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Abū al-Ghāzī Bahadur Khan's Genealogical Narrative in *Shajara-i Tarākima*

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Abstract

This study examines how Abū al-Ghāzī Bahadur Khan represents and evaluates historical events and the social and political relations surrounding them in *Shajara-i Tarākima*, focusing on passages in which his perspective as narrator is explicit. Employing a historical research design, the study first identified narrative units in which Abū al-Ghāzī's position as narrator becomes explicit. These units were subsequently coded and analyzed thematically using a qualitative content analysis approach. The analysis focused on narrator-centered passages identified through indicators of self-reference, personal experience and eyewitness testimony, explicit narrative intervention, evaluative statements, and contextual inference. The findings show that social order in *Shajara-i Tarākima* is represented through six interrelated dimensions: political authority and moral responsibility; epistemic authority and critical verification; language, audience, and access to knowledge; genealogy and collective belonging; migration, settlement, and social order; and narrative management and the author–reader relationship. The findings further demonstrate that Abū al-Ghāzī does more than transmit genealogical knowledge: he selects, organizes, and evaluates lineage, status, knowledge, and communal belonging according to particular value-based and epistemic criteria. Accordingly, *Shajara-i Tarākima* can be understood not simply as a historical text that records lines of descent, but as a genealogical narrative that reconfigures the past through genealogical categories, social relations, and narrator positioning. The study therefore demonstrates that genealogical narratives provide insight not only into the transmission of lineage and descent, but also into the narrative construction of social order, belonging, and authority.

Keywords: *Shajara-i Tarākima*; Abū al-Ghāzī Bahadur Khan; ego-documents; genealogical narrative; historical Turkic languages

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1. Introduction

The written literature of every society has its roots in oral narrative traditions. While some of these narratives have survived through their transmission into written forms, others have disappeared over time. Those that have been preserved in written form constitute an important part of a society's intangible cultural heritage and provide valuable insights into that society's worldview as well as its intellectual and emotional life (Kahya 2024). In this respect, the Turkic languages possess a rich written textual tradition extending from the eighth-century Orkhon Inscriptions to the present day and have attracted sustained scholarly interest since the nineteenth century from researchers in Russia, China, the United

States, Germany, and other parts of Europe and Asia. Much of this scholarship, however, has concentrated on philological objectives, including accurate transcription, the correction of reading errors, proposals for alternative readings, etymological analysis, critical editions, and the preparation of dictionaries and indexes. These studies make essential contributions to the field (Sarı 2020), while research also highlights the value of examining the social and cultural dimensions of historical texts (Kahya 2024). Building on these perspectives, the present study focuses on the social and political values represented in Abū al-Ghāzī's narrative. *Shajara-i Tarākima*, composed in Chagatai Turkic by Abū al-Ghāzī Bahadur Khan (1603–1663) in 1659–1660, may be regarded as a work that has been shaped by this broader scholarly tendency.

A review of the literature on *Shajara-i Tarākima* shows that a substantial proportion of existing research belongs to the tradition of textual edition, textual criticism, and philological analysis. One of the earliest translations of *Shajara-i Tarākima* was produced by Toumanskiy (1897). Kononov (1958), a Russian scholar, compared the surviving manuscripts and produced a comparative text accompanied by a linguistic analysis and Russian translation. In Türkiye, following Ergin's (n.d.) Turkish rendering of the work, the editions prepared by Ölmez (1996) and Ölmez (2020) became among the most comprehensive philological studies of the text, bringing together such elements as the original text, transcription, indexes, and glossaries. More recently, Demir (2021) rendered the work into modern Turkish, thereby making it accessible to a wider readership. Kazakh scholars Mamyrbekova and Seytbekova (2013) also contributed to the interpretation and conceptual organization of the vocabulary of *Shajara-i Tarākima* through their Kazakh-language study.

Alongside this philological line of inquiry, another body of research has focused on specific linguistic and textual features of the work. Studies have examined its linguistic characteristics (Aydoğdu 2018), compound sentence structures (Keskin 2017), and textual features (Zahidoğlu 2014). The verse passages in the work have likewise been approached from different perspectives. Kargı (1991) examined these passages in terms of their textual and philological characteristics, whereas Özbay (2017) considered them as traces of oral culture within a seventeenth-century historical work and investigated the functions of poetry within the narrative. These studies demonstrated that the verse passages may be understood not merely as textual components but also as elements contributing to the formation of oral culture and historical narrative. Ölmez (2019), in turn, examined the work within the *Oghuznāmā* tradition. The study by Kazakhstani scholars Kömekov and Tashkarayeva (2022) further broadened this line of research by addressing the oral-historical tradition in the text through source analysis and problems of interpretation.

The work has also long been used as a primary or supplementary source in studies of Central Asian, Oghuz, and Turkmen history. In addition to the works of historians such as Agadzhanov (1969), Golden (1972, 1992), and Bregel (1981), the study by the Chinese historian of Central Asia Lan (2018) provides another example of scholarship drawing on *Shajara-i Tarākima* as a historical source. In these studies, the information contained in the work has been used particularly to understand the history of the Turkmens and the political and social structures of Central Asia. Within this historical line of inquiry, Penrose's (1975) doctoral dissertation occupies a distinctive place. Penrose (1975) approached the work not simply as a text transmitting historical information about different periods but in relation to Abū al-Ghāzī's political circumstances and objectives in the seventeenth century. He argued that the composition of *Shajara-i Tarākima* was closely connected to Abū al-Ghāzī's political aims. In this respect, the study is significant because it demonstrated that the genealogical narrative should be considered not merely as a means of transmitting lineage and knowledge of the past, but also in relation to political context and the construction of legitimacy.

In recent years, this historical approach has been developed further. Tashkarayeva et al. (2024) examined the continuity of elements of spiritual culture represented in the work, while Tashkarayeva and Aldibayeva (2024) investigated the relationship between the place and water names recorded in the text and the political structures of medieval states. Durmuş (2021) and Özkul (2025) demonstrated that *Shajara-i Tarākima* also offers material for interpreting such elements of material culture by focusing on the military, social, and mythological. More recently, Tashkarayeva (2026) examined economic structures based on nomadic and semi-nomadic ways of life, socio-economic relations, and aspects of everyday life in the text from a historical and source-critical perspective. Her study explored the roles of such concepts as yurt, migration space, military booty, and taxation mechanisms in economic organization and structures of power. It also emphasized that, because the work was composed in the seventeenth century, the information it conveys was shaped by the political and ideological conditions of the period as well as by the genealogical tradition, thereby highlighting the importance of source criticism in its interpretation.

A more recent tendency in the literature involves interdisciplinary readings that move beyond the linguistic dimensions of the work. Such studies make it possible to approach *Shajara-i Tarākima* not merely as a source of linguistic data but as a multilayered text containing evidence about historical, social, and cultural structures. Kahya (2024), for example, examined the migration narratives in the work from ethnocultural and sociological perspectives, focusing on the political, military, and economic causes and consequences of migration as well as patterns of post-migration integration. The study argued that the narratives in *Shajara-i Tarākima* should be understood not simply as accounts of historical events but as cultural narratives emerging at the intersection of oral and written traditions. It also emphasized the need to examine the work's social and cultural dimensions beyond conventional philological and linguistic approaches. Meanwhile, Kahya (2025) examined the discourse markers in *Shajara-i Tarākima* and noted that previous academic studies have largely focused on the text's editions, linguistic features, and assessments of earlier research, whereas certain features related to spoken language have received relatively less attention. That study drew attention to the semantic and narrative functions of discourse markers in historical texts and demonstrated how overlooking them in translation may result in shifts in meaning. Another recent linguistic contribution is the study by Kenzhalin et al. (2026), which examined Turkic-Mongolic vocabulary in *Shajara-i Tarākima* from historical-phonetic and semantic perspectives, thereby identifying traces of language contact in the text. Based on an analysis of more than four thousand lexical items, the study addressed the phonological, morphological, and semantic adaptation of Turkic and Mongolic elements and demonstrated that the work is an important source not only for historical and philological research but also for the study of language contact.

Taken together, scholarship on *Shajara-i Tarākima* has developed into a broad field of inquiry ranging from textual editions and philological features to linguistic structures, verse and oral-cultural elements, historical and political contexts, migration, social life, economic organization, discourse organization, and language contact. These studies demonstrate that *Shajara-i Tarākima* can be approached not simply as a philological or historical source, but as a multilayered text encompassing social, cultural, linguistic, and narrative dimensions.

Building on this body of scholarship, the original contribution of the present study lies in identifying passages in which Abū al-Ghāzī's position as narrator becomes visible and treating these passages as a distinct dataset based on grammatical, narrative, and evaluative selection criteria. It then examines, in an integrated manner, the functions these passages perform in social classification, the articulation of value judgments, and the justification or questioning of legitimacy. The analysis encompasses statements concerning the narrator's own experiences, explicit evaluations of individuals and events in the past, and interventions

through which he organizes the narrative. This approach makes it possible to investigate the relationship between the ways in which social order is represented in the text and the narrator's practices of selecting, evaluating, and presenting knowledge to his audience. The social meaning of genealogical narrative is therefore examined through both the content transmitted by Abū al-Ghāzī and the narrative position he assumes in interpreting and organizing that content.

Accordingly, this study examines how Abū al-Ghāzī's perspective as a ruler and historian shapes his representation and evaluation of historical events and sociopolitical relations in *Shajara-i Tarākima*. Based on Kononov's (1958) edition, the analysis focuses on passages containing his accounts of personal experience, explicit assessments of past individuals and events, and interventions in the selection and organization of the narrative. Particular attention is given to his treatment of political authority, social status, lineage, collective belonging, and migration, together with the criteria he invokes when assessing historical accounts and presenting them to his audience. The study distinguishes between the historical circumstances being narrated and the narrator's perspective on those circumstances.

Accordingly, the study addresses the following research question:

- How does Abū al-Ghāzī represent and evaluate historical events and sociopolitical relations in passages that make his own narrative perspective explicit?

2. Historical Narrative, Narrator Position, Testimony, and the Ego-Document Approach

One of the central problems in the study of historical texts is the tendency to treat the information they convey as a direct and immutable reflection of events that occurred in the past. Historical narrative, however, does not consist merely of recording past events; rather, it is produced through the selection, organization, and interpretation of events and experiences within a particular narrative perspective (White 1987; Ricoeur 1984). Accordingly, the analysis of a historical text requires attention not only to what is narrated, but also to who narrates, from what position, and in what manner. Ricoeur's approach to historical narrative emphasizes that events of the past are organized within a particular temporal and semantic structure in narrative form (Ricoeur 1984). From this perspective, narrator position constitutes an important analytical dimension for understanding how historical knowledge is constructed within a text.

This perspective is particularly useful for distinguishing the different narrative layers found in *Shajara-i Tarākima*. Oral traditions concerning earlier periods, information derived from previous written sources, and narratives rooted in the *Oghuznāmā* tradition coexist within the same textual whole alongside statements based on Abū al-Ghāzī's own life, observations, experiences, and evaluations. These forms of narration, however, do not share the same modes of access to knowledge or the same narrator positions. In the former group, Abū al-Ghāzī primarily assumes the role of transmitter and compiler, whereas in passages grounded in his own experiences and observations, he becomes visible as a narrator who experiences, observes, interprets, and evaluates. Rather than placing all narratives in the work on the same epistemological level, it is therefore necessary to distinguish them according to narrator position, source of knowledge, and the temporal frame to which the narrative refers.

This distinction is informed by the ego-document approach, which seeks to identify traces of an author's self and personal experience in historical sources. The concept was introduced in the 1950s by the Dutch historian Jacob Presser (1899–1970) and was subsequently developed by Rudolf Dekker into a broader category of sources applicable to historical research. In general, the term ego-document refers to historical texts in which authors provide direct or indirect information about their own actions, experiences, thoughts, and

emotions (Dekker 2002). The concept is not restricted, however, to wholly personal genres such as diaries, letters, memoirs, or autobiographies. The ego-document approach therefore offers a useful perspective for identifying traces of the author and forms of self-referential narration within different types of historical texts.

Applied to *Shajara-i Tarākima*, this framework does not require the work as a whole to be classified as an ego-document. Rather, particular passages within its different narrative layers in which Abū al-Ghāzī's own experiences, observations, testimonies, interpretations, and evaluations become visible may be examined from an ego-document perspective. In this study, therefore, the concept of the ego-document is employed not as a classificatory device for defining the genre of the work, but as a conceptual framework that assists in identifying self-referential and experience-based narrative segments within the text.

At this point, the concept of testimony also becomes important. Abū al-Ghāzī's accounts of events that he personally experienced, observed, or participated in distinguish these passages from narratives concerning earlier periods. Testimony, however, should not be equated with the event itself or with an immutable reality of the past. It is grounded in the narrator's relationship to a particular event or experience, and that experience is subsequently selected and presented from a particular perspective within the narrative. Abū al-Ghāzī's testimony-based statements should therefore be understood not as the "direct reality of the past" but as narratives of a past that he experienced or observed. This understanding is consistent with the view of historical narrative as requiring attention to the relationship between the past and the subject who narrates it (Ricoeur 1984).

Within this framework, the ego-document approach and the concept of testimony are not used interchangeably. Testimony refers to the narrator's direct experiential relationship with an event or situation, whereas the ego-document approach focuses on the textual visibility of the author's self and personal experiences in historical texts. A passage written in the first person should therefore not automatically be regarded as testimony or as an ego-documentary narrative. Likewise, a text need not be wholly autobiographical in order to be examined from an ego-document perspective.

This distinction is particularly important in the analysis of *Shajara-i Tarākima*. Statements relating to different historical periods, different sources of knowledge, and different speakers may occur within the same narrative. The fact that a statement was incorporated into the text by Abū al-Ghāzī does not necessarily mean that he endorsed the information as his own view or evaluation. First-person expressions found in poems, religious quotations, collective discourse, or testimonies attributed to other individuals cannot therefore be treated as Abū al-Ghāzī's self-narration merely because they employ first-person forms. Whether such statements belong to the narrator must instead be determined through close attention to textual context and explicit narrative intervention.

In accordance with this theoretical framework, narrator position is treated in the present study as a central analytical criterion. Narratives derived from written sources such as Rashīd al-Dīn, from oral traditions, and from the *Oghuznāmā* tradition are regarded as representing a narrative layer in which Abū al-Ghāzī primarily occupies the position of transmitter of knowledge about the past. By contrast, statements constructed through his own life, experiences, observations, testimonies, interpretations, and evaluations are treated as the layer in which his narrator position becomes directly visible. The study thus seeks to distinguish analytically between Abū al-Ghāzī's narratives concerning his own historical period and sphere of experience and the traditions and accounts inherited from earlier periods.

The purpose of this approach is not to claim that Abū al-Ghāzī's statements based on personal experience and observation are more "accurate" than other historical narratives. Rather, the aim is to identify the social categories, value judgments, and evaluative criteria

through which he interprets events that he experienced or observed. Accordingly, the expression "Abū al-Ghāzī's own narrative" is not used in this study as a broad category encompassing all information transmitted by him in the text. Instead, it is defined as an analytical category referring specifically to statements in which personal experience, observation, testimony, interpretation, or evaluation is explicitly visible.

3. Material and Methods

3.1. Research Design

This study was designed within the qualitative research tradition using a historical research design. According to Büyüköztürk et al. (2018, p. 21), historical research seeks to answer the question "What happened in the past?" in relation to a particular problem through the careful examination of documents from the period under investigation or, where possible, through interviews with individuals who lived during that period. The evidence used in historical research can be classified into four categories: primary sources; secondary sources comprising scholarly studies produced about the past; systematically maintained records such as institutional reports and case notes; and personal accounts of the past, including autobiographies, memoirs, and oral history records (Danto 2008, p. 5).

The primary data source of the present study was *Shajara-i Tarākima*, which constitutes a primary written source with respect to the subject under investigation. Rather than attempting to reconstruct the historical reality of the events narrated in the text, the study focuses on how everyday social relations are represented from the author's perspective within a seventeenth-century genealogical narrative.

3.2. Material

The primary source material of the study is *Shajara-i Tarākima*, composed in Chagatai Turkic by Abū al-Ghāzī Bahadur Khan in 1659–1660 (1070 AH). Abū al-Ghāzī Bahadur Khan was born in Rabī' al-Awwal 1012 AH (August 1603), in the Year of the Rabbit according to the twelve-animal Turkic calendar. He belonged to the Shibanid (Shaybanid) dynasty, and his lineage traced back to Genghis Khan through both his paternal and maternal lines. Following the death of his father, 'Arab Muhammad Khan, in 1620, prolonged struggles for power among his brothers led Abū al-Ghāzī to spend periods of exile successively in Samarkand, Tashkent, the Kazakh Khanate, Bukhara, and, for approximately ten years, in Safavid Iran, particularly Isfahan. During this period, he developed his command of Persian and Arabic to the extent that he was able to compose poetry in these languages. Following the death of his elder brother Isfandiyār Khan in 1642, he was proclaimed khan in Gurganj and, by 1645, had consolidated his authority over Khiva and assumed control of the Khanate of Khiva (Kononov 1958; Kafalı 1994; Spuler 1983; Ölmez 2020).

A decisive turning point in Abū al-Ghāzī's relations with the Turkmens occurred during the early years of his rule. Shortly after assuming power, he reportedly gathered approximately two thousand prominent Turkmen figures in the city of Hazārasb under the pretext of holding a banquet and had them killed. This event marked the beginning of sustained hostility between Abū al-Ghāzī and the Turkmens, followed by successive conflicts in 1648, 1651, and 1653 (Kafalı 1994). Abū al-Ghāzī himself indicates in *Shajara-i Tarākima* that the work, written seventeen years after the emergence of this hostility, may have been intended as an attempt to regain the goodwill of Turkmen notables and to seek forgiveness for the sin associated with a conflict in which both the guilty and the innocent had been killed (Kahya 2025).

The reason for composing the work (sabab-i ta'līf) is explained in the introduction to *Shajara-i Tarākima*. According to Abū al-Ghāzī, Turkmen religious scholars, *sheikh*s, and *biy*s approached him and complained that the *Oghuznāma* manuscripts in their possession

were full of errors and inconsistent with one another. They therefore requested that he produce a single reliable history, a request that he accepted. In preparing the work, Abū al-Ghāzī drew on both oral and written sources. He evaluated traditions circulating among the Turkmen tribes as well as genealogical records held by beys and religious authorities. Among his written sources, he made particular use of the *Oghuznāma* section of Rashīd al-Dīn Fazlullāh's *Jāmiʿ al-Tawārīkh*. Nevertheless, the *Oghuznāma* section of *Shajara-i Tarākima* also contains additional information not found in *Jāmiʿ al-Tawārīkh* (Kafalı 1994).

According to the table of contents of Kononov's (1958) edition, which constitutes the principal edition used in the present study, the "Perevod" (translation/text) section consists of the following major subsections: the Introduction; Adam; the birth of Oghuz Khan; the reign of Oghuz Khan; Oghuz Khan's campaigns in Turan and India, followed by Iran, Syria, and Egypt; Oghuz Khan's return to his homeland and the toy (ceremonial assembly/feast); the reign of Kün Khan; the names of Oghuz Khan's sons and grandsons; the meaning of the twelve *yüzlik* and twenty-four *aymak* divisions; the meanings of the names, *tamga* (tribal marks), and *onkun* (bird emblems) associated with his descendants; the laws and injunctions of the Oghuz people; the reigns of Qayı Khan, Diyb-Baquy Khan, İnal-Yavı Khan, Erki, Tuman, Qanglı-Yavlı, Mur-Yavı, Qara Khan, Bogra Khan, and subsequent rulers; the dispersal of the Oghuz people during the reign of Ali Khan; the ancestors, brothers, and descendants of Salor-Ögürciq Alp; groups that later became incorporated into the Turkmens; and, finally, a section devoted to women who became rulers among the Oghuz (Kononov 1958, Table of Contents, p. 4).

The primary subject of the work is the genealogy of the Turkmens, although this genealogy is embedded within a broad narrative framework extending back to the beginnings of human history. The work opens with an account of Adam and the prophets who followed him. Japheth, the son of Noah, is identified as the ancestor of the Turks, and one of Japheth's sons is said to have borne the name "Turk". The narrative then briefly recounts the lives of rulers descended from the Turkic lineage before turning to Oghuz Khan. Oghuz Khan's birth, wars, conquests, and life up to his death are described in detail. This section also includes information on the names of his sons and grandsons, their *tamga* and *onkun* symbols, and forms of Turkic tribal organization, such as the twelve *yüzlik* and twenty-four *aymak* divisions (Kafalı 1994), following Oghuz Khan's testament and the toy involving his sons, the reigns of subsequent rulers—including Kün Khan, Qayı Khan, Diyb-Baquy Khan, and İnal-Yavı Khan.

In terms of content, the work can be characterized as an *Oghuznāma* text recounting the legendary history of the Turkmens. It was composed on the basis of Rashīd al-Dīn's *Jāmiʿ al-Tawārīkh* together with approximately twenty *Oghuznāma* traditions collected by Abū al-Ghāzī himself, which gives the work its overall *Oghuznāma* character. The text also preserves distinctive information concerning events that probably occurred in the fifteenth century, as well as details relating to the history of the Central Asian Turks and the genealogies of the Turkmens (Kafalı 1994; Ölmez 2020; Kahya 2025).

Seven manuscripts of the work are known to have survived: the Leningrad (L), Tashkent (T, T1, T2, T3), and Ashgabat (A, A1) manuscripts (Ölmez 2020, pp. 25–27). Among these, the Tashkent manuscript is regarded as the oldest and the most reliable textual witness (Kafalı 1994). The work was first translated into Russian by Tumanskiy and printed in a limited number of copies in Ashgabat in 1892. The original Chagatai text was later published in Ankara in 1937 by the TDK as a facsimile of the Leningrad manuscript. The most authoritative scholarly edition was prepared by the Russian Turkologist A. N. Kononov in 1958 on the basis of the earliest Tashkent manuscript and through comparison with the other surviving manuscripts; this edition also included a Russian translation and a grammatical analysis of the text (Kafalı 1994; Spuler 1983).

In the present study, Kononov's (1958) edition was used as the primary text because it constitutes one of the earliest and most comprehensive scholarly editions of *Shajara-i Tarākima*. For passages involving ambiguity or requiring contextual verification, Ölmez's (2020) philological edition and Ergin's (n.d.) Turkish translation were also consulted for comparative purposes. All quotations from *Shajara-i Tarākima* presented in this article were translated into English by the researchers.

3.3. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for the Dataset

In this study, Abū al-Ghāzī's "own narrative" was not understood as encompassing the entirety of the historical information contained in *Shajara-i Tarākima*. Rather, it referred specifically to statements in which the narrator's personal position, experience, and evaluations become visible within the text. Accordingly, three basic criteria were used for data selection: The first is the use of the first person and explicit self-references that reflect Abū al-Ghāzī's own experience or testimony. The second is the interpretation, conclusion, or explanation of previously presented information through the narrator's explicit intervention, including comments regarding the process of transmitting or editing the text. The third criterion is the use of expressions containing praise, criticism, condemnation, moral judgment, generalization, or rhetorical evaluation regarding individuals, events, or situations.

By contrast, statements that merely reported historical events, geographical information, genealogical or tribal data, etymological explanations, or information attributed to other individuals or sources were not treated as part of Abū al-Ghāzī's own narrative. The central criterion was therefore not simply whether the information had been incorporated into the text by Abū al-Ghāzī, but whether his position as narrator, witness, interpreter, or evaluator was explicitly visible. For this reason, the analysis distinguished between Abū al-Ghāzī's direct narrative voice and statements attributed to other individuals or sources.

First-person expressions appearing in poems, religious quotations, collective discourse, or testimonies attributed to others were not classified as Abū al-Ghāzī's narrative solely on the basis of their grammatical form. Such statements were considered when necessary to clarify the surrounding context; however, they were included in the thematic analysis only when Abū al-Ghāzī provided an explicit interpretation, evaluation, or narrative intervention in relation to them. Accordingly, the fact that a statement was transmitted by Abū al-Ghāzī was not taken to mean that he endorsed it or presented it as his own view.

Passages identified through these criteria were treated as discourse units organized around a coherent sequence of events, with semantic unity and linguistically identifiable points of beginning and/or closure. In this respect, the study was informed by Van Dijk's (1981, pp. 177–78) conceptualization of the "episode" as a unit of meaning in discourse analysis.

3.4. Data Collection and Analysis

The text of *Shajara-i Tarākima* was examined in its entirety by the researchers, and passages meeting at least one of the three criteria specified above were identified. The selected passages were first verified contextually to determine whether they belonged to the same sequence of events and formed a coherent narrative unit. They were then coded according to their meanings and narrative functions and organized under thematic categories on the basis of conceptual relationships among the codes. In some cases, a single passage contributed evidence relevant to more than one theme.

The analysis drew on Schreier's (2012) approach to qualitative content analysis, particularly its principles of developing a coding framework, segmenting the text into units of meaning, and grounding coding decisions in explicit definitions. The analytical process was conducted in two interrelated stages: identifying the narrative units to be included in the

study and examining the social meanings embedded within those units. In the first stage, the relevant sections of *Shajara-i Tarākima* were examined using indicators that made Abū al-Ghāzī's narrator position visible. These indicators were employed as selection criteria for determining the boundaries of the dataset (see Section 3.3) and were kept analytically distinct from the thematic codes.

Coding units were defined as textual expressions that constituted a coherent unit of meaning in relation to the research question. A single sentence or several consecutive sentences were treated as one coding unit when they performed a shared semantic or narrative function. The paragraph in which the passage occurred and the corresponding episode were used as context units. The boundaries of coding units were determined not by sentence length but by shifts in topic, evaluation, or narrator intervention. Preceding and subsequent statements were examined to clarify references and determine the narrator's position. However, coding decisions were made on the basis of the expressions included within the analytical scope of the study.

The coding framework was developed through the combined consideration of the conceptual orientation derived from the research aim and codes generated from the text. Status, authority, language choice, social relations, and value judgments served as initial sensitizing concepts guiding the analysis, while the content of the passages themselves provided the primary basis for naming the codes and defining their scope. The codes were compared in terms of meaning, scope, and distinctiveness; overlapping codes were merged, while codes with unclear boundaries were redefined. For each code, an operational definition, indicators for inclusion, boundaries for exclusion, and illustrative textual examples were documented.

In the final coding stage, each unit of meaning was assigned one primary code corresponding to its most salient content or narrative function in relation to the research question. Additional meanings carried by the unit were retained through related concepts and analytical notes rather than being counted as separate coding assignments. Higher-order thematic categories were subsequently developed by examining conceptual similarities and differences among the codes. Examples illustrating the analytical progression from textual expressions to codes and overarching categories are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Examples of the Coding of Textual Expressions and Their Relationship to Analytical Categories.

Example Textual Excerpt	Initial Codes	Final Code	Main Category	Coding Rationale
"The good among them became *nökers*, while the bad became *raāyā*". (Kononov 1958, p. 36)	Good–bad evaluation; *nöker*– *raāyā* distinction; status differentiation	Distinction between *nöker* and *raāyā* according to social position	Political authority and moral order	The labels "good" and "bad" are associated with the social statuses of *nöker* and *raāyā*. This pairing shows that social differentiation is presented together with the narrator's value judgments.
"Therefore, one must speak in such a way that everyone, good or bad, can understand and that the words may reach their hearts". (Kononov 1958, p. 36)	Comprehensibility; broad audience; social function of communication	Expanding access through comprehensible Turkic	Language, audience, and access to knowledge	The preference for Turkic, justified in the preceding sentences, is linked here to the expectation that the text should be understandable to everyone. The code is based on the function of language choice in facilitating access to knowledge and establishing a relationship with the audience.

Coding decisions were subsequently checked against the original quotations, the boundaries of the codes were reviewed, and units open to alternative interpretations were documented through analytical notes. In passages lacking an explicit first-person marker, inclusion required that an inference, evaluation, or rhetorical intervention attributable to the narrator could be demonstrated within the text. Temporal expressions such as "today" or "in our time", or the mere transmission of information concerning the narrator's own period, were not considered sufficient selection criteria in themselves. Narrative transition statements were also retained within the analytical scope; however, their function in organizing the text was distinguished from that of statements directly describing social relations.

As a result of these evaluations, 47 of the 48 records examined were included in the analysis. One record, which was attributed to another authority and did not sufficiently reveal Abū al-Ghāzī's own narrator position, was retained in the data inventory together with the reason for its exclusion but was omitted from the thematic analysis. The final coding framework consisted of 34 codes organized under six main categories. Five of these categories focused on social and epistemic content, whereas the category "Narrative Management and the Author–Reader Relationship" was treated as an analytical axis explaining how such content was selected, organized, and presented to the audience. The final categories, together with their definitions and associated codes, are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Final Main Categories, Definitions, and Codes.

No.	Main Category (Theme)	Definiton	Codes
1	Political Authority and Moral Order	The narrator's interpretation of rulership, social statuses, and human conduct through legitimacy, responsibility, justice, reason, and religious-moral values.	Accession to rule through dynastic legitimacy; *nöker–raāyā* distinction according to social position; acknowledgment of the ruler's responsibility for violence; criticism of a ruler on the basis of reason; interpreting claims of absolute ownership as arrogance; condemnation of violence against the innocent; transience expressed through migration and temporary settlement.
2	Epistemic Authority and Critical Verification	The narrator's establishment of his authority over historical knowledge, acknowledgment of the limits of knowledge, and evaluation of transmitted claims in terms of sources, chronology, and evidentiary support.	Social commissioning of historical writing; explicit acknowledgment of the limits of knowledge; exclusion based on commonly shared knowledge; degrees of certainty and caution; prompting the audience to calculate; omission due to an abundance of sources; testing genealogical claims through chronological calculation; selective recording based on renown; limits of testimony and transfer of responsibility in transmitted accounts; explicit evidentiary formula.
3	Language, Audience, and Access to Knowledge	The narrator's association of linguistic and rhetorical choices with the ability of audiences from different literacy levels and generations to understand the text.	Expanding access through comprehensible Turkic; orally addressed audiences differentiated by generation.

Table 2. *Cont.*

No.	Main Category (Theme)	Definiton	Codes
4	Lineage, Belonging, and Collective Identity	The narrator's organization of genealogical knowledge, explanation of criteria for belonging to the community, and evaluation of uncertainties concerning descent or identity claims that vary according to political position.	Consolidation of genealogical knowledge; uncertainty concerning parentage or lineage branch; entry into the genealogical record through ritual participation; lineage discourse shifting according to political power; uncertainty regarding the continuation of a lineage branch.
5	Migration, Settlement, and Social Order	The narrator's association of collective mobility and settlement with political events, and his representation of differences in distribution, allocation of duties, age, and wealth.	Migration triggered by a change of ruler; preference for describing seating, *ülüş* (allotment), and duty arrangements; forced migration caused by invasion; age, poverty, wealth, and death.
6	Narrative Management and the Author–Reader Relationship	The narrator's positioning of himself within the text, selection and sequencing of topics, and establishment of a relationship with his audience through writing, reading, remembering, and prayer.	Self-positioning through lineage and office; writing as a means of moral redress; narrative transitions and delimitation of topics; intratextual sequencing and cross-reference; selective exemplification; honoring individuals through prayers for divine mercy.

3.5. Trustworthiness

In accordance with Lincoln and Guba's (1985) framework, multiple procedures were employed to enhance the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the study. The analytical process was conducted collaboratively by two researchers. The suitability of passages for inclusion in the study, the boundaries of narrative units, the development of codes, the relationships between codes and categories, and the interpretation of the findings were jointly evaluated through repeated reference to the source text.

After the analysis had been completed, the coding table, category structure, and resulting interpretations were submitted for review to an independent researcher holding a doctoral degree and with prior experience in qualitative data analysis. This procedure was treated as a form of peer debriefing, which involves the evaluation of the data, analytical process, and interpretations by a qualified researcher external to the study (Creswell and Poth 2018). The independent researcher was asked to assess the extent to which the selected passages met the study's inclusion criteria, the internal consistency of the codes and categories, and the degree to which the interpretations were supported by the textual evidence.

The reviewer's comments and recommendations were subsequently considered jointly by the researchers, and the analytical framework was finalized after the necessary revisions had been made. In addition, to increase the transparency and auditability of the analytical process, the findings were supported by direct quotations from *Shajara-i Tarākima* together with the corresponding page numbers.

3.6. Ethical Approval/Ethical Statement

Ethical review and approval were not required for this study because the research was based exclusively on the analysis of a publicly available historical text and did not involve human participants, personal data, or the collection of primary data from individuals.

4. Findings and Discussion

The narrative units examined in *Shajara-i Tarākima* show that social relations are represented in close connection with Abu al-Ghazi's dual position as ruler and historian. The social positions of individuals, the conduct of rulers, the reliability of knowledge, and forms of collective belonging acquire meaning through the evaluative criteria employed by the narrator. In these representations, the authority derived from lineage and political position is accompanied by considerations such as moral responsibility, acknowledgment of the limits of knowledge, and attention to the audience's capacity for understanding. The narrative thus makes visible not only the distinctions through which social order is defined, but also the tensions that emerge in the justification of those distinctions.

The findings are discussed in relation to five interconnected domains: political authority and moral order; epistemic authority and critical verification; language and access to knowledge; lineage and collective belonging; and migration and social order. Narrative management and the author–reader relationship are treated as a separate analytical axis explaining how these forms of content are selected, organized, and presented to the audience. The findings for each category are supported by textual excerpts and discussed in relation to the relevant historical and conceptual literature. In interpreting the material, attention was paid to the fact that the narrated events belong to different historical periods, and the analysis was therefore limited to the social evaluations that Abū al-Ghāzī makes visible while recounting his own experiences and transmitting information about the past.

The main categories derived from the analysis and their definitions are presented in Table 2.

4.1. Findings and Discussion on the Category of Political Authority and Moral Order

The findings under the theme of political authority and moral order indicate that the right to rule is associated with continuity of dynasty, while the conduct of rulers is evaluated through criteria such as reason, self-aggrandizement, and harm inflicted on the innocent. Abū al-Ghāzī's description of his accession to power—"we sat upon our father's throne and occupied ourselves with the affairs of the realm" (Kononov 1958, p. 35)—links his political position to his familial past. The expression "our father's throne" foregrounds dynastic continuity, whereas "the affairs of the realm" makes the responsibility of governance visible. Spiegel's (1983) study demonstrates how genealogical narratives can lend continuity and legitimacy to political stances through kinship ties. It thus provides a useful comparative framework for interpreting this practice. Although Spiegel (1983) examines a different historical context—namely, medieval France—Abū al-Ghāzī's account similarly demonstrates how family origins can serve as a narrative foundation for explaining political stances.

The narrator's mode of interpreting social position is particularly visible in his statement concerning the Turkmens who came to Khwārazm: "The good among them became *nöker*s, while the bad became *raāyā*" (Kononov 1958, p. 36). Here, differences in status are presented together with positive and negative evaluations. Because the text does not specify the concrete attributes underlying the distinction between "good" and "bad", no definitive conclusion can be drawn regarding the individuals' loyalty, military competence, or moral conduct. Nevertheless, the two social positions are clearly not represented as equivalent in evaluative terms. *Nöker* status is associated with a positive designation, whereas reaya status is paired with a negative one, thereby incorporating social differentiation into the narrator's evaluative language. In this passage, social hierarchy becomes visible through the ruler's authority to define and rank individuals.

When evaluative language is directed toward the conduct of earlier rulers, criteria concerning the acceptable exercise of authority become more explicit. The statement that

Mardan "had no reason at all" conveys the narrator's negative judgment of the ruler in direct terms. In the same episode, *Mardan* is criticized for failing to say "If God grants it to me, I shall give it to you" while his statement, "These provinces are mine; I give them to you" (Kononov 1958, p. 47), is interpreted as an attempt at self-aggrandizement. In this account, the ruler's speech toward his entourage becomes an object of moral evaluation. Abū al-Ghāzī's observation that "Had he spoken in this way, there would have been no fault in it" also makes explicit the form of expression he regards as acceptable: a formulation acknowledging political authority as contingent upon divine will is approved, whereas an unconditional claim to ownership is associated with self-exaltation.

A further dimension of the criticism directed at *Mardan* concerns his "beginning to kill the good people of the *Khalaj* without cause" (Kononov 1958, p. 47). By describing this action as "another evil", the narrator subjects the ruler's conduct to explicit moral judgment. The phrase "without cause" is particularly significant because it provides the central justification for condemning the violence. These evaluations may be compared with discussions in the Islamic mirrors-for-princes tradition, where the responsibilities of rulers, the limits of political power, and the legitimate use of force are recurring concerns. In the Arabic, Persian, and Turkish advice literature compiled by Marlow (2023), such issues occupy a central place in the evaluation of rulership. In Abū al-Ghāzī's narrative, comparable questions are addressed through brief judgments directed at the words and actions of particular individuals.

A tension emerges when this framework of moral evaluation is read alongside Abū al-Ghāzī's account of his own military activities. In describing his conflicts with the Turkmens, the narrator states that "God granted us [victory]" and then adds that "because of us, approximately twenty thousand good and bad people died. Among them were both the guilty and the innocent" (Kononov 1958, p. 36). The attribution of victory to divine assistance is accompanied by an acknowledgment that the deaths were connected to his own actions. The phrase "because of us" makes the narrator's responsibility visible, while the distinction between "the guilty" and "the innocent" indicates that those on the opposing side of the conflict are not placed within a single moral category. Analytically, the significance of the passage lies less in the reported number of deaths than in the fact that political opposition and individual guilt are not treated as fully synonymous within the narrative.

The contrast between the evaluation of *Mardan* and this passage also reveals how moral criteria are applied in relation to the narrator's own position. Whereas another ruler's killing of innocent people is directly characterized as "evil", Abū al-Ghāzī's own conflicts are narrated through the combined language of hostility, victory, and responsibility. The distinction between guilt and innocence is therefore maintained in both accounts, but the ways in which the actions are framed and justified differ. This finding suggests that moral evaluation and political legitimation can coexist within the same narrative. Even when acknowledging the consequences of his own actions, the narrator continues to speak from the position of a ruler.

The moral dimension of the theme takes a different form in the generalization that "this world is indeed like a caravanserai, and the children of Adam are like a caravan: some depart, while others remain for a time" (Kononov 1958, p. 45). The imagery of the caravan, departure, and temporary settlement is used to express the transience of human life. This metaphor shows how experiences associated with mobility and settlement provide a conceptual resource for the narrator's moral interpretation. Within this theme, the representation of social relations is therefore constructed through the ranking of individuals by status, the evaluation of rulers' words and actions, and broader reflections on the transience of human life. The fact that the voice making these evaluations also possesses governing authority

makes it necessary to interpret the moral judgments in the narrative in conjunction with the narrator's political position.

4.2. Findings and Discussion on the Category of Epistemic Authority and Critical Verification

Alongside the evaluations associated with his political position, Abū al-Ghāzī also constructs his authority to speak reliably about the past. The findings within the category of epistemic authority and critical verification indicate that this authority is grounded in social recognition, explicit acknowledgment of the limits of knowledge, and critical assessment of the consistency of transmitted accounts. Abū al-Ghāzī explains that Turkmen *mullāh*s, *sheikh*s, and *biy*s approached him because "they had heard that I knew history well", and he responds to their request for a reliable history by stating, "I accepted their request" (Kononov 1958, p. 36). This account presents historical knowledge as a socially recognized competence. The rationale for composing the work is thus constructed through an encounter between religious and political elites seeking authoritative knowledge and the ruler-narrator who agrees to provide it. In this way, the narrator makes the value of his knowledge visible through the demand of those who are represented as needing that knowledge.

This claim to authority is accompanied by statements in which the narrator explicitly marks the limits of what he knows. In defining the scope of the work, the statement "What can be done about what we do not know?" limits the narrator's authority to what he claims to know (Kononov 1958, p. 37). In another passage, the statement "Although we do not know these matters in detail, we know the general situation" establishes a distinction between detailed and general knowledge (Kononov 1958, p. 56). This caution, however, is not applied uniformly throughout the narrative. While Abū al-Ghāzī asserts that everything he recounts from the time of Inal Khan to his own period "is entirely reliable and contains no error", he states with regard to an earlier period that "one should speak little about this matter; if we say too much, it may become falsehood" (Kononov 1958, p. 55). Claims to certainty and acknowledgments of uncertainty therefore coexist in the text. The emphasis on the possibility of "falsehood" also suggests that the limits placed on narration are connected to an ethical responsibility concerning how much one ought to claim to know.

The critical assessment of transmitted knowledge becomes particularly explicit in Abū al-Ghāzī's treatment of genealogical sequences. In questioning the generational link between Oghuz Khan and Ögürciq, he states that "sixteen generations pass in four hundred, or at most four hundred and fifty, years", comparing the number of ancestors listed in the genealogy with the chronological span he considers plausible (Kononov 1958, p. 70). His criticism does not entirely reject the possibility that the individuals named belonged to the Oghuz lineage or were among Ögürciq's ancestors. Rather, what is questioned is whether these names could constitute an uninterrupted sequence covering the entire period. The statement that "if approximately forty generations pass in every thousand years, then two hundred generations should have passed" continues the same line of reasoning (Kononov 1958, p. 71). These chronological calculations are not used here as historically verified dates in the modern sense. What is analytically significant is that the narrator tests an inherited genealogical account against chronological assumptions that he himself accepts.

This process of verification is reinforced by statements that invite the audience to participate in the reasoning. The instruction "Now calculate for yourselves how many years there were between them" and the appeal "Now, those who read and listen to these words, think carefully" direct readers and listeners to draw conclusions from the premises supplied by the narrator (Kononov 1958, pp. 56, 71). At the same time, the narrator continues to determine both the framework of the reasoning and the information to be used. Following a chronological objection concerning Salor *Qazan*, Abū al-Ghāzī's appeal to a poem attributed to *Qorqut* Ata shows that different forms of discourse can be mobilized in the process of

justification. Özbay's (2017) finding that the poems in the work may function as evidence in support of historical events is relevant to this use. What matters here is not the voices contained within the poem itself, but Abū al-Ghāzī's decision to incorporate the poem into the narrative in support of his own claim. The expression "The proof of what we have said is as follows" in another passage likewise makes explicit the narrator's tendency to present his evaluations together with supporting grounds (Kononov 1958, p. 75).

The statement that "only those who had become well known among the people were entered into the records; those who were not known were not written down"—used to explain gaps in genealogical sequences—directly links the evaluation of knowledge to social visibility (Kononov 1958, p. 71). In this explanation, Abū al-Ghāzī associates inclusion in the record with social recognition. A distinction therefore emerges between having existed in the past and having one's name transmitted to later generations. Vansina's analysis of the social uses of oral traditions similarly shows that accounts of the past need to be considered in relation to the interests and social positions of the groups that preserve them (Vansina 1985). Within this comparative framework, Abū al-Ghāzī's explanation may be read as an awareness of the selectivity of genealogical recording. In accounting for missing names, the narrator also acknowledges that the possibility of being remembered was not equally distributed among individuals.

The selection of knowledge is also shaped by what the narrator assumes to be shared knowledge with his audience. His decision not to recount certain stories about Adam because they are "well known among the people" indicates that the scope of the written narrative is related to existing social knowledge (Kononov 1958, p. 37). Likewise, he explains the omission of accounts concerning some rulers by noting that earlier authors had already written numerous books on the subject (Kononov 1958, p. 70). The absence of a topic from the narrative therefore does not necessarily indicate ignorance. Widespread familiarity and the perceived sufficiency of earlier written accounts also guide selection. These statements show that the scope of the work is constructed through the relationship between the narrator, previous transmitters, and the audience's presumed knowledge.

A further dimension of epistemic authority concerns the distribution of responsibility for the reliability of transmitted traditions. When recounting a tradition concerning the origins of the Ichki-Salors, Abū al-Ghāzī states "We did not live in those times", thereby acknowledging the absence of direct testimony. He then adds, "If this account is false, may the sin rest upon those who told it before us" (Kononov 1958, p. 74). The tradition is preserved in the text, yet the narrator creates distance between himself and earlier transmitters with regard to its truthfulness. The use of the concept of "sin" in evaluating inaccurate transmission presents the communication of knowledge as a relationship carrying moral responsibility. This stance demonstrates that, alongside narratives tested through chronological reasoning, the text also preserves traditions whose uncertainty is explicitly acknowledged. Epistemic authority in *Shajara-i Tarākima* therefore does not rest on a single, unchanging procedure of verification. Rather, it is constructed through the interplay of social recognition, reasoning, caution, and responsibility for transmission.

4.3. Findings and Discussion on the Category of Language, Audience, and Access to Knowledge

Alongside the reliability of knowledge, the question of to whom this knowledge is addressed and how it is communicated also emerges as a social concern in the narrative. In the passages examined under the category of language, audience, and access to knowledge, Abū al-Ghāzī relates his linguistic choices directly to the audience's capacity for understanding. While criticizing earlier historians for displaying their linguistic skill through the use of Arabic and Persian vocabulary, he explains his own preference by stating that one should "speak in Turkic in a manner that everyone can understand". He then asks, "What benefit

is there if our words cannot be understood?" (Kononov 1958, p. 36). Comprehensibility may therefore be interpreted here as a communicative responsibility assumed by the historian toward the community. At the same time, the criticism directed at earlier writers' language use should be understood less as evidence of their actual intentions than as a means through which Abū al-Ghāzī articulates his own judgment regarding appropriate historical narration.

The social dimension of this approach becomes particularly visible in the contrast between a small literate minority and the larger group who may struggle to understand what is being communicated. Abū al-Ghāzī argues that it is insufficient for a few individuals who understand the text to explain it to others, stating instead that one should speak "in such a way that everyone, good or bad, can understand and that the words may reach their hearts" (Kononov 1958, p. 36). This reasoning suggests a desire to reduce dependence on intermediaries in the circulation of knowledge. The expression "everyone, good or bad" also brings together individuals who are otherwise differentiated evaluatively within a shared community of addressees. Thus, the narrator's tendency to evaluate and classify individuals coexists in the same passage with an effort to address a broad audience. These statements, however, do not provide evidence of actual literacy rates in the period or of how widely the work was in fact understood. Rather, they reveal the problem of accessibility as perceived by the narrator and the solution he proposes.

The emphasis on comprehensible Turkic acquires a broader significance when considered in relation to language choices in Central Asian historical and literary production. In his study of translation activity in the Khanate of Khiva, Toutant (2019) notes that making texts intelligible to a broad readership constituted an important objective within this translation tradition. Among the earlier examples of this tendency, he refers to Abū al-Ghāzī's statement in *Shajara-yi Turk wa Mughul* (Genealogy of the Turks and the Mongols) that Turkic should be used in a form comprehensible to everyone, even to a young child. This comparison suggests that the linguistic preference articulated in *Shajara-i Tarākima* may be situated within Abū al-Ghāzī's broader conception of historical writing, in which comprehensibility occupied an important place. In *Shajara-i Tarākima*, however, the distinctive feature of this concern lies in the explicit justification of language choice through the conditions of understanding and communication with the audience: whom the narrative addresses becomes a criterion for how it should be expressed.

The narrator's conception of the audience includes not only those who will read the text but also those who will "listen to it being read" (Kononov 1958, p. 36). This formulation indicates that Abū al-Ghāzī anticipated the reception of the written work through oral performance as well. Kahya's study of *Shajara-i Tarākima* draws attention to features of spoken language in the text and to the role of discourse markers in guiding meaning and the progression of narration (Kahya 2025). The passages examined here complement this linguistic perspective by focusing on the roles assigned by the narrator to readers and listeners. The joint reference to reading and listening suggests that the narrator recognizes multiple modes of access to knowledge and seeks comprehensibility for both groups of addressees.

The expected participation of the audience becomes even more explicit in the narrator's address to different generations: "O elders who listen to these words and perceptive young people! Turn your hearts toward these words; listen to them and penetrate their meaning!" (Kononov 1958, p. 52). The joint invocation of elders and younger people places different generations within the same call to listen and understand. The designation "perceptive", together with the injunction to direct one's attention toward the words, defines the form of intellectual engagement expected from the audience. The narrator's responsibility to communicate clearly is therefore matched by an expectation that listeners attend carefully

and make an effort to understand. From the perspective of everyday social relations, the recurring pattern in these passages is that the transmission of knowledge is structured through reciprocal expectations: while the narrator adapts his language to the audience, he simultaneously directs that audience toward attentive engagement with the meaning of his words.

4.4. Findings and Discussion on the Category of Lineage, Belonging, and Collective Identity

Within the category of lineage, belonging, and collective identity, communities are connected to the past through the organization of names, the specification of genealogical relationships, and the explanation of why particular groups are included in the narrative. Abū al-Ghāzī's statement regarding the children and grandchildren of Oghuz Khan that "we consider it necessary to give all their names together in one place" makes the organization of genealogical knowledge an explicit narrative choice (Kononov 1958, p. 50). Bringing dispersed information together around a common origin renders the relationships among the individuals represented in the narrative more visible. Spiegel's (1983) conception of genealogy as a narrative structure that links historical material through generations and social ties provides a useful framework for interpreting this practice. In the passage examined here, lineage functions not simply as inherited information, but as a classificatory framework through which the narrator presents the community as an intelligible whole.

This organization does not imply that genealogical relationships are always known in complete or unambiguous form. After stating that he will list the sons born to the concubines of Oghuz Khan's six sons, Abū al-Ghāzī notes that "it is not known which of these was born to which son of Oghuz Khan" (Kononov 1958, p. 51). General genealogical affiliation is therefore preserved while the connection to a specific paternal branch remains uncertain. A comparable gap appears in the statement, "We have related the descendants of Ögürciq's five sons. However, the lineage descending from his son named *Qusar* is unknown" (Kononov 1958, p. 74). Read together, these passages indicate that recognition of a group's place within a broader genealogy and knowledge of the precise links between generations constitute different levels of genealogical certainty. The statement concerning *Qusar* likewise does not demonstrate that this branch ceased biologically to exist. Rather, the uncertainty reported by the narrator concerns his inability to trace its continuation within the genealogy available to him. Genealogical coherence is thus maintained alongside explicit acknowledgment of gaps in knowledge.

The inclusion of groups that fall outside direct descent brings the boundaries of belonging into sharper focus. When discussing peoples who were named by Oghuz Khan but did not descend from him, Abū al-Ghāzī explains why they nevertheless entered the record: "Because they were present at that toy, their names were written in the book: Qangli, Qipchaq, Qarluq, and Khalaj" (Kononov 1958, p. 51). Participation in a shared toy thus becomes one basis for inclusion within the genealogical narrative. The distinction between these groups and Oghuz's biological descendants is retained, yet their incorporation into the shared narrative remains possible. Genealogical boundaries are therefore preserved at the same time as the narrative community is expanded. Sneath's (2007) emphasis on the role of aristocratic power and political arrangements in the social organization of Inner Asia provides a useful comparative perspective for considering forms of affiliation that cannot be reduced to descent alone. In this case, the specific relationship is constituted through being named by Oghuz Khan and participating in a common toy: inclusion in the written record does not fully coincide with descent from a common ancestor.

The relationship between genealogical discourse and political position becomes particularly explicit in Abū al-Ghāzī's treatment of the Seljuks. He attributes to them the claim "We are from the *Qiniq* clan of the Turkmens" before their accession to rulership, and, after they

became rulers, the assertion "We are descended from him, from the lineage of Afrasiyab" (Kononov 1958, p. 70). The before-and-after contrast constructed by the narrator suggests that the representation of origins changed with the acquisition of political power. A position initially articulated through membership in the Kınık clan is subsequently reformulated through a genealogical claim extending to Afrasiyab. In Abū al-Ghāzī's account, this shift is represented as a reselection of the past to which a dynasty associates itself in accordance with its changed political position. The passage is therefore significant less as evidence for establishing the historical origins of the Seljuks than as evidence of how Abū al-Ghāzī interprets changes in genealogical claims.

This finding intersects with Penrose's (1975) argument that the genealogical structures of *Shajara-i Tarākima* are connected to political objectives and competing claims to leadership among Turkmen groups. Penrose's analysis primarily concerns the political function and historical context of the work, whereas the present analysis focuses more specifically on how Abū al-Ghāzī constructs, compares, and evaluates changing claims of descent within the narrative itself. From this perspective, genealogy emerges not as a politically neutral record of ancestry, but as a form of discourse through which political position and collective affiliation can be renegotiated.

The connection between this criticism and everyday social relations becomes clearer when claims of brotherhood are considered alongside expectations of benefit to the community. Abū al-Ghāzī reports that the Seljuks said: "We are Turkmens; we are your brothers", yet judges that they "brought benefit neither to the people nor to the community" (Kononov 1958, p. 70). The judgment following the attributed claim of brotherhood suggests that declarations of common belonging are expected to be supported by conduct. In the narrator's evaluation, brotherhood acquires meaning as a relationship that entails responsibilities toward the community. The change in genealogical discourse is criticized together with the perceived failure to fulfil these responsibilities. Belonging is therefore assessed not solely through claims about shared origins, but also through the social consequences of the relationship being claimed.

Taken together, the findings in this category show that genealogy in *Shajara-i Tarākima* does more than record descent. It organizes who can be situated within a shared past, distinguishes different degrees of genealogical certainty, and provides criteria through which inclusion and belonging are recognized or questioned. Entry into the record, clarity of descent, participation in a shared toy, political claims to ancestry, and the responsibilities associated with brotherhood represent distinct dimensions of collective affiliation. Abū al-Ghāzī's interventions demonstrate that these dimensions do not necessarily coincide: genealogical information may remain incomplete, groups outside direct descent may nevertheless be incorporated into the narrative, and claims of common origin may be subjected to criticism on the basis of conduct. The social significance of genealogical narrative therefore lies in the narrator's active organization and evaluation of the boundaries of belonging, rather than in the mere preservation of lineage information.

4.5. Findings and Discussion on the Category of Migration, Settlement, and Social Order

Within the category of migration, settlement, and social order, the movement of communities and the organization of shared life emerge as two major domains through which Abū al-Ghāzī interprets social relations. In a passage associated with his own period, he explains Turkmen mobility in relation to his own arrival: "Those who were in Khwārazm, when they heard that we had arrived, fled and went to the three aforementioned territories" (Kononov 1958, p. 35). He subsequently notes that these groups later returned to Khwārazm by different routes. The phrase "when they heard that we had arrived" places the narrator's political presence directly within the process of displacement. Departure and return are

thus narrated as part of a sequence of events linked to the ruler's presence. Mobility is represented here not simply as geographical movement, but as a social experience through which the spatial consequences of political relations become visible.

In a passage concerning an earlier migration, the narrator's position becomes evident not through direct participation but through an inference about the past: "From these words it may be understood that when the invaders settled in the Turkmen homeland, those peoples who were attacked and managed to escape the enemy fled to Transoxiana". This explanation is followed by the observation that most of the Turkmens eventually gathered in that region, while only a small number remained in their former homeland (Kononov 1958, p. 57). The phrase "from these words it may be understood" shows the narrator organizing previously transmitted information into a causal sequence. The relationship established between attack, flight, and resettlement in another region interprets the geographical distribution of communities through conflict. Manz's (2021) approach to nomadic societies, which situates mobility in relation to warfare, political organization, and interaction with sedentary environments, provides a useful comparative framework for understanding this relational dimension of movement. In Abū al-Ghāzī's account, attachment to a homeland appears as a relationship that may change in response to security conditions and political developments. At the same time, expressions such as "most of them" and "only a few" should be understood as the narrator's qualitative assessment of population distribution rather than as quantitative demographic evidence.

The organization of shared life becomes especially visible in Abū al-Ghāzī's intervention concerning how the toy should be narrated: "Now let us tell who sat in each of the twelve tents (*urga*), which portion of the sheep (*ülüş*) was given to each, who divided that portion into pieces, and who remained beside the tents to hold the horses" (Kononov 1958, p. 51). The elements foregrounded in this statement are spatial position, allocation of food, and the distribution of responsibilities. The phrase "let us tell" indicates that these details are brought together through a deliberate narrative choice. The analytical significance of the passage therefore lies in the particular forms of social organization that the narrator chooses to make visible within ceremonial life. Co-presence at the toy is represented as structured through differences in spatial placement, distribution, and service.

Fischler's (2011) discussion of commensality as a practice that may be intertwined with hierarchy and relations of dependence provides a useful perspective for interpreting the social significance of this narrative choice. Shared eating brings participants together, but it may also provide a setting in which relations among them are organized and expressed. Abū al-Ghāzī's decision to discuss seating arrangements, portions of meat, and assigned duties within the same narrative frame reveals an interest in how collective participation is socially ordered. The passage itself, however, is primarily a narrative announcement and does not yet specify which particular individuals occupied which positions. It therefore does not, on its own, establish a detailed hierarchy. What it does show is that differences in distribution, spatial positioning, and responsibility were considered by the narrator sufficiently significant to be included in his account of social order.

The social experience of the toy takes a different form in another passage, where contrasting conditions of life are represented as being temporarily suspended: "The elderly forgot their age, the poor their poverty, and the rich their death" (Kononov 1958, p. 58). In this three-part construction, old age, poverty, and wealth are associated with different forms of burden or limitation. The elderly are linked to the weight of age and the poor to material deprivation, while the association of the wealthy with death may be read as a reminder of the limits of material prosperity. The verb "forgot" intensifies the sense of collective joy created by the toy. The narrative effect derives from the temporary displacement of different life conditions during ceremonial togetherness. Social distinctions are not erased; rather,

they remain part of how collective enjoyment is described, since the narrator expresses participants' joy through the different burdens he assumes they ordinarily carry.

Taken together, the migration and toy passages reveal two interconnected dimensions of social order. The migration narratives focus on the conditions under which communities leave one territory, disperse, and regroup elsewhere, while the toy passages emphasize the organization of co-presence through spatial positions, shares, and responsibilities. These two narrative domains connect the spatial and interpersonal dimensions of social life. When explaining the dispersal of communities and selecting the details through which ceremonial gatherings are described, Abū al-Ghāzī also interprets the ways in which people are positioned in relation to political developments and to one another. Everyday life within the genealogical narrative is therefore represented through movement, settlement, distribution, service, and differentiated life circumstances. In this sense, migration and ceremonial organization function not merely as background events, but as narrative sites through which the spatial and relational structure of social order becomes visible.

4.6. Findings and Discussion on the Category of Narrative Management and the Author–Reader Relationship

Within the category of narrative management and the author–reader relationship, three features are particularly prominent: Abū al-Ghāzī's presentation of his own speaking position, his selection and organization of the material to be narrated, and his expectation of a particular response from his audience. This category functions as an analytical axis that helps explain how the social meanings examined in the preceding sections are made visible through narrative form. The narrator's interventions concerning the act of narration and his communication with the audience may be related to what Neumann and Nünning (2014) describe as metanarrative commentary. Such commentary, which may also occur in non-fictional texts, makes visible the decisions through which a narrator organizes and presents knowledge.

Abū al-Ghāzī's self-introduction at the beginning of the narrative shows how his speaking position is framed through lineage, place, and political status: "Now, from this point onward, the words will be spoken by Abū al-Ghāzī Khan, son of 'Arab Muhammad Khan of Urgench, of the lineage of Chinggis" (Kononov 1958, p. 35). The joint reference to ancestry, place, and paternal affiliation locates the narrator within a recognizable social and political position. The formulation "the words will be spoken by" transforms this identification into an explicit claim to narrative authority. Before explaining the lineages and communities of the past, the narrator first presents his own genealogical and political position to his audience. The social evaluations developed throughout the work are therefore framed as the discourse of a narrator whose dynastic affiliation is explicitly stated. Genealogical knowledge thus functions not only as the subject matter of the work, but also as a resource through which the narrator establishes his own authority to speak.

The narrator's organizing role also becomes visible in his judgments concerning the sufficiency and scope of information. In the statement "Now let us end our account of the Khalaj here; what we have told is sufficient", the closure of a topic is explicitly linked to an assessment of adequacy (Kononov 1958, p. 47). Elsewhere, the statement "I shall tell some of these" announces that only a portion of the available material will be transmitted (Kononov 1958, p. 57). Together, these interventions show that the scope of the narrative is shaped by Abū al-Ghāzī's own decisions about selection and sufficiency. In the latter case, however, the criterion governing that selection is not explained. The analytical point is therefore not why a particular item was selected, but that selective transmission is explicitly acknowledged by the narrator. This finding also cautions against treating the amount

of narrative space devoted to a community or event as a direct measure of its historical prevalence or importance.

The sequencing of information is likewise managed through cross-references and statements of postponement. The sentence "We have already given all their names above in order" directs the audience back to an earlier sequence, while the statement "How they returned, God willing, I shall explain later" announces the postponement of an explanation (Kononov 1958, pp. 52, 68). Similarly, "The descendants of these four men, God willing, we shall describe separately later" signals that different genealogical branches will be treated as distinct narrative units (Kononov 1958, p. 73). Expressions such as "above" and "later" refer not to historical time itself, but to the position of information within the structure of the text. Through such signals, Abū al-Ghāzī instructs his audience about what should be remembered, what should be anticipated, and in what sequence genealogical relationships should be followed. These interventions transform dispersed genealogical material into a more navigable narrative order.

The moral dimension of the author–audience relationship becomes particularly visible in Abū al-Ghāzī's expectations concerning the benefit produced by the book: "Who knows how many thousands of people will rejoice when they learn from what I shall tell them things they did not previously know!" (Kononov 1958, p. 36). In the same passage, he presents the spiritual merit he hopes to gain through writing as a good deed that may outweigh the sin he associates with warfare. The transmission of knowledge is thus linked to both benefiting others and reckoning with the author's own past actions. This relationship becomes more explicit in the request directed to future readers: "If at any time someone reads this book and learns from it something he did not know before, let him recite a Fatiha for our soul" (Kononov 1958, p. 36). The association between acquiring knowledge and offering prayer gives authorship a structure of religious reciprocity. Within this imagined relationship, the reader is not merely a recipient of information but an addressee who may respond to the benefit received through an act of prayer. The phrase "at any time" extends this expectation beyond the narrator's immediate audience and toward future acts of reading.

The prayer Abū al-Ghāzī requests for himself finds a parallel in the way he commemorates figures from the past. His statement concerning Uzbek Khan—"May God's mercy be upon him!"—introduces religious reverence into the narrator's representation of a historical person (Kononov 1958, p. 77). This brief formula cannot be taken as a comprehensive endorsement of all the individual's actions, but it does make visible the attitude through which he is remembered. When Abū al-Ghāzī's prayer for a figure from the past is considered together with his request that future readers recite the Fatiha for him, narration and remembrance appear to be connected through a religious relationship. As a narrator of the past, he commemorates others through prayer while simultaneously hoping that his own text will become a means through which he, too, will be remembered.

Taken together, the findings show that narrative management in *Shajara-i Tarākima* is not simply a formal feature of textual organization. It is one of the principal means through which Abū al-Ghāzī establishes his authority, controls the selection and sequence of historical knowledge, and defines the relationship between himself and his audience. His decisions concerning what to include, what to omit, what to postpone, and how to direct readers and listeners shape the visibility of the social relations discussed throughout the work. At the same time, his requests for attention, understanding, benefit, remembrance, and prayer place the audience within a reciprocal relationship with the narrator.

More broadly, *Shajara-i Tarākima* represents social order through relations of lineage and status, mobility, distribution, and interpersonal obligation. Abū al-Ghāzī's judgments concerning which knowledge is reliable, which conduct is appropriate, and which claims of

belonging are legitimate reveal the criteria through which social legitimacy is constructed in the narrative. His practices of selecting, sequencing, and presenting knowledge in an accessible form determine how these relationships become narratively visible. Within the genealogical organization of the work, everyday life therefore emerges as a historical field of representation in which knowledge of the past acquires meaning through the narrator's social position, moral judgments, and relationship with his audience.

5. Conclusions

This study has shown that the genealogical narrative in *Shajara-i Tarākima* is not merely a means of transmitting lineage relations and information about the past. It also makes visible how social relations, political positions, forms of belonging, and criteria of knowledge are interpreted by the narrator. When Abū al-Ghāzī's self-references, personal experiences, evaluations, and explicit interventions in the narrative are considered together, social order does not appear in the text as a fixed and self-evident structure. Rather, it is constructed through the narrator's practices of selection, association, evaluation, and organization.

The central finding of the study is that genealogical knowledge cannot be considered independently of narrator position. While Abū al-Ghāzī relates lineage, political authority, and social belonging to the past, he also questions the reliability of transmitted information, marks the limits of his knowledge, and explicitly justifies some of his evaluations. Similarly, his association of language choice with the audience's capacity for understanding, together with his direct interventions in the scope and sequencing of the narrative, shows that he is not merely a transmitter who records the past, but an active narrator who shapes both the epistemic value and the social function of the narrative. From this perspective, lineage, knowledge, authority, and belonging in *Shajara-i Tarākima* emerge not as independent elements but as interrelated fields of meaning structured through the narrator's positioning.

This conclusion does not challenge the value of *Shajara-i Tarākima* as a historical source. Rather, it demonstrates the importance of treating narrator position as an additional analytical dimension when interpreting the work. Evaluative terms such as "good", "bad", "reliable", "innocent", "guilty", and "brother" should therefore be understood first as meanings produced from Abū al-Ghāzī's own narrative and social position. Accordingly, the work may be approached not only as a historical source used to ask "What happened in the past?" but also as a genealogical narrative through which one may ask, "By whom, according to which criteria, and in what manner was the past interpreted?"

The principal contribution of this study lies in identifying a distinct set of narrator-centered passages in *Shajara-i Tarākima* and examining how Abū al-Ghāzī presents and assesses historical events, political conduct, lineage claims, and relations of collective belonging. The analysis connects these representations to his position as a ruler and historian, showing how his evaluations and decisions about the selection and organization of material shape the account presented to his audience.

The study also has several limitations. The analysis is restricted to the narrator-centered passages identified in *Shajara-i Tarākima* and does not aim to represent the entire historical content of the work. In addition, because the analysis is based on a single text and a specific narrator position, the findings cannot be directly generalized to seventeenth-century Central Asian society as a whole. They should instead be understood primarily as findings concerning the narrative perspective that Abū al-Ghāzī makes visible within the text.

Future research could compare *Shajara-i Tarākima* with other genealogical and historical works in order to examine the period-specific and text-specific characteristics of narrator positioning in greater detail. In particular, investigating narrator interventions within an intertextual framework and comparing first-person narration across other examples of

historical writing may provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between genealogical narrative and authorial self-positioning.

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this manuscript:

TDK	Turkish Language Association (Türk Dil Kurumu)

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