

## Speaking “Bukharan”

### *The Circulation of Persian Texts in Imperial Russia*

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Unlike in Central Asia or Daghestan, Muslims in Russia historically often wrote a curious mixture of Arabic, Persian, and Turkic, with either Ottoman or Chaghatai Turkish influences, so that the study of Muslim texts there requires proficiency in at least three languages of Islam besides Russian.<sup>1</sup> This is not only true of collected volumes (*majmu'at*) that comprise several works, but also of individual narratives where switching between these languages was a widespread practice in the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. As far as one can judge from the manuscripts still held privately across the Russian Federation, this linguistic feature mirrored the cultural orientations and fashions that evolved over a period of centuries across that vast region.<sup>2</sup> The Persianate literary tastes and preferences of the Muslim citizens of imperial Russia originated from the cultural and religious prestige of Bukhara as a major intellectual center. For as Allen Frank's ground-breaking research has demonstrated, since the late eighteenth and throughout the nineteenth centuries, the Muslims of imperial Russia used to go primarily to Bukhara to study Islamic subjects.<sup>3</sup> There were usually no native speakers of Persian in the remote Tatar villages of imperial Russia, and because almost nothing is known about the use of Persian as a spoken language among Russia's Muslims, the concept of *Per-sographia*, developed by Nile Green in his Introduction to this volume, is crucial in this chapter. The classics of Persian ethical literature, such as Sa'di, were widely copied in local madrasas across the Russian Empire, and in the nineteenth century, some Russian Tatars even tried to compose their own literary works in Persian, among them Ahmadjan Tobuli (1825–189?)<sup>4</sup> and his brother-in-law 'Abd al-Rahim al-Bulghari (1754–1834).<sup>5</sup>

The prestige of Bukhara is not a self-explanatory reason for the popularity of Persian in the northern Eurasian regions of the Russian Empire. There were many intellectual trends and schools of thought in Bukhara and other Central Asian centers of learning. Moreover, madrasas in a “geography of *'ajam*” that extended from Nizhnii Novgorod beyond Russian imperial territories to Kabul all used

Persian, and this language choice for scribes and authors meant a contribution to a Persianate sphere.<sup>6</sup> This is reflected in the thousands of Persian manuscripts that madrasa students in imperial Russia either produced locally themselves or imported from Central Asia, where they bought the originals or copied them. Catalogues of Persian manuscripts published by Alsu Arslanova and Salim Giliazutdinov in Kazan have made this landscape of literary production accessible.<sup>7</sup> Through their tremendous efforts to catalogue hundreds of previously unknown texts, these two scholars have identified numerous works from prerevolutionary private collections that are now preserved in state archives. The ill-conceived approach of describing manuscripts according to their language is part of the Soviet academic legacy that emphasized the study of the “Foreign Orient,” that is Turkey, Iran, and Arab lands, rather than the USSR’s “own Orient,” leaving the latter to specialists in Soviet national republics who were rarely versed in Islamicate literary culture.<sup>8</sup> The same holds true for the current research on Persian manuscripts in Russia: the study of classics is rarely associated with the living tradition of Persian literacy in the Russian Empire. For Russian scholarship, the Persianate world is conceived of as lying outside of Russia’s borders, particularly in the modern republics of Iran and Tajikistan. Despite the fact that Persian manuscripts in Inner Russia are the best catalogued and well described (better than Arabic and even Turkic-language texts), current research contains very little reflection on how Islamic literature functioned in the cultural realm of imperial Russia.<sup>9</sup> This is especially true of research on classical literature in Iranian studies. Regrettably, the transmission of knowledge and circulation of texts in Persian among the Muslims of Russia thus largely remains outside current scholarly interests in Russia.

As a counterweight to this tendency, this chapter shares some findings and tentative hypotheses on how the role of Persian learning evolved over the past three centuries among the Muslim communities of Russia. To do so, it maps some of the genres and individual works available in the manuscript libraries of Russia. Still, it would be a grave mistake to cut off and isolate the development of Persian texts from the rest of the literature that was in circulation in imperial Russia, including in the Russian language as the dominant vehicle of imperial information. This chapter is merely a modest attempt to highlight those places where Persian is in the forefront, often accompanied by other languages, in the literary history of Russia’s Muslims. The role of Persian literacy in imperial Russia should in no way be overestimated on the basis of sources cited below. It is beyond any doubt that the various Turkic dialects, usually referred to under the rubric of Tatar literary language formed in the Golden Horde, played the central role in articulation of everyday matters, but also in historiography, poetry, and official documentation, while Arabic was reserved for the countless books on religious subjects. However, there were historical periods and cultural zones in which the use of Persian was deemed crucial by local actors who made their linguistic choices on the basis of societal expectations and their personal abilities

and educational backgrounds. A more nuanced picture of the linguistic landscape of Muslim culture in the Russian Empire might perhaps be achieved by digitally linking information from surviving manuscripts with the geography of their production and circulation, as well as with the evolution of linguistic choices over time and space.<sup>10</sup> However, such a map is not likely to appear soon, given the deplorable situation of cataloguing the Arabic-script manuscripts in Kazan, Ufa and elsewhere.

The present chapter looks at three geographically selected case studies. The first focuses on Yunus al-Qazani, a scholar from the Volga region who travelled to Bukhara and Eastern Turkistan in the seventeenth century and used Persian in Quranic exegesis, Sufi writings in the Naqshbandi tradition, and legal exposition. The second highlights the role of the Persian language for the communities of Siberian Bukharans settled around the city of Tobolsk in the early eighteenth century, among whom Sufi texts were dominated by this language and references to literature produced in Central Asia. The third case concerns a Daghestani Sufi authority living in exile who used some Persian in the letters he addressed to his fellows in Tatarstan. This final section of the chapter demonstrates that migrant literati from the predominantly Arabic-using region of Daghestan in the Caucasus still had to satisfy the triple language mosaic of Islamic literature in Russia that was so heavily influenced by the canon of earlier reference works composed in the Persianate cities of Central Asia.

#### TATAR STUDENTS IN BUKHARA

Judging from available documentation, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Persian was not just the language of pious didactic poetry that instructed Muslims youths on how to behave.<sup>11</sup> In the first centuries of Russian dominance over the former lands of the Golden Horde, Persian was also regularly used for legal purposes, Sufi doctrines, and even for teaching Arabic grammar. Most of this writing was a product of cultural influence stemming from the regular trips of Tatar students to Bukhara and other educational centers in Central Asia, where Persian was a language of instruction. The first author who left us a considerable amount of written Persian is Akhund Yunus ibn Akhund Iwanay al-Qazani (d. 1689/90). When he was eighteen, Yunus al-Qazani copied the Quran and added some interlinear translations in Persian.<sup>12</sup> He mainly studied in Transoxiana and was remembered by subsequent scholars as one of the first Muslims of Russia who went to study in Bukhara.<sup>13</sup> Some decades after his death, another scholar and Sufi shaykh called Taj al-Din al-Bulghari (1768–1838) discovered an Arabic poem by Yunus al-Qazani that lacked a commentary (*sharh*) in the Chaghatai Turkic language. To make these untitled verses available to his co-religionists, Taj al-Din al-Bulghari commented on them and added the following biography of Yunus al-Qazani:

This poet died in the land of Bulghar, in Kicha village near Kazan. He was a learned and pious person. Al-Qazani authored commentaries on *Fara'iz al-Sajawandi*, *al-Fiqh al-Kaidani*, and other works. Besides that, he possessed the ability to perform miracles [*al-karamat wa al-kashufat*] and belonged to the Naqshbandi Sufi path. He studied with Idris Afandi in Yarkand in the Kashgar region and became his successor. Idris Afandi was also originally from Kazan region, from Chally village, also previously known as Tarberdi. In 1110 [1698],<sup>14</sup> Idris Afandi granted him a Sufi diploma, which he received from his master Hidayatullah al-Yarqandi.<sup>15</sup>

This Russian link to the Eastern Turkistan (or Xinjiang) region discussed in Alexandre Papas's chapter 8 in this volume is notable, since religious figures with the attribution name (*nisba*) al-Yarqandi feature in Siberian legends of Islamization dating from the late eighteenth century.<sup>16</sup> Being able to consult and produce Persian texts was certainly part of this link, since in addition to his Arabic poetry, Yunus al-Qazani wrote an extensive commentary on an Arabic legal text on the subject of inheritance, *al-Fara'id al-Sirajiyya* by the twelfth-century scholar Siraj al-Din al-Sajawandi, which was subsequently known as *Sharh-i Yunus* (Yunus's Commentary) in Tatar madrasas and later circulated between Kazan and Tashkent, where at least six copies of it have been preserved.<sup>17</sup> Yunus cites his teacher Safar al-Turki, a mullah in Tobolsk, in this work. Its intended audience remains an open question,<sup>18</sup> but the choice of language tells us something about the readers envisaged, who would have had to know enough Persian to understand the legal details translated from the Arabic original and Yunus's comments.

Yunus al-Qazani also had something to say about the status of Muslim lands conquered by the Russians. In a bilingual Arabic-Persian work (*taqirrat*), he vaguely advised his co-religionists to accept the new situation of "infidel domination" as unthreatening to the basics of their beliefs.<sup>19</sup> The following question posed to him by 'Abd al-Karim al-Shirdani exemplifies the rhetoric and terminology used in this debate:

Question: What is the reasoning in regard to a land that is currently in the hands of infidels, where the victory of Muslims was short-lived and the rules of infidels were installed? Are Kazan, Astrakhan, Kasimov, and other such places closed to merchants and traders? Do they belong to the land of war [*dar al-harb*] or to the land of Islam [*dar al-Islam*]? Is it strictly prescribed for each Muslim to leave [*hijrat kardan*] such places, or not?<sup>20</sup>

Irrespective of Yunus's opinion, it seems that the question of jihad and other forms of resistance against the non-Muslim government remained quite a popular issue among the Volga Tatars for a long period of time.<sup>21</sup> Tatar students copied the *Kitab al-Khaqaniya* composed by Muhammad Sharif Bukhari (d. 1697) in 1643, which contained a section on jihad. There are at least four copies of the work in the archives of Kazan, two of them produced in the seventeenth century.<sup>22</sup> Even throughout the nineteenth century, Muslims of the Volga region continued to

question the legal status of Russia as a "land of Islam," justifying their pious migrations to Central Asia or the Ottoman Empire.<sup>23</sup>

In 1726, another Bukharan student, Mansur ibn 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Anas al-Burunduqi (also known as 'Ubaydullah al-Bulghari), compiled a work on Arabic grammar in Persian entitled *Sharh al-'Awamil al-Mi'a*,<sup>24</sup> which subsequently became very popular in the madrasas of Inner Russia.<sup>25</sup> A similar Persian grammar of Arabic of Central Asian origin, *Sharh 'Abdullah*, was widely copied in Tatar madrasas throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>26</sup> It seems that, beyond the abundant copies of grammatical or Sufi treatises brought from Central Asia or copied locally, the legal discourse of Inner Russia's Muslims was also partly conducted in Persian in the first half of the nineteenth century. This observation is supported by the fatwas of Mufti Muhammadjan ibn Husayn (1789–1824), dated from 1819, and of his successor 'Abd al-Salam ibn 'Abd al-Rahim (1774–1840), dated from 1833, with regard to the Islamic calendar and against the drinking of alcohol and celebrating a popular spring festival called *Sabantuy*.<sup>27</sup> Unlike many of his contemporaries, 'Abd al-Salam never studied in Bukhara, but received his religious education in Kazan and Qarghala, an important trading and cultural center near Orenburg in the Volga-Ural region.<sup>28</sup> Even a poem in praise of 'Abd al-Salam by 'Umar al-Qarghali was written almost entirely in Persian.<sup>29</sup> The same preference for Persian writing is evident in a collection of legal documents copied or authored by Fathullah al-Uriwi (1765–1843), a famous legal scholar of the era, who nonetheless preferred to write his longer legal treatises in Arabic, or sometimes in Tatar.<sup>30</sup>

Although the Arabic and Tatar languages undoubtedly dominated in the writings of Russia's Muslims in the nineteenth century, there were thus authors who regularly produced original Persian texts, including a poem in praise of the Tatar theologian and historian Shihab al-Din al-Mardjani (1818–89) and commentaries on Sufi works.<sup>31</sup> 'Abd al-Rahim al-Bulghari was among the most prolific of these authors, famous for his commentaries on the ethical works *Thabat al-'ajizin* and *Murad al-'arifin* of Sufi Allahyar (1616–1713). Both commentaries enjoyed great popularity and are known in numerous copies in state and private libraries across the country.<sup>32</sup> While residing in Bukhara between 1788 and 1803, 'Abd al-Rahim al-Bulghari penned an impressive number of works, partially in Persian. Among the latter are his lexicological commentaries on Shams al-Din al-Kuhistani's *Jami' al-rumuz*, Ahmad Sirhindi's *Maktubat*, and al-Ghazali's *Ihya 'ulum al-din*.<sup>33</sup> His key work on Sufi ethics, called *al-Sayf al-sarim*, was written half in Persian and half in Arabic and aimed to provide a picture of the ideal Muslim.<sup>34</sup>

In short, among the Muslims of the Volga-Urals in and after the seventeenth century, Persian literacy was greatly associated with scholarly credentials acquired in Central Asia. But during the nineteenth century, active production of Persian texts with no obvious links to Bukhara commenced in Tatar territory. Moreover, as early fatwas from the imperial muftiate testify, Persian also served at times as a language of legal debate.

## PERSIAN IN WESTERN SIBERIA

Among learned Central Asian migrants in western Siberia during the late seventeenth century, Persian literacy was certainly a norm.<sup>35</sup> Most of the texts produced in this migrant milieu around this period were in Persian. For example, recently at the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts in Saint Petersburg, the present author came across a short manuscript work by Dawlat Shah ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab al-Ispijafi, a migrant Yasawi Sufi shaykh who had travelled between the Central Asian city of Sayram, the Siberian town of Tobolsk, and the cities of India. He is remembered in local Siberian hagiographies as a discoverer of the sacred tombs of those who supposedly first spread Islam in western Siberia. According to these legends of Islamization, composed chiefly in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Dawlat Shah first occupied himself preaching among the Qalmyqs on the banks of Syr Darya river and then moved north in order to identify eighteen saintly graves, which then became veneration sites. Hagiographical sources also add that he collected saintly genealogies and became surrounded by local disciples (as documentary evidence attests).<sup>36</sup>

Dawlat Shah was a teacher of at least two local Siberian religious figures of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, namely, Khwajam Shukur<sup>37</sup> and Ibni Khwaja. Persian texts of their Sufi diplomas have been preserved by their families and are known from early twentieth-century copies.<sup>38</sup> In these documents, Dawlat Shah licensed his students to spread a Sufi “path” (*tariqa*), albeit without any specification as to which one. Due to the lack of sources, details of particular religious practices, and of the social context in which Dawlat Shah operated, remain a mystery. Drawing on Central Asian hagiographical sources, Devin DeWeese has identified Dawlat Shah as a Yasawi Sufi shaykh.<sup>39</sup> But it remains unclear what this Yasawi link meant for his Siberian disciples in an area where the Indian-derived Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi order soon became the dominant Sufi tradition.

Turning to comparable figures, it is striking that whereas Khwajam Shukur had previously received his “license” (*ijazat-nama*) in the Siberian city of Tobolsk, Ibni Khwaja had studied with his master in Bukhara and had been “licensed” there in around the 1680s, the latest possible date that we can calculate from a note in the copy of Ibni Khwaja’s *ijazat-nama* produced in 1920. The note in question runs as follows: “This is a license brought from Bukhara by the ancestors of the Qomarow village mullah, ‘Abd al-Jabbar Yankhujin, two hundred and thirty-three years ago.”<sup>40</sup>

Dawlat Shah al-Ispijafi authored at least two Sufi works that have survived to the present day, one of them presumably in an autograph manuscript. The first of these works is devoted to the condition of soul before its unification with the human body, and to the legitimization of listening to music (*sama*) as a mystical practice. It has survived in a late nineteenth-century copy from Tatarstan.<sup>41</sup>



FIGURE 9. From Sayram to Siberia: Dawlat Shah al-Ispijafi's *Burhan al-Zakirin*. Courtesy of Kazan University Library. MS 747 F, fols. 2b–3a.

Fortunately, this copy bears the exact date and place of its composition, namely, Tobolsk in the year 1692.

In fact, this is one of the earliest examples of an original work on Sufi rituals to have been composed in the Muscovite state. Given the rarity of such texts, it is worth briefly outlining its contents. The treatise, which might have been part of a larger work, is organized as an answer to a tempting question by one of the author's fellow Muslims (*baradaran*): did the soul exist before its unification with the body; and if so, is the memory of that preexistence passed on? Dawlat Shah answered positively: the human soul continues to carry the experience it acquired before its unification with the body, but under the evil influence of worldly life, all the perfect sounds and forms that the soul had encountered in the eternal realms come to completely disappear from its memory. Citing verses from Jalal al-Din Rumi's *Masnawi*, Dawlat Shah claimed that "cleansing" the memory of the human soul went hand in hand with the sins of this world. The only way to remember the idyllic experience of paradise is to perform the ritual of *sama'*, that is, to play musical instruments and sing beautiful songs that resemble the sounds of paradise. At this point the author made a reservation that *sama'* can be of two kinds: godly (*rahmani*) and demonic (*shaytani*). The difference lies in the participants' attitudes to the details of Shari'a, for only the strict following of even the smallest prescriptions of the religious law can guarantee the legitimacy of *sama'* as a ritual practice. Any music performed by impious persons must therefore be condemned and forbidden.

A second, somewhat larger, text by Dawlat Shah bears the title *Burhan al-Zakirin*. It has come down to us as a manuscript in his own handwriting, bearing the date Rabi‘ al-Awwal 1117 (that is, July 1705).<sup>42</sup> The text, written in Persian and Chaghatai Turkish, consists of four chapters: on the preeminence of vocal *zīkr* (remembrance of God); on Quranic verses and prophetic traditions that explain the ways of *zīkr*; on the spiritual lineages of shaykhs who practiced vocal and silent forms of *zīkr*; and on the ethical prescriptions of the Sufis (*ba‘z-i adab-i silsila*). It is clear that the external, vocal form of ritual practice was central to Dawlat Shah’s writings, and he had to defend his position against the proponents of the silent remembrance of God.

Regardless of the universality of arguments involved in this discussion, we can conclude that musical performance and a form of *zīkr* spoken aloud were part of the teaching that Dawlat Shah al-Ispijafi spread among the Muslims of Siberia. Sufi ritual practice was also a highly disputed matter in other localities of the Russian Empire. This was why Dawlat Shah’s short account had been copied somewhere in the Volga-Ural region in 1893. Other Persian texts that supported the vocal forms of *zīkr* were also composed in what is today the Perm’ region of Siberia around the turn of the seventeenth century and were similarly associated with the Yasawi Sufi tradition.<sup>43</sup> Even as late as the 1860s, Sufi groups near Tobolsk continued to practice vocal *zīkr* and public recitation of religious poems despite the warnings of their colleagues from Samarqand who contended that this did not bring due spiritual reward.<sup>44</sup>

Even so, it is doubtful that anyone actually spoke Persian in Tobolsk or its surrounding villages by the mid-nineteenth century. Written Persian was a different matter, though, and even in the 1840s, the Naqshbandi Sufis of the area who had received their education in Bukhara still used Persian to correspond with their peers back in Bukhara. An example is a letter written by ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Damulla Sayfullah al-Bukhari to his friend Damulla Khwajam Wirdi Khalifa from the village of Sausqan near Tobolsk.<sup>45</sup> We know from biographical sources that Khwajam Wirdi had studied in Bukhara with Kalan Ishan Sahibzada and had many students in Siberia before he died in his native village in 1855.<sup>46</sup>

Thus, in Siberia probably more than in the Volga-Urals, literacy in Persian remained strong until the late nineteenth century as a result of the constant migration in both directions between Transoxiana (especially Bukhara) and the mid-Irtysh Valley. The Russian imperial bureaucracy called these migrants “Siberian Bukharans” in order to designate both their place of origin and of settlement.<sup>47</sup> In fact, from quite early on, western Siberia’s religious communities were strongly bound to their peers in Central Asian centers of learning, which ensured the exchange of goods and ideas between the two regions. With its traditions of Islamic learning and Sufism, based on Persian-based literacy, Bukhara often meant more to Siberians than the great Tatar intellectual center of Kazan or any of the other Islamic centers of the Volga-Urals, not to mention Iran.

## A DAGHESTANI SHAYKH SPEAKS "BUKHARAN"

Another case of linguistic polyphony evident in our sources comes from Daghestan, a land of mountains and, in Michael Kemper's words, an "island of classical Arabic literature" in the Caucasus.<sup>48</sup> For the second half of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century, we know of a Naqshbandi-Khalidi Sufi network that united Daghestan and the Volga region via an important nodal point in Astrakhan.<sup>49</sup> A case study of this network is the Daghestani shaykh Mahmud al-Almali (1810–77), who was sent into exile by Russian officials and eventually settled in Astrakhan around the 1860s.<sup>50</sup> Not only was al-Almali able to create a large following in the city, he also integrated himself into the world of Tatar Sufis, merchants, and Muslim scholars (*'ulama*). From Astrakhan, he travelled widely in the heartlands of the Russian Empire, paid a visit to the sacred graves in the city of Bulghar near Kazan, and even married a Tatar woman, the daughter of a local saintly figure, Ibrahim Diwana. Moreover, in Tatarstan, he invited local Muslim authorities to join his Sufi lineage (*silsila*). Muhammad Zakir al-Chistawi (1815–93) was al-Almali's foremost admirer and closest friend. We know of many details of their personal contacts between 1862 and 1876 from a collection of letters that al-Almali sent to al-Chistawi, which survives in two manuscripts, one from a village in Tatarstan and another from Astrakhan.<sup>51</sup> These numerous letters discuss the phenomenon of the "double supervision" of Sufi initiates by al-Almali and al-Chistawi. Indeed, it was their joint students who preserved the letters, for the students of these two Sufi masters in turn travelled back and forth between Astrakhan and Chistopol', learning from both al-Almali and al-Chistawi.

What is striking about al-Almali's letters is that they follow the linguistic polyphony of the Islamic literature of Inner Russia. The letters start in Arabic, then move on to colloquial Turki, which is in turn broken up by al-Almali's custom of regularly quoting books in Persian. This linguistic practice was certainly not common in Daghestani writings of the period, when Arabic dominated the intellectual scene.<sup>52</sup> So al-Almali's usage of Persian is of particular interest in clearly demonstrating his deep integration into intellectual traditions and norms based on the use of written Persian, which were more accepted among the Tatar *'ulama* at the time than by their Daghestani counterparts. Not only does al-Almali's language use point to this integration, so does the list of Persian bibliographical references in his texts. For these Persian citations link the author with literary canons established in Bukharan madrasas and familiar to the Tatar students whose generation after generation were sent to study in Bukhara's "abode of knowledge."

Al-Almali was born in Shirwan and subsequently studied there. This is probably why he knew Persian so well and was able to make translations into both Persian and Chaghatai Turkish. In his letters he cited such authors as Ya'qub Charkhi (d.1447), 'Abd al-Rahman Jami (d.1492), and Ahmad Sirhindi (d. 1624), particularly his *Maktubat* (Letters), pointing to a core collection of Sufi classics that

were copied en masse by the Muslims of Russia. Such references made Mahmud al-Almali's views on Sufi practices understandable by and popular among the predominantly Tatar audience he addressed. Thus, knowledge of Persian and familiarity with the Turkic language became key factors for al-Almali's smooth integration into Inner Russia's world of scholars, Sufis, and merchants. This audience was accustomed to the trilingual literature of the Persian Sufi treatises imported from Central Asia and recopied in Tatar rural madrasas. It is not surprising, therefore, that al-Almali's letters survived mainly in the Tatar milieu, where they had been disseminated by his followers.

This Daghestani case shows the power of the Persianate cultural sphere, which required scholars from a predominantly Arabic linguistic area to orient themselves toward and adopt the references of the Persian canon of Sufi literature established in Central Asia and shared by Muslims of the Russian Empire.

### CONCLUSIONS

As this chapter's fragmentary overview has shown, the main source of inspiration for the Persianate culture that spread across the Muslim regions of imperial Russia was Bukhara. Under Russian governance, the empire's Turkic-speaking literati not only actively used and nativized classics of Persian poetry or Sufi manuals imported from Bukhara. They also contributed to maintaining a common cultural sphere across which Persian acted for centuries as a written lingua franca. In some cases, the Muslims of Russia played a significant role of intermediaries between the Arabic and Persian linguistic spheres. Suffice it to mention that the only Arabic translation of the Persian *maktubat* of Ahmad Sirhindi was made by the Tatar Naqshbandi shaykh Muhammad Murad al-Ramzi (1855–1935), who knew both Arabic and Persian very well and resided in Mecca for the last decade or so of his life.<sup>53</sup>

Among the learned Tatar Muslim subjects of imperial Russia, literacy in Persian defined the list of books and authors to be regularly cited and brought into circulation. This is why we have several thousand Persian manuscripts copied by Tatar students in Central Asia or produced in Inner Russia. But things had changed by the early twentieth century, when most Tatar students preferred to go to study in the Ottoman Empire or Egypt and thus found themselves immersed in different languages and literatures. From this point on, Persian began to be marginalized in writing, such that by the early Soviet period we encounter notes of readers that helplessly confess, "I do not understand Farsi."<sup>54</sup> During the subsequent Soviet era, students at the Mir-i 'Arab madrasa, the sole Muslim school permitted to remain open in Bukhara, received only elementary instruction in Persian and so did not engage in writing or reading Persian texts to any notable extent. Rather, in accordance with the usage of Russian academic dictionaries and the works of Soviet Orientalists, their efforts were aimed entirely at the practical ability to read Arabic texts on hadith and jurisprudence.<sup>55</sup> Today, Moscow has replaced "Bukhara the Noble" (Bukhara-yi Sharif) in attracting thousands of Central Asian migrants

(who often barely speak Russian), and written Persian has become almost nonexistent in the Muslim culture of the Russian Federation.

## NOTES

1. This chapter was written in the frame of “The Russian Language of Islam,” project no. 360–70–490 of the Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek (NWO; Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research), and of project no. 17–81–01042 a(ts) of the Russian Foundation for Basic Research (RFBR). I am grateful to its anonymous reviewers for their criticisms and fruitful suggestions. All remaining mistakes are mine.

2. For an overview of my early expedition work in western Siberia, see Alfrid Bustanov, *Knizhnaia kul'tura sibirskikh musul'man* (Moscow: Mardjani Foundation, 2013).

3. Allen J. Frank, *Bukhara and the Muslims of Russia: Sufism, Education, and the Paradox of Islamic Prestige* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

4. Institute of Language, Literature and Arts (Kazan), MS 6058, fols. 106b–107a. On the author, see Alsu Khasavnekh, *Akhmetzian Tubyli: zhizn' i tvorchestvo tatarskogo poeta-sufiia XIX veka* (Kazan, 2017).

5. So far the only comprehensive overview of Persian literature in Russia is Salim Giliuzudinov, *Persidsko-tatarskie literaturnye sviazi (X–nachalo XX vv.)* (Kazan, 2011).

6. Rebecca Gould, “The Geographies of ‘Ajām: The Circulation of Persian Poetry from South Asia to the Caucasus,” *Medieval History Journal* 18, 1 (2015): 87–119.

7. Alsu Arslanova, *Opisanie rukopisei na persidskom iazyke Nauchnoi biblioteki im. N.I. Lobachevskogo Kazanskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta*, 2 vols. (Kazan, 2005, 2015); Salim Giliuzudinov, *Opisanie rukopisei na persidskom iazyke iz khranilishcha Instituta iazyka, literatury i iskusstva*, 3 vols. (Kazan, 2002, 2006, 2007). Another catalogue of Persian manuscripts collected at the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts (the former Saint Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences) includes roughly 492 manuscripts, with about 298 titles copied in the Volga-Urals and western Siberia. See *Persidskie i tadzhikskie rukopisi Instituta narodov Azii AN SSSR*, ed. Nikolai D. Miklukho-Maklai, 2 vols. (Moscow, 1964). For an overview of the genres and popular works, see Devin DeWeese’s chapter 4 in this volume.

8. See *The Heritage of Soviet Oriental Studies*, ed. Michael Kemper and Stephan Conermann (London: Routledge, 2015).

9. For a recent overview of cataloguing efforts in Russia, see Il'ya Zaitsev, “Izuchenie i katalogizatsiia sobranii arabskikh, persidskikh i tiurkskikh rukopisei v Rossiiskoi Federatsii za istekshie 25 let (1991–2016),” [http://manuscriptaislamica.ru/storage/app/media/uploaded-files/Arabic\\_Persian\\_and\\_Turkish\\_Mss\\_Catalogue.pdf](http://manuscriptaislamica.ru/storage/app/media/uploaded-files/Arabic_Persian_and_Turkish_Mss_Catalogue.pdf).

10. The late historian Mirkasym Usmanov authored a small, but informative, account on the fate of two manuscripts (one of them in Persian) that travelled between Kazan and Eastern Turkistan. See Mirkasym Usmanov, “Knigi-puteshestvennitsy,” in *Dagestan i musul'manskii Vostok. Sbornik statei*, ed. Alikber Alikberov and Vladimir Bobrovnikov (Moscow: Mardjani Foundation, 2010), 273–79.

11. For an overview of the political importance of pious poetry in Russia, see Alfrid Bustanov, “Against Leviathan: On the Ethics of Islamic Poetry in Soviet Russia,” in *The Piety of Learning: Islamic Studies in Honor of Stefan Reichmuth*, ed. Michael Kemper and Ralf Elger (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 199–224.

12. Kazan University Library MS 189T.

13. Shihab al-Din al-Marjani, *Mustafad al-Akhbar fi Ahwal Qazan wa Bulghar* (Kazan, 1900), 187.

14. This date must be wrong given the lifetime of Yunus al-Qazani, which is not surprising given Taj al-Din’s notorious fame as a mystifier. See Allen J. Frank, *Islamic Historiography and ‘Bulghar’ Identity among the Tatars and Bashkirs of Russia* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 94.

15. Kazan University Library MS 5882 Ar., 99b–100a (a late copy by Fathullah ibn Rahmatullah produced at the madrasa of Mulla ‘Abd al-‘Alim ibn Yahuda al-Bikbawi in 1845). Both Idris Afandi and

his teacher Hidayatullah figure prominently in local “Bulgharist” hagiographies. See Frank, *Bukhara and the Muslims of Russia*, 79.

16. Alfrid Bustanov, “Rukopis’ v kontekste sibirskogo islama,” in *Kul’t sviatykh v sibirskom islame: spetsifika universal’nogo*, ed. Aleksandr Seleznev et al. (Moscow: Izdatel’skii dom Mardjani, 2009), 181. For the study of local production of Sufi texts in Eastern Turkistan see Alexander Papis’s chapter 8 in this volume.

17. Kazan University Library MS 440 F, 451 F, 473 F (copied by ‘Abd al-Khaliq ibn Mulla Ahmar al-Mamdali), 506 F (autograph?). See the descriptions in Arslanova, *Opisanie rukopisei*, 2: 455–60. Michael Kemper mentions two copies of the book in Tashkent: Kemper, *Sufis und Gelehrte in Tatarien und Baschkirien, 1789–1889: Der islamische Diskurs unter russischer Herrschaft* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 1998), 217n22.

18. Shihab al-Din al-Mardjani, *Mustafad al-Akhbar fi Ahwal Qazan wa Bulghar* (Kazan, 1900), 188. The proper spelling of al-Turki’s attributive name is unknown.

19. Kazan University Library MS 5875 Ar., fols. 82b–88b; MS 399 Ar., fols. 168b–173a. MS 399 Ar. provides a date of composure as Ramadan 15, 1014/ January 24, 1606, which must be a mistake given the dates of al-Qazani’s life. This small treatise (*mukhtasar*) is written in Arabic and Persian and contains questions posed by ‘Abd al-Karim Shirdani with answers by Yunus ibn Iwanay al-Qazani.

20. Kazan University Library MS 399 Ar., fol. 168b.

21. Especially in the mid-eighteenth century, calls for jihad appear regularly in the written form. See, e.g., a proclamation by Zayn al-‘Abidin al-Qarghali: *Rusiya müsilmannarini ikhtilalä dägvät idän khitabnamä* (1773), Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, Saint Petersburg, MS D566, fol. 1a.

22. Arslanova, *Opisanie rukopisei*, 1: 363–64; 2: 414–16. A manuscript kept at the Museum of National Culture (MS KP-14016) is peculiar, because the copyist, Bikash ibn Ish Muhammad al-Qazani, claims that he finished his work in 1015/1606 (fol. 77a), which is impossible given the date of tract’s composition.

23. Kazan University Library MS 740 F, fols. 92b–97a; Murtaza ibn Husayn al-Burali, *Risala fi bayan dar al-kharb*, Kazan University Library MS 2400 Ar., fols. 63a–68b. For more details on the issue of *dar al-harb* in Russia, see Alfrid Bustanov, “The Bulghar Region as a ‘Land of Ignorance’: Anti-Colonial Discourse in Khorezmian Connectivity,” *Journal of Persianate Studies* 9 (2016): 183–204, and Michael Kemper, “Imperial Russia as Dar al-Islam? Nineteenth-Century Debates on Ijtihad and Taqlid among the Volga Tatars,” in *Islamic Law and Society: A Global Perspective*, ed. Sabrina Joseph, *Encounters: An International Journal for the Study of Culture and Society* 6 (2015): 95–124.

24. Fakhretdin Rizaetdin, *Asar. 1 tom* (Kazan: Rukhiat, 2006), 36, provides a short biography of this author.

25. There are at least fourteen copies of the work: Arslanova, *Opisanie rukopisei na*, 2: 43–44, 51–52; Alfrid Bustanov, *Knizhnaia kul’tura sibirskikh musul’man*, 117–19; Giliazutdinov, *Opisanie rukopisei*, 1: 187–88, 2: 146–47, 3: 136–37.

26. E.g., Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, Saint Petersburg, MS B3477, an 1819 copy on Russian-manufactured paper by Sangatullah b. mulla Lutfullah al-‘Ajam. Other copies: Kazan University Library MSS 145 F, 180 F, 221 F, 261 F, 263 F, 277 F, 286 F.

27. Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, Saint Petersburg, MS B 3086, fols. 26ab; *ibid.*, MS B 4375, fols. 163b–166a, copied by Imam ‘Abd al-Hadi b. ‘Abd al-Jabbar. Rizaetdin Fakhretdinov cites only his Turkic-language writings full of Russian loanwords. See Rida al-Din ibn Fakhr al-Din, *Athar*, vol. 1, fasc. 7 (Orenburg, 1904), 352–410.

28. Robert Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar: Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 67–71, 77–78; Kemper, *Sufis und Gelehrte*, 66–77.

29. ‘Umar b. Muhammad al-Qarghali, *Tadhkira janab ‘ali shaykh al-islam wa mufti ‘Abd al-Salam b. ‘Abd al-Rahim Orenburghi Ufi*, Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, Saint Petersburg, MS B4089.

30. Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, Saint Petersburg, MS B3476, 96ff. This very important collection of legal documents was brought to Leningrad by members of the manuscript expedition, Vali

Zabirov and Sayid Vakhidi, from the scholar's home village Ura in 1934. The collection was never catalogued or mentioned in the literature. On the author and his writings, see Nathan Spannaus, “The Decline of the Akhund and the Transformation of Islamic Law under the Russian Empire,” *Islamic Law and Society* 20, 3 (2013): 372–74.

31. Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, Saint Petersburg, MS B2580, fols. 48b–50b. The author of this poem is *damullah* ‘Ubaydullah b. Rahmatullah al-Qarlawi.

32. Giliazutdinov, *Persidsko-tatarskie literaturnye*, 113–19. Private collections in the Volga-Urals and western Siberia that conserve late-nineteenth-century copies include that of Kalam al-Din Shangareev, a Soviet-era imam in Rostov-on-Don and Perm, and the library of Rafis Shaikhadarov, a present-day imam in the village Iske Baltach in northern Bashkiria.

33. Giliazutdinov, *Persidsko-tatarskie literaturnye*, 119–22.

34. Kazan University Library MS 1204–1206 Ar.; Institute of Language, Literature, and Arts (Kazan), MS 44. For a Russian translation of the work, see Utyz-Imiani Gabdrakhim, *Izbrannoe*, ed. Ramil’ Adygamov (Kazan: Tatarskoe knizhnoe izdatel’stvo, 2007), 184–236.

35. Historiography on Central Asian migrants in Siberia is abundant. To cite just a few studies: *En islam siberien*, ed. Stephane A. Dudoignon, *Cahiers du monde russe* 41, 2–3 (2000); Aleksandr Seleznev, Irina Selezneva and Igor’ Belich, *Kul’t sviatykh v sibirskom islame: spetsifika universal’nogo* (Moscow: Mardjani Foundation, 2009); Igor’ Belich, “Vsemirnaia skazka v fol’klore sibirskikh tatar (opyt istoriko-etnograficheskogo analiza),” *Etnografo-arkheologicheskie komplekсы: Problemy kul’tury i sotsiuma* 8, ed. Nikolai Tomilov (Omsk: Nauka, 2004), 63–96.

36. For more details, see Alfrid Bustanov, “Notes on the Yasaviya and Naqshbandiya in Western Siberia,” in *Islam, Society and States across the Qazaq Steppe (18th–Early 20th Centuries)*, ed. Niccolo Pianciola and Paolo Sartori (Vienna: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2013), 80–81.

37. On this person and the role of his family in the history of Islam in Siberia, see Igor’ Belich, “Pis’mennye istochiki 80-kh godov XVIII—pervoi chetverti XIX veka o pravovykh traditsiakh sibirskikh tatar,” *Etnografo-arkheologicheskie komplekсы: problemy kul’tury i sotsiuma*, vol. 10, ed. Nikolai Tomilov (Omsk: Nauka, 2009), 170–94; Alfrid Bustanov, “Sviashchennye rodoslovnye i mezhregional’nye svyazi musul’man Severnoi Evrazii: Istorii sem’i Shikhovykh v XVII–XX vv.,” in *Sufizm i musul’manskaia dukhovnaia traditsiia: teksty, instituty, idei i interpretatsii*, ed. Aleksandr Knyshev, Denis Brilev, and Oleg Yarosh (Saint Petersburg: Peterburgskoe vostokovedenie, 2015), 106–25; Zaituna Tychynskikh, *Sluzhilye tatory i ikh rol’ v formirovanii etnicheskoi obshchnosti sibirskikh tatar (XVII–XIX vv.)* (Kazan: Fan, 2010); *Zakon, obychai, shariat: materialy po pravovoi kul’ture sibirskikh tatar (XVIII–nachalo XX v.)*, ed. Gul’sifa Bakieva (Tiumen, 2013), 13–80 (prepared by Igor’ Belich and Alfrid Bustanov).

38. A resident of Tumen, Hasan khwaja b. Mir ‘Ali khwaja of Bukharan origin, possessed a Persian “genealogy” listing the locations of Shi’i shrines in Central Asia and Iran. This manuscript was copied for the historian Gerhard Miller in 1154/ 1741 and thus survived in the Archive of Ancient Acts in Moscow: see Bustanov, *Knizhnaia kul’tura sibirskikh musul’man*, 84.

39. Devin DeWeese, “The Yasawi Presence in the Dasht-i Qipchaq from the 16th to 18th Century,” in *Islam, Society and States across the Qazaq Steppe*, ed. Pianciola and Sartori, 59.

40. Kazan University Library MS 1575 T, fol. 26a. This copy of Ibn Khwaja’s diploma is nearly unintelligible: the copyist did not know Arabic and Persian and thus only mechanically reproduced what he saw in the original, which may have been the very document issued by Dawlat Shah in Bukhara.

41. Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, Saint Petersburg, A 1539, fols. 81a–85b. This manuscript was copied by ‘Abd al-Wahid ibn Ahmadi ibn Baymat ibn ‘Abdullah in 1893. In the catalogue, the location of the copy was mistakenly read as Kabul instead of Tabul (i.e., Tobolsk). See *Persidskie i tadzhikskie rukopisi Instituta narodov Azii AN SSSR*, ed. Miklukho-Maklai, 1: 508.

42. Kazan University Library MS 429 F, fols. 1a–34a. First description of the manuscript: Arslanova, *Opisanie rukopisei*, 2: 731–32.

43. Kazan University Library MS 747 F, fols. 27b–35a. Cf. Devin DeWeese, foreword to *Sobranie fetv po obosnovaniiu zikra dzhakhr i sama*, ed. Bakhtiyar Babadzhanov and S. Mukhammadaminov (Almaty: Daik-Press, 2008), 10–11.
44. Bustanov, *Knizhnaia kul'tura sibirskikh musul'man*, 97–100.
45. This letter, dated from Zu al-Qāda 1256/December 1840–January 1841, is preserved in the private library of Abbas Bibarsov in the Penza region.
46. Alfrid Bustanov, “Abd al-Rashid Ibrahim’s Biographical Dictionary on Siberian Islamic Scholars,” *Kazan Islamic Review* 1 (2015): 28–29, 67.
47. Erika Monahan, *The Merchants of Siberia: Trade in Early Modern Eurasia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016).
48. Michael Kemper, “An Island of Classical Arabic in the Caucasus: Daghestan,” in *Exploring the Caucasus in the 21st Century: Essays on Culture, History and Politics in a Dynamic Context*, ed. François Compañen, László Marác, and Lia Versteegh (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 63–90.
49. See esp. Shamil’ Shikhaliev and Michael Kemper, “Sayfullah-Qadi Bashlarov: Sufi Networks between the North Caucasus and the Volga-Urals,” in *The Piety of Learning: Islamic Studies in Honor of Stefan Reichmuth*, ed. Michael Kemper and Ralf Elger (Leiden: Brill, 2017): 166–98.
50. Michael Kemper, “al-‘Almāli, Mahmūd,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd ed., ed. G. Krämer, D. Matringe, J. Nawas, and E. Rowson (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 29–31.
51. Kazan University Library MS 1TGF, fols. 55b–130a (copied by Ahmad al-Utiyami in 1886); Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, Saint Petersburg, MS B3575, 32b–33a, 41b–42a, 57a, 78a, 79a, 80a–84b, and 90b–91a (copied by ‘Abd al-Wahhab al-Hajji-Tarkhani). For an overview of these letters, see Alfrid Bustanov, “Sufizm bez granits: pis'ma Daghestanskogo shaikha Makhmuda al-Almali v Chistopol” in *Istoricheskie sud'by narodov Povolzh'ia i Priural'ia*, ed. Ildus Zagidullin, vol. 5 (Kazan, 2015), 51–66.
52. Amri R. Shikhsaidov, “Sammlungen arabischer Handschriften in Daghestan,” in *Muslim Culture in Russia and Central Asia from the 18th to the Early 20th Centuries*, ed. Michael Kemper, Anke von Kuegelgen, and Dmitriy Yermakov (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 1996), 297–315.
53. Abdulsait Aykut, “The Intellectual Struggle of Murad Ramzi (1855–1935): An Early 20th Century Eurasian Muslim Author” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, 2015).
54. National Library of the Republic of Tatarstan, Kazan, MS 757T (copied in 1845), fol. 39b.
55. Eren Tasar, “The Official Madrasas of Soviet Uzbekistan,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 59, 1–2 (2016): 265–302.