

“The Image of Japan in the World of Islam: Abdürreşid Ibrahim and the Japanese of the late Meiji Period”

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Abdürreşid Ibrahim (1854-1944) was a Russian born Turko-Tatar Muslim missionary, intellectual, and political activist who was involved with the Asianist politics of prewar Japan. One of the major figures of Muslim revival and Turkic nationalism during the transitional years from the late nineteenth century to the early decades of the twentieth, Ibrahim was active in the political opposition among Russian Muslims to the authoritarianism of the Tsarist government under Romanov rule. Together with the opposition groups among the Russians and the Turko-Muslims of the Tsarist empire, Ibrahim took part in the reformist and revolutionary activities of the age and faced the frequent harassment of the authorities. He was the key organizer of the First Islamic Congress of Russia in 1905. His activities put him on the intellectual and political stage of nationalist currents in the Ottoman empire as well. Ibrahim was one of the major figures in the Pan-Islamic and Pan-Turkist nationalist movements surrounding the 1908 Young Turk Revolution. As an Ottoman agent, he fought against Russia during the First World War.

Ibrahim's embroilment in the opposition politics of nationalism led him to form contacts with Japan, which was seen as the “Rising star” of Asia, particularly after the Japanese victory of the 1905 Russo-Japanese War.

Ibrahim who is said to have been already deported from Japan in 1903 for having been involved in anti-Russian propaganda, came back on an officially recognized visit in 1908. This time he formed close contacts with high figures in government and politics such as prime minister Ito and Count Ōkuma, and became an activist within the Asianist currents already gaining ground in Japan represented by a wide range of figures such as the liberal Tokutomi Sōhō, members of the Asianist Black Dragon Society (*KoKuryūkai*) as Uchida Ryohei, and Toyama Mitsuru.

As a Muslim missionary, Ibrahim's main purpose was to help spread the word of Islam among the Japanese in order to gain the help of Japan against the oppressors of the Muslim peoples in Russia and the rest of Asia. As part of his political activities, Ibrahim also partook in the founding of the Greater Asia Society (*Ajia Gikai*), an offshoot of the East Asian Common Culture Association of Prince Konoe Atsumaro (*Tōa Dōbunkai*).

Through the continuation of his Black Dragon Society contacts, his political career took him back to Japan on the eve of the Second World War during which time he was active in

publicizing Islam. Ibrahim died in Tokyo in 1944 as the head religious cleric (*imam*) of the first Muslim mosque of Tokyo built in Yoyogi-Uehara. He is buried in the Muslim section of the foreign burial grounds in the Tamareï cemetery.

Ibrahim's major work, a two-volume book entitled *Alem-i Islam Japonya'da intisar-i Islamiyet* (The World of Islam and the Spreading of Islam in Japan) published in 1910, comprises an account of his travels and experiences in Japan and the Muslim communities of Asia. The first extensive work on Japan written in Turkish, the book is significant for it introduced the image of Japan as a "rising star" of Asia against the imperialist West to the reading public of the Turkish world in the Ottoman empire and the Turko-Muslims living under Romanov-Soviet polity.

His work reveals a militant Muslim intellectual's perception of Japan in the anti-colonialist/anti-imperialist circles around the turn of the century. It provides a "non-European" image of Japan in the World of Islam that diverges from the standart perceptions of Western observers.

Ibrahim's involvement with Japan also partly resembles the involvement of such Asian nationalists as Sun Yat Sen with the Asianist Black Dragon Society at some point in their early political career. His life story which can be traced in Japanese, English, Russian, and Turkish documentation, acts as a "window" for unveiling some of the Japanese Asianist involvement in the Islamicist policies of prewar Japan and the Japanese view of the World of Islam.

As a man who spent a lifetime of unceasing intellectual and political activism for the cause of the liberation of the Muslim peoples of the world, Ibrahim is an example of the charismatic intellectual figures among the "fin de siècle" generation who led a life of constant activism in the nationalist and imperialist politics of the early twentieth century.

Japan and the Japanese as seen and interpreted by Wenceslau de Moraes in his "Glimpse of the Japanese Soul" (1926)

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Wenceslau de Moraes (1854, Lisbon — 1929, Tokushima), had been stationed about ten years as a naval officer in Mozambique and another ten years in Macao. From Macao he had visited Japan in 1889, 1894 and in 1895 as a Portuguese officer, before he was appointed