

BOOK REVIEW

A.K. Бустанов [Bustanov A.K.] 2019. *Библиотека Зайнап Максудовой / Зэйнап Максудова китапханәсе*. Москва: Mardjani Foundation, 463 pp.
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If we had to summarize the main scholarly areas of interest of the young, but already experienced Tatar researcher Alfrid Bustanov, we might say he is interested in both Islamic manuscripts, mainly but not exclusively in Turkic languages, and in the way Muslims deal with their written heritage. Sometimes he has the opportunity to combine these research interests within one project, as might be shown with his first major monography entitled *The Book Culture of Siberian Muslims* from 2013 (Bustanov 2013; Cwiklinski 2014) in which he attempted to understand the written heritage of the Siberian Muslims by both investigating the collections of Islamic manuscripts in Siberian libraries and describing these manuscripts themselves. The origin of Bustanov's approach lies in his research on the manuscripts which gave him the opportunity to get to know the literary repertoire of the Siberian Muslims.

The present book, which is the continuation of previous works (Bustanov 2014; Bustanov 2018), has, according to Bustanov's own account (p. 26), a similar genesis: In the beginning of 2012, being curious about the manuscript collections in Kazan, the capital of the Autonomous Republic of Tatarstan in the Russian Federation, other than the one at the library of Kazan Federal University he was well acquainted with, he began to explore the collection of the National Museum of the republic and discovered there Zäynäp Maksudova's (1897–1980) manuscript collection. The richness of the collection was all the more astonishing as Maksudova had worked as a teacher of the Russian language at a school in Kazan for more than thirty years – a profession not necessarily associated with an interest in Islamic manuscripts. However, her biographical background paves the way for a better understanding of her interests: born in 1897, she both studied and taught at the madrasa of the village of Izh-Bobi in Vyatka governorate (guberniya), an institution that was famous for both the propagation of reformatory Islamic thoughts and its role in the education of women. Bustanov convincingly argues in the introductory chapter of the book that the eight years Maksudova spent at the madrasa must have been formative in her life because since then she continued collecting Islamic manuscripts, and her professional retirement in 1957

just paved the way for more intensified activities in this field: she became lector for the Arabic language at the Pedagogical Institute of Kazan and took part in the edition and the translation of several Turkic manuscripts, establishing at the same time a network of both professional Orientalists and Islamic clerics throughout the whole Soviet Union.

As Bustanov shows in his introduction in Russian, Maksudova's interest in collecting the manuscripts had also the purpose of satisfying her own spiritual needs: being herself a pious Muslim, she documented her reading experience of the Qur'an in her personal diary and wrote her own prayers. The documentation of her own manuscript collection in a lengthy catalogue with detailed information on the single manuscripts seems thus to have served the double purpose of documenting the cultural heritage of the Muslims in the Russian Empire and serving as a personal manual for the use of these texts, because Zäynäp Maksudova was, as Bustanov convincingly shows, an avid and continuous reader of the manuscripts in her own collection.

The second and largest part of the present book consists of Zäynäp Maksudova's list of 378 manuscripts which had been in her possession with additional comments by her in the Tatar language, transcribed by Bustanov from the original Arabic to the Cyrillic alphabet. As he points out, Maksudova's comments on the manuscripts were neither written in a uniform way nor complete, and this was surely one of the reasons why he traced the manuscripts at the National Museum of the Republic of Tatarstan (henceforth: National Museum) and the G. Ibragimov Institute of Language, Literature and Art of the Tatarstan Academy of Sciences (henceforth: G. Ibragimov Institute) and completed Maksudova's entries. Bustanov's additions in Tatar to the catalogue are made according to the standards of contemporary manuscript research and pave the way for further work with the manuscripts. Photographs of many of the manuscripts illustrate single aspects.

Maksudova's catalogue is completed by two lists compiled by Bustanov: one of the manuscripts from her catalogue that he could not find in either of the institutions mentioned above and another one of those manuscripts that had been in the possession of the Tatar school teacher (and retrieved by Bustanov) but do not figure in her catalogue. Furthermore, Bustanov has added a list of the printed books in Arabic script kept in the National Museum that had been in her father's and her own possession, a section with information on Tatar Islamic clerics compiled by Zäynäp Maksudova. Finally, one can find material on her own biography, the last section containing not only texts on her life by herself and her daughter, but also a family tree and further material. Indices of the authors, the places and of the stamps to be found on the manuscripts make the information contained in Maksudova's catalogue better accessible to further research. At the end of the book the reader finds selected facsimiles of both autobiographical material regarding Zäynäp Maksudova's grandfather and father and of some manuscripts formerly in her possession.

There are only minor points that might be said critically about the present book, most of which regard its Tatar-language parts. It is, for instance, not quite understandable why Bustanov did not use the official denominations of the two main institutions he has found most of the manuscripts in: why did he write *Tatarstan Gömhüriyäte* instead of *Tatarstan Respublikasi* for 'the Republic of Tatarstan' in the name of the National Museum, and why does he only use the shorthand version of the official name of the G. Ibragimov Institute? For the sake of the reader he should have stuck to the official versions of these names. When giving additional information on the manuscripts Zäynäp Maksudova had written about, Bustanov uses several times the familiar form *Zäynäp apa* (with *apa* meaning 'older sister'), which roughly translates into English



as ‘aunt Zäynäp’ – to the mind of the reviewer, a denomination far too familiar for the genre of manuscript descriptions. Fortunately, these are only minor points and might be corrected easily.¹

Yet, there is one aspect of the book that needs to be corrected in a further print immediately: Alfrid Bustanov does not name the exact origin of the sources he is publishing in his book. While this is no problem with the largest part of the book, Zäynäp Maksudova’s lengthy and almost exhaustive catalogue of her own manuscripts, since Bustanov introduces this source properly in the first part of the book, giving the exact archival signature as well, it surely makes the work with Maksudova’s information on the Tatar Islamic clerics and with the biographical material on her life difficult. The reader might conclude that the material on the clerics stems from her biobibliographical dictionary Bustanov writes about in the introductory part of the book (pp. 33–35), but this cannot but remain an informed guess, and the same holds true for the biographical material on Maksudova herself, too. However, seen in a global perspective, the positive aspects of the book outweigh the critical ones by large. Even if one concedes that Bustanov is not the first researcher to work with Zäynäp Maksudova’s archive – in 2004 L.P. Sotnikova published her collection of Tatar proverbs (Sotnikova 2004) – and that Maksudova was not unknown to the public in Tatarstan – there is even an entry on her in the Tatar-language version of the *Encyclopedia of Tatarstan* (Musabäköva 2011) –, Bustanov’s research has to be regarded as quite important.

In a certain way, Alfrid Bustanov’s new work gives us insight into the inner world of a Muslim woman in the Soviet Union, and it might be the starting point for further research in three different directions: firstly, Zäynäp Maksudova’s catalogue with Bustanov’s additions might pave the way for further research on Islamic literature in Turkic, Arabic and Persian, which had been preserved mainly in the form of manuscripts among the Muslims of the Russian Empire. Secondly, the manuscript owners’ remarks on their acquisition and the according owner stamps might help to establish the way these manuscripts were passed on from one owner to another, thus helping to reconstruct a network of learning and transferring of Islamic knowledge among Muslim intellectuals in the Russian Empire. The last aspect where Alfrid Bustanov’s book might be helpful is research on the way Muslims in the Soviet Union tried to reconcile the life in a largely anti-religious state with their Muslim identity. In the future it might be useful to publish, if possible, Zäynäp Maksudova’s correspondence with Orientalists and with Islamic clerics and further material. Hopefully, Alfrid Bustanov’s new book will receive its due recognition of the scholarly community.

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¹ This holds also true for the only typographical error the reviewer came across accidentally: in a description of a book (No. 15 on p. 298), the title contains most likely the Arabic-script word *سی نظامنامه* rather than *مظامنامه*.



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