A combination of interconnected political events, cultural accomplishments and internal religious and social requirements connected with the community's self-identification led to the gradual supplanting of the "Syriac" tradition.

The revolutions of the nineteenth and twentieth century convinced the connection between political events and the questions of culture. One has only to recall the reform of Russian orthography undertaken by the Boyars. The revolution of the new era had to look new, bearing obvious witness to the depth of change within society. Contemporaries to the events connected with the revolution undoubtedly understood the striving of the new Mosopotamia- and Kharṭûṭh-oriented elite to inscribe its victory on the form of the Sacred book. They did this by turning away from the tradition connected with their vanquished opponents and by affirming a variant close to the Mosopotamian cultural orbit. The victory of the 'Abbīdīs coincided with new achievements in the unification of Arabic grammar and the growing mastery of calligraphers and ornamentalists. The Kūfic manuscripts created in the ninth century, copied in a monumental and significantly more regular script with the obligatory employment of diacritics and marks of vocalisation, adorned with carefully copied ornament in gold and with intricate dividers between ʿaydīt and qaʿīt. Formatted horizontally to set them apart instantly from other Scriptures and books, would undoubtedly best the outwardly unpromising hīṣāṭ copies. Everything about their appearance indicated that a new era had begun in the community. These changes as an actuality, along those unification level of the Qur'ānic manuscripts are being fixed by numerous sources. That is why several Western researches were able to advance the final stage of the Qur'ānic text fixation took place not later than then the 9th c AD.

But let us turn to the problem of the origin of the Arabic script. According to Prof. Noja during the latest decades "too much effort has been put into examining the shape of the marks, to the detriment of the general vision of how this writing was copied. Everyone agrees that Arabic writing did not spring forth ex nihilo, and as regards its origin the Islamic component and that of Western scholars are interwoven and even mixed".

According to him "a parallel may be drawn with the square Hebrew characters that emerged on the return from Babylonia, imitating the small squares and rectangles of the cuneiform characters[3]. It has always been difficult to say openly that these were copied. Indeed, how could one ever say in Israel that the writing had been borrowed from their fierce enemies of Mesopotamia? In the same way for Arabic writing there has perhaps been a wish to deny it well over the last centuries — how could one ever say, at the peak of Islamic history, that it had been copied, it least as a general concept, from a single and exclusively Christian script found in the Syriac? But in reality in both cases the earlier tradition said it clearly. As regards the Arabic one, one can read about it in the modern Ba'īmārī[4], if one does not wish to resort to Prince Cumati, although the way

Nabīh Abbot treated this subject remains extremely interesting[5].

But if this is valid for members of the two religions, I do not know if this managerial vision was lacking in the West in the generations that preceded us, beginning with Nīklede, who almost accidentally deviated from the course set by Sylvestre de Sacy, to which certain works that are now classics have returned in recent decades, and continuing up to the final works of Françoise Bregoli-Chamont[7].

Anyhow it is evident that the Christian cultural and missionary centers existed in Lā•güm and Ghasanid provinces have to be the cradle of the Arabic script. The problem of the existence of Arabic translations of the texts of the Bible circulated in pre-Islamic Arabia produced a considerable number of works, even though it is still far from any definite solution. Not going into the details of the discussion[9], let us consider only several facts. The Christian character of the most ancient known Arabic inscriptions allows us to suggest that the system of writing was in use before the Arabs, and that we know Arabic as a probable development (like many other similar Oriental systems) by Christian missionaries somewhere in the region of al-ʾIjar or al-ʾAḥram, or by heirs of the Caesareans, who were the first to write in Arabic the tradition names Zayd b. Hamād (ca. AD 500) and his son, the famous poet 'Abd b. Zayd, who lived in al-ʾIjar[11], and that the best speaker of the pre-Islamic past was Qass b. Sīda, who was also connected with Arabian Christians (possibly — of Najrān)[12].

In Damascus four parchment leaves were found with the Arabic text of the 7th Psalm written in Greek script. The scholar who published it dates the text to the ninth century; such specialists, however, as Bernard Laved and Nabīh Abbot consider that it possibly could be dated back to the sixth century[13]. A. Baumbach thought that some of the manuscripts containing Arabic translations of the texts of the Scriptures could be attributed to the pre-Islamic period. G. Graf and S. Griffițch agreed with him[14]. There is some indirect evidence that as early as the fourth century liturgy in Arabic, including correspond­

In conclusion, there is no definite evidence that as early as the fourth century liturgy in Arabic, including corresponding texts from the Old and the New Testament, could be served in Iraq, Syria, and in Hīmārī South Arabia[15]. The verses by pre-Islamic poets, especially by poets-monophthists, contain numerous parallels with the Bible which deserve special attention[16].


Preliminary observations over the Arabic epic lore recorded by the Qur'ān and accepted by the early Islamic theologians demonstrate that the Islamic way undoubtedly underlines Christian editing in the pre-Islamic time. In this case, however, a special investigation is required.
IN MEMORIAM

PROFESSOR SEVIR B. CHERNETSOV (1943—2005)

Sevirm Chernetsov's heart stopped beating on February 3. A day before, when colleagues called him to discuss his paper for Manuscripta Orientalia, his wife Miliena answered: “Sevirm is unwell, please, call him tomorrow”. Alas, that “tomorrow” never came... It is a severe blow to the Ethiopian and African studies in Russia, which is difficult to repair. I first met him when I was a student at the Oriental Department of the University. My teacher of Manding, Svetlana Tishchenko, asked me to take a book to the Institute of Ethnography, namely to Sevirm Chernetsov: “You’ll recognize him at once, he looks very medieval!” These characteristics came to my mind recently, when Sevirm drew my attention to a large-size picture at the entrance door of his apartment: an old Ethiopian monk with a manuscript under his arm at the entrance of a cave monastery. He said: “This is my Epsom alter ego.” It was true, Sevirm was medieval, in the sense that he was a true paladin of Knowledge. It happened to us more than once that his severe judgement of somebody, or his refusal to take on a promising to everybody) raised in the long run all his decisions and many of who was angry with him. Sevirm Chernetsov was against which he checked his colleagues too. Sevirm is “golden most of all.”

Sevirm Chernetsov was born on (Central Russia), where his mother Leninigrad, and his father, Boris visited her occasionally when war, his family returned to Leninigrad a student of the “male English high standard of education. Then, it Oriental Faculty of the University every student studied Kiswaabi, time, and it was at the upper grades opted for Ethiopian studies, and At that time, Dorey Oldegroves both at the Oriental Faculty and at the Institute of Ethnography Sevirm Chernetsov graduated from as his personal assistant at the Institute (as a member of the Academy of Sciences, he had a right to have an assistant), and, at the same time, gave him a topic for a thesis, Ethiopian Magic Scrolls: An Essay of Philological and Ethnographic Study.

Sevirm Chernetsov defended his PhD Thesis (more precisely, “Candidate in Science”) seven years later — much more than it is usually expected. One of Sevirm’s favourite sayings was: “Who harnesses slow, rides fast”. After a slow start (which is quite understandable, taking into account the real complexity of the chosen topic), he astonished his colleagues with his prolificacy: between 1974 and 1991, he published three thick volumes of correspondence translations of Ethiopian chronicles (Ethiopian Chronicles of 14th through 16th Centuries (Moscow, 1984); Ethiopian Chronicles of 17th through 18th Centuries (Moscow, 1989); Ethiopian Chronicles of 18th Century (Moscow, 1991)) and two monographs (Ethiopian Feudal Monarchy in 15th through 16th Centuries (Moscow, 1982); this book was defended in 1984 as Sevirm’s Doctoral Degree. Ethiopian Feudal Monarchy in 17 Century (Moscow, 1990). His sixth book, Ethiopia in the Course of the First Sixteen
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