BOOK REVIEWS


At the end of the 1950s on the initiative (and under the editorship) of an outstanding specialist in African studies D. A. Ol'derogge, preparation of a series called "Drevnie i srednevekovye istochniki po ètnografii i istorii narodov Afriki izlomne Sahary" (Ancient and Medieval Sources on the Ethnography and History of the Peoples of Africa South of Sahara) began in the Kunstkamera in cooperation with a prominent specialist in African studies V. I. Belleaev. It was planned to publish three volumes containing texts which date to the 7th—15th c. V. V. Matveev and L. E. Kubbel' worked on the preparation of texts and their translations.

The first volume of the series was published in 1960 with the subtitle "Arabiske istochniki VII—X vv." (Arabic Sources of the 7th—10th c.), although in the preface the compilers wrote about the 9th—10th c. works. It contained fragments of the works of 23 authors. The second edition was published in 1965 with the subtitle "Arabiske istochniki XI—XII vv." (Arabic Sources of the 11th—12th c.) and contained fragments from the works of 15 authors. The third volume was published in 1985 with the subtitle "Arabiske istochniki XII—XIII vv." (Arabic Sources of the 12th—13th c.) and contained fragments from the works of 25 authors. By that time it had become obvious that the program manifested in the first edition of the series did not fit into three volumes and the work would be continued. New participant — M. A. Tolmacheva — was involved in the work. L. E. Kubbel's death in 1988 and V. V. Matveev's death in 1995 did not allow them to complete the work in the next volumes. V. A. Popov and N. A. Dobronravrov undertook the work on the preparation of the preserved drafts for publication.

The book published in 2002 has many differences from the previous volumes. It was published as volume CXVI of the series "Literaturen piemianiki Vostoka" (Literary Monuments of the East). Although this was an academic series, it was very popular among a wide range of readers.

It does not bear the name common for the multi-volume series, however, it is marked as "vol. 4". Instead a certain hybrid was formed from the original title and subtitle: "Arabische islochaniki XIII—XIV vv. po ètnografii i istorii Afriki izlomne Sahary" (13th—14th Century Arabic Sources on the Ethnography and History of Africa South of Sahara). This new title, in combination with the mark "vol. 3" may mislead the reader, as this is the first volume for the 13th—14th c. sources.

On the other hand, the book contains few minor differences from the previous editions. In a short preface V. A. Popov tells about the principles of work with the heritage of the original compilers of the series: the texts of their translations and comments have been preserved as fully as possible. Then there follows a short introduction by M. A. Tolmacheva in which she gives a general characteristic of the Arabic works published in this volume and the description of the general state of world studies of the Arabic sources on Africa.


What concerns the Arabic original texts, most of them are quoted from the already existing publications, Arabic as well as European. The papers of the compilers did not always contain the original text, and then the publishers had to search for the source, and sometimes even introduce some additions. Thus, Kitâb taba`ab al-mach'îdd bî-l-Maghrib, referred to by V. V. Matveev as "not yet published", and quoted from Kitâb al-siyar of al-Sharrûmî, was published in Algeria in 1974 and its fragments were added by the editors; the editors have not found the Cairo edition of the al-Wâqiyât of Ibn Khalîkîn, which was used by V. V. Matveev, and have to use an earlier one.

Only when publishing Kitâb al-bul`dân by al-Qazwînî the compiler compared the F. Wustefeld edition with the manuscripts from the funds of the St. Petersburg Branch of
We must thank the publishers who undertook a difficult and thankless work, due to which the preserved material has not been lost for the scholarship, and D. A. Ofredoger's undertaking was completed.

As an analogue of the original texts of a certain period on a certain theme, this book can be useful for anyone concerned about the matter. What concerns the Russian-speaking readers, they have received an opportunity to familiarize themselves not only with a scientific importance, but also with a very interesting reading.

I. Wojewódzki

Efim A. Rezvan
«The Qur‘ān of ‘Uthmān»

Since the late 15th century, the Qur‘ānic manuscript, one of the most important in the world, was preserved in the memorial complex of the ‘Isbīyya Sufi brotherhood in the small village of Katta-Langar, some 100 km to the south of Samarkand. It was venerated for centuries as a genuine copy of the ‘Uthmānic Qur‘ān, written in the hand of the third righteous caliph and bearing traces of his blood.

Ninety-seven large parchment folios in Hijāzi script dated to the 9th century A.D. are held now in St. Petersburg, Karats-Langar, Bokhara and Tashkent. They contain approximately half of the text of the Qur‘ān. The history of the manuscript spans at least twelve centuries and tells a remarkable tale of dynasties and states, cities and people. It is, in essence, the story of Islamic civilisation itself, from its emergence in Arabia in the 7th century to the triumph of Islam, which survived and outlasted communism in the Muslim republics of the former USSR.

Prof. Dr. Efim Rezvan, author of the project, is the well-known specialist in Qur‘ānic studies, Deputy Director of the Kunstkamera Museum and Editor-in-Chief of "Manuscripta Orientalia". His latest book «The Qur‘ān and Its World» received the UNESCO award (for the important contribution to the culture of non-violence and dialogue among the civilisations), the title of the best book published in Russia in 2001 and the World Prize for the Book of the Year of the Islamic Republic of Iran (2002).

New monograph of the scholar presents a thorough study of the manuscript, viewing it historically through the prism of how the Qur‘ānic text was gradually established. The study is equipped with a facsimile reproduction of the manuscript (black and white in the book and in full colour in the DVD). The DVD also contains video film by Efim Rezvan and Sasha Abashkin «In Search of the Qur‘ān of ‘Uthmān» (52 minutes). The film is included along with the book brings the reader/viewer into the scholar’s workshop, allowing him to come along for visits to mountain villages in Central Asia and the bustling cities in the East, as well as sit quietly in the hush of the library. The story of the Muslim scripture based on the unique manuscript and field materials could be very important for mutual understanding and inter-confessional dialogue both in Russia and worldwide.

One can now state with confidence that the banks of the Neva are home to one of the most ancient and important Qur‘ānic manuscripts in the world, a Muslim relic no less significant than those venerated by Muslims in Cairo, Istanbul and Tashkent.

The publication (hard cover, A4 format, parallel texts in English and Russian, DVD) came out of press in August of 2004 in the series «Oriental Calligraphy and Miniatures from St. Petersburg Collection» (established 1962, renewed 2002, Academic Director – Mikhail Piotrovsky) after the delay connected with the appearance of the newly discovered fragments.

For details and film multilingual pre-view, please, visit book web-site at http://www.mushaf.spb.ru
To buy the book via internet, please, write to mushaf@mail.ru

Efim Rezvan’s book not only brings us close to an understanding of how the Sacred Text was established, it also gives us, Muslims and non-Muslims, a chance to brush up against the History that is recorded in this remarkable copy of the Qur‘ān. I welcome the publication of this book and congratulate its author on the scholarly coup that it is his right to claim.

Mikhail Piotrovsky,
Director,
State Hermitage Museum
JEYNOV — "WE ARRIVED"
(The Arabs of Uzbekistan — Images of Traditional Culture)

Authors

Prof. Dr. Seriv B. Cherevetsov — Head of the Department of African Studies of Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera), Russian Academy of Sciences (St. Petersburg), specialist in the history and ethnography of Ethiopia, author of a number of monographs and series of articles in the field.

Prof. Dr. Alexander B. Kudelin — Full member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Deputy Director of the World Literature Institute, Russian Academy of Sciences (Moscow), specialist in the history of the Arabic literature, author of the series of monographs in the field.

Prof. Dr. Marina I. Reizer — Professor of the Department of Iranian Philology at the State Moscow University Institute of Asian and African Studies (Moscow), specialist in medieval Persian poetry and culture, author of numerous publications in the field.

Prof. Dr. Efim A. Rezvan — Deputy Director of the Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera), Russian Academy of Sciences (St. Petersburg), specialist in Arabic and Islamic studies, author of a number of monographs and numerous articles dealing with Russian-Arab relations, history of Islam and Oriental studies computing.

Dr. Maria E. Rezvan — Research fellow of the Department of Central Asia Ethnography of Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera), Russian Academy of Sciences (St. Petersburg), specialist in the Qur’anic studies and Islamic magic, author of a series of articles in the field.

Mr. Konstantin S. Vasiltsov — Post-graduate student of the History of Middle East Department, St. Petersburg University, research fellow of the Department of Central Asia Ethnography of Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera), Russian Academy of Sciences (St. Petersburg), specialist in the history and culture of Central Asia.

Dr. Igor N. Wijewolski — Chief Librarian in the library of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, specialist in Semitic studies, author of several articles dealing with the history of Islamic and Judaic culture.

Notes to Contributors

Manuscripts must be written in English. Manuscripts must be clearly typewritten with numbered pages, double linespacing and wide margins throughout. Italic and bold typeface should be avoided. Use underlining where text is to be italicised. The title should be as brief and informative as possible. The institute at which the work has been done should be indicated at the head of each paper. Authors are requested to include their e-mail address if one is available.

Submissions

Manuscripts should be sent in duplicate to the Editor-in-Chief: Dr. Efim A. Rezvan, Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera), Russian Academy of Sciences, 3 Universitetskaya nab., 199034, Saint-Petersburg, Russia, e-mail: rezvan@kunstkamera.ru.