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*Riza Fakhreddinov on Īshmī Īshān*

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Michael Kemper

# Denunciation and Revenge

Riza Fakhreddinov on Īshmī Īshān

The Tatar text translated below reflects the famous conflict between Muslim modernist intellectuals (the so-called Jadīds) and traditionalist scholars in the late Russian empire. Tatar Jadīdism (named after the “new teaching method,” *uṣūl-i jadīd*) began in the 1880s as a call for Muslim educational reform according to European models and for the establishment of Muslim journalism in Russia. In the following decades, Jadīd scholars and students thoroughly transformed Tatar education, literature, historiography, as well as religious, public and political life, with a diversity of trends and opinions that make it increasingly difficult to regard Jadīdism as one coherent movement. As Anke von Kügelgen has emphasized, the Jadīds argued that knowledge (*‘ilm*) must encompass not only religious sciences but also secular subjects; education had the task “to form a good child, mother and father, worker and citizen, on behalf of the respective nation or union.”<sup>1</sup>

The historian, moralist and educator Riḍā’addīn b. Fakhreddīn (Fakhreddinov, 1858–1936) was a nodal figure in the vast Jadīd religious and educational networks that spanned the Volga-Urals. From 1891 to 1906, Fakhreddinov served as an official (*qāḍī*) in imperial Russia’s Muftiate, the Orenburg Spiritual Administration of Muslims in Ufa. The tasks of this institution were to organize and control Islamic religious life in Inner Russia and Siberia. In 1906 Fakhreddinov quit this position and became a central personality in the new scene of Islamic journalism in the city of Orenburg, Russia’s gateway to the Kazakh Steppe; as chief editor of a famous Islamic literary magazine *Shūrā*,<sup>2</sup> Fakhreddinov maintained contacts with writers, educators and imams, and corresponded with readers about the history of the local communities and their spiritual leaders. In the midst of the Russian civil war, all Islamic journalism in the Volga-Urals region was closed down, forcing Fakhreddinov to return to work at the Muftiate. In 1921 his superior, Mufti ‘Ālimjān Bārūdī (Galimdzhan Barudi), passed away and Fakhreddinov took over his functions; for the following fifteen years he would continue to serve as Soviet Russia’s Mufti. Formally the highest Muslim authority in the Russian part of the USSR, Fakhreddinov had nothing

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1 von Kügelgen 2017: 98, 79.

2 Dudoignon 2006.

with which to resist Stalin's violent assault on Muslim religious and intellectual life: starting in the late 1920s almost all mosques and Muslim schools were closed down, Islamic libraries were destroyed and imams (but also secular-minded Muslim intellectuals) were muted, exiled, imprisoned or executed. Mufti Fakhreddinov died a natural death in 1936, embittered by what he thought was the end of Islam in Russia. Indeed, immediately after his death, the other co-workers at the Muftiate were eliminated.

All through these years Fakhreddinov collected information about the biographies of Muslim scholars from the Volga-Urals and adjacent territories, which he brought together in his famous *Āthār* (Monuments). This four-volume work is the most encompassing of all Tatar biographical compilations from the Jadīd era. Between 1900 and 1908 Fakhreddinov managed to publish two volumes of *Āthār*. His attempts to also have the third volume printed (as it seems, in 1906, 1911 and 1924) all failed;<sup>3</sup> eventually he realized that the Bolsheviks would never allow him to publish this volume. Still, Fakhreddinov continued to work on *Āthār* III until briefly before his death, adding more biographies and new material to biographies that he had composed earlier.<sup>4</sup> It was only in 2010 that his manuscript of *Āthār* III was published, in the form of a Cyrillic Tatar transcription, without content-related commentaries.<sup>5</sup>

*Āthār* III is of particular interest because it covers Fakhreddinov's contemporaries: the scholars who passed away between 1874 and 1930. One among these personalities is the Sufi grandmaster (*ishān*) and theologian Īshmuḥammad b. Dīnmuḥammad al-Tūntāri (Dinmukhametov, 1849–1919), and it is his biographical entry that I offer below in translation. In Tatar historiography, this Īshmuḥammad (mockingly called “Īshmī Īshān”)<sup>6</sup> is the archetype of the fanatic “Qadimist” (defender of the old), a representative of the Bukharan-style curriculum of Ḥanafī law, Mātūrīdī speculative theology and Naqshbandiyya Sufism. He became famous for his aggressive attacks against the Jadīds and for denun-

<sup>3</sup> Kemper 2022b: 91–92.

<sup>4</sup> Riḍā'addīn b. Fakhraddīn, *Āthār* III. I am grateful to the director of the Institute of History, Language and Literature of the Ufa Scientific Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Prof. Dr. Aibulat V. Psianchin, for allowing me to consult the manuscript of *Āthār* III, and to Prof. Dr. Marsil N. Farkhshatov for collegial support and advice. My thanks also go to Dr. Gulnaz Sibgatullina (University of Amsterdam) for a critical reading of the present contribution.

<sup>5</sup> Rizaeddin Fākhreddin 2010. As well as *Āthār* III, this edition also encompasses volume IV, which consists of additions to the biographies covered in the previous three volumes.

<sup>6</sup> The Persian-origin honorific *ishān* (“they”) means “revered Sufi master.” In the discourse of the new Muslim intellectuals of the Volga-Urals of the early twentieth century, “ishānism” had come to mean backwardness, superstition and the exploitation of believers.

ciations that he sent to the Tsarist police.<sup>7</sup> Fakhreddinov was also among the targets of Īshmuḥammad's accusations.

No wonder, then, that Fakhreddinov struggled with the question of whether, and how, to integrate his personal enemy into a book dedicated to the shining memory of the Tatars' pious ancestors. In most biographical entries in *Āthār* III, Fakhreddinov is very respectful, even when discussing scholars whose opinions he did not share. His biographies usually follow a standard pattern: after mentioning the places where the person in question studied and worked (as imam or teacher), Fakhreddinov provided the names of his masters and disciples, and also of his wives and offspring; often he listed the person's published and unpublished works and gave excerpts from his writings. Not so in the case of Īshmuḥammad: as the reader will see below, Fakhreddinov went right into particular episodes that are meant to reveal the evil character of this person. Indeed, Īshmuḥammad stands before us as a nasty and dangerous person who tried to use the Russian police to destroy his own Muslim opponents. With the help of several episodes, Fakhreddinov revealed the moral corruption and scholarly incompetence of this man, but also the rejection that Īshmuḥammad received from the pro-Jadīd Tatar elite of his time.

Fakhreddinov's account is seemingly the most detailed biography of Īshmuḥammad written by a contemporary.<sup>8</sup> Still, Īshmuḥammad remains an enigma, and it would be particularly interesting to have a closer look at his Muslim supporters and sponsors, and at his students (none of whom Fakhreddinov mentions by name). However, my goal is not to establish the truth about Īshmuḥammad's machinations, nor to reconstruct his networks. Rather, I suggest regarding Fakhreddinov's entry on Īshmuḥammad foremost as a personal document about Fakhreddinov himself: the study of this biography sheds light on Fakhreddinov's discursive strategies.

In *Āthār* III, Fakhreddinov often included reports by friends and colleagues, sometimes reproducing them in dialogical forms.<sup>9</sup> This is also the case here: Fakhreddinov reproduces several conversations that others had with Īshmuḥammad. Even more, in this entry Fakhreddinov largely speaks through the statements of his colleagues, meticulously noting who said what – as well as when and on which occasion – about Īshmuḥammad's behavior. It would, how-

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7 On Īshmuḥammad, see Salikhov 2004; Ross 2019; Mökhämmätshin n. y.: 175–176. My thanks go to Dr. Danielle Ross for sharing some Tatar materials about the Tüntär *īshāns* with me.

8 Other scathing reports on Īshmuḥammad are very short, as if the authors wanted to avoid detail; see, e. g., Muḥammad-Najīb Tüntārī's Tatar-language history of Tüntär village (Tüntārī n. d.: 21–22), and even Mozaffari 1931: 73–74.

9 Kemper 2021.

ever, be wrong to say that Fakhreddinov hides behind others: rather, he uses his informants to corroborate his own judgment on Īshmuḥammad and thus for defending himself against an evil accuser. Seen from this angle, there are few places in *Āthār* III where Fakhreddinov reveals more of himself, not as an actor but as a vulnerable victim. To be sure, Fakhreddinov also remarks that Īshmuḥammad was merely an imbecile who could not be taken seriously. At the same time Fakhreddinov *did* take him seriously, for he mentions that he produced a separate collection of materials by and on Īshmuḥammad, even storing this collection in the Muftiate's library (where others would have access to them).

For the Jadids of the late Russian empire, Īshmuḥammad was indeed a dangerous man. One of Īshmuḥammad's denunciation letters to the police triggered the prosecution of 'Abdallāh and 'Ubaydallāh Būbī, prominent Jadid writers and educators who operated a large reformist *madrasa* in the village of Izh-Bubi. Starting in 1909, Īshmuḥammad wrote letters to the Russian authorities in which he accused the Būbī brothers of various political crimes – in the opaque catchwords of the day, conspiracy with the Ottomans, Pan-Islamism, socialism and anti-governmental propaganda among their students. The authorities launched investigations, and in January 1911 the Būbī brothers were arrested and brought to trial, with their *madrasa* closed down.<sup>10</sup>

What is less known is that Fakhreddinov was also drawn into this police campaign. A few days after the arrest of the Būbīs, on 11 February 1911, the same governor's office issued an order to search Fakhreddinov's apartment in Orenburg and to confiscate whatever suspicious material was found.<sup>11</sup> Among the items the police took with them during their night raid was the *Āthār* III manuscript – the very item to which Fakhreddinov would later add his biography of Īshmuḥammad, the person who triggered that police campaign.<sup>12</sup>

In his biography of Īshmuḥammad, Fakhreddinov decided not to mention the case of the Būbīs. He did, however, construct a link between Īshmuḥammad's denunciations and the confiscation of the *Āthār* III manuscript. This he does by mentioning that the police searched his house in Orenburg, adding that they did not find his collection of items related to Īshmuḥammad. By storing these items in the Muftiate's library, Fakhreddinov had paradoxically preserved the denunciation files produced by his enemy while his own work had been

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**10** Bubiŷ 1999: 48, 61–62. As Danielle Ross shows, students from the Tüntār *madrasa* were attracted to the Būbī *madrasa*, where they indeed started to radicalize (Ross 2020: 210–226).

**11** For a reproduction of the search warrant, see Bubiŷlar 1999: 196.

**12** For the police raid, see Rizaeddin Fākhreddin 2010: 14. After a year the *Āthār* III manuscript was returned to Fakhreddinov.

taken away from him. Now was the time for revenge: Fakhreddinov said he had decided to burn these collected writings of Īshmuḥammad. We do not know whether he managed to do so;<sup>13</sup> at any event, Fakhreddinov clearly determined how Īshmuḥammad should be remembered.

The Tatar manuscript text as it has come down to us demonstrates that Fakhreddinov composed his entry on Īshmuḥammad in increments. Īshmuḥammad's biography is placed next to other entries on people who passed away in 1919, indicating that Fakhreddinov produced the first part of Īshmuḥammad's biography shortly after the latter's execution at the hands of the Bolsheviks in 1919 (and several of the episodes in that part of the biography emphasize that Īshmuḥammad's sons, active Bolsheviks, did nothing to save their father from being shot). This part ends with a formula invoking God's mercy, which indicates that this is where the entry was supposed to end. But then Fakhreddinov added an extra page with more reports about Īshmuḥammad, using another ink and a different paper (with the Russian name of a Soviet institution printed on it, obviously dating from the 1920s or even 1930s).

Finally, at one point Fakhreddinov must have added a loose piece of paper to the biography, placing it between the pages. This extra item, produced by another hand and in a more archaic style of Tatar, reproduces one of Īshmuḥammad's attacks on Fakhreddinov himself, obviously from the time when Fakhreddinov was still working as qadi in the Muftiate (that is, before 1906). Unfortunately we do not know to whom Īshmuḥammad addressed this "announcement letter" (*i'lān-nāma*, as he called it). The editors of the 2010 Tatar Cyrillic edition omitted this separate piece of paper but the archivist of the *Āthār* III author's manuscript clearly regarded the loose sheet as part of the biography and gave it page numbers. As will be shown below, in this letter Īshmuḥammad reacted to a statement that Fakhreddinov had published in a 1904 fascicle of the *first* volume of *Āthār* (meaning that in *Āthār* III, Fakhreddinov preserved his major enemy's attack on *Āthār* I!). What enraged Īshmuḥammad in 1904 (or shortly thereafter) was Fakhreddinov's claim that the study of the Quran must be based on the knowledge of natural and social sciences, and that such an approach can only be expected from a scholar who studied at "European and American universities and academies." Īshmuḥammad's letter turns out to be a defense of traditional Muslim Quran exegesis against the modernist/reformist embrace of European philological and historical methodologies. In Īshmuḥammad's perspective, following Western approaches is nothing else but unbelief, and he corroborates that with quotes from the Quran. This additional document

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13 The Muftiate's archive is not open to research.

once more highlights the “Īshmī Īshān paradox”: a Muslim scholar who so vehemently rejected any Russian, Western and non-Muslim influence on Muslim society saw no problem in mobilizing the Russian authorities to harass and eliminate his Muslim opponents.

The following full translation of Īshmuḥammad’s entry in *Āthār* III is based on my reading of Fakhreddinov’s autograph (stored today in the Ufa Scientific Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences), which in some places differs from the 2010 Cyrillic Tatar edition. My translation also encompasses the *i’lān-nāma* that Fakhreddinov inserted into the manuscript, thereby offering a glimpse at Īshmuḥammad’s own discursive style. My transliteration of Tatar terms is slightly Ottomanized to avoid pronunciations that even the Orientalist might find confusing (i. e., the reader will find *‘ilm ve ma’rifet* in place of *güylem vä mäg”rifät*, [knowledge and enlightenment]). Words and phrases in parentheses (round brackets) are Fakhreddinov’s; those in square brackets contain my additions. In footnotes I provide information on personalities that Fakhreddinov mentioned in the text. Of particular interest is the role of the Kazan theologian and historian Shihābaddīn al-Marjānī (1818–1889), whom Fakhreddinov saw as his personal model in scholarship and Islamic reform (*iṣlāḥ*); the entry starts with Īshmuḥammad’s conflict with Marjānī, predetermining Fakhreddinov’s judgment about Īshmuḥammad.

## First document: Fakhreddinov’s biography of Īshmuḥammad, *Āthār* III, fols. 297a–298a

Īshmuḥammad b. Dīnmuḥammad b. Yārmuḥammad b. Maṣūr. He was imam and *mudarris* in the famous village of Tüntär. In Rajab 1337 (April 1919) he was shot by the Bolsheviks, in the town of Malmyzh. He had almost reached the age of eighty. The place where he is buried appears to be unknown.

This person’s biography and his actions are well-known, and he is quite famous; for this reason I see no particular necessity to go into detail. I collected all the letters that people sent me about him and put them into my folders, including most of the newspaper articles about him. These materials were not lost in the course of the brutal searches [carried out in my house by the imperial police in 1911], and survived in the places where I had put them to escape the searches. I now regret [that I preserved these documents]; reproducing [here] only the things that I think are important, I decided to burn the rest.

In a Persian-language letter of 13 Shawwal 1296 [30 September 1879], ʿIshmuḥammad Mullā expressed his admiration and respect for [Shihābaddīn] al-Marjānī, and put himself in a very humble position. He said more or less the following: “The wife (*ḥaram*) of Shamsaddīn Ḥaḍrat wants to be my wife (*refīqa*), and she is putting pressure on me.<sup>14</sup> But I do lack courage because she was my [late] master’s wife. For various reasons I have to be very circumspect, and therefore I decided to leave this place [i. e., Tüntār village]. I ask you to arrange that I obtain the place of Dāmullā Tajaddīn in the city of Kazan.”

This is the most important part of this letter. I have seen this letter with my own eyes in one of Marjānī’s volumes, and I made a copy from the original. Did Marjānī respond to this letter or not? Did he try to bring [ʿIshmuḥammad] to that position of imam [at a Kazan mosque], or did he refrain from doing so? I could not find this out.<sup>15</sup>

At any event another person was assigned to that position, and ʿIshmuḥammad did not reach his goal. He then turned away from Marjānī and later even became his fiercest enemy. That is well known. He circulated many lies and much nonsense about Shamsaddīn Ḥaḍrat’s wife, as people from his own circle used to tell [me]. As many stories testify, he wanted to make people believe that this woman was in love with him.

On 6 August 1919, I heard Mufti Dāmullā ‘Ālimjān [Bārūdī]<sup>16</sup> saying the following about this person: “After he started to quarrel with Marjānī I said to ʿIshmuḥammad: ‘In our time there are only two real scholars, namely Marjānī and

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**14** ʿIshmuḥammad’s masters in Tüntār were first the famous ‘Alī ʿIshān al-Tüntārī and then the latter’s son-in-law, Shamsaddīn b. Raḥmatallāh al-Mazār-Āstī (d. 1293/1876). After ‘Alī ʿIshān’s death in 1874, Shamsaddīn became the director of the Tüntār *madrasa* but died two years later on a *hajj* travel. ʿIshmuḥammad then took over the Tüntār *madrasa* and, seemingly, came into conflict with ‘Afifa, ‘Alī al-Tüntārī’s daughter and Shamsaddīn’s widow.

**15** Danielle Ross argues that Marjānī did not comply with ʿIshmuḥammad’s request to intercede for him and that it was Marjānī who brought this devious episode into circulation (Ross 2020: 103). This assumption is not supported by Fakhreddinov, who emphasized that he did not know how Marjānī responded.

**16** ‘Ālimjān (Galimjān) Bārūdī (Galiev, 1857–1921), imam in Kazan and founder of the famous Muḥammadiyya *madrasa* in that city, was a major representative of educational and religious reform. ʿIshmuḥammad had already started to attack Bārūdī in the 1890s; see Ross 2020: 189. As well as publishing numerous primers and other works, in 1906 Bārūdī started editing the religious journal *Dīn va ma‘īshat*. In 1917 he became the first elected Mufti of inner Russia (the office to which he would be succeeded by Fakhreddinov, in 1921). In *Āthār* III, Fakhreddinov often refers to Bārūdī as a close companion and source of information; see Kemper 2022a, passim.



Qannawjī,<sup>17</sup> and you started to attack both of them. With your writings you do not win the love of their followers, nor are your writings of much help to their enemies (because what he wrote was nonsense [*ma'nāsiz sheyler*]). Better remain silent.' These words of mine made Īshmuḥammad very angry, and he responded: 'I am also going to write a refutation (*reddiyye*) against you!' [fol. 297b] And he indeed wrote something. On this topic Īshmuḥammad received advice (*neşihet*) from his own shaykh Dhākir Ḥaḍrat (Chistāyī).<sup>18</sup> But he did not listen to the latter's words, and even acted against him. The result was that his relations with Dhākir Ḥaḍrat were destroyed. One day I myself [i. e., 'Ālimjān Bārūdī still speaking] said to Dhākir Ḥaḍrat: 'Better stop feeling insulted by that Īshmuḥammad, forgive him, he is a person whom nobody can take seriously (*ul ma'dhūr bir adam*).' Dhākir Ḥaḍrat responded: 'Here is a letter that he sent me. A dog wouldn't eat it even if you smear butter on it – so full it is of ugly things.<sup>19</sup> People will forgive me that I will now write a refutation, even if I do not feel any inclination to do so.' Truly, Īshmuḥammad had a plebeian character, and was a big liar! ... Shihāb Ḥaḍrat [Marjānī] was right in calling him a falsifier (*muza-wwir*).” Hereby ends my quote from 'Ālimjān Ḥaḍrat.<sup>20</sup>

I heard Jihāngīr Ākhūnd Ābizgīldīn<sup>21</sup> say: “In the summer of 1917 the Spiritual Administration (i. e. the Muftiate in Ufa, *Dīniyya nazarati*) sent me to Malmyzh region to resolve a dispute among the Muslims. There I ran into some kind of gathering (*jīyen*). A young man climbed up the *minbar* [i. e., the Friday preacher's elevated chair in the mosque] and started to speak. He finished by

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**17** This is one of the few Tatar references to Indian reformists of the time. Şiddiq Ḥasan Khān Qannawjī (1832–1890) was the major scholar at the court of the female ruler of Bhopal, the Begum Shāh Jahān (whom Qannawjī eventually married). Reportedly the author of some 200 published works, Şiddiq Ḥasan Khān is regarded as a founding father of the *Ahl-i ḥadīth* movement. See Preckel 2000.

**18** The Naqshbandiyya shaykh Muḥammad-Dhākir al-Chistāvi (Kamalov, d. 1893) maintained a large school in the city of Chistopol (today Tatarstan), on which see Ross 2020: 142–145 and *passim*.

**19** In Tatar folk culture, the image of the dog is – like that of the pig – that of a dirty animal that eats everything (personal communication Dr. Al'fina Sibgatullina, April 2021).

**20** Instead of continuing with the remaining text preserved on folio 297b, the Kazan edition here inserts fol. 298ab, and then jumps back to 297b – without notification. This editorial change of folio sequence ignores the fact that 298a is written on different paper and in different ink, and probably at a later date.

**21** The Jadid Abizgil'din (1875–1938) was director of the 'Uthmāniyya *madrasa* in Ufa, and imam of Ufa's first mosque. Starting in 1921 (when Fakhreddinov took over the responsibilities of the Mufti) he worked in the Muftiate, including as qadi (in 1923–1928 and 1932–1936). After Fakhreddinov's death in April 1936 the Muftiate was dismantled. Abizgil'din was imprisoned in October of that year, and executed (for “Bashkir nationalism”) on 17 June 1938.

saying: ‘In order to improve the situation of the Muslims of Malmyzh district [ūyāz, from Russian *uezd*] one has first to finish off the Īshmī Īshāns [Īshmī Īshānlar].<sup>22</sup> As long as the Īshmī Īshāns are alive it is impossible to spread knowledge and enlightenment (*‘ilm ve ma‘rifet*) among the Muslims!’ I later learned that this young man was Īshmuḥammad Īshān’s own son ‘Abdalḥayy.” End of quote from Jihāngīr Ākhūnd.<sup>23</sup>

I also heard Kamāl Afandī Muẓaffar<sup>24</sup> saying: “Among the papers in the political police administration (*jandarma idāresi*) of the city of Sarapul<sup>25</sup> were Īshmuḥammad Ḥaḍrat’s denunciations (*si‘āyet ‘ariḍalarī*, [“slandering petitions”]) about Muslims. The Reds (*qizillar*) [i. e., the Bolsheviks] came with these papers to Malmyzh. [Īshmuḥammad’s] companions in writing these denunciations were Dhākir Mullā<sup>26</sup> and a person called Khalīl. [The Bolsheviks] brought all three [authors of the denunciations] to Malmyzh and shot them. Two sons of Īshmuḥammad, Nūr al-Īslām and Nūr al-‘Iyān,<sup>27</sup> knew that if two communists (*kāmūnist*) served as guarantors (*kāfil*) to ensure that [Īshmuḥammad] would

22 That is, the Sufi shaykhs of Īshmuḥammad’s type.

23 According to one tradition from Tüntār region, this ‘Abdalḥayy (Gabelkhāy) Dinmukhametov (1901–1922) fled from his father’s school and became a prominent village teacher and journalist who adhered to Jadidism (and then to Bolshevism). See the online source compilation “*Tirān tamīrlī Tüntārem*” *entsiklopediyāse* n. y., 1: 29, reportedly based on the writings of a certain Baqiy Ziyatdinov. Another local tradition says it was Īshmuḥammad himself who sent his son ‘Abdalḥayy to a Russian school; Danielle Ross (2020: 210) takes this claim as evidence for her conclusion that Īshmuḥammad was not against learning the Russian language. At any event the conflict lines went right through the family.

24 Muḥammad-Kamāl Muẓaffarov was a graduate of ‘Alī Īshān al-Tüntārī’s *madrasa* in Tüntār, then served in the Russian army, and eventually worked for the Khusainov trade company. A brother of his wife was married to Īshmuḥammad’s daughter, Fāṭima; see Ross 2020: 151–152. Like Fakhreddinov, Muẓaffarov was a critic of the Bukharan style of education. Between 1911 and 1917 he regularly contributed to Fakhreddinov’s literary journal *Shūrā*, with articles on educational reform, Russian language teaching and Russian pedagogics, but also on religious reform including questions of *ijtihād* and the teaching of ‘*aqida*. See Gosmanov/Mārdanov 2000: s. v.

25 Sarapul on the Kama River (today in the Republic of Udmurtiia, north of Tatarstan) hosted a Gendarmerie office (*zhendarmskii uchastok*). Founded in 1827 as the security police of the Russian Army, the Gendarmerie investigated both criminal and political cases. In 1902 the state security tasks of the Gendarmerie were transferred to the newly established *Okhranka*. Still, the witch hunt against the Jadids in 1911 reveals that the Gendarmerie continued to carry out political/security investigations. Also, the confiscated manuscript of Fakhreddinov’s *Āthār* III was brought to Sarapul; see Rizaeddin Fākhreddin 2010: 14.

26 This cannot be the above-mentioned Naqshbandiyya shaykh Muḥammad-Dhākir al-Chištāvī as he died in 1893.

27 Reportedly, Nūr al-Īslām was indeed a Bolshevik officer in the revolutionary period (“*Tirān tamīrlī Tüntārem*” *entsiklopediyāse* n. y. 4: 249–250). Nūr al-‘Iyān (Gayan), together with his

not escape, they would not have shot them. But they refrained from serving as guarantors, even though they were communists. They did nothing to save their father from execution; rather, they wanted him to be shot.” End of quote from Kamāl Afandī.

All his life Dāmullā Īshmuḥammad was busy with writing, and he produced a lot of works. His faithful followers published these items and distributed them but he also left behind unpublished writings, and probably quite a lot. All scholars knew, however, that his works had no scholarly significance. In fact, this person was not a man of scholarship. Perhaps he once started on the path of scholarship; but then he went astray, and lost his way. I am totally convinced that if a reader is not afraid of spending his precious time on reading some of Īshmuḥammad’s works, he will soon find out that my words are not only true but indeed *very* true.

I collected all the printed works of Īshmuḥammad that I could find, and bound them into one volume (*jild*) that I brought to the library of the Spiritual Administration. I even entered them into the library catalogue (*fihrist*). In these writings there are many places where he curses me, sometimes mentioning my name and sometimes not; but as he was a person who cannot be taken seriously, and who acted irresponsibly, this did not make me angry.<sup>28</sup>

I wanted to preserve myself from writing this person’s biography, hoping I could leave this task to someone coming after me. But God the Exalted saw that this hope was not fulfilled. However much I shied away from this task I eventually did write about him. I hope that, God willing, with these writings of mine the account between him and myself is settled; but I also believe that much more can be said. May God the High and Great grant forgiveness!

[It seems Fakhreddinov’s first version of his entry on Īshmuḥammad ended here. The following text was obviously added at a later point: it is written on different paper<sup>29</sup> and with purple instead of black ink – to mark the difference between the first and the later drafts.]

[fol. 298a] On 17 June 1909 there was a meeting in the house of our brother Fātiḥ Afandī Karīmī<sup>30</sup> in Orenburg. On that occasion Shākīr b. ‘Abdallaṭīf

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above-mentioned brother ‘Abdalḥayy, was one of the founders of the Soviet journal *Yaqtī yul* (Bright Path) in the 1920s.

**28** This paragraph is a later addition by Fakhreddinov, written in a different ink and placed between the lines and then in the left margin.

**29** The paper has printed vertical lines and a Soviet imprint: Ufa. Tipo-lit. “Okt. Natisk. RB-SNKh zak. No. 1748–2” (i. e., printed for Bashkortostan’s Council of People’s Economy, *Respublika Bashkortostan Sovet narodnogo khoziaistva*).

**30** Fatikh Kārimī (Fatih Karimov, b. 1870, executed by the Bolsheviks in 1937) was a close friend of Fakhreddinov in Orenburg, and a famous writer of Tatar novels. Karimov also main-

Ḥakīmī Tüntārī from Bugul'ma<sup>31</sup> said the following: “Muḥammad-Kamāl [Muzaffarov] from Malmyzh once came to Īshmuḥammad Ḥaḍrat and said: ‘Ḥaḍrat! Something terrible happened! They exiled Dāmullā ‘Ālimjān Ḥaḍrat [Bārūdī] from Kazan!’<sup>32</sup> To which Īshmuḥammad Ḥaḍrat immediately responded: ‘Not Riḍā [Fakhreddinov]? He should have been the first!’”

At one point I was of help to the *madrasa* of Najīb Makhdūm [i. e., Muḥammad-Najīb Tüntārī].<sup>33</sup> After Īshmuḥammad heard that I was in Tüntār [supporting the Jadīd *madrasa* of his competitor], Īshmuḥammad became furious at me, and sent me a letter. It is difficult to imagine that any person in the world could be so insulting in his language, using so many shameful words, and be so dark in his heart. In his letter he told me: “May your tongue be immobile at the time that you die, so that it cannot pronounce the [confession of] faith [with the result that you end up in hell]!”

On 2 August 1905 I heard the following words from Luṭfallāh Afandī Ishāqī: “During his study time in Bukhara Īshmuḥammad wanted to learn mathematics (*‘ilm-i ḥisāb*), and for this purpose he went to a special teacher and started to take lessons. The teacher began by explaining the rules of addition; when adding numbers he said: ‘and so much [i. e., an interim sum] we keep in our heart [i. e., mind],’ thus beginning with a very easy thing to explain. But Īshmuḥammad was unable to imagine how ‘to keep this in his heart.’ Not knowing how to put this into practice he was forced to ask the teacher. The teacher was very astonished. Taking Īshmuḥammad’s question for a joke he responded himself with a joke. When he realized that Īshmuḥammad could not imagine and did not understand [how to add numbers] he gave him a serious clarification. But no matter how hard the teacher tried to explain the case with various methods: Īshmuḥammad continued to understand nothing. In the end he dropped

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tained a publishing house and edited the newspaper *Vaqīt* (1906–1917, followed by *Yanga Vaqīt*, 1917–1918).

<sup>31</sup> Presumably a member of the family that operated the Khakimov trading house in Malmyzh.

<sup>32</sup> In 1908 Bārūdī was exiled from Kazan to Vologda in Russia’s North. After four months he was allowed to leave his place of exile; he went on an extended *hajj* and returned to Kazan in 1910. Bārūdī’s biographer Munir Iusupov (2003: 160) mentions Īshmuḥammad’s evil denunciations targeting Bārūdī but does not say they triggered Bārūdī’s exile.

<sup>33</sup> Muḥammad-Najīb Tüntārī (Shamsutdinov, b. 1862, died in 1930 in a Bolshevik prison) was the grandson of the famous Naqshbandiyya shaykh ‘Alī Tüntārī; it was his mother (the widow of Shamsaddīn) whom Īshmuḥammad harassed in the first episode mentioned above. A Jadīd pedagogue, Muḥammad-Najīb Tüntārī opened a Jadīd school in Tüntār that competed with Īshmuḥammad’s *madrasa*. Between 1912 and 1916 Muḥammad-Najīb Tüntārī occasionally contributed to Fakhreddinov’s *Shūrā*; Fakhreddinov devoted an entry to praising him in *Āthār* III (fols. 327–328).

the mathematics lesson and never learned it. Unable to acknowledge his own shortcomings, Īshmuḥammad used to say: ‘In order to be good in mathematics one has to be stupid.’”

On 12 March 1914 Muḥammad Kamāl Muẓaffar [i. e., the above-mentioned Muzaffarov] was at my place [in Ufa], and I heard him say: “The people whom Īshmuḥammad Ḥaḍrat denounced to the government were servants of the religion and of the nation. These denunciations he composed together with a priest (*pūp*, R. *pop*) by the name of Anton, and with a missionary (*mīsyūnīr*) by the name of Kuz’ma. Īshmuḥammad always used to listen to their advice, and he acted in accordance with what they preferred.” Perhaps this priest and this missionary knew the Turkic language (*tūrkiča*), or they were from the Kreshchen community (*kreshīn ṭā’ifasi*) [of baptized Tatars]. Kamāl Afandī must have said something about this, but I forgot what it was.

## Second document: Īshmuḥammad’s refutation of Fakhreddinov’s claim that Quran exegesis performed at non-Muslim universities is valid<sup>34</sup>

[fol. 296a] [in pencil:] Īshmuḥammad Mullā’s [writing]

[in black ink, by another hand:] Qāḍī Riḍā’addīn Afandī, in the fifth part of his history, spoke about the *tafsīr* of the Quran, the source of our faith. There he claimed that according to his own opinion (*mashrab*), the scholars of the academies (*āqādimiyya arbābi*) indeed produce *tafsīr*.<sup>35</sup> This would be a *mashrab* that no one shares with him, and as such it would not be a big thing to mention. We would have to remain silent on this. However, these pernicious

<sup>34</sup> This document is a piece of brownish paper inserted in *Āthār* III directly before Fakhreddinov’s biography of Īshmuḥammad, integrated into the manuscript pagination as folios 296a and 295b (i. e., in reverse order; the verso page comes first).

<sup>35</sup> In the fifth fascicle of *Āthār* I (Orenburg: Karimov, 1904, p. 228–229), Fakhreddinov indeed criticized the *tafsīr* scholars of the past for including unreliable reports that even the compilers of *A Thousand and One Nights* would not have considered worthy of reproduction. He added: “In order to achieve competence in the interpretation of the Noble Quran and the hadith one first has to develop a way (*yul*) of doing *tafsīr* based on scholarship and the natural/social sciences (*‘ilm vā fānn*). Only after establishing such a method will some people be able to acquire real competence. Such a great and important service can only be expected from someone who conducted serious studies at the universities and academies of Europe or America, and who at the same time is a person of perfect morality. To expect such an accomplishment from other people would be in vain.”

fantasies are being spread among the common people. Their error is, first of all, based on [a wrong interpretation of] the verses of the Quran, and second, on a rejection of the rules of *tafsīr* (*qā'ida-i tafsīrning ibāsi*). For this reason I was forced to write this special announcement letter (*i'lān-nāma*).

God the Exalted said [6:39]: “And those who cry lies to Our signs are deaf and dumb, dwelling in the shadows.”<sup>36</sup> [This verse] means that the groups who do not believe in the Quran and in the true messenger, and who while seeing the Quran are still unable to understand it, will remain in their ignorance.

God's second verse [to be mentioned in this context] is [17:45]: “When thou recitest the Quran, We place between thee, and those who do not believe [in the world to come], a curtain [obstructing].”<sup>37</sup> Curtain (*hijāb*) here means “unable to understand the meaning of the Quran”; in their hearts I put something that does not allow them [to understand].

His third verse is [17:46]: “And We lay veils upon their hearts lest they understand it, [and in their ears heaviness].” This noble verse testifies to the fact that in the hearts of the unbelievers there is something that prevents them [from understanding].

His fourth verse is [41:44]: “[Say: To the believers it (= the Quran) is a guidance, and a healing; but those who believe not, in their ears is a heaviness, and to them it is a blindness.] Those – they are called from a far place,” meaning these unbelievers are far away from the meanings of the Quran.

His fifth verse is [30:7]: “They know an outward part of the present life [but of the Hereafter they are heedless],” that is, it is not enough that these unbelievers try to achieve what is in this world.

The sixth verse is God's word [56:79]: “[It is surely a noble Quran, in a hidden book,] only the purified shall touch [it].” This noble verse encompasses the term “purity” (Ar. *ṭāhira*) both in the formal (*iṣṭilāḥiyya*) and in the inner (*bāṭiniyya*) sense, namely “touching” (*massa*) in the sense of both “doing good deeds” [*ḥasana*, and therefore being in a pure state] as well as in the sense of “understanding” (*idrāk*) [and therefore having access to purity]. [And accordingly, God's expression] “who is unbelieving and assigns other gods to God” (Ar. *kafara wa-sharaka*) refers to the group that is impure, and whose intellect is unable to touch the meanings of the Quran. [fol. 295b] In a similar way also many noble hadith traditions say that the unbelievers do not understand the meanings of the Quran.

[To sum up:] First of all, Riḍā'addīn Qāḍī's opinion (*mashrab*) has been refuted by arguments of the sharia. But second, it must also be rejected from the

<sup>36</sup> Here and in the following the translation is based on Arberry 1955.

<sup>37</sup> The Quranic words in square brackets are missing in the manuscript copy.

viewpoint of logical reasoning (*vujūh-i ‘aqliyya*). That is, to do a *tafsīr* is more than just explaining the Arabic words [of the Quran] one-by-one with the help of scholarship. Rather, a *tafsīr* is only completed if it employs the rule of linking and dividing, the manners of connecting [with Islam] and dividing [between Islam and unbelief], and the manners for detecting the true intention (*qā‘ida-i it-tiṣāl qā‘ida-i infisāl vujūh-i vaṣl vujūh-i faṣl vujūh-i vuqūf ‘alā l-murād* [sic!]).<sup>38</sup> But they [i. e., the scholars of the academies] are ignorant of the manners how to detect the intended meaning, and are unable to distinguish between departure (*inṣirāf*) [from Islam] and the lack thereof. For this reason, it is wrong to say that the works (? *prāvātleri*) of the academy scholars are *tafsīr*, and equally wrong to call them a translation.

Riḍā Qāḍī’s chimera has been refuted with the help of proofs from the Quran, from the hadith, and by rational thinking. Given that he continuously rejects the Quran there is a great fear that he will also do other [forbidden] things.<sup>39</sup>

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**38** In my understanding, what İshmuḥammad here wants to express is that a distinction has to be made between scholars who are connected to the Quran and to Islamic lines of knowledge transmission, and unbelievers who lack this embeddedness in Islam. Only Muslims will reach the true meaning of the Quran because they are able to make the correct connections between individual Quranic statements and between these statements and the objects to which they refer. By mentioning a whole line of technical terms İshmuḥammad of course also highlights his mastery of the Arabic *tafsīr* tradition.

**39** Below on the same page (in another ink) there is a seemingly unrelated note, reading “*al-Thamarāt*, year 1317, number 1276.” This appears to refer to the Syrian Islamic newspaper *Thamarāt al-funūn*, which existed from 1875 to 1908. The year 1317 began on 11 May 1899, meaning this particular issue cannot contain a response to Fakhreddinov’s statements of 1904.

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