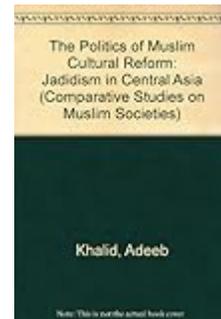




Adeeb Khalid. *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999. xx + 335 pp. \$26.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-520-21356-2; \$60.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-520-21355-5.



Reviewed by Shoshana Keller (Hamilton College)

Published on H-Russia (May, 1999)

Imagining Nations: The Jadids in Central Asia

Some thirty years ago, there was a burst of scholarship on the history of what was then Soviet Central Asia, which yielded a number of works on the Russian conquest, imperial administration, and Soviet development of the region that are still widely-used classics.[1] Since then, it seems that the bulk of publication on Central Asia has concerned contemporary politics and economics, leaving these books increasingly dated as subaltern and post-colonial theories and new archival discoveries sweep the discipline. Fortunately, we are in the midst of a new burst of scholarship, which not only utilizes new tools but, thanks to the fall of Cold War barriers, approaches Central Asia from perspectives other than that of Russian administrators. Adeeb Khalid's book is a welcome addition to this growing literature.[2]

The Jadids, or "New-Method" men, flourished in Turkestan in the last decades of the tsarist regime. They advocated renewing Islamic culture through Western educational methods and adapted Western forms of "print capitalism," such as newspapers and theater, to carry out what Khalid calls "the politics of admonition." [3] The Jadids excited the imaginations of Western scholars, who

saw in them fellow intellectuals, modernizing liberals, proto-Communists—in short, men from a very foreign culture who were nonetheless familiar, who could be pointed to as a model for Central Asia's potential development. Khalid does not entirely dismiss this image, but he very firmly situates the Jadids (who generally called themselves *ziyalilar*, intellectuals, or *taraqqiparwarlar*, progressives) in the context of their own culture, not as the great Western liberal hope.

Understanding the significance of the new method of education is impossible without understanding the old method, so Khalid begins with the clearest explanation yet in English of traditional education and the reproduction of Islamic culture. The *maktab* (primary school) and *madrasa* (roughly equivalent to a seminary for clergy) did not teach phonetic literacy in the Western sense, which was the main reason the Jadids and European observers criticized them so harshly. Instead, they conveyed proper morals, conduct, and sacred knowledge, the authority of which was assured through a recognized chain of transmission from master to pupil. If a person (there were also *maktabs* for girls, if not *madrasas*) knew the proper texts

to recite at the proper times, she or he was considered educated. Trade skills were largely oral well into the nineteenth century, and only a few men needed to know how to write. Craft guilds transmitted technical knowledge within their closed memberships.

An educational system founded on personal bonds was also reflected in the political order, which was based more on personal chains of authority than a fixed bureaucratic hierarchy. Khalid's discussion of the political relations among clergy, rulers, and "notable" families is clear and quite interesting. He is arguing against earlier models of Turkestani political structure as a theocracy or as a simple autocracy, yet he still relies heavily on Russian and other foreign traveler sources for his exposition (a major exception being Sadriddin Ayni's memoirs).^[4] The current constraints on monograph publication may have prevented this, but some discussion of the nature of available sources and the problems they present would have been most helpful in assessing the accuracy of Khalid's proposed model.

This educational system was perfectly adequate until the Russian conquest of the 1860s forced Turkestan to join the Western capitalist order. The Russian presence was actually quite light, since they were more interested in military control and economic exploitation than full absorption, and in any case did not have the resources to govern Turkestan closely even if they had wanted to. The shock of foreign conquest and the subsequent economic degradation caused a profound re-thinking of traditional ways, although Khalid strongly argues that Jadidism cannot be viewed as simply a response to Russian imperialism.

One may well object that had the Russians not been in Turkestan, neither would the Jadids. But Khalid maintains that the Jadids were primarily concerned with internal social and cultural reform, not a political response to the Russians—in fact they were politically weak except for a brief period after 1917. He also points out that Jadidism was not necessarily "the natural" response to colonial occupation. Other groups of Turkestanis embraced an ever-stricter observance of Islam ("valorized" the tradition, in post-modern jargon) or advocated greater russification. These points are well taken, but I think Khalid overstrains to make his case. As he himself says, the Russian conquest set profound changes in motion for Turkestanis, and Jadidism "is to be located at the intersection" of these changes, Russian cultural policies, and the traditional order (p. 81). Without the conquest, there would have been no space in which the Jadids could develop.

Khalid's greatest contribution is in his discussion of Jadid activities and thought, since he makes much more extensive and sophisticated use of Jadid writings in Turkic and Persian than previous scholars. Some of these writings, particularly the state-sponsored newspaper *Turkistan wilayatining gazeti* and the journals *Taraqqi*, *Ulugh Turkistan*, and *Sada-yi Turkistan* (among others), have not been discussed in English before. He also provides more detailed biographical information than has been previously available. The Jadids, most of whom were themselves products of traditional educations, spent much of their time excoriating the old schools and the blinkered ways of thought they produced. This was "the politics of admonition" (Chapter Four) that fixed the blame for their current predicament squarely on Turkestanis themselves. The Jadids' solution centered on phonetically-based education that taught true literacy. When students could read and understand texts, they could gain access to the Western scientific worldview and apply that knowledge to the benefit of their own culture.

While superficially a simple concept, the new method of education contained profound challenges to the old order and the groups that benefited from it. Jadid schools were modeled on Russian schools, with tables and chairs, books written specifically for children, and maps. The study of geography, history, and Islam together had the effect of "desacralizing" knowledge (pp. 172-75) and placing Islam in a space- and time-specific context. The Jadids used the European media of print and theater to propagate their ideas, creating new spaces for public discourse beyond the control of the old elites (and contributing to the concept of public discourse itself). One of the younger generation of Jadids, Hamza Hakimzada Niyazi, even invented folksongs for school children to sing. Discussing the impact of these ideas and modes of communication leads Khalid to explore the history of printing, publishing, and public performance in Turkestan.

The logical end of the Jadid argument was that the old elites should give way to a new elite—the Jadids, who would lead the people to an enlightened and purified Islamic culture. But who were "the people"? The idea of "nation" figured prominently in Jadid discourse, and Khalid asserts convincingly that the origins of contemporary Uzbek, Tajik, Kirghiz, and other nationhoods lie in these pre-revolutionary debates, not in Soviet-imposed decrees (pp. 183-87). He discusses in some depth the vexed question of ethnic identities in Turkestan, which simply cannot be fit into neat scientific categories. The terms "Sart," "Tajik," "Turk," and "Ozbek" were highly

fluid in their use, with some groups, as an example, calling themselves “Ozbek” while speaking exclusively Persian.

While the Jadids paid little attention to concepts of class (they mostly ignored the peasants, who made up the vast majority of Turkestan’s population), they spent much time in their writings envisioning a Muslim Turkestanian nation, one that was distinct from the Tatars, Armenians, and Jews around them. This nation was not pan-Turkic or even pan-Islamic in nature, as the exclusion of Tatars shows, but was bounded by both geographic and religious differences. The Jadids’ “romantic nationalism” (p. 197) led them to argue for a radical reconfiguration of Turkestanian communities.

How “successful” the Jadids were is a complicated question. They were always a small minority (although Khalid unfortunately does not provide a clear sense of just how many people we are dealing with here), and their publishing and theater ventures were continually hampered by poor finances and government censorship. The period of their greatest activity was fairly short, from 1905 to 1917, with gaps as state supervision waxed and waned. On the other hand, powerful ideas do not need a loud voice to carry them. The Jadids’ schools, plays, and journals drew a wide audience among the elite groups, the plays in particular attracting large crowds during the World War I years.

Khalid’s last chapter concerns the first years of Bolshevik rule, when many of the new Turkestanian leaders (Faizulla Khojaev, Hamza, Abdalrauf Fitrat) were Jadids who saw the new regime as the best chance for making their ideas political reality. This was the highpoint of their influence, since the modernizing goals of the Jadids fit well with parts of the Bolshevik program. As the 1920s closed, however, it became clear that the Bolsheviks were in a much better position to use and discard the Jadids than vice-versa. Khalid points out that, among the Jadid leaders, only Ayni died of natural causes.

Khalid’s work brings the study of recent Central Asian history to a new level of sophistication. It deserves a wide audience among Russian and Middle East specialists.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

<https://networks.h-net.org/h-russia>

Citation: Shoshana Keller. Review of Khalid, Adeeb, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia*. H-Russia, H-Net Reviews. May, 1999.

Notes

[1]. Edward Allworth, ed., *Central Asia: A Century of Russian Rule* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1967; new editions 1989, 1993), Seymour Becker, *Russia’s Protectorates in Central Asia: Bukhara and Khiva, 1865-1924* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), Alexandre Bennigsen and Chantal Lemerquier-Quelquejey, *Islam in the Soviet Union* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1967), Helene Carrere d’Encausse, *Reforme et revolution chez les musulmans de russie l’empire: Bukhara, 1867-1924* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1966), published in English as *Islam and the Russian Empire: Reform and Revolution in Central Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

[2]. Books using new approaches include Daniel Brower and Edward Lazzarini, eds., *Russia’s Orient: Imperial Borderlands and Peoples. 1700-1917* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), Andreas Kappeler, Gerhard Simon and Georg Brunner, eds., *Muslim Communities Reemerge: Historical Perspectives on Nationality, Politics, and Opposition in the Former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), Michael Kemper, Anke von Kugelegen, and Dmitriy Yermakov, eds., *Muslim Culture in Russia and Central Asia from the 18th to the Early 20th Centuries*, Vol. 1 (Berlin: Klaus Schwartz Verlag, 1996); and Anke von Kugelgen, Michael Kemper and Allen J. Frank, eds., *Muslim Culture in Russia and Central Asia from the 18th to the Early 20th Centuries* Vol. 2 (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1998).

[3]. Khalid relies fairly heavily on the work of Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd edition (London: Verso, 1991).

[4]. Khalid uses a 1984 Persian edition of Ayni, *Yad-dashtha*. There is now an English translation of Part 1 of Ayni’s memoirs, *The Sands of the Oxus: Boyhood Reminiscences of Sadriddin Aini* (Costa Mesa, Calif.: Mazda Publishers, 1998).

Copyright (c) 1999 by H-Net, all rights reserved. This work may be copied for non-profit educational use if proper credit is given to the author and the list. For other permission, please contact H-Net@H-Net.MSU.EDU.

URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=3115>

Copyright © 1999 by H-Net, all rights reserved. H-Net permits the redistribution and reprinting of this work for nonprofit, educational purposes, with full and accurate attribution to the author, web location, date of publication, originating list, and H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online. For any other proposed use, contact the Reviews editorial staff at hbooks@mail.h-net.org.