From the Khan’s Oven

Studies on the History of Central Asian Religions in Honor of Devin DeWeese

Edited by

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Sufi Saint or Salafī Reformer?  
ʿAlī Tūntārī in Fakhreddinov's Tatar Lineage of Kalām Critique

Michael Kemper

As Devin DeWeese argues, historians in the West as well as in Turkey, Russia and Central Asia have all been focussing too much on the representatives of Jadidism, the Muslim cultural reform movement of the late imperial and early Soviet eras. The fame of the Jadids, enhanced by their massive publication practices, overshadowed the “traditional” Sufis and scholars of kalām who stood in the tradition of the age-old Islamic manuscript culture of the region. When Jadidism became widespread, in the 1880s to early 1900s, these Sufis and kalām experts were lumped together under the label of “Qadimism”, and seen by many Jadids as obstructing national progress and enlightenment. While many historians have written about the origins, writings, views and activities of the Jadids, few academics have been interested in the heritage of “Qadimism”.2

One specific problem in this context is that historians used to retrieve information about those “Qadims” mainly from the writings of the Jadids or of authors associated with the trajectory of Jadidism. In particular the encompassing biographical dictionaries produced by Islamic historians from the Volga-Urals such as Shihābaddin al-Marjānī (1818–1889), Muḥammad Murād al-Ramzī al-Manzilawī (d. 1934), and Riżā‘addin b. Fakhraddin (Rizaeddin Fakhreddinov, 1858–1936) offer a wealth of information on “traditional” scholarship of the pre-Jadid era. These biographical works are readily available, appear to have a systematic coverage, and make the conscious claim to be objective. What we, however, often forget when we turn to these biographical works is that their compilers maintained specific positions in the Islamic dis-

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course of their time, and that they were critical of other positions. Furthermore, in one way or another they all contributed to the huge field that we still subsume under the (mis-)nomer of Jadidism (or were, in the case of Marjānī, later incorporated into the dominant Jadid trajectory). Devin DeWeese has become so frustrated with the dominance of the Jadid paradigm that he suggested we should “take a vacation from Jadid studies” (or stop Jadidology once and for all). I take the liberty to nuance Devin’s position, since I believe we cannot afford to simply ignore the Jadids and their works; rather, I suggest we take a closer look at how categories such as Jadidism, Qadimism, and Salafism have been constructed. This includes a study of how the biographers dealt with their sources, with a keen eye for techniques of selection, representation, interpretation, and perhaps manipulation.

The present paper analyzes the biographical practice of the most prolific of the three above-mentioned biographers, Rizaeddin Fakhreddinov. When skimming through Fakhreddinov’s many biographical works on scholars from the Volga-Urals one gets the impression that Fakhreddinov simply brought together all biographical information he could find, indiscriminately covering any scholar of the past centuries whose memory survived. In the present chapter, however, I suggest that Fakhreddinov carefully selected what and whom he wanted to present, and in what form and with what kind of value statement. I argue that his presentation of the history of Islamic discourse in the Volga-Urals was framed by his singling out of historical personalities who, he found, shared his own vision of Islam; and I contend that this exercise also entailed the suppression of information that he must have had at his disposal. The overall goal of this exercise was to construct a regional/national lineage of Salafi-minded Islamic scholarship that was critical of kalām (speculative theology) and Sufism. I investigate these issues with the example of Fakhreddinov’s biography of ʿAlī b. Sayfallāh al-Tūntārī (d. 1291 / 1874), a Sufi master and kalām specialist from the village of Tūntār in Malmyzh district (Viatka province; today Republic of Tatarstan, Russian Federation).

Fakhreddinov included Tūntārī’s biography in the third volume of his Tatar-language Āthār, which he finalized for print in 1910. The publication did not materialize, apparently because the imperial censors rejected his manuscript, and soon after his apartment was searched by the police. Also in the subsequent years he was not able to publish the whole third volume of Āthār; however, some materials from the manuscript went into Fakhreddinov’s articles for Shūrā, the Tatar-language journal that he edited in Orenburg. In 1917 Fakhreddinov returned to the Muftiate in Ufa, first as qāżī and then, from 1921 onwards, in the function of muftī. While he had very limited access to printing all through the Soviet years, Fakhreddinov continued to add materials to
his manuscript. As a result, the surviving manuscript not only covers scholars whose death fell into the years 1874 to 1910 (that is, the original version) but also contains Fakhreddinov’s notes on the fate of later Islamic scholars (albeit in a less systematic and encompassing fashion) who died in the years up to shortly before 1936, when Fakhreddinov passed away.

My analysis is based on what is seemingly the original manuscript, in Arabic-script Tatar, preserved in the collection of the Institute of History, Language and Literature of the Ufa Scientific Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Ufa (Bashkortostan).3 This autograph I compared with the 2010 Kazan edition of Āthār 111, in Tatar Cyrillic script.4 I also compared the manuscript text with the biography of Tūntārī that Fakhreddinov published in Shūrā, in two issues of 1913.5 This published biography lacks all the documents that Fakhreddinov included in his Tūntārī biography in Āthār 111, and therefore offers a more streamlined image of the shaykh.

ʿAlī b. Sayf Allāh al-Tūntārī is a hard nut to crack, in particular because he did not produce any coherent works that could inform us about his views. Contemporary scholarship has been taking little notice of him.6 It seems that in his time he was above all famous as a Sufi shaykh, and even as a saint who produced miracles. It is reported that the saint made his horse carriage fly over a bridge that had been washed away. In another legend, armed Orthodox missionaries arrived in his village to force the Muslim population into accepting Christianity, but then the shaykh’s power made their weapons fall out of their hands. Finally, the shaykh was reported to heal people from diseases also after he himself had passed away.7 Already Ḥusayn b. Amirkhān (Amirkhanov, d. 1893), in

3 Riżā‘addīn b. Fakhrraddīn, Āthār 111, ms Nauchnyi arkhiv UNTS RAN, Fakhreddinov fond, manuscript 112-S. See Ramîl’ M. Bulgakov, Kratkii obzor tiurkskikh rukopisei Rizaeddina bin Fakhreddina i ego islamovedcheskikh rabot sovetskogo perioda, khraniashchikhsia v nauchnom arkhive UNTS RAN, unpublished document, Ufa.
4 Riżeeddin Fâkhreddin, Asar. Öchenche häm dürtenche tomnar. Chief editor M.A. Usmanov (Kazan: Rukhiyät nāshriyäte, 2010). Unfortunately, this edition at times omits materials that Fakhreddinov included in his manuscript, and is not always exact, especially when it comes to Islamic terms and book titles.
6 The only entry on ‘Alī Tūntārī that I could find in one of the recent encyclopedias of Islam in Russia is Aidar Khabutdinov, “ʿAlî b. Saifulla b. Saifulla [sic, with the incorrect doubling] b. Gabderrashid b. Utegian at-Tiunteri (ok. 1794–1874)”, in Islam v Tatarstane: Entsiklopedicheski slovar’, vol. 7 of the series Islam v Rossiskoi Federatsii, chief ed. D.V. Mukhetdinov (Moscow: Medina, 2017), 24. This short entry only mentions the names of Tūntārī’s teachers and his disciples (as they are given by Marjānī and Fakhreddinov), without offering any context and without an attempt at characterizing him and his role in the Islamic discourse of the time.
the biographical section of his *Tavārīkh-i bulghāriyya* (published in Kazan in 1883), described ʿAlī b. Sayfallāh al-Tūntārī as a saint (*valī*), and as a teacher of “the rational and traditional sciences” (*al-*maʿqūl val-*manqūl*) – which is a standard expression for a conventional scholar of the classical Islamic curriculum. Amirkhanov emphasizes that ʿAlī Tūntārī helped people to find their way to Islam, and that he did a lot to clear the *shariʿa* of unlawful innovations. However, Amirkhanov did not go into any detail.8 Roughly around the same time ʿAlī Chuqrī (d. 1889) wrote a panegyric on ʿAlī Tūntārī, and included it in his collection of *marthiya, Shamʿ al-ţiyāʾ*. Here again, the image of the shaykh is that of a traditional Sufi master with an interest in ḥadīth.9

Also Fakhreddinov, in 1910, depicted ʿAlī Tūntārī as an influential teacher, and as an active participant (if not an important node) in the Naqshbandiyya mujaddidiyya and khālidiyya Sufi networks that linked the Volga-Urals with the Ottoman Empire, the North Caucasus, Central Asia, Afghanistan, India, and Medina. ʿAlī Tūntārī was a prominent personality not only in his native village of Tüntär but also in Kazan, where he consorted with the local and regional Muslim trade elite.

But Fakhreddinov did not portray ʿAlī Tūntārī as a miracle-making saint or as a classical theologian of the mainstream traditions; to the contrary, in Fakhreddinov’s account Tūntārī stands before us as a proponent of *iṣlāḥ* (“reform” or “repair”) who called for the return to true Islam and the rejection of speculative theology. As will be shown below, Fakhreddinov even elevated Tūntārī to the level of ʿAbdannāṣir al-Ｑūrṣāwī (d. 1812) and Shihābaddin al-Marjānī (d. 1889), the two famous Tatar scholars whom Fakhreddinov and many others admired as the founding fathers of a Salafi-minded critique of the Sunnī legal schools, and thus as the major proponents of critical thinking in Islamic law (up to the call for *ijtihād*) among the Volga-Urals Muslims. Similarly, Qūrṣāwī and Marjānī gained fame as fierce critics of the speculative theology of the predominant Māṭūrīdī and Ashʿarī schools.10 To see a Sufi master (whom some revered as a saint) join the ranks of Salafi-minded “reformists” is surprising, and calls for an explanation. Why did Fakhreddinov – himself no friend of Sufism and *kalām*11 –

suggest such a re-interpretation, and which techniques did he employ to make his view plausible?

Below I will review the various materials on Tūntārī that Fakhreddinov collected for publication, paying special attention to the question which information came down to him in written form (including via the same Shihābaddīn al-Marjānī) and which he received in the form of oral reports (e.g. from Tūntārī’s family members and disciples). I will then go into detail with one central element in Fakhreddinov’s biography of Tūntārī, namely a certain “conversion narrative” meant to explain Tūntārī’s turn away from kalām towards Quran and Sunna; I suggest that this conversion episode enabled Fakhreddinov to integrate Tūntārī into his regional Tatar Salafī lineage. I will shed light on the ambiguities that remained visible in Fakhreddinov’s account on Tūntārī, arguing that these tensions were responsible for the fact that Fakhreddinov’s elevation of Tūntārī into the Tatar Salafī Pantheon did not last.

1 Marjānī’s Esteem of Tūntārī

Shihābaddīn al-Marjānī was a model for Fakhreddinov not only as a jurist and theologian but also as a historian and biographer. When Fakhreddinov produced his Āthār he could rely on Marjānī’s Tatar-language collection of Muslim biographies from the Volga-Urals, Mustafād al-akhbār. The second volume of this work (Kazan 1885) contains what appears to be the first systematic biography of ʿAlī Tūntārī. Before analyzing Fakhreddinov’s collection of materials on Tūntārī it is therefore useful to review the information that Fakhreddinov obtained from his famous predecessor.12

Marjānī offered a basic account of Tūntārī’s life, including the names of his masters and disciples. Presenting Tūntārī as a teacher (mudarris) and shaykh of regional fame, Marjānī also formulated a first value statement on Tūntārī, in which he qualified him as “the most educated and the most virtuous of all ʾishān in our country, the clearest in his expression and a great example to follow.” We know that Marjānī was highly critical of kalām and also no friend of Sufism, and this formulation can be seen as his polite way of saying that Tūntārī was influential but not one of the big scholars to emulate. Marjānī furthermore drew attention to ʿAlī Tūntārī’s wealth that he demonstrated in the splendour of

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12 Shihābaddīn al-Marjānī, Mustafād al-akhbār fī aḥvāl Qazān va-Bulghār, vol. 11 (Kazan, 1885), 203–204.
his house and of his clothing, as well as by keeping race horses and maintaining
a rich library. Marjānī furthermore indicated that “despite the sharp rumours
among the population” ‘Alī Tūntārī cared not only for the scholars and the rich –
meaning that he belonged to the Muslim trading elite of his time – but also for
other people. Yet Marjānī’s judgment remains ambiguous at best: “When he
spoke he was either excessively boastful or, to the contrary, he exaggerated in
the display of humbleness, and debased himself”. This is not particularly flat-
tering.

Marjānī was always interested in the standpoints that scholars maintained
in the most prominent Islamic legal disputes of the time, in particular the ques-
tion of the night prayer (‘ishā’) in northern Russia. According to Marjānī,
Tūntārī held the opinion that the night prayer was mandatory also for Mus-
lims living in the northern regions where in the “white nights” of summertime
there is no complete darkness (against the view of other scholars who argued
that if there is no night then there should be no night prayer, for the night prayer
is conditional upon the arrival of complete darkness). A second legal opinion
that Marjānī reported from Tūntārī is that Muslims must not eat meat slaugh-
tered by non-Muslims (that is, by Orthodox Christians/Russians or animists) –
something we would today classify as a “ḥalāl issue” but with political over-
tones. In both cases Tūntārī’s views coincided with Marjānī’s own judgments.
Here it should be noted that in his legal and theological works, Marjānī used
to emphasize that his own judgment in these legal questions was the product
of his ijtihād, that is, of his ability to examine the original sources of Islam, the
Quran and the Sunna of the Prophet, in order to derive from them a solution
for a question at hand (instead of merely performing taqlīd, that is, of following
one of the available opinions that other scholars of the Ḫanāfī legal school for-
mulated before him). As Tūntārī’s opinions in these legal issues were identical
to Marjānī’s, one would expect that Marjānī might have considered Tūntārī a
man capable of ijtihād. But Marjānī does not link Tūntārī to ijtihād, does not
even mention the term; nor does he imply that Tūntārī might have developed
a critique of kalām.

Marjānī kept his biographical entry on ‘Alī Tūntārī short, to less than one
page in Mustafād al-akhbār (and “hidden” among others in the list of the suc-
cessive teachers at the Tūntār madrasa). Obviously, it did not occur to Marjānī
to depict Tūntārī as a person comparable in praiseworthy scholarship to Qūr-

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13 Michael Kemper, “Imperial Russia as Dar al-Islam? Nineteenth-Century Debates on Ijti-
had and Taqlid among the Volga Tatars,” special issue: Islamic Law and Society: A Global
Perspective, guest editor Sabrina Joseph, Encounters: An International Journal for the Study
of Culture and Society 6 (Fall 2015), 95–124.
ṣāvī or to himself. Let me add that among the materials that Fakhreddinov reproduced in his biography of Tūntārī there is a letter by which Marjānī invited Tūntārī to his wedding, in Kazan in Rabi’ 1 of 1290 (April/May 1873, a year before the old īshān passed away). By including this invitation, Fakhreddinov seems to indicate that already Marjānī held Tūntārī in high esteem, and that the two were acquainted with each other. But there is no evidence of regular contact between Marjānī and Tūntārī.

Another biography of Tūntārī that Fakhreddinov must have known was that published by the above-mentioned Muḥammad Murād al-Ramzī, a Naqshbandi historian who was very familiar with all Sufis of the area. Ramzī’s biography of Tūntārī (comprising less than one page in his 1908 Arabic-language Talfiq al-akhbār) praises ‘Ali Tūntārī in conventional terms as a shaykh. Ramzī mentioned Tūntārī’s study years with scholars at home and in Bukhara, his travels to India in the service of a Naqshbandiyya shaykh, his fame as a teacher back home in Tūntär, and also that his disciple and son-in-law Shamsaddīn b. Rahmatallah took over ‘Ali Tūntārī’s madrasa after the latter’s death. Ramzī knew Tūntārī personally, for he mentioned that he once had the honor to visit the shaykh in his house. In this light it is noteworthy that again, there is no mention of Tūntārī’s positive or negative relation to kalām, or of his engagement in legal studies, the elements that Fakhreddinov would emphasize two years later in 1910.

2  Fakhreddinov’s Materials on al-Tūntārī

In contrast to his predecessors Marjānī, Amirkhanov and Ramzī, Fakhreddinov gave Tūntārī a very prominent place in his book: Tūntārī’s biography is placed at the very beginning of Āthār 111, before all others, and it is fairly elaborate and long, comprising thirty pages in the manuscript. In this long entry, Fakhreddinov reproduced a wealth of documents and reports related to Tūntārī’s life, habits, opinions, values, and social networks. This information he divided into

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14 Riżā’addīn b. Fakhraddin, Āthār 111, 15a.
15 Muḥammad Murād al-Ramzī [al-Manzilawi], Talfiq al-akhbār wa-talqīḥ al-āthār fi waqāʾī’ Qazān wa-Bulghār wa-mulūk al-Tatār (Orenburg, 1908), vol. 11, 477.
16 Riżā’addin b. Fakhraddin, Āthār 111, fols 3ab–9ab, 10a, 11ab–15ab, 15cd, 16ab, 17a; in the printed edition of 2010 it covers pages 16–42.
17 On Fakhreddinov’s compilation practices see Liliia F. Baibulatova, “Asar” Rizy Fakhreddina: istochnikovaia osnova i znachenie svoda (Kazan: Tatarskoe knizhnoe izdatel’stvo, 2006).
twenty thematic sections, each with an own header (to which I here add running numbers):

1. an introductory paragraph with general information on Tūntārī, including his full name as ‘ʿAlī b. Sayfallāh b. ‘Abdarrashīd b. Ūtagān b. Yār-Muḥammad b. Qūtlūgh-Muḥammad b. Muḥsin al-Tūntārī, as well as the years of his birth and death and the places that he visited (fol. 3a);

2. Tūntārī’s genealogy, linking Tūntārī’s family tree to the elite of the defunct Kazan Khanate and, indirectly, to the Kasimov Khanate (3a);

3. his youth and education, including his spiritual crisis (3a–4a);

4. a list of his masters, emphasizing that he studied from well-known kalām and legal scholars of the Volga region (Tājaddīn al-Ishtirākī, Muḥammadraḥīmal-Āshiṭīal-Machkaravī, ‘Abdallāh b. Yahyā al-Chirtūshī) and from Bukhara (ʿAṭāʾallāh b. Yūsuf al-Bukhārī, Fakhraddīn b. Ibrāhīm b. Khūjāshal-Qazānī). Fakhreddinov also remarks that Tūntārī attached himself to two respected Sufi masters of Indian origin, with whom he travelled to India (4a). These šaykhs can be identified as Fażl Aḥmad Maʿṣūmī Ḥażrat JīoṢāḥib Pishāvārī (d. 1231/1816) and the latter’s son and disciple, Fażl Miyān Ghulām Qādir (d. 1271/1855 in Bukhara). As Waleed Ziad demonstrated in a recent publication, these travelling Sufi masters linked Peshawar, Qandahar and Kabul with Bukhara and the Volga region, with trade routes playing a central role in their networks.

5. a list of Tūntārī’s disciples, mentioning 13 persons by name (4a);

6. Tūntārī’s family (concentrating, in fact, on his wife ‘Īzzal-Nisā and the important role she played in Tūntārī’s life, through her financial, practical and moral support) (4ab);

7. “his thoughts on the madrasas and their teaching principles”, containing, after Fakhreddinov’s brief critique of the traditional madrasa system, a first anecdote to the point that ‘Ali Tūntārī was against kalām and urged his students to work towards the “improvement/reform” (iṣlāḥ) of the morality of Muslim families, and of “the people” as a whole (4b–5b);"
a section on ʿAlī Tūntārī’s teaching and educational activities, consisting of a first-person sermon by Tūntārī on labor ethics and, again, his call for the improvement of morals (here: tāḥṣīb al-akhlāq) (5b–6a);

(a section on the books that Tūntārī’s owned, indicating that Tūntārī’s library mostly comprised works of Islamic law and legal theory, taḥfīr and ḥadīth, morality and medicine, mathematics and “ḥikma” (here referring to works about exemplary historical personalities, such as from the time of Muḥammad). This section also reproduces colophons of 17 manuscripts from Tūntārī’s library that Tūntārī had copied with his own hand. Among these are works by various Arab, Ottoman and South Asian authors, on kalām/theology, logic, Sufism (e.g. Sirhindī’s Maktūbāt, Ghazālī’s al-Munqīz min al-zulāl), ḥadīth, biography of the Prophet Muḥammad (represented by al-Wāqidī), and poetry on the prophet (Birgevī’s takhmīs on the Qaṣīdat al-Burda). Fakhreddinov noted that the colophon of one manuscript from Tūntārī’s library (a kalām commentary, authored by a certain Ḥanafī, on ‘Aẓuẓaddīn Ḥijī’s al-Risāla al-ʿażuẓīyya) was produced by Tūntārī “in the year 1233, or 1808 according to the Christian calendar” (6ab). This indicates that by 1808 Tūntārī was most probably still a madrasa student who copied works of kalām under the guidance of his teacher.

(a section on Tūntārī’s own writings. As Fakhreddinov could not find any books authored by Tūntārī, this section only reproduces lengthy glosses (all in Arabic) that Tūntārī apparently left in the margins of books written by others. Among these are Tūntārī’s comments on ʿAlī al-Qārī’s statements on monistic Sufism and on the faith of the Prophet’s parents (would they go to Hell because they died before their son received God’s revelation?), with long quotes from Aḥmad Sirhindī’s Maktūbāt interspersed (7a–8b);

(a section on Tūntārī’s personal qualities (including how he looked like, and emphasizing his care and clemency for others) (9b);

(11) two letters by ʿAlī Tūntārī, one (in Arabic, not mentioning the addressee) consisting of a brief note on the succession of authority in the Emirate of Bukhara after the death of Amīr Ḥaydar (in 1826), the other (in Persian) being a convoluted expression of respect to an unnamed addressee (9ab);22

(12) a section on Tūntārī’s personal qualities (including how he looked like, and emphasizing his care and clemency for others) (9b);


22 The second letter is left out in the Kazan edition.
(13) Tūntārī’s method (*maslak*) in Islamic creed and practice, highlighting his following of the Quran and Sunna, and claiming that Tūntārī did not bind himself to any one of the four Sunni legal schools. This section also mentions Tūntārī’s reverence for the Sufi/ethical writings of al-Ghazālī, Ibn ‘Arabī, al-Sha’rānī and Abū I-Barakāt al-Suhrawārdī (9b and 11a);

(14) his life and how he behaved towards others, explaining that he was a man of considerable means who used to spend his money on charitable acts (11a);

(15) other information on him, including a number of episodes – some reproducing his witty responses in conversations with Kazan merchants23 – as well as the text of a collective oath of the people of Tūntār to follow the *sharīʿa* (11a–12b; this document is reproduced below, in the appendix to the present chapter);

(16) his spiritual genealogy in the Naqshbandiyya-mujaddidiyya brotherhood (linking Tūntār via the above-mentioned SāḥibzādeʿAbdalqādir and five other links to Aḥmad Sirhindī [d. 1624], the namesake of the Mujaddidiyya brotherhood) (12b);

(17) nine letters that prominent contemporaries sent him, and that reflect Tūntārī’s interregional networks:

a) a letter by a certain Ḥasan al-Dīn Tūntārī writing from Bukhara and asking ‘Ali Tūntārī to arrange the transfer of an inheritance from the Volga area to a student in Bukhara (9 Ṣafar 1251) (13ab);

b) a short *ijāza* (in Persian) signed and sent by Tūntārī’s direct shaykh Miyān Ghulām Qādir Maʿṣūmī (not dated, and lacking the usual *silsilā*) (14a);

c) a letter by ‘Abdalḥakīm b. Muḥammad (praising ‘Ali Tūntārī) (1251) (14a);

d) two letters from Baghdad, one by a certain ‘Alī Ashraf Shaykh al-Islām Baghdādī (1252) and another by ‘Abdalbāqī al-Baghdādī al-Naqshbandi (1258), both urging Tūntārī to donate money to a certain Baghdadi descendant of the Prophet Muḥammad who lost his fortune while trading (fol. 14ab); as Fakhreddinov convincingly argues in a commentary at the end of this section (fol. 15b), these letters from Baghdad appear to be a forgery, and a scheme by unknown persons to get access to Tūntārī’s wealth under religious pretexts;

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23 One of these jokes is as follows: “Once Ibrāhīm Bay Yūnusuf (Iunusov) said in Kazan: ‘Ḥāzrät, we have grown old, will you not make a *duʿā* prayer (for me).’ ‘Correct’, said the shaykh, ‘you have grown old, but when you were a child you were already growing old.’”
e) a letter by Muḥammad Aṣgharb. Īshniyāz from Troitsk, reporting that his Sufi master, the famous Zaynallāh Rasūlī (Rasulev, d. 1917) was denounced by his enemies, interrogated at the Muftiate, then imprisoned in Zlatoust and eventually sentenced to exile in Vologda, in Russia’s north; on his way into exile Rasūlī would soon arrive in Kazan, and Tūntārī is requested to organize support for Rasūlī in that city (dated “23 February 1873”) (15ab);

f) a letter by Salimgirāy Tevkelev, Mufti of the Orenburg Muslim Spiritual Administration in Ufa, solemnly announcing that he sent Tūntārī a medal/decoration, and another one to his deputy Shamsaddin b. Rahmatallāh (1869) (15b);

g) a letter by Mahmūd Afandī al-Dāghistānī [al-Almāli, d. 1877], the namesake of the Daghestani Naqshbandiyya khālidiyya-maḥmūdiyya brotherhood, indicating that the writer has been exiled to Astrakhan but is writing from Kazan (Jumada 1290) (15b);25

h) a letter by Shihābaddīn al-Marjānī, inviting Tūntārī to his wedding (Rabīʿ 1290) (15a).

(18) testimonies of contemporaries, consisting of Marjānī’s positive quote on Tūntārī’s qualities as an āshān that I reproduced above, without however mentioning Marjānī’s less flattering statements (16a);

(19) a section on Tūntārī’s morals, emphasizing that he was humble, patient, and just, and that he cared for his students, the poor and the weak (16a);

(20) as a post-scriptum (ʿilāvä, fol. 16ab) Fakhreddinov adds a report that he received from ‘Alī Tūntārī’s grandson, Muḥammadnajīb Tūntārī [Shamsutdinov, 1862–1930, the son of ‘Alī Tūntārī’s disciple, Shamsaddin b. Rahmatallāh al-Mazār-Āstī al-Tūntārī, and the shaykh’s daughter, ‘Afīfa]. Muḥammadnajīb reports that he visited one of ‘Alī Tūntārī’s oldest disciples, a certain ‘Abdallāh who worked as imam in the village of Zavod (near Tūntārī), and interviewed him about the qualities of his former master. Asked about ‘Alī Tūntārī’s methods, the former disciple emphasized that ‘Alī Tūntārī was a prominent teacher of tafsīr and ḥadīth, and that he considered logic and kalām to be “dangerous”.


Reshaping the Image of ‘Ali Tūntārī

This mix of written and oral sources produces a certain ambiguity and tension. In general the written sources testify to ‘Ali Tūntārī’s popularity as an expert in kalām and in Sufism, that is, in directions of scholarship that Fakhreddinov himself saw as deviations from the true pursuit of Islamic inquiry. In contrast, most of the sections based on oral information point out that Tūntārī was a true follower of what Fakhreddinov regarded as the fundamentals of Islam: the Quran and the Sunna of the Prophet, with tafsīr and ḥadīth studies as the key disciplines to investigate them; these oral reports emphasized that Tūntārī rejected kalām and its philosophical speculations. Noteworthy is also that Fakhreddinov offered absolutely no indication that ‘Alī Tūntārī might have been regarded as a miracle-producing saint. Fakhreddinov’s overall attitude towards the shaykh is one of utmost respect, in particular, because Tūntārī placed Quran and Sunna higher than kalām, and defended the shariʿa and Islamic morality.

In terms of methodology, Fakhreddinov used to provide short introductions to the individual documents, and once in a while a brief commentary (e.g. on one occasion – in the context of ‘Ali al-Qārī’s dogmatic positions – Fakhreddinov permits himself to oppose Tūntārī’s claim that Muslims who denounce extreme Sufis are by necessity heretics).26

When reproducing written documents Fakhreddinov meticulously noted dates, places and sources; this source criticism he however rarely applied to oral information. Oral accounts were obviously key in all sections where Tūntārī’s direct speech is quoted, including sections 6 (where Fakhreddinov reproduced Tūntārī’s praise for his wife ‘Izz al-Nisā), 7 (where Tūntārī admonishes his deputy, Shamsaddin b. Ṭahmatallāh, to not go deeper into the study of kalām), and 8 (where Tūntārī gives a sermon on the necessity of physical labor also for imams). Similarly, also sections 12–15 (on his qualities, method, and actions) mention no written sources. We may assume that Fakhreddinov received oral information about Tūntārī from the latter’s disciples (including via the above-mentioned Shamsaddin b. Ṭahmatallāh [d. 1293]27). While Fakhreddinov was

26 The context is Tūntārī’s argument, in one of his glosses and via Sirhindī, that Muslims who denounce Sufis such as Ibn ‘Arabī are heretics. Here Fakhreddinov adds a note, saying that only God can classify people as heretics. While formulated as a cautioning remark against Tūntārī’s argument, Fakhreddinov’s Murjiʿite position can also be seen as supporting Tūntārī’s defense of Sufism, since from it follows that also the Sufis should not be called heretics. Riżāʾaddin b. Fakhraddin, Athār 111, 8b.

27 Ramzī reports that this Shamsaddin b. Ṭahmatallāh al-Mazār Astī took over ‘Ali Tūntārī’s
very critical with regard to documents (to give an example, he dismissed as forgery the two letters that Tūntārī received from Baghdad), Fakhreddinov did not discuss the possibility that his oral informants might not be reliable; by mixing oral narratives with written documents, he took it for granted that his sources were trustworthy, and that his own reproduction of their oral accounts (often in the form of Tūntārī’s direct speech) was correct.

To support his interpretation of Tūntārī as a Salafi-minded scholar, Fakhreddinov emphasizes that Tūntārī’s study of *kalām* led him into a spiritual or intellectual crisis, through which he became familiar with the true approach to Islam:

> After having well understood the method of the people of the *kalām*, ‘Ali Īshān [Tūntārī] saw that he had not studied anything else, and he said to himself [in Persian:]
> Arab man, I am afraid that you won’t reach the Ka’ba
> Because the way that you are travelling is leading to Turkestan!

Reciting this verse, he realized that he was unhappy with his situation, and he fell into deep anxiety (*iżtirāb*). He could not find consolation and ultimately left his home and travelled to Bukhara. After having spent fourteen years in Bukhara he returned to this country (mämläkät). In Bukhara, he continued the usual lessons, but at the same time he also studied the works of the *salaf* and the methods (mäsläkläre) of the true preservers of Islam (*ḥuffāz-i islām*). At the end he began to follow Sufism. He gave a Sufi oath of allegiance (*bayʿat*) to Şāhībzade Abū ‘Abdallāh ‘Abdalqādir and also to Miyān Fażl Qādir, and frequented their conversations (*soḥbat*) and conventions (*mäjlis*).28

This paragraph raises questions. We understand that Tūntārī experienced a spiritual crisis29 because he understood the futility of *kalām*, and it is for this reason that he travelled to Bukhara; but in Bukhara he continued “the usual classes” (obviously, of *kalām*!). True, according to Fakhreddinov it was

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in Bukhara that Tūntārī also discovered the works of the salaf for himself (meaning, we must assume, works of tafsīr and ḥadīth), but this statement is brief, vague and not linked to a concrete teacher or to a specific learning curve in Bukhara. And ultimately, Fakhreddinov concedes that Tūntārī’s Bukharan period resulted in his embrace of Sufism. At another point, Fakhreddinov even mentioned that in Bukhara, Tūntārī wandered about like a Qalandārī dervish, and that he consorted with Shīʿīs (whom, we should remember, Orthodox Sunnis and in particular Salafīs tend to regard as unbelievers). The impression one gets is that if ʿAlī Tūntārī indeed experienced a crisis, this led him first to a particular radical Sufi lifestyle, and then into the company of the above-mentioned Indian Mujaddidiyya Sufi masters (who were perhaps more “sober” and moderate in their Sufi practices than the wild “Qalandarīs”). Under their guidance Tūntārī then travelled further south, to Afghanistan and India, from where he eventually brought home many of the precious books on medicine and mathematics that Fakhreddinov listed in the section of Tūntārī’s library.

This turn to Sufism (and not to Salafism) is alluded to by other elements in Fakhreddinov’s text: at several occasions, Tūntārī is presented as an ardent reader of al-Ghazālī’s books, including his Orthodox ethical compendium Iḥyāʿ ʿulūm al-dīn but also al-Munqīẓ min al-ẓalāl, in which Ghazālī famously described his own disappointment with intellectual pursuits – that is, speculative theology, logic and philosophy – and his turn towards Sufi ethics. From these hints, we may indeed conclude that Tūntārī’s spiritual crisis brought him to Sufism.

When did this crisis/change take place? Fakhreddinov reported that Tūntārī remained in Bukhara for 14 years, and he dated his return to Tūntār with the year 1246/1831 (Marjānī gave a similar date, 1245). Accordingly, the crisis that made Tūntārī leave for Bukhara must have hit him around the year 1232 (ca. 1817). At that time Tūntārī was probably in his twenties. After his return from Bukhara, Tūntārī would teach in Tūntār for more than four decades. This makes it plausible that Tūntārī gained true prominence as a specialist of kalām only after his return from Bukhara, when he already operated as an experienced and far-travelled scholar equipped with the “Bukharan prestige” (to use an expression coined by Allen J. Frank). If this is the case, then Tūntārī’s move away from kalām, and towards Quran and Sunna studies, must have taken place.

30 Riżā’addin b. Fakhraddin, Āthār 111, 11a.
31 Riżā’addin b. Fakhraddin, Āthār 111, 11a.
much later in his long life (if at all). Fakhreddinov’s attempt to link Tūntārī’s discovery of Salafī approaches to his studies in Bukhara remains unconvincing – all the more since Bukhara was seen as a stronghold of kalām, not of hadīth and tafsīr.

4 Tūntārī’s Sufism

Fakhreddinov also had to deal with the circumstance that Tūntārī’s great fame rested on his activities as an īshān. By the early 20th century, the public discussion of “ishanism” in the Muslim discourse and press was characterized by assertions that the īshāns amassed wealth by selling blessings and talismans, thereby exploiting an uneducated Muslim population. How then to produce a positive image of Tūntārī if he was one of the most prominent Sufi masters, and perhaps a Muslim faith healer?

Fakhreddinov’s first strategy was to downplay Tūntārī’s engagement in Sufi rituals:

Although he had the position of a shaykh, and although he did educate Sufi disciples (mörīds), he did not busy himself with the khaṭm-i khwajagān [i.e., the central Naqshbandiyya litany and the practice of its recitation]. His mājlis conventions were calm, and the people who entered his conventions found relaxation there. He had a good hand for medicine (ṭibb), and he treated many diseases according to the rules of medicine (ṭibb qāʿidase berlä).

This description of how Tūntārī conducted the Sufi ritual in his mājlis is meant to emphasize that the shaykh rejected the ecstatic ḯikr jahr (“vocal ḯikr”), which has often been characterized as leading people into a trance. We are thus to believe that Tūntārī maintained the “orthodox” ḯikr khafī (“silent ḯikr”), in which the participants meditate without uttering the name of Allah, and without any chanting, dancing, or musical instruments. Fakhreddinov even ascribed a “relaxing” impact to Tūntārī’s way of conducting this ritual, as if the purpose of Tūntārī’s ḯikr was what we would today call mindfulness. Similarly, Fakhreddinov’s emphasis on “books of medicine” in his section on Tūntārī’s library must be seen as an attempt to present him as a well-read doctor, not as a practitioner of faith healing.

Still, Fakhreddinov could not deny that ‘Alī Tūntārī was a man of considerable means (as already mentioned by Marjānī, who alluded to Tūntārī’s habit of displaying his wealth). According to Fakhreddinov, Tūntārī indeed owned
cows as well as fifty horses, some of which he kept as race horses, seemingly his hobby. But Fakhreddinov insisted that Tūntārī’s property was rightfully acquired:

[Tūntārī] was on the path of perfect piety and did not accept the ṣadaqa gifts that people are obliged to give. Rather, he made a living by his own hands and conducted trade operations, working through his representatives (sg. vākīl), and he was also busy in agriculture. The money that he gained by these means, and that he did not need for himself, he used to give to the poor, and in particular to his poor students, in addition to other charitable acts that he performed.33

This makes Tūntārī an entrepreneur, although one who “did not show any lust for the wealth of the rich”, and did not accumulate money for his family or his successors.34

From this reasoning, Fakhreddinov explains what can be called Tūntārī’s labor ethics for imams. According to the biographer, the shaykh used to admonish his students not to depend on the charity of their mosque community but to earn money by hard labor, next to their work as imams:

To exert a profession with this goal [of making a living by earning money through labor] is a duty according to the sharīʿa of Islam. Do not just take care of the education of the people [but carry out a profession to make a living]. If there is nothing [to eat] then take the plough into your hands!35

This hands-on approach is accompanied by Tūntārī’s realization that an education in speculative theology does nothing to improve the morals of the students, and that kalām does not prepare them for their future jobs as imams in the Muslim communities.36 Here and in many other instances Fakhreddinov made Tūntārī speak in the first person, obviously in order to convey the authenticity but also the urgency of the message; and in all of these cases, Fakhreddinov did not reveal from whom he heard Tūntārī’s words. As the content is congruent with Fakhreddinov’s own moralist stance, it is not far-fetched to assume that Fakhreddinov put his own words into the mouth of the shaykh (who, by the time of writing, had already been dead for more than 35 years).

33 Riżā’addīnb. Fakhraddīn, Āthār 111, 11a.
34 Riżā’addīnb. Fakhraddīn, Āthār 111, 11a.
35 Riżā’addīnb. Fakhraddīn, Āthār 111, 5b.
36 Riżā’addīnb. Fakhraddīn, Āthār 111, 5a.
At times Fakhreddinov’s practice of speaking through Tūntārī assumes humoristic features. Again, without revealing his source, Fakhreddinov tells us that on his way to Bukhara, Tūntārī made a stop in Samarqand, where he visited a madrasa. In one of the ḥujras – the student cells on the madrasa compound – he saw that a senior student was sitting in front of two famous books of medieval kalām, works best known under their popular titles Mullā Jalāl (“The book of Mullā Jalāladdīn”) and Ḥikmat al-ʿayn (“Wisdom of the Core”). Tūntārī had studied these works at home, with his own masters. Fakhreddinov describes in dialogical form how Tūntārī provokes the unnamed student:

The shaykh [i.e., ‘Āli Tūntārī]: I see you have Mullā Žalāl [“Mulla the Error”] and Ḥiṭṭat al-ʿayn [“Insult of the Eye”] in front of you. I thought that in the land of Islam there are no such books. My hope has been shattered.

The student: What are you saying? These are blessed books that belong to the curriculum of higher studies! Is it just to give them such names?

The shaykh: If something is part of the higher studies curriculum then this in itself does not yet mean it is part of religious studies. These books are from the heritage of the Greeks, they have nothing or little to do with the religion of Islam. The study of the religion of Islam comprises Arabic studies (ʿulūm ʿarabiyya), Islamic law (fiqh) and the creed (ʿaqāʾid) according to the way of the salaf, as well as tafsīr and ḥadīth.

What we find here is Fakhreddinov giving us a concise definition of what he regarded as a Salafi curriculum. The dialogical form introduced here – a device that he used repeatedly in Āthār 111 – is a lively and powerful fashion to convey the message that Tūntārī abhorred kalām, and that he turned to Salafi views even before he went to Bukhara. Such literary devices remind us of the fact that Fakhreddinov was also an experienced writer of Tatar novels, beginning with his Sälīmä (1889) and Āsmā (1903).

In one case Fakhreddinov did mention the source of an oral report, and the reason may be that he obtained that information from someone else already in written form. This is a letter by Muḥammadnajīb Tūntārī reporting about an

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37 Mullā Jalāl is Jalāladdīn al-Dawwānī’s (d. 1427) commentary on ‘Ażuẓaddīn ʿĪjī’s (d. 1355) al-ʿaqāʾīd al-ʿażuẓīyya; the Ḥikmat al-ʿayn was authored by Najmaddin al-Kātībī (d. after 1276).
38 A formulation implying that Russia is not counted as part of Dār al-Islām.
39 Riẓā’addīn b. Fakhraddīn, Āthār 111, 5ab.
interview that Muḥammadnajīb had taken from a certain ʿAbdallāh b. Ibrāhīm, one of Tūntārī’s last living disciples. This former disciple did what Marjānī had failed to do, namely to bring Tūntārī into relation with ʿijtihād. This informant claimed that Tūntārī rejected kalām and that he also operated independently from the existing legal schools (mazhab, pl. mazāhib) of Sunni Islam:

The shaykh did not love when people declare themselves bound to one specific mazhab. True, if that is a person’s inclination, then it is allowed to follow the mazhab of a given mujtahid [that is, the medieval founder of one of the existing four Sunni legal schools, including the Ḥanafī school that dominated among Russia’s Tatars and Bashkirs]. However, people who have the ability to do so will take [the right solution to the issues that they struggle with] directly from the Book and the Sunna, said the shaykh.40

Building on the various reports about Tūntārī’s rejection of kalām and his independence in Islamic law, Fakhreddinov came to the following conclusion:

[Tūntārī’s] practice of Islam and his creed (ʿaqīda) were in accordance with the Quran and the Sunna, and they were point for point identical to the creed and practice of Abū l-Naṣr al-Qūrṣāvī and Shihābaddīn al-Marjānī, that is, of the three or four people of this type that we have had in this country (mämläkät).41

This must have been a bold conclusion for a contemporary reader. By elevating ʿAlī Tūntārī to the level of Qūrṣāvī and Marjānī, Fakhreddinov declared Tūntārī to be a model for his contemporaries. This was possible by disregarding, downplaying or circumventing Tūntārī’s pursuit of kalām and of Sufism, and by emphasizing Tūntārī’s ethics. Fakhreddinov created another hero for the Tatar Muslims, a model to emulate.

40 Riżā‘addin b. Fakhraddīn, Āthār 111, 16b.
41 Riżā‘addin b. Fakhraddīn, Āthār 111, 11a.
Conclusion: Fakhreddinov and Tūntārī

Was ʿAlī Tūntārī then a devoted scholar of kalām, a miracle-making Sufi saint, or a Salafī-minded religious reformer who pioneered the way back to the Quran and the Sunna? This question might have been pointless for Tūntārī himself because it presupposes categorical differences that were formulated after his death. What we can conclude is that it was Fakhreddinov, in 1910, who for the first time introduced Tūntārī as a Salafī-minded critic of kalām and radically downsized Tūntārī’s image as a Sufi. Fakhreddinov’s sources for these claims were all oral; the written materials that he selected for publication provide no evidence for his interpretation.

One is tempted to speculate that the new evaluation of Tūntārī’s biography reflected a new development in the oral memory of Tūntārī as it was circulating three decades after his death in 1874. In the early 1900s, ʿAlī Tūntārī’s successor as leader of the Tuntar madrasa was Īshμī İşhān, d. 1919), a person who in Tatar Muslim and in Soviet atheist writings came to define the image of the ultra-reactionary religious fanatic; reportedly, Īshμī İşhān denounced Jadids to the Tsarist authorities in order to not let authority over the Muslim community slip into their hands. In the village of Tūntār, İshmī İşhān’s major target of attacks was ʿAlī Tūntārī’s grandson Muḥammad nājiib b. Sayfllāh al-Tūntārī, a devoted Jadid who reportedly operated a second mosque and school in the village. Above we encountered this Muḥammad nājiib as the person who interviewed al-Tūntārī’s last disciple and sent the report to Fakhreddinov. As Muḥammad nājiib tells us in his history of the village of Tūntār, he suffered tremendously from İshmī İşhān’s denunciations (donos, ‘arīża); according to Muḥammad nājiib, İshmī İşhān also denounced Fakhreddinov, ‘Ālimjān Bārūdī and the Būbī brothers to the authorities, thereby provoking house searches, temporary arrests (including Muḥammad nājiib’s, as he reported) and the closure of Jadid schools (such as that of the Būbis). Perhaps the dispute was also


43 Mökhämmätnäjiib Tüntäri, “Mökhämmätnäjiib khäzrät yazması”, ed. by Rāfkhät Zārīpov, Ekho vekov/Gasïrlar awazi 1–2 (2003), 45–59, here: 53–56. This village history includes a biography of ʿAlī Tūntārī (largely following Fakhreddinov’s account to which Muḥammad nājiib had himself contributed!) and ends with Muḥammad nājiib’s autobiography. A prolific Jadid writer and educator, Muḥammad nājiib al-Tūntārī perished in a Bolshevik prison in 1930, one year after he wrote the village history. For the original text see Muḥammad-
Sufi Saint or Salafī Reformer?

about the material heritage of ‘Ali Tūntārī, including his house, his wealth, and the mosque and madrasa buildings.\(^44\)

In this light it is logical to assume that the Jadid Muḥammadnajīb wanted to lay a full claim on the memory of his grandfather: with the help of former disciples like the above-mentioned ‘Abdallāh he shaped a new image of ‘Ali Tūntārī, to demonstrate that the current holder of the madrasa, Īshmī Īshān, has nothing in common with his famous predecessor. This new image would shift the emphasis from Sufism and *kalām* to Jadid entrepreneurial work ethics, Salafī views, and an appreciation of the secular sciences such as medicine. This would distinguish ‘Ali Tūntārī’s broad horizon from the alleged narrow-mindedness of Īshmī Īshān. This new image would make a perfect fit with Fakhreddinov’s own agenda.\(^45\)

In fact, Fakhreddinov’s biography of ‘Ali Tūntārī reveals a lot about Fakhreddinov himself. The Tatar lineage of Salafī thought into which Fakhreddinov integrated Tūntārī started with Qūrṣāvī (d. 1813), culminated in the work of Marjānī (d. 1889), and was then continued by Fakhreddinov’s mentor ‘Ālīmjān al-Bārūdī (d. 1921). At many points in *Āthār* III Fakhreddinov wrote about his own relationship to Bārūdī; with these narratives, Fakhreddinov placed himself into this line of Salafī thought among the Volga-Ural Muslims.\(^46\)

Salafīs are convinced that present society needs to be healed by eliminating all man-made additions to religion, and by returning to Quran and Sunna. In Fakhreddinov’s biography of ‘Ali Tūntārī, this healing is presented in the form of a conversion narrative: reportedly, a spiritual crisis made Tūntārī realize that *kalām* is a waste of time. This narrative reminds us of the experiences of Qūrṣāvī, whose rejection of *kalām* brought him into severe conflicts with the most prominent scholars in Bukhara and the Volga-Urals, but also of Marjānī, who during his studies in Bukhara “discovered” the story of Qūrṣāvī for himself, and became the major defender of the latter’s critique of *kalām* and *taqlīd*.\(^47\) Also in

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\(^{44}\) Ramzī claims (around 1908) that Muḥammadnajīb Tūntārī managed his grandfather’s fortune (Talīf, 11, 477–478).

\(^{45}\) Fakhreddinov wrote a very bitter biography of Īshmī Īshān; Riżā‘addin b. Fakhraddīn, *āthār* III, 296–298.

\(^{46}\) Michael Kemper, “Interlocking Autobiographies: Dialogical Techniques in Fakhreddinov’s *Āthār* III”, forthcoming.

this regard, Fakhreddinov integrated Tūntārī into an existing interpretational framework, one that presupposes a personal conversion to explain the crossing from the “wrong” to the “correct” camp within Islam.

Fakhreddinov’s Āthār contains more biographies of scholars whose Salafī-mindedness the compiler emphasizes; one case in point is Šalāḥaddīn b. Ishāq b. Saʿīd al-Lāzī al-Qazānī (d. 1292/1875), one of ʿĀlimjān Bārūdī’s professors. In his biography on this Šalāḥaddīn, Fakhreddinov included a long biographical essay produced by Bārūdī in which Bārūdī depicted Šalāḥaddīn as entertaining the same views as Marjānī. In his comments Fakhreddinov then struggled with the circumstance that Šalāḥaddīn and Marjānī were in conflict with each other, seemingly because of Marjānī’s temperament.48

Obviously, Fakhreddinov’s agenda was not just to preserve the information that he obtained on the deceased scholars of his region; his goal was to demonstrate that regional scholarship emancipated itself from the Bukharan traditions, in particular from kalām and Sufism. This critique of speculative theology and taqlīd that Fakhreddinov detected in (or read into) the heritage of Alī Tūntārī would eventually fill the temporal gap between Qūrṣāvī, at the beginning of the 19th century, and Marjānī, in its second half. By claiming personalities like ʿAlī Tūntārī whose most productive period fell into the mid-nineteenth century, Fakhreddinov not only “Salafized” the Tatar past but also disputed the historical anchors of his contemporary Islamic opponents such as Ishmuḥammad b. Dinmuḥammad al-Tūntārī. This is how the saint ʿAlī Tūntārī could briefly make it into the top group of the Qūrṣāvīs and Marjānīs; the fact that there were no books from Tūntārī’s own pen, and that the oral reports about him were conflicting, allowed for such a re-interpretation. This construction of a regional line of Salafī thought comprised the selection of suitable personalities, but also of concrete documents and oral reports on these personalities; materials that did not fit the purpose of the compiler (here, obviously, reports about Tūntārī’s miracles) were suppressed.

6 An Appendix on Beer

Among Fakhreddinov’s materials related to the biography of Tūntārī is a document pertaining to the genre of communal agreements (Arab. ittifāq). So far this genre has been described from pre-colonial and colonial Dagestan in the North Caucasus, where certain villages and village confederations concluded

48 Riżā‘addīn b. Fakhraddīn, Āthār 111, 36a–38b.
ittifāq agreements on a whole range of issues, including the fixation of fines and compensation payments resulting from actions such as theft, injury and murder, but also regulations about communal pastures, water and defense.49 Some ittifāqs from Daghestan formulated the decision of a community to no longer follow customary law (‘ādāt) but to accept the norms of the sharī‘a, either wholesale or in certain parts of it (such as marriage/divorce and inheritance regulations).50

One of the documents that Fakhreddinov reproduced in his biography of Ḥāli Tūntārī is an ittifāq of the community of Tūntār from April 1845. Like in the Daghestani cases, also here the ittifāq lays down the village community’s decision to follow the regulations of Islam, and to abandon any activities that contradict Islamic law. While Ḥāli Tūntārī’s name does not appear in this document, Fakhreddinov insisted that this agreement was concluded exactly under Tūntārī’s leadership, and on his initiative:

It was through his good intentions, and with God’s guidance, that Ḥāli Tūntārī invested much energy (ijtihād), explained many arguments, and achieved that many polytheists (majūsī) accepted Islam, thereby joining the Muslim neighborhoods [of their villages]. The influence of the shaykh made the elders (aqsaqal) of Tūntār agree upon the following oath (mu‘āhida), and to write it down and hand it over to the shaykh:

In the year 1845, on 27 April, we, the great and small of the community of the village of Tūntār, came to an agreement (ittifāq) and expressed our wish for the following statement [or order, iqrār] and oath (‘ahd). Those of us who can write set their signatures, and those who cannot write set their tamghā stamps. [This oath is on the following issue:] From now on none of us will drink beer (sīrā) or any other intoxicating drink, nor will we produce it or ask others to produce it. For ourselves and for others we forbid all actions that are against the sharī‘a. We will not stay away from the communal prayers in the mornings and in the evenings unless there are strong necessities to do so. We will not let our family members [ahl-i avlād, here referring to women and children] go out to


50 “Soglashenie zhitelei tomural’skoi volosti kasateľ’no ustanovleniia shariati v sfere nasledstvennogo prava (1122/1710 g.),” in: Khrestomatiia po istorii prava i gosudarstva Dagestana v XVIII–XIX vv., chast’ 1, ed. by Timur M. Aitberov (Makhachkala: Dagestanskii Gosudarstvennyi Universitet/Fond Shamilia, 1999), 12.
places that the *sharīʿa* does not order us to go to. Concerning religious and worldly affairs we will not oppose the agreements that were constituted for the welfare (*ṣalāḥ*) of the community (*jamāʿat*). If, in the time from now on, we commit acts against the *sharīʿa*, or if one of us drinks beer, misses the prayer or does other detestable acts, then we see it as necessary to punish them (by *taʿzīr*) according to the *sharīʿa*. Agreeing upon this we set our signatures.\(^5^1\)

In Fakhreddinov’s manuscript this text is followed by a list of 29 names of local imams and other male Muslims who signed the agreement, among which ʿAlī Tūntārī’s is not to be found; we are supposed to assume that this text was handed over to him, to be stored in his house. In Fakhreddinov’s collection of materials, this document is meant to bolster the image of ʿAlī Tūntārī as a relentless striver for the implementation of Islamic law and morality, and to demonstrate his influence among the population. It is interesting to note that the last part of the text implies that the village had several agreements of this kind.

Fakhreddinov commented the text with the words: “This oath reminds one of the oath of the Arabs of Mecca that became famous under the name *hilf al-fuẓūl*”\(^5^2\); with this comparison Fakhreddinov associated the village agreement with the historical alliance for the regulation of justice (“The League of the Virtuous”) that was concluded with the participation of the prophet Muḥammad; thereby he again places Tūntārī’s actions in direct relation to Islam’s early years.

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\(^{52}\) Riżā’addin b. Fakhraddin, *Āthār* 111, 12b.
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