Beginning in the seventeenth century the settlement and circulation of Central Asians in Russia and Siberia increased the exposure of Tatars and Bashkirs to Central Asia. During the Petrine era Russian trade policies brought these two communities in closer contact along the Qazaq steppe, and also brought increasing numbers of Tatars and Bashkirs to the cities of Central Asia, especially Bukhara and Tashkent. By the beginning of the nineteenth century most large Central Asian cities had Tatar and Bashkir residents, or, as Central Asians called them, “Noghays” or “Bulghars”. These communities included both transient individuals, such as merchants, students, and scholars, and those who had decided to settle there permanently. The latter group also included merchants, craftsmen, scholars, and Sufis, many of whom were fugitives. Some of these Tatars and Bashkirs were well connected with the local authorities, serving as clerics, Sufi shaykhs, courtiers, and military officers in the various khanates. Tatar and Bashkir expatriates and the institutions they maintained were often touchstones for recently-arrived merchants and students, who could establish connections when they arrived in a Central Asian city.

“Institution,” “Mahalla” Saints and Legendary Scholars in Central Asia

In addition to genealogies among Tatars and Bashkirs that established an ancestral relationship with various Central Asian cities, there also existed numerous legends describing the experiences of expatriate Tatars and Bashkirs who traveled to Central Asia, lived there a while, and returned to Russia. The legends that have come down to us are rather localized, but nevertheless provide evidence that Tatar and Bashkir communities perceived a historical precedent in the presence of their compatriots in Central Asia. In Bukhara, for example, there was a shrine and a mahalla named Khwaja Bulghar. Its inhabitants claimed that Khwaja Bulghar had been the son of the ruler of Bulghar. According to the legend, he had argued with his father and came to live in Bukhara, and when he arrived at the
mahalla’s mosque, he entered the chillakhana, and died there.\(^1\) Khwaja Bulghar was also the name of a cemetery and of a water channel in the city.\(^2\) Other Bukharan legends explicitly identify Bulghar Khwaja as the 14th century Sufi Hasan b. ‘Umar al-Bulghari, and credit him with having taught local craftsmen the art of working leather, as well as with having taught local murids.\(^3\) It is in all likelihood to this cemetery that Shihab ad-Din Marjani was referring when he related that a scholar from Qarghalı named Husayn b. Muhammad b. ‘Umar al-Bulghari al-Kirmani died in Bukhara in 1857 and was buried near the tomb of Hasan b. ‘Umar al-Bulghari.\(^4\)

In his genealogy compiled in 1805, the *Tarikh Nama-yi Bulghar*, the Bashkir Sufi and historian Taj ad-Din b. Yalchighul al-Bashqordi recorded a semi-legendary account of one of his ancestors, Qul-ʿAli b. Mir-Hajji, who was born near the mouth of the Zay River, in the western Bashkir country. His father had served a local khan as an imam, and Qul-ʿAli moved to Khorezm to study, where he was a mudarris for 45 years. When a certain Tusi Khan came from China to destroy Khorezm, Qul-ʿAli fled to the Qazaqs and lived among them before returning to the mouth of the Zay, where he died at age 110 at the time of Amir Timur’s destruction of Bulghar. Qul-ʿAli’s son was Mir-ʿAli who, like his father, went to Khorezm to study. He was a mudarris in Urgench for thirty years, and died there. His son Mir-Sharif was an Imam and mudarris for sixty years in Urgench and Khiva, and died there too. Mir-Sharif’s son was Mir-Sa’id, who is described as one of the greatest scholars of the times. He is said to have lived in the village of Sejavend, to have written a work called *Fariza*, and to have died at the hands of the Persian ruler Nadir-Shah who conquered Khorezm in 1740.\(^5\)

For our purposes the significance of Taj ad-Din’s account is not whether it is historically accurate, but rather its qualities as a genealogy and sacred history of the Tatars and Bashkirs, including his own Äyle tribe, and in which several generations of ancestors appear as scholars in Central Asia. Similar legends circulated among the Arghïns of the Qazaq Middle Horde, who attributed the founding of the Kukaltash Madrasa in Bukhara to an

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1 O. Kh. Sukhareva, *Kvartal’naia obschchina pozdnfeodal’nogo goroda Buhkary*, (Moscow, 1976), 73.
2 N. Khanykov, *Opisanie Bukharskago khanstva*, (St. Petersburg, 1843), 80-81.