Building an Archival Persona: The Transformation of Sufi Ijāza Culture in Russia, 1880s–1920s

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Building an Archival Persona: The Transformation of Sufi Ijāza Culture in Russia, 1880s–1920s

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Abstract

This article analyses the uses of education certificates (ijāzas) as a tool of self-expression by Russia’s Muslims in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. While the transmission of ijāzas as such served as a means of constructing the ideal Muslim personality, manuscript evidence suggests that a selective approach to compiling ijāza miscellanies could successfully be employed in building one’s own archival persona – the way how an individual wanted to appear on pages of future biographical books: not only as an important transmitter of prestigious lineages, but chiefly as a unique performer of their selective combinations. The presence of Sufi certificates on multiple lineages within and beyond the borders of the established Sufi ‘orders’ suggests the increasing heterogeneity of Sufi organization and practice that was part of the phenomenon of a broadening cultural repertoire, from which individuals could draw upon for their archival persona. The type of ijāzas that we analyse here, namely the separate...
documents and miscellanies listing the transmitted practices, were very much the product of their time and their wide circulation in late imperial Russia suggests, as we argue, an unprecedented rise of ʿijāza culture, imported from the Ottoman realm.

**Keywords**

Muslim subjectivity – hybrid Sufi affiliations – ʿijāzas – self-image – persona – manuscript miscellanies – Sufism in Russia

1 **Introduction**

In summer 1934, two eminent figures in Tatar manuscript studies – Sayyid Wāḥidī (1881–1938) and Walī Zabirov (1897–1937) – embarked upon a major initiative to collect old books in private possession in Kazan and its outskirts and then to donate them to the Institute of Oriental Studies in Leningrad for preservation and further investigation. Their efforts proved fruitful, and within just a few weeks they managed to collect up to 1200 manuscripts and ca. 1000 documents. This expedition, the detailed history of which still awaits a separate study, revealed the existence of items that had been archived within a single family for many decades.

One collection stands out particularly among the items brought to the Leningrad Institute. It is an entire family archive that belonged to Aḥmad Shujāʿ and his wife Māhirā in the village of Qullār near Kazan. A document attesting to the transfer of this archive to Wāḥidī and Zabirov lists 110 manuscript books, a mathematical scroll and an impressive cache of documents and private letters.1 Aḥmad’s father Ṣibghat Allāh was a village ʿimām in neighbouring Ori (Bāylār Orisi) and had studied with Fatḥ Allāh al-Urawī (1765–1843), one of the most prominent legal scholars in the region of the first half of the 19th century.2 Both Fatḥ Allāh and Ṣibghat Allāh were part of the Naqshbandī Mujaddidi network of Bukharan provenance.3 Fatḥ Allāh al-Urawī had studied in Bukhara and was a Sufi shaykh. It is not surprising therefore that the Sufi manuals make up an important part of the family archive. The family of

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1 *Raspiski o pokupke i polucheniiv dar ot otdel’nykh lits materialov*, The Archive of Orientalists at the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts (St Petersburg), 1934, fol. 1a.
Ṣibghat Allāh was visible in the region and had important connections, including kin relations with other scholarly clans. In particular, Badr-i Jahān (d. 1895), the mother of the above-mentioned ʿAḥmad Shujāʿī, was a daughter of Naṣr al-Dīn al-Barangawī (1796–1868).4 Next to his own scholarly accomplishments the latter is renowned also as the grandfather of ʿAḥmad al-Barangawī (1877–1930), the author of the Ṭarīkh-i Barangawī, an extensive historical book that describes in detail the Bukharan connections of several generations of Tatar ulama near Kazan. The two ʿAḥmads were thus cousins and had a similar approach to performing their subjectivities through archival and writerly practices.

We do not know much about ʿAḥmad Shujāʿī, but certain items that entered the Leningrad Institute can help to highlight aspects of his private life. One such important item remained non-inventoried from 1934 up to spring 2021, when it accidentally came to the attention of one of the present article’s authors.

This ījāza miscellany (in Sufi terminology: thabat) consists of five separate texts, all transmitted from Ḥusayn ibn Ismāʿīl al-Qazānī, a resident of Medina, to his student ʿAḥmad Shujāʿī between 12 ʿṢafar and late Rajab of 1321/from 9 May to mid-October 1903 (Appendix I). The texts were written by different copyists on Russian paper,5 most probably brought to Medina with Tatar students, one of them being the young ʿAḥmad Shujāʿī. A glance at this collection of documents, carefully preserved in the personal archives of ʿAḥmad Shujāʿī right up to the decisive visit of academic manuscript hunters in 1934, allows us to reconstruct the following picture of events. In compliance with the fashion of those days, in 1904 or even earlier, ʿAḥmad Shujāʿī performed a pilgrimage to Mecca and stayed in Medina for a while.6 The city had a Tatar madrasa called Qazānīyya and was host to a considerable number of Tatar students who would go to Medina to study. In this Tatar environment the young ʿAḥmad Shujāʿī obtained a certificate from Ḥusayn ibn Ismāʿīl, originally from Kazan. The latter was a bearer of several important ījāzas from various Sufi traditions,

all binding him in one way or another with Muhammad ‘Alî al-Witrî (d. 1904), the figure central to the development of Sufism in late imperial Russia.\(^7\) Sometime later Aḥmad Shujāʿ transmitted at least one of those practices to Qiyyām al-Dîn ibn Nu‘mān, of whom we know nothing else.

As we can judge from the magnificent Tarîkh-i Barangawî and its meticulous study by Allen Frank,\(^8\) the Mujaddidî line of Naqshbandiyya was dominant among Tatar scholars for most of the 19th century right up to the 1900s. Hybridity, however, was already there in the mid-19th century: in Rabī’ al-Ākhir 1276/October–November 1859, the brothers Burhān al-Dîn and Ḥāfīz al-Dîn, the latter being Aḥmad al-Barangawî’s father, obtained an ijāza from a Samarqand-based scholar Tâj al-Dîn ibn Ḥâmar al-Bulghârî (d. 1872) for the Shâdhilî litany Ḥizb al-bahrî, received previously from Darwîsh Muḥammad al-Shâfiʿî al-Hindustânî. Their silsilâ was counted among “the most reliable in the world.”\(^9\) Evidence of these connections was carefully archived in the family of Aḥmad al-Barangawî. If Aḥmad Shujāʿ was aware of the previous presence of Shâdhilî links in the lore of his close relatives, then for him getting a similar Shâdhilî ijāza from a teacher in Medina could play a role of keeping up the family tradition. By the early 20th century establishing multiple Sufi affiliations turned into a norm. Back in the old days ijāzas would be provided only after a considerable period of study and hence a relatively small number of such documents are mentioned in our sources,\(^10\) but in Aḥmad Shujāʿ’s youth obtaining a fancy ijāza from a prominent teacher was simply a matter of contacting the right people and thus did not require much time.

The case of Aḥmad Shujāʿ’s set of Sufi documents is both unique and common. It is common, because at that time many Tatar students would go to Mecca and Medina to acquire knowledge necessary for successful careers and relevant

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8 Allen J. Frank, Bukhara and the Muslims of Russia.

9 Aḥmad al-Barangawî, Tarîkh-i Barangawî, The Institute of Language, Literature, and Art (Kazan), 1914, fol. 139b; Allen J. Frank, Bukhara and the Muslims of Russia, 90–91. Around the same time, in 1274/1858, a certain Muḥammad ‘Alî b. Shams al-Dîn received a Shâdhilî ijâza on the same litany from a Maghribî shaykh, whom he met during the pilgrimage. The text of the ijâza together with a Persian biography of Abû-Ḥasan al-Shadhili is present in a manuscript convolute in the private library of ‘Abbâs Bîbarsov in the village of Urta Eluzan in the Penza region (Ms. 68, no pagination).

to their understanding of the ideal Muslim personality. Some of these students seized the opportunity to get the prestigious succession protocols from important shaykhs. However, Aḥmad al-Barangawī, about the same age as Aḥmad Shujāʿ, did not go to Medina and preferred to invest in the well-established links with the Central Asian Sufi environment. The general tendency among the youth was to move to Mecca and Medina and more often than not to study the Qurʾan, the hadīth, and the related subjects. Many autobiographical accounts of those who studied in Medina at the time show us that Sufism was no longer on the priority list of Russia’s young Muslims.¹¹ For example, ʿAbd al-Majīd al-Qādirī (1881–1962) from Ī斯塔plibāsh in the South Urals, famous for its dynasty of Naqshbandī Muḥaddī shaykhs with strong Bukharan connections, was brought up in a Sufi environment, but in his memoirs did not evoke any interest in Sufism. More or less at the same time as Aḥmad Shujāʿ, al-Qādirī went to Mecca and Medina with a purpose to learn the Qurʾān by heart and to become a certified specialist in recitation.¹² Another Tatar student of those years was even more pragmatic: Ismāʿīl al-ʿĀbdī (1891–1930) from Kazan did not find it wise to stay in Medina for a long time. He used his time there to improve his language skills and follow some classes on the Qurʾān and hadīth, but preferred to go back to Russia to be part of the blossoming public life in his home city.¹³ Still, the range of possible trajectories and attitudes was wide and included an option of going to Bukhara, as in the case of Aḥmad Shujāʿ’s cousin Aḥmad al-Barangawī.

What was the rationale behind collating multiple certificates in a single manuscript¹⁴ volume? To answer this question, we must look at the context of Sufi history in the Caucasus, the Volga-Urals and Siberia as well as the set of known ījāzas received at the turn of the 20th century. The structure of this


¹⁴ Our research of ījāza miscellanies is a modest contribution to the recent turn towards the study of manuscript composite texts or miscellanies: One-Volume Libraries: Composite and Multiple-Text Manuscripts, ed. Michael Friedrich and Cosima Schwarke (Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 2016); The Emergence of Multiple-Text Manuscripts, ed. Alessandro Bausi, Michael Friedrich and Marilena Maniaci (Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 2020); Exploring Written Artefacts: Objects, Methods, and Concepts, ed. Jörg B. Quenzer (Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 2021).
article builds around the following logic. To outline the historical context, we start with the history of Naqshbandiyya in Russia and the formation of several regional branches. After that we investigate the circulation of *ijāza* miscellanies (*thabat*) as well as individual Sufi certificates between the 1880s and 1920s, emphasizing the bundled character of transmission and the blurring of lines between brotherhoods with the simultaneous rise of importance of the individual branches within the umbrella *ṭarīqas*. The next section zooms in on a rich collection of *ijāzas* and succession protocols archived by ʿĀlimjān al-Bārūdī between 1919 and 1921. Here we show that the tendencies evident in Sufi *ijāzas* are applicable to the broader phenomenon of *ijāza* circulation and to its role in self-fashioning and even archival practices. *Ijāza* miscellanies, we argue, have turned into an instrument of building an archival persona, a manufactured facet of one’s personality described by the embeddedness into prestigious chains of transmission. Archival persona is a concept that we propose in order to understand better the selective expressions of individual subjectivity in archival composition, be that a collection of multiple items, or – as in the case with *ijāzas* – a single manuscript miscellany. Building an archival persona was a practice and its actual character depended on desire of the author; some authors wanted to be remembered as a scholar, others as physicians or composers. Individuals turned to the construction of their archival personas when they conceived of themselves as historical actors and sought to engrave a certain version of their selves by the means of archival practices – carefully selecting one type of documents, while hiding and disregarding parts of their selves that did not fit into a desired picture. It is therefore an important task for historians to be aware of structures of subjectivity that stand behind the available archival evidence.

15 On the phenomenon of ‘bundled *silsilas*’ in 18th- and 19th-century Central Asia: Devin DeWeese, “‘Dis-ordering’ Ṣūfism in Early Modern Central Asia: Suggestions for Rethinking the Sources and Social Structures of Ṣūfi History in the 18th and 19th Centuries,” in *History and Culture of Central Asia/Istoriia i kul’tura Tsentral’noi Azii*, ed. Bakhtiyar Babadjanov and Kawahara Yayoi (Tokyo: The University of Tokyo, 2012), 259–79.


The Many Faces of the Naqshbandiyya in Russia

The history of Sufi ‘orders’ in the Russian Empire developed from a period of relative diversity without emphasis on particular brotherhoods in the 18th century, followed by a period of domination by the Naqshbandiyya for most of the 19th century and, finally, the stage of hybrid Sufi affiliations at the turn of the 20th century. In this part of our article we characterize each of these stages to give a sense of the options available in Sufi affiliation and transmission of knowledge by the early 20th century.

The late 17th- and early 18th-century Yasawī įjāzas and treatises found in Western Siberia and the Volga-Urals do not identify the titles of their ‘order’; rather, they emphasise the personality of the shaykh and reflect on the broader notions of the Sufi path. Cases of linking several lines of succession are known from the late 18th century: a miscellany of Sufi texts produced in the village of Qarağay of Tiumen region contains four įjāzas, which portray Aḥmad al-Sirhindī and Muḥammad al-Bāqī as both Naqshbandī and Qādirī shaykhs. The latter connection might reflect the need to justify the practice of vocal dhikr, widespread around Tobol'sk since the late 17th century. When the Naqshbandiyya arrived in the second half of the 18th century, this new ‘order’ nominally replaced the previous communal Sufi affiliations, leaving no space for the Yasawīyya.

Various branches of the Naqshbandiyya brotherhood penetrated the Russian realm during the late 18th and 19th centuries. This process laid out the context for debates on the legitimacy of individual branches and certain practices. Lines of succession from Aḥmad al-Sirhindī (1564–1624) developed in Russia. One line, called the Mujaddidiyya, was particularly prominent in Māvarāʾannahr and became popular among the Tatar students who received their education from Niyyāz Quli al-Turkmānī (d. 1821) and Faydkhān al-Kābulī (d. 1801) and brought the prestige of the Central Asian Naqshbandiyya back to their home villages in the Volga-Urals and Siberia in the 19th century.

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21 Allen J. Frank, Bukhara and the Muslims of Russia; Michael Kemper, Sufis und Gelehrte in Tatarien und Baschkirien, Chapter 2.
A sub-branch developed via Khālid al-Baghdādī (1779–1827) and hence received the name Khālidīyya. In the early 19th century this branch entered the Ottoman lands and Shirvān, where Ismāʿīl al-Kurdāmī (1778–1827) became a successor of Khālid al-Baghdādī. Two of the former's students brought the Khālidīyya to Daghestan: one line of succession goes down from Khas Muḥammad al-Shirwānī via the Daghestani shaykh Muḥammad al-Yarāghī (d. 1254/1838–39). This line is still present in Daghestan and bears the name Khālidīyya. Another line for a long time was present in Shirvān, among the local Daghestani Sunnis. This line is known as the Naqshbandīyya Maḥmūdiyya, named after Maḥmūd al-Almālī (1810–1877).22

In the Ottoman lands another student of Khālid al-Baghdādī, Aḥmad ibn Sulaymān al-Ṭārāblusi (d. 1858), helped to spread the Khālidīyya. From him the line goes down to Aḥmad Diyyā al-Dīn al-Gumushkhānawi (1813–1893), hence the branch's title Khālidīyya Diyyāʾiyya.23 Zayn Allāh al-Rasūlī (1833–1917) was a famous representative of this line in the Volga-Urals.

As we see, by the end of the 19th century four branches of the Naqshbandīyya had spread in the North Caucasus and Inner Russia: the Mujaddidiyya in the Volga-Urals, the Khālidīyya in Daghestan, the Khālidīyya Maḥmūdiyya

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in the Volga-Urals and Daghestan, and the Khâlidîyya Diyā’îyya in the Volga-Urals. This picture becomes more complex if we consider that Sufis of the area started to merge the distinct Naqshbandî networks and affiliate with the branches of Shâdhâliyya and Qâdiriyya, as we see in Aḥmad Shujâ’ī’s manuscript volume. At that time, association with a particular branch (wîrd) played a vital role in the self-representation of Sufi shaykhs as well as in the debates on the legitimacy of other lines of succession and their practices. The notion of a single overall Naqshbandî ‘identity’ was in the meanwhile put aside, because of the blurring of lines between brotherhoods at the turn of the 20th century. Hybrid collections of ijâza increasingly turned into sources of social capital, making individual affiliations less and less important.24

In what follows we will look at several cases in which the Sufi shaykhs express their opinions regarding each of these issues to draw a complex map of hybrid and heterogeneous traditions of Sufism in late Imperial Russia, and thus provide some context to the study of ijâza circulation. Daghestani manuscripts often contain discussions of Naqshbandî practices and their transmission protocols. Texts of the Khâlidî tradition usually contain a sîlsîla stemming from the Prophet Muḥammad and going down to Aḥmad al-Sirhindî, Khâlid al-Baghdâdî, Ismâ’îl al-Kurdâmîrî and Muḥammad al-Yarâghî, and then dwell on the aspects of ritual practice. One such work starts with an attack on audition (samâ’) and ritual dancing (raqâs) as illegitimate practices.25 Masters of this Sufi line follow the double-step system for remembrance practices: they recommend the vocal dhîkr for neophytes and the silent one for experienced followers. Ilyâs al-Tsudakhârî (d. 1904) claimed that the vocal dhîkr is only suitable for individuals who are not yet free of many sins and are not ready to perform the practice in the heart only.26 As for the issuing of ijâzas, the Khâlidî shaykhs recognize the oral transmission granted in presence of witnesses or via the spiritual bond with an (often deceased) shaykh, known as wâyisîyya. Al-Tsudakhârî wrote that he had received an ijâza from his teacher ʿAbd al-Râḥmân al-Thughûrî (1792–1882) in oral form.27 We need to point out here that the earliest written ijâza of a Daghestani Sufi shaykh was issued only in 1241/1826 (Fig. 1). This early certificate does not reveal an established form for

27 Idem, Kifâyat al-murîd, 251.
Figure 1

Notes by Jamāl al-Dīn al-Ghāzī Ghumūqī from 1826 containing: a) a copy of the letter from Muhammad al-Yarāghi to Ghāzī Muhammad al-Gimrāwī (d. 1828) confirming the ĵāza issued to the latter by Jamāl al-Dīn al-Ghāzī Ghumūqī, and b) a text of the ĵāza obtained by Jamāl al-Dīn al-Ghāzī Ghumūqī from Muhammad al-Yarāghi on 1 Ramadan 1241/8 April 1826

Source: Jalal al-Dīn al-Mahalli, Tafsir al-Jalalayn, Ms. Institute of History, Archaeology, and Ethnography (Makhachkala), Collection 14, Ms. 41, Fol. 2a.
A Khālidī ğāṣa issued by Muhammad al-ʿUbūdī to Abū Bakr from Ingishi (Daghestan), 1880s. The form of this certificate appears to be informed by standards established in Mecca, where al-ʿUbūdī resided in the 1870s.

Source: The private archive of Magomed Pakhrutdinov in the village of Ingishi, Daghestan.
such documents, while the few extant Khālidī ijāzas of a later period certainly follow an established format (Fig. 2).

The Maḥmūdiyya tradition developed a radically different view on ritual practices and their transmission. In terms of the remembrance of God, the Maḥmūdī shaykhs completely rejected the legitimacy of the vocal dhikr for the Naqshbandiyya. This tradition considered each brotherhood to be an independent path to acceding to a knowledge of God by means of a specific ritual practice. Hence, the Maḥmūdiyya assumed the possibility of the vocal dhikr for other brotherhoods, but not for the Naqshbandiyya. Hasan al-Qahī (1852–1937) would insist that the great Naqshbandī teachers of the past classified the vocal remembrance of God as harmful innovation (bidʿa). Developing his ideas further, al-Qahī likened the great shaykhs of Sufism to the founding fathers of legal schools. Inasmuch as mixing up the opinions of various legal schools cannot be accepted, a similar logic is valid for Sufi practices: each brotherhood has its own unique way, and they all have their legitimacy in an equivalent way as the legal schools respect each other’s validity. The Naqshbandiyya according to the Maḥmūdī shaykhs is specifically associated with the strict practice of silent dhikr.28

By criticizing the vocal dhikr in the Naqshbandiyya, however, the Maḥmūdiyya shaykhs could not afford themselves to be attacking the powerful Khālidī shaykhs who had lived in Daghestan and supported the vocal form of remembrance. One of the Maḥmūdī teachers, Shuʿayb al-Bāginī (1853–1909), discovered a helpful solution for this dilemma. He related that the Khālidī shaykh Jamāl al-Dīn al-Ghāzī Ghumūqī (d. 1866–67)29 would recommend for neophyte followers the practice of vocal dhikr from the Qādirī brotherhood, because he had an ijāza in that tradition. His students, al-Bāginī reasoned, continued to practice this type of remembrance and in their ignorance thought it to be a Naqshbandi rite.30 On the one hand, we see here the strict following of the Naqshbandi line and faithfulness to the silent dhikr, but on the other, we also see the merging of two brotherhoods – the Naqshbandiyya and Qādiriyya. Borders between the two schools of Sufism in terms of practice started to blur.

In terms of succession protocols, the Maḥmūdi shaykhs insisted that ijāzas should be written down in the presence of witnesses, because the granting of ijāzas is a matter too important to be accomplished orally.31 As we can surmise, this approach made the Khālidī line of succession simply illegitimate in the eyes of the Maḥmūdi shaykhs.32

The documents from Aḥmad Shujāʾ’s collection (Appendix I), such as a chain of succession by the personal acquisition of knowledge (al-musalsil bi-l-muṣāḥafa), shared the zeal of authenticity with the principle of Daghestani Maḥmūdiyya that did not recognize questionable chains of spiritual succession and prioritized those ijāzas that could be verified. The manuscript insisted on the personal meeting of teachers and students (the document uses the Arabic formula sāfaḥanī – he has greeted me) in the transmission of Sufi practices.

The same logic was extended to ijāzas from other brotherhoods: Ḥasan al-Qahī possessed three ijāzas from Sayf Allāḥ qāḍī Bashlarov (1853–1919), conferred respectively by the Naqshbandī, the Shādhilī, and the Qādirī chains, but the latter was the least important to al-Qahī, because his teacher had obtained it from Muḥammad Murād al-Ramzī (1855–1935)33 in oral form only. Hence, he noted in one of his works: “I will not relate information not supported by written evidence, because oral transmission does not deserve any mention.”34 The Qādirī line transmitted orally therefore did not find any practical support among the Maḥmūdiyya shaykhs. To have a written testimony now became critical, even if an ijāza were produced by a tradition other than the local branch or brotherhood. By the early 20th century, the landscape of Sufism in Russia was characterized by the hybridity of ‘orders’ and their particular branches as well as the rising prominence of written certificates that established verifiable links with the prestigious chains of scholarly transmission. The cultural repertoire had widened, and multiple combinations of scholarly prestige had become acceptable.

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31 Ibid., 366–68.
33 Muḥammad Murād al-Ramzī was a prominent shaykh combining various lines of succession. Born in the Menzelinsk district of the Orenburg governorate, he studied in urban madrasas of the Volga-Urals region, then travelled to Central Asia and spent many years of his life in the Hijaz. He made a name of himself by translating Ahmad al-Sirhindī’s Maktūbāt from Persian into Arabic and compiling a political and intellectual history of Russia’s Muslims: Abdulsait Aykut, The Intellectual Struggle of Murād Ramzī (1855–1935), an Early 20th Century Eurasian Muslim Author, unpublished PhD thesis (Wisconsin-Madison University, 2015).


3  *Thabat* and the Domestic Circulation of *Ijāzas*

Let us offer an overview of the *ijāzas* and their variations that have survived in state and private collections across the Russian Federation. An entire network of followers of Zayn Allāh al-Rasūlī was marked by the certificates that he had generously granted to many of his students in Troitsk and beyond. One of the first *ijāzas* known from this environment comes from the archive of Niyyāz Bāqī ibn mullāh Biktimer (1846–1924) in the Siberian village of Atyāl in the Tiumen region. This certificate is written in al-Rasūlī’s own hand and bears the precise date of 1 Muḥarram 1314/12 June 1896. Here the master transmitted the teaching of the books *Dalāʾil al-khayrāt*,35 *Qaṣīdat al-burda*, and *Ḥizb al-aʿẓam*. The text contains no mention of brotherhoods or their branches. The library of Niyyāz Bāqī preserved the printed versions of all three books mentioned in his *ijāza*.36 Upon returning from Troitsk to his home village, Niyyāz Bāqī started to instruct local children, but we know next to nothing of him spreading Sufi learning, other than the fact that he remained a Naqshbandī shaykh himself. While his son ‘Abd Allāh continued to perform a silent form of *dhikr*, the latter’s son Munīr rediscovered the Sufi legacy of his family only after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and sought to receive guidance of the Daghestani Ḥāfmūdiyya.37

In 2012, while working at the manuscript department of the Russian National Library in St Petersburg Evgenii Khamidov discovered a miscellany (*thabat*) containing three texts: a) *Bāb al-murāqaba* in the Tatar language; b) a chain of the spiritual succession of Khālidīyya shaykhs; c) an *ijāza* from al-Rasūlī to Ṣāliḥjān hājjī ibn Muḥammadjān hājjī.38 The latter part bears the date 1321/1903 and was marked by al-Rasūlī’s personal seal. Khamidov, who read the manuscript as al-Rasūlī’s original work, specifically points out that the *ijāza* granted the right to teach not only Sufi practices but also medical sciences and to produce talismans (*ajaztu bi-ruqyat al-amrāḍ wa kitābat al-tawwīdhāt al-sharʿīyya*).39 From the digital copies of the miscellany, kindly provided to us

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37 Idem, “Rafail’ Valishin’s Anti-Wahhabi Sufi Traditionalism in Rural Western Siberia,” in *Islamic Authority and the Russian Language: Studies on Texts from European Russia, the North Caucasus and West Siberia*, ed. Alfrid Bustanov and Michael Kemper (Amsterdam: Pegasus, 2012), 219–64.
by Evgenii Khamidov, it is plain that these texts are strikingly similar to what we have in Aḥmad Shujāʾ’s collection reviewed above – it appears, therefore, that *thabats* of this type became popular at the time.

Another manuscript of similar content stems from the library of ʿAbbās Bibarsov (1937–2012) in the village of Urta Eluzan in the Penza region. Between the 1950s and 1970s Bibarsov travelled widely throughout the Tatar settlements in Soviet Russia to acquire and then sell old Muslim books and manuscripts. A portion of what he managed to collect has remained in his private possession, making up an impressive collection of ca. 100 manuscript books and about one thousand rare publications. A *thabat* from this library (Ms. 88) contains chains of transmission and a description of the *murāqaba* types (*Bāb al-murāqaba*), again in Tatar, all received from Zayn Allāḥ al-Rasūlī. We know that the manuscript had belonged to a certain Yār Allāḥ Ṣūfī Makhmudov from Yekaterinburg, but the actual circumstances of the item’s transfer to Bibarsov’s hands remain unknown. The manuscript bears no date, but the style of handwriting and the type of Russian paper suggest its production in the early 20th century, synchronous to most *ijāzas* analysed above. Yār Allāḥ Ṣūfī received a certificate for *Ḥizb al-bahr* practice in the version transmitted from Abū-l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī (also present in Aḥmad Shujāʾ’s manuscript).40 This chain of transmission was initially acquired by al-Rasūlī from Muḥammad ʿAlī al-Witrī. Yār Allāḥ Ṣūfī had another *ijāza* for the same practice transmitted directly from ʿImām al-Nawawī, while al-Rasūlī was included into this alternative chain of transmission by al-Gumushkhānawi.41

Zayn Allāḥ al-Rasūlī, who had studied briefly in Istanbul in 1869, established himself as a major authority in Sufi learning with his madrasa in Troitsk, attracting numerous students from across the Empire. A holder of several chains of spiritual succession in more than one brotherhood, al-Rasūlī transmitted his knowledge selectively to different students in multiple combinations, ranging from specifically Naqshbandī Khālidī practices to a mix with the Shādhiliyya, medicine, and occult sciences. The present archival situation suggests that despite the great popularity of the Naqshbandiyya in the Volga-Urals and Siberia very few *ijāzas* have come down to us in their 19th-century originals. There were multiple types of succession protocols – either as a short text or drawing integral to a manuscript book, or as a magnificent scroll with all the

40 The library of ʿAbbās Bibarsov, Ms. 88, fol. 6b.
41 Ibid., fol. 5ab.
names of great shaykhs down to the grantee. However, the type of ijāzas that we analyse here, namely the separate documents or miscellanies listing the transmitted practices, were time-specific and their wide circulation in late imperial Russia suggests an unprecedented rise of ijāza culture imported, in fact, from the Ottoman realm. Unlike in Daghestan, where Sufism was a way to social success, the grantees of al-Rasūl’s ijāzas in Inner Russia did not become famous for their Sufi activities and the spread of multiple ijāzas did not result in the blossoming of Sufi networks, education, and rituals across the country.

A shaykh would include within a thabat those certificates that he had received over the course of his lifetime, including the general certificates in a certain discipline or genre and more specific ones on the transmission of a book or even a single hadīth, as we can see in the cases of al-Witrī, al-Gumushkhānawī, and al-Rasūlī. The compilation of thabats served the goal of structuring a model that shaykhs had selected from a broader cultural repertoire of Islamic knowledge production. Some scholars would craft their own miscellanies, others would copy and transmit the existing collections without adding anything new. Let us look at the details in regard of several thabats transmitted by Muḥammad Śāliḥ al-Ajāwī, Zayn Allāh al-Rasūlī and Sayf Allāh qādī Bashlarov.

Muḥammad ‘Ali ibn Žāhir al-Witrī possessed a thabat that included various certificates, including those on hadīth transmission, on grammar, and Sufi practices. As he wrote, he had compiled the miscellany on the basis of those ijāza collections that were in the hands of his teachers. Next to that he added another ijāza collection acquired from teachers of a different line. These documents comprised a single volume gathered by al-Witrī.

A thabat belonging to Bakhtiyār ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Yūrtushi was produced in 1302–1303/1884–1886 and included the following documents: a) an ijāza from Muḥammad Dhākir al-Chistāwī and a succession protocol of the Khālidī branch; b) a Mujaddidi sīsilā of Muḥammad ‘Ali al-Tūntārī; c) a copy of the Mujaddidi ijāza issued by Muḥammad ‘Ubayd Allāh ibn Muḥammad Nıyāż Qulī al-Turkmānī to Muḥammad ʿ Harrāth al-Istārlbāshī in 1269/1852–53. The latter copy is accompanied by imitation seals and a visual reproduction of the Mujaddidi sīsilā in a scroll form. The practical reasons for copying this old certificate and a related succession protocol in the late 19th century remain unclear to us. Naturally, texts in the manuscript miscellany are mixed with medical and occult receipts in Tatar and Persian: Kazan University Library, Ms. 6551 Ar., fols. 136b–150a. The manuscript was acquired by the manuscript expedition from Bakhtiyār ibn ʿAbd al-Jalīl in the village of Kūlbāsh of the Mari El Republic in 2005, but was inventoried only in 2021.

Thabat Zayn Allāh al-Rasūlī, fols. 1a–3b. Manuscript is kept in private possession of Ilyās Kayaev (b. 1962), Makhachkala, Daghestan.
On Ṣafar 3, 1314/July 13, 1896, al-Witrī passed this entire cache of ḫāṭaṭas to Zayn Allāh al-Rasūlī, when the latter paid a visit to Medina.\(^{44}\) Similarly, al-Rasūlī included in his ṭhabāt a collection of ḫāṭaṭas received from al-Gumushkhānāwī and a few other shaykhs.\(^ {45}\) In his ḫāṭaṭas al-Gumushkhānāwī noted the existence of numerous similar miscellanies of Arab and Ottoman shaykhs.\(^ {46}\) Thus, al-Rasūlī brought together the ṭhabāt of al-Witrī and al-Gumushkhānāwī and the resulting collection symbolized the long tradition of authoritative knowledge transmission (Appendix II).

As well as granting ḫāṭaṭas to al-Rasūlī, al-Witrī passed on his certificates to Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-Ajāwī al-Khān-Kirmanī al-Qazānī. The latter created a ṭhabāt of his own: its manuscript was commissioned by the Leningrad Institute of Oriental Studies from Šābir ʿAlimov (1872–1938), a teacher of Arabic in Astrakhan in the 1930s. This miscellany includes several works on Naqshbandī practices and the original ḫāṭaṭas transmitted to Muḥammad Šāliḥ from multiple teachers in Medina between February 20, 1903, and March 30, 1904 (Appendix III). While most of the certificates in this miscellany are written in Arabic and Ottoman, two Persian ḫāṭaṭas made their way there. One of them bears the seal of a certain damullah Nūr Muḥammad Khalīfa dated 1307/1889–90 and contains a chain of Mujaddidī shaykhs down to Afāq ḥāja and Muḥammad Šāliḥ certifying the teaching of the Sufi path (Fig. 3). Another certificate dated Jumādā al-Ākhir 27, 1325/August 6, 1907, shows that he studied Islamic law at the madrasa of ‘Abd al-Khāliq ibn mullā Sultān. The paleography and language of these documents suggest their Central Asian provenance. Most probably, Muḥammad Šāliḥ first studied in Central Asia and then moved to Medina to perform pilgrimage and improve his education. Even though his ‘Bukharan’ ḫāṭaṭas looked different from the Medinan ones and were clearly of lesser social prominence in the early 20th century, Muḥammad Šāliḥ decided to keep them, presumably because he was not interested in manipulating his archival image in the eyes of future generations.

From late March to September 1907, Sayf Allāh qādi Bashlarov was at Zayn Allāh al-Rasūlī’s home in Troitsk: here, on Jumādā al-Ākhir 27, 1325/August 6, 1907, the shaykh granted his student all the ḫāṭaṭas he possessed from al-Witrī and al-Gumushkhānawī. Bashlarov then copied the entire ṭhabāt of al-Rasūlī and his teacher who attested to the validity of the copy by his personal seal and signatures (Fig. 4).

\(^{44}\) Ibid, fol. 4a.
\(^{45}\) Ibid, fol. 5b.
\(^{46}\) Ibid, fol. 6b.
Figure 3 A Persian ijāza in the Mujaddidi path from Muhammad Ṣāliḥ al-Ajāwī's collection
Source: Muhammad Ṣāliḥ al-Ajāwī, Thabat, Institute of Oriental Manuscripts (St Petersburg), Ms. C2302, Fol. 64b.
Figure 4  An ijāza for Bashlarov on al-Rasūlī's thabat
SOURCE: THABAT ZAYN ALLĀH AL-RASŪLĪ, FOL. 9B.
Further on, Bashlarov ventured to compile his own miscellany in which he verbatim included al-Rasūlī’s legacy and added a single Shādhilī ijāza from the thabat of the above-mentioned al-Ajāwī. This case thus represents a more selective approach to the transmission practices of ijāza collections. Such practice is further evidenced by Bashlarov’s decision not to transmit the Naqshbandiyya uwaysiyyya and the oral initiation in Qādiriyyya that he had received from his Tatar teachers Muḥammad Dhākir al-Chistāwī (1815–1893) and Muḥammad Murād al-Ramzī respectively. Moreover, despite possessing two lines of Shādhiliyya from al-Witrī via al-Rasūlī and al-Ajāwī, in his transmission to the Daghestani shaykh al-Qahī Bashlarov ignores al-Rasūlī’s ijāza in Shādhiliyya. As to why this should be, we do not know. What is important for our topic here is the highly selective approach to the transmission of ijāzas. Bashlarov’s personal choices had a tremendous impact on the history of Sufism in Daghestan: the now dominant Shādhiliyya continues to this day to celebrate its ties with Tatar Sufism. In his letters to al-Qahī, whom he had initiated into the line of al-Rasūlī only in 1919, Bashlarov stressed the centrality of Shādhili practice for his disciple. The Maḥmūdiyya brotherhood thus invested heavily in setting up strong bonds with Sufi traditions outside of the region at the expense of close relations with Khālidīyya in Daghestan. Belonging to the same Naqshbandi tariqa did not matter much: the merging of branches took place not on the local level, where fierce competition was evident, but on the transnational and transregional level. Their strict following of Naqshbandī practice and the critique of questionable chains of succession allowed the Maḥmūdī shaykhs to welcome the Sufi brotherhoods new to the region, imported chiefly by Bashlarov. Followers of the Maḥmūdīyya found it satisfactory that Bashlarov possessed the written certificates of initiation to all those traditions and their practices, and they would not question the legitimacy of the succession in the upper parts of the chain.

49 Idem, Talkhīṣ al-maʿārif, 141.
50 Idem, Maktūbāt, 195–98.
51 Ibid, 130.
52 Idem, Talkhīṣ al-maʿārif, 118. For details on the interactions of Sufis in Daghestan and the Volga-Urals region see: Shamil Shikhaliyev and Michael Kemper, “Sayfallah-Qadi Bashlarov.”
Let us now compare this evidence with ʿĀlimjān al-Bārūdī’s manuscript volume. Born the son of a wealthy merchant, al-Bārūdī devoted his entire life to knowledge acquisition and teaching and in fact had no financial difficulties in accessing any type of Islamic cultural production that could be reached in Russia or abroad. At the start of his career, he studied with multiple teachers in Kazan and Bukhara. One of the books that he bought during his studies in Bukhara contains marginal notes bearing al-Bārūdī’s signature ʿAlīmjān (sic!) al-Ghazānī and the date Shaʿbān 16, 1297/July 13, 1880. The name ‘al-Ghazānī’ was a customary way of personal linkage to the city of Kazan, systematically spelled by Tatar sources as Ghazān, probably to mirror the symbolic significance of the figure of the Ilkhanid Ghazān Khan (1271–1304) for the encounter with unbelievers on the fringes of the Islamicate world and the spread of Islam. Following al-Bārūdī’s repeated trips to the Near East between 1887 and 1910, the form of his self-fashioning changed dramatically.

A staunch collector of everything precious related to Islamic scholarship and the owner of a huge library, al-Bārūdī made an effort to gather the certificates that he had received from his masters in the Near East and bound them in a single volume (majmūʿa): “I have arranged (rattabtu) this description in Ufa on Ramadan 20, 1337 [June 19, 1919], when I performed the judicial duties (fī khidmat al-iftāʾ wa-l-qadāʾ),” meaning during his tenure as a mufti, shortly before his death in 1921. This manuscript in velvet binding has survived in the collection of Sayyid Wāḥidī and is currently stored at the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts in St Petersburg. Al-Bārūdī arranged ijāzas that he had collected in a more or less random list (fihrist) preceding the original documents
Building an Archival Persona

Comparison of this list with the actual contents reveals that many texts did not make it to the list (Appendix V) but are nevertheless present in the miscellany. This shows that al-Bārūdī continued to work on the collection and that he altered the order of ijāzas and took some of them out. The way the documents have survived in the volume is a result of his engagement with this collection. The manuscript demonstrating ʿĀlimjān al-Bārūdī’s impressive scholarly credentials is remarkable for many reasons. Nearly all the documents present in the volume are written in Arabic and a few in Ottoman. No Persian or Tatar texts feature in this book, which is not surprising given the clear emphasis made by al-Bārūdī on the Arab chains of transmission, completely ignoring his previous Bukharan experiences and his instructors back then. Al-Bārūdī may have acquired similar certificates from his major teacher Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Qazānī (d. 1875), whose precious library he had inherited, but this miscellany reveals no sign of such documents. Al-Bārūdī invested in documenting his personality as embedded into transregional connections centred on the Ottoman lands. In his last years, al-Bārūdī was no longer concerned with the Bukharan stage of his path, even though he did not destroy those parts of his library and the personal items that stemmed from that earlier era, such as his notebooks written in Persian.58 While the afore-mentioned Muhammad Ṣāliḥ al-Ajāwī did not shy away from exposing his Central Asian links in the thabat, al-Bārūdī as a public figure cared more about the way how his image would be perceived from the historical evidence, hence he made an effort to manipulate that image, creating a version of his archival persona embedded in a manuscript volume with ijāzas from the Ottoman Empire.

Most of the ijāzas included by al-Bārūdī into the volume were produced either in the period 1304–1307/1887–89, during his first trip to Egypt and the Hijaz, or in the period 1327–28/1909–10, when he stayed in Istanbul, the Hijaz, and Syria. Other dates suggest that al-Bārūdī went to the Ottoman Empire repeatedly and sometimes received ijāzas even by mail, as in the case of an ijāza issued by Ahmad al-Haḍrāwī al-Makkī in 1307/1890.59 Unlike previously, collecting ijāzas was now a very intensive process that did not require an extended period of study with a teacher granting certificate. This implied simplicity to a point of formality: the shaykhs were interested in popularizing their chains of transmission, especially via ḥājjīs, while the grantees sought to collect an impressive set of authoritative ijāzas from important people. This personal strategy allowed one to turn oneself into a hub of Islamic learning.

58 Kazan University Library, Ms. 52T.
59 Institute of Oriental Manuscripts (St Petersburg), Ms. B2947, fol. 85ab. No. 24 in al-Bārūdī’s description (see Appendix II).
for the benefit of a local audience in Russia, who would not need now to go to Egypt to get a link to the verifiable succession protocols in Qur’an recitation. The fact that al-Bārūdi was the director of the Muhammediyya madrasa in Kazan made things even easier: the graduates would receive a portion of his ijāzas upon graduation. Al-Bārūdi thus tried to achieve what other scholars of the era did by means of composing biographical dictionaries: he cemented his authority and self-image in the practice of issuing ijāzas as well as in archiving the proper set of documents which related to a single part of his personal experience that he wanted to be remembered for and to which he was passionately committed.

It appears that al-Bārūdi’s persona as a key link for Russia’s Muslims to the authoritative chains of knowledge transmission was long in the making: already in 1905, his biographer, a certain Maš’ūd afandi, organized al-Bārūdi’s life narrative according to the stages of Islamic education. This work relates that in his youth al-Bārūdi studied multiple books in Kazan, but did not receive an ijāza from his teachers in Russia. Al-Bārūdi acquired his first ijāza in Bukhara, in 1297/1879–80, after several years of study with ʿAbd al-Shukīr afandi, Ikhtiyār Khān, Mir Sharīf al-Sāʿītchī, and damullāh ‘Īsā. Upon his return to Kazan, Maš’ūd afandi continues, al-Bārūdi established bonds of friendship with the eminent scholar Shihāb al-Dīn al-Marjānī (1818–1889), who would publicly express his sympathy (izhār-i maḥabbat) to “our mullāh ‘Ālim.” This episode in particular attests to al-Bārūdi’s personal involvement in the production of his biography: the author had access to al-Bārūdi’s educational documents and oral reminiscences that sought to embed his persona into the powerful network of al-Marjānī’s admirers. More than ten years before the compilation

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62 Maš’ūd afandi, Ustād al-kull ulān fādūl ‘Ālimān al-Bārūdī hāzratīlareng fi-l-jumla tārjāmā-yi hūle (April 23, 1905), Institute of Oriental Manuscripts (St Petersburg), Ms. A1219, fol. 35a.

63 To assess the prominence of al-Marjānī’s persona on the symbolic landscape of the ulama in Kazan by the early 20th century, one can consult a huge volume of reminiscences published by his students and followers: Mārjānī, ed. by Shahar Sharaf et al. (Kazan, 1915.)
of an *ijāza* miscellany, the biography of al-Bārūdi already stressed the prominence of educational certificates with a focus on teachers from the Ottoman Empire. Numerous commemorative poems that praised the scholar after his death would enshrine al-Bārūdi’s persona as an embodiment of cosmopolitan Islamic learning with proper licenses⁶⁴ and thus complete the process of establishing his archival persona initiated by the scholar himself.

In contrast to Bashlarov’s *thabat*, in al-Bārūdi’s certificates Sufism does not feature prominently. But when it comes to Sufi *ijāzas*, they look like the type analyzed in the previous section, namely combining several brotherhoods, chiefly the Shādhiliyya, Naqshbandiyya Khālidiyya and Naqshbandiyya Diyā’iyya. Transmission of the Diyā’iyya included some esoteric practices, for which one would not give credit to al-Bārūdi, known for his supposedly reformist mindset. The main tendency in the topics of *ijāzas* is easy to recognize: recitation of the Qurʾān, transmission of Prophetic traditions, plus Shāfiʿī and (rarely) Ḥanafī law. While interest in the first two is not surprising, given the rise of Qurʾānic and ḥadīth scholarship in the 20th century, the study of legal schools other than one’s own illustrates the process of blurring the madhhab borders and the strengthening of diverse types of *ijtihād* evident throughout the 19th century.

The materiality of *ijāzas* had its own implication: *ijāza* miscellanies played a crucial role in building one’s self-image and in enabling the archiving of the version of personality that an individual cultivated over the course of his life. It is usually *his* and not *her*, because similar collections of *ijāzas* composed by women remain yet unknown, even though the possibility of acquiring certificates was open to women: al-Bārūdi mentions documents that he had received jointly with his brother Ṣāliḥjān and his wife ʿĀʾishā.⁶⁵ The narration of short biographies and the mention of countless names of people of the past featured prominently in the manuscript volume, because these elements proved critical to one’s self-image. In the aftermath of his travels to the Near East, al-Bārūdi changed his persona and sought to archive the latest version of self-fashioning in its most updated form through the verifiable sources of correct knowledge. Al-Bārūdi did not simply archive his *ijāzas* in a single volume: he continued to work with this miscellany between 1919 and 1921, taking some documents out

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⁶⁵ No. 21 and 65 in al-Bārūdi’s list of *ijāzas*, see Appendix IV. Originals of the latter do not seem to survive.
(was he now skeptical of the Khālidiyya link transmitted from al-Rasūlī?) and adding more material – some documents had escaped his attention at the first round of building the volume, while others were collected over the course of these two years. Departing from the previous tradition in transmitting thabat collections intact, al-Bārūdī made his personal impact clear by selecting what needed to be part of his archival persona and what could be omitted.

What mattered was the social prestige and the type of persona associated with the practice of collecting ījāzas about multiple subjects from a variety of teachers, preferably Arabs, representing authoritative and verifiable chains of succession. This might be linked further to the synchronous interest in books produced in the classical period: collecting and studying them became a matter of social prestige. The wealthy Tatars would not spare money on buying precious Arabic manuscripts, autographs and copies crafted during an author's lifetime. Even though there were examples of antiquarian interest among earlier scholars in Dagestan, it is safe to assume that the new social conditions at the turn of the 20th century opened the door to most of the old Arabic manuscripts that are today held in the collections of Muslim libraries in Russia.

The persona that al-Bārūdī constructed for himself drew on all these elements. From early on in his life, he engaged actively in archival practices and collecting old manuscripts. During his stay in Bukhara, he preferred to write notes in Persian and bought books that had once belonged to the library of Muḥammad Pārsā (d. 822/1420), a towering figure of the Central Asian Naqshbandiyya. Similarly, his interest in biographical literature went back to his childhood. For most of his last decades al-Bārūdī was writing diaries – it is here that we learn about his take on Muslim personality or shahāṣiyā – and engaging in correspondence with his peers in Russia. While al-Bārūdī’s goal of presenting himself as a key figure in transmission of knowledge mobilized a cache of ījāzas from influential Arab and Ottoman shaykhs, his personal diaries that he also continued to write up to his death reveal the day-to-day performance of subjectivity. While the edited volume of ījāzas contained a desired image, carefully crafted by the owner, the diaries show all the complexity of al-Bārūdī’s personal experience on the daily level. For instance, here al-Bārūdī would not shy away from composing poetry in Persian next to the narration of names of those to whom he had granted ījāzas that very morning. Taken together, these transformations reveal the formation of a new culture of


Muslim personality drawing upon new literary techniques as well as the altering way of dealing with the sets of succession protocols.

5 Conclusion

To live a life worth remembering, one needed conceptual models for imitation. These were provided, among other things, by the forms of knowledge transmission. To be a scholar or even a circumcision specialist (sönnätiche) one had to possess a reliable succession protocol. This scholarly tradition led to the emergence of a peculiar genre of ijāza miscellanies – thabat – that united all the certificates obtained by a shaykh from his teachers. These manuscript volumes included a certain vision of what it means to be a member of the literati due to a combination of lineages and names of transmitters present in ijāzas and silsila. There was no single way of dealing with these collections: some disciples, like Bashlarov, would compile thabat by selecting their own ijāzas here and there, others, like al-Rasūlī, would aggregate the contents of pre-existing thabats, still others, like al-Qahī, would simply copy what they had been given without adding anything new. From this range of Sufi models expressed in the form of thabat collections Bashlarov came closest to leaving his personal impact on the way ijāzas were perceived and therefore how their key transmitters would be regarded on the pages of history. This is what we call the archival persona.

Both Bashlarov and al-Bārūdī, as contemporaries, received a similar set of ijāzas of Ottoman provenance. Next to the Sufi certificates they possessed diplomas on teaching certain books on Prophetic traditions, law, and even Arabic grammar. Subjectivity played out differently at the stage of transmission and archiving: Bashlarov placed an explicit emphasis on the Sufi part in his ijāzas, but al-Bārūdī did not pay attention to Sufi diplomas or to those certificates that he had received in Bukhara. Both individuals preferred to invest in those aspects of their experience that proved successful in their respective regions: Sufism in Daghestan and the study of ḥadith and comparative law in the Volga-Urals. The Shādhilī links of Bashlarov became crucial for the history of Sufism in 20th-century Daghestan, but the same affiliations acquired by Aḥmad Shujāʿ, whom we referred to at the beginning of this article, did not play

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68  A certain ʿUbayd b. Bikchantāy had to provide a written certificate on the mastery of circumcision (khātnā risālāsī) copied for him by a Kazan mullah ʿAbd al-Laṭīf b. Saʿīd as early as in 1825: [Majmūʿ], Institute of Oriental Manuscripts (St Petersburg), Ms. B3476, fols. 31b–32b (document no. 12).
any role in his further life. However different the outcomes for Bashlarov and Aḥmad Shujāʿ, the Ottoman cultural realm of the era served as a model-making environment for Russia’s Muslims.

While Bashlarov did not go beyond adding one element to the thabat of his teacher and leaving aside some other links, the idea of the archival persona finds its best embodiment in the collection of ijāzas brought together and reshuffled by al-Bārūdī between 1919 and 1921. An old scholar, who had already accomplished most of what one could imagine in one’s lifetime, al-Bārūdī made a conscious effort to leave his imprint on the way he would be remembered by subsequent generations of Muslims. No doubt, al-Bārūdī conceived of himself as an historical figure who would make it into the history books. Being aware of this, al-Bārūdī wanted to manage the details of his persona as it should be archived after his death. This was the task that al-Bārūdī busied himself with in the last years of his life. Ījāza collections were not that much a resource of power or influence for a person of such resource as al-Bārūdī. He used ījāzas to curate his public image in Islamic tradition. And in this he was successful: multiple elegies written after his death celebrate him as a great master of Islamic learning of international renown and mention his Ottoman teachers.

However, we historians should not take the personas our historical actors created at their face value. Above we noted that al-Bārūdī’s thabat was the result of a careful selection process and a particular personal agenda. To get a sense of diversity one might have a brief glance at the extensive diaries that al-Bārūdī wrote for many years: there we encounter al-Bārūdī’s various reflections on an array of everyday issues that sometimes sit uncomfortably with the strict picture of a Muslim scholar drawn in his ījāza miscellany.

The key to understanding the popularity and ease of receiving Sufi ījāzas with bundled silsilas lies not just in the peculiarities of the history of Sufism in the early 20th century, but also in the rise of ījāza culture at the time more generally. Sufi certificates were part of a broader movement that aimed to accommodate the widening spectrum of available subjects and teachers for a quickly growing audience of students going on ḥājj from all over the world. Written documentation for lines of knowledge transmission became a usefully verifiable tool of navigation within a sea of multiple options. To figure out who studied where and with whom, one needed to have a written statement. Collecting these documents in miscellanies became a habit that would potentially guarantee the authority of the grantee at home. This would either work out or not: some written ījāzas proved to be influential, as in the case of Daghestan where the Maḥmūdiyya saw rapid expansion during the 20th
and early 21st centuries; but in other cases, like in inner regions of Russia, collections of multiple *ijāzas* (not only Sufi) served as objects of merely personal importance (why would the owners keep the otherwise useless paper?) that reminded them of their trips in the Near East or of their teachers, and their youth.

The rise of *ijāza* culture was an outcome of the intensification of ties between Russia’s Muslims and their peers in the Near East. This was made possible by the cultural turn to the Ottoman Empire and the technological progress that allowed affordable travel. This cultural phenomenon, however, owes its appearance not only to the technical changes, speeding up of interregional contacts and the general turn from the Persianate towards the Ottoman/Arab models of personality, but also, and more importantly, to the process of forming a new culture of expressing Muslim subjectivity, including the spread of respective literary genres, such as autobiographies and diaries.

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Appendices

Appendix I. Texts in Aḥmad Shujāʿ’s miscellany.

1. A certificate of several Shādhilī texts and practices, namely *Dalāʾil al-khayrāt, Ḥizb al-imām al-Nawawī, Ḥizb al-aʿẓam, al-Ḥizb al-qutb al-Shādhilī*. All of these were acquired by Ḥusayn ibn Ismāʿīl from his teacher Muḥammad ʿAlī ibn Ẓāhir al-Witrī al-Madanī.

2. An invocation with the chain of succession of Aḥmad al-Gumushkhānawī.

3. A detailed explanation of the distinct types of *murāqqaba* (*Bāb al-murāqqabāt*) in the Tatar language.

4. A certificate on the transmission of the Shādhilī texts and litanies *Ḥizb al-aʿẓam, Qaṣīda al-burda, Ḥizb al-qutb al-Shādhilī*. This document bears the stamp of a personal seal of Ḥusayn ibn Ismāʿīl, produced in 1317/1899–1900.
5. A chain of succession by the personal acquisition of knowledge (al-musalsil bi-l-muṣāḥafa). This document was written by Aḥmad Shujāʿ and at its end contains a brief note in pencil saying that the ijāza was eventually passed down to a certain Qiyyām al-Dīn ibn Nuʿmān.

Appendix II. A description of ijāzas composed by Zayn Allāh al-Rasūlī and copied by Sayf Allāh Bashlarov

2. Fols. 2a–2b: an ijāza on the Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī.
5. Fol. 3a: an ijāza on the Dalāʾīl al-khayrāt.
6. Fol. 3a: an ijāza on the Qaṣīda al-burda.
7. Fol. 3a: an ijāza on the Ahzāb al-Shādhili.
10. Fol. 3b: ijāzas on six authorized collections of ḥadīth, the rational and applied sciences.
11. Fol. 4b: an ijāza on the ḥadīth Musalsala bi-l-awwaliyya with a chain of transmission.
12. Fol. 5a: an ijāza on the Sharḥ al-alfīyya written by Ibn ʿAqīl (grammar) with a silsila.
14. Fols. 5b–6b: an ijāza on five ḥadīths, including Musalsala bi-l-awwalīn.
15. Fol. 6b: an ijāza on the collection of ḥadīth transmitted by Ḥusayn, the grandson of the Prophet Muḥammad.
16. Fol. 7a: an ijāza on the collection of ḥadīths of four imāms (Abū Ḥanīfa, Mālik, al-Shāfiʿī, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal) and six authorized collections.
al-Muḥammadīyya by Ibn ʿArabī and all his other writings; Waṣāyya by Aḥmad al-Rifāʿī; Ghānīyya al-murīd by ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Gilānī; Waṣāyya by Ibrāhīm al-Ḍaṣūqī; al-Ahzāb by Abū-ḥ-Ḥasan al-Shādhili and all of his other writings; Isqāt al-tadīb by Aḥmad ibn ʿAtaʾ Allāh al-Iskandarī and his other writings; Shurāq al-ḥikma by Ibn ʿĪbād; Manāzīl al-sāʿīrīn by ʿAbd Allāh ibn Muḥammad al-Anṣārī and his other writings; al-Awārif al-maʿārif by Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardi; Quwwat al-qulāb by Abū Ṭālib al-Makki; Rūyād al-sālīḥīn and al-Arbʿūna ḥadīthān by al-Nawawī and all of his other writings; Fatḥ al-Bārī sharḥ Ṣaḥih al-Bukhārī by Ibn Ḥājur al-ʿAsqalānī and all of his other writings; Umdat al-qāri sharḥ Ṣaḥih al-Bukhārī by Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-ʿAynī and all of his other writings; al-Kawākib al-Durārī sharḥ Ṣaḥih al-Bukhārī by Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Kirmānī and all of his other writings; Irshād al-sārī sharḥ Ṣaḥih al-Bukhārī and al-Mawāhib al-ladunīyya by Aḥmad al-Qasṭalānī and all of his other writings; al-Lamīʿ al-ṣabḥ al-Barāwī which is a commentary on Mawāhib al-ladunīyya; Taʿāliq al-Masāḥibīn by al-Damānī which is a commentary on Mawāhib al-ladunīyya; Taʿāliq al-Maṣāḥibīn ʿalā al-Ṣāmīʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ by al-Nawawī; Sharḥ al-Muṣlim by al-Nawawī; Minhaj al-Bārī by Zakariyya al-Anṣārī; al-Tawshīḥ by al-Suyūṭī which is a commentary on Minhaj al-Bārī; Tanqīḥ by al-Zarkashī which is a commentary on al-Tawshīḥ and other writings of al-Zarkashi; Tawdīḥ by Ibn Mālik and all of his other writings; al-Farī al-Ajlūnī; Iḍāʿa al-durārī by Shihāb Aḥmad al-Dīn and all of his other writings; ʿUlmām al-ḥadīth by Ibn Ṣalāḥ and all of his other writings; Alfiyya al-ḥadīth by al-ʿIrāqī and all of his other writings; Jāmīʿ al-kabīr and fāmīʿ al-ṣaḥīḥ by al-Suyūṭī and all of his other writings; Taḥṣīl al-ʿamīl al-tanzīl by al-Baghwārī; Taḥṣīl by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and all of his other writings; Taḥṣīl by al-Ḥaydāwī and all of his other writings; Taḥṣīl by al-Zamakhsharī and all of his other writings; Taḥṣīl al-Jalālayn by al-Maḥallī and al-Suyūṭī; al-Durr al-maṣnūr by al-Suyūṭī; Taḥṣīl by Abū-ḥ-Saʿūd; Taḥṣīl al-Khaṭībī by al-Ṭabarzī and all of his other writings; al-Nihāya fi gharīb al-ḥadīth by Ibn al-Ḥathīr; al-Sīḥāḥ by al-Jawāhārī; al-Qāmūs by Majīd al-Dīn al-Fīrūzābādī; Ḥayāt al-ḥaywān by al-Dammirī and all of his other writings; Kitāb by Sibawayh; al-Ajurūmīyya and comments on it; al-Alfiyya and comments on it; al-Mughnī and comments on it; al-Miṣlāḥ by al-Sakākī; Taḥkīṣ al-Miṣlāḥ and al-Idāḥ by al-Khaṭīb al-Qazwīnī; Maqāmāt al-Ḥarrārī and all of his other writings; al-Shāṭibīyya by al-Shāṭībī; writings by ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī, Najm al-Dīn al-Ghaytī, Ibn Ḥājur al-Makki, al-Ramlī, al-Subkī, ʿAlī al-Qārī, Shihāb al-Khafājī, Zayn al-Dīn (the author of Baḥr al-rāʿīq), and his brother ʿUmar al-Sharanbalanī, al-Tirmītashī, Khayr al-Dīn al-Ramlī, al-Ḥaṣkāfī, al-Laqānī, al-Manāwī, al-Ḥalabī, Ibn Mālik, Ibn Hīshām, Ibn ʿAqīl, Khālid al-Azhārī, Sayyid al-Sharīf, Saʿād al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī, ʿĪsām al-Dīn, Munlā Jāmī, ʿAḍud al-Dīn; al-Ṣadr al-Sharīʿa; Munlā Khusrūw, al-Marghīnānī, al-Qarāshī, Qāḍī Khān, Aḥmad ibn ʿAlāʾ al-Sāʿāṭī,
Appendix II. A description of ijāza.

1. Fol. 5b: an ijāza from Muhammad ʿAlī al-Witrī to Muhammad Śāliḥ al-Ajawī on the transmission of the Naqshbandiyya Mujaddidiyya dated 24 Muḥarram 1322/April 10, 1904.
2. Fol. 7b: an ijāza from Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥusayn al-Ḥabashi to Śāliḥ al-Ajawi for teaching science.
3. Fol. 8b: an ijāza from Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq to Muḥammad Śāliḥ al-Ajawī for teaching dhikr and murāqaba dated 1322/18 March 1904–March 6, 1905.
4. Fol. 9a: an ijāza from Ḥabib al-Raḥmān al-Qāżimi al-Riḍāwi to Muḥammad Śāliḥ al-Ajawī for teaching all the sciences dated early 1322/April 1904.
5. Fol. 18a: an ijāza from Muḥammad Murād al-Ramzī to Ibrāhīm, the son of Muḥammad Śāliḥ al-Ajawī for teaching the book Ḥizb al-Bahr al-Shāhdhili where Muḥammad Śāliḥ al-Ajawī included Bashlarov.

9. Fols. 67b–70b: an *ijāza* from Muḥammad ʿAlī al-Witrī to Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-Ajāwī for the reading and teaching of the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīh*, Ḥīzb al-aʿẓām, Dalāʿīl al-khayrāt, Ḥīzb al-Shādhiliyya, Ḥīzb al-ilmam al-Nawawi with a *silsila*. And here also *ijāza* for treatment with verses of the Qurʾan and writing letters. This *ijāza* was given in Bukhara dated 10 Ramaḍān 1313/February 23, 1896.

10. Fols. 72b–75a: an *ijāza* from Mīr Shahrī Muḥammad to Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-Ajāwī for performing the *khātm al-khwājagān*. This *ijāza* was given to Mīr Shahrī Muḥammad from Aḥmad Dīyāʾ al-Dīn Ghumushkhānawī and from Aḥmad Ḥamdī al-Dāghistānī.


Appendix IV. A description of *ijāzās* composed by al-Bārūdī in 1919.

1. Fols. 4b–6b: the first *ijāza* listed by al-Bārūdī is a diploma in Qurʾan recitation with a chain of succession issued and sealed by shaykh Muḥammad al-Miṣrī al-Muqrī al-Shāfīʿī on 27 Shawwāl 1304/July 18, 1887.

2. Fol. 18a: a succession protocol (*sanad*) from shaykh al-islām ʿAtāʾ Allāh khwāja al-Bukhārī up to the author of the *Mishkāt al-masābīh*.

3. Fols. 19b–21a: an *ijāza* in Qurʾanic recitation issued and signed by Kamāl al-Dīn ibn Sayf al-Dīn al-Kashāwī al-Qazānī al-Muqrī, accompanied by a detailed chain of succession, dated 1304/1886–87. An exact place is not mentioned, but since the year coincides with al-Bārūdī’s travel in the Near East, it must have been a Tataar Qurʾan specialist residing in Cairo.


5. Fol. 27a: a succession protocol from the same person in the Shāfīʿī law.

6. Fols. 27b–28b: an *ijāza* on the poems of al-Būṣīrī issued and sealed by the same Aḥmad al-Zaqqūq.

7. Fols. 29a–31a: an *ijāza* by Muḥammad Abū Ṭāhir al-Kurdi to Aḥmad ibn Mawlānā Muḥammad with a succession protocol on *ḥadīth*, dated Rajab 26, 1123/September 9, 1711, and then copied by al-Bārūdī in the last days of Dhū-l-Qaʿda 1308/late September 1892, when he was taking rest at al-Shinya, a village in Syria. In his colophon al-Bārūdī calls the document *al-thabat*.


10. Fol. 33b: several succession protocols of Aḥmad al-Ṭahāwī on the *al-Durr al-mukhtar*.
13. Fol. 48a: an *ijāza* on the *Dalaʿīl al-khayrāt* issued and signed by the same person to al-Bārūdī. Dated Muḥarram 16, 1307/September 11, 1889.
14. Fols. 48b–55a: two *ijāzas* on the poems of al-Būṣīrī and the ethics of their recitation issued and signed by the same shaykh to al-Bārūdī. The documents are written in the Ottoman language and dated Rabīʿ al-Awwal 5, 1303/December 12, 1885.
17. Fol. 58b: a general *ijāza* (*ijāza ʿamma*) issued and signed by Muhammad Šāliḥ al-Zawawī al-Makkī that includes the *ijāza* of the aforementioned Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad, the verifiable succession protocol (*sanad al-muṣāfaha*), and the *Ḥīṣb al-bahr* by al-Shāhdhīli. Received at the end of 1304/1887, before al-Bārūdī’s travel to Medina.
20. Fols. 66ab: an *ijāza* on *ḥadīth* to al-Bārūdī by Muḥammad Aẓam ibn Luṭf Ḥusayn al-Khayrabādī al-Hindi. 10 Muḥarram 1305/September 27, 1887.
21. Fol. 67b: an *ijāza* on *ḥadīth* to ‘Ālimjān al-Bārūdī and his brother Šāliḫjān issued and signed by ‘Abd al-Qādir ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭarāblusī al-Madānī. 11 Muḥarram 1305/September 28, 1887.
24. Fols. 85ab: an *ijāza* to al-Bārūdī issued and signed by Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Ḥāḍrāwī al-Makkī (1836–1909) on al-Shārīʿānī’s *Kashf al-ghamma* in *ḥadīth* scholarship. The document bears a note by the grantee: “This *ijāza* has reached me via our brother Sharaf al-Dīn ibn al-ḥājj al-marḥūm Miftāh al-Dīn al-Qazānī residing in Mecca at the end of Ramaḍān 1307 [May 1893].”

26. Fols. 89a–90b: additions (ʾilāwa) of the above-mentioned shaykh to several of al-Bārūdī’s ʿijāzas, including the esoteric sciences (al-Bārūdī fails to state this explicitly in his list of ʿijāzas). Kazan, 6 Rabīʿ al-Awwal 1314/August 15, 1896.

27. Fols. 92a–93a: an ʿijāza in hadīth scholarship to al-Bārūdī issued by Ṣādiq ibn Ḥasanān al-Ḥusaynī al-Bukhārī al-Qanūjī. Sent to al-Bārūdī from India in 28 Jumādā al-Akhir 1306/March 1, 1889. Interestingly, the shaykh misspelled the name of Kazan as “Mazān belonging to Bulghār.”


33. Fol. 112a: a biography of Aḥmad Daḥlān, a teacher from Hijaz, his masters, with his succession protocols, plus a chain of succession of al-Bārūdī’s teacher sayyid ʿAbd al-Qaḍīr al-Ṭārābūsī al-Madānī from the shaykhs of Damascus, Egypt and Maghribi. Mecca, Dhū-l-Hijja 1304/August–September 1887.


35. Fols. 113ab: a succession protocol of ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbbas al-Makkī on the hadīth of mercy (ḥadīth al-raḥma al-musalsala bi-l-ʿawwaliyya) with an imitation of shaykh’s seal. Copied in Mecca, 5 Dhū-l-Hijja 1304/August 24, 1887. Al-Bārūdī had listened the hadīth from the shaykh (wa ʿammītu al-ḥadīth al-madhkūr ‘anhu).

36. Fol. 113b: an ʿijāza by Muḥammad ibn Khalīl al-Qawqūchī al-Ṭārābūsī with a succession protocol on sciences and Sufi paths (fī-l-ʿilām wa-l-ṭarāʾīq al-sharīʿa), in 1305/1887–88, the year of the shaykh’s death. The latter was introduced to Naqshbandiyya through Muḥammad al-Sulaymānī, to Qādiriyya via Ḥusayn al-Dājjānī, to Shāhdhiliyya via Muḥammad al-Habī, to Khalwatiyya via...
Muḥammad al-Sabāʾī al-Miṣrī. Al-Bārūdī received this ʿijāza via Sharaf al-Dīn al-Qazānī in Rabīʿ al-Awwal 1306/November 1888.


42. Absent in the volume: a dhikr of his teacher ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad al-ʿArabī.


44. Absent in the volume: a dhikr of his teachers the brothers Yūsuf and Muḥammad ibn Salīm both sons of Salīm al-Ḥifnī.


47. Absent in the volume: a dhikr of his teacher ʿAṭiyya al-Ajhūrī.


49. Absent in the volume: a dhikr of his teachers the brothers Yūsuf and Muḥammad ibn Salīm both sons of Salīm al-Ḥifnī.

50. Absent in the volume: a dhikr of his teachers the brothers Yūsuf and Muḥammad ibn Salīm both sons of Salīm al-Ḥifnī.

51. Absent in the volume: a dhikr of his teachers the brothers Yūsuf and Muḥammad ibn Salīm both sons of Salīm al-Ḥifnī.

52. Absent in the volume: a dhikr of his teachers the brothers Yūsuf and Muḥammad ibn Salīm both sons of Salīm al-Ḥifnī.

53. Absent in the volume: a dhikr of his teachers the brothers Yūsuf and Muḥammad ibn Salīm both sons of Salīm al-Ḥifnī.

54. Absent in the volume: a dhikr of his teachers the brothers Yūsuf and Muḥammad ibn Salīm both sons of Salīm al-Ḥifnī.

55. Absent in the volume: a dhikr of his teachers the brothers Yūsuf and Muḥammad ibn Salīm both sons of Salīm al-Ḥifnī.
55. Absent in the volume: a succession protocol of the same teacher in the *Musnad* of Imām Abū Ḥanīfa.

56. Absent in the volume: a succession protocol of the same teacher in the *Musnad* of Imām Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī.

57. Absent in the volume: a succession protocol of the same *shaykh* in the *Musnad* of Ibn Ḥanbal.

58. Absent in the volume: various succession protocols (*al-musalsilāt*).

59. Foll. 169b: the final part (*khātima*) of thabat and several succession protocols to it. Mecca, 1304/1888–89.

60. Foll. 170b: a prayer linked to the pious imāms (*du‘ā’ al-farj ba’d al-shidda*), transmitted by Muḥammad ʿAlī ibn Ẓāhir al-Witrī. This text was copied by al-Bārūdī at the house of his teacher on Muḥarram 10, 1305/September 27, 1887.


64. Absent in the volume: an *ijāza* by Muḥammad al-Mubārak ibn Muḥammad al-Jazāʾirī al-Dimashqī al-Ḥusaynī in his hand.


66. Absent in the volume: an *ijāza* by ʿAbd al-Qādir Tawfīq al-Shanalbī al-Ṭarāblūsī with a list of his teachers. 1328/1910–11. He passed away two years later.


68. Absent in the volume: a succession protocol of the above-mentioned shaykh in the *Ṣahih* al-Bukhārī by his hand going back to ʿAbd al-Bāqī al-Ḥanbalī.


Absent in the volume: a copy of al-Bārūdī’s ījāza to several students on the Qaṣīda al-burda.

Absent in the volume: an ījāza by Muḥammad al-Azhari and a succession protocol in the recitation of Qur’ān. “I have been favored by meeting with him and receiving [an ījāza] from him.” 1304/1886–87.

Absent in the volume: some teachers of Ḥasan ʿAlī al-ʿUjīmī.

Absent in the volume: an ījāza by ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ʿArabzārī from his book al-ʿUjīmī issued and signed by ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn al-Bārūdī, 1327/1909–10. This note was added to the volume in 1339/July 17, 1921, a few months before his death.

Appendix V. Ījāzas included into the volume by al-Bārūdī between 1919 and 1921.


2. Fols. 18a: a succession protocol from Nawrūz Muḥammad ibn Yār Muḥammad ‘Alī Yaḥyābāḏī on al-Arbaʿīn by al-Nawawī, copied by al-Bārūdī on Dhū-l-Qaʿda 12, 1339/July 17, 1921, a few months before his death.


4. Fol. 31b: a succession protocol of Majd al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Firūzābāḏī in reading of the ʿṢahīḥ by Muslim, copied by al-Bārūdī.

5. Fol. 74b: a succession protocol in ḥadīth scholarship of Ibrāhīm al-Saqāʾ as copied by al-Bārūdī from Yūsuf al-Nabhānī, who passed on the ījāza to al-Bārūdī in Medina in 1327 or 1909–10. This note was added to the volume in 1338/1919–20.


7. Fols. 80ab: an undated ījāza in ḥadīth scholarship granted to al-Bārūdī by Ḥusayn Ḥabashi.