

# Transnational politicisation of local elites in Semirechye: The first Muslim congress of the Semirechye region (1906) and the Uzun-Agach congress (1910)

**Aida KUBATOVA**

Senior researcher

National Academy of Sciences (KG)

[kubatova-aida@mail.ru](mailto:kubatova-aida@mail.ru)

Doi: 10.5077/journals/connexe.2025.e2431

## Abstract

The article reflects on the political activities of the local elites in the Semirechye at the beginning of the 20th century, using two important events as examples: the first Muslim Congress (1906) and the Uzun-Agach Congress (1910). It analyses the role and contribution of the Kyrgyz and Kazakh elites, and the Tatars in the political processes that took place in the region in the early 20th centuries, as well as their influence on the further development of the socio-political life of the population of the Semirechye. The main Kyrgyz and Kazakh actors in this emerging political movement were, on the one hand, the civil servants working for the regional administration, most often as interpreters, and on the other hand, the administrators of the volost, who represented the lineage elites. These two groups held the power within the population. The Tatars saw their direct political role progressively diminish, although they remained a crucial link due to the influence of the Tatar press, their connections with the Muslim in Russia, and their financial support. The development of political and national demands among Central Asians in a colonial context is described through the formation of networks and the organisation of congresses and informal gatherings between 1905 and 1912. The 1905 revolution allowed for the expression of political discourse and paved the way for the brief representation of Semirechye alien population in the new State Duma. Muslim reformism, known as Jadidism, played a pivotal role in the politicisation of Semirechye, significantly impacted by the All-Russian Muslim movement. The freedom of religion had many implications. The Kazakh and Kyrgyz elites mobilised alongside Tatars and Uyghurs in a transnational dynamic.

**Keywords:** Jadidism, Semirechye, All-Russian Muslim, Tatar, intelligentsia, lineage elites, politicisation

## Résumé

Cet article examine les activités politiques des élites locales dans le Semirechye au début du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, en s'appuyant sur deux événements importants : le premier congrès musulman (1906) et le congrès d'Uzun-Agach (1910). Il analyse le rôle et la contribution des élites kirghizes et kazakhes, ainsi que des Tatars, dans les processus politiques qui ont eu lieu dans la région au début du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, ainsi que leur influence sur le développement ultérieur de la vie sociopolitique du Semirechye. Les principaux acteurs kirghizes et kazakhs de ce mouvement politique émergent étaient, d'une part, les fonctionnaires travaillant pour l'administration régionale, le plus souvent comme interprètes, et, d'autre part, les administrateurs de volost, qui représentaient les élites lignagères. Ces deux groupes détenaient le pouvoir au sein de la population. Les Tatars ont vu leur rôle politique direct diminuer progressivement, même s'ils sont restés un maillon essentiel en raison de l'influence de la presse tatare, de leurs liens avec les musulmans de Russie et de leur soutien financier. Le développement des revendications politiques et nationales parmi les Centrasiatiques dans un contexte colonial est décrit à travers la formation de réseaux et l'organisation de congrès et de rassemblements informels entre 1905 et 1912. La révolution de 1905 a permis l'expression du discours politique et a ouvert la voie à une brève représentation de la population allogène du Semirechye au sein de la nouvelle Douma d'État. Le réformisme musulman, connu sous le nom de djadidisme, a joué un rôle central dans la politisation du Semirechye, fortement influencée par le mouvement musulman panrusse. La liberté de religion a eu de nombreuses implications. Les élites kazakhes et kirghizes se sont mobilisées aux côtés des Tatars et des Ouïghours dans une dynamique transnationale.

**Mots-clés :** Djadidisme, Semirechye, musulmans de Russie, Tatar, intelligentsia, élite lignagère, politisation

## Introduction

At the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries, significant changes took place in the socio-political, economic and cultural life of the population of Turkestan. The region was under the strict control of the Russian Empire, which largely determined its development during this period. This was characterised by new capitalist commodity-trade relations penetrating production and agriculture. The Russian authorities actively established their powerful administrative control over the region, using the local population as cheap labour. Nevertheless, the development of transport and communication networks contributed to the region's integration into the Russian economy. However, such significant changes also increased the region's dependence on the central government. The Tsarist colonial regime had penetrated Central Asian societies, which had to adapt to the administrative regulations and laws of the Empire.

The Semirechye region was no exception, but it experienced specific dynamics. Migratory movements altered the region's population composition. From the 1860s' onwards, large groups of Uyghurs and Dungans settled alongside Kazakh and Kyrgyz lineages (see article by Svetlana Asanova in this issue). Tatars, who were mainly merchants, also came to the region in search of a prosperous future (Sultangalieva 2012). They were accompanied by mullahs and teachers, who were in high demand among the Kazakhs and Kyrgyz. However, another group, who were non-Muslim unlike the previous ones, were the cause source of conflict and economic hardship for the Central Asian populations. Semirechye was a popular destination for settlers from European Russia, whose numbers only increased from the beginning of the 20th century, depriving the indigenous peoples of their land (Малтусынов 2006).

The economic, social and political crisis was becoming increasingly urgent. Although Semirechye was far from the main intellectual and economic centres, it was not isolated from the protest movements developing throughout the Empire. The Central Asian populations adopted various forms of resistance to defend their own interests, some of which were based in part on pre-colonial methods involving the use of violence. They also relied on negotiations with the colonial authorities and attempts to exploit imperial legislation. In Semirechye, the Kyrgyz lineage elites, known as *манар* [манап] (Prior 2013), and the Kazakh elites, played a central role in the political and socio-economic life of their compatriots, defining the main directions of development.

The role of Islam in Kyrgyz and Kazakh society also evolved during this period. Its presence grew stronger, and both the *manaps* and the Kazakh elites openly embraced it as their own, financing the construction of mosques and performing the *hajj* (Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca) (Hallez 2022; Kane 2015). Shabdan Zhantaev (1839-1912), a *manap* from the Sarybagysh lineage group, was a prominent figure in this movement, undertaking the *hajj* between December 1904 and May 1905 (Akiyama 2021, 90-103). Religious discourse became an element of the legitimacy of the elites, including the defence of Muslim values and a path to progress. Since the end of the 19th century, these elites had appropriated the idea of social progress requiring the development of education and knowledge. This was expressed in the influence of the Muslim reform movement known as Jadidism from *Usul-i Jadid* (the new methods), which spread through the Tatars (Khalid 1998, 80-113). The new curriculum in the *medrese* – the Muslim higher educational institutions,<sup>1</sup> comprised both religious education and material sciences that would be resourceful for the community in tackling the modern-day challenges. In 1901, the *medrese*, named Ekbaliya [Экбалия – progress], was the first one established in the Kyrgyz part of Semirechye. It was opened in Tokmak by Galii Uzbekov, a Tatar merchant of the second guild from Pishpek. He called on Tatar teachers from the

<sup>1</sup> A *medrese* is a Muslim higher educational institution which students joined after learning to read Arabic in a *mektep* (elementary school) or with mullahs. The curriculum mainly consisted of Arabic language, recitation of the Quran (*tajwid*), knowledge of the *hadith*, sharia and *fiqh* (Islamic law).

Volga-Ural region who had studied in Jadid *medrese*. They distributed the Muslim press, opening Kyrgyz to the ideas circulating in the Russian Muslim world.

Russian-allogeneous schools appeared between 1897 and 1900 in Tokmak and several Kyrgyz volosts in Semirechye (Султаналиев 2021, 300-301). They were established thanks to Kyrgyz subsidies. The teaching staff was mainly Russian, with the gradual integration of Central Asians for religious and Kyrgyz language teaching. The pupils were destined to work in the Tsarist administration and to teach. They formed a new social class within Kyrgyz society, generally referred to as the intelligentsia, which was in contact with Russian officials and also sensitive to the currents of ideas stirring Russian society.

This article discusses the repercussions of the 1905 revolution in Semirechye, specifically among the Kyrgyz and Kazakh populations. It was less a matter of a revolutionary agenda than a platform of demands centred on two themes: the practice of Islam and the recognition of rights for the Kyrgyz and the Kazakhs. The sources documenting these events among the Central Asian populations are very fragmented. Nevertheless, they highlight certain processes and show the predominant role of the lineage elites, the Tatars and those educated in Russian schools. It also appears that the pan-Russian Muslim movement was an inspiration for the groups active in Semirechye and that it encouraged joint action among the various Muslim populations in the region. In the face of surveillance and repression by the Russian authorities, political practices were devised. The two main events marking the period from 1905 to 1912 were the gatherings of representatives of the Muslims of Semirechye in the spring of 1906 in Vernyi and in October 1910 in Uzun-Agach.

The sources used in this article are mainly archival documentation from the State Archives of Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, and the Muslim press. These include reports by agents working to monitor Central Asians on behalf of the Tsarist administration and the security department. These documents provide numerous details on the informal nature of the political activities of the Kazakhs and Kyrgyz and the networks they built. The police and Russian bias require that they must be studied with caution. Materials from fund II-461 of the Central State Archives of the Republic of Uzbekistan were used in the preparation of this article. Reports sent to the head of the Turkestan security department from the Investigation Unit of the city of Vernyi in the Semirechye region state that an agent under the pseudonym “Kara” [Kapa – Black] is being sent to the city of Pishpek to monitor the Muslim movement. He provided information that is important for today’s research on the preparation of the local population for the congress of Russian Muslims. It indicates the growing interest and organisation among the Muslims of Turkestan at the beginning of the 20th century. The reports relate the Muslim press and the readings available in the Semirechye: *Терджиман* (Translator), the first Muslim periodical publication edited in Crimea from 1883 to 1905 and promoting jadidism (Bennigsen 1964, 35-42), *Вакт* (Time) Tatar journal published in Orenburg from 1906 to 1918 with the same orientation as *Терджиман* (Bennigsen 1964, 72-75), *Айқан* (Alas) Kazakh journal published in Troitsk from 1911 to 1915 (Bennigsen 1964, 150-151; Субханбердина 1995), *Акмолла* (Akmola) Tatar-Kazakh journal published in Troitsk from 1911 to 1917 with a Jadid orientation (Bennigsen 1964, 80-81). It indicates the active participation of print media in the dissemination of ideas and discussion of issues concerning the Muslim community. These publications played an important role in shaping public opinion and disseminating information about political events and cultural processes. The reports submitted by agents are examples of the intelligence work carried out by the security department of Turkestan. I would like to express my gratitude to Aigul Makhaeva, Kazakhstani researcher, for providing these archival documents, which played an important role in understanding the historical processes and political movements of that time.

In addition to these materials, archival documents from fund И-160 of the Central State Archive of the Kyrgyz republic were consulted. The documents contain information about the propagation of the Pan-Turkism, Jadid schools and on the convening of Muslim congresses.

The Turkestan press is the second essential source for this article. The newspaper *Туркестанские ведомости* (Turkestan News), the official publication of the Turkestan General-Governorship, was published in Russian, Kazakh and Uzbek from 1870 to 1917. It was used in particular to disseminate decrees and decisions issued by the central and regional Tsarist authorities. The liberal and independent newspaper *Русский Туркестан* (Russian Turkestan) was published from 1898 to 1907 in Tashkent. In December 1905, the editorial board passed into the hands of social democrats and reported on the development of the revolutionary movement in Turkestan, as well as on the political activity of the Central Asian populations (Ксенжик 2025, 115).

### **The decrees of 1904-1905: From the awakening of a Muslim movement in Russia to petitions addressed to the Tsar**

Under pressure from a general protest movement throughout the Empire in 1905, the Tsar was forced to make significant concessions and issued a series of decrees to initiate reforms, one of the major milestones being the election of a State Duma (Ascher 2004). The Central Asian populations took part in the debate and numerous initiatives were taken between 1905 and 1906 to put forward their demands and obtain the same rights as the Russians.

The imperial decree “On plans to improve the state order” [О предначертаниях к усовершенствованию государственного порядка], promulgated on 12 December 1904, preceded the revolutionary events, but marked the beginning of unrest among Muslims, as its purpose was to end discrimination and reform religious policy (Crews 2006, 330-332). From January 1905 onwards, Tatar circles were busy preparing proposals to send to the authorities in order to obtain greater freedom for the practice of Islam. Among these demands were the election of the mufti of the Orenburg Spiritual Assembly,<sup>2</sup> the transfer of jurisdiction over mosques and Muslim educational institutions to the Spiritual Assembly, specific points on *waqf*<sup>3</sup> and the censorship of religious writings (Исхаков 2007, 113-125). These debates were followed in Semirechye through the Tatar newspapers.

Following the revolution of January 1905, Tsar Nikolai II decided to call elections to form an assembly, known as the Bulygin Duma, named after the Minister of the Interior. The census suffrage was very restrictive and also excluded alien populations, and therefore both Kazakhs and Kyrgyz, who quickly reacted to this decision. Alongside the issue of freedom of worship, the question of civil rights [гражданственность] was one of the recurring themes discussed among all the populations of the Empire. In Semirechye, a meeting was held in Vernyi on 31 March 1905, where it was requested that four representatives be elected for the main ethnic groups in the region: Russian, Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Uyghur. Instructions were subsequently sent to regional administrations in response to demands by Central Asians to be able to elect their representatives. They stated that “nomadic populations should not be allowed to participate in the elections” (Озганбай 2000, 39).

On 18 February 1905, a decree was issued authorising the sending of petitions to the Tsar. In order to reform the Empire, the people were given a voice to express their demands. Muhamedzhan Tynyshpaev (1879-1937), one of the future central figures of the Kazakh intelligentsia from

---

<sup>2</sup> The Orenburg Muslim Spiritual Assembly (Оренбургское магометанское духовное собрание) was a state-controlled religious administration established in 1788, that had jurisdiction over certain aspects of Islamic activity in Siberia, the Volga-Ural region, and parts of Central Asia. The Head position was held by a mufti to be approved by the Tsar (Azamatov 1998).

<sup>3</sup> A *waqf* is a donation used to fulfill public or family needs as a charitable social service under Islamic law (Абашин 2016).



Semirechye, who was then a student in the imperial capital, sent a letter to the President of the Russian Council of Ministers (Тынышпаев 2001, 18-23; Осадчий 2001). He called for a review of the Tsarist regulations that had instituted a state of emergency in the steppes. The military governors of the *Kirgiz*<sup>4</sup> regions had the right to reject any elected *Kirgiz* representative and appoint a replacement. This arbitrariness was reinforced by conflicts between lineages for control of local administrations (national courts, the council of elders [*aqsagal*] and the post of volost administrator). Muhamedzhan Tynyshpaev denounced this situation in which powerful lineages imposed their will on weaker ones. He called for the establishment of a rule of law similar to that in Russia, which would make it possible to overcome rivalries between lineages and work for the prosperity of the entire Kazakh people.

Justice demands that the *Kirgiz* people of 6 000 000 not be ignored. Their representatives must be listened to and involved in issues relating both to the overall construction of the state and to the reform of the administration of the *Kirgiz* people (Тынышпаев 2001, 23).

The summer saw numerous gatherings organised in various regions of Central Asia on the initiative of members of the intelligentsia and the ruling elites. The Tsarist administration counted 172 such gatherings between 1905 and early 1906. Moderate in tone, the petitions primarily addressed religious and agrarian issues, namely freedom of worship, an end to peasant colonisation and the return of land. All these gatherings and the activities of the Central Asians were monitored by the Russian authorities, who attempted to contain them.

At the instigation of Shabdan Zhantaev, one of the leading Kyrgyz *manaps*, a petition circulated in the Semirechye region in June 1905 (Жусупов 1992, 105-112). The main points raised concerned freedom of worship and the agrarian question, echoing the adapted terms of the pan-Russian Muslim movement and Kazakh petitions. It called for the creation of a spiritual assembly for the Kyrgyz and Kazakhs to manage family law, the opening of mosques, the clergy, schools and *medrese*, and educational staff (Akiyama 2021, 98-99). Shabdan Zhantaev tasked his son Aman Shabdanov, Ahmetbek Koibagarov and Surantai Tashibekov with collecting signatures in the various uyezds of Semirechye. Surantai Tashibekov was from the volost of Sarybagysh, like Shabdan and his son (Figure 1). Ahmetbek Koibagarov, a Kazakh (“Койбарарова... 1928) from the Tolkan volost, was a lawyer practising in Pishpek. He was considered loyal [благонадежный] according to the Pishpek police report.

**Figure 1.** Shabdan Zhantaev, 1908

From left to right:  
Aman Shabdanov, Aiykabyly  
Kemelov, Shabdan Zhantaev,  
Shabdan's granddaughter, the volost  
administrator Abdrahman Estevesov  
and a *dzhigit* in 1908.

(CSA KR, f.77, op.1, d.1, l.1)



<sup>4</sup> The use of the term *Kirgiz* corresponds to the usage in Russian sources to refer primarily to Kazakhs, with whom the Kyrgyz may possibly be associated.

After obtaining signatures in the Pishpek district, they went to the Vernyi uezd, collecting numerous signatures, then travelled to the Kopal uezdt, where they were arrested and interrogated. Ahmetbek Koibagarov stated that “they do not see anything reprehensible or illegal in travelling around the region for the above-mentioned purpose and have not encountered any obstacles to date.” The directives from the Tsarist authorities were unclear on the measures to be taken in response to the population’s initiatives. Surveillance was the order of the day, but the decrees were supposed to grant new rights. This first Kyrgyz initiative shows a desire not to limit their demands to their compatriots alone, but to extend them to other Muslim populations in Semirechye. However, their petition was seized, and they were sent back to Vernyi. Therefore, they were unable to obtain signatures in either the Kopal or Dzharkent uezds. This petition failed to achieve its objective or be sent to the Tsar, unlike the two main Kazakh petitions drafted that same summer (Hallez 2014, 284-285).

### Preparations for the State Duma elections: Politicisation and networks in Semirechye

In the summer of 1905, prominent Tatar figures decided to organise a general congress of Muslims in order to create a progressive party to represent the interests of Muslims in Russia in the future Duma. The appeal was published in the newspaper *Терджуман*, which was widely distributed throughout the Empire, including in Semirechye (Исхаков 2007, 162-163). The congress founded the Union of Muslims, *Ittifaq al-muslimin*, in order to present a united voice for Muslim interests before the Tsarist authorities. Unlike the Tatars, the Central Asians had not been granted the right to elect their representative to the Duma.

The revolutionary movement continued to demand more freedom and rights, forcing the Tsar to soften his position. The Tsarist manifesto of 17 October 1905 completely changed the situation. The right to vote was now open to alien populations, who would be represented by one deputy for each of the oblasts of Central Asia. Regional administrations and populations had to organise themselves to prepare for the elections, which were initially scheduled for January 1906 but were postponed to March-April.

The manifesto also pledged to grant civil rights to the people, including freedom of worship, speech, assembly and association. It allowed for the expression of political and national discourse. In November 1905, a congress of autonomists was organised in Saint-Petersburg, bringing together delegates from 12 nationalities within the Russian Empire. Muhamedzhan Tynyshpaev participated and expressed strong criticism of the colonial regime. His speech, published in the newspaper *Русский Туркестан* in January 1906, reiterated the main demands and advocated for national autonomy (Тынышпаев 2001, 23-33). He raised political, religious and agrarian issues and concluded by stating that the *Kirgiz* demanded “freedom, justice, the rule of law and equality” (Тынышпаев 2001, 33). The young Muhamedzhan Tynyshpaev found himself at the heart of political activity in Saint-Petersburg and made a name for himself in many circles.

In Semirechye, where Muhamedzhan Tynyshpaev was from, preparations for the Duma elections did not begin before March 1906, as the rules for the election campaign in Central Asia were not published until 22 February. The unified approach outlined by the *Ittifak al-musulmin*, whose statutes had been adopted at the Second All-Russian Congress of Muslims in January 1906, was followed by the Central Asian elites. The first congress of Muslims of Semirechye was convened in Vernyi on 31 March.

The meeting, held for the first time in the region, was attended by representatives of Muslim communities: delegates from Pishpek, Przhevalsk, Dzharkent, Kopal, Lepsinsk, Vernyi and Tokmak, as well as representatives of Muslims from the city of Kuldzha. A total of 100 officially invited guests participated in the congress, in addition to 200 other attendees. The precise list of participants is

not known, but a large number of Tatars were present alongside Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Uyghurs and Uzbeks. The congress began with a reading from the Quran by Zakir Vagapov, the *mudaris* of the Muslims of Pishpek.<sup>5</sup> Zakir Vagapov was not only involved in educational matters, but also actively participated in the social and political life of the region. It was therefore no surprise that he was elected chairman at the Congress. His deputy was Akbar Yuldashev, a Uyghur from Dzharkent, and Ahmetbek Koibagarov was chosen as secretary.

The Tatar Zakir Vagapov was respected not only among the Kyrgyz, but throughout Turkestan. In his work *Тарих кыргыз Шадмания: Кыргыз санжырасы* (*History of Kyrgyz Shadmania: Kyrgyz genealogy*) from 1914, Osmonaly Sydykov (1875-1940), considered the foremost Kyrgyz historian, provides rare information about Zakir Vagapov, of whom he was a student:

In 1901-1902, Quran scholar Zakir Kary Vokhabov [Vagapov] arrived in Tokmak from Troitsk. The number of students increased many times over. But an official named Chavokov decided to ban the education of *Kirgiz* children in the city of Tokmak and ordered them to be expelled. However, only after a request from Shabdan Baatyr and on the initiative of our mentor and teacher Zakir Damolly, the children were not dismissed. Year after year, the number of students began to increase. This man began to teach children syntax [*nahu*] and morphology [*sarf*] using a new method, as well as teaching history, geography and arithmetic (Сыдыков 1990 [1914], 14).

Zakir Vagapov studied at the Rasuliya *medrese* in Troitsk (Кубатова 2025, 226). He was possibly the son of Abdul-Vali Abdul-Vagapov Abu-Bakirov, a Tatar merchant of the 2nd guild of Troitsk, who traded with Tashkent, the Kokand Khanate and China since the beginning of the 19th century (Небольсин 1850).

There is also very little information about the lawyer Ahmetbek Koibagarov. He was close to Shabdan's entourage and the Tatar circles of Pishpek. A report from 1912 by a secret agent of the tsarist administration nicknamed "Kara" states that "Ahmetbek Tashimovich Koibagarov, who lives in the city of Pishpek, merchants Iskak and Ibrai Daulbaevs, and others receive the Muslim newspapers *Айқан*, *Вакт*, and *Акмола*, and that the news is commented on by lawyer Koibagarov in *mashrab*".<sup>6</sup> Ishak Daulbaev (Figure 2) was one of the richest merchants in Pishpek, heavily involved in public life and the financing of Jadid schools (Yarkov A. 1996, 82). He participated with his brother Ibrai in the first congress in Vernyi.

Akbar Yuldashev was the son of Vali-Ahun Yuldashev (1839-1916), a very wealthy Uyghur merchant from the First Guild. Vali-Ahun Yuldashev had made his fortune supplying the Russian army on the border with China. Closely connected to the Russian administration, he was the principal promoter of the city of Dzharkent and wielded immense influence within the Uyghur community.

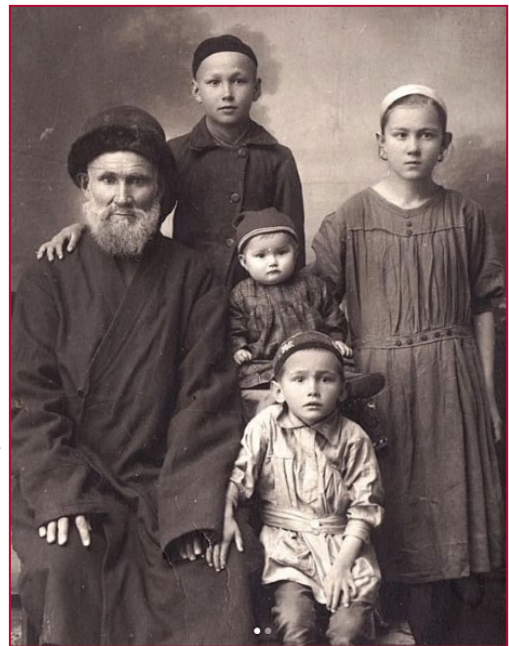


Figure 2. Ishak Daulbaev and his family

<sup>5</sup> *Русский Туркестан* (69), 6 May 1906.

<sup>6</sup> A *mashrab* is a closed and informal men "club" that host regularly meeting to discuss community affairs and maintain a bond of sociability (Togayev 2023). Центральный Государственный Архив Республики Узбекистана, ф. И-461, оп. I, д. 1172, лл. 78.



Referring to the work of the first Congress of Muslims, a resolution prepared by the commission was adopted at the congress.<sup>7</sup> It noted the need to organise a Muslim Spiritual Assembly, which should serve all Muslim nationalities of Turkestan. It was also noted that when considering an issue concerning any nationality, it should be resolved after a report by a representative of that nationality. Muftis, sheikh-ul-Islams, qadis, imams, muezzins and other ministers of religion should be elected and be confirmed to their positions not by the administration, but by the spiritual assembly. And since there were many young people who had been educated abroad, the resolution decided to “give them permission, if they are worthy, to claim the above-mentioned positions.” The construction and repair of mosques, schools and medrese should be carried out with the permission of the spiritual assembly. At the same time, the resolution notes that activities carried out in Turkestan must be within the framework of the law relating to Muslims in Russia. Jadidism was also supported and the resolution called to the opening of new Jadid *medrese*. The funding of these medrese relied exclusively on patronage, as the *waqf* system that existed for Tatar and Uzbek *medrese* had been prohibited in Semirechye and the Kazakh steppes. The patrons had to circumvent this ban (Махмытов 2023, 500). State financial participation was primarily required. It was also decided to open libraries and to hold a teachers’ congress in Pishpek and Tokmak the following year.

The last point was the organisation of the Duma elections. The main demand was a fairer representation of the Muslim population of Semirechye:

Since the population of the Semirechye region consists of five nationalities, at least three seats should be allocated in the State Duma, and this right should be given to the local Kara-Kirgiz, Taranchi [Uyghur] and Kirgiz-Kaisak. The Tatars, Sart [Uzbek] and others who have come from other places should not express any dissatisfaction, as their representatives are elected from other places (Туркестанские ведомости 69, 6 May 1906).

Muslim identity in no way erased belonging to one’s nationality. It was mobilised because the feeling of a community of interest among all the Muslims of Turkestan was strong and the unity of the Muslims of Russia was conceived as a political strategy to face the Russian authorities. Moreover, the request for three seats was never studied by the Tsarist administration and therefore forced the selection of a single representative.

In order to announce the ten-point resolution to the authorities and implement it, the three members of the congress bureau, Zakir Vagapov, Akhmetbek Koibagarov, and Akbar Yuldashev, to which were added Zainetdin Tazetdinov, Mirkasym Mirshanov, were elected as special representatives of the assembly. Zainetdin Tazetdinov and Mirkasym Mirshanov were two Tatar merchants and entrepreneurs from Vernyi. Zainetdin Tazetdinov was the son-in-law of the most powerful Tatar merchant in Vernyi, Ishak Gabuvaliev (1839-1911) (Figure 3), who had opened a *medrese* in Vernyi in 1883 (Таиров 2003). It was converted to the Jadid method in 1900 and Zainetdin Tazetdinov was entrusted with its management. He also became the director of the Muslim library in Vernyi opened in March 1907 (Галиев 2001; Хисамутдинова 2022, 172-173), which had been on the agenda of the Muslim congress. Mirkasym Mirshanov owned a textile factory in the village of Zaitsevo in the Vernyi uezd (Вся Россия... 1902, 2803).

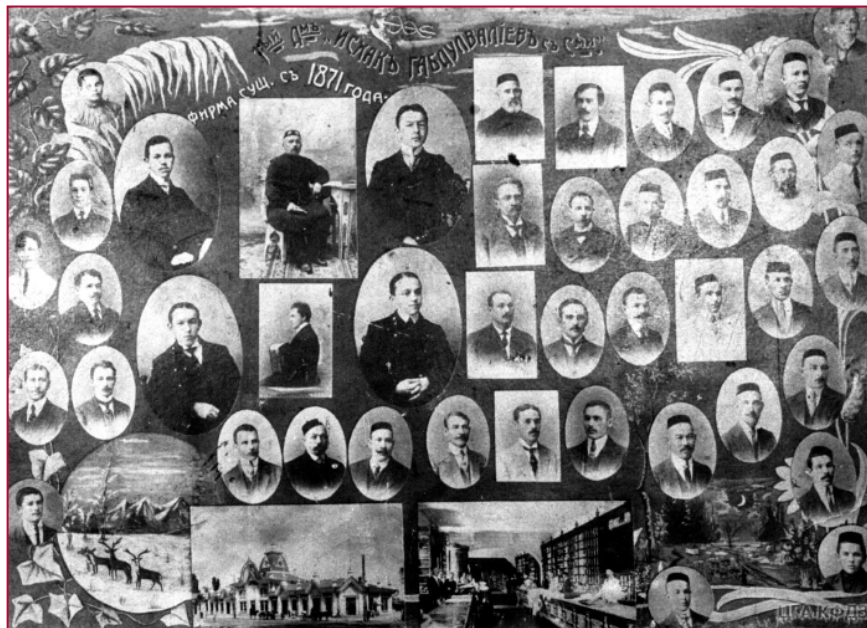
On 3 April, a telegram was sent to the Prime Minister Sergei Witte (1849-1915) in Saint-Petersburg expressing gratitude to “His Most Gracious Majesty” (Nicholas II) from the Assembly of Muslims of Semirechye, which had been authorised by the administration. The next day, Zakir Vagapov, Ahmetbek Koibagarov, Zainetdin Tazetdinov, as representatives of the assembly, were warmly received by the general governor of the Semirechye oblast [Mihail Ionov (1846-1924)].<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Русский Туркестан (69), 6 May 1906.

<sup>8</sup> They were accompanied by Rahmatulla Zainullin, a Tatar businessman living in Vernyi, owner of a tannery and a livestock farm (Вся Россия 1902, 2803).



Koibagarov spoke on behalf of those present. The governor considered the request to organise a meeting of Turkestan Muslims to be appropriate and necessary for the region's population of four million Muslims. The periodical press of the time published the governor's words spoken at the meeting: "Gather together, report what is lacking, ask for help, but do not rise up in rebellion against the government." Koibagarov replied to these words: "Thank God, the Muslims of Russia are not susceptible to this highly contagious revolutionary disease and will remain uninfected." After a twenty-minute meeting, the representatives expressed their gratitude for the reception, took leave and retired. And on 7 April, a telegram arrived from Saint-Petersburg addressed to Vagapov with the following content: "Faithful. To Mudarris Vagapov. His Imperial Majesty has given orders to express gratitude to the Muslims of the Semirechye region for their wishes. Count S. Witte" (*Русский Туркестан* (69), 6 May 1906). The position of the actors of the Muslim Congress was legalistic.



**Figure 3.** Employees of Ishak Gabdulvaliev's commercial enterprise in 1908

In the square frame, Ishak Gabdulvaliev is seated at a table, with his sons Rafik and Kutdus to his left in two ovals. Below Ishak Gabdulvaliev is his son-in-law Zainetdin Tazetdinov

Running out of time, the political consolidation of this movement could not be achieved with the election of a representative to the Duma. Electors were to be appointed for each volost, and they, in turn, were to choose their own deputy, but the process began lately. Therefore, the elections in Semirechye could only partially take place due to the dissolution of the Duma on July 8, 1906. No deputy from Semirechye sat in the first Duma. During this period, Ahmetbek Koibagarov had established his position as the tsarist authorities' main interlocutor for the alien population of Semirechye. Following the dissolution of the first Duma, preparations for a second term took place at the end of 1906. In the meantime, political forces continued to organise and plan for the future. Surveillance of their activities increased, and numerous agents attempted to trace the networks and movements of key figures.

A third All-Russian Congress of Muslims was held in Nizhny Novgorod between 16 and 21 August 1906 (Усманова 2005, 140-141). It brought together 800 delegates from across the Empire. Koibagarov and Ishak Daulbaev were the two representatives of Semirechye. The congress again voted on several issues: the creation of a Spiritual Assembly for Turkestan and support for Jadidism in education. However, the discussion on the reorganisation of the *waqf* was postponed.

The *Ittifaq al-Muslimin* party was given a program and actually took shape at this congress. The congress called on the Russian government to make no decisions regarding Muslims before the convening of the second Duma.

After these failed attempts to petition the Tsar, the Muslims of Semirechye appealed directly to the highest authorities through spokespeople. While Muhamedzhan Tynyshpaev had played this role due to his presence in Saint-Petersburg in 1905 without being officially appointed, Koibagarov had been chosen at the Congress in March 1906. He was recognised as such by the Russian authorities. In December 1906, the Minister of Internal Affairs addressed Koibagarov as “the representative of the Muslims of the Semirechye oblast.”<sup>9</sup> Koibagarov drafted telegrams outlining Semirechye’s demands. In December 1906, he presented demands concerning agrarian policy, opposing petitions from *Kirgiz* groups requesting land allocations in exchange for their sedentarisation.

Respecting the petition of a small group of *Kirgiz* to be counted among the peasantry will bring discord and disunity among the *Kirgiz* and will harm their economic and other well-being, changing the way of life of an entire people. On behalf of the *Kirgiz* of the Semirechye region, I humbly request, Your Excellency, that you lay the loyal feelings of the *Kirgiz* population of the region at the feet of His Imperial Majesty and report to the Emperor the *Kirgiz*’s request for land as herders. Then, if there is an actual surplus, allocate it to settlers. Until the land has been allocated to the *Kirgiz* and the surplus has been determinate, stop the alienation of *Kirgiz* land. The plots proposed by the Semirechye Resettlement Party for settlers are to be left in the use of their previous owners until the matter is resolved or until the State Duma convenes (Малтусынов 2006b, 304-305).

This position, defended by Koibagarov, was also found in other Kazakh regions. Alihan Bukeyhanov (1866-1937), the main political figure of the Kazakh national movement throughout the early 20th century, adopted the same viewpoint, but other Kazakh groups saw sedentarisation as a solution to the problem of land grabbing by settlers (Hallez 2014, 290).

The answer to Koibagarov was negative, expressing a position completely diverging of the Russian authorities: “Noteworthy is the desire of a certain portion of the Semirechye *Kirgiz*, noted in the petitioners’ telegram, to use their land allotment as settlers. There is, of course, no basis for opposing this, as Ahm. Koibagarov is petitioning. On the contrary, in my opinion, this desire deserves full encouragement” (Малтусынов 2006b, 305). The request to support decisions on agrarian policy with a debate in the future State Duma was not even considered. In December 1906, Koibagarov received directly from the Minister of Internal Affairs information about the elections to the Second Duma:

Three representatives will be elected to the State Duma from the Semirechye region: the first from the military Cossacks, through an elective assembly of all military settlements; the second from alien and Dungans through a volost assembly; the third from the urban and settled village population, not belonging to alien or *Kirgiz*. Alien and *Kirgiz* shall not participate in the election of the third member of the State Duma. In connection with your statement of claim, the Ministry of Internal Affairs sent a telegram to the General Governor of Turkestan with the following content: “For those who, in their claim to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, demand clarification of who among the urban and rural population does not belong to the Alien or *Kirgiz* communities when compiling the electoral list, it should be explained that it is necessary to take into account people of all faiths who have moved to all regions of the Turkestan General-Governorship and to regions of the Empire that do not belong to the local population. The local population participates in all areas of the governorship in accordance with the law. In the Semirechye region, candidates are selected at separate volost congresses, and urban voters from among alien are selected at congresses of volost representatives. Thus, according to urban censuses in the Semirechye region, alien

<sup>9</sup> Центральный государственный архив Кыргызской Республики, Ф. И-92, оп. 1, д. 13, л. 3-4.

cannot participate in elections; they participate only as part of volosts, while in other regions they participate in separate congresses of urban voters. If you disagree with this interpretation of the law, you may send your statement regarding your exclusion from the electoral rolls to the District Electoral Commission, then to the Government, and also to the Senate”.<sup>10</sup>

The content of the telegram clearly shows that the rights of the Muslim urban population are being violated and, at the same time, the authorities fear popular resistance. To prevent this, Koibagarov has been given permission to address this issue. Many Tatars, involved in public and political activities, were not included in the voter lists. This was the case for Vagapov himself. He wrote a letter to the Pishpek District Election Commission on behalf of himself, Abdullah Safiullin, Muhamed-Galii Abubakirov and Sadyk Rahimov.<sup>11</sup> On 23 January 1907, Galii Uzbekov, who established the Ekbaliya *medrese*, sent his statement to the same commission. At the end of his statement, he asked that it be forwarded to Ahmetbek Koibagarov.<sup>12</sup> The fact that Galii Uzbekov was not included in the list by the Pishpek *starosta* (mayor) M. Vasilyev was explained by the absence of documents and the information that he still belonged to the Petropavlovsk uезд in the Akmolinsk oblast.<sup>13</sup>

Although there are various reasons why these voters were not included in the list, we believe that there is a deeper meaning behind this. The fact is that they were all active members of the Jadid circles in Tokmak and Pishpek. The involvement of the Tatars in political and social life was feared by the Russian authorities, who sought to marginalise them. The Muslim faction and the All-Russian Muslim Congresses had succeeded in opposing certain government decisions, notably the 1906 regulation, ultimately withdrawn in February 1907, that would have imposed the Cyrillic alphabet in all educational institutions. The question of Muslim loyalty was raised by many conservative circles, leading to a reduction in the number of non-Russian deputies in the Third Duma and the removal of representatives for Central Asians (Campbell 2015, 143-152).

A much later report from the head of the Vernyi uезд describes the conduct of the election of the Muslim representative to the second Duma: “At the beginning of 1907, the electors chosen from the *Kirgiz*, Taranchi, and Dungan volosts went to Vernyi”<sup>14</sup> to elect their representative to the Duma. They reportedly agreed to elect Alpysbai Tasbulatov (1846-?), a Kazakh from the Chamalgan volost. Tasbulatov had been administrator of his volost from 1876 to 1897 and was very influential in Vernyi. According to the Vernyi police chief, a telegram was received from Russia, without its precise origin being indicated, which required a change of candidate. The next day, Muhamedzhan Tynyshpaev was unanimously elected, in accordance with the telegram. The report concluded that the idea of a Muslim union had taken root among the population. It also mentioned Zakir Vagapov’s agitational activities throughout the region. Tynyshpaev served in the Second Duma between February and June 1907 before its dissolution. The right of alien to elect their representatives was abolished for subsequent Dumas

### Underground political activities of Muslims elites in Semirechye, 1908-1912: The Uzun-Agach congress

Between 1908 and 1916, the number of supporters of the Jadid movement grew. Underground groups began to appear as repression became more visible (Бабаджанов 2016). Under pressure from orthodox and conservative Russian circles, who denounced the strengthening of Islam thanks

<sup>10</sup> Центральный государственный архив Кыргызской Республики, Ф. И-92, оп. 1, д. 13, л. 3-4.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, л. 2.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, д. 18, л. 1.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, л. 2.

<sup>14</sup> Центральный государственный архив Республики Казахстан, Ф. 44, опись 1, дело 3698, лл. 5-8об.

to laws on religious tolerance, a government commission was created in 1909 to combat the influence of the Tatars among the Muslims of the Empire. Another commission on education among non-Russian populations began work in 1910. Then, the Balkan War of 1912-1913 reawakened the 'spectre' of pan-Islamism (Campbell 2015, 155-169). The Jadid *medrese* and Muslim intellectual circles were closely monitored for any activity deemed 'disloyal' to the Empire. The prevailing opinion among most Russian security agencies was that "the [pan-Islamist] movement has not been observed, but the danger is always there" (Campbell 2015, 188).

In the "Brief report on the mood of the Muslim population of the Turkestan region" from October 1914, sent to the General Governor of Turkestan, it was noted that evenings called 'gap' were being held among the people: "People gather *at gap* according to their nationality, age, wealth, and sometimes profession, so there were *gap* gatherings of 15-30 participants, including elderly people, young people, property owners, small traders, craftsmen, and others."

The Jadids played an active role in these *gaps*, discussing political issues, weekly events, problems related to the opening of new-method schools and providing them with assistance, and conducting charity events to raise funds. The composition of the *gap* was constantly changing. Participants did not set a specific agenda, did not elect leaders, and did not keep minutes.

Social ties within urban Muslim communities were organised into informal groups. *Gap* and *mashrab* are closed circles of varying sizes that meet regularly. The principle was completely different from the meetings or congresses mentioned above. The phenomenon seems to have developed from 1908 onward or at least appears in the archives of the Russian administration. As a rule, they were led by influential merchants, *manaps*, and intellectuals. Russian agents had an orientalist view of the matter, using this term 'gap' to name networks active in Central Asia that they had difficulty defining. They associated them with forms of secret societies propagating pan-Islamism (Togayev 2023, 99).

The Turkestan regional security department received many reports from agents. It stated the following about these organisations:

In the Semirechye, Fergana and other regions, there are organisations called '*gap*' or '*mashrab*'; in Vernyi, there are more than ten of them. *Mashrab* has at least 17-20 members, depending on their nationality, age and profession. Members of the organisations pay weekly membership fees of 20 kopecks. Every Sunday, members of the organisation gather and discuss upcoming matters.<sup>15</sup>

According to another report from the security department, the *gap* or *mashrab* group in Tokmak was headed by the Tatar merchant Gali Toktarov, and counted a total of 41 people. Galii Uzbekov was among its members.<sup>16</sup>

Petr Stolypin (1862-1911) came to power as prime minister in July 1906 and he pursued a policy of repression against the revolutionary movement and encouraged Russian settlement in Central Asia. He is also responsible for the change in electoral law that deprived allogeous populations of representation in the Duma. Despite persecution and oppression, ties between representatives of the national political elite of Turkestan not only remained intact but, on the contrary, strengthened, and their actions against colonial policy continued.

The Tatars were very active and visible in 1906-1907, but they remained more in the background in the following period, providing logistical and financial support. The various components of the Kazakh and Kyrgyz elites mobilised in Semirechye to defend their compatriots against agrarian

<sup>15</sup> Центральный Государственный Архив Республики Узбекистана, ф. И-461, оп. I, д. 1172, л. 1116.

<sup>16</sup> The other members named are Aziz and Yakub Sadyrbaev, Sydyq Kanzetayev, Shamen Davletov, Ibrahim Murzabaev, and Abduaziz Igamberdiev. Центральный Государственный Архив Республики Узбекистана, ф. И-461, оп. I, д. 1172, лл. 187-188).



policy, arbitrariness, and corruption. This concerned both the lineage elites in the volosts and those serving in the regional administration. Numerous meetings took place, and books and newspapers circulated widely. The Vernyi library was, in this sense, an important place for the dissemination of political ideas. Faced with this underground activity, numerous agents were tasked by the tsarist administrations with monitoring the main activists. Their names appear repeatedly in the reports. Shabdan Zhantaev is the main Kyrgyz figure named continuously along with Dyur Sooronbaev [Sayranbaev] (1869-1921), *manap* from a Sarybagysh lineage. Sooronbaev was administrator of the Tynai volost of the Pishpek uezd and studied at the Vernyi Russian Gymnasium. Alongside them, several Kazakhs played a central role: officials – Barlybek Syrtanov (1866-1914), Ibragim Zhainakov (1885-1942(43?)),<sup>17</sup> Ish-Muhammed Ablaihanov (1851-?),<sup>18</sup> and volost administrators – Siyat Niyazbekov (1855-1922), Monke Ismailov (1885-?) (Figure 4).



**Figure 4.** Photograph taken for Shabdan Zhantaev's 70th birthday in 1909

Dyur Sooronbaev (front row, second from left); second row, from left to right: Choko, Muhamedzhan Tynyshpaev, Shabdan Zhantaev, Maksymkozho, Kanat Ybykeev.

(CSA KR KFFD, no. 60978)

This is confirmed by the Uzun-Agach congress held on 21 October 1910, which was attended by representatives of the Kazakh and Kyrgyz political elite. The congress was held secretly near Vernyi, close to Uzun-Agach, on the day when the Semirechye regional administration was celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Russian victory over the Kokand army at Uzun-Agach. The Russian forces received support from the Kazakhs and Kyrgyz, who took part in the battle on 19-21 October 1860 (Morrison 2020, 198-203; Недзвецкий 1910). After the celebration ended, Kazakh and Kyrgyz leaders gathered in a house near Uzun-Agach and held their congress (Maxaeva 2011, 197). The majority of participants were current or former elected officials in their volost, volost administrators

<sup>17</sup> Ibragim Zhainakov studied at the Vernyi Russian Gymnasium and began to work as a translator for district administration from 1904 and was in the following years transferred to the regional administration in Vernyi. He was in close relations with the Russian officials and could influence many issues concerning the Kazakhs and Kyrgyz. As his father before him, his brother, Nurmuhammad was elected volost administrator from 1907 to 1915 (Толенова 2019).

<sup>18</sup> Ish-Muhammed Ablaihanov was the grand-son of the sultan Syuk Ablaihanov (1779-1853), who had control over Zhalayir and Shaprashty lineages of the Elder zhuz in Semirechye. Syuk recognised the Tsarist sovereignty in 1817. Ish-Muhammed studied at the Omsk Cossack Corps and became officer in the Siberian Cossack army. He served in the Semirechye regional administration as a translator. He retired in 1910 (Сатенова 2015).

or *bii*, and civil servants working in the Tsarist administration, which explains their presence at a celebration of the Tsarist conquest. All those mentioned above participated in the congress.

At this congress, Barlybek Syrtanov took the place of Koibagarov as representatives of Muslims to Russian authorities and was put on close surveillance by them.<sup>19</sup> A native of Kopal uezd, he studied at the University of Saint-Petersburg before entering the service of the Tsarist administration in Tashkent, then in Semirechye from 1903 onwards (Ўзбекҗлы 1996). Questioned by the police in December 1910, Barlybek Syrtanov said he was acting as a representative and legal defender of local Muslims and was charged to report on the urgent needs and the demands of Muslims, especially the *Kirgiz* of the Semirechye.<sup>20</sup>

During the congress, the demands of the Muslims from the Semirechye boiled down to four points: 1) land management, 2) general education, 3) legal matters, and 4) religious matters. The main demands were to limit the colonisation of Kyrgyz and Kazakh lands, to establish a Muslim spiritual administration in Turkestan, to equalise the rights of Kyrgyz and Kazakh representatives in the State Duma with others.<sup>21</sup> The congress decided that in order to stop the resettlement of Russians to the Semirechye region, it was necessary to go to the Tsar with a petition. It was decided to collect funds from each volost for the journey of a delegation to Saint-Petersburg. It was also considered to ask the Emir of Bukhara for help. Syrtanov and Sooronbaev were chosen to compose the delegation.<sup>22</sup> Both of them were fluent in Russian.

Although belatedly, the authorities learned from their agents about the Uzun-Agach congress and its decisions. To prevent the congress from taking action, the Semirechye general governor instructed the heads of the Kopal, Vernyi, Lepsinsk, Pishpek, and Przhevalsk districts to find out who would be participating in fundraising for the delegation to Saint-Petersburg, and how Kazakhs and Kyrgyz had received the decisions of the congress. Despite the obstacles created by the colonial authorities, funds continued to be collected. Each volost had to give 200 rubles, and the final sum collected was a total of 5 000 rubles from all the uezd.<sup>23</sup>

Representatives of the elite participated in explaining the decisions of the Uzun-Agach Congress to the Kazakh and Kyrgyz societies and promoting them. According to a report by the secret agent “Kara”, the leaders of the political movement among the Kyrgyz and Kazakhs of the Semirechye region were representatives of national intelligentsia, including: Dyur Sooronbaev, Ibrahim Zhainakov, and Ish-Muhammed Ablaihanov.<sup>24</sup>

Archival documents also contain information that Syrtanov gave instructions to the above-mentioned individuals. One of them states that Syrtanov, as representative of the Semirechye Kazakhs and Kyrgyz, travelled around the uezd to convey the decisions of the Uzun-Agach Congress to the people, and then left Pishpek for Saint-Petersburg.<sup>25</sup> In order to avoid arousing the suspicion of the authorities, Dyur Sooronbaev had to leave for the Imperial capital separately. However, the authorities soon learned his imminent departure, and he was forced to stay in Pishpek.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>19</sup> In January 1901, Syrtanov went to Kopal. The head of the Kopal district was instructed to keep an eye on Syrtanov and report on the time of his departure from Kopal (3 January 1910, No. 1419) (Центральный Государственный Архив Республики Узбекистана, ф. И-461, оп. I, д. 1025, л. 3).

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, л. 2.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, л. 2.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, л. 17.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, л. 1026, л. 67.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, л. 1172, л. 41.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, л. 44.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, л. 1023, л. 17.

Two clarifications were added. The first was that the population was far from pan-Islamist tendencies. This issue was of great concern to the Russian authorities in the years 1910-1912, before an investigation established that there was no such danger. As Adeeb Khalid explained:

The attraction of the Ottoman Empire for Muslim reformers lay not in primordial religious or ethnic solidarities – as the much abused terms ‘pan-Islamism’ and ‘pan-Turkism’ imply – but rather in the fact the Ottoman Empire was the most powerful (mostly) sovereign Muslim state (Khalid 2015, 37).

The second was the issue of collecting money which has always been perceived by the Russian authorities as a practice aimed at undermining their authority. Syrtanov denied having proceeded to it.

The Kazakhs and Kyrgyz of the Aulie-Ata district in the neighbouring Syr-Darya oblast tried to hold a congress in the summer of 1910 to discuss the same issues as the Uzun-Agach congress. Well-known people from the district arrived to participate in the congress, which was to be held in one of the mosques in the city of Aulie-Ata. The congress has not yet begun that the district chief learned about it through his agents. He took a hundred Cossacks with him and dispersed the gathering. In a report to the military governor of the Syr Darya region, he indicated that the agenda of the congress included the issue of creating a system of self-government for the local population. He also noted that a Russian named Vladimir had married the daughter of a wealthy *Kirgiz* from the Ashparinskaya volost and converted to Islam.<sup>27</sup>

Obstacles of this kind forced representatives of the Kyrgyz and Kazakh elites to seek more suitable conditions for discussing the problems that had arisen. In June 1911, a memorial service for Nogoibai Doolotbakov, former Kyrgyz administrator of the Kalutinskaya volost, was held in Kordai, north to Pishpek. The most active and influent members of the Kyrgyz and Kazakh communities, representing the volosts from the two uezds of Pishpek and Vernyi, attended it. Among them, were many participants of the Uzun-Agach congress-Dyur Sooronbaev, Monke Ismailov administrator of the Chamalgan volost, and also Mokush Shabdanov (1873-1933), one of Shabdan Zhantaev's sons, or Bekbolat Ashekeev (1843-1916) who had been administrator of the Zhayilmish volost. They discussed ways of resolving the problems of protecting the rights of the local population and promised to work together to implement them.<sup>28</sup>

At this meeting, the failure of Syrtanov's mission had become known and was widely discussed. Kyrgyz participants were critical of Syrtanov's attitude and expressed doubts about the expenses incurred. They decided to collect funds from the *uezds* of Pishpek and Przhevalsk and to entrust Dyur Sooronbaev with the mission. He was to be accompanied by the Russian bailiff Kutukov to facilitate his efforts in Saint-Petersburg, but Kutukov's administration didn't allow him to leave.<sup>29</sup> Thus this mission failed like the previous one (Галиев 2011, 411-413). The attendees at the memorial service were also presented with Myrzhakup Dulatov's work *Ояң қазақ* (Wake Up, Kazakh), published in Ufa in 1910 and reprinted in 1911.<sup>30</sup>

Myrzhakup Dulatov (1885-1935), Kazakh poet, novelist and journalist, met Alihan Bukeihanov in 1904 and became one of his close political partners. His work offered a sharp critique of Tsarist policy in Central Asia and called for a transformation of Kazakh society from within to face the challenges of modernity. Directly influenced by Jadidism, the book addressed many issues related to the practice of Islam that had been debated since 1905. Myrzhakup Dulatov discussed teaching in *medrese*, the opening of mosques, and, of course, the spiritual assembly (Uyama 2013, 102-105).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, л. 17.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, л. 1026, л. 11.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, л. 79.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, л. 117.

Myrzhakup Dulatov was arrested for this book in June 1911, before being released the following year (Uyama 2015, 687-688). His book had a profound impact throughout Central Asia and Russia, as it resonated with the spirit of the times. In March 1912, a police report documented the book's distribution in Semirechye:

At the *Kirgiz* Congress in 1911 [during the memorial service for Nogoibai Doolotbakov], Tymbai Serikbaev, an interpreter for the Pishpek uezd administration and a resident of Pishpek, distributed a copy of a book by a certain Dulatov entitled *Ояң қазақ* to each of the volost administrators of his uezd for distribution among the nomadic population. The book describes the daily life of the nomads and indicates how to get rid of Tsarist power. [...] The book was distributed throughout the Semirechye region via interpreters, and in the Vernyi uezd by Ibragim Zhainakov (Galiev 2011, 415).

## Conclusion

The politicisation of Kazakhs and Kyrgyz in Semirechye originated clearly in the reforms promoted by Jadidism. From the first initiatives in 1905 to the discourse presented in Dulatov's book, *Ояң қазақ*, published in 1911-1912, Jadid themes were ever-present. The freedom to practice Islam was accompanied by a desire for reform, expressed in the opening of Jadid medrese and mosques. The Tatars and the All-Russian Muslim movement thus greatly influenced public and political life in Semirechye. This role was particularly strong in 1905, when political networks within the Kazakh and Kyrgyz populations had not yet been established. This period was also marked by individual initiatives, such as those of Shabdan Zhantaev. It raised the question of how the interests of the Muslim population of Semirechye were represented to the Russian authorities.

The elections to the State Duma were designed to address the demands expressed by revolutionary movements and various segments of imperial society, including the Muslims of Russia. The allocation of a representative for the alien population of Semirechye in the first and second Duma raised hopes that these demands would be taken into account. This did not happen. At this time, exchanges with the Tsarist authorities revealed the Muslims of Semirechye's unwillingness to challenge Russian power. There was no embrace of revolutionary rhetoric. However, the lack of response to their demands was accompanied by increased surveillance and repression beginning in 1908. Methods of action, organization, and rhetoric evolved in reaction, demonstrating a growing hostility toward the Tsarist regime. The success of Dulatov's book is a symbol of this.

The main Kyrgyz and Kazakh actors in this emerging political movement were, on the one hand, the civil servants working for the regional administration, most often as interpreters, and on the other hand, the administrators of the volost, who represented the lineage elites. These two groups held the power within the population. The Tatars saw their direct political role diminish, although they remained a crucial link due to the influence of the Tatar press, their connections with the Muslim in Russia, and their financial support.

The political activities of Kyrgyz and Kazakhs in Semirechye could not be openly displayed and shifted towards a more informal mode of conduct. From 1907, congresses and political debates were organised within the framework of ritual occasions (funerals, weddings, celebrations) that required gatherings. More urban forms of sociability, borrowed from the Uyghurs and Uzbeks, the *gap* and the *mashrab*, also developed.

Initiated in 1905, the political activities of Kyrgyz and Kazakhs to defend their own's interest did not stop in 1912. With the exception of the older generation, including Shabdan Zhantaev, and Barlybek Syrtanov who died prematurely, the main names encountered in this article would reappear among the political leaders during the rebellion of 1916 and then in the national movements of 1917-1918. The establishment of a united front of the Muslims of the Empire to achieve their goals received a response that tended to call this strategy into question. The national aspect gained



prominence, as evidenced by the criticisms following Syrtanov's delegation to Saint-Petersburg. The debate was revived after the 1917 revolution, but the influence of Jadidism within societies remained strong, even as it evolved.

## References

- Abraham Ascher, 2004. *The Revolution of 1905: A short history*, Stanford: Stanford U.P.
- Bennigsen Alexandre, Lemerrier-Quelquejaye Chantal, 1964. *La presse et le mouvement national chez les Musulmans de Russie avant 1920*, Paris-La Haye : Mouton & co.
- Azamatov Danil, 1998. "The Muftis of the Orenburg Spiritual Assembly in the 18th and 19th centuries: The struggle for power in Russia's Muslim Institution", in von Kugelgen Anke, Kemper Michael, Frank Allen J. (eds.), *Muslim culture in Russia and Central Asia from the 18th to the early 20th centuries*, vol. 2: *Inter-Regional and Inter-Ethnic Relations*, Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 355-384.
- Campbell Elena, 2015. *The Muslim question and Russian imperial governance*, Bloomington: Indiana U.P.
- Crews Robert, 2006. *For Prophet and Tsar: Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia*, Harvard: Harvard U.P.
- Hallez Xavier, 2014. « Du statut d'alloge à celui de citoyen soviétique : la route des Kazakhs vers une autonomie politique (1905-1920) », *Cahiers d'Asie centrale* 23 : 275-342.
- Hallez Xavier, 2022. « Pratiques et structures politiques kazakhes sous la colonisation tsariste : fait tribal et fait religieux dans la région du Semiretche (Turkestan, 1868-1917) », *Archives de sciences sociales des religions* 199 : 21-44.
- Kali Azat, Makhayeva Aitkul, Erpay Ilyas, Rustemov Saulebek, 2022. "The role of the Tatars in the socio-political life of Semirechye at the beginning of the XXth century," *Bylye Gody* 17(2): 922-933.
- Kane Eileen, 2015. *Russian Hajj. Empire and the Pilgrimage to Mecca*, Ithaca: Cornell U.P.
- Khalid Adeeb, 1998. *The politics of Muslim cultural reform. Jadidism in Central Asia*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Khalid Adeed, 2015. *Making Uzbekistan. Nation, Empire, and Revolution in the early USSR*, Ithaca & London: Cornell U.P.
- Morrison Alexander, 2020. *The Russian conquest of Central Asia: A study in imperial expansion, 1814-1914*, Cambridge: Cambridge U.P.
- Prior Daniel, 2013. "High rank and power among the Northern Kirghiz: Terms and their problems, 1845-1864", Sartori Paolo (ed.), *Explorations in the social history of modern Central Asia (19th-early 20th century)*, Leiden & Boston: Brill, 137-179.
- Sultangalieva Gulmira, 2012. "The Russian Empire and the intermediary role of Tatars in Kazakhstan: The politics of cooperation and rejection", Uyama Tomohiko (ed.), *Asiatic Russia. Imperial power in regional and international contexts*, London & New-York: Routledge, 52-79.
- Togayev Zokir, 2023. "Some considerations about 'Gap' (*Mashrab*) organization and its activities," *Central Asian Journal of Literature, Philosophy and Culture* 4: 98-103.
- Uyama Tomohiko, 2015. "Repression of Kazakh intellectuals as a sign of weakness of Russian imperial rule", *Cahiers du monde russe* 56(4) : 681-703.
- Uyama Tomohiko, 2013. "The changing religious orientation of Qazaq intellectuals in the tsarist period: Sharī'a, secularism, and ethics," in Pianciola Niccolo, Sartori Paolo (ed.), *Islam, society and states across the Qazaq steppe (18th – early 20th centuries)*, Wien: OAW, 95-118.
- 
- Абашин Сергей, « Вакуфный вопрос » [The *waqf* question], Котюкова Татьяна (ред.), *Туркестан в имперской политике России : Монография в документах*, Москва : Кучково поле, 281-299.
- Абдуллаев Р. М. Ровшан, агзамходжаев С. С., Алимов И. А. (ред.), 2000. *Туркестан в начале XX века : К истории истоков национальной независимости* [Turkestan at the beginning of the twentieth century: Towards the history of the origins of national independence], Ташкент : Шарк.

- Алимова Дилором, 2000. *Джадидизм в Средней Азии. Пути обновления, реформы, борьба за независимость* [Jadidism in Central Asia: Paths of renewal, reform, and the struggle for independence], Ташкент : « Узбекистон ».
- Алимова Дилором, Багирова Ирада (ред.), 2012. *История общественно-культурного реформаторства на Кавказе и в Центральной Азии (XIX-начало XX века)* [The history of public and cultural reformation in the Caucasus and Central Asia (19th – early 20th century)] 6 Самарканд : МИЦАИ.
- Аллез Гзавье, 2023. « Прощение от казахского чиновника (Турдыбек Сыртанов) : введение в жизненный путь казахов в царскую колониальную эпоху » [A petition from a Kazakh official (Turdybek Syrtanov): An introduction to the life of Kazakhs during the Tsarist colonial era], *The Qazaq Historical Review* 2 : 230-246.
- Бабажданов Бахтияр, 2016. « Административный надзор, агентурные донесения, хадж, цензура » [Administrative supervision, intelligence reports, Hajj, censorship], in Котюкова Татьяна (ред.), *Туркестан в имперской политике России : Монография в документах*, Москва : Кучково поле, 492-498.
- Вахидов Хамид, 1979. *Просветительская идеология в Туркестане* [Enlightenment ideology in Turkestan], Ташкент : Узбекистан, 1979.
- Вся Россия. *Русская книга промышленности, торговли, сельского хозяйства и администрации : торгово-промышленный адрес-календарь Российской империи* [All of Russia. The Russian book of industry, trade, agriculture, and administration: A commercial and industrial address calendar of the Russian Empire], 1902, СПб : Изд-во А.С.Суворина.
- Галиев Виль, 2001. *Тюрская библиотека в Верном* [Turkic library in Vernyi], Алматы : НБ РК.
- Галиев Виль, 2011. *Книга разбудившая народ (Разыскания о Мыржакыпе Дулатове и его сборнике « Проснись, казах »)* [The book that awakened the people (Research on Myrzhakyp Dulatov and his writing “Wake Up, Kazakh”)], Алматы : Мектеп.
- Жусупов Кенеш, 1992. *Шабдан баатыр* [Shabdan batyr], Бишкек : « Ала Тоо » журн. ред.
- Исхаков Салават, 2007. *Первая русская революция и мусульмане Российской империи* [The first Russian revolution and Muslims of the Russian Empire], Москва : Издат. « Социально-политическая Мысль ».
- « Койбагарова (Кайбагарова) Шафика Ахмедбековна (1906-1994) » [Koibagarova (Kaibagarova) Shafika Ahmedbekovna], *Осведомительный бюллетень КЭИ АН СССР (19-20/56-57)*, 1928 : 15.
- Ксенжик Галина, 2025. « Периодическая печать Туркестанского края как источник по изучению истории Казахстана начала XX в. » [Periodical press of the Turkestan region as a source for studying the history of Kazakhstan at the beginning of the 20th century], *Gumilyov Journal of History* 1 : 109-127.
- Кубатова А, Байдилдеев Ж., 2025. « Периодические издания джадидов и их роль в общественно-культурной жизни кыргыстана » [Jadid periodicals and their role in the socio-cultural life of Kyrgyzstan], *Steppe Panorama* 9 (4) : 95-111.
- Кубатова А., 2025. « Татарские просветители у истоков мусульманского образования в Кыргызстане в начале XX в. » [Tatar educators at the origins of Muslim education in Kyrgyzstan in the early 20th century], Зайнеева Г., Хуснутдинова Г., *Просветительство и межкультурный наследие Каюма Каюма в контексте современных исследований : материалы международного научного форума, посвященного 200-летию со дня рождения Каюма Насыри*, Казань : ИЯЛИ, 219-227.
- Малтусынов Сапаргали, 2006а. *Аграрный вопрос в Казахстане и Государственная дума. России 1906-1917 гг. (Социокультурный подход)* [The agrarian question in Kazakhstan and the State Duma of Russia, 1906-1917 (socio-cultural approach)], Алматы : Дайк-Пресс.
- Малтусынов Сапаргали, 2006б. *Аграрная история Казахстана (конец XIX - начало XX в.). Сборник документов и материалов* [Agrarian history of Kazakhstan (late 19th – early 20th centuries). Collection of documents and materials], Алматы : Дайк-Пресс.
- Махаева Айгуль, 2011. *Казак-кыргыз тарыхынан (19-кылымдын экинчи жарымы – 20-кылымдын башы)* [From Kazakh-Kyrgyz history (second half of the 19th century – beginning of the 20th century)], Бишкек.
- Махмутов Зуфар, Титова Татьяна, 2023. « Благотворительная деятельность мусульманского купечества Казахстана в XIX – начале XX в. » [Charitable activities of Muslim merchants of Kazakhstan in the 19th – early 20th centuries], *Вестник КИГИ РАН* 3 : 496-504.

- Небольсин Петр, 1850. « Рассказ троицкого 2-й гильдии купца, Абдул-Бали Абдул-Вагапова Абу-Бакирова, о путешествии его с товарами из Троицка в Чугучак, и о прочем » [The story of the Troitsk 2nd guild merchant, Abdul-Bali Abdul-Vagapov Abu-Bakirov, about his journey with goods from Troitsk to Chuguchak, and other things], *Географические известия*. Вып. 3. 7(9) : 371-406.
- Недзвецкий Владислав, 1910. *Узун-Агачское дело. Историческая справка к пятидесятилетию юбилею 21 октября 1860-1910 гг.* [The Uzun-Agach affair. Historical background for the 50th anniversary of 21 October 1860-1910], Верный : Семиреченский статистический комитет.
- Осадчий Федор, 2001. *Великий творец добра и света : Страницы судьбы инженера М. Тынышпаева* [A great creator of goodness and light: Pages from the fate of engineer M. Tynyshpaev], Алматы : Арыс.
- Өзбекұлы Сәкен, 1996. *Барлыбек Сыртанов* [Barlybek Syrtanov], Алматы : Жеті жарғы
- Сатенова Марал, 2014. « Наброски к портрету султана Иш-Мухаммеда Аблайханов » [Sketches for a portrait of Sultan Ish-Muhammad Ablaikhanov] ([online](#)).
- Субханбердина Үшкөлтай, Дәуітова Сәуле, 1995. *Айқап* [Aiqap], Алматы : Қазақ энциклопедиясы.
- Султаналиев Бакыт, 2021. « Становление этно-конфессионального мусульманского образования на севере Кыргызстана в конце XIX – начале XX вв. » [The formation of ethno-confessional Muslim education in the north of Kyrgyzstan in the late 19th – early 20th centuries], *Minbar. Islamic Studies* 14 (2) : 297-309.
- Сыдыков О. 1990 [1914]. *Тарих кыргыз Шадмани : Кыргыз санжырасы* [History of Kyrgyz Shadmania: Kyrgyz genealogy], Фрунзе : Кыргызстан.
- Таиров Наиль, 2003. « Исхак Габдулвалиев : татарский купец и благотворитель » [Iskhak Gabdulvaliev: Tatar merchant and philanthropist], *Гасырлар авазы – Эхо веков* 1 (2) : 143-146.
- Толенова Зирабубы, Оразов Рашид, 2019. « История Алаш в судьбах исторических личностей (исторический образ Семиреченского деятеля Алаш – Ыбрайыма Джайнакова) » [The history of Alash in the destinies of historical figures (The historical image of the Semirechye figure of Alash – Ybragim Zhainakov)], *Мир Большого Алтая* 5 (4) : 566-585.
- Тынышпаев Мұхамеджан, 2001. *Таңдамалы. Избранное* [Selected Works], Алматы : « Арыс » баспасы.
- Усманова Диляра, 2005. *Мусульманские представители в Российском парламенте. 1906-1916* [Muslim representatives in the Russian Parliament. 1906-1916], Казань : Фэн АН РТ.
- Хисамутдинова Альфия, 2022. *Значимые люди татарской диаспоры, стоявшие у истоков культуры, экономики, социальной жизни города Верного* [Significant people of the Tatar diaspora who stood at the origins of the culture, economy, and social life of the city of Vernyi], Алматы : ТОО « Таугуль принт ».
- Чукубаев Абдыгам, 1967. *Классовая борьба и общественная мысль Киргизии (1900-1917)* [Class struggle and public thought in Kyrgyzstan (1900-1917)], Фрунзе : Кыргызстан.
- Ярков Александр, 1996. *Татары и башкиры в Кыргызстане : историко-культурный портрет. Часть 1.* [Tatars and Bashkirs in Kyrgyzstan: A Historical and Cultural Portrait. First Part], Бишкек.



Ce document est mis à disposition selon les termes de la licence Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International : <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>