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Interlocking autobiographies: Dialogical techniques in Fakhreddinov's *Āthār* III

Michael Kemper

Rizaeddin Fakhreddinov (Riḍā'addīn b. Fakhraddīn, 1858-1936) was a prolific author of Tatar-language Islamic literature, journalism, and historiography, and is seen as a towering personality of Jadidism's religious wing.¹ The present contribution examines Fakhreddinov's use of written and oral materials in the third volume of *Āthār*, his famous collection of biographies of Muslim scholars from the Volga-Ural region.

Fakhreddinov started to systematically collect, copy, and edit historical documents and other texts providing information on scholars and Sufis of the past when he served as *qāḍī* in the imperial Muftiate in Ufa, the so-called Orenburg Muslim Spiritual Administration.² Next to utilizing the Muftiate's archives he also used the institution's communication lines to reach out to the region's imams, whom he asked to send him biographical accounts as well as documents and Islamic texts. Many colleagues he interviewed about their acquaintances and teachers. A huge amount of these biographical materials found entry into the 15 fascicles of *Āthār* ("Traces", "Monuments") that Fakhreddinov published between 1900 and 1908, and that he grouped into two volumes.

In 1906 Fakhreddinov left the Muftiate and became a professional journalist in Orenburg; as chief editor of the influential Muslim journal

¹ On Jadidism in the broader Muslim context see Ingeborg Baldauf, "Jadidism in Central Asia within Reformism and Modernism in the Muslim World", *Die Welt des Islams* 41.1 (2001), 72-88.

² For literature on Fakhreddinov see for instance Fanil' N. Baishev, *Obshchestvenno-politicheskie i nraivoenno-eticheskie vzgliady Rizy Fakhretdinova* (Ufa: Kitap, 1996); Ismail Türkoglu, *Rusya Türkleri Arasındaki Yenileşme Hareketin Öncülerinden Rizaeddin Fahreddin (1858-1936)* (Istanbul: Ötüken, 2000); Ömer Hakan Özalp, *Rizaeddin bin Fahreddin: Kazan'la İstanbul Arasında Bir Âlim* (Istanbul: Dergah, 1999); *Rizaeddin Fäxreddin: Fämi-biografik jüjentik* (Kazan: Rukhiyat, 1999), 193-223. Fakhreddinov's "own" autobiography – not to be confused with the texts that I deal with in the present paper – was recently published under the title of *"My Biography" of Riḍā' al-Dīn b. Fakhr al-Dīn (Ufa, 1323 A.H.)*, with an Introductory Essay and Indices, edited by Marsil N. Farkhshatov, ISOGAI Masumi and Ramil M. Bulgakov (TIAS Central Eurasian Research Series No. 11, University of Tokyo, 2016).

Shūrā he continued to maintain a wide web of correspondents who sent him all kinds of information. In February 1911 he finished a third volume of *Āthār* that covered the biographies of scholars whose death fell into the years 1874-1910. However, the Russian censorship officers did not give him permission for publication; even worse, soon the police came to his apartment and confiscated materials from his library. A year later the manuscript of *Āthār* III was returned to its author, yet still without permission for publication.³

As the Bolsheviks closed down the Muslim journals and newspapers, in 1918 Fakhreddinov returned to work in the Muftiate in Ufa, first as *qāḍī* and then, after Mufti Bārūdī passed away in 1921, as interim Mufti, and eventually as elected Mufti. During these years at the helm of Russia's Islamic institution Fakhreddinov witnessed the state's growing pressure on Muslim communities, the unfolding of radical anti-religious propaganda, the closing down of madrasas, mosques and libraries in the course of collectivization, the public harassment of imams and *qāḍīs* in order to force them out of office, and the growing number of arrests and executions. Knowing that there was no opportunity to publish his *Āthār* III, Mufti Fakhreddinov continued privately to add materials to his original manuscript. In result the autograph of *Āthār* III that has come down to us – seemingly the only existing copy – contains not only the original part that the imperial censors had examined but also later remarks, as well as some 39 additional biographies of persons who died in the years up to 1930. These later additions are less systematic – there is no coverage of the years 1923 and 1925-1928 – and often limited in scope; however, they are of particular interest because they reflect Fakhreddinov's judgments on his contemporaries, including on his direct colleagues in the Muftiate.

In what follows I offer a partial translation and an analysis of one such biography, that of Fakhreddinov's predecessor in the office of mufti, Gālimjān ('Ālimjān) Bārūdī (1857-1921). My contribution is therefore about how Fakhreddinov described his own relation to Bārūdī. At the same time my goal is to show how Fakhreddinov entangled texts, his own texts, and communication with others about his texts. In particular we will see that Fakhreddinov interlocked Bārūdī's biography with

³ Michael Kemper, "From 1917 to 1937: the Mufti, the Turkologist, and Stalin's Terror", *Die Welt des Islams* 57.2 (2017), 162-191, here: 180f.

his own – in the form of an autobiography and an “author’s biography” within a biography. Finally, the entry on Bārūdī gives us a good idea how Fakhreddinov reflected upon the very text that he was producing: in their literary dialogues both he and Bārūdī spoke about *Āthār*, Fakhreddinov’s manuscripts from which I herewith deliver excerpts.

In 2010 Fakhreddinov’s manuscript was edited in Kazan (Tatarstan), rendering the Arabic-script original into Cyrillic Tatar.⁴ Unfortunately, this publication offers no annotations, and items that Fakhreddinov included in the individual biographical entries (such as letters and other documents in Arabic and Persian) are at times omitted or shortened. My analysis is therefore based on the original manuscript 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),⁵ which I compared with the Kazan edition.⁶

The whole entry on Bārūdī covers folios 314a to 318b (that is, nine and a half handwritten pages). The parts that are of interest for the present study, and that will be translated below, cover the first four and a half pages of the biographical entry.

After discussing Fakhreddinov’s biography of Bārūdī I briefly draw attention to another section from *Āthār* III, a part where Fakhreddinov reproduces a dialogue that he had with Bārūdī about the biographical genre; here as well Fakhreddinov employs interlocking techniques to describe how he saw his personal relationship with Bārūdī.

⁴ Rizaeddin Fākhreddin, *Asar. Öchenche häm dürtenche tomnar*. Chief editor M.A. Usmanov (Kazan: Rukhiyat nāshriyāte, 2010).

⁵ Nauchnyi arkhiv UNTs RAN, Fakhreddinov fond, Manuscript 112-S. See Ramil’ M. Bulgakov, *Kratkii obzor tiurkskikh rukopisei Rizaeddina bin Fakhreddina i ego islamovedcheskikh rabot sovetского perioda, khраниashchikhsia v nauchnom arkhive UNTs RAN*, unpublished document, Ufa.

⁶ I am grateful to the Institute’s director, Prof. Dr. Aibulat V. Psianchin, for allowing me to consult the manuscript, and I am indebted to Prof. Dr. Marsil N. Farkhshatov for practical support and good cooperation. I am also grateful to Dr. Gulnaz Sibgatullina (University of Amsterdam) for important suggestions, and to Dr. Alfrid K. Bustanov (University of Amsterdam) for inspiring conversations about Muslim ego-documents from Russia.

BEGINNING OF TRANSLATION PART

[Note: Round brackets and quotation marks are Fakhreddinov's. All dates and years (*hijrī* and Christian) are rendered as in the original manuscript. Only items in square brackets are my additions.]

[Section 1: general information] [fol. 314a]

‘**Ālimjān b. Muḥammadjān b. Binyamīn b. ‘Alī b. Qulmuḥammad al-Bārūdī al-Muftī.** He died 5 Rabī’ II 1340 (6 December 1921) in Moscow, during his tenure as mufti of the Spiritual Administration, the religious center of Muslims, in the city of Ufa. He was transferred back to Kazan and buried there in the Muslim cemetery. He was 67 years old.

(Arabic:)

The death of Qays was not just one single death,
it destroyed the fundament of the people.
After this, I have been living with very little solace,
and I endure the calamities of fate.

[Section 2: Fakhreddinov's reproduction of Bārūdī's autobiography]

At this place I would like to reproduce an (auto-) biographical article (*tārjāmā-i ḥāl maqālāse*) from Gālimjān [Bārūdī] *ḥāzrāt*'s own pen, a text in which he characterized himself. As his sentences are very long, I am forced to change the way how he expressed himself, but I will do so without changing the content. So this is the biography that he produced himself:

“The writer of these lines, the Mufti ‘Ālimjān b. Muḥammadjān b. Binyamīn al-Bārūdī, was born on 17 Jumādā II 1273, that is, in early February 1857, in the village called Kuchek Quval of Kazan region. In the summer of 1278-1862 he went to Kazan where he began to study at the madrasa of Dāmullā Salāḥ.⁷ After having finished some of the higher classes in 1292-1875 he went to Bukhara. After finishing the educational cycle at the madrasas of Bukhara he returned to Kazan, in the Sha‘bān of 1299 (corresponding to June 1882), and was appointed second imam at the fifth mosque of the city. On the first of Muḥarram of the year 1300 (1882) he started to give lessons to one or two students. He gradually developed his own madrasa. More students were coming, and this way the Madrasa-i Muḥammadiyya came into being.

⁷ On this person later.

In 1304 he travelled via Istanbul and Egypt to the Hijaz, where he performed the *hajj* pilgrimage. On this travel he broadened his knowledge of religion and his ideas about the reformation (*iṣlāḥ*) of madrasas. Upon return to Kazan he continued to give weekly conventions about how to give sermons.

In the year 1908 of the Christian calendar he was exiled for a period of two years to the city of Vologda [in Russia's north]. After staying there for four months he departed, with permission granted by the Interior Ministry, and travelled to the Hijaz, via Vienna, Budapest, Istanbul and Egypt, and [once more] conducted the *hajj*. From there he travelled to the cities of Damascus, Beirut, Trablus and Ba'lbek. In 1910 he returned to Kazan. In 1912 he was again entrusted with the position of imam at the same place.

In 1917 he was for the third time travelling in Turkestan [fol. 314b], and when the revolution occurred, he was spreading his ideas about teaching reform, addressing the people in Ferghana, Tashkent and other regions. When he was in the town of Chimkent, the Congress of All Muslims of Russia (*gomūmī Rūsiyā möselmānlari nādvāse*) elected him for the first time to the office of Mufti. In 1918 and again in 1920 he was re-elected to this office. Recognizing that this was the wish of the people, he accepted this election.

My method (*māslāk*) and my thoughts: What I am standing for is to bring the *maktabs* and the *madrasas* closer to the religion, and to make them beneficial for the lives of the people; and to make young and old adhere to the religion and to follow it with all force; this is the goal that I am serving. Religion is not a knowledge but a practice, and practice is the goal of all knowledge. Furthermore, it is a duty to not follow anyone in *taqlīd* [i.e., without controlling the evidence of a given argument]; one must not flatter people, and one must preserve the greatness of religion. But in any issue one has to proceed in steps, and at a slow pace. It is well-known that it is difficult to drag people away from what they have been accustomed to, so that haste only leads to anxiety and confusion in such affairs.

As the people who possess knowledge and power, the imams must do all they can [lit., to conduct *ijtihād*] to spread knowledge, to improve the morals of the people, and to bring the people closer to God. One should not carry out the function [of imam] just because it brings a monthly income.

In any affair one must turn to God and invoke Him in *munājāt* prayers. There are situations where one is inclined to believe that things just have

obvious [natural?] reasons, but one should not believe that this is the case; [instead, one should always remember that God is behind all events]. I ask God to provide guidance to myself, my family, my brothers and friends, and I ask God in my *du‘ā* prayers that He bring all Muslims onto the path of salvation. And God is the guide. Written 1 Şafar 1339 [14 Oct. 1920].”

[Section 3: Fakhreddinov’s assessment of Bārūdī’s place in regional Islamic history]

Mufti Gālimjān Bārūdī was one of the three true scholars that emerged among the Muslims of this country. The first two of these were [Abū n-Naṣr ‘Abdannaṣir] al-Qūrṣāvī [d. 1812] and [Shihābaddīn] al-Marjānī [d. 1889]. In some respect Bārūdī had more luck than Qūrṣāvī and Marjānī, and was ahead of them; this is so because Bārūdī had good students, had seen many places and met many scholars, and had the opportunity to read the latest printed books.

[*The following two sentences were crossed out in red ink:*] In any issue he guided his thinking into the right direction, and his rational weighing of the arguments was correct. It is well-known, however, that in terms of steadfastness and stubbornness Qūrṣāvī and Marjānī, and in particular Marjānī, stood incomparably higher than Gālimjān *ḥāzrāt*.

[*Written in the same red ink, above the crossed-out sentences:*] By performing his own *ijtihād* Bārūdī arrived at the truth in all kinds of questions that scholars of the recent past have struggled with; he was not afraid of anybody. Also Qūrṣāvī and Marjānī, and in particular Marjānī, had the literary courage (*jāsārūt-i ādābiyyā*) to announce the truth to the Muslim world, and to propagate the truth; still, Gālimjān *ḥāzrāt* remains one of the most outstanding scholars.

[*Resumption of the original text:*] This should not come as a surprise; it is only God who gives human beings the things that we call “vision” (*baṣīrat*) and “consideration” [or respect,] (*i‘tibār*); their own *ijtihād*, their effort and their eagerness add nothing to it. Gālimjān Bārūdī *ḥāzrāt* followed the correct creed, performed the correct practice, and also used to perform extra litanies (*avrād*). He never made false accusations against anyone, and he never put himself above others. He stood aloof from mean acts such as destroying the relations between persons; in his words he was upright. He spoke Arabic and Persian and wrote in these languages as if they had been his mother tongues. [315a]

When Mufti Gālimjān had already left for Moscow [shortly before his death] one crazy *ishān* [Sufi master] came to Ufa, and wandering about he said arrogant and unbearable things such as: “I came here to offer my

service, for I can transfer the soul of [the Prophet Muḥammad's first successor] Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq into Mufti Gālimjān *ḥāzrāt!* But [when I came to see Bārūdī] he was not in his house. I told this to that other person, Riza Qāḍī [i.e. Fakhreddinov], but he will have a short life, has only five more years to live, for him I would not exert myself now." The Mufti somehow heard about this *īshān's* words, and one day before he passed away, he said to the people around him: "After we had gone [to Moscow] a big event happened in Ufa. An *īshān* came and said curious things (by which he must have meant what the Ishan had said about himself). Riḍā Qāḍī does not believe [in this Ishan], and paid only little attention to him, but Ṣābir Qāḍī does give him consideration, and is not indifferent to this person (because Ṣābir Qāḍī is a member of the Sufi brotherhood)." When he heard that a certain imam from a village close to the *īshān's* residence was living in Moscow, Gālimjān *ḥāzrāt* invited this imam to himself in order to ask him about this *īshān*. But by the time this imam arrived the Mufti had already passed away.

Mullā Hādī b. Fakhraddīn, one of his most gifted disciples, said: "Our master Dāmullā Gālimjān used to give lessons in a manner that we could understand well, but when talking to the people in public gatherings he would rarely insert any scholarly or literary elements into his speech. People who participated in public gatherings [where Bārūdī would speak] say that there was no opportunity to start a conversation about scholarly or literary topics".

[Section 4: Bārūdī's assessment of Fakhreddinov]

Gālimjān *ḥāzrāt's* testimony about members [of the Muftiate] who worked with him

What is reproduced below is copied from what he [i.e., Bārūdī] wrote with his own pen, without changes to the content. However, there are some changes as to the actual phrasing.

1. Riḍā Qāḍī

Qāḍī Riḍā'addīn b. Fakhraddīn b. Sayfaddīn b. Subḥānqul b. Bīkmuḥammad b. Yūldāsh al-Shirdānī. His forefathers came from a village called Shirdan, from the Zuya area of Kazan region, and moved to the village Kichuchat in the Bugul'ma area; they were counted as Teptiars.

Riḍā Qāḍī was born in 1859.⁸ He received his education from *mudarris* ‘Abdalfattāḥ, in the well-known village of [Nizhnie] Shel’cheli in the Bugul’ma area. For a few years he worked as madrasa tutor (*mu’īd*).

In 1889 he became *imām* and teacher in the village of Il-Bek, in the same area, and began to teach to students. But in 1891 he transferred to Ufa to serve in the position of *qāḍī*. In that year [315b] he received the rank of *ākhūnd*. On 8 January 1892 his imam license (*manshūr*) was changed, transferring his assignment as imam and teacher from the village of Il-Bek to that of Kichuchat.

From that year of 1891 until May 1906 he served as *qāḍī*. In May he transferred to Orenburg to become chief editor and director of the famous journal *Shūrā*.

On 9 January 1918 the First Turkic-Tatar National Congress (*berinche türk-tatar millät mäjlise*) again elected him to the office of *qāḍī*; he began to work as *qāḍī* in early March. In 1920 he was again elected *qāḍī* by the convention of scholars and caretakers (*golāma vä mütävällilär nädväse*), and he is still serving in that position.

The scholarly and literary qualities of the person are obvious, and they are well-known to most scholars and intellectuals (*āhl-i āfkār*). He is well-known as a person of good character and of high standing. For the persons of the recent years we explain [these qualities] here, on paper: he is strong in scholarship, and his Arabic is perfect. He is very familiar with the most important of all sciences, that of *ḥadīth*. He understands the core of any issue in a correct manner. He has good knowledge about Islamic history, and in particular about the biographies of Muslim scholars. He wrote the beautiful book *Āthār* about the scholars and famous personalities who lived in our country (*ushbu bilādimez*). He is firm in religion and in issues of creed, and he is reliable in the performance of religious functions. His morality, his patience and his endurance are beautiful. He is a person of action, not of many words. He is benevolent to everybody. He is a responsible and trustworthy personality.

The dominant feature in his nature is the idea of correcting [or improving, reforming; *islāḥ*]; he has critical thoughts about anyone, any issue, any word that somebody says. His criticism of members of Sufi brotherhoods and of other scholars is more than what is necessary. Some of his writings and thoughts, statements that he made and things that he put into writing, must be seen as examples for the exaggeration and radicalism (*ghuluv vä ifrāt*) of the youth.

⁸ In other texts Fakhreddinov clarified that his birthday fell on 31 December 1858.

That he has some weak sides is due to the fact that he has met few professors, for he did not travel in the Islamic lands; his inborn shortcoming is therefore that he reached perfection in all matters only through the strength of his own reflection and reading. But which servant of God is flawless? He is a respectable shaykh; how much he is standing above the [other] fruits of our time. May God bless his knowledge and his practice, amen!

Some particular thoughts of the person

[Fakhreddinov speaking:] The Mufti inserted this header into his biography [of Fakhreddinov] but did not write anything underneath. It is possible that he copied the text [of the present biography] from another place, and that he did not manage to also transfer what was written originally after this header, thereby leaving the header here without what was supposed to follow. In that case the original text must have explained [Bārūdī's] "particular thoughts".

The first part of this biography [that Bārūdī produced about Fakhreddinov] is taken from the official biography that is kept in the Spiritual Administration [that is, in the Muftiate's archive], in a special book containing the biographies of the co-workers. The second part, starting with "The scholarly and literary qualities of the person", was composed by Gālimjān *hāzrāt* himself.

[Section 5: Fakhreddinov's assessment of Bārūdī's assessment]

Before the revolution I was just one of those who had deep respect for the Mufti and held his scholarly qualities in high esteem [316a], but after the revolution when I entered service [in the Muftiate], I could no longer just feign friendliness the way I had done before, for all kinds of reasons and social pressures. I could not agree with [Bārūdī's] soft attitude towards people. Maybe during our time in the office there were moments when I developed my [critical] thoughts [in conversations with Bārūdī], but these were not meant to attract the attention of the Mufti; rather, I used to declare that this work [in the Muftiate] is only beneficial when it is coupled with compulsion.

For this reason, he knew that my method (*māslāk*) did not consist of being in agreement with him, and he also knew very well that I was free and independent in my thought. He remembered many instances of me acting in this manner.

This is why I never expected him to write such [praising] things about me; in fact, I never imagined him writing in this manner. Had he used words such as "stupid", "haughty" and "arrogant" to describe me then

this would not have surprised me. I would not be astonished if he indeed used such words at another place.

At any event his text is exaggerating, for it assigns to me a higher place than I deserve; his expression of a good opinion about me results from his good heart. I know my own character extremely well, and if anybody will ever read this text then the reader should not trust it. For if I believed that there would ever be a reader then I would not have copied [Bārūdī's assessment of myself] into this text. I did insert it into this manuscript because I have no doubt at all that my biography, I myself, and even our whole history, will soon be forgotten and annihilated. Therefore, I said to myself: it is after entering Paradise that I will bring *Āthār* once more in order, make the necessary additions, and have it printed; this is how I will make good use of the time.

[END OF TRANSLATION PART]

Analysis of the translated text: interlocking (auto-)biographies

The remainder of Fakhreddinov's biographical entry on Bārūdī contains a few other sections that we do not have to take into account here.⁹ Of interest is that it ends with a long letter that Bārūdī composed on 5 Ramadan 1337 ("3 June 1919") in the Muftiate in Ufa, addressing his deputy Shahar Sharaf (1877 [1879?]-1938). As Bārūdī reported in this letter, at the time of writing the city of Ufa was held by White troops but severely shelled by the Red Army. Given the Bolsheviks were about to take the city, Bārūdī expressed his expectation to perish in the ensuing carnage, and formulated the letter as a last will; in particular, he asked Shahar Sharaf to take care of his library and to finish Bārūdī's commentary on the *Sūrat al-Baqara* (fols. 317b-318b). Fakhreddinov introduced his reproduction of this letter by noting that Shahar Sharaf showed this letter to him, Fakhreddinov, on 18 Jumādā II 1353 ("27 September 1934"), after Shahar Sharaf had read Fakhreddinov's biography of Bārūdī. This

⁹ These include: (1) Bārūdī's short biographical notes of two other qadis working under his direction, namely Kashshāf Tarjumānī and Ṣābir Qāḍī (fols. 316ab); (2) the text of a model teaching license (*ijāza*) that Bārūdī formulated on his own letter paper (with printed letterhead "Galiev", Bārūdī's Russian name), glued into the manuscript (the object of this teaching license being Bukhārī's famous *ḥadīth* collection; Fakhreddinov wrote that he inserted this text because it mentions Bārūdī's professors) (fol. 317a); (3) biographical information about Bārūdī's first and second wives (317a); (4) various short remarks by Shahar Sharaf about Bārūdī's style of teaching and holding speeches (317b).

note gives us another clue about Fakhreddinov's editing and collecting practices, for it demonstrates

- a) that the last part of the Bārūdī entry (consisting of the letter), if not the whole entry, must have been written after 27 September 1934, that is, in the last 18 months of his life (Fakhreddinov passed away on 11 April 1936);
- b) that Fakhreddinov gave his manuscript of *Āthār* III (or parts thereof) to trusted colleagues so that they could read it, and provide feedback or additional documents;
- c) that Fakhreddinov incorporated their feedback (or the extra texts that they provided);¹⁰
- d) that Fakhreddinov was transparent about this process, thereby integrating more dialogical elements into his biographies.

More instances of Fakhreddinov's practice to "speak through others" and to respond to his informants can be found in the paragraphs that I translated above.

The first curious element of such communication is that Fakhreddinov starts his biography of Bārūdī by reproducing the latter's autobiography. If we take into consideration the seemingly difficult relationship between the two then Fakhreddinov's choice to have Bārūdī presenting himself appears as an elegant tool. Bārūdī was just a little less than two years Fakhreddinov's senior, but he was the more influential educator, and a celebrated scholar in what also Fakhreddinov regarded as the most important disciplines of religious studies, namely *ḥadīth* and *tafsīr*. Obviously Fakhreddinov struggled with how far to go in the praise of Bārūdī's achievements: in the first version of his text he compared Bārūdī to Qūrṣāvī and Marjānī (Fakhreddinov's models in Islamic scholarship), noting that Bārūdī always arrived at the truth. But then Fakhreddinov must have doubted whether such a qualification is

¹⁰ Another entry where this practice is not only discernable but even explained is Fakhreddinov's biography of 'Alī Tūntārī (d. 1874); Fakhreddinov ended this entry by saying that his colleague Muḥammadnajīb Tūntārī, a grandson of 'Alī Tūntārī, read Fakhreddinov's biography of 'Alī Tūntārī, and then provided extra information, namely a report about a conversation that Muḥammadnajīb Tūntārī had with one of 'Alī Tūntārī's last disciples. For Fakhreddinov's shaping of 'Alī Tūntārī's biography according to his own Islamic agenda see Michael Kemper, "Sufi Saint or Salafi Reformer? 'Alī Tūntārī in Fakhreddinov's Tatar Lineage of Kalām Critique" (forthcoming).

justified; he crossed out this sentence and replaced it by a statement (in red ink) that takes a certain distance to Bārūdī, emphasizing that not the person himself is to be lauded but God's decision to invest "vision" and "consideration" into that person.

The other striking instrument to engage with Bārūdī in a posthumous conversation is of course that Fakhreddinov turns the tables and also includes his own biography, Fakhreddinov's, as he found it in a manuscript text from Bārūdī's pen. What we have here is a curious case of biographical reciprocity, with two authors reciprocally assessing each other in one and the same document. To increase the confusion, one might even argue that Bārūdī's short text about Fakhreddinov constitutes another autobiography (namely, Fakhreddinov's) hidden in a biography (namely, Fakhreddinov's biography of Bārūdī): formally the person who speaks is Bārūdī, but technically it is Fakhreddinov – for after all, Bārūdī's biography of Fakhreddinov has come down to us only in Fakhreddinov's own edition, meaning he can have made any changes in the text that he wished (and at many occasions Fakhreddinov mentioned that he changed at least the style of documents that he reproduced). On top of that, Fakhreddinov might have been the very author of the first half of his biography, for – as he himself remarks – this first part of Bārūdī's text was based on the staff files of the Muftiate, which in turn must have relied on paperwork provided by Fakhreddinov himself (maybe even in the form of an autobiography?) when he started to work at that institution.

Further of interest is how Fakhreddinov deals with the praise that he received from Bārūdī. Again, Fakhreddinov struggles with his own text; is it not a token of self-complacency to integrate a text that praises himself? Even more so: is it not arrogant or even blasphemous to include your own biography into a collection of biographies of deceased men, all praiseworthy representatives of Islam? Fakhreddinov put his doubts aside by arguing that Bārūdī's positive remarks about him were wrong, and just due to Bārūdī's good character (in fact again alluding to the very softness of Bārūdī's character that apparently frustrated Fakhreddinov in their daily work of the Muftiate). In addition, Fakhreddinov defends the integration of this (self-)praise with the argument that this does not matter anymore: "my biography, I myself, and even our whole history, will soon be forgotten and annihilated." In the mid-1930s, this can only

mean that Fakhreddinov fears for the survival of the Muslim communities of Soviet Russia. Similar statements of despair also appear in other parts of *Āthār* III. Ironically, this argument relieves our moralist from any moral constraints. It does not mean, however, that Fakhreddinov wrote this text only for himself, for as seen above (in the context of Bārūdī's letter) Fakhreddinov used to share his biographical texts with colleagues from whom he expected additional information, or in whose judgment he was interested. Accordingly, at least Shahar Sharaf must have seen Bārūdī's praise of Fakhreddinov when he read Fakhreddinov's biography of Bārūdī.

One more case: Interlocking dialogues

Bārūdī appears as Fakhreddinov's *alter ego* at more instances in *Āthār* III, and each time Fakhreddinov gives nuance to their relation. One such occasion is Fakhreddinov's biography of a certain Ṣalāḥ ḥāzrāt (Ṣalāḥaddīn b. Ishāq b. Sa'īd al-Lāzī al-Qazānī, d. 1875). As this person was Bārūdī's direct master, Fakhreddinov asked Bārūdī to compose a biography of Ṣalāḥ ḥāzrāt. Bārūdī complied, and his account is reproduced by Fakhreddinov. Bārūdī's long text puts Ṣalāḥ ḥāzrāt into a very good light, emphasizing his good morals as well as his inclination to reject *kalām* and to rely on the Quran and Sunna instead.

After reproducing Bārūdī's text Fakhreddinov reports a dialogue that unfolded between himself and Bārūdī, in fact a conversation about what can be said in a biography, and what should not be mentioned. This dialogue begins with Fakhreddinov's introduction:

[fol. 39a:] At this point I would like to reproduce parts of a private conversation that I had with Gālimjān ḥāzrāt [added in red ink: back in the good days], in Ufa, and that was about Ṣalāḥ ḥāzrāt:

Dāmullā [Bārūdī]: He [i.e., Ṣalāḥ ḥāzrāt] was my revered professor and my benefactor to whom I was completely devoted, but there is one thing that I feel I must tell you now. To be sure, our Ṣalāḥaddīn ḥāzrāt had a well-organized *madrassa*, and he gained a lot of fame. But in Bukhara he had failed in showing respect to his own professor (Bārūdī called Ṣalāḥaddīn's professor Kuncheki or similar, I cannot remember it very well). For my part I believe that this disrespect caused the short duration of his teaching. For all in all, he [Ṣalāḥaddīn] taught just for twelve years [in Kazan].

Myself: Did you mention this affair around Ṣalāḥaddīn and his professor (that is, the fact that he insulted the professor) in Ṣalāḥaddīn's biography that you produced [for *Āthār* III]?

Dāmullā: No, I did not put it to paper.

Myself: But exactly these kinds of things are the basis of books and articles written according to the biographical method. You think that mentioning this event would denigrate your professor, and for this reason you left it out. While you thought, "I am writing the biographies of Ṣalāḥaddīn, Ishāq, Muḥammadkarīm, and many others of my professors!", what I told you is: "You are in fact writing a hagiography (*mānāqib kitābi*), and you are completely following the framework [of a hagiography]. You are unable to write a biography because out of respect to your professors you close your eyes before their shortcomings, trying to make people forget them, and you turn all their deeds only to the best side." This is what I said, and you certainly remember that as well. This word of mine has become true: because he was your own professor you have not been able to write that Ṣalāḥ ḥāzrāt failed to respect his own professor, and that he did not receive a blessing [here: *du'ā* prayer] from his teacher when he left him.

Dāmullā: I said to myself, information about such an affair should not be brought to the world's attention through my work.

Myself: If this is the case then your wish remains unfulfilled, because the information that Ṣalāḥ ḥāzrāt did not receive the blessing [here: *fātiḥa*] of his professor was spread (is being spread) through you.

Dāmullā: What do you mean, how is it being spread through me?

Myself: Because you just told it to me, and what you said I will first write into my daily notebook (*könlek dāftāre*), and then there will be your article on the biography of Ṣalāḥaddīn in "*Āthār*". To that article I will add this information. This way this affair will [fol. 39b] be spread in the world.

Dāmullā: Hohoho, if this is the case then perhaps I myself should write it.

Myself: In that case what you write will perhaps indeed be a biography...

As this dialogue is part of Fakhreddinov's entry on Ṣalāḥ ḥāzrāt who died in 1875, it is located in the first part of *Āthār* III (that is, in the original manuscript that Fakhreddinov intended to get printed in February 1911). We may therefore assume that this communication took place before 1911, and thus several years before Fakhreddinov started to work

under Mufti Bārūdī. The relationship between Fakhreddinov and Bārūdī is still one of peers: it is Fakhreddinov who commissioned Bārūdī to contribute biographies to *Āthār*, lecturing Bārūdī about the difference between a biography and a hagiography. Again, at stake is a question of morality: should the biographer transmit reports that put his master into a negative light? As a stubborn defender of what he believed to be scientific objectivity Fakhreddinov insisted that one should not conceal anything, and eventually he even inserted what his informant obviously preferred not to see published. The episode demonstrates once more how Fakhreddinov understood their differences in character, placing his own rigidity above Bārūdī's softness. Eventually Bārūdī gave in, reportedly accepting Fakhreddinov's open violation of confidentiality with humor. This dialogue constitutes another example of Fakhreddinov's practice of "allowing his respondents to respond to his own use of their first responses", a practice that we already encountered above.

This passage is also of interest for another reason. Above, in the context of Fakhreddinov's biography of Bārūdī, we identified "interlocking autobiographies"; here we stumble upon "interlocking dialogues". In one of his own first-person statements in the dialogue with Bārūdī we find Fakhreddinov reminding his counterpart of what he had told him in an earlier conversation about biographies. For clarifying that these statements do not belong to the current dialogue but to a past conversation Fakhreddinov put his quotes from their first conversation into inverted commas. He then added: "This is what I said [to you earlier], and you certainly remember that as well". Bārūdī was to blame himself if he failed to adhere to Fakhreddinov's high standards!

Conclusion

Fakhreddinov used the literary devices that we identified above to underline his methodological rigidity and transparency. He permitted his readers to see how his entries came into being, from a casual conversation with his informant to his daily notebook and eventually to the manuscript. Fakhreddinov reports how he obtained his written sources, and how he edited them; at many occasions (such as in the context of Bārūdī's autobiography) he mentioned that he changed the wording of a given source, insisting that he did not change its content. With oral sources he was equally transparent, noting from whom he obtained what information. It is in these contexts, with regards to informants who

were his contemporaries, that Fakhreddinov employed skilful techniques to make these informants “respond” to his own questions, but also to his edition of their information (as we saw with Fakhreddinov’s use of reports by Bārūdī, Shahar Sharaf, and in a footnote, Muḥammadnajīb Tūntārī). This is perhaps one of the major features of the third volume of *Āthār* that covered the age of his contemporaries: it has a lot to say about Fakhreddinov himself and the circles in which he operated. As his sources were more diverse than in the previous two volumes, Fakhreddinov – by 1911 an experienced journalist who also had several novels to his name – enjoyed more liberty to play with literary techniques.

Today, Fakhreddinov’s insistence on pure empiricism appears to us as an illusion. Still, as historians we make wide use of the materials that he provided. It is therefore important to detect Fakhreddinov’s own agenda in his works, in particular his defence of what he regarded as true and pure Islam against the traditions of *kalām* and Sufism. In fact, empiricism goes hand in hand with what we would today call Salafism (or Islamic fundamentalism). We therefore have to be very careful when using the materials provided by Marjānī, Murād Ramzī, Fakhreddinov and other biographers of the late imperial and early Soviet eras: while they might claim to be encompassing and transparent we simply do not know what they left out, how much they manipulated or invented; they were part of the discourse that they reported about.

What I suggested in this contribution is to study the great biographical collections of the Jadid era as literary products in their own right, if not as concealed ego documents. An analysis of literary techniques helps us to identify the personal and professional agendas of the biographers; what they report as factual information then becomes a subjective reflection not only on their predecessors and contemporaries but also of the biographers’ own conceptions of the self. Fakhreddinov’s biographies reveal much about how he made sense of his own personality in relation to others. In that sense the entanglement of personalities is reflected in the interlocking of (auto-)biographical texts.