The Account of Two Russian Travellers to Kuwait and Ethiopia

Elin Rezvan
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In the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century Russia was actively expanding its activities in the East. Many expeditions and journeys were organised, with prominent figures of Russian culture participating. The state spent significant resources for the purpose of acquiring interesting manuscripts and museum collections connected with the Islamic world. In this period the widest circles of the Muslim population of Russia shared the ideas of religious and political revival and the state began consistently asserting the rights of its Muslim subjects abroad. Russian archives, museums and private collections contain astonishing materials linked to the journeys of this type.

Sergey Syromyatnikov. Journalist as Diplomat and Intelligence Agent:

"When I was galloping along the steppe on the charger mare of the sheikh, and Arabs that accompanied me were shaking their whips, as though they were spears, and chanting war songs, to the sound of which their horses proudly raised their heads and spreading their tails in the wind, I understood the fascination of their free life in this waterless country and the pride with which it cultivated in their sons".

Sergey Syromyatnikov

Sergey Syromyatnikov (1864—1933) who is mentioned in the archives documents as the author of the project of the palace of Khaza'ali, Sheikh of Muhammed, was a remarkable personality — a St. Petersburg University Candidate of Law, specialist in ancient Scandinavian culture, a writer, a well-known journalist, editor-in-chief of the official government paper “Rossiya”. He was actively publishing his works in Russian and foreign newspapers and magazines. In 1900 Russian composer Peter Schonk wrote his fantasy opera “Actaeon” based on the plot of the short story by Syromyatnikov. He corresponded with Russian political figures, prominent masters of Russian culture and science, including famed Russian poet Nikolay Gumilev, of whom we will speak below.

Syromyatnikov was closely connected with the Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich (the grandson of Tsar Nicholas I and a childhood friend of Tsar Nicholas II) and was sent to the Gulf on a secret mission in 1900. He was accompanied by Staff Captain V.K. de-Pellenberg of the Pavlovsky Guards’ Regiment and Bekir Gamazov, an Otse. The influential group of the Grand Duke’s was displeased with the passive line of Russian diplomacy in the region. This was especially true in connection between the project of constructing a Russian railway and the bank of the Gulf, which was considered in this timeframe as an object of great importance for Russia from the strategic point of view. Syromyatnikov and his mission attempted to conduct “alternative diplomacy”. The analysis of the documents testifies that rather broad tasks were set for Syromyatnikov, including establishing important personal contacts and collecting reliable trade, economic, military and political information.

Quite recently a rather interesting source on Syromyatnikov's trip emerged out of nowhere. It was searched out and found by Boris Syromyatnikov, a grandnephew of Sergey Syromyatnikov, who told the striking story. Tidying up his apartment he brushed against an old bookcase with a map and was unspeakably surprised when its secret compartment opened up, having come into contact with the map. Among the documents the little box contained was a diary (figure 1) by Sergey Syromyatnikov written during his trip to the Gulf region.

Undoubtedly, the main point of the route was Kuwait. In this connection it is rather significant that after his conversations with Sheikh Mubarak Syromyatnikov again visited main ports of the Gulf. Three of five travel essays written as the result of the trip and published in Russian journals were dedicated to Kuwait.

"Surrounded by his retinue, Sheikh Mubarak slowly came down the narrow stairs. He was a medium-size old man with a broad and thick beard, thin almost-brown face, furiously wrinkled. His brown eyes were expressive and pensive. His motions were well-measured and filled with loftiness. There was something sad in his eyes. He told me he was glad to see a Russian man and that the arrival of ‘Gilyas’ greatly increased his importance among Arabs. And so we began a long..."
oriental conversation interspersed with the formulas of politeness and flattery”.

However, we learn of the important results of negotiations with the Sheikh again only from the recently discovered diary: “...I drew up the following dispatch. Was in Kuwait. The ruler continues to request the protection of Russia. ...The dispatch was not accepted on account of being encrypted”. Syromyatnikov reported the negotiation results by means of letters to the Russian consulates in Baghdad and Damascus.

In the materials prepared as the results of the trip, Syromyatnikov gave detailed information on the history and economy of Kuwait, recounted of military and political significance, related his own impressions of various types: “The population of Kuwait is about 30,000 inhabitants who live in 3,000 houses; of them 50 are Jews from Bushehr, for whom the Sheikh built a synagogue, which is rented to them for 20 roubles per year. There are over 500 shops in the city, three hotels, six coffee houses, many granaries, three schools with one hundred students, four mosques. ...The nature of the population can be judged by the fact that each year up to 30 new houses are built and 40 new shops are opened”.

“According to rather incomplete information, which I gathered at the spot, various sorts of goods are imported into Kuwait to the amount of 670,000 roubles per year. I think that export reaches about the same figure, including the export of pearls to the sum of about 200,000 roubles per year. If the English take 3% from export and import, they will then acquire at least 67,000 roubles per year for the protection of Kuwait, which, of course, is enough to have a gunboat in the Kuwaiti gulf and even bring some worthless cannon ashore for the purpose of intimidating Turks”.

From Kuwait Syromyatnikov set out for Muhammedah. For this journey Sheikh Mubarak put his yacht at his disposal and wrote the ruler of Muhammedah a letter, in which he called Syromyatnikov “his sort” and recommended him as a serious partner for negotiations.

Based on the results of the meetings with Sheikh Khaza’al, the ruler of Muhammedah, Syromyatnikov writes in his diary: “He invited me for lunch. Before lunch I was presented with a few gifts: a carpet and a diamond ring. He requested rifles and protectorate”. In accordance with the diary the discussion of this subject matter was to be continued on the next day: “August 14/27th of 1900. Sheikh came before breakfast. We talked about the conditions of the protectorate. At five o’clock there is a serious conversation about the conditions. He wrote with his own hand (underlined by Syromyatnikov, — E.R.):

We must defend him from his enemies that come by land and sea.

If need be we must supply [him] with weapons and money.

Not to deprive him of subjects and not to interfere in internal affairs. Not to deprive him of customs, neither land nor sea ones,

and not to interfere in the way they are run, not to demand for an account from anyone but him.

After his death to render patronage to his children, reconcile them and protect them from attacks from all sides for as long as Russia exists, from age to age.

He pledges to immediately supply us with 5,000 horsemen (more or less) armed with Martini rifles with 500 cartridges per each horseman”.

It is absolutely evident that the results of negotiations of Syromyatnikov in Kuwait and Muhammedah had the potential to create drastic changes in the state of forces in the Gulf. In this connection it is not surprising that the Englishmen did their best to hinder Syromyatnikov and his people. During one of the attacks he was wounded in the leg and efforts were made to confiscate materials relating to the trip.

The documents mentioned above include exciting and unique documentary evidence about this short but very important period in Russian-Arab relations. Communication with the Russians was easy and Russian policy at that time paralysed the interest of the Gulf people who were pressing for independence. All this helped Russia to build up its influence in the region.

Nikolay Gumilyov. Poet as Traveller and Ethnographer

Looking at streams at the foot of the hills, The oaks and triumph of mildday sun, Europeans are wondering how strangely they resemble Each other the motherland and the people, its son.

Nikolay Gumilyov. Abyssinia

It’s hard to acquire the light, to quench it, though, is easy...

Sheikh Nur Hussein

In 1913 the Saint-Petersburg Kunstkamera Museum provided funds and set goals for Nikolay Gumilyov's journey to Ethiopia. He was an
outstanding Russian poet of the Silver Age, a courageous officer and an intrepid traveller, who was executed by Cheka in 1921, convicted of participating in a counter-revolutionary plot. The poet brought back not only ethnographic and manuscript collections, but also impressions that inspired a number of poetical works. Today these are considered treasures of Russian literature.

In 2008 the Kunstkamera Museum started a project devoted to his Ethiopian trip of 1913. Within the project we organized an expedition to the south-eastern regions of Ethiopia. In 12 days the expedition walked about 5,500 km and saw the places Gumilyov had seen almost 100 years ago. As a result, the Museum hopes to present soon an exhibition and media project.

It was in Harar, historically one of the most important Islamic cities of Africa, that Gumilyov compiled a major part of his collections stored now in Kunstkamera Museum; and it is not surprising that a significant portion was related to Islamic booklore. The poet’s personal interests and the specific character of Harar as an Islamic booklore regional centre met there.

The old part of Harar (Harar jugol) surrounded by walls is sacred for local Muslims. They find a silhouette of a praying person bent in a low bow even in the city wall shape. Thus, the space of the city becomes a kind of a prayer carpet. The length of the wall (6666 cubits) is equal to the number of the Qur’an ayat, and the number of gates (five) is associated with the five “pillars” (arkan) of Islam. As a sacred space, the city is divided into seven circles (shari) and the “level of sanctity” is decreasing with the movement from the city centre to the city wall (the last circle encloses the city wall on the outside).

Harar is known as “the city of saints” (madinat al-awlyya) and in the opinion of local people it is the fourth Islamic city by religious value. Even at present Harar citizens affirm that the city has 99 mosques (according to the number of Allah names) and about 300 saint graves. Harar jugol is included into the List of World Heritage by UNESCO. That was Nikolay Gumilyov’s view of Harar in 1913.

“Already from the mountain top Harar looked gorgeous with its houses made of red sandstone, high European buildings and pointed minarets of mosques. It was surrounded by a wall and people were not allowed to get through the gates after the sunset. Inside it looked exactly like Baghdad in the times of Harun al-Rashid with its narrow streets going up or down like stairs, massive wooden doors, squares full of noisy people in white clothes, the court right there in the square — all of that was full of old fairy-tale charm”.

For centuries Harar was a manuscript production centre famous all over Africa. A century ago there was a whole district where bookbinding craftsmen lived. In the book about his Harar trip famous British scholar and traveller Richard Burton described his visit to local sheikh and his impression of the manuscript collection. The scene described by Burton long ago was virtually repeated in 2008 in Harar when we visited Sheikh ‘Abd Allah Musa, a keeper by birth of Sayyid ‘Ali Hamdong’s mazor. (figure 3) We listened carefully to the Sheikh, who took a wonderful large-format Qur’an manuscript and, then, a number of folios from a metal lock-box, telling us about the saint he worshipped. The manuscripts as well as their covers were of really high quality. As it turned out later, one of the covers brought by Gumilyov was once a part of the manuscript from mazar Sayyid ‘Ali Hamdong’s library.

Nikolay Gumilyov brought to Russia not only a collection of manuscripts and covers, but also tool sets of a craftsman and a scribe. In April of 2000 the MAE expedition members managed to buy some more items of that range, such as qalarns, a bronze pen case, and an ink pot. Now St. Petersburg owns a unique collection of material elements and technical characteristics of scribal tradition in Harar — a centre that for a long time reproduced and maintained large amounts of written texts, which played a key role in Islam expansion not only in the South-East of Ethiopia, but in the Horn of Africa in general.

The second most important destination of Gumilyov in Ethiopia was the Sheikh Hussein memorial complex (figure 4). There are quite a few sites in the Muslim world pilgrimage to which may be equated by locals to the haij to Mecca under certain conditions. Among these places is a mausoleum of Hakin-shaykh (the village of Baishevo of Vagansky district of Tyumen region), the tomb of Ahmad Yasaev in the city of Turkestan (Kazakhstan) and the tomb of Appaa-khwaja in Kasgharlia, the tomb of Jafur al-Sadiq (Khotan region), the tomb of Baha’ al-Din Nanghband (Bukhara), the sacred mountain of Takht-i Sulyaman (Osh), the mausoleum of Shaykh Burhan al-Din (Ulakan, Western Sumatra). The memorial complex of Shaykh Hussain is probably most interesting among them as none of these sacred sites model the structure of Arabian shrines and requires pilgrims, in its essence, to repeat the key rituals of haij:

I led a caravan for eight days from Harar Through the wild Chercher Mountains. And I shot gray monkeys on the trees, And fell asleep among the roots of yacca. A mysterious city, a tropical Rome, I saw tall Sheikh Hussein, I bowed to the mosque and to the holy palms, And was admitted before the eyes of the prophet.

These lines of the Gumilyov’s poem were preceded by the field note: “In half an hour of our beautiful journey we reached overflowing Wabei. We started shooting and shooting in order to scare crocodiles away, and then we went swimming. Crocodiles were swimming around, which scared the mules who began sinking, rushed along the stream. Shots were heard all around us. From Kolya’s leg, whose mule overturned itself, a crocodile tore a spot off; and it tore off a shama from another boy. All scared we got out of the water, and having taken all our clothes off we were drying ourselves on the riverbank. Then we were fishing... I’ve got fever and nephritis. We have nothing to drink...”

The mountain of Sheikh Hussein is already in sight; we crossed a large ravine and found ourselves on a plain. We were walking for 6 hours”.}

**Figure 1:** Title page of the record book with the Gulf diary of Sergey Synyavskiy. **Figure 2:** Illustration to unpublished “Practical Persian Gulf Guidebook” by Sergey Synyavskiy. **Figure 3:** Harar: In mazar of Sayyid ‘Ali Hamdong. **Figure 4:** A pujran to Sheikh Nur Hussein memorial complex.
رواية فينون من الرحلة الروس عن الكويت وبلاد الحبشة

أولاً، رحلة سيرجي سيمونوفيتيف، الصحبي والطيار والمصورين.

بينما كتب جورجي بيلارتي، في النص الأساسي باللغة الإنجليزية، كان نص مخالب مثيرًا للاهتمام من الناحية الثقافية، كان مطبوع بشكل جميل على شكل مدخل ثم ميلاد للأساطير، حيث يتناول السياح وغيرهم من الأشخاص الذين سافروا إلى الكويت، كونه من الرحلات الأولى التي توجهت إلى الكويت.

على الرغم من أن سيرجي سيمونوفيتيف، وعندما تم نشره في الصحف، تبين أنه من أواخر القرن التاسع عشر، فقد كان يحتوي على نصوص عديدة عن الحياة في الكويت، حيث يشمل عادات وأفكار الحياة وتراثها، ووصف الحياة في الكويت بطرق مميزة.

يستند سيرجي سيمونوفيتيف، علامة لا تزال تثير إعجابنا، على نصوص عديدة عن الحياة في الكويت، حيث يتناول عادات وأفكار الحياة وتراثها، ووصف الحياة في الكويت بطرق مميزة.

عَرَبُ صَحِيْحَةٍ بِعِرَاحٍ مِنْ أَوْسُوسِ إِلَى بِيْرُمِيَةٍ، عُلَمُ عِلَاحٍ عَلَى نَصَائِخٍ عِسْمَيْنِ إِلَى بِيْرُمِيَةٍ، عُلَمُ بِعِرَاحٍ مِنْ أَوْسُوسِ إِلَى بِيْرُمِيَةٍ، عُلَمُ عِلَاحٍ عَلَى نَصَائِخٍ عِسْمَيْنِ إِلَى بِيْرُمِيَةٍ.
وتحمل جسورا، وقد أطلق عليها الباحثون النار عام 1711
لتمكينهم في قوة المبارزة ضد الثوار. عاد الثائر من رحلة
محمولة بعطلات ومعدات إدارية، كما عاد ببطهابات أهله
بعض الأعمال المدنية، التي تمت من كوك البحرين.

في عام 1683 بدأ حكم كاجا في مشروع تدريس
التعليم إلى أخوية التي تمت في عام 1691، وتم تنفيذه
بالتحرك إلى المواقع الجنوبية الشرقية في أوروبا، على
 مدى إلى غرب عربات سارات البساتنة - 50 كم، وصل إلى الأماكن التي ذكرها
чивيثا بعد تلقيها في المنطقت.

اكتسب مجمع بميدلينغ، شارع ورحلة وباكست نظم
الأحساء العربية في يربوع، جزء كبيرا من مجموعة المجموعة
حلايا في متحف كاجا، ليس من الغريب أن يرتبط
أهاليها بالمطرقة المستخدمة من الكتب العربية، يمكن الوحي أن
أتمت هذا الشارع وحشته شراء مراكز الإقليمي
المهارات والكتب العربية.

يضم السلوكيات المجاز الفريد من الديانة، التي
تعتقد به تيار، تبدو فيها صور شخص يعبث، وهو في
وضوح الكروج، وذلك ينصح بعملية بينهما
بضعة للصلاة، يبلغ 모습 الأمرض 3333 دراء، وهو من يإياء

فيه 170000 روبية سهولا، وأظهر أن الصدر
تحلل فيهن سهم الرحم، بما ذكره السلمان،
الذي تقوله في 30900000 روبية سهولا، إذا
كان حاكم الإمبراطورية للسادة الإلخاداء واترادر
36، ولكن ذلك فيما كان يعترفون عليه في
ما يقارب 700000 روبية سهولا من أجل ملكية الكوت. وتيه
كان مسجد وبيع مدينة حريدة، في ملكية الكوت، ووضع الديوان الدائرة على ما فيها، كثيرة
بهذا الأثر.

توجه سيراميككوف من الكوت إلى الحرة،
وبرندايدة اقتصاد الكرمة، مشتركة في هذه البيئة
الخاصة به من أجل التعلم والموقع، أدبل
خليفة إلى حاكم الكرمة، وهو سيراميككوف
بيته، حيث شرح أن يكون شركا سهولا.

نتحاقي بالشتات مع الشيخ خزعيل، حاكم الكرمة،
كما سيراميككوف في مدرسة، نفتني
بالشمال، يُهمي إلى إيدها اساساً
سجدة وتحلى من المليشيا، وقد تعلم بين المتبنين
وحل الحركات أيضا، ويزيد المحترفين، فقد تم
شايها، حتى 1474، حيث نتائج المحررين، وما
عن خروج الحالة، هي الكرة كتلة في
Mahonada بقطرات الديانة التي كتبت في

كما يبي (وضع سيراميككوف، خالصة هذه الكتلة):

على أن نتعامل معه داء أعاشبا بما.
- إذا اقتصد الضيعة ففي نزول_fractionدل،
- عاينا أن نعمه من منبعه إن عرا، وراء
- وبأمور من تجارة جاموس، لا نحملها بأي حر، مع
- ونحني الديانة فبطرية إراداتها، وما بين...

روسيا:
- يتحدد الشطر بزومبا على النور بسجحة ألف هر،
- من ملاحات سيراميككوف، في الكوت، بحيرة
- كانت على ذلك أن صناعات سيراميككوف، في التواريخ، بحيرة
- تنتهي إلى أرجحها من المناظر، بما يبلاغ
- هناك، ستكون في الكوت، أي مختارة من البحيرات، ما يبلاغ

بموهدا، يزعم مقاتا إصلاحه ما يعادل
بوهدي. يزعم مقاتا لإصلاحه ما يعادل
نائباً من الميناء، والثلاثاء، بما يبلغ
الإشعار أن كل عام يتم ما يلب من 300 بيرو
والإخطارات 400 تجارة،

لا يوجد نص يمكن قراءته بشكل طبيعي من الصورة المقدمة. لا يمكنني قراءة الصور الصوفية أو المكتوبة بصيغة غير النصية.
About the journal

Hadith al-Dar is a publication of the Dar al-Atbar al-Islamiyyah. Every year, the Dar al-Atbar al-Islamiyyah organizes a series of lectures known as the Cultural Season. Hadith al-Dar was created to share these lectures with academic and cultural institutions and Friends of the Dar al-Atbar al-Islamiyyah around the world. Cultural Season 16 got underway in October 2010 until May 2011 and, as with previous years, it presented scholars in a wide variety of fields related to arts and culture in the Islamic world.

The Dar al-Atbar al-Islamiyyah (DAI) is a government cultural organisation based on a Kuwaiti private art collection. Since its inception in 1983, DAI has grown from a single focus organisation created to manage the loan of the prestigious al-Sabah Collection of art from the Islamic world to the State of Kuwait to become an internationally recognised cultural organisation.

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This publication is sponsored in part by:

Stamp seal made of silver; the stamping face of lobed teardrop shape with a tri-lobed base, the top with a hole for suspension, engraved in Thuluth with the owner’s name ‘al-Abd near Bar ‘Ali’ and the Shah’s invocation ‘Call upon All, the paragon of wonder, you shall find him of help in your misfortune. All anguish and all sorrow shall disappear, through thy divine trusteeship, Oh ‘Ali, Oh ‘Ali, Oh ‘Ali’

Iranian World
9th-10th century AH/15th-16th century CE
المحويتوت

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صور في العالم; تصوير أبو الحسن الصوبي لصور التوجم
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