

# ODESSA AS A HAJJ HUB:

1880s TO 1910s

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## **Executive Summary**

One unexpected result of Russia's modernization drive after the Crimean War was that the empire became a crossroads of the hajj, the annual Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca. This paper explores Odessa's role as a hajj hub between the 1880s and 1910s. It forms part of a larger project that looks at Russian imperial policy toward the hajj. The project reconstructs the geography of the hajj under tsarist rule, exploring how Russia both absorbed ancient hajj routes through conquests of Muslim lands and helped forge new ones with its development of modern transportation networks in its southern borderlands. It argues that Russia, like other European imperial powers, began to sponsor the hajj in the nineteenth century, establishing a network of institutions and services between the empire and Mecca to serve its Muslim subjects making the pilgrimage. Drawing on both state documents about the hajj from the Russian imperial archives, and sources produced by and for Russia's Muslims (hajj memoirs and newspaper articles), the book examines both the complex motivations behind state sponsorship of the hajj and varied Muslim responses to it.

## Odessa as a Hajj Hub

One unexpected result of Russia's modernization drive after the Crimean War was that the empire became a crossroads of the hajj, the annual Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca. This was part of the global remapping of hajj routes along modern rail and steamship lines, a spontaneous process that accelerated after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869.<sup>1</sup> Starting in the 1850s the Russian state funded the development of two commercial fleets – the Russian Society of Steam Navigation and Trade (ROPiT) and the Volunteer Fleet – which provided steamship service between Black Sea ports and the Far East, with stops along the way in the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, and the Persian Gulf.<sup>2</sup>

In the 1880s the state expanded its railroad system into the Caucasus and Central Asia, eventually making it possible to get from Tashkent to Odessa by train in eight-and-a-half days.<sup>3</sup> Muslims with access to these lines of modern transport – from Russia as well as Afghanistan, China, Persia, and Bukhara – were quick to see in them a faster, less expensive way of making the hajj. By the early 1900s thousands every year were turning away from ancient overland routes through Persia and India to take Russian trains and steamships to get to Mecca.<sup>4</sup> And with

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<sup>1</sup> See C.A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2003): 351-357; F.E. Peters, *The Hajj: The Muslim Pilgrimage to Mecca and the Holy Places* (Princeton, 1994): 266-315.

<sup>2</sup> In 1856 the Russian state created ROPiT and in 1883 it nationalized the Volunteer Fleet (founded in 1878 by a group of Russian tea merchants). See S.I. Ilovaiskii, *Istoricheskii ocherk piatidesiatiletiiia Russkogo obshchestva parokhodstva i torgovli* (Odessa, 1907); M. Poggenpol', *Ocherk vozniknoveniia i deiatel'nosti Dobrovol'nago Flota za vremia XXV-ti letniago ego sushchestvovaniia* (St. Petersburg: Tip. A. Benke, 1903): 113; and Thomas C. Sorenson, "The End of the Volunteer Fleet: Some Evidence on the Scope of Pobedonostsev's Power in Russia," *Slavic Review* Vol. 34, No. 1 (Mar., 1975): 131-137.

<sup>3</sup> Derzhavnyi Arkhiv Odes'koi Oblasti (DAOO), f. 2, op. 2, d. 3391, ll. 76-77. On railroad construction in Russia's southern and eastern borderlands see Frithjof Benjamin Schenk, "Mastering Imperial Space? The Ambivalent Impact of Railway Building in Tsarist Russia," in Jörn Leonard and Ulrike von Hirschhausen (eds.) *Rule and Conflict, Representation and Crisis: Multi-Ethnic Empires since the Nineteenth Century* (forthcoming); Derek W. Spring, "Railways and Economic Development in Turkestan before 1917," in Leslie Symons and Colin White, *Russian Transport: An Historical and Geographical Survey* (London, 1975); and W.E. Wheeler, "The Control of Land Routes: Railways in Central Asia," *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society* vol. 21 (1934): 585-608.

<sup>4</sup> See S.E. Grigor'ev, "Rossiiskie palomniki v sviatykh gorodakh Aravii v kontse XIX-nachale XX v." in N.N. D'iakov

this shift in traffic patterns, new hajj hubs gradually emerged across Russia's southern borderlands, Odessa being among the most important.

Known as “Adis” among Turkic-speakers, Odessa by the early twentieth century was the center of the Black Sea hajj traffic leaving Russia. State-led efforts to organize hajj transport helped bring as many as 25,000 Muslim pilgrims through Odessa every year.<sup>5</sup> Even in a city of half a million people, crowds this big must have been hard to miss.<sup>6</sup> And yet they show up nowhere in the historiography.

Why is that? In part it has to do with the way Odessa's history is often framed – as a Jewish city, a site of labor unrest, a cultural center, a frontier town, etc. – the result being a series of narrowly focused studies that collectively reinforce a sense of Odessa's uniqueness, with less attention paid to its increasing connectedness to other parts of the empire and role as a mass transit hub in the era of modernization.<sup>7</sup> Also at work here is the general problem of neglect of Islam: the missing hajj story from Odessa's past is another example of how Muslims are often left out of the larger narrative of Russian history, particularly when it comes to parts of the empire where they did not historically predominate. Finally there is a methodological issue:

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(ed.) *Istoriografiia i istochnikovedenie istorii stran Azii i Afriki* (St. Petersburg: Izd. S.-Peterburgskogo universiteta, 1999): 88-110; S.E. Grigor'ev, “Al-[H]ujjaj al-Rūs ilā Makkah al-Mukarramah wa-al-Madīnah al-Munawwarah fī awākhir al-qarn al-tāsi' ‘ashr wa-bidāyat al-qarn al-‘ishrīn,” *al-Wathīqah* 32 (July, 1997): 106-138; and Efim Rezvan, *Al-Hajj qabla Mi'at Sanah: al-Rihlah al-Sirriyah lil-Dābit al-Rūsi ‘Abd al-‘Aziz Dawlatshīn ilā Makkah al-Mukarramah, 1898-1899 : al-Sira' al-Dawli' alā al-Jazīrah al-‘Arabīyah wa-l-‘Ālam al-Islāmī : Riwayah Wa[s]fiyah Badi'ah lil-Tārikh wa-al-Jughrāfiyā wa-al-Ijtimā' wa-al-Idārah* (Beirut: Dar al-Takrib, 1993).

<sup>5</sup> DAOO, f. 2, op. 2, d. 3391, ll. 40ob-42. See also M. Menshikov, “Uvazhenie k Islamu,” *Novoe vremia* (Nov. 25, 1908).

<sup>6</sup> In 1897 Odessa's population was nearly half a million; by 1914 it was 630,000. See Patricia Herlihy, *Odessa: A History, 1794-1914* (Cambridge: Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 1986): 233.

<sup>7</sup> For a broad social and economic study of tsarist-era Odessa – the first history of the city written in any language – see Herlihy's *Odessa*. For more narrowly focused studies see E.G. Plesskaia-Zebol'd, *Odesskie nemtsy, 1803-1920* (Odessa: Izd. “TES,” 1999); M. Polishchuk, *Evrei Odessy i Novorossii: Sotsial'no-politicheskaia istoriia evreev Odessy i drugikh gorodov v Novorossii, 1881–1904* (Moscow: Mosty kul'tury, 2002); Roshanna P. Sylvester, *Tales of Old Odessa: Crime and Civility in a City of Thieves* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2005); Robert Weinberg, *The Revolution of 1905 in Odessa: Blood on the Steps* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993); and Steven J. Zipperstein, *The Jews of Odessa: A Cultural History, 1794-1881* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985).

many traditional sources on Odessa – Russian-language newspapers, guidebooks, and European travel memoirs – are largely silent on the hajj traffic. Nowhere, for instance, is it mentioned in the famous Baedeker and Moskvich guides to the city from the early 1900s.<sup>8</sup>

Reconstructing Odessa’s history as a hajj hub requires us to look beyond the usual sources on the city. Of particular importance are the various Muslim newspapers published in late imperial Russia, and the dozens of hajj memoirs written by Russian Muslims in these years; both genres offer rich detail on the pilgrim traffic through Odessa.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, by returning to traditional sources with fresh eyes we can discern traces of this history. A grainy photo appears in the pages of Odesskie novosti – one of Odessa’s mainstream newspapers -- of two Tashkent natives posing at Odessa’s railroad station, just back from Mecca and heading home; thick folders of correspondence on the hajj turn up in Odessa’s imperial-era archives, in easy-to-miss files labeled simply “Pilgrims.” Piecing together these sources allows us see Odessa anew, as a place transformed in the era of mass mobility into an international center of Muslim pilgrimage.<sup>10</sup>

In this paper, I explore hajj season in Odessa, focusing in particular on state efforts to

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<sup>8</sup> This is not so surprising given what Baedeker and Moskvich were selling (an adventure/vacation) and their target audiences (middle-class Europeans/Russians). See Karl Baedeker, Baedeker’s Russia, 1914 (London: George Allen & Unwin Limited, 1914); Grigorii Moskvich, Illiustrirovannyi prakticheskii putevoditel’ po Odessie fourth edition (Odessa: Tip. “Tekhnik,” 1908); and D. Vainer, Illiustrirovannyi putevoditel’ “Odessa” (Odessa: Tip. B. Sapozhnikova, 1900).

<sup>9</sup> For hajj memoirs see for example Kh. Al’mushev, Khadzhname: kniga o khadzhe (N. Novgorod: Izd. NIM “Makhinur,” 2006); R. Berdiev, Seyahatnama, 1909/1327. (Astrakhan: Tip. T-go D-ma A. Umerov i Ko., 1911); and Sh. Ishaev, “Mekka—sviashchennyi gorod musul’man (rasskaz palomnika),” Sredneaziatskii vestnik (Nov. 1896): 60-81, (Dec. 1896): 45-83. See also “S palomnikami do Dzheddi i obratno,” Turkistān wilāyatining gazetii (Feb. 2, 1914): 1; “Poezdka odnogo tuzemtsa palomnika v Mekku,” Turkistān wilāyatining gazetii (February 23, 1914): 2; and “Pis’mo Mully Alima o puteshestvii v Mekku,” Turkistān wilāyatining gazetii (March 25, 1910): 1.

<sup>10</sup> In these same years Odessa became a center also of Orthodox pilgrimage from Russia to Jerusalem – a story that has yet to be told by historians – resulting in the construction of new facilities attached to Orthodox monasteries to house and feed the crowds of pilgrims. ROPIT guidebooks in the early 1900s included an entire back section for Orthodox pilgrims traveling through Odessa, providing information on steamship ticket prices, details on necessary travel documents, and a detailed list of accommodations for Russian Orthodox pilgrims in Odessa, Mt. Athos, Nazareth, and Jerusalem. See for example Putevoditel’ Russkago obshchestva parokhodstva i torgovli, 1911 god (Odessa: Tip. Aktsionernago Iuzhno-Russkago obshchestva pechatnago dela, 1911): 466-473.

streamline the pilgrim traffic by supporting construction of a full-service “hajj complex” (khadzhikhana) in the port. Beyond trying to illuminate a little-known dimension of Odessa’s history, my larger goal is to show how state officials tried to harness the economic potential of the mass hajj traffic to further Russia’s modernization.

This idea will not fit with prevailing views about the tsarist regime as suspicious of and always trying to stop Muslims from moving around or going abroad, especially as anxieties about pan-Islamism mounted in the early twentieth century.<sup>11</sup> Such views, while common, reflect just one side of a complicated debate within the late imperial regime about the relationship between Muslim mobility and empire-building. The archives of the Odessa city-governor offer a starting point for considering other sides to this debate; in the pages that follow I will use these archives to explore how officials saw both problems and opportunities in the growing hajj traffic. I will also bring into my analysis articles and advertisements from Turkistan wilayatining gazetii – Tashkent’s main Turkic-language newspaper – which illustrate the use of mass media by Russian steamship companies to encourage Muslim pilgrimage through Odessa and other Black Sea ports.

### **Modernization and Mass Pilgrimage**

The history of Russia’s modernization has often been told through a Marxist lens, in terms of cities, factories, and workers, leading inexorably to socialist revolution.<sup>12</sup> In recent years historians of Russia have joined with other scholars of modern Europe in exploring how

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<sup>11</sup> Daniel Brower, “Russian Roads to Mecca: Religious Tolerance and Muslim Pilgrimage in the Russian Empire,” Slavic Review 55, no. 3 (Fall 1996): 567-584; Robert Crews, For Prophet and Tsar: Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006): 72-74; and Adeb Khalid, The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998): 52.

<sup>12</sup> See for example Hans Rogger, Russia in the Age of Modernisation and Revolution, 1881-1917 (New York: Longman, 1983): 100-161.

modernization led also to increased religiosity and new forms of religious observance. Much of this new work focuses on how railroads and steamships gave rise to mass Christian pilgrimages within Europe and Russia, to places like the Marian shrine at Lourdes, a French town in the foothills of the Pyrenees, and Solovki, a fifteenth-century Orthodox monastery complex on an island in the White Sea.<sup>13</sup> Parallel to this scholarship, though rarely brought into dialogue with it, there is also an emerging body of work on the mass hajj as a byproduct of late nineteenth-century European colonization of Asia and Africa, which brought modern transportation networks to the Muslim world.<sup>14</sup>

From Algeria to Russia to Indonesia, railroads and steamships revolutionized the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca, transforming it from a small-scale phenomenon used mainly by the wealthy and well-connected along land routes and on sailing vessels, into a mass, steam-powered event dominated by the poor. The political and economic effects of this transformation were dramatic and on a global scale. Eager to tap into this huge new market, European steamship companies expanded their fleets and opened new lines to the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf.

Fearing cholera epidemics and the spread of “fanatical” Islamic teachings from Arabia,

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<sup>13</sup> See for example Ruth Harris, Lourdes: Body and Spirit in the Secular Age (New York: Viking Penguin, 1999); Suzanne K. Kaufman, Consuming Visions: Mass Culture and the Lourdes Shrine (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005); Roy R. Robson, Solovki: The Story of Russia Told through Its Most Remarkable Islands (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004): 170-185; Roy R. Robson, “Transforming Solovki: Pilgrim Narratives, Modernization, and Late Imperial Monastic Life,” in Mark D. Steinberg and Heather J. Coleman (eds.) Sacred Stories: Religion and Spirituality in Modern Russia (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007): 44-60; and Christine D. Worobec, “The Unintended Consequences of a Surge in Orthodox Pilgrimages in Late Imperial Russia,” Russian History 36 (2009): 62-76.

<sup>14</sup> Sugata Bose, A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006): 193-242; Brower, “Russian Roads to Mecca”; Laurent Escande, “D’Alger à la Mecque: L’administration française et le contrôle du pèlerinage (1894-1962),” Revue d’histoire maghrébine 26 (1999): 277-292; Michael F. Laffan, Islamic Nationhood and Colonial Indonesia: The Umma Below the Winds (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003); Michael Christopher Low, “Empire and the Hajj: Pilgrims, Plagues, and Pan-Islam under British Surveillance, 1865-1926” (Unpublished Master’s thesis, Georgia State University, 2007); Gregory Mann and Baz Lecocq, “Between Empire, Umma, and the Muslim Third World: The French Union and African Pilgrims to Mecca, 1946-1958,” Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East Vol. 27, No. 2 (2007): 365-381; Takashi Oishi, “Friction and Rivalry over Pious Mobility: British Colonial Management of the Hajj and Reaction to It by Indian Muslims, 1870-1920,” in Hidemitsu Kuroki (ed.) The Influence of Human Mobility in Muslim Societies (London: Kegan Paul International, 2003): 151-175; and William R. Roff, “Sanitation and Security: The Imperial Powers and the Nineteenth Century Hajj,” Arabian Studies VI (1982): 143-160.

European colonial officials undertook projects to monitor and support the flow of pilgrims to Mecca and back to the colonies, while the European powers formed an international sanitary conference (precursor to the World Health Organization) to address the problem of cholera being spread along hajj routes and into Europe.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, port cities around the world became bustling new transit centers for the hajj traffic – places like Algiers, Jeddah, Singapore, Bombay, as well as Odessa – while ancient caravan cities, now abandoned by pilgrims, lost prestige and revenues. Damascus was one such place: having served since ancient times as center of the Syrian caravan, one of the three main Meccan caravans sponsored by Islamic kings and sultans, its once-flourishing economy rapidly declined with the opening of the Suez Canal and shift of hajj traffic to the sea.<sup>16</sup>

Historians, echoing colonial officials' anxieties about cholera and pan-Islamism, have generally presented the hajj in the decades leading up to World War One as a source of “twin infection”.<sup>17</sup> Framed in geopolitical terms, the hajj's ground-level social, political, and economic dimensions have largely been overlooked, along with critical questions about the pilgrims themselves.<sup>18</sup> In Russia, as elsewhere, hajj pilgrims transformed the places they traveled through, often taking local officials by surprise while also generating new economic

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<sup>15</sup> Peters, The Hajj: 266-315; and David Edwin Long, The Hajj Today: A Survey of the Contemporary Pilgrimage to Makkah (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1979): 69-75.

<sup>16</sup> Abdul-Karim Rafeq, “Damascus and the Pilgrim Caravan,” in Leila Tarazi Fawaz and C.A. Bayly (eds.) Modernity and Culture: From the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002): 130-143. In part hoping to revive Damascus's role as a hajj center, the Ottoman sultan in the 1900s started construction on the Hijaz Railway, projected to run between Damascus and Yemen (it reached Medina in 1908, as far as it would go). See James Nicholson, The Hejaz Railway (London: Stacey International, 2005); and Hicaz Demiryolu: Istanbul'dan Medine'ye bir Tarih Belgeseli (Istanbul: Albaraka Türk Yayınları, 1999).

<sup>17</sup> The phrase comes from Roff, “Sanitation and Security”: 143-160.

<sup>18</sup> Historians of Christian pilgrimage in modern Europe have shown far more interest in the ground-level experience and pilgrims themselves, exploring questions about their religious beliefs and practices, attitudes toward modern technologies and medicine, experience of illness, the food they ate, the cost of their tickets, the souvenirs they bought, and their economic importance to the communities intersected by new hajj routes See Harris, Lourdes; and Kaufman, Consuming Visions.

opportunities and relationships, and debates about how to manage the little-understood phenomenon of the pilgrimage.

Nowhere was this more the case than turn-of-the-century Odessa. While other Russian ports in the Black Sea were also used by Muslim pilgrims, none in this period saw the same volume of traffic as Odessa. This made sense, given Odessa's leading role in Russian trade and transportation on the Black Sea: steamships left Odessa several times a day for Istanbul and beyond, and rail lines directly connected the city to spots all across the empire.

Drawn by the convenience of travel, large numbers of Mecca-bound Muslim pilgrims started gathering in Odessa every year by the 1880s, attracting the attention of the Sharif of Mecca, who began sending envoys to the city to help coordinate the annual movement of pilgrims to the Hejaz.<sup>19</sup> Improvements in transportation soon made these numbers even greater. In 1903 direct Odessa-Jeddah service was introduced on Russian steamships; this made it possible for Muslim pilgrims to get from the Black Sea to Red Sea ports without changing ships.<sup>20</sup> And in 1906 a rail line was finished linking Tashkent to Orenburg and on to Odessa. By 1908 the Ministry of Transport was organizing special "hajj cars" for rail service between Tashkent and Odessa, and by 1909 the Volunteer Fleet was running "Hejaz steamships" out of Odessa exclusively for Muslim pilgrims.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Hafez Farmayan and Elton L. Daniel (eds. and trans.) A Shi'ite Pilgrimage to Mecca, 1885-1886: The Safarnameh of Mirza Mohammad Hosayn Farahani (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990): 183-4.

<sup>20</sup> ROPiT introduced a "Persian Line" with service to Jeddah in 1903, and the Volunteer Fleet introduced service to Beirut and Jeddah in 1907. On the ROPiT line see "Ob ustanovlenii strochnykh parokhodnykh reisov mezhdou Odessoi i portami Persidskogo zaliva i Bassoroi," no. 22767 in Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi imperii third edition (St. Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1885-1916); and Putevoditel' Russkogo obshchestva parokhodstva i torgovli (Odessa : Tip. Aktsionernago Iuzhno-Russkago Obshchestva pechatnago diela, 1911): 105. See also Aleksandr Adamov, Irak arabskii: Bassorskoi vilaiet v ego proshlom i nastoiashchem (St. Petersburg: Tip. Glav. Upr. Udielov, 1912): 475; Grigor'ev, "Rossiiskie palomniki v sviatykh gorodakh Aravii v kontse XIX-nachale XX v.": 93; and Otchet Shtabs-Kapitana Davletshina o komandirovke v Khidzhaz (St. Petersburg: Voennaia tipografiia 1899): 90.

<sup>21</sup> Derek W. Spring, "Railways and Economic Development in Turkestan before 1917," in Leslie Symons and Colin White, Russian Transport: An Historical and Geographical Survey (London, 1975): 51; DAOO, f. 2, op. 2, d. 3391, ll. 76, 253; and DAOO, f. 2, op. 2, d. 3471, ll. 17-17ob, 20.

## Hajj Season in Odessa

The hajj traffic dramatically altered Odessa's human landscape, filling the streets with crowds of Muslim men – women and children were rare – most of them poor, exhausted, and dirty from a week spent crammed into a poorly ventilated train car. On their backs they carried huge sacks stuffed with necessities for the weeks-long journey: blankets, carpets, cups, pots and pans, stores of dried bread (sukhar'), fruits and vegetables, and metal locks and samovars to sell in Arabian markets.<sup>22</sup> Most spoke no Russian and were at the mercy of self-styled “hajj agents” that swarmed their arriving trains.

Consistent with the fixed timing of the hajj by the Islamic calendar, these crowds were intensely seasonal: they formed in Odessa suddenly, over a span of a few months, and disappeared as quickly, boarding steamships a month or so ahead of the scheduled rituals in Arabia (the date of which shifted back eleven days each year, in line with the calendar's lunar cycles). For locals looking on, the initial effect must have been something like seeing the carnival come to town: costumed figures parading through the streets and speaking in strange tongues, the air thick with smells of rotting food and long-unwashed bodies, paper tickets littering the streets, shady types lurking in the margins, before – POOF– the crowds cleared and the whole thing was over.

However short-lived hajj season in Odessa was, it had become an integral, though controversial, part of the city's economic and political life by the early twentieth century. Entire industries sprung up to serve the crowds: bakeries producing “Sart” breads, firms hiring out Turkic-speaking interpreters, travel agencies offering cut rates on steamers to Arabia, , and criminal rings – found everywhere the lucrative hajj crowds moved – hawking everything from

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<sup>22</sup> Ishaev, “Mekka—sviashchennyi gorod musul'man (rasskaz palomnika)” (Dec., 1896): 46.

fake Chinese passports to tickets on non-existent steamers.<sup>23</sup>

Local hotels refashioned themselves during the season as “hajj inns,” and home-owners rented out furnished rooms to pilgrims, who might spend several weeks in Odessa getting their passports in order and waiting for a spot on a ship. The local mullah, Sabirzhan Safarov, made lots of money doing burials of would-be pilgrims in the Muslim cemetery near the railway station. And while a large Muslim labor force was imported from Tashkent – for translating, slaughtering livestock, and preparing “Muslim” foods – plenty of local Jews and Christians also made their living off the hajj traffic. All of this created headaches for local police and sanitary officials who struggled to get a handle on the growing crowds.<sup>24</sup>

For the majority of Muslim pilgrims that traveled third-class to Odessa, getting there was an ordeal. Russia’s new rail lines were notoriously inefficient and unregulated, and not designed for Muslim needs. Across southern Russia, crowds of pilgrims would gather at new railway “stations” – which were often nothing more than a sign posted alongside tracks – where they would sit and wait for days in the open air, enduring blazing sun, rainstorms, and cold, with no access to food or water.

Penza and Samara were two of the worst transfer stations on pilgrims’ itineraries: trains from Siberia would pass through there already overflowing with passengers, and not stop for the miserable crowds. When a train with space finally did pull up, as many as 60 pilgrims might pile into a car designed for 40, and spend the next several days trapped in squalor. Standing, half-sitting, sprawled on luggage racks and in the passageways of stuffy cars, men were mixed in among women, people got sick in the car, there were no private lavatories, no fresh water, and no open space for prayer.

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<sup>23</sup> Turkistān wilāyatining gazetī (August 19, 1910); (February 2, 1914).

<sup>24</sup> DAOO, f. 2, op. 3, d. 3471, l. 11; DAOO, f. 2, op. 3, d. 3391, ll. 60ob, 122.

Food was also a big problem. Between Tashkent and Istanbul pilgrims had trouble finding anything they could eat: at train stops across Russia peasants lined up along the tracks selling pork sausages, lard (salo), and baked goods made from mystery animal fats, all of it forbidden by Muslim dietary laws. Faced with either starving or eating the rotting food in their sacks, many became sick during the journey from disease or food poisoning. Upon arrival in Odessa, things got worse: exhausted and disoriented, pilgrims became easy prey for the scores of pickpockets and thieves that eagerly awaited their arrival.<sup>25</sup>

### **A Plan for Organizing the Hajj**

This, in any event, was the awful state of affairs presented by Said Gani Saidazimbaev in a report on the hajj he took to St. Petersburg in the winter of 1908. A rich Tashkent businessman in tight with the Russian administration there, Saidazimbaev also had powerful friends in the State Duma who helped him gain access to various government offices during his visit to the capital.<sup>26</sup> Saidazimbaev's dismal view of the Russian hajj was not news to state officials: it basically squared with the dozens of other reports compiled by the government over the years from Russian officials and eyewitnesses to the hajj traffic.

For decades Russian consuls in Istanbul, Beirut, and Jeddah had been sending the foreign ministry accounts of abuse suffered by Russia's Muslims en route to Mecca – getting fleeced by steamship captains, locked into airless holds and denied food aboard ROPiT ships, attacked by Bedouins during the overland trek from Jeddah to Mecca, etc. – and proposing new state

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<sup>25</sup> DAOO, f. 2, op. 2, d. 3391, ll. 76-82, 273-274.

<sup>26</sup> DAOO, f. 2, op. 2, d. 3391, l. 95ob; Menshikov, "Uvazhenie k Islamu."

measures to protect them.<sup>27</sup> The Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs had been collecting similar tales of woe from the doctors and spies it sent into Arabia to research the sanitary dimensions of the hajj.<sup>28</sup>

The Russian press periodically ran pieces about the perils Russia's Muslims faced in making the hajj: one piece, published in the newspaper Novoe vremia in 1908, urged the government to intervene and save Muslim pilgrims from the “predatory claws of the Jews, Greeks, and Armenians” ripping them off in Odessa and Sevastopol'.<sup>29</sup>

In his report Saidazimbaev argued that modernization had made a mess of the hajj in Russia and that most Muslim pilgrims were “simple” and “unsophisticated,” lacked the resources to navigate the journey on their own, and were in need of a leader to guide them. He offered himself as the best candidate for the job. He proposed an ambitious and “rational” reorganization of the hajj in Russia for the benefit “not only of Muslim pilgrims, but also the state coffers of the Russian Empire.” He claimed that poor travel conditions through Russia – as well as rumors about special “privileges” awaiting pilgrims along land routes through India and Persia – were making many pilgrims turn back to the old land routes, thus depriving Russia of much-needed revenues. Improving conditions on rail cars and steamships, he argued, would keep the lucrative hajj traffic circulating within the empire, thus enriching Russian railroad and steamship companies.<sup>30</sup>

Modeled on British efforts to organize the hajj in India through Thomas Cook, Saidazimbaev's plan called for a state-backed monopoly – led by him – that would coordinate

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<sup>27</sup> See for example the 1903 report from Russia's Jeddah consul to the ambassador in Istanbul. Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv voenno-morskogo flota (RGAVMF), f. 417, op. 1, d. 2757, ll. 2-8.

<sup>28</sup> See for example D. Zabolotnyi, Otchet o komandirovke v Dzheddu (St. Petersburg: Tip. V. Kirshbauma, 1897); and Otchet Shtabs-Kapitana Davletshina o komandirovke v Khidzhaz.

<sup>29</sup> Menshikov, “Uvazhenie k Islamu.”

<sup>30</sup> DAOO, f. 2, op. 2, d. 3391, ll. 78-81.

and oversee all aspects of the pilgrim traffic across the empire, charging pilgrims a flat rate for a single ticket to get them from home to Odessa to Jeddah and back.<sup>31</sup> As such, his plan aimed to eliminate the multi-ethnic group of middlemen already providing services to pilgrims in Odessa – he called them “predatory cabals,” and deemed them all crooks – and create instead a single full-service “hajj complex” (*khadzikhana*) in the port that provided dormitory-like, gender-segregated accommodations, separate hospitals for men and women, a “disinfection” facility, prayer room, barber, bathhouse, kitchens, shops selling *halal* foods, visa services, and steamship ticket sales, all under one roof.<sup>32</sup>

The Odessa hajj complex was supposed to be the end point in a network of hajj facilities that Saidazimbaev proposed building along Russian rail routes used by Muslims. These were to go up all across Central Asia, in Penza, Samara, and Kharkov, and resemble traditional caravanserais, providing water, food, trading stalls, a teahouse, a prayer hall, and gender-segregated shelter for Muslim travelers.

The one in Odessa would be the biggest, with a capacity for 3,000 pilgrims and a modern sanitary facility up to international quarantine standards. Saidazimbaev’s plan also called for an overhaul of the transport of Muslim pilgrims through Russia and from Odessa. Much like how special train cars were designed to transport the many sick pilgrims to the healing shrine at Lourdes, Saidazimbaev proposed that “hajj cars” be created by Russian railroad companies, with gender-segregated compartments, open space for prayer, and fresh water available for ablutions and washing clothes. These train cars were to be staffed with a crew of Muslim “guides” to assist pilgrims on the journey, as would a fleet of steamships specially renovated for Muslim

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<sup>31</sup> On Thomas Cook in India see Low, “Empire of the Hajj”: 65-71; and The Mecca Pilgrimage: Appointment by the Government of India of Thos. Cook and Son as Agents for the Control of the Movements of Mahomedan Pilgrims from All Parts of India to Jeddah for Mecca, Medina, etc., and Back (London: Printed for Private Circulation, 1886).

<sup>32</sup> DAOO, f. 2, op. 2, d. 3391, ll. 78-80.

pilgrims.<sup>33</sup>

Saidazimbaev's plan met enthusiastic support in St. Petersburg. In February 1908 A.G. Niedermiller, Chair of the Committee of the Volunteer Fleet, signed an exclusive deal with Saidazimbaev, promising him a fleet of specially-outfitted steamships to transport pilgrims from Odessa to Jeddah over the next three hajj seasons, and a 15% commission on the price of each pilgrim ticket he sold. Niedermiller also gave Saidazimbaev a 50,000-ruble interest-free loan to build a pilgrim complex adjacent to the Tashkent railroad station, complete with an office selling Volunteer Fleet tickets.

In return, Saidazimbaev promised to deal only with the Volunteer Fleet, and to "attract pilgrims to these steamships in the largest possible numbers." Saidazimbaev claimed already to own a building in Odessa's port, which he would convert into a sanitary facility to "disinfect" pilgrims prior to their boarding the Volunteer Fleet ships; this was not true, and would later become a point of contention in Saidazimbaev's dealings with the Odessa authorities.<sup>34</sup>

In March 1908 Petr Stolypin – who was both Minister of Internal Affairs and Prime Minister of Russia from 1906 to 1911 – named Saidazimbaev "head of the Muslim pilgrimage in Russia." This was a new position: while various Russian ministries had been involved for decades in facilitating aspects of the hajj, no single institution or individual had ever been put in charge of the entire pilgrimage. In mid-March the Ministry of Internal Affairs circulated an announcement to the empire's governors and city-governors, informing them of Stolypin's appointment of Saidazimbaev – "to organize the pilgrimage from Russia to Mecca, and solve the many problems associated with it" – and asking them to get local officials to help him.

By June, Saidazimbaev had also, with the help of the Minister of Transport, persuaded a

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<sup>33</sup> DAOO, f. 2, op. 2, d. 3391, l. 79, 274. On the Lourdes train cars see Kaufman, *Consuming Visions*: 37.

<sup>34</sup> DAOO, f. 2, op. 2, d. 3391, ll. 83-85.

Congress of representatives of the Russian railroads to designate up to 1,000 third-class train cars as “hajj cars” for use along the 14 different train lines used by Muslims across the empire during hajj season. Beyond this, the Minister of Transport gave Saidazimbaev permission to organize provisions centers for hajj pilgrims at major train stations along their routes, and the Minister of Finance helped him petition the port authorities in Odessa for a lease of land to build his hajj complex.<sup>35</sup>

How do we account for Saidazimbaev’s extraordinary success in getting state support for his hajj plan? His connections in the government clearly helped. Niedermiller, for one, mentioned that Saidazimbaev had come “highly recommended” to the Volunteer Fleet by several Duma members.<sup>36</sup> His timing was also good. With the opening of the Trans-Siberian railroad in 1903, the Volunteer Fleet had lost much of its business ferrying tea, colonists, arms, and convicts between Odessa and the Far East. The Fleet suffered further losses after the Russo-Japanese war in 1905, when trade between Odessa and the Far East came to a standstill.<sup>37</sup> Seeking new ways to fill its ships, the Fleet looked to the competitive and ever-expanding market of transporting pilgrims to Jerusalem and Mecca: in 1907 it began direct service from Odessa to Beirut and Jeddah, the main ports used by Christian and Muslim pilgrims. In this context, Saidazimbaev’s plan must have seemed to Niedermiller a unique opportunity to outmaneuver competing foreign steamship companies – British companies especially – in capitalizing on Russia’s hajj traffic.

Stolypin had his own reasons for supporting Saidazimbaev’s plan, all having to do with his desire for imperial stability in the shadow of the 1905 revolution. Perhaps best known for his brutal repression of revolutionary groups and radical land reforms, Stolypin was also committed

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<sup>35</sup> DAOO, f. 2, op. 2, d. 3391, ll. 64, 82; 79-79ob, 274ob; 80ob, 276.

<sup>36</sup> DAOO, f. 2, op. 2, d. 3391, l. 95ob. See also Menshikov, “Uvazhenie k Islamu.”

<sup>37</sup> Herlihy, *Odessa*: 107, 203; Stuart Thompstone, “Tsarist Russia’s Investment in Transport,” *Journal of Transport History* ser. 3, 19/1 (March 1998): 63; RGAVMF, f. 417, op. 1, d. 2757, l. 3ob.

to religious toleration as a guarantor of social order, something that often led to tensions with his more conservative colleagues and the tsar himself.<sup>38</sup> This commitment – together with the government's stepped-up efforts to fight cholera and other infectious diseases associated with the hajj – led Stolypin in 1907 to issue Rules on the Transport by Ship of Muslim Pilgrims from Black Sea Ports to the Hejaz and Back. Issued in the aftermath of a massive cholera outbreak in 1907 that had killed some 20,000 in Arabia alone, and distributed to officials in all of Russia's Black Sea ports, the Rules give a clear sense of the cramped and unsanitary conditions pilgrims had long been suffering aboard steamships: they required ships to provide adequate drinking water and food, access to clean toilets (at least one toilet per 100 passengers, and gender-segregated), an on-board disinfection room and fully-equipped medical clinic, ventilation and regular cleaning of below-deck space, and at least 1.5 square meters of space per pilgrim.<sup>39</sup>

Besides imposing new restrictions and requirements on steamship companies, the Rules greatly expanded the role of Odessa's local officials in regulating the hajj traffic, by establishing the city as the main port of exit for Muslim pilgrims leaving Russia (Feodosiia, which already had an established quarantine system, was made the port of return), and creating a Port Pilgrimage Commission in Odessa. Headed by the Odessa city-governor and including local sanitary, trade, and customs officials and Russian steamship company representatives, the Commission's basic duties were to set ticket prices on steamships carrying Muslim pilgrims,

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<sup>38</sup> Abraham Ascher, P.A. Stolypin: The Search for Stability in Late Imperial Russia (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001): 296-297; and Paul Werth, "Empire, Religious Freedom, and the Legal Regulation of "Mixed" Marriage in Imperial Russia," The Journal of Modern History 80 (June 2008): 328.

<sup>39</sup> See Pravila perevozki na sudakh palomnikov-musul'man iz Chernomorskikh portov v Gedzhasa i obratno (St. Petersburg: Pervaia tsentral'naia vostochnaia elektropechatnia, 1908). In 1897 Tsar Nicholas II established the Commission on Measures for Prevention and Struggle against the Plague, Cholera, and Yellow Fever (KOMOUCHUM). Around that time the tsarist government began sending Russian doctors and spies into Arabia to collect information about conditions on hajj ships, and the spread of disease. In 1904 the Chief Medical Inspectorate (under the Ministry of Internal Affairs) began drafting rules for monitoring Russia's Muslim pilgrims abroad to control the spread of cholera. DAOO, f. 2, op. 2, d. 3391, l. 90; Zabolotnyi, Otchet o komandirovke v Dzheddu; and Otchet Shtabs-Kapitana Davletshina o komandirovke v Khidzhaz.

ensure their sanitary screening in the port, inspect and issue certificates to steamships approved for hajj transport, and appoint doctors to hajj ships.<sup>40</sup>

Stolypin's appointment of Saidazimbaev should be seen in the context of the Ministry of Interior's larger project, already well underway in late 1907, to bring the hajj traffic under centralized state control and surveillance. At the same time, as Stolypin's correspondence with the Odessa authorities makes clear, it was also an attempt to increase revenues for Russian steamship companies, by having them replace foreign companies that had long dominated the Black Sea hajj transport.

### **The “Khadzhikhana” in Odessa**

In June 1908 Saidazimbaev arrived in Odessa to prepare for that year's hajj traffic. With the season due to start in September, and resistance to his plans cropping up almost immediately, it quickly became clear he had to scale back some of his plans. The first major issue Saidazimbaev faced was where to house his hajj complex: not only was there no time to build a new structure, but his request for a piece of land in the quarantine area of the port had embroiled him in a feud involving the Odessa city-governor, ROPiT representatives, and local customs officials and businessmen who also had claims to the spot.<sup>41</sup> While Niedermiller lobbied the Odessa city-governor, I.N. Tolmachev, to decide things in Saidazimbaev's favor, Saidazimbaev went in search of a temporary rental to serve as that year's khadzhikhana.

With Tolmachev's help and for 7,500 rubles, he managed to rent the partly-vacant local House of Industry (Dom trudoliubii), a two-story stone building flanked by one-story wings, in

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<sup>40</sup> DAOO, f. 2, op. 2, d. 3391, l. 128-129ob.

<sup>41</sup> DAOO, f. 2, op. 2, d. 3391, ll. 62, 87ob, 91-95ob, 125-125ob.

the industrial Peresyp neighborhood adjacent to the port.<sup>42</sup> Saidazimbaev got use of the building from August through December – the projected hajj departure season – with the stipulation that the House of Industry’s baker continue to occupy one wing of the building. This deal made creative use of a work relief institution that had been set up – along with dozens of other houses of industry across Russian cities starting in the 1890s – to provide food and shelter to homeless and unemployed workers.<sup>43</sup> The building was not ideal: with space for only 1,400 pilgrims, it was not big enough to house the crowds expected that year. It also needed extensive renovations that Saidazimbaev got started on immediately.

Paying out of pocket, Saidazimbaev quickly put up a makeshift hajj complex centered around the House of Industry. Attached to the building an outpatient clinic and separate men’s and women’s hospitals were built, and an old bathhouse was renovated to include two steam disinfection facilities, outfitted in consultation with the doctor in charge of Odessa’s medical observation station.

In the building’s courtyard a mosque was constructed with space for 400. Next door to the house, special for “Kirgiz pilgrims,” ten tents were pitched (donated by troops of the Odessa military district) alongside outdoor ovens for cooking (ochagi). A row of shops was built across the street, selling meat, groceries, and dry goods needed for the trip (cooking pans, drinking mugs, samovars, steamer rugs, suitcases, blankets, etc.); in this space Saidazimbaev also installed a Turkestani barber offering free shaves and haircuts. In vacant buildings up the street a teahouse and a bakery selling “Sart” breads and cakes were opened.

Inside the House of Industry, its six large halls were lit with kerosene lamps and divided

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<sup>42</sup> DAOO, f. 2, op. 2, d. 3391, l. 110.

<sup>43</sup> Adele Lindenmeyr, Poverty is Not a Vice: Charity, Society, and the State in Imperial Russia (Princeton, 1996): 168-195.

according to levels of disinfection: downstairs was open space filled with iron bunks, and upstairs were “hotel rooms” with signs on the door indicating the number of pilgrims in each room, and where they were in the disinfection process (just arrived, completed disinfection process in the bathhouse, under 5-day observation, or finished with observation).

Impersonal, efficient, and state-of-the-art, the disinfection facility was the centerpiece of Saidazimbaev’s hajj complex. He carefully built it in accordance with international quarantine requirements – including in it an ultra-modern “Japanese-system” steam room, the first of its kind in Russia – hoping it would establish Odessa as the sole government-sanctioned port of departure for Muslim pilgrims, thus bringing the hajj traffic under his monopoly. His proud description of the facility, laid out in a 23-page report on the 1908 hajj for the Ministry of Internal Affairs, gives some sense of what the disinfection experience was like for pilgrims.

Overseen by a staff of Muslim attendants, disinfection was a mass, highly organized process that took place two or three times a day, between 7 a.m. and 4 p.m. After depositing their clothes and belongings for steam disinfection in a separate room, 75 naked pilgrims were herded into a long, narrow room with clean white plaster walls and a cement floor covered with a lattice mat, lined with individual showers along both walls and steam pipes sticking out of the walls. Each shower had a basin with cold and hot faucets, a piece of bast, and a bar of soap; above each shower was a number, which pilgrims matched to the number on metal tags worn around their necks. Many also wore a clear, rubberized bag around their necks, issued by attendants to hold their valuables. Upon completion of the disinfection process (which Saidazimbaev refrained from describing in detail) and after dressing, pilgrims were given a final tag to put around their necks, a cardboard sign, reading “Underwent disinfection and observation, on such and such day

and month.”<sup>44</sup>

What were the results of Saidazimbaev’s efforts to streamline Odessa’s hajj traffic in 1908? Reporting to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Saidazimbaev declared it a huge success “for both the government and for pilgrims.” He described his efficient handling of nearly 7,000 pilgrims (less than half the number expected, due to a cholera outbreak within Russia). Nearly half came from Turkestan, and another 25% from China; all were registered in the khadzhikhana’s logbook, put through disinfection, and sent to Jeddah on five Volunteer Fleet vessels certified for hajj transport by the local authorities. Saidazimbaev reported no signs of cholera, and only six deaths; and despite attempts by “enemies” to discredit him and sabotage his plan, he claimed strong support from the pilgrims themselves, as seen in the fan letters several apparently wrote to the Ministry of Internal Affairs.<sup>45</sup>

The archives of the Odessa city-governor do not bear out Saidazimbaev’s view of things: they reveal widespread resistance towards Saidazimbaev and his plan, ending in the Ministry of Internal Affairs cutting ties with him. Viewed in comparative context, it is tempting to see Saidazimbaev’s failure to organize the hajj as inevitable; faced with uncooperative pilgrims and yearly losses, Thomas Cook had finally given up trying to organize the hajj in India, and colonial officials elsewhere struggled to find a way to control the hajj traffic without alienating Muslim populations.<sup>46</sup> But there were also local dynamics, specific to Odessa and to Russia, which perhaps doomed Saidazimbaev’s plan from the start.

ROPiT never supported the plan because it stood only to lose from it: for years it had been the sole Russian company transporting Muslim pilgrims from Russia, and now it was

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<sup>44</sup> DAOO, f. 2, op. 2, d. 3391, ll. 276-277.

<sup>45</sup> DAOO, f. 2, op. 2, d. 3991, l. 279.

<sup>46</sup> Low, “Empire of the Hajj”: 65-71.

blocked out entirely. ROPiT responded by launching plans to open a competing hajj facility in Odessa, while also encouraging pilgrims to use the one it already operated in Sevastopol; this created confusion for port officials and city-governor Tolmachev, and undermined the goal of concentrating hajj pilgrims in a single facility.

Also opposed to Saidazimbaev's plan were the many local merchants and businesspeople that rightly saw it as a threat to their economic interests: people like Rylka Zekhster, a young widow who supported herself and seven children by renting furnished rooms to "Tatar pilgrims." Fearing that her business would soon be shut down, she wrote to Tolmachev in August 1908, assuring him that she ran an honest business and was not a "swindler," and that the local mullah would vouch for her. Another opponent was Petr Gurzhi, a retired ship captain-turned-businessman who had seen his own ambitious plan for building a hajj complex in Odessa squashed when Saidazimbaev came along. Though persuaded by the city-governor to cooperate with Saidazimbaev, Gurzhi seethed with resentment and missed no opportunity to badmouth him to the local authorities.<sup>47</sup>

Many pilgrims also resented Saidazimbaev, for reasons that are easy to see. His plan involved force every step of the way. Armed gendarmes – provided by Tolmachev – met pilgrims' trains to "escort" them to the hajj complex, where they were locked in and not allowed to leave.<sup>48</sup> Several episodes of unrest in the hajj complex – explained away by Saidazimbaev as deliberate "provocation" by his enemies – may well have been resistance to the prison-like conditions or the humiliating experience of "disinfection." Of particular note is a pamphlet that an outraged Saidazimbaev found circulating among the pilgrims: in it was a drawing of a group of pilgrims in chains, being dragged by Saidazimbaev from the door of the khadzikhana to a

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<sup>47</sup> DAOO, f. 2, op. 2, d. 3391, ll. 121-122.

<sup>48</sup> DAOO, f. 2, op. 2, d. 3391, l. 203.

waiting Volunteer Fleet ship in the port. This, too, Saidazimbaev dismissed as a smear campaign by his jealous rivals. And yet the story told in this drawing bears striking resemblance to other stories reported by pilgrims in Muslim newspapers around this time, about new uncertainties and horrors brought by quarantine procedures and others measures introduced in the name of modernizing and “improving” the hajj.<sup>49</sup>

Rumors of Saidazimbaev’s heavy-handedness seem to have cost him Stolypin’s support. Oblivious to the complex economic dynamics of the hajj traffic in Odessa – and having bought Saidazimbaev’s characterization of pilgrims as a “simple” and inexperienced bunch – Stolypin imagined the Odessa khadzikhana as a safe haven for Muslim pilgrims, who would “naturally” find their way there and feel tremendous gratitude towards the government. He was therefore indignant when word reached him in November about Muslim pilgrims being forced into the khadzikhana and onto Volunteer Fleet ships: he immediately wrote to Tolmachev, warning that pilgrims must be “free to choose” where they stayed and which ships they boarded, and asking him to stop all use of coercion. Stolypin was further dismayed to learn that Saidazimbaev had made a secret deal to send pilgrims on Egyptian steamers, pocketing a huge advance and violating his promise to Stolypin to use only the Russian fleets.<sup>50</sup>

### **Saidazimbaev’s Legacies**

Though Saidazimbaev had great plans for the 1909 hajj season in Odessa, he had disappeared from the scene by the time it came around. Gone also was the government’s plan for centralizing the hajj through Odessa: instead there emerged multiple, competing firms that cooperated with the railroads, ROPiT, and the Volunteer Fleet in organizing the hajj traffic

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<sup>49</sup> See for example Turkistān wilāyatining gazeti, (February 2, 1914): 1.

<sup>50</sup> DAOO, f. 2, op. 2, d. 3391, ll. 204-205; 202ob.

through Odessa, Sevastopol, and Batumi. In fall 1909 Petr Gurzhi, Saidazimbaev's old rival, joined with Odessa's mullah Safarov and several former employees of Saidazimbaev to form the Society for the Transport of Muslim Pilgrims, which arranged lodging for pilgrims in Odessa hotels, ran special "Hejaz steamships" during hajj season, and sold tickets in Odessa and in the empire's Muslim regions, with plans to open an office in Tashkent.<sup>51</sup>

Gurzhi's company competed that year with a St. Petersburg-based firm hired by the Volunteer Fleet to coordinate its hajj services and sell steamship tickets in Tashkent, Kashgar, Baku, Batumi, Sevastopol', and Odessa.<sup>52</sup> By 1910 ROPiT and the Volunteer Fleet were both running ads for their "Hejaz Steamships" in Tashkent's main newspaper. "Esteemed hajjis" were offered a variety of choices: ROPiT's ships went from Sevastopol or Feodosiia to Beirut, while the Volunteer Fleet ran service from Odessa to Beirut, Yanbu, and Jeddah.<sup>53</sup> In fine print, at the bottom of the Volunteer Fleet ad, ran the disclaimer that, "Said Gani Saidazimbaev has nothing to do with the services of the Volunteer Fleet."<sup>54</sup>

And so Saidazimbaev left a mixed legacy. Clearly discredited by his 1908 experiment in organizing the hajj, many of his key ideas nevertheless persisted and gave shape to a new kind of hajj experience in Russia, one in which the government and private industry did more to meet the needs of Muslim pilgrims. After 1908, Russian steamship companies built hajj facilities not just in Odessa but all around the Black Sea, providing space where Muslims could rest and pray while they waited for their ship to leave port. <sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> DAOO, f. 2, op. 2, d. 3471.

<sup>52</sup> Turkistān wilāyatining gazetī (August 19, 1910).

<sup>53</sup> Turkistān wilāyatining gazetī (September 22, 1911).

<sup>54</sup> Turkistān wilāyatining gazetī (August 19, 1910).

<sup>55</sup> As of 1910 ROPiT was advertising a kervansarai and mesjid for Muslim pilgrims in Sevastopol and Feodosiia, and as of 1913 the Ministry of Internal Affairs was planning to build a khadzhiikhana in Batumi. Turkistān wilāyatining gazetī (September 8, 1910); Central State Historical Archive, Tbilisi (SSSA), f. 13, op. 1, d. 501 (1913).

In 1910 the Ministry of Transportation introduced new, direct (besperesadochnaia) rail service between Tashkent and Odessa especially for Turkestan Muslims: now, for the first time, it was possible to make this journey without changing trains. An article published in Turkistan wilayatinig gazetii in February 1910 described the two options newly available: pilgrims could either take a postal train that provided first-, second-, or third-class service and took eight-and-a-half days to reach Odessa, or go fourth-class on a freight train that took twelve days.<sup>56</sup>

As for the khadzikhana Saidazimbaev had set up in the House of Industry, this continued to serve as Odessa's central lodging place for hajj pilgrims up to World War One. Outside hajj season the building also came in handy during cholera outbreaks, equipped as it was with the city's most modern steam disinfection facility. In June 1910 Odesskie novosti reported that the city government had evacuated hundreds of residents from contaminated neighborhoods and sent them to the "specially equipped 'khadzi-khane,'" where they received food, lodging, and medical treatment.<sup>57</sup>

## Conclusions

Recognizing Odessa's importance as a hajj hub has the potential to broaden our understanding of modernization in late imperial Russia. Industrialization, urban growth, the emergence of a working class, the rise of nationalism and revolutionary movements – these are all central, well-documented pieces of the story of Russia's modernization that nevertheless hold the focus mainly on Russia's cities and its western, European regions.

We are less accustomed to thinking about the effects of modernization in the broader

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<sup>56</sup> Turkistān wilāyatining gazetii (February 26, 1910).

<sup>57</sup> Odesskie novosti, no. 8136 (June 10 (23), 1910): 3; Odesskie novosti, no. 8138 (June 12 (25), 1910): 2.

geographical context of the multi-confessional empire, and as part of Russia's colonization of southern and eastern borderlands. State planners in St. Petersburg may have ordered railroads built into Central Asia as a way to export European culture and troops to Asiatic borderlands, but – as we have seen in this essay – this did not stop the people living there from putting these railroads to their own uses.<sup>58</sup>

By investing in railroads and steamship navigation, the tsarist regime unwittingly increased Muslim mobility within the empire and brought its Muslim subjects into closer contact with the wider Muslim world. What did this mean for Russia's Muslims? The effects went beyond small circles of elites and intellectuals, who now enjoyed more efficient travel abroad and easier access to foreign publications; long-distance travel was now open to Muslims of all segments of society, many thousands of whom began to make the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, traveling on trains and steamships alongside Muslims from China, Afghanistan, and Persia. Having made mass Muslim mobility a reality, the drivers of Russia's modernization next sought to profit from it. Though it failed in the end, the 1908 plan to organize the hajj was largely an attempt by leading state officials to channel the traffic and revenues of the Muslim pilgrimage in the direction of Russia's struggling steamship companies.

By the eve of World War One, Odessa had emerged as a major center along the modern hajj route cutting across southern Russia. The city had a small, settled Muslim community that had developed in large part around the hajj traffic, its members coming from all over: the Crimea, Turkestan, the North Caucasus, the Volga region, Persia, the Ottoman Empire. Odessa's Muslims ran bakeries, coffeehouses, carpet shops, and groceries.<sup>59</sup> Their marriages, divorces,

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<sup>58</sup> Spring, "Railways and Economic Development in Turkestan before 1917": 46.

<sup>59</sup> Zakir Kalmykov, "Odesskie tatory: proshloe bez budushchego?" Deribasovskaia-Rishel'evskaia: Odesskii al'manakh 35 (2008): 27-32.

births, and deaths are recorded – in ever-increasing numbers – in registers kept by the city’s mullah between the 1840s and the 1910s; and many were buried, alongside countless would-be pilgrims, in the city’s Muslim cemetery.

Soviet authorities almost succeeded in destroying this history: in the 1930s they bulldozed the Muslim cemetery along with the city’s sole mosque next door, to make way for a city park named after Lenin (called Preobrazhenskii Park today). They did, however, preserve the archives, which turn out to be enough to reconstruct this remarkable period in Odessa’s history, when it was “Adis,” a destination and meeting-place for Muslims from the Black Sea to China.

