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# Problematizing the World of the Muslim Tatars of the Russian Empire and Beyond

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This paper attempts to problematize the formation and history of the present-day Tatars (with a focus on the Kazan Tatars) by examining several elements of continuity and discontinuity. The elements of continuity over the past thousand years include classical Muslim networks, commercial networks, and later Sufi networks. The elements of discontinuity include the arrival of new tribes as a part of the establishment of the Mongol World Empire in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the depopulation and disruption caused by the Black Death in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and the arrival of new tribes from the east in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century. Although the ancestors of the modern Kazan Tatars were involved in classical transregional networks beginning a millennium ago, from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century on, they became involved in new pre-modern and modern movements. This included transregional Orthodox Muslim networks, but later also movements associated with modernity such as the decoupling of education, language, history, and identity from the religious sphere. Finally, it describes briefly a series of individuals who left the Russian Empire to go into exile or became a part of Tatar merchant diaspora communities. Whoever they were, whatever level of education they had, whatever their occupation, Tatars, and scholars of Tatar origin, were involved in transregional social, economic, and intellectual connections. Ismail Gasprinskiy, who is today considered by Crimean Tatars as one of their own, was actually trying to create a larger non-territorial Muslim Turkic identity while also stressing education and a broader imagined community through the newspaper which he founded. Some other scholars, especially Shihab al-Din al-Marjani and Murad Ramzi,

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even contributed to global Islamic civilization transcending their own ethnic group.

### 1. The History of the Tatars in Pre-Modern Eurasia

The formation of the people and modern nation we know today as the “Kazan Tatars” took place over a long period of time going back well over a millennium. (In such studies they are often called the “Volga Tatars” or the “Volga-Ural Tatars”.) The best-known Euro-American survey on this subject focuses on the theme of national resilience going back to the time of the Volga Bulgars.<sup>1</sup> Usually, however, monographic studies of their history tend to focus on the period beginning in the late 18<sup>th</sup>-early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. In the past two decades or so, scholars have focused on the important role Tatars played in the Russian Empire in several distinct spheres. One of these has been the role of Tatars in religious communities.<sup>2</sup> Another focus has been Tatar intellectual history.<sup>3</sup> Still other scholars have focused on the role of Tatars in the commercial life of the Russian Empire.<sup>4</sup> To what extent, however, has the historical formation of the Kazan Tatars been problematized?

There are a number of issues that I think are relevant to consider in future research on the formation of the modern Kazan Tatars. These should include Muslim religious and commercial networks going back over a thousand years; the role of the arrival of new Turkic and Mongol tribes in the 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> centuries; the role of the Black

<sup>1</sup> Azade-Ayşe Rorlich, *The Volga Tatars. A Profile in National Resilience* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1986).

<sup>2</sup> See for example Allen J. Frank, *Islamic historiography and “Bulghar” identity among the Tatars and Bashkirs of Russia*, (Leiden: Brill, 1998); and Agnès Nilüfer Kefeli, *Becoming Muslim in Imperial Russia: Conversion, Apostasy, and Literacy* (Ithaca-London: Cornell University Press, 2014).

<sup>3</sup> See my “The Formation of a Tatar Historical Consciousness: Şihabâddin Mârcani and the Image of the Golden Horde”, *Central Asian Survey* 9, no. 2 (1990): 39-49; and *Şihabeddin Mârcani: In Honor of the Two Hundredth Anniversary of His Birth*, Editors: Ä. Muşinskiy and L. Şäyex; Russian translator: T. Kazaçenko; Tatar translator: İ. Xäliullin (Kazan: Tatarstan PEN Club and Tatarstan kitap nâşriyatı, 2019); and Nathan Taby Spannaus, “Islamic Thought and Revivalism in the Russian Empire: An Intellectual Biography of Abū Nasr Qūrsāwī (1776-1812)”, Ph.D. dissertation (McGill University, 2012). This dissertation has resulted in a newly-published book: Nathan Spannaus, *Preserving Islamic Tradition: Abu Nasr Qursawi and the Beginnings of Modern Reformism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

<sup>4</sup> See Mustafa Tuna, *Imperial Russia's Muslims: Islam, Empire and European Modernity, 1788-1914*, *Critical Perspectives on Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

Death (mid-14<sup>th</sup> century and later) in the depopulation (including the virtual disappearance of the Volga Bulğars) of this region; the subsequent rebound in the population of the Middle Volga region beginning in the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century; the related emergence of smaller khanates such as the Khanate of Kazan in a geography with a much smaller population (presumably) than a century earlier; the growing role of Sufi networks beginning with the time of the Golden Horde which continued (with or without disruption?) down to the late 19<sup>th</sup> - early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries; the role of the Little Ice Age (say in the 16<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, but with a climatic downturn first beginning in the 1280s), and finally the role of modernity and the rise of nationalism, which is inextricably linked to it. What we can see in later periods but which no doubt existed in earlier periods as well were merchant diasporas. All of these lent a special character to the formation of the Kazan Tatars, as I will outline below.

The first issue we need to consider is the long history of Muslim religious and commercial networks. As I have argued elsewhere, it would be difficult to separate these two from one another.<sup>5</sup> The earliest evidence for Muslim networks in the Middle Volga region is provided, of course, in the record of his trip by the 10<sup>th</sup> century traveler Ahmad Ibn Fadlān.<sup>6</sup> Ibn Fadlān's trip around 921-922 CE was an embassy sent by the Caliph in Baghdad to the king of the Volga Bulğars. His route took him through the land of the Ğuzz (including Turkmenistan of today) all the way north to the land of the Volga Bulğars. The Volga Bulğars were only partially sedentarized and had already converted to Islam by the time of the arrival of Ibn Fadlān's embassy.

Later, following the establishment of the Mongol World Empire, the vibrant commercial life in the Golden Horde in the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century can be seen especially from the account of William of Rubruck, who traveled from Sinop in northern Anatolia to Soldaia (Sudak) in

<sup>5</sup> See my "Muslim Networks in Central Eurasia during the Golden Horde and the Later Golden Horde", in *Türkistan jäne türkologiya. Xalıqaralıq ğılımy-teoriyalıq konferentsiya materialdarmın jıynaǵı* (21 naurız 2017 j.) (Türkistan, 2017), 6-10.

<sup>6</sup> The first full edition and translation of this work was by A. Zeki Validi Togan, *Ibn Fadlān's Reisebericht*, *Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 23 (Leipzig, 1939). In English see most recently Ahmad ibn Fadlān, *Mission to the Volga*, trans. James. E. Montgomery, *Library of Arabic Literature* 28 (New York: New York University Press, 2017).

Crimea in 1253.<sup>7</sup> Although he was on a diplomatic mission himself, he was traveling in the company of merchants and it is clear from his account that the infrastructure of the Golden Horde was organized to support commerce.

The best parallel to the travelogues of Ibn Fadlān's and William of Rubruck in the 14<sup>th</sup> century is offered by the account of Ibn Battūta.<sup>8</sup> In his classic travel account, Ibn Battūta allows us a much more detailed insight into Muslim networks in Eurasia in the 1330s. He traveled through the territory of the Golden Horde around January 1333 and left us descriptions of mosques, religious judges, and Sufi hospices (*zāwiya*). He described religious officials in the towns of Qırım, Azaq, and al-Māchar as well as in Khwarezm. His description of Saray (presumably the later Saray Berke or *al-Sarā(y) al-cadīd* in his account) somewhat later reveals the city to have been a remarkable center of Islamic civilization attracting religious scholars from Central Asia, the North Caucasus, Egypt, and beyond. This remarkable religious infrastructure in the steppe could not have been built without deep support from the state and reliance upon extensive religious networks.

We also understand from Ibn Battūta that there existed in this territory by his time a significant Sufi network, which would have been one of those elements of a transregional Islamic civilization which was imported to Saray and other parts of the Golden Horde via Central Asia. The religious devotion of Özbek Khan and other members of the Golden Horde élite was most certainly inspired and promoted by these same scholars and religious teachers whom Ibn Battūta describes. The same network would have had a commercial aspect as well since itinerant religious scholars (whether they were Sufis or not) probably participated in commerce as a part of their livelihood. Thus we see that there were networks from the 10<sup>th</sup> century CE (perhaps when they were first opening up) which became even more vibrant in the 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is these medieval networks

<sup>7</sup> For his account see for example William of Rubruck, "The Journey of William of Rubruck", in *Mission to Asia*, trans. A. Nun of Stanbrook Abbey, ed. C. Dawson (London, 1955/Toronto, 1980), 89-220.

<sup>8</sup> For his account of the Golden Horde, see Ibn Battūta, trans. H.A.R. Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, A.D. 1325-1354*, i-iii, Works Issued by the Hakluyt Society, II, 110, 117, and 141 (Cambridge, 1958-1971), 470-549.

that I suspect continued down to the 19<sup>th</sup> century when it was clear that Tatar merchants were playing an important role in the Russian Empire's commerce with Turkistan.

The network of Sufi orders for which Ibn Battūta and other sources offer indirect evidence for the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century plus the example of the devotion of Ozbek Khan and other personages is only the beginning of a long period of influence by Sufi orders on ancestors of the Kazan Tatars. At first, the Yasaviya order (*tariqat*) is prominent in the region, including in the Khanate of Kazan. This can be seen from the tradition of religious literature in praise of Ahmad Yasavi which is documented for the time of the Khanate of Kazan. In this regard, I can mention the example of the *Qissa-i Hubbi Xoca* of Kul Shārif, which is the story of Hubbi Xoca (or Sultan Hubbi), third son of Hakim Ata Süleyman (who is the *naib* 'deputy' of Hoca Ahmad Yasavi) and Ganbar Ana.<sup>9</sup> This is clear documentation of the strong presence of the Yasavi tradition in the Khanate of Kazan in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>10</sup> From this time on, we see the legacy of the Yasavi order continuing among the Tatars of the Middle Volga region down to modern times.

Later, at some point following the conquest of the Khanate of Kazan by Muscovy in 1552, the Naqshbandi order would begin to become prominent in the Middle Volga region. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it is clear that we cannot understand "Tatar Islam" without understanding that there was a profound Naqshbandi imprint on Tatar Islam through the education which young Tatars received in Samarkand, Bukhara, Balkh, and other centers of religious education in Central Asia. Of course, this *tariqat* was also active in the Volga-Ural region. This is described most clearly in Hamid Algar's study of Shaykh Zaynullah Rasulev.<sup>11</sup> The work of Agnès Kefeli-Clay also helps us understand how the spread of Islamic education among the forcibly-converted

<sup>9</sup> Kol Şārif, "Kıyssa-i Xöbbi Xuca", in *İ küñel bu dönyadır. Gazällär, kıyssa / Kul Sharif, Hizn' zhestoka, no prekrasna... Gazeli, kissa* (Kazan: Tatarstan kitap nāşriyatı, 1997), 43-53.

<sup>10</sup> See also the references to studies on the Yasavi legacy in Tatar literature in Th. Zarcone, "Yasawiyya", in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Accessed on 13 November 2019.

<sup>11</sup> Algar, Hamid, "Shaykh Zaynullah Rasulev: The Last Great Naqshbandi Shaykh of the Volga-Urals Region", in *Muslims in Central Asia. Expression of Identity and Change*, ed. Jo-Ann Gross (Durham, 1992), 112-133.

Krāshen is also evidence of the activities of the Naqshbandi order in the Middle Volga region.<sup>12</sup>

Turning our attention to the arrival of Turkic and Mongolian tribes during the period of the establishment of the Golden Horde in the 1230s, we should consider that this also meant the introduction of a new tribal system into the region. If I am not mistaken, it appears that the earlier tribal composition of the western regions of the *ulus* of Jochi (or “Golden Horde”, which is a later term)—which I believe was actually called the White Horde (*Aq orda*)—consisted of the Qongrat, Qiyat, Mangıt, and Sicivut tribes. Later, when Toqtamış arrived in the western lands towards the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, he was accompanied by the Shirin, Arğın, Barın, and Qipchaq tribes.<sup>13</sup> Modern knowledge of these earlier tribes can only be derived from older family genealogies (*shācārā*), toponyms, or archival sources, since knowledge of one’s tribal background among modern Kazan Tatars has faded away more or less completely. Once these various tribes settled down to a sedentary way of life, one way in which the role of tribal genealogy and exogamy was continued was in the practice of a man marrying a woman from outside his native village. In this regard, the gatherings known as *ciyim* served an important function in allowing young men from one village to meet young women from other villages.

Although there are several ways in which I am arguing for continuity in the formation of the Kazan Tatars from the 13<sup>th</sup> century to modern times, there was, in fact, one strong element of disruption we must mention as well, namely the Black Death beginning in the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The waves of bubonic plague caused by the spread of the bacteria *Yersinia pestis*, which would continue in various episodes over the next centuries, led to political disruption in the form of the collapse of the Golden Horde and the rise of competing Chinggisid and tribal figures, sudden severe depopulation, and quite likely a role in the repopulation of this region played by the new tribes arriving with Tokhtamysh. (I term this period the “Later Golden Horde”.) In this regard, I would propose that this change in tribal composition (namely the displacement of the earlier tribes

<sup>12</sup> *Becoming Muslim in Imperial Russia: Conversion, Apostasy, and Literacy.*

<sup>13</sup> See my *Plemennaya politika i sotsial’noe ustroystvo v Zolotoy Orde, İstoriya i kul’tura Zolotoy Ordı i tatarskix xanstv* 27. Russian translation by Ç.İ. Xamidova and Roman Hautala (Kazan: İnstitut istorii im. Ş. Mardjani AN RT, 2019), 166-167.

by the Shirin, Arğın, Barın, and Qipchaq) is also suggestive of discontinuity in the population of the Middle Volga region occurring in the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, i.e. from the period of the Volga Bulğars prior to the Mongol conquests through the earlier Golden Horde to the later period of the Khanate of Kazan. Not only did the Volga Bulğars more or less disappear in the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century, but probably a certain portion of the tribes in the western territories of the Golden Horde must also have suffered a decline in population, too. (One can say the same for the Crimean Tatars, too, though they had a different substratum other than the Volga Bulğars with whom they were in contact.)

For this reason, despite the fact that there was a body of local literature (I hesitate to call it historiography) in the 18<sup>th</sup> century advocating that the Tatars were Bulğars, I believe, in fact, that the Bulğars were probably decimated by the Black Death. Certainly, the Volga Bulgarian epigraphic language ceased to be used after 1356, after which time tombstones in the Middle Volga region began to be written using the Old Tatar language.<sup>14</sup> The literature of the Golden Horde also comes to a sudden end in the 1360s.

Another issue which is ultimately related to the rise of epidemic disease is the climatic downturn beginning in the 1280s and especially the climatic minimum in the 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>15</sup> This is a period when European paintings regularly depict scenes of severe winter landscapes and the Thames and other rivers, even the Bosphorus, froze solid. I have suggested recently that the attacks of the Shibanids from their home territory in Tobolsk and Tūmen began in a year in which there is a sharply cold winter. Nomads relying on their herds of horses, flocks of sheep and other animals

<sup>14</sup> See my "Gravestones and the History of Medieval Tatar Civilization: A Brief Overview" ("Nadgrobynye kamni i istoriya srednevekovoy tatarskoy tsivilizatsii: Kratkiy obzor"), in *Islam i tyurkskiy mir: Problemy obrazovaniya, yazyka, literatury, istorii i religii. Materialy VIII mezhdunarodnoy tyurkologicheskoy konferentsii (Islam and Turkic World: Problems of Education, Language, Literature, History and Religion. Materials of VIII International Turkic Conference)* (Kazan: Yelabuga Institute of Kazan Federal University-Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University, 2016), 76-80.

<sup>15</sup> See my "Climate Change in Central Eurasia and the Golden Horde", *Golden Horde Review / Zolotoordinskoe obozrenie* 4, no. 1 (2016): 6-25; and "Climate Change, Disease, and the History of Western Siberia in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods", in *Materiali Vserossiyskogo (s mejdunarodnim učastiem) simpoziuma "Kul'turnoe nasledie narodov Zapadnoy Sibiri: sibirskie tatary", posvyashçennogo 100-letiyu Foata Toaç-Axemetoviça i 20-letiyu Sibirskogo simpoziuma "Kul'turnoe nasledie narodov Zapadnoy Sibiri" (10-12 dekabrya 2018 g.)*, ed. Z.A. Tiçinskix (Tobol'sk, 2019), 180-188.

began to find it very difficult to survive. I believe that this was the reason for many movements to the south by nomads.

In the sedentary region of the Middle Volga the severe winters which are now typical must have meant that the diet changed, too. In modern times wheat and corn (a post-Columbian crop) are grown in the Volga region, but it is possible that not even rye could be grown during this period. According to Iskändär Gilyazov, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century millet was the most common grain grown in the Middle Volga region.<sup>16</sup> The warming of the climate after 1800 could have led to new prosperity in the agricultural communities of the Middle Volga region. Could this new prosperity also have led to an increase in the number of young Tatars sent to study Islam in the medreses of Bukhara, Samarkand, and beyond?

One of the great transformations in Tatar civilization beginning around 1800 is the emergence of a bundle of phenomena ultimately associated later in the century with modernity. It is not clear whether this is simply because of roughly two and a half centuries of living under colonial rule (including at times religious persecution) following the conquest of the Khanate of Kazan, or whether there were some other forms of transmission, perhaps through the Ottoman Empire or another path. (This topic requires further research by appropriately-trained scholars.) Whereas before 1800 it is difficult to speak of Tatars who are advocating change or “reform” in various spheres (religious practice, religious and later secular education, publishing, identity, and other areas), this definitely begins to come into view around 1800. Over the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, we see the emergence of a wide range of views—differing from one person to another—rejecting some aspects of traditional religious practice, religious education, and other matters as well. While this has been labeled by the binary of “Jadidism” (from Arabic *jadīd* ‘new’) versus “Qadimism” (from Arabic *qadīm* ‘old’), this has been misleading in many ways and has led to unfair recent criticism of even the validity of the study of modernity itself among the Muslim Turks of the Russian Empire.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Personal communication.

<sup>17</sup> See the relevant articles in the *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 59, no 1-2 (2016).



During the time of the Khanate of Kazan and later between 1552 and 1800, during the expansion of Russia's trade with the Kazakh Steppe and later Turkistan, Muslim Tatar merchants played an active role.<sup>18</sup> By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there are sufficient sources to be aware of merchants who had ties to Central Asia, in some cases with one family in Turkistan and another family in the Middle Volga region. In this regard, I think we can speak of a Tatar merchant diaspora which began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (or much earlier?) and left its mark in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in places far removed from one another such as Helsinki, Istanbul, Harbin, and Kyoto.

What we see—and the way in which I will organize the rest of my paper—is the emergence of a series of figures who can exemplify these various transregional trends and developments.

## 2. Ūtiz-Īmānī

One well-known example of a young Tatar who studied in Bukhara at the beginning of his career was Abdarraḥīm Ūtiz-Īmānī al-Bulḡārī (1754-1834), who would later become well known as a poet and scholar. His life and works have been studied by the great Tatar literary scholar and historian Mirkasim Usmanov.<sup>19</sup> Usmanov, who is very sympathetic to Ūtiz-Īmānī (perhaps overly so), considered him to have been a transitional figure who represented a link between two distinct periods of Tatar culture. He portrayed him as an important early social reformer who advocated education and rejected much of what he saw of the life and professional activities of the Muslim clerics of Bukhara. He also credits Ūtiz-Īmānī with an important role in the rejection of the closure of independent interpretation of the Qur'an (Arabic *ijtihād*), though I must say that his argument is not very convincing on this point. In contrast, Nathan Spannaus, for one, sees Ūtiz-Īmānī as a staunch traditionalist scholar opposed to *ijtihād*.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> See the contribution by Iskander Gilyazov, Gul'nara Zinnyatova, and Mami Xamamoto, "4. Torgovlya", in *Istoriya Tatar s drevneysix vremen v semi tomax, v: Tatarskiy narod v sostave Rossiyskogo gosudarstva (vtoraya polovina XVI-XVIII vv.)* (Kazan: Institute istorii AN RT, 2014), 476-491. See also Matthew P. Romaniello, *The Elusive Empire: Kazan and the Creation of Russia, 1552-1671* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012).

<sup>19</sup> Mirkasym Gosmanov, "Gabderäxim Utiz Īmāni äI-Bolḡari: Çor, icat häm miras", in *Ūtkännän - kiläçäkkä* (Kazan, 1990), 199-263.

<sup>20</sup> See for example Spannaus, "Islamic Thought and Revivalism in the Russian Empire", 46 and 139.

Usmanov considers that Ūtiz-Īmānī traveled to Bukhara not because he was interested solely in obtaining the certificate which would allow him to pursue a career as a teacher, but rather in search of deeper learning in a Muslim land which was not a part of the infidel Russian empire. (Today, when I read these lines again, I may say that Usmanov's views say just as much—perhaps even more—about the time and circumstances under which he led his own life rather than Ūtiz-Īmānī...) Usmanov believes that Ūtiz-Īmānī was devastated by two separate factors: the death of his beloved wife and the disillusionment he suffered in Bukhara. According to Usmanov, his ultimate disappointment in Bukhara led Ūtiz-Īmānī to seek knowledge further afield in Samarkand and even in Balkh, Kabul, and Herat. After ten years in Bukhara, first as a student and later as a teacher, he left Central Asia to return to his homeland in 1795.

Usmanov's positive portrayal of Ūtiz-Īmānī is based in part upon two works. One of them, the *Tuhfāt ul-ghurabā' wa-latā'it ul-ghaza'*, includes a description of the four categories of students in Bukhara.<sup>21</sup> The first category is the "Stupid Rich Youth" who, despite the admonitions given him, falls under the influence of the religious teachers who spend all their time running to their next meal. Because of such a lifestyle, any opportunity for real learning is wasted. The rich youth remains close to his teachers only as long as his money does not run out. The second category is the "Smart Rich Youth" who does not fall under the sway of the religious teachers, but then runs the risk of being denounced to the police as a spy. The third category is the "Handsome Poor Youth" who falls prey sexually to the religious teachers. The fourth category is the "Modest, Honest Poor Fellow" who cannot attract the attention of the religious teachers because he is not rich. If he falls ill, he will not have the money to be taken care of or even to be buried. In the view of Ūtiz-Īmānī catastrophe awaits all four of these students. Usmanov believes that Ūtiz-Īmānī's authorship of such lines shortly before his departure after a ten-year sojourn in Bukhara reflected his judgment that he had wasted his time there. According to Usmanov, however,

<sup>21</sup> Gosmanov, "Gabderāxim Utiz Īmāni āl-Bolgarī", 209-215. For additional details see my "İctihād or Millāt? Reflections on Bukhara, Kazan, and the Legacy of Russian Orientalism", in *Reform Movements and Revolutions in Turkistan: 1900-1924. Studies in Honour of Osman Khoja / Türkistan'da Yenilik Hareketleri ve İhtilaller: 1900-1924. Osman Hoca Anısına İncelemeler*, ed. Timur Kocaoğlu (Haarlem: SOTA, 2001), 347-368.

Ūtiz-Īmānī would continue to advocate knowledge and learning throughout his career. This is supported by some additional lines of poetry which Usmanov cites.

In the end, the characterization of Ūtiz-Īmānī by Usmanov—a great scholar of Tatar history and literature—as an enlightener (*prosvetitel'* ‘enlightener’ being the preferred apolitical unanalytical term used by Soviet-era scholars to describe a wide range of figures in this period) must be considered deeply problematic, especially since Spannaus describes him as an enemy of Qursavi, the figure to whom I will turn next. Ūtiz-Īmānī serves as just one representative of a large number of Tatar students who left the Volga-Ural region to travel Turkistan to deepen their knowledge of Islam. At the same time, he is also a good example of the limits of Soviet-era interpretations of “enlighteners”, a term which masks the actual views of earlier Muslim Tatar figures whose views are not accurately presented because of political exigencies of the time. For this reason, the Soviet-era interpretations of all these figures need to be completely recast.

### 3. Abu Nasr Qursavi

Another important Tatar intellectual who spent a period of time in Bukhara was Abu Nasr Qursavi (1776-1812). A great step forward in the study of this scholar and his writings is the dissertation of Nathan Spannaus, who studied a broad range of published and unpublished works by Qursavi to rescue him from obscurity and contextualize him against the backdrop of 18<sup>th</sup>-century scholars in the Hicāz placing “their primary emphasis on hadith scholarship and the importance of *ijtihād* to the exclusion of *taqlīd*”.<sup>22</sup>

According to Spannaus, Qursavi left for Bukhara around 1800 for his education. In Bukhara, he was initiated into the transregional Naqshbandi-Mucaddidiya order. Around four years later he returned to be the imam and religious teacher in the mosque of the village where he was born. He returned to Bukhara in 1808, where he debated his views with local scholars in the presence of the Bukharan Emir Haydar himself. His criticism of local religious scholars concerning the divine attributes led the emir to sentence him to death for heresy. He escaped execution by repenting and fled Bukhara to avoid further punishment. He continued to be hounded

<sup>22</sup> Spannaus, “Islamic Thought and Revivalism in the Russian Empire”, 14.

by criticism of his views once he was back in Kazan. Official complaints accusing him of being an infidel and of corrupting the teachings of the faith were lodged against him. He died a few short years later of cholera in Istanbul while on his way to the Hajj after he was practically driven out of Kazan.<sup>23</sup>

Qursavi's views were indeed characterized by an advocacy of a sound belief based upon personal interpretation of the Qur'an and he opposed *taqlid*, or "the acceptance of another's position or assertion (*qawf*) without evidence (*dalil*)".<sup>24</sup> But as Spannaus rightly notes, Qursavi's reasoning was based completely on classical Islamic methods understood best against the backdrop of the diverse transregional world of post-classical Islamic thought in the 18<sup>th</sup>-early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Those later thinkers who saw him as a modernist thinker following later methods rejecting traditional Islamic methods were attributing such views to him anachronistically.<sup>25</sup> Therefore while he served as an inspiration for the later Jadids, he was not one of them. Nevertheless, he was another outstanding example of the transregional movement of ideas in this period in the Islamic world of Eurasia and Qursavi's role as a participant in that movement of ideas.

#### 4. Qayyum Nasiri

An important new phase is represented by the career of Qayyum Nasiri (1805-1902). While there are scholars who call him the "father of the Tatar nation", this is very misleading in my view. Nasiri was the Tatar analog of the folklorists and philologists who strove to create a modern literary language across Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He wrote about Tatar ethnography, he wrote a grammar of the Tatar language, he created a regular annual publication called *Kalendar* or *Taqvim* (which I have never had the opportunity to peruse), etc. In my view, he was striving to create a modern Tatar literary language. In this regard, he fits neatly in the first phase of Miroslav Hroch's Phase A:

Activists strive to lay the foundation for a national identity. They research the cultural, linguistic, social, and sometimes historical attributes of a non-dominant group in order to raise awareness of

<sup>23</sup> Spannaus, "Islamic Thought and Revivalism in the Russian Empire", 41.

<sup>24</sup> Spannaus, "Islamic Thought and Revivalism in the Russian Empire", 112.

<sup>25</sup> Spannaus, "Islamic Thought and Revivalism in the Russian Empire", 223-226.

the common traits—but they do this “without pressing specifically national demands to remedy deficits.”<sup>26</sup>

But this is also a far cry from the time of Ūtiz-Īmānī and Qursavi, for whom literacy was largely for learning the Qur’an, Islamic sciences, and poetry. In contrast, Qayyum Nasiri was trying to establish a secular literary language for writing non-religious prose texts.

### 5. Shihab al-Din al-Marjani

The next person on whom I would like to focus is Shihab al-Din al-Marjani (1818-1889), who is often considered the greatest scholar among the Muslims of the Russian Empire in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He had many dedicated disciples and has been the subject of more extensive scholarly attention than Ūtiz-Īmānī and Qursavi.<sup>27</sup> Like the two earlier scholars, he also spent a period of study in his youth in Bukhara and Samarkand. Apparently, Marjani was dissatisfied with his course of instruction and instead spent most of his time in libraries. While in Bukhara, he wrote a work critical of the scholasticism and ignorance of the religious class in Bukhara. He also called upon Tatar youth to refrain from pursuing a religious education in Bukhara and to study worldly (i.e., secular) subjects. Quite cleverly, he had this book distributed only upon his departure from Bukhara in order to avoid the fate that befell Qursavi. Among the other works he produced while in Bukhara was a work expressing his support for the ideas of Qursavi.

In the case of Marjani, there is no question that he followed wholeheartedly in Qursavi’s footsteps and advocated reopening “independent interpretation” as well as rejecting *taqlīd*. Indeed, Spannaus argues that had there been no Marjani, Qursavi’s reputation may never have recovered. It seems that part of what Marjani did was build a career by embracing Qursavi. (Nothing wrong with that...)

<sup>26</sup> See Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe: A Comparative Analysis of the Social Composition of Patriotic Groups Among the Smaller European Nations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

<sup>27</sup> On Marjani see: Mirkasıym Gosmanov, “Mārcani turında ber niçä süz”, *Ūtkännän - kiläçäkkä*, 7-19; Michael Kemper, “Şihābaddīn al-Margānī als Religionsgelehrter”, in *Muslim Culture in Russia and Central Asia from the 18th to the Early 20th Centuries*, ed. Michael Kemper et alia, *Islamkundliche Untersuchungen 200* (Berlin, 1996), 129-165; Ahmet Kanlıdere, “Mercānī”, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, volume 29 (Ankara : Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2004.), 169-172; and most recently my *Şihābeddin Mārcani: In Honor of the Two Hundredth Anniversary of His Birth*.

Marjani's advocacy of secular education, including the study of the Russian language, was a more significant departure from the views held by his predecessors. Through his works and disciples, these ideas gained wide circulation. The question of how these ideas might have influenced later reformers in Bukhara requires further study. Hélène Carrère d'Encausse famously offers the following description of Marjani's program:<sup>28</sup>

1. Freedom of *ijtihād* or interpretation of religious law; individuals must make their own responses to every question, based on their own understanding of the Qur'an.
2. Abandonment of blind submission to the traditional authorities (*taqlid*).
3. Rejection by the medreses of books of scholastic, conservative philosophy.
4. Introduction into the medreses of the teaching of the Qur'an, the Ḥadīth, and the history of Islam.
5. Introduction to the medreses of the teaching of science and the Russian language.
6. Return to Islamic culture and the purity of early Islam.

Carrère d'Encausse's description is drawn from early Soviet scholarship, namely Arsharuni and Gabidullin's *Oçerki panislamizma i pantyurkizma v Rossii* published in 1931. Such a characterization of Marjani's views - which is itself attributed in Arsharuni and Gabidullin's work to 'Abderrahman Sa'di's history of Tatar literature published five years earlier in 1926 has become, for better or worse, a classic description of Marjani's contribution. I hope to return to the question of Marjani's revised medrese curriculum and educational program in the future.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> See Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, trans. Quintin Hoare, *Islam and the Russian Empire. Reform and Revolution in Central Asia*, Comparative Studies on Muslim Societies 8 (Berkeley, 1988), 58. I have also discussed this issue in my "İctihad or Millät? Reflections on Bukhara, Kazan, and the Legacy of Russian Orientalism". See also Spannaus "Islamic thought and revivalism in the Russian Empire", 2-7.

<sup>29</sup> For a discussion and outline of the two versions of the curriculum in Marjani's medrese, which was considered the best in the region, see Şihâb ad-dîn al-Marcânî, *Nażûrat al-haqq fi farđiyat al- 'işâ' wa-in lam yağib aş-şafaq*, editors Ürxân b. İdris Ancqâr [Orhan Ençakar] and 'Abd al-Qâdir b. Salcûq Yilmâz [Abdülkadir Yılmaz] (Amman: Dâr al-Fath and Istanbul: Daru'l-Hikme, 2012), 28-32; and *Haqq al-mâ rifa wa-husn al-idrâk bi-mâ yalzam fi wucûb al-fitr wa-l-imsâk wa-talihâ rasâ'il uxrâ*, editor Lu'ayy b. 'Abd ar-Ra'ûf al-Xalîlî l-Hanafî (Amman: Dâr al-Fath, 2016), 24-26.

Let us review what is relevant here for understanding the development of thought among the Tatars living in the Russian Empire. Perhaps Ūtiz-Īmānī did promote knowledge and condemn the Bukharan mullahs, but he was still a conservative religious scholar who did not embrace new ideas, let alone advocate any kind of reforms. Qursavi promoted, within a classical framework and possibly under the influence of the Hicāz School identified by John Voll, the importance of the study of the Qur'an and the Ḥadīth first hand rather than simply accepting the opinions of others, in other words rejecting *taqlīd*. Marjani goes way beyond this by developing a theory of education that embraces elements of secular education, even the study of secular sciences and the Russian language. This is clear evidence of the imprint of modernity on Marjani as far as the separation of the secular sphere from the religious sphere is concerned. For Ūtiz-Īmānī and Qursavi, the secular sphere did not exist; for Marjani it seems to have played an important role and co-existed alongside the religious sphere. Did this reflect something he learned before heading off to Samarkand and Bukhara, or did it develop upon his return to Kazan and teaching Islamic sciences in the Tatar Teachers School there (in addition to his work as a religious official) beginning in 1876? Since it is through his position as a teacher at the Tatar Teachers School that he became acquainted with Orientalists such as Mirza Aleksandr' Kazembek, Friedrich Wilhelm Radloff, Ilya Berezin, and Josef Gottwaldt, it is possible that this could have been a contributing factor to the development of such ideas by him.

Another element that is important about Marjani, in addition to his contributions to Islamic sciences, is his role as a historian. I have argued elsewhere that Marjani's most influential contribution was to the development of the theory of a Tatar nation in his two-volume work entitled *Mustāfad ul-axbar fi āxval Qazan vā-Bulğar*.<sup>30</sup> (The Arabic-language biographical dictionary of great figures in Islamic civilization entitled *Wafīyat al-aslāf wa-taḥīyat al-axlāf* had less of an impact on this, even though it may have been an even greater scholarly achievement.) The first volume, which was an overview

<sup>30</sup> *Mustāfad ul-axbar fi āxval Qazan vā-Bulğar*, i-ii (Kazan, 1885-1900). See also my "The Formation of a Tatar Historical Consciousness: Şihabäddin Märçani and The Image of the Golden Horde"; and *Şihabeddin Märçani: In Honor of the Two Hundredth Anniversary of His Birth*.

of Tatar (and Turkic!) history, was first published in Kazan in 1303/1885-1886. The first volume was republished posthumously in Kazan in 1897, and the second volume was published for the first time in Kazan eleven years after his death in 1900. The second volume consists of an overview of Tatar mosques, scholars (*ulema*), religious courts, and civil courts.

This was the work that laid the basis for the theory of a Tatar territorial nation by establishing historical continuity between Volga Bulğaria, the Golden Horde, the Khanate of Kazan, and the Muslim Tatars of the Russian Empire of his time. He advocated the use of the name Tatar and historical continuity in the existence of a Tatar nation on that territory. This work was quite a scholarly achievement for its time, drawing upon Islamic and other sources, but it also shows how Tatars' view of the past has changed so dramatically from the overview I presented earlier. Given that he had written such a work in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and that it began the impetus for the Tatar national project following the liberalization of newspaper publishing in the Russian Empire in 1905, it would be wrong to think that Tatars gained their modern identity only in the Soviet period. Indeed, Bashir and Kazakh identity formation was largely a reaction against the emergence of a pre-Soviet Tatar national identity.

## **6. Ismail Gasprinskiy and the Rise of a Muslim Tatar Imagined Community**

As we progress chronologically we are seeing more and more diversity in the range of views held by individuals. In contrast to many other historical figures in this period, one should not be blamed for a lengthy consideration of Ismail Gasprinskiy, even though I will try to be as brief as possible. For me, the two great individuals among the greater community of Muslim Turks in the Russian Empire were on the one hand Marjani, and on the other Ismail Gasprinskiy. Gasprinskiy was influenced deeply by Marjani's agenda and consulted with him before embarking on his own journey, but what a journey! Gasprinskiy did not advocate a Tatar identity, even though today he is claimed by Crimean Tatars as one of their own. Nevertheless, it is not possible to contextualize the various individuals I am covering without including the influential contributions of Gasprinskiy on the Kazan Tatars as well.



Ismail Bey Gasprinskiy<sup>31</sup> (also known today as Gaspıralı, 1851-1914) founded the landmark newspaper *Perevodchik/Tercüman* in Bahçesaray in Crimea beginning in 1883. This weekly newspaper was the most influential newspaper in the Muslim Turkic world in its day, and perhaps should be considered the most influential newspaper of its day in the Russian Empire as a whole.<sup>32</sup> The newspaper was published in both Russian and Turkic. The Turkic part of the newspaper was not in Crimean Tatar, rather it was a simpler variety of Ottoman Turkish laced with elements from Crimean Tatar and other dialects (when addressing readers from those regions).<sup>33</sup> Only after 1905 did Gaspıralı acknowledge his attempt at creating a unified literary language for all the Turks.<sup>34</sup>

Before the publication of *Tercüman*, Gaspıralı had already distinguished himself as a political theoretician of the Muslim Turks of the Russian Empire in his *Russkoe musul'manstvo* "Russian Islamdom" (1881) and later in his *Russko-vostoçnoe soglaşenie* "Russo-Oriental Relations" (1896).<sup>35</sup> These works are intended to ameliorate Russian attitudes towards Muslims and he calls for a rapprochement (*sblizhenie*) between Russians and the Muslims of the Russian Empire. Indeed, he refers to Russians as *sooteçestvenniki* 'compatriots'.

<sup>31</sup> On Gaspıralı see Edward J. Lazzerini, "Ismail Bey Gasprinskiı (Gaspıralı): The Discourse of Modernism and the Russians", in *Tatars of the Crimea. Their Struggle for Survival*, ed. Edward Allworth (Durham, 1988), 149-169; Alan W. Fisher, "Ismail Bey Gaspıralı, Model Leader for Asia", in *Tatars of the Crimea. Their Struggle for Survival*, 11-26; Nadir Devlet, *Rusya Türklerinin millî mücadele tarihi (1905-1917) (The History of Russian Turks, National Struggle)*, Türk Kültürünü Araştırma Enstitüsü Yayınları 58 (Ankara, 1985); *Ismail Bey (Gaspıralı), Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Yayınları 962* (Ankara, 1988); and Hakan Kırımlı, *Kırım Tatarlarında millî kimlik ve millî hareketler (1905-1916) (National Movements & National Identity Among the Crimean Tatars) (1905-1916)*, (Ankara, 1996), 167; and *National Movements & National Identity Among the Crimean Tatars (1905-1916)*, The Ottoman Empire and its Heritage 7 (Leiden : Brill, 1996).

<sup>32</sup> It is worth examining *Tercüman* and the entire world of newspapers in the Muslim Turkic world of the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries from the perspective of the framework offered by Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised edition (New York: Verso, 2006).

<sup>33</sup> Kırımlı, *National Movements & National Identity Among the Crimean Tatars*, 34-35.

<sup>34</sup> Kırımlı, *National Movements & National Identity Among the Crimean Tatars*, 41.

<sup>35</sup> 12 Ismail Bey Gasprinskiy, *Russkoe musul'manstvo*, Society for Central Asian Studies. Reprint Series 6 (Oxford, 1985); and Ismail Gasprinskiy, *Russko-vostoçnoe soglaşenie. Mîsli, zâmetki i poželaniya* (Bakhchisaray, 1896), trans. Edward J. Lazzerini, "Russo-Oriental Relations: Thoughts, Notes, and Desires", in *Tatars of the Crimea. Their Struggle for Survival*, 202-216. See also Edward J. Lazzerini, "Ismail Bey Gasprinskiı's *Perevodchik/Tercüman*: A Clarion of Modernism", in *Central Asian Monuments*, ed. Hasan B. Paksoy (Istanbul, 1992), 143-156, especially 150-151.

Gaspıralı also had another agenda which is best expressed in the famous post-1905 slogan of his newspaper: *Dilde, fikirde, işte birlik* “Unity in Language, Thought, and Deed”, for Gaspıralı advocated not just a common Muslim Turkic literary language, but the unity of all the Muslim Turkic peoples. Indeed, just as he advocated unity among the Turkic peoples within the Russian Empire, outside of the Russian Empire Gaspıralı advocated an Islamic ideology embracing all of the Muslim peoples. It was these two ideas, Pan-Turkism and Pan-Islam, which were relentlessly vilified in Imperial Russian and later Soviet-era Orientalist scholarship.

Although Gaspıralı is often seen as an icon of modern Crimean Tatar nationalism, it is in fact a mistake to consider him a “Crimean Tatar” nationalist. Gaspıralı advocated the unity of all the Turkic peoples. Although he saw the various Turkic peoples as forming a single group known as “Turks”, from the beginning Gaspıralı did not advocate a territorial nation in the modern sense, nor did this exist elsewhere among the Muslim Turkic peoples of the Russian Empire or the Ottoman Empire. His model is much closer to the concept of “national-cultural autonomy” (*milli muxtariyät*) envisaged late in the Russian Empire and which is being advocated once again today in Russia. It also came into competition with the Tatar identity advocated by Marjani and—had the Bolshevik Revolution not intervened—his theory of “Muslim Turks” might have prevailed.

In contrast to the system of traditional Muslim religious schools, Gaspıralı advocated a system of independent “New Method” (*usul-i jadid*) schools supported by the public. The cornerstone of his approach was the phonetic method (*usul-i savtiye*) for teaching literacy in the Arabic alphabet in forty days by teaching the phonetic value of characters in order to read the student’s native Turkic language as opposed to rote memorization of the alphabet in order to study the Qur’an and other religious texts in Arabic.

Gaspıralı also introduced the modern classroom to the school (*mektep*), with modern facilities, standardized class times (45 minutes per class, maximum five courses per day, six days per week), regular examinations, and updated textbooks, including Gaspıralı’s own *Hoca-i sibyan* introducing the Arabic alphabet and short stories and poems including the themes of Islamic, Crimean, and Russian history and geography.

Although he was hoping for public support for his schools, the first New Method School opened in 1884 with only 12 students enrolled. He began a steady effort to publicize the success of these schools in teaching literacy and modern subjects. In 1887 he was able to open a second school in Kasimov. He also publicized the New Method schools at the annual fair at Nijniy Novgorod (approximately 225 km from Kasimov). Soon the fame of his schools spread and they began attracting numerous candidates for teaching at the schools. With support from wealthy Tatar sponsors, by 1895 there were 100 New Method schools across the Russian Empire and an amazing 5,000 of them by the time of his death in 1914.

It is important to note that Gaspıralı supported education for women as well as men. He also advocated higher-level education and opened the Zincirli medrese, but he could not support this medrese project, which ultimately ended in failure in 1895. Nevertheless, the idea of reformed medreses did take off in the Russian Empire.<sup>36</sup>

There can be no doubt that in certain respects Marjani's proposals for curricular reform influenced Gaspıralı's ideas in the sphere of education. By now we have seen the institutionalization of secular education, secular identity, secular printing, and the notion that Muslim Turks all belong together as one great people on an equal footing with Russians within the Russian Empire. Although this does not do justice to Gaspıralı's achievements, we can see how much things have changed in a bit over 100 years since the time of Ūtiz-Īmānī and Qursavi.

## 7. Murad Ramzi

The next figure I would like to discuss briefly is Murad Ramzi (1855-1935), a scholar who defies characterization.<sup>37</sup> He was an influential translator, including serving as the translator of the *Maktubat* of Sirhindi (d. 1624) from Persian into Arabic. This translation and the later translation of this Sufi text from Arabic into Turkish was an influential work. Later he was also the author of a massive scholarly history of Bulğar and Kazan which appears to have been intended

<sup>36</sup> For the wide range of diversity in schools called medrese in this period, see Mustafa Tuna, "Madrasa Reform as a Secularizing Process: A View from the Late Russian Empire", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 53, no. 3 (2011): 540-570.

<sup>37</sup> See the excellent study by Abdulsait Aykut, "The Intellectual Struggle of Murād Ramzī (1855-1935): An Early 20th Century Eurasian Muslim Author", Ph.D. dissertation (University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2015).

for fellow highly-trained scholars. Whereas the earlier translation of Sirhindi showed his side as a Naqshbandi shaykh, his history reveals aside as an anti-colonialist nationalist historian. Certainly by this time we see that the range of political beliefs runs the full gamut, from the so-called Qadimists who are deeply conservative religious scholars who do not wish to change anything to the Naqshbandi shaykh who is (or becomes) a national historian. I should add that his work is also one which draws upon modern scholarship from his own day with which he was able to be familiar. Following his exile from the Russian Empire, he lived and taught for a considerable period of time in Mecca, where he continued his activities and trained students who would later become influential leaders of the Naqshbandi in Indonesia. He spent the final years of his life in Chuguchak in Xinjiang, China. Not only is Murad Ramzi an example of a scholar who traveled widely across the Muslim world of Eurasia, but he is also an example of the broad transregional range and influence of the Naqshbandi order of which he was a member as a Muslim scholar. More significantly, like Marjani, his influence extended far beyond the world of just the Tatars to embrace the entire Muslim world.

### 8. Musa Jarullah Bigi

Another Tatar scholar who often disagreed with Murad Ramzi was Musa Yarullah (Jarullah) Bigi (1875-1949).<sup>38</sup> Bigi was a scholar of Arabic and the Qur'an who embraced the concept of *ijtihad*, insisting that all Muslims are obliged to interpret the Qur'an personally. He even translated the Qur'an into Tatar, but the manuscript of this translation cannot be located. (His written Tatar was so very heavily influenced by Turkish that it is often difficult to distinguish it from Turkish.) If Ramzi was dressed in traditional robes, Bigi was dressed like a European dandy. Many of Bigi's views were unorthodox, such as his notion that it was not just Muslims who could go to heaven, but rather that worthy people of any religious tradition would be able to get into heaven. Because his views were so controversial, he also had to leave the Russian Empire. He spent time in exile, giving lessons in South Asia, Japan, Finland, Egypt, and elsewhere. From the examples of Ramzi and Bigi, we clearly see that by the early

<sup>38</sup> See the excellent study by Selçuk Altuntaş, "How to be a Proper Muslim in the Russian Empire: An Intellectual Biography of Musa Jarullah Bigiyev (1875-1949)", Ph.D. dissertation (University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2017).

20<sup>th</sup> century the simplistic binary of Qadimist versus Jadidist breaks down completely.

### 9. Emrullah Agi

If I may be forgiven for a more personal note, one last figure I would like to mention is my late uncle, Emrullah Agi. He was born in Penza and moved with his parents' immediate family towards the East, eventually ending up in Harbin. From the valuable memoirs he had written and which were discovered and published only after his death we have a valuable capsule description of life among Tatar refugees who were living as a merchant diaspora in China (but it could have been anywhere else in Eurasia).<sup>39</sup> His family started as poor itinerant peddlers, but they were later able to set up a fur shop and make a far better living through this business. What we see from his life story is that wherever Tatars went, they set up schools. They looked up to Shihab al-Din al-Marjani (but how might they have understood why he was so important?), the Tatar national poet Gabdullah Tukay who died so young because of tuberculosis, and Ismail Bey Gasprinskiy as well. They met with Gayaz Isxakiy, the émigré Tatar writer and politician who had a role as foreign minister of the short-lived Idel-Ural Republic (1917). They had a sense of history and deep-seated national pride as well as pride as Muslims, even though living as a diaspora in China. They were in touch with the Tatar diaspora in Japan and elsewhere. Finally, it is important to note that there were also Tatar diaspora communities set up by fur traders in Finland, where Bigi also taught (as noted above). In this regard, the Tatar merchant diaspora can be compared with other merchant diaspora communities in world history.

### 10. Conclusion

The elements of Tatar thought, religion, and culture which I have outlined here did not emerge in the 19<sup>th</sup> century out of a vacuum, in many cases, they continued a thousand-year tradition of Muslim networks, trade, and continuity in Islamic practice. Sufism emerged later but became another strong transregional factor. But whereas there was more or less a single approach to religion and identity in earlier times, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century we see the emergence of multiple

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<sup>39</sup> Emrullah Agi, *One Man's Life. An Unfinished Autobiography*, translator: Golnara Khasanova, English language editor: Uli Schamiloglu (Kazan: Magarif, 2009).

approaches to the question of identity, language, territory, and other issues. In particular, we see the rise of different approaches among various representative scholars, each of whom had different ideas about what the attributes of the Tatar nation are. Finally, these competing ideas were shared or contested across broad Tatar geography stretching across the Russian Empire plus in the Tatar diasporas from Finland to the Ottoman Empire and as far east as China and Japan. Indeed, in some regards, the influence of Tatar scholars in some cases extended across the entire Islamic world. In this way, we can say unequivocally that the Tatars had deep transregional connections from one end of Eurasia to the other.

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