Pasha as a patriot and a devoted supporter of the Young Turk movement.

As for the role of Russian Muslims such as Abdurreshid Ibrahim and Yusuf Akçura in the events of the Ottoman Empire, the question of their participation in political struggle remains open. The text of the *Istanbul Letters* indicates that they were well acquainted with the leaders of the Young Turks and may even have enjoyed their trust. However, it remains unclear whether they were merely observers or active participants in these events. The degree of involvement of

Russian Muslims in the political struggle within the Ottoman Empire requires further study. It is possible that their presence in Istanbul in 1912–1913 was connected not only with observation but also with attempts to establish ties between the Muslim communities of Russia and the Ottoman Empire. Nevertheless, a precise answer to this question requires the study of additional sources, including archival materials and correspondence among the participants in these events.

In the *Istanbul Letters*, Fatikh Karimi also reports that Turkish youth organized an official public association called “Türk Ocakları” (“Turkish Hearths”). The aim of this society was to promote the national upbringing of the Turks: their advancement in science and education, the development of the economy and culture, and the cultivation of the Turkish language. One of the aims of the society was to make the Turks prosperous and economically independent. To achieve this, members of the organization intended to meet and establish contacts with representatives of crafts and industry, encourage and motivate the people toward trade and agriculture, and assist in the creation of new partnerships (companies) and commercial enterprises among the Turks. In its program, Türk Ocakları declared that, as a purely public organization, it would never interfere in political affairs and would not serve political parties. According to its charter, only Turks could become members of the organization. As Fatikh Karimi writes, many representatives of the youth and intelligentsia responded very positively to the society. Within a year, membership had grown to nearly seven hundred people. Among them were many doctors, lawyers, editors, and writers — people of different views, convictions, and social backgrounds.

Due to the Tripolitanian and Balkan Wars, the activities of the society were suspended for a long period. In December 1912, it resumed its work by organizing scientific and literary gatherings and conferences. Fatikh Karimi reports that a tea reception was arranged in support of the Hilal-i Ahmer (“Red Crescent”). Representatives of the Crimean Muslims, who brought donations for the Hilal-i Ahmer, were invited. Among the respected representatives of the northern Turks living there was Abdurreshid Efendi (Ibragimov); Ahmet Ağaoğlu was also present at the gathering. Among the correspondents

of Tatar newspapers invited were Ğaliäsğar Kamal and Fatikh Karimi himself¹⁴. In total, about thirty people attended the meeting. The hosts were the chairman of the Türk Ocakları (manager of the newspaper *Efham*), Ferid Bey, and his deputy Yusuf Akçura.

At the gathering, discussion turned to the physical education of children. It was argued that the physical improvement of the nation was the primary necessity, after which the cultivation of a healthy spirit could follow. The efforts of the state and society in the sphere of physical education were said to bring significant benefits in Europe, especially in England.

In response, Abdurreshid Efendi presented his own arguments: although physical education was indeed necessary for children, such societies and organizations should not be established merely in imitation of Europe and England, but rather in accordance with the national consciousness of the Turks and the foundations of their own way of life. Such ideas, he maintained, must be developed by Turkish thinkers themselves. Up to the present time, he continued, because the Turks had attempted to evaluate everything according to its conformity with Europe, nothing truly beneficial had resulted. He then spoke about how the Japanese, having independently calculated and understood everything for themselves — without constantly looking toward Europe — had achieved far greater progress in improving their condition¹⁵.

The discussion at the gathering then turned to the pressing issue of the time, one that may still remain relevant today: the opposition between “Ottomanism” and “Turkism”. Ahmet Ağaoğlu declared that in the Tripolitanian and Balkan Wars, it was not the Turks who had lost, but Ottomanism itself.

He believed that what had been called “Devlet-i Osmaniye” and “Millet-i Osmaniye” consisted of peoples and confessions as diverse as Turks, Arabs, Armenians, Albanians, Kurds, Greeks, Laz, Muslims, Christians, pagans, or even mixed “collections”: a father who was Albanian and a mother who was Circassian, or a father who was

¹⁴ Кәримми Ф. Истамбул мәктүпләре. Оренбург, 1913. С. 175.

¹⁵ Ibid. С. 177.

English and a mother who was Arab. The entity defeated in this war, he argued, was the Ottoman government, which had been unable to govern the country and had brought calamities upon the fatherland — not the government of the Turks. The Turks themselves were a healthy people; they had not decayed. Had they governed the state independently, such disasters would certainly not have befallen it. As soon as genuinely Turkish troops from Anatolia began arriving toward the end of the war, they demonstrated success against the Bulgarians at Çatalca. The principal mistake of the Turks, according to Ağaoğlu, was that they gave the name of one state and one nation to a “collection of life” (a conglomerate) made up of so many peoples who neither loved nor understood one another, nor wished to do so, and then, trusting them, entered into war. Experience, however, showed that only the Turks themselves were capable of safeguarding Turkey’s interests¹⁶.

He continued: “The Turks have a brilliant future ahead of them! The great vitality of the Turks can be seen in the progress of the northern Turks [that is, the Turks of Russia, or the Volga-Ural Tatars] in trade and enlightenment. As a result of the current situation, the political life of Turkey will undoubtedly experience many shortcomings and defects. But this will not harm the Turks themselves. Having awakened through bitter experience, their life will undoubtedly enter a path more worthy than before. Therefore, the Turks must not lose hope or fall into despair; rather, they must take up their work with even greater diligence than before”¹⁷. After Ahmed Bey Ağaoğlu concluded his speech, those present expressed the opinion that the Turks needed national love (love for their own nation) and the spirit of Turkism, and that it was because they lacked patriotism that they were losing the war. Fatikh Karimi further notes that in previous years there had been attempts in the governance of Turkey to introduce the principles of Islamism (Islamiyat), Ottomanism, and Turkism. However, none of these succeeded in taking root as the foundation of state administration.

¹⁶ Ibid. C. 180–181.

¹⁷ Ibid. C. 181.

Conclusion

Thus, the study revealed that some contemporary researchers accept information from gendarmerie documents as indisputable fact, even though the documents themselves contain no concrete evidence of criminal activity on the part of “Tarrakion Islamiya”.

Most likely, gendarmerie officials, seeking to justify their activities and strengthen control over the Muslim intelligentsia, exaggerated or even constructed the threat allegedly posed by “Tarrakion Islamiya”. The absence of concrete evidence of criminal activity and the inconsistency between Mahmud Esad’s biographical data and the claims contained in the documents point to the possibility of falsification or erroneous interpretation of facts.

As for the very idea of progressive Islam reflected in the name of the alleged organization, it is evident that this theme developed actively in the early twentieth century both in the Ottoman Empire and among the Muslims of Russia. The ideas of Hilmi Bey, described by Fatikh Karimi, are important for understanding the context of modernization processes in the Muslim world at the beginning of the twentieth century. They also demonstrate how Tatar intellectuals such as Fatikh Karimi actively studied and adapted the Ottoman experience in order to address the problems facing Russian Muslims.

With regard to the organization “Tarrakion Islamiya”, the mention of Hilmi Bey’s plans to create a party called “Muslim Progress” may indeed be connected with this theme. However, as the study demonstrates, gendarmerie officials in Russia often constructed images of “Pan-Islamism” and “Pan-Turkism”, exaggerating threats and creating imaginary networks. Thus, the actual existence of “Tarrakion Islamiya” in Russia remains questionable, while the accusations directed against Tatar intellectuals may have formed part of the political rhetoric of the time.

Moreover, the materials contained in the *Istanbul Letters* show that representatives of the Russian Muslim intelligentsia were deeply immersed in the intellectual and socio-political life of the Ottoman Empire. When Tatar journalists interviewed opposition politicians — the leaders of the Young Turks at that time — their interlocutors

themselves began asking questions about the lives of Russian Muslims. This indicates the profound interest of the Young Turk leaders in social processes taking place in the Muslim regions of the Russian Empire.

Thus, the reality of “Tarrakion Islamiya” as an active and extensive organization operating within the territory of Russia remains uncertain, and its activities were likely exaggerated or even fabricated. In order to clarify the situation more fully, it is necessary to examine both Ottoman sources and materials from Tatar publications relating to the year 1913 and the subsequent period.

Conflict of interests

The author declares no relevant conflict of interests.



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