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Qul Sharīf and the Narratives of Ghazān

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Zeki Validi Togan’s (1890–1970) intellectual trajectory was similar to that of many contemporaries who were similarly born into a Muslim learned milieu. He received a madrasa education, over the course of which he developed a particular interest in manuscripts, and then embarked upon a career as an academic Orientalist.1 Upon his ultimate emigration to Turkey in 1925 after the establishment of the Bolshevik regime in Russia and years of travel in Central Asia, Iran and Europe, Togan made a series of important discoveries in the field of Eurasian Islamic history. As a result of his trips Togan reported the existence of several unique manuscripts—each of which on their own would have been sufficient to secure professional success for whomever was lucky enough to find them. Togan was the first to inform the scholarly world about the existence of a unique copy of Shu'ab-i pandjgāna, a historical work attributed to Rashīd al-Dīn (1247–1318) that has miraculously survived at the Topkapı Museum in Istanbul.2 In 1923, while in Mashhad, Iran, Togan came across another important unicum—the account of Ibn Faḍlān’s journey to


Similarly, in his works Togan made extensive use of *Chingiz nāma* by Utemiş Hājjī, a source crucial for understanding the history of the Eastern Dash-i Qipchaq in the late 14th and early 15th centuries. As has been recently suggested, Togan borrowed this particular manuscript in around 1927 from Rida al-Din Fakhreddinov (1858–1936), by then a mufti of Soviet Russia and an eminent Muslim scholar. Togan failed to return the book to its original owner and it remained in his private archive.

Alongside these various discoveries, Zeki Velidi Togan made yet another important finding. In an otherwise unimpressive miscellanea kept at a library near Kütahya, Turkey, he unearthed one of the few native sources on the history of the Kazan Khanate, composed shortly before the bloody capture of the city in 1552. It is a rather brief work of ten pages authored by a certain Sharīf al-Ḥājjī-Tarkhānī. The narrative praises the qualities of the defenders of Kazan who managed to counter the attack of the advancing Russian forces in winter 1550. In the very title of the manuscripts its author or copyist explicitly identifies the genre of writing as *ẓafar nāma*, a traditional form of court literature that celebrates a ruler’s great victories. The work subsequently became known as the *Ẓafar nāma-yi wilāyat-i Qazān*, i.e. ‘The Victory Book of the Kazan Khanate.’ As Togan tartly noted, the source’s depiction of a heroic victory by the defenders offers a very different account of the events of 1550 from what one finds in Russian annals, which ascribe the invading army’s withdrawal simply to harsh weather conditions.
A scholarly consensus has yet to be reached as to the identity of Sharīf al-Ḥājjī-Tarkhānī. Relying on similarity of names, most researchers have assumed that the work was written by sayyid Qul Sharif, the alleged author of Qiṣṣa-yi Ḥubbī khwāja, who was killed during the Russian siege of Kazan in 1552.8 Il’ia Zaitsev, meanwhile, tentatively suggests that the work might have been composed in Astrakhan by mawlāna Sharif al-Din Ḥusayn Sharifi, the author of Jađdat al-ʿāshiqīn.9 This hypothesis is based on the evidence that in 1549 Sharif al-Din’s father Kamāl al-Dīn Khwārazmī (d. 1551) travelled from Samarqand to Aleppo via Ḥājjī Tarkhān/Astrakhan, thus passing through the Volga region around the time of events related in Ṣafār nāma-yī vilāyat-i Qazān. According to Zaitsev, Sharif al-Din Ḥusayn Sharifi could have been the author of this work and hence called himself in the manuscript Sharif al-Ḥājjī-Tarkhānī, while Qul Sharif, the defender of Kazan, was a different historical figure. Il’ias Mustakimov opposes this argument, arguing that Sharif al-Din Ḥusayn could not have witnessed the events in Kazan because he was on the hajj trip with his father when the events in question unfolded.10 While for Mustakimov, as for most Tatar historians, Qul Sharif and Sharif al-Ḥājjī-Tarkhānī remain one and the same figure, Togan describes Qul Muhammad Sayyid, a defender of the citadel’s fourth entrance and the leader of local Sufis, and Sharif, the author of the Ṣafār nāma-yī vilāyat-i Qazān, as two distinct individuals.11 This uncertainty regarding the identity of the author has to do with the scarcity of our sources on the history of the Kazan Khanate. Very few written testimonies have survived and very few scholars have explored those that have.12 Beyond the fact that historiography on the Kazan Khanate remains

8 Kol Shärif häm anyng zamany = Kul Sharif i ego vremia, ed. by Marsel’ Akhmetzianov (Kazan’: Tatarstan kitap nāshriiate, 2005).
10 Il’ias Mustakimov, “Zafar-name-i vilaiyet-i Kazan”: 158.
11 Zeki Velidi Togan, “Kazan Hanlığında İslam Kültürü”: 196.
rather modest, it is the very content of *Ẓafar nāma-yi wilāyat-i Qazān* and the manner in which its first publisher presented it that has contributed to the relative marginality of this source in scholarship on Islam in Central Eurasia. Ili’ia Zaitsev is one of the few scholars who has not relied solely on Togan’s edition of the source, but tried to engage with the original manuscript and suggested some alternative readings of names mentioned by Sharif. On the basis of Russian chronicles, Zaitsev managed to identify three chief defenders of Kazan in 1550, all of them members of the Crimean aristocracy: Qozijaqoghlan, Barbulsun atalique, and Torchibik. They fled the city in 1551, but were soon captured by Russians. Sharif praised in his work the brave hero Aq Muḥammad ughlan, whose biography Zaitsev followed on the basis of Russian sources: in 1551 Aq Muḥammad managed to escape to the Noghay Horde and then to Crimea, where he occupied prominent positions at the court up to 1577. Zaitsev’s seminal works remain the only ones in Russophone scholarship that take the *Ẓafar nāma-yi wilāyat-i Qazān* seriously as a source on the history of Kazan Khanate and substantiate its account by cross-referencing it with Russian documents and chronicles.

Let us now return to the question of how Togan conceptualized the significance of this hitherto-unknown historical source. Togan situated the *Ẓafar nāma-yi wilāyat-i Qazān* with reference to a number of themes, the most significant of these being the idea of the holy war against the infidels (*ghazā)*. By emphasizing the author’s pious rhetoric against the ‘cursed infidels,’ Togan proposed to read this narrative in the broader context of *ghazāwāt*, explicitly

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linking the latter with the Yasawī tradition and the hero warriors fighting against the infidels: “To defend Kazan as an Islamic frontier (Islam thughuru [sic]),” he wrote, “was a tradition continuing from the times of Ghazan Khan.”

Ghazan Khan (1271–1304) belonged to a cohort of the first Ilkhanid rulers to accept Islam. Togan discloses a possible source of inspiration for his interpretation of Sharif’s ghazâ narrative in the English summary of his article that goes beyond what is said in the main text. After stating that the Bulghars and Chuvashes offered no resistance to the Russian advance, Togan postulates that “the Kazan Tatars on the contrary as a political element, as religiouse [sic] soldiers (ghazi's [sic]), who assumed the Islamic traditions of the combat against the infidels, like the Ghazi’s [sic] on the Byzantine Frontiers (thughur) of Islam.” Togan had borrowed this ghazâ thesis from his good friend Paul Wittek (1894–1978), a renowned Austrian Ottomanist who famously explained the rise of the Ottoman Empire with reference to the drive of Muslim religious expansion and hence ‘holy war’.

Despite the Orientalist nature of his argument (i.e., the idea that religious zeal alone drove Muslims to build empires), Paul Wittek’s writings proved influential on scholarly awareness of the ghazâ narratives and the genre of fath nāma in the Ottoman and Mughal context. Despite the fact that Zafar nāma-yi wilāyat-i Qazān is clearly an example of the ghazâ narrative composed at the Muslim-Christian frontier on the Middle Volga River, very few scholars other than Togan have attempted to analyze the manuscript from this angle. Moreover, I dare to suggest that it is the religious colouring of this work that has obstructed its receiving serious study in Russia. This is particularly the case today, when the regional courts in Russia regularly ban Islamic literature and express anxieties about the potential ‘extremist’ contents of old manuscripts.

To strengthen his argument about the importance of the ghazâ tradition in the Volga-Ural region, Togan argues that city of Kazan derived its name

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16 Zeki Velidi Togan, “Kazan Hanlığında İslam Türk Kültürü”: 196.
18 Zeki Velidi Togan, “Kazan Hanlığında İslam Türk Kültürü”: 204.
from Ghazan Khan, whose pious warriors (*ghāzīs*) had supposedly reached the city. This etymological argument may sound fanciful, but is perhaps not as far-fetched as it might seem. Social and religious practices in the Volga-Ural region were heavily shaped by the region’s Persianate legacy for many centuries, including under Russian rule, consecutive generations of literati in the region imagined the cityspace of Kazan as specifically Muslim and by calling it Ghazān built themselves into the greater world of the Persianate and—more broadly—Muslim high culture. Again in his English summary at the end of the article Togan briefly expresses his opinion of the Persianate roots of *ghazān* narratives in the Volga-Urals: “Such elements of Perisan [sic] culture [as linguistic borrowings for urban culture and the reverence of the Prophet’s offspring] were brought to the northern regions of Bulgar certainly by the Muslim Ghazi’s [sic] and other propagandists of Islam.”21 This observation makes a lot of sense given the broad circulation of Persianate literature and related symbols and images in the Volga-Urals and Western Siberia between the 17th and early 20th centuries.22 Even if Kazan did not, in fact, originally derive its name from Ghazan Khan, it is nevertheless telling that, as we shall see, its name was often rendered in Islamicate sources as ‘Ghazan’. Togan was among the first scholars to identify the link between this latter rendering and the city’s long-established associations with Ghazan Khan and other transregional religious connections.23

The first instances where we encounter references to the city of ‘Ghazān’ are sixteenth-century khanal chancellery documents. The earliest such document dates from 1523, and is a conferral of fiscal immunity (*yarlīgh*) issued by Kazan Khan Ṣāḥib Garāy, referring to “the areas of Ghazān and the blessed properties” (*wilāyat-i Ghazān wa mamālik maḥrūsa*). Il’ias Mustakimov read this chancellery formula as a sign of Ilkhanid courtly influence.24 Based on this evidence, Il’ia Zaitsev was first to observe that the author of the *Ẓafar nāma-yi wilāyat-i*

21  Zeki Velidi Togan, “Kazan Hanlığında İslam Türk Kültürü”: 204.
Qazān used a similar formulation in referring to the land (wilāyat) of Bulghar.\textsuperscript{25} Similar such references to the city of Ghazān as the center of a distinct land or region thereafter proliferated in the writings of Volga-Ural Muslim scholars. To give a reader the sense of persistence with which madrasa-educated individuals continued to associate their main city with Ghazan Khan and the holy wars even in the Soviet Union, let me provide a series of examples.

As early as 1104 [1692–93], Qadīr Muḥammad b. mullah Shaykh Muḥammad produced a copy of a Persian legal manual \textit{Tarjama-yi mukhtagār}, identifying the place of composition as 'Ghazān, in the territory of Bulghar.'\textsuperscript{26} This manuscript is one of the rare instances of book production in the Tatar quarter of Kazan after the fall of the Khanate. Interestingly, the former capital features in the book’s colophon\textsuperscript{27} as part of the imagined Bulghar land\textsuperscript{28} and not as a political centre of either an imperial district or the historical Kazan Khanate. Further development of manuscript culture in the region provided more opportunities for developing a new spatial framework for the Volga-Urals’ Muslim culture. For example, one early 18th-century copy of \textit{Gulistān} by Saʿdī notes that it was copied in Baranga village (qāriya) of the Alat district (\textit{al-ṭarīq}) of the Bulghar domain (wilāyat).\textsuperscript{29} Another Persian book dated to 1780 in the Christian era (masīhiyya) follows the same pattern: ‘in Bugad village of Kazan district (rāh) of Ufa domain.’ The copyist adds here the exact institutional setting, namely the madrasa of mullah Muḥammad Ḥanīfa b. Ṣāliḥ.\textsuperscript{30} Both colophons refer to a district by using a word for ‘road’ (Arabic \textit{al-ṭarīq}; Persian \textit{rāh}). In both instances, this seems to be a calque for the Russian word \textit{doroga}, which by the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{26} \textit{Tarjama-yi mukhtagār}, Institute of Language, Literature, and Arts of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tatarstan, Ms. 2603, fol. 163b. This book originates from the private library of Ish Muḥammad b. Din Muḥammad. Surprisingly, Salim Giliazudinov has classified the manuscript’s paper as being of Russian provenance, which cannot be true given the early date of the manuscript: \textit{Opisanie rukopisei na persidskom iazyke iz khranilishcha Instituta iazyka, literatury i iskusstva}. Vol. 1 (Kazan’: Fiker, 2002): 159. However, another manuscript of the same era, a Persian commentary on the Qurʾān written or copied by Dūst Muḥammad in 1084 [1673–74] identifies Qazān and not Ghazān as a place of writing: National Library, Ankara, Ms. A.E. Farsca. 892. This reflects some variation in handling the name of the city.
\item \textsuperscript{27} For a recent study of colophons as a genre: \textit{Scribal Practice and the Global Cultures of Colophons, 1400–1800}, ed. by Christopher D. Bahl and Stefan Hanß (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022).
\item \textsuperscript{28} Allen J. Frank, \textit{Islamic Historiography and ‘Bulghar’ Identity among the Tatars and Bashkirs of Russia} (Leiden: Brill, 1998).
\item \textsuperscript{29} Saʿdī, \textit{Gulistān}, Kazan University Library, Ms. 880 F, fol. 80b.
\item \textsuperscript{30} An anonymous collection of legal issues, Kazan University Library, Ms. 988 F, fol. 5b.
\end{itemize}
late 1560s had become a commonplace term to denote a territorial unit in the Kazan region. (*Doroga* in turn was a rendering of a similar-sounding Mongol word *darugha*, a territorial subdivision, which was one of a number of terms that the Russian authorities simply borrowed from the Kazan Khanate.) The territorialized use of the word ‘road’ in Muslim manuscript production thus reflected a discourse of spatiality as developed at the early stage of entanglement of Russian and Muslim conceptualizations of the region. Although the Russian empire subsequently abandoned the *doroga* as an administrative unit, Muslim copyists continued to use the word ‘road’ to mean ‘district’, thus establishing an alternative mental geography, distinct from the changing colonial administrative vocabulary.31

The colophons of early Tatar manuscripts also contain the names of copyists, but rarely mention their *nisbas*, the spatial attributive names that would connect an individual to a place on the map. The Muslim authors writing near Kazan in the early 18th century, such as Murtaḍā al-Simitī, would be referred to as al-Ghazānī.32 One manuscript colophon reads as follows: “this noble book has been copied by the poorest of men ʿAbdullāh b. Muslim b. ʿAlī at the madrasa *akhund* ʿAbd al-Salām b. Uz Muhammad al-Ghazānī in Qarghāl settlement [near Orenburg] in 1164 [1750/51].”33 In this and other such colophons, explicit references to places were replaced by attributive names that show the migration of Tatar population to the South Urals in the mid-18th century. While the teacher is clearly defined as coming from Ghazān/Kazan, the village of Qarghala is not yet spatially situated. The long process of figuring out of how to conceptualize these new settlements was accompanied by formulating alternatives: either to think of these categories as part of the Bashkir lands or to integrate them into the realm of Bulghar.

The 19th-century Arabic-script epitaphs similarly included the attributive name al-Ghazānī as referring to the entire region of Muslim settlements near Kazan, as in the case of the gravestone of imam Sulaymān b. Muhammad

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31 The earlier colophon mentioning the Bulghar domain does not mirror the Russian administrative division. In fact, the colonial mapping completely neglected the spatial importance of Bulghar: the Russian geographical imagery knew only a settlement with this name and not a region. On the importance of native spatial categories and their decline in the colonial setting: Manan Ahmed Asif, *The Loss of Hindustan: The Invention of India* (Cambridge, U.S.: Harvard University Press, 2020).

32 Murtaḍā al-Simitī, *Mukhtasar fi-l-fiqh*, Kazan University Library, Ms. 317 Ar., fol. 4a. Judging from the manuscript’s paleography, it could have been copied during the author’s lifetime.

33 *Tarkīb ‘awāmil kabīr*, Kazan University Library, Ms. 6142 Ar., fol. 42a. Words in the colophon lack dots.
Figure 1 A medical receipt noted down in the city of Ghazān, 1885. This note is part of a large manuscript miscellany on occult topics. Note: Kazan University Library, Ms. 6886T, fol. 242a. The source of acquisition is unknown.
Nadhir al-Ghazānī al-Sharīfī erected at the cemetery of Tübän Ölî in 1836.\textsuperscript{34} Another gravestone inscription dated 1906 belongs to the hand of the calligrapher ʿAbd al-Bârî al-Bârûdî al-Ghazānî, who lived in the city of Kazan but the tombstone with his epitaph was placed at the graveyard of the village of Pândâlgâ in Penza region.\textsuperscript{35} The same observation holds true for manuscript copying: throughout the 19th century multiple scribes in and near Kazan continued to identify their home city as Ghazān.\textsuperscript{36} By the end of the century, references to the city of Ghazān appeared not just in the learned discourse of ‘ulama in Inner Russia but also in the ordinary writings of urbanites on topics such as medicine and the occult (Figure 1). One possible reason for keeping up the tradition was that the region continued to be a religious frontier: the Russian Orthodox mission constructed its own narrative of Kazan as an important center of Christianity and Muslims responded by finding ways to retain their distinctiveness and epistemological autonomy.\textsuperscript{37}

Strikingly, references to the city of Ghazān continued right up to the Great Terror of the 1930s. The old inventories of Islamic manuscripts held at Kazan University Library contain a traditional colophon, written in Arabic in 1935:

قد وقع الفراخ من تسويه هذه النسخة الشريفة الميمونة المسأة باسم الكتب على
يد الفضفاض النحيف أفتر العباد قليل البضاعة وقُبّر البطالة إياه الفاروق عبد الحق
ابن جار الله ابن حبيب الله القرآئي الجليل ثم الغزافي في يوم أحد عشر من أيام برج
العقب في سنة خمس وتسعين وثمانية وألف بمسيحية بلدة المحروسة غزان في
کتابه عليه تأازراتان

This noble work named The Book Titles has been composed by the hand of a helpless servant [of God] Abū-l-Fārūq ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq b. Jârullâh

\textsuperscript{34} Aidar Gainetdinov, Archa raiony epigrafik istâlekläre (Kazan': Institut istorii im. Sh. Mardjani, 2017): 247–248.
\textsuperscript{37} Agnes Nilufer Kefeli, Becoming Muslim in Imperial Russia: Conversion, Apostasy, and Literacy (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2014).
b. Ḥabībullāh al-Qarātālī al-Jabalī and later al-Ghazānī on 11th day of Scorpio in 1935 according to the Christian calendar at the Scientific Library of Tatarstan in the blessed (al-maḥrūsa) city of Ghazān.38

However anachronistic this evocation of ancient city titles (in particular, the term al-maḥrūsa features on coins as an attribute of the Golden Horde cities,39 also used by Sharif al-Ḥājjī-Tarkhānī on fols. 60a, 61b) and chronologies might seem for the time of Great Terror in Russia, the sense of Muslim mental mapping was still very much part of the individual self-consciousness, so strong that it could even enter the Soviet archival documentation.

To contextualize the ghazā motif of Sharif’s work Togan tried to establish a link between the author and the Yasawī legacy: he suggests that the Yasawī shaykhs were somehow more inclined towards the holy battles for the sake of religion than members of other spiritual brotherhoods. However, attributing the articulation of holy war exclusively to the Yasawī profile cannot be completely accurate. In fact, we know little about the presence of Yasawīs in the Volga-Urals before the arrival of the Naqshbandiyya mujaddidiyya in the late 18th century.40 Tatar philologists celebrate the poet Mawlā Qoliy, who was active in the mid-17th century, as someone initiated into a Yasawī tradition.41 His written oeuvre, however, does not allow us to specify what exactly stood behind this affiliation. More evidence can be mined from the numerous works related to Dawlat Shāh al-Ispijābī (d. 1714), a Yasawī shaykh with followers in Tobolsk and Bulghar. He was a figure featuring prominently in a variety of ghazā narratives in both the Volga-Urals and Siberia. Al-Ispijābī was a prolific author and an important itinerant Sufi, whose writings contain some treatment of the topic of jihad.42 An autograph of his work Abwāb al-jinān (1709), in particular, contains a statement that the manuscript was sent by the author

42  Dawlat Shāh al-Ispijābī, Burhān al-dhākirīn, Kazan University Library, Ms. 429 F, fols. 6b, 29b–33a. Cf. the Russian translation: Daulatshah al-Ispidzhabi, Burkhan az-zakirin (‘Dokazatel’stvo dlia pominauischikh’): ed. and transl. by Alfrid Bustanov and Evgeniia Nikitenko (Moscow: Sadra, 2020). For legal reasons, the episodes on jihad have been omitted in the Russian translation.
to his brethren in villages near Bulghar (Figure 2), thus attesting to a Yasawi presence in the region.  

A commonality of religious traditions in Western Siberia and the Volga-Urals is of special importance for us here, because Togan suggested that some features of the text’s language reveal commonality with the language of Siberian Tatars. For him these linguistic aspects served as an argument for the cultural unity that existed among the populations of the late Golden Horde. Commonalities do not end here, however. Sharif claimed descent from the Prophet Muhammad and belonged to the category of sayyids. Moreover, the text identifies him as a descendant of Sayyid Ata, a prominent figure of Yasawi hagiographies, whose spiritual offspring were also active among the Muslims of Siberia starting from the 1570s. The conversion narratives composed in Siberia between the mid-17th and mid-18th centuries, which give al-Ispijabi credit for establishing the cult of sacred sites in the region, portray the motif of holy war against the infidels for the spread of Islam as central to the entire narrative.

As I have shown elsewhere, the Siberian conversion narratives derived their inspiration directly from the 14th-century Yasawi accounts from the region of Middle Syr Darya. Interestingly, some Yasawi hagiographies continued to circulate in Tatar manuscripts at least up to the mid-19th century. The reason behind this continuing interest presumably lay not in the upkeep of the Yasawi tradition in the Volga-Urals, but rather in the continuous rejection on the part of numerous ‘ulamā to grant Russia the status of a ‘land of Islam'. In order

43 Dawlat Shâh al-Ispijäbi, Abwâb al-jinân, Kazan University Library, Ms. 6764T, fol. 245a.
44 Zeki Velidi Togan, “Kazan Hanlığında İslam Türk Kültürü”: 197, 202, 203.
45 Damir Iskhakov, Seidy v pozdeznolotoordynskikh gosudarstvakh (Kazan’: Iman, 1997).
48 Muhammad Sharif al-Bukhari, Hujjat al-Dhakirin, Kazan University Library, Ms. 5875 Ar., fols. 122b–145a (copied by Hasan b. Rahmanullah al-Urmasbashi in the 1830s); an anonymous Yasawi hagiography, the National Museum of the Republic of Tatarstan, Ms. 18369–59, fols. 12a–28a (copied by the son of Abdullâh Bûbi in the first half of the 19th century).
to do this, however, there was no need for Muslim scholars and activists to associate themselves with the Yasawīs or any other brotherhood. Although Togan suggests that there was a particular association between the Yasawīs and ghazā in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, we know that in later epochs the idea of jihad was widespread, and in no way confined just to one or other concrete Sufi affiliation.50 Some scholars and Sufis would still request writings on the holy war and fights for the spread of Islam.51 There is also evidence for the broad popularity of tales about the caliph ‘Ali, who was portrayed as a warrior against infidels, in the second half of the 19th century.52 There is no

evidence that this phenomenon had anything to do with either the Yasawī or the Naqshbandī traditions.

Thus, writing about ghazā and Ghazān continued for centuries after Sharīf’s death. This was despite the fact that both Sharīf himself and the Żafar nāma-yi wilāyat-i Qazān soon faded into obscurity. It is of no surprise, because the manuscript discovered by Togan is the only known copy of this work that had been completely inaccessible to Muslim authors in Russia. Despite the stable popularity of non-conformist narratives throughout the 18th and 19th centuries resulting in the waves of pious emigration to Central Asia and the Ottoman Empire, to the best of my knowledge not a single Muslim author in imperial Russia made use of the figure of Sharīf or tried to expand on his ideas simply because his legacy was not available to them. When Shihāb al-Dīn al-Marjānī describes the discovery in 1814/15 of a gravestone that belonged to a Muslim martyr who perished ‘at the hands of the infidels’ and its placement in the main prayer room of the First Stone Mosque of the city (later called the Marjānī mosque), neither does he evoke the figure of Sharīf, nor his ghazā narrative.53

At the turn of the 20th century, Tatar nationalist sentiment elevated the figure of Süümibikä (b. ca. 1521), a Kazan princess captured by Russians before the final siege, to symbolize the melancholy of the defeated and all the pain of Tatars’ losing their statehood;54 this served to confer upon the fall of Kazan a mournful, elegiac mood, rather than the idea of heroic struggle as conveyed in Sharīf’s work. The memory of warriors defending the city, who perished in the citadel, was not in demand for the national narratives simply because their symbolism of pride did not match the emotional register of trauma. Eventually, modern Tatar nationalism has turned Ghazān (غزاين) into Kazan’.

While the ghazā theme understandably occupies the central position in Sharīf’s historical work, Togan’s decision to work on the żafar nāma may have been informed by personal concerns, which perhaps had some influence on the way how his discoveries were received in Soviet Russia and the post-Soviet republics. The Bolshevik regime left him no chance of returning to his home country, where in his youth he strived to help establish a new political order that


54 Kazanskaiia tsaritsa Siuun-bike v istorii narodov Rossii: Sbornik statei, ed. by Bulat Rakhimzianov (Moscow: Kvadriga, 2019).
would grant greater autonomy to Russia’s Muslims, and enable the Bashkirs’
national development.55 Both the project of political and cultural autonomy of
the Volga-Urals and the idea of an autonomous Muslim Bashkiria were buried
by Lenin’s decrees in establishing the Bashkir and Tatar Autonomous Soviet
Socialist Republics in 1919 and 1920 respectively. Togan fled the country in 1920
and never came back again. Tellingly, Togan does not say much about the his-
torical struggle between Moscow and Kazan in the mid-16th century, or the fall
of Kazan and its significance for the fate of Muslim culture in the Volga-Urals.
Instead, he stresses the defensive character of ghazā for Kazan Tatars, noting
that they strived to defend the land of Islam, not to conquer new territories.56

It is not by chance that in his assessment of Ẓafar nāma-yi wilāyat-i Qazān
Velidi repeatedly referred to his early works published before the October
Revolution as well as to the historical accounts by Hādi Aṭlāsī (1876–1938), a
Tatar writer who, as Togan was doubtless aware, perished in the Gulag.57 The
only work by Soviet historians towards which Togan expressed respect in his
article was the now classic study of Bulghar epitaphs by Kharun Iusupov (1914–
1968).58 Togan was certainly aware of the historical prominence of Muslim
graveyards in the Volga-Urals as well as of the Tatar historiographical tradi-
tion in the study of these locales.59 He repeatedly refers to the rich epigraphic
material gathered by Iusupov to demonstrate the Muslim legacy of Kazan
Tatars, whose very name, Togan insisted, was not borrowed from the Russians
in the 19th century, but rather was already attested in the mid-16th-century
Ottoman sources.60 In his article, Togan avoids the discussion that took place
among the Soviet linguists as to whether the language of Bulghar inscriptions
should be identified as an early form of Chuvash or Tatar, simply relying here
on the authority of Iusupov.61

55 On the involvement of Muslims in revolutionary events and the Civil War: Salavat Ishakov,
Rossiiskie musul’miane i revoliutsiiia (vesna 1917–leto 1918) (Moscow: Sotsial’no-politicheskaiia
mysl’, 2004); Danielle Ross, Kazan’s Muslims and the Making of Imperial Russia

56 Zeki Velidi Togan, “Kazan Hanlığı’nda İslam Türk Kültürü”; 198.

57 Ibid.: 194, 196, 199.

58 G.V. Iusupov, Vvedenie v bulgaro-tatarskuiu epigrafiku (Moscow, Leningrad: Akademiia

59 One of the earlier works was published in the mid-19th century: Khusain Feiezkhánov,
“Tri nadgrobykh bulgarskikh nadpisii.” Izvestiia Arkheologicheskogo obschestva, vol. 4
(St Petersburg: Tipografia Akademii nauk, 1863): 396–424. For an overview: Dzh.G.
Mukhametshin, “G.V. Iusupov i problemy tatarskoi epigrafiiki.” Povolzhskaiia arkheologiia

60 Zeki Velidi Togan, “Kazan Hanlığı’nda İslam Türk Kültürü”; 199.

61 Iusupov’s position in identifying the Bulghar gravestones as part of the Tatar national
heritage was attacked severely by his colleagues in Chuvashia: Mikhail Fedotov, Vassili
Dimitriev, “[Review of G.V. Iusupov. Vvedenie v bulgaro-tatarskuiu epigrafiku. M.-L,

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Thanks to the Iron Curtain, Togan’s publication of Sharif al-Hājjī-Tarkhānī’s commemoration of victory remained inaccessible to researchers in Soviet Russia, but Turkish scholars continued the study of this source. Akdes Nimet Kurat (1903–1971), a Tatar émigré historian in Istanbul, published the first Turkish translation of the work, while Ayşe Melek Özyetgin analysed the source philologically and offered a translation into modern Turkish. This latter work, in particular, helped lay the foundation for the first Tatar publications that saw the light in the course of the 1990s, the era of substantial political and economic autonomy of the Republic of Tatarstan. The new wave of Tatar nationalism and cultural rapprochement with Turkey enabled an elevation in status for the author of the *Ẓafar nāma-yi wilāyat-i Qazān*. Following the opinion of their Turkish colleagues, Tatar historians now identified Sharīf al-Ḥājjī-Tarkhānī with Qul Sharīf, the leader of the city’s defence during the last siege before the city’s capture in 1552, whose name features in Russian sources. Since its inception in October 1989, the annual commemorative march, the Day of Memory (*khäter köne*), in the city center has become a regular public manifestation of Tatar nationalism. For years, this event has been attracting thousands of citizens. What is commemorated, however, is not the glorious heroism that Sharīf described in his narrative, but the dramatic events of the Russian conquest and the melancholy of modern nationalism embodied in the figure of Süümbikä. The prominence of 1552 in memory politics of sovereign Tatarstan made Qul Sharīf’s figure central as a political symbol of the new mode of relationships between Kazan and Moscow. This symbolism has rapidly taken shape in stone: in 2005 the Qul Sharīf mosque was erected within the walls of the Kazan Kremlin (a related decree was published by the President

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Mintemer Shaimiev already in 1995), more than four centuries after the last call to prayer on this hill. Since then, regardless of its political message, the mosque has become a commonly accepted symbol of the city and the republic. This is despite the fact that, with a new turn of centralization of power under Putin, the political and even religious status of the Qul Sharif mosque has started to decline. At the time of writing, in winter 2022, the Tatarstani government has been in consultations about the construction of a new Congregational Mosque in Kazan to celebrate the 1100th anniversary of the Bulghars' conversion to Islam. In the new political environment, the creation of this new mosque might serve to marginalize the old one. The Qul Sharif mosque and public celebrations of the Day of Memory will only remain a reminiscent of the republic special status in Yeltsin's Russia. There is no surprise, therefore, that even the research on Zafar nāma-yi vilāyat-i Qazān has largely stopped: today there is still no direct translation into Russian or Tatar made from the manuscript original and no in-depth study of the text.

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66 Almost a decade ago, Il’ias Mustakimov advertised his work on the manuscript, but since then the promise has remained unfulfilled: Il’ias Mustakimov, “Zafar-name-i vilaiyet-i Kazan’ Sharifa Khadzhi-Tarkhani: nekotorye itogi i perspektivy izucheniiia.” In Iz istorii i kultury narodov Srednego Povolzh’ia, vol. 5 (Kazan’: Institut istorii im. Sh. Marjani AN RT, 2015): 156.
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