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RIZAÉDDIN FÄXREDDIN
AND THE SOCIAL HISTORY
OF THE MUSLIM COMMUNITIES
OF THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE

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89706-136-5.

The biographical dictionary, one of the central genres of Islamic historiography, constitutes an important source for the historical study of Islamic societies and provides us tremendous amounts of historical information on the *ulama*, the class of scholars who are omnipresent in these societies.¹ Often focused on a particular legal school and/or locale, these works, “written by ‘*ulama*’ for ‘*ulama*,’” represent virtually

all the social history available for the Islamic world in the premodern period,² and, through this genre, “We can know these people [the *ulama*] in their own terms far more directly and comprehensively than we can any other element in Islamic society.”³ The individual entries (Tat. *tärjemä*) included within a biographical dictionary can present relatively detailed biographical information, but, taken collectively, these entries can also provide a thorough picture regarding the *ulama* as a whole and their history and social role.

For the Volga-Ural *ulama*, we have three main biographical dictionaries: Shihāb al-Dīn Marjānī’s (1818–1889) *Mustafād al-akhbār*,⁴ Muḥammad Murād Ramzī’s (1853–1934) Arabic-language *Talfīq al-akhbār*,⁵ and Rizaéddin Fäxreddin’s (1859–1936) *Asar*.⁶ These first two works, in keeping with the rise in interest in the history of Islam in the Volga-Ural region, have been published in new editions in recent

¹ On the importance of the biographical dictionary, see R. Stephen Humphreys. *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry*. Rev. ed. Princeton, 1991. Pp. 187–192.

² Roy Mottahedeh. *The Patricians of Nishapur: A Study in Medieval Islamic Social History* by R.W. Bulliet (Review) // *Journal of the American Oriental Society*. 1975. Vol. 95. No. 3. Pp. 491–495.

³ Humphreys. *Islamic History*. P. 187.

⁴ Shihāb al-Dīn Marjānī. *Mustafād al-akhbār fī aḥwāl Qazān wa-Bulghār*. 2 vols. Kazan, 1885–1900.

⁵ Muḥammad Murād Ramzī. *Talfīq al-akhbār wa-talqīḥ al-āthār fī waqā’i’ Qazān wa-Bulghār wa-mulūk al-Tatār*. 2 vols. Orenburg, 1908.

⁶ Riḍā’ al-Dīn b. Fakhr al-Dīn. *Āsār*. 15 parts in 2 vols. Part 1: Kazan, 1900. Parts 2–15: Orenburg, 1901–1908.

years,⁷ including translations of the *Mustafād al-akhbār* into modern Tatar⁸ and Turkish,⁹ as well as a partial Russian translation.¹⁰ With this new, modern Tatar version accompanied by a Russian translation, we can now add *Asar* to this list.¹¹

Of the three biographical dictionaries, *Asar* is perhaps the most valuable historical source. The only out-and-out biographical dictionary, strictly speaking (both Marjānī and Ramzī's respective works only partially feature biographical material, with substantial sections of narrative history), *Asar* is much longer than the other two, and includes notices for a larger number of scholars with comparatively more detail and

information. In addition, Fāxreddin utilized in its composition the archives of the Muslim Spiritual Assembly as well as documents sent to him by private individuals.¹² As a result, Fāxreddin was able to record in *Asar* a great number of these documents in their entirety. Such documents range from a fragment of a seventeenth-century Persian-language *ijazāt* (document acknowledging competence to teach) granted to a Siberian *axund* (high-ranking authority in Islamic law) to an official order from Prince Aleksandr Golitsyn to Mufti Möxämmädjan of the Spiritual Assembly.¹³ It is these documents – important primary sources in their own right – that give

⁷ Şehabeddin Mercanî. *Müstefād'ül-ahbar fi ahval-i Kazan ve Bulgar*. 2 vols. Ankara, 1997. [Reprint of 1897–1900 Kazan edition.] Muḥammad Murād Ramzī. *Talfīq al-akhbār wa-talqīḥ al-āthār fi waqā'i' Qazān wa-Bulghār wa-mulūk al-Taṭār*. 2 vols. / Ed. by Ibrāhīm Shams al-Dīn. Beirut, 2002. The 1908 Orenburg edition has also been made available online by Harvard University Libraries: <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:FHCL:2174688> (last visit: November 19, 2011). We may also include Xösäen Ämirkhanov's *Tawārīkh-i Bulghāriyya*, the 1883 Kazan edition of which was recently reprinted with an introduction and Russian translation; Khusain Amirkhanov. *Tavarikh-e Bulgariia (Bulgarskie khroniki)* / Ed. and trans. A. M. Akhunova. Moscow, 2010. (This work includes some biographical information on the ulama, though it is primarily a narrative history.)

⁸ Şihabeddin Märjanî. *Möstäfadel-äxbar fi äxvali Qazan vä Bolğar: Qazan häm Bolğar xälläre turında faydalanılğan xäbärlär*. Kazan, 1989.

⁹ E. N. Hayrullin et al. (Eds.). *Şehabeddin Mercanî. Müstefādül-ahbār fi ahvāl-i Kazan ve Bulgar: Kazan ve Bulgar'daki durum hakkında faydalanılan haberler*. Ankara, 2008.

¹⁰ Shikhabutdin Mardzhani. *Izvlachenie vestei o sostaianii Kazani i Bulgara* / Ed. Valiulla Iag'kub. Kazan, 2005. (This work is a translation of the first volume only.)

¹¹ There is a Bashkir edition of the first two volumes published in Ufa, also in 2006–2009; Rizaëddin Fäxreddinov. *Athar*. 2 vols. Ufa, 2006–2009. (This edition is, unfortunately, unavailable to me.)

¹² On *Asar*'s composition, see Liliia Baibulatova. "Asar" Rizy Fakhreddina: istochnikovaia osnova i znachenie svoda. Kazan, 2006.

¹³ For example, Rizaëddin Fāxreddin. *Asar* / Ed. R. Miñnullin et al. Kazan, 2006. Vol. I. Pp. 34, 104.

Asar its enormous value, particularly since the vast majority of these documents exist nowhere else.

Consequently, *Asar*'s significance goes beyond the genre of the biographical dictionary. Indeed, *Asar* provides us with materials for the social history of the whole of Russia's Muslim community, and not simply the *ulama*. Included are numerous legal documents, such as records of family-law disputes and directives from the government.¹⁴ Letters between family members are also recorded.¹⁵ Even the inscriptions on gravestones are given.¹⁶ In short, the documents contained in *Asar* make the work remarkably important for the study of history.¹⁷ Based in large part on these documents, *Asar* has proved useful as a source for a number of broadly themed studies, recently those of Robert Crews¹⁸ and Mustafa Özgür Tuna.¹⁹

Its level of detail and the breadth of the materials included make *Asar*

of inestimable value for the study of Muslims in the Russian Empire, which is why its new edition now is so beneficial. Rather than a reprint of the original published version in Arabic-script Tatar, this new edition in modern Tatar and Russian is accessible to a much wider audience. This is especially true for the third and fourth volumes, which were never previously published.²⁰ That half of such an important historical work is now widely available is by far the most exciting thing about this new edition, as well as its greatest strength. Though most historians would prefer an edition of the original text (also especially true for the third and fourth volumes), publishing the volumes in modern Tatar makes them accessible to those without a knowledge of the Arabic alphabet, and allows Tatars a way to study their own history without any special linguistic training. This is a not-insignificant concern. As Edward Lazzerini has noted, Soviet-

¹⁴ E.g. Ibid. Vol. I. P. 113; Ibid. Vol. III-IV. P. 133.

¹⁵ E.g. Ibid. Vol. I. Pp. 92-94.

¹⁶ E.g. Ibid. Vol. I. P. 66.

¹⁷ There is also, intriguingly, a list of Muslim clergy members appointed to positions in Orenburg guberniia in place of clergy who were currently incarcerated; Ibid. Vol. I. P. 160.

¹⁸ Robert Crews. *For Prophet and Tsar: Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia*. Cambridge, MA, 2005.

¹⁹ Mustafa Özgür Tuna. *Imperial Russia's Muslims: Inroads of Modernity* / Ph.D. dissert.; Princeton University, 2009.

²⁰ These volumes otherwise exist only in manuscript, with copies preserved in a number of collections, including the Tatarstan National Museum and the Tatar Institute of Language, Literature and History, respectively, in Kazan, and the center of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Ufa; Fäxreddin. *Asar*. 2010. Vol. III-IV. P. 4; Baibulatova. "Asar" Rızı Fäxreddina. P. 12.

era scholarship altered the historical understanding of Islam in the Volga-Ural region, and the study of primary historical sources is an important means for developing a more accurate picture of this history.²¹

Also important is the opportunity for those with only a knowledge of Russian to make use of this valuable work. All too often the minority groups that helped comprise the multiethnic Russian Empire are ignored or marginalized in the writing of Russian history. This neglect undoubtedly hinders our scholarly understanding of the history of the Russian Empire as a whole. The breadth of *Asar*'s historical material makes it relevant to this broader history. To cite but one example, there is the case of Ġabdulla b. Möslim b. Ġali b. Älmöxämmäd [*sic*] b. Çuençal mirza b. Däweş mirza (#67), an important *axund* in Orenburg *guberniia*, who in 1773 gathered a force of Tatars and Bashkirs to fight against

Pugachev's rebellion.²² The availability of significant primary sources such as *Asar* to scholars of Russian history certainly makes it possible to incorporate such elements into the writing of Russian imperial history.

This issue of linguistic accessibility cuts both ways, however. Publishing the work in Cyrillic-script Tatar and Russian versions excludes the general audience of Islamic studies, where knowledge of the Arabic script is far more common. However, the editors' choice of language is perfectly understandable, and is a good indicator of their intended readership. The academic separation of Russia's Muslim communities from the study of the rest of the Islamic world is nevertheless an important issue,²³ and one that certainly needs to be addressed in scholarship. (Editions of more Arabic-script primary sources with the original text preserved could be useful in closing this gap.²⁴)

²¹ Edward J. Lazzerini. The Revival of Islamic Culture in pre-Revolutionary Russia: or, Why a Prosopography of the Tatar Ulema? // Ch. Lemerrier-Quelquejay et al. (Eds.). *Passé Turco-Tatar, Présent Soviétique: études offertes à Alexandre Bennigsen*. Paris, 1986. Pp. 367-372. See also Allen Frank's important bibliographic essay on the study of Islam in the Volga-Ural region: Allen J. Frank. *Muslim Religious Institutions in Imperial Russia: The Islamic World of Novouzensk District and the Kazakh Inner Horde, 1780–1910*. Leiden, 2001. Pp. 5-16.

²² Fäxreddin. *Asar*. 2006. Vol. I. P. 53. According to Fäxreddin, Ġabdulla's great-great-grandfather, Däweş was also the ancestor of the important Dashkov family of Russian nobility.

²³ See Devin DeWeese. *Islam and the Legacy of Sovietology: a Review Essay on Yaacov Ro'i's Islam in the Soviet Union* // *Journal of Islamic Studies*. 2002. Vol. 13. No. 3. Pp. 298-330.

²⁴ This is particularly true for Marjānī's monumental six-volume biographical dictionary in Arabic on the entirety of Islamic history, which absolutely deserves publication; Shihāb al-Dīn Marjānī. *Wafiyat al-aslāf wa-taḥiyat al-akhlāf* // Ms. Kazanskii Gosudarstvennyi

This edition of *Asar*, unfortunately, reflects this separation. There are several errors in the volumes regarding aspects of the Islamic scholarly tradition (precisely the tradition to which *Asar* is a contribution). For instance, a letter in Arabic between scholars (cut from the published text) is described by the editors as quoting “the Muslim scholars Rabbani and Taftazani” (*möselman fäkihlärennän Rabbani, Täftazani süzläre kiterelgän*).²⁵ What the editors apparently read as “Shaykh al-Rabbani” (i.e., a person’s name) is in the original “al-shaykh al-rabbānī” (the divine master), a very common honorific for Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1624), the founder of the Mujaddidiyya Sufi order, who is indeed quoted in the letter. (In fact, two other scholars, Abū Bakr Kalābādhī [d. 994] and ‘Umar Nasaḥī [d. 1142], are also quoted here.)²⁶ There are also numerous smaller errors found in the volumes, particularly in the transliteration of proper names from Arabic script to Tatar. For instance, the name of the

author of the important Islamic legal work the *Jāmi‘ al-rumūz*, Shams al-Dīn Quhustānī (d. ca. 1546), is mistakenly given as “Qahistani” (rather than “Qohostani”), and the famous Cairene scholar Murtaḍā Zabīdī’s (d. 1791) name is rendered as “Zöbäydi.”²⁷ This is not an issue with the third and fourth volumes, as it is clear that the editors – understandably – took pains to preserve the original text as much as possible, including the multitude of Arabic words.²⁸

These errors, present though they are, are mostly peripheral and do not detract much from the edition. A much larger problem, however, is the degree to which the published text has been pared down. Given the richness of the material contained in *Asar*, it is disappointing that this new edition is so heavily abridged. This is particularly the case with the second volume; not only have all additional documents included in the original been excised, but whole entries, as well.²⁹ As a result, much of the

Universitet. Nos. A-609 through A-615. The introduction has been published, but is not widely available; Idem. Muqaddimat kitāb Wafiyat al-aslāf. Kazan, 1883. The work has also been briefly addressed by Aidar Iuzeev with some short excerpts translated into Russian; Aidar Iuzeev. Ocherki Mardzhani o vostochnykh narodakh. Kazan, 2003.

²⁵ Fäxreddin. *Asar*. 2006. Vol. I. P. 68, n. 37.

²⁶ Cf. Fakhr al-Dīn. *Āsār*. 1903. Pt. 3. P. 98.

²⁷ For example, Fäxreddin. *Asar*. 2009. Vol. II. P. 15; Cf. Fakhr al-Dīn. *Āsār*. 1905. Pt. 10. P. 101; Fäxreddin. *Asar*. 2006. Vol. I. P. 164.

²⁸ As a result of this approach, many of the Arabic words that would otherwise have been replaced by Tatar equivalents remain in the text, with a gloss included in the footnotes.

²⁹ Cf. the notice for Xösäen b. Fäizxan b. Fäizulla b. Bukkenä b. İsmäğil’ b. Täñrebirde äs-Sabaçayı (#406); Fäxreddin. *Asar*. 2009. Vol. II. P. 113; Fakhr al-Dīn. *Āsār*. 1905. Pt. 14. Pp. 432-443.

scope and detail that sets *Asar* apart from other biographical dictionaries is lost. The entry for Fätxulla b. äl-Xöcäen b. Ğabdelkärīm äl-Orī (#223) is a case in point.³⁰ One of the most important figures of his era,³¹ Fäxreddin records many of his writings, especially records of his legal decisions issued in his role as *axund*. These documents give us a picture of the interplay between the government and its Muslim subjects, the role of the official *ulama* within the empire's Muslim communities and Muslims' standing within Russian society.³² Unfortunately this trove of social-historical material is missing entirely from the new edition.

The first volume is abridged to a lesser degree, with many of the original documents included. Nevertheless, much valuable material has been cut.³³ The third and fourth volumes, however, do not seem to have been abridged, though with-

out consulting the original text it is impossible to tell. (Abridgments, it should be noted, are not clearly indicated within the text.³⁴) The Russian version in each volume has been pared down considerably relative to the Tatar, but this is an understandable – if regrettable – concession to space constraints.³⁵

However, I do not want a dwelling on what is not present to detract from what is. Volumes published over a century ago – or not at all – are now available in a handsome edition, organized with substantial indices³⁶ and a scholarly apparatus (unfortunately, missing in the second volume), and in language accessible to a wide audience. Fäxreddin's work remains a remarkable piece of historiography, inestimably valuable in its breadth and detail and the richness of the materials recorded in it. Of the biographical dictionaries for Volga-Ural Muslims, Rizaëddin Fäxred-

³⁰ Fäxreddin. *Asar*. 2009. Vol. II. Pp. 6-10; Fakhr al-Dīn. Āsār. 1905. Pt. 9. Pp. 7-72.

³¹ See Michael Kemper. *Sufis und Gelehrte in Tatarien und Baschkirien, 1789–1889: Der islamische Diskurs unter russischer Herrschaft*. Berlin, 1998.

³² See Fakhr al-Dīn. Āsār. 1905. Pt. 9. Pp. 12-72.

³³ Cf. the notice for İbrahim b. Xujaş (#139); Fäxreddin. *Asar*. 2006. Vol. I. Pp. 109-115; Fakhr al-Dīn. Āsār. 1904. Pt. 5. Pp. 225-238.

³⁴ See the letter by Fätxulla b. äl-Xöcäen äl-Orī regarding Ğabdennasır b. Äbennasır b. İbrahim b. Yarmöxämmäd b. İştiräk äl-Kursavı (#98), which is imperceptibly truncated in the new edition; Fäxreddin. *Asar*. 2006. Vol. I. P. 72; Cf. Fakhr al-Dīn. Āsār. 1903. Pt. 3. Pp. 108-109.

³⁵ For instance, the Tatar section of vols. III-IV is pp. 6-498; the Russian section is pp. 527-646.

³⁶ There are indices in each volume for place names and scholars' entries. With the considerable regard for student–teacher relationships in the work, however, one wishes that the index for scholars referred to each mention of a particular scholar, rather than merely his particular biographical notice.

din's *Asar* is the most substantial and detailed historical source. In addition to its extensive biographical information on the region's *ulama*, it contains numerous documents of various types recorded in their entirety. These documents – legal, religious, personal, governmental – are rich primary sources in their own right and constitute valuable materials for the social history of the Muslim communities of the Russian Empire. That this work is now widely available is without question a good thing. These volumes represent a tremendous amount of effort on the part of editors and translators, from which all of us interested in the history of Islam in Russia stand to benefit.

Любовь КОЗИК

Balázs Apor, Péter Apor, and E. A. Rees (Eds.), *The Sovietization of Eastern Europe: New Perspectives on the Postwar Period* (Washington, DC: New Academia Publishing, 2008). 349 pp., ill. Index. ISBN: 978-0-9800814-6-6.

Общественно-политические процессы в странах Восточной Европы после Второй мировой войны вызывали и продолжают вызывать интерес исследователей различных стран. Во многом это связано со стремлением изучить механизм происходивших трансформаций, осознать степень вовлечения в них общества, определить масштаб изменений в самых различных сферах жизнедеятельности государства. В этой связи можно полагать, что знакомство с материалами сборника “Советизация Восточной Европы: новые перспективы в послевоенный период” вызовет интерес специалистов как по истории Центральной и Восточной Европы, так и СССР. Следует заметить, что большинство представленных в нем статей написано с точки зрения постмодернистских теорий, что позволяет по-новому взглянуть на события и перемены, происходившие в европейских странах социалистического лагеря после Второй мировой войны.