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 *ijāza* culture, imported from the Ottoman realm.

**Keywords**

Muslim subjectivity – hybrid Sufi affiliations – *ijāzas* – 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This expedition, the detailed history of which still awaits a separate study, revealed the existence of items that had been archived within a single family for many decades.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 *imām* 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 poluchenii v 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 Aḥmad Shujāʿ, was a daughter of Naṣr al-Dīn al-Barangawī (1796–1868).

Next to his own scholarly accomplishments the latter is renowned also as the grandfather of Aḥmad al-Barangawī (1877–1930), the author of the Tārīkh-i Barangawī, an extensive historical book that describes in detail the Bukharan connections of several generations of Tatar ulama near Kazan. The two Aḥmads were thus cousins and had a similar approach to performing their subjectivities through archival and writerly practices.

We do not know much about Aḥmad Shujāʿ, 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-Qaẓānī, a resident of Medina, to his student Aḥmad Shujāʿ between 12 Ṣafar and late Rajab of 1321/from 9 May to mid-October 1903 (Appendix I). The texts were written by different copyists on Russian paper, most probably brought to Medina with Tatar students, one of them being the young Aḥmad Shujāʿ. A glance at this collection of documents, carefully preserved in the personal archives of Aḥmad Shujāʿ 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, Aḥmad Shujāʿ performed a pilgrimage to Mecca and stayed in Medina for a while.

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 Aḥmad Shujāʿ 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 Muḥammad ‘Alī al-Witrī (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-Dīn ibn Nuʿmān, of whom we know nothing else.

As we can judge from the magnificent Tarīkh-i Barangawī and its meticulous study by Allen Frank,8 the Mujaddidī 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 Rabīʿ al-Ākhir 1276/October–November 1859, the brothers Burhān al-Dīn and Hāfiẓ al-Dīn, the latter being Aḥmad al-Barangawī’s father, obtained an ʿijāza from a Samarqand-based scholar Tāj al-Dīn ibn Aḥmar al-Bulghārī (d. 1872) for the Shādhiʿī litany Ḥizb al-bahr, received previously from Darwīš Muḥammad al-Shāfiʿī al-Hindustānī. Their silsila was counted among “the most reliable in the world.”9 Evidence of these connections was carefully archived in the family of Aḥmad al-Barangawī. If Aḥmad Shujāʿ was aware of the previous presence of Shādhiʿī links in the lore of his close relatives, then for him getting a similar Shādhiʿī ʿijāza 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 ʿijāzas 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 ʿijāza 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

8 Allen J. Frank, Bukhara and the Muslims of Russia.
9 Aḥmad al-Barangawī, Tarīkh-i Barangawī, 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 ʿAli b. Shams al-Dīn received a Shādhiʿī ʿijāza on the same litany from a Maghribī shaykh, whom he met during the pilgrimage. The text of the ʿijāza together with a Persian biography of Abū-ʿl-Ḥasan al-Shadhili is present in a manuscript convolute in the private library of ʿAbbās Bībarsov 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 Qur’an, the ḥadīth, 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. For example, ‘Abd al-Majīd al-Qādirī (1881–1962) from Istārlijbaš in the South Urals, famous for its dynasty of Naqshbandī Muṣṭafaddī 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 Qur’an by heart and to become a certified specialist in recitation. Another Tatar student of those years was even more pragmatic: Ismāʿīl al-ʿĀbīdī (1891–1930s) 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 Qur’an and ḥadīth, but preferred to go back to Russia to be part of the blossoming public life in his home city. 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-Barangawi.

What was the rationale behind collating multiple certificates in a single manuscript 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 ĭjāzas received at the turn of the 20th century. The structure of this

14 Our research of ĭjāza 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 ijāẕa miscellanies (thabat) as well as individual Sufi certificates between the 1880s and 1920s, emphasizing the bundled character of transmission15 and the blurring of lines between brotherhoods with the simultaneous rise of importance of the individual branches within the umbrella ṭarīq̱as. 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.16 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 propose17 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 sīsilas’ 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 Ṣūfī History in the 18th and 19th Centuries,” in History and Culture of Central Asia/Istoriia i kul’tura Tsentral’noi Aziii, ed. Bakhtiyar Babadjanov and Kawahara Yayoi (Tokyo: The University of Tokyo, 2012), 259–79.

16 James Pickett and Paolo Sartori, “From the Archetypical Archive to Cultures of Documenta-

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 įāzas 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 Qarāghay of Tiumen region contains four įāzas, which portray Aḥmad al-Sirhindī and Muḥammad al-Bāqī as both Naqshbandī and Qādirī shaykhhs. 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 Māwarā’annahr 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.

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-Baghḍādī (1779–1827) and hence received the name Khālidiyya. In the early 19th century this branch entered the Ottoman lands and Shirwān, where Ismā‘īl al-Kurdaṃīrī (1778–1827) became a successor of Khālid al-Baghḍādī. Two of the former’s students brought the Khālidiyya to Daghestan: one line of succession goes down from Khas Muḥammad al-Shirwānī via the Daghestani shaykh Muḥammad al-Yarāḏī (d. 1254/1838–39). This line is still present in Daghestan and bears the name Khālidiyya. Another line for a long time was present in Shirwān, among the local Daghestani Sunnis. This line is known as the Naqshbandiyya Maḥmūdiyya, named after Maḥmūd al-Almālī (1810–1877).22

In the Ottoman lands another student of Khālid al-Baghḍādī, Aḥmad ibn Sulaymān al-Ţaraḥblūsī (d. 1858), helped to spread the Khālidiyya. From him the line goes down to Aḥmad Diyyā al-Dīn al-Gumushkhanawī (1813–1893), hence the branch’s title Khālidiyya 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 Naqshbandiyya had spread in the North Caucasus and Inner Russia: the Mujaddidiyya in the Volga-Urals, the Khālidiyya in Daghestan, the Khālidiyya Maḥmūdiyya


in the Volga-Urals and Daghestan, and the Khâlidiyya Diyâ’iyya in the Volga-Urals. This picture becomes more complex if we consider that Sufis of the area started to merge the distinct Naqshbandi networks and affiliate with the branches of Shâdhiliyya and Qâdiriyya, as we see in Aḥmad Shujā’hui’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 Naqshbandi ‘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 ījâza 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 ījâza circulation. Daghestani manuscripts often contain discussions of Naqshbandi practices and their transmission protocols. Texts of the Khâlidī tradition usually contain a silsila stemming from the Prophet Muḥammad and going down to Aḥmad al-Sirhindī, Khâlid al-Baghdādí, Ismā’îl al-Kurdāmî 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 (raqs) as illegitimate practices.25 Masters of this Sufi line follow the double-step system for remembrance practices: they recommend the vocal dhikr for neophytes and the silent one for experienced followers. Ilyâs al-Tsudakhârī (d. 1904) claimed that the vocal dhikr 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 ījâzas, the Khâlidi shaykhs recognize the oral transmission granted in presence of witnesses or via the spiritual bond with an (often deceased) shaykh, known as uwaysiyya. Al-Tsudakhârī wrote that he had received an ījâza from his teacher ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Thughūrī (1792–1882) in oral form.27 We need to point out here that the earliest written ījâza 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, Kifâyât 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-Yarāghī to Ghāzī Muhammad al-Gimrāwī (d. 1828) confirming the ijāza issued to the latter by Jamāl al-Dīn al-Ghāzī Ghumūqī, and b) a text of the ijāsa obtained by Jamāl al-Dīn al-Ghāzī Ghumūqī from Muhammad al-Yarāghī on 1 Ramadan 1241/8 April 1826

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

Source: The private archive of Magomed Pakhrutdinov in the village of Ingishi, Daghestan.
such documents, while the few extant Khālidi ʿiẓās 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 Maḥmūdi 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. Ḥasan al-Qaḥī (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-Qaḥī 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 Maḥmūdi 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 Khālidi shaykhs who had lived in Daghestan and supported the vocal form of remembrance. One of the Maḥmūdi teachers, Shuʿayb al-Bāginī (1853–1909), discovered a helpful solution for this dilemma. He related that the Khālidi 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 ʿiẓāza 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 Maḥmūdī shaykhs insisted that ĵāzās should be written down in the presence of witnesses, because the granting of ĵāzās 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 Maḥmūdī shaykhs.32

The documents from Aḥmad Shujāʿ’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 ĵāzās 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 ĵāzās from other brotherhoods: Ḥasan al-Qahī possessed three ĵāzās from Sayf Allāh qāḍī Bashlarov (1853–1919), conferred respectively by the Naqshbandi, 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 ĵāza 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.

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 Ramzi (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 Biktīmer (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, 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 Maḥmūdiyya.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 shaykhīs; c) an ijāza from al-Rasūlī to Şālihān 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-amrāḍa wa kitābat al-tawwīdhāt al-shar’īyya).39 From the digital copies of the miscellany, kindly provided to us

36 Alfrid Bustanov, Knizhnaia kultura, 57–59.
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: Pegasuś, 2012), 219–64.

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by Evgenii Khamidov, it is plain that these texts are strikingly similar to what we have in Aḥmad Shujāʿ’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 Allāh al-Rasūlī. We know that the manuscript had belonged to a certain Yār Allāh Ṣūfi 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 Allāh Ṣūfi received a certificate for Ḥīzīb al-bahr practice in the version transmitted from Abū-l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī (also present in Aḥmad Shujāʿ’s manuscript).40 This chain of transmission was initially acquired by al-Rasūlī from Muḥammad ʿAlī al-Witrī. Yār Allāh Ṣūfi had another ijāza for the same practice transmitted directly from Imām al-Nawawī, while al-Rasūlī was included into this alternative chain of transmission by al-Gumushkhānawī.41

Zayn Allāh 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-Rasūlī’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 hadith, as we can see in the cases of al-Witrī, al-Gumushkhânwâi, 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 Şâliḥ al-Ajâwī, Zayn Allâh al-Rasūlî and Sayf Allâh qâdî Bashlarov.

Muḥammad ‘Ali ibn Žâhir al-Witrī possessed a thabat that included various certificates, including those on hadith 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.

42 A thabat belonging to Bakhtiyâr ibn ‘Abd Allâh al-Yûrtushi was produced in 1302–1303/1884–1886 and included the following documents: a) an ijāza from Muḥammad Dhâkir al-Chistâwī and a succession protocol of the Khâlîdî branch; b) a Mujaddidî sîslâ of Muḥammad ‘Alî al-Tûntârî; c) a copy of the Mujaddidî ijāza issued by Muḥammad ‘Ubayd Allâh ibn Muḥammad Niyâz Qûlî al-Turkmânî to Muḥammad Ḥarrâth al-Istârîbâshî in 1269/1852–53. The latter copy is accompanied by imitation seals and a visual reproduction of the Mujaddidî sîslâ 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 Bakhtiyâr ibn ‘Abd al-Jalîl in the village of Külbâsh of the Mari El Republic in 2005, but was inventoried only in 2021.

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

As well as granting ījāzas to al-Rasūlī, al-Witrī passed on his certificates to Muḥammad Šālih al-Ajāwī al-Khān-Kirmānī al-Qazānī. The latter created a thabat of his own: its manuscript was commissioned by the Leningrad Institute of Oriental Studies from Šabīr ʿAlimov (1872–1938), a teacher of Arabic in Astrakhan in the 1930s. This miscellany includes several works on Naqshbandi practices and the original ījāzas transmitted to Muḥammad Šālih 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 ījāzas made their way there. One of them bears the seal of a certain dāmullah Nur Muḥammad khalīfa dated 1307/1889–90 and contains a chain of Mujaddidī shaykhs down to Afāq khwāja and Muḥammad Šālih 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 ʿAbd al-Khāliq ibn mullā Sulṭān. The paleography and language of these documents suggest their Central Asian provenance. Most probably, Muḥammad Šālih first studied in Central Asia and then moved to Medina to perform pilgrimage and improve his education. Even though his ‘Bukharan’ ījāzas looked different from the Medinan ones and were clearly of lesser social prominence in the early 20th century, Muḥammad Šālih 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 qādī 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 ījāzas he possessed from al-Witrī and al-Gumushkhānawī. Bashlarov then copied the entire thabat of al-Rasūlī and his teacher who attested to the validity of the copy by his personal seal and signatures (Fig. 4).

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44 Ibid, fol. 4a.
46 Ibid, fol. 6b.
A Persian ijāza in the Mujaddidi path from Muhammad Šāliḥ al-Ajāwī’s collection

Source: Muhammad Šāliḥ al-Ajāwī, Thabat, Institute of Oriental Manuscripts (St Petersburg), Ms. C2302, fol. 64b.
FIGURE 4  An ʿijāza  for  Bashlarov  on  al-Rasūl’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 uwaysiyya and the oral initiation in Qādiriyya 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 Khālidiyah 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 Maḥmūdi shaykhs to welcome the Sufi brotherhoods new to the region, imported chiefly by Bashlarov. Followers of the Maḥmūdiyya 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, Talkhīs al-ma’ārif, 141.
50 Idem, Maktūbāt, 195–98.
51 Ibid, 130.
52 Idem, Talkhīs al-ma’ārif, 118. For details on the interactions of Sufis in Daghestan and the Volga-Urals region see: Shamil Shikhaliev and Michael Kemper, “Sayfallah-Qadi Bashlarov.”
4 ʿĀlimjān al-Bārūdī’s Persona

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 (fi ḫidmat al-iftāʾ wa-l-qadāt),” 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 (fihris) preceding the original documents

53 Despite the overwhelming archival material on al-Bārūdī’s personality and the availability of his diaries, surprisingly little research has been done so far on him and his efforts at creating and supporting his self-image. The only research monograph on al-Bārūdī draws almost exclusively on Russian sources: Munir Iusupov, Galimdzhan Barudi (Kazan’: Tatarskoe knizhnoe izdatel’stvo, 2003).

54 ‘Abd al-Ḥakīm al-Sayālkūṭī, Ḥāshiyya ’alā sharḥ al-Shamsīyya, two notes between fols. 21–22 and 26–27. Kazan University Library, Ms. 20Ar. (a Central Asian manuscript dated by Rajab 29, 1286/November 4, 1869 from the collection of ʿĀlimjān al-Bārūdī).


56 Institute of Oriental Manuscripts (St Petersburg), Ms. B2947, fol. 4a.

57 A digital copy of the manuscript is currently available online: 50543c6206c356bb95a2e08ed2b686d6384994.pdf (darul-kutub.com). Last accessed on October 16, 2021. In our research we consulted the digital copy, not the actual manuscript.
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 ījāzas 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 Šalāḥ al-Dīn al-Qazānnī (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. While the afore-mentioned Muhammad Šālīḥ 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 ījāzas from the Ottoman Empire.

Most of the ījāzas 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 ījāzas even by mail, as in the case of an ījāza issued by Ahmad al-Haḍrawī al-Makkī in 1307/1899. Unlike previously, collecting ījāzas 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 ījāzas from important people. This personal strategy allowed one to turn oneself into a hub of Islamic learning.
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-Bārūdı was the director of the Muḥammadiyya madrasa in Kazan made things even easier: the graduates would receive a portion of his ījāza upon graduation. Al-Bārūdı 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 ījāzas 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-Bārūdı’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 Maṣʿūd afandi, organized al-Bārūdı’s life narrative according to the stages of Islamic education. This work relates that in his youth al-Bārūdı studied multiple books in Kazan, but did not receive an ījāza from his teachers in Russia. Al-Bārūdı acquired his first ījāza in Bukhara, in 1297/1879–80, after several years of study with ʿAbd al-Shukūr afandi, Ikhtiyār Khān, Mir Sharīf al-Sā‘atchī, and damullāḥ ‘Īsā. Upon his return to Kazan, Maṣʿūd afandi continues, al-Bārūdı established bonds of friendship with the eminent scholar Shihāb al-Dīn al-Marjānī (1818–1889), who would publicly express his sympathy (iẓhār-i maḥabbat) to “our mullāh ‘Ālim.” This episode in particular attests to al-Bārūdı’s personal involvement in the production of his biography: the author had access to al-Bārūdı’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


62 Maṣʿūd afandi, Ustādāh al-kull ulān faḍūl ‘Ālimān al-Bārūdı hāzrâtīyân eng fi-l-jumla tārjāmā-yi hāl-e (April 20, 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-Bārūdī 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-Bārūdī’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-Bārūdī’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-Bārūdī, 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 Shāfiʿi and (rarely) Ḥanafi law. While interest in the first two is not surprising, given the rise of Qur’anic 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-Bārūdī mentions documents that he had received jointly with his brother Šāliḥjān 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-Bārūdī 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-Bārūdī 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-Bārūdī’s list of *ijāzas*, see Appendix IV. Originals of the latter do not seem to survive.
(was he now skeptical of the Khâlidiyya link transmitted from al-Rasûl?) 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-Bârûdî 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 ijâzas 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 Daghestan, 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-Bârûdî 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 Pârsâ (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-Bârûdî was writing diaries – it is here that we learn about his take on Muslim personality or shakhşîyya – and engaging in correspondence with his peers in Russia. While al-Bârûdî’s goal of presenting himself as a key figure in transmission of knowledge mobilized a cache of ijâzas 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 ijâzas contained a desired image, carefully crafted by the owner, the diaries show all the complexity of al-Bârûdî’s personal experience on the daily level. For instance, here al-Bârûdî would not shy away from composing poetry in Persian next to the narration of names of those to whom he had granted ijâzas 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 (sönnätche) one had to possess a reliable succession protocol. This scholarly tradition led to the emergence of a peculiar genre of ījāza 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 ījāzas and silsilas. There was no single way of dealing with these collections: some disciples, like Bashlarov, would compile thabats by selecting their own ījāzas 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 ījāzas 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-Bārūdi, as contemporaries, received a similar set of ījāzas 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 ījāzas, but al-Bārūdi 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 hadith 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 ‘Ubayd b. Bikchantāy had to provide a written certificate on the mastery of circumcision (khātnā risālāsī) copied for him by a Kazan mullah ‘Abd al-Laṭīf b. Saʿīd as early as in 1825: [Majmūʿa], 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 Shujā, 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 ĭjāzas 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 ījāzas (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 ījāza 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 Shujā’ī’s miscellany.
1. A certificate of several Shāḏhilī texts and practices, namely Dalāʾīl al-khayrāt, Ḥīżb al-imām al-Nawawī, Ḥīżb al-aʿẓām, al-Ḥīżb al-quṭb al-Shāḏhilī. All of these were acquired by Ḥusayn ibn Ismā’īl from his teacher Muḥammad ʿAlī ibn Žāhir 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 murāqaba (Bāb al-murāqabāt) in the Tatar language.
4. A certificate on the transmission of the Shāḏhilī texts and litanies Ḥīżb al-aʿẓām, Qaṣīda al-burda, Ḥīżb al-quṭb al-Shāḏhilī. This document bears the stamp of a personal seal of Ḥusayn ibn Ismā’īl, produced in 1317/1899–1900.
A chain of succession by the personal acquisition of knowledge (al-musalsil bi-l-muṣāḥafā). This document was written by ʿAbd Shujāʿ and at its end contains a brief note in pencil saying that the ījāza was eventually passed down to a certain Qiyyām al-Dīn ibn Nuʿmān.

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

1. Fols. 1a–2a: an ījāza on the Risāla al-ʿAjlūnīyya.
2. Fols. 2a–2b: an ījāza on the Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī.
5. Fol. 3a: an ījāza on the Dalāʾīl al-khayrāt.
6. Fol. 3a: an ījāza on the Qaṣīda al-burda.
7. Fol. 3a: an ījāza on the ᴦāzāb al-Shādhilī.
10. Fol. 3b: ījāzas on six authorized collections of ḥadīth, the rational and applied sciences.
11. Fol. 4b: an ījāza on the ḥadīth Musalsala bi-l-awwalīyya with a chain of transmission.
12. Fol. 5a: an ījāza on the Sharḥ al-alfīyya written by Ibn ʿAqīl (grammar) with a silsila.
14. Fols. 5b–6b: an ījāza on five ḥadīths, including Musalsala bi-l-awwalīn.
15. Fol. 6b: an ījāza on the collection of ḥadīth transmitted by Ḥūsayn, the grandson of the Prophet Muḥammad.
16. Fol. 7a: an ījāza 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 of his other writings; Waṣīyya by Aḥmad al-Rifāʿī; Ghānīyya al-murīd by ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Gilānī; Waṣīyya by Ibrāhīm al-Dāsuqī; al-Ahzāb by Abu-l-Ḥasan al-Shāhdīli and all of his other writings; Isqāt al-tadbīr by Aḥmad ibn ʿAtaʾ Allāh al-Iskandarī and his other writings; Shurāq al-hikma by Ibn I ṣāṭ; Manāẓīl al-sāʾīrīn by ʿAbd Allāh ibn Muḥammad al-ʿAnsārī and his other writings; al-Awārīf al-maʿārif by Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardi; Quwwat al-qulūb by Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī; Rīyād al-sādīḥīn and al-A[rūʿa]nā ḥadīthān by al-Nawawī and all of his other writings; Fatḥ al-Bārī sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī by Ibn Ḥajar al-Asqalānī and all of his other writings; ʿUmdat al-qārī sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī by Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-ʿĀynī and all of his other writings; al-Kawākib al-Durārī sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī by Muḥammad ibn Yusuf al-Kirmānī and all of his other writings; Irshād al-sārī sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and al-Mawāhib al-laduniyya by Aḥmad al-Qastalānī and all of his other writings; al-Lamīq al-ṣabīḥ al-Barawī which is a commentary on Mawāhib al-laduniyya; Taʿāliq al-Maṣābiḥ by al-Dānānī which is a commentary on Mawāhib al-laduniyya; Taʿāliq al-Maṣābiḥ ʿalā al-Ṣaḥīh al-Bukhārī by al-Nawawī; Ṣaḥīḥ al-Muslim and all of his other writings; ʿUlūm al-ḥadīth by Ibn Ṣaḥāḥ by al-Dīn al-Rāzī and all of his other writings; Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and all of his other writings; al-Suyūṭī and all of his other writings; al-Qārī and all of his other writings; ʿArāʾ al-Dīn al-Rāzī al-Makki, ʿAlī al-Subkī, ʿAlī al-Dīn al-Laqānī, ʿAlī al-Dīn al-Ḥalabī, Ibn Mālik, Ibn Hishām, Ibn ʿAquīl, Khālid al-Azhārī, Sayyid al-Sharīf, Saʿād al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī, ʿIsmāʾ al-Dīn, Munlā ʿĀmīr, ʿĀdūd al-Dīn; al-Ṣadr al-Sharīʿa; Munlā Khusruw, al-Marghinānī, al-Qarashi, Qāḍī Khān, Aḥmad ibn ʿAlāʾ al-Sāʿāṭī,

18. Fols. 8a–8b: an ijāza on six hadiths, including a hadith of direct transmission.
19. Fol. 8b: an ijāza on passing on the rosaries.
20. Fol. 8b: an ijāza on the dhikr “lā ilāha illā-lāh”.
21. Fol. 8b–9a: an ijāza on four legal schools.
22. Fol. 9b: An ijāza for Bashlarov on al-Rasūlī’s thabat
23. Fols. 10a–10b: an ijāza to Bashlarov on reading of the Dalā’il al-khayrāt.
25. Fols. 12a–12b: a silsila and ijāza from al-Rasūlī to Bashlarov on the Qašīda al-burda.
26. Fols. 13a–15a: a list of scholars who studied with al-Rasūlī and books that he read under the guidance of these scholars.
27. Fols. 16a–17b: a silsila of transmitters of the ijāza on the Ḥīz al-imām al-Nawawī where al-Rasūlī included Bashlarov.
29. Fol. 20b: a silsila from Niyāz Quli al-Turkmānī down to Bashlarov.

Appendix II. A description of ijāzas collected by Muḥammad Šāliḥ al-Ajāwī.

2. Fol. 7b: an ijāza from Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥusayn al-Ḥabashī to Šāliḥ al-Ajāwī for teaching science.
4. Fol. 9a: an ijāza from Ḥabib al-Raḥmān al-Qāzimi al-Riḍāwī to Muḥammad Šāliḥ al-Ajāwī for teaching all the sciences dated early 1322/April 1904.


10. Fols. 72b–75a: an iyāza from Mīr Shahrī Muḥammad to Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-Ajāwi for performing the khatm al-khwājāgān. This iyāza was given to Mīr Shahrī Muḥammad from Aḥmad Diyya al-Dīn Ghumushkhānawī and from Aḥmad Ḥamdī al-Dāghistānī.


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

1. Fols. 4b–6b: the first iyāza listed by al-Bārūdī is a diploma in Qur’an recitation with a chain of succession issued and sealed by shaykh Muḥammad al-Miṣrī al-Muqrī al-Shāfī‘ī on 27 Shawwāl 1304/July 18, 1887.


3. Fols. 19b–21a: an iyāza in Qur’ānic recitation issued and signed by Kamāl al-Dīn ibn Sayf al-Dīn al-Khashwārī 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 co-incides with al-Bārūdī’s travel in the Near East, it must have been a Tatar Qur’ān specialist residing in Cairo.


5. Fol. 27a: a succession protocol from the same person in the Shāfī‘ī law.

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

7. Fols. 29a–31a: an iyāza by Muḥammad Abū Ṭāhir al-Kurdi to Aḥmad ibn Mawlānā Muḥammad with a succession protocol on hadith, dated Rajab 26, 1123/September 9, 1711, and then copied by al-Bārūdī in the last days of Dhū-l-Qa‘da 1308/late September 1893, when he was taking rest at al-Shinya, a village in Syria. In his colophon al-Bārūdī calls the document al-thabat.


13. Fol. 58b: a general iǧāza (iǧāza ‘amma) issued and signed by Muhammad Ṣāliḥ al-Zawawī al-Makkī that includes the iǧāza of the aforementioned Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad, the verifiable succession protocol (sanad al-muṣāfaha), and the Ḥizb al-bahr by al-Shādhili. Received at the end of 1304/1887, before al-Bārūdī’s travel to Medina.


6. Fols. 85ab: an iǧāza to al-Bārūdī issued and signed by Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Ḥażārāwī al-Makkī (1836–1909) on al-Shārānī’s Kashf al-ghamma in hadīth scholarship. The document bears a note by the grantee: “This iǧāza has reached me via our brother Sharaf al-Dīn ibn al-ḥājj al-maḥrūm Miftāḥ al-Dīn al-Qazānī residing in Mecca at the end of Ramaḍān 1307 [May 1899].”

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

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


35. Fols. 113ab: a succession protocol of ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abbas al-Makki on the hadīth of mercy (ḥadīth al-raḥma al-musalsala bi-l-awwalīyya) 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 ẓāmi‘tu al-ḥadīth al-madhkūr ‘anhu).

36. Fol. 113b: an ījāza by Muḥammad ibn Khalīl al-Qawquchi al-Ṭarābulsi with a succession protocol on sciences and Sufi paths (fi-l-‘ilām wa-l-ṭarā‘īq al-sharīf), in 1305/1887–88, the year of the shaykh’s death. The latter was introduced to Naqshbandiyya through Muḥammadjān al-Sulaymānī, to Qādiriyya via Ḥusayn al-Dajjānī, to Shādhiliyya via Muḥammad al-Ḥabī, to Khalwatiyya via


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


44. Absent in the volume: a dhikr of his teacher Ḥasān ibn Ibrāhīm al-Jabartī al-Ḥanafī, “a famous historian.”


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


49. Absent in the volume: a dhikr of his teachers ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad al-‘Arabī.


52. Absent in the volume: a dhikr of his teacher in the Sunan of Ibn Māja.

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-Shāfi‘ī.
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. Fol. 169b: the final part (*khātima*) of *thabat* and several succession protocols to it. Mecca, 1304/1886–87.
60. Fol. 170b: a prayer linked to the pious imāms (*duʿāʾ 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.
65. Absent in the volume: his *ijāza* to al-Bārūdī and his wife ʿĀʾisha in litanies of the Shādḥiliyya and especially the *Ḥizb al-bahr*.


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’an. “I have been favored by meeting with him and receiving [an ījāza] from him.” 1304/1886–87.


Absent in the volume: an ījāza by ‘Abd al-Wahhāb ‘Arabzā with a succession protocol from Nawrūz al-Dīm al-Saqāʾī, at Azhar in Cairo, dated by Muḥammad Bayūmī, copied by al-Bārūdī on 25 Dhūl-Qa’dā 12, 1339/July 17, 1921, a few months before his death.

Fol. 18a: a succession protocol from Nawrūz Muḥammad ibn Yār Muḥammad ‘Aliyyabādī on al-Arba‘īn by al-Nawawī, copied by al-Bārūdī on Dhū-l-Qa’dā 12, 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. Fol. 18a: a succession protocol from Nawrūz Muḥammad ibn Yār Muḥammad ‘Aliyyabādī on al-Arba‘īn by al-Nawawī, copied by al-Bārūdī on Dhū-l-Qa’dā 12, 1339/July 17, 1921, a few months before his death.


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

5. Fol. 74b: a succession protocol in ḥadīth scholarship of Ibrāhīm al-Saqā’ 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.