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**EDITORIAL BOARD**

**Dear readers,**

The foundation of our journal coincided with serious changes in the whole complex of the humanities. The rejection of “large narratives” (Marxism, structuralism, psychoanalysis, etc.) led to predominance of description over interpretation and to the shift of attention to “boundary” themes and issues. Naturally, the contents of the *Manuscripta* reflected this shift of interests of the scholarly society. Artificially created boundaries between related branches of scholarship were eliminated. This, in turn, have led to the fact that for the last three years our journal has developed in close cooperation with Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera) of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the State Hermitage. According to our readers' feedback, the materials that we publish have become more interesting and versatile. We have significantly widened the geographical range of the published studies. Series of articles that the journal continues to publish regularly excite stable interest.

A researcher engaged in complex analysis of oriental manuscripts sooner or later comes to realizing the following fact: full-fledged research can only be carried out in the context of a wide range of cultural and scientific achievements of the corresponding epoch. The peculiar features of patterned carpet weaving, the specificities in decoration of bronze or ceramic vessels can help greatly when dating or localizing oriental bindings. The same applies to the analysis of clothes, patterns of fabrics, styles of head-dresses of characters of oriental miniatures. Obviously, the study of many elements of an oriental manuscript can also be an important source when studying museum collections of different kinds. That is why there are so many museum specialists among the authors and readers of our journal, and the editorial board of *Manuscripta* has from the very first issues regularly published articles dedicated to materials which are not directly linked with the analysis of oriental manuscripts, but interesting from the point of view of comparative study of manuscripts and museum objects. This refers to the article published in the present issue, which continues Dmitry Ivanov's research dedicated to the Buddhist collections of the St. Petersburg Kunstkamera.

One of the articles published in the current issue is connected with new exhibition project started by St. Petersburg Kunstkamera together with several scholarly, artistic and museum institutions of Uzbekistan. Name of the project sounds strange for those who new nothing about the lengthy cultural interaction in between Russia and Central Asia: “Oriental Dreams: Russian Avant-Garde and Silks of Bukhara”.

It is historically conditioned that MAE RAS possesses one of the wealthiest collection of Central Asian textiles connected with the history of political and diplomatic relations between Central Asia and Russia. Considering its volume and importance it is one of the most significant collections not only in Russia but in the whole Europe. The collection includes textile samples, festive and everyday clothes and jewellery. Most important part of the collection comprises ceremonial gifts to Russian tsars from Bukhara amīrs and *Khīwa khāns*. The famous collection of velvet and silk ikats alone counts over 500 samples. These collections provide priceless material for comparative studying of Central Asia traditional costumes and they are now open for researches from all countries.

Our museum also possesses valuable collection of historical photos and ethnographic pictures associated with Central Asia and its culture studying history. We also obtain extensive collections of artefacts that can tell marvellous stories to an inquisitive researcher. The best items from our collections are shown at the present exhibition.

It may be considered the result of a lengthy cultural interaction that a collection of Russian avant-garde painting which is second only to the collection at the Russian Museum is now preserved in the collections of

Uzbek museums. Furthermore, it can be considered proven that the images and forms reflected in Central Asian tapestries influenced the aesthetics of Russian avant-garde.

Our Uzbek colleagues and friends have not only brought to St. Petersburg outstanding and yet little-known works of such famous Russian advance-guard artists as Yavlensky, Stenberg, Klyun, Stepanova, Rodchenko and Exter but also enriched the exhibition with admirable examples of traditional costume and jewellery as well as beautiful new dresses created by modern Tashkent designers.

The project was initiated by the "Forum of Culture and Art of Uzbekistan" Foundation and Russian Asiatic Society, organizations uniting scholars, journalists, politicians and businessmen eager to work on consistent and progressive development of cultural, political and economic relations between Russia and Uzbekistan.

Theorists predict a forthcoming change in basic scholarly paradigms. Basing on the achievements of the recent years, when the focus of the research has shifted, and new details which had been imperceptible have been revealed; when the main and the secondary have traded places and description has prevailed over interpretation, a new wave of universalization has grown ripe. We shall see. I am sure that, like before, our journal will reflect all important shifts in research practices.

On behalf of all members of our editorial board, I would like to say Happy New Year to you and to wish you success and well-being. We sincerely thank you for your letters and your constant interest in our journal. See you in the New Year!

Efim Rezvan,  
Editor-in-chief

## TEXTS AND MANUSCRIPTS: DESCRIPTION AND RESEARCH

E. Rezvan

### MINGANA FOLIOS: WHEN AND WHY

In the previous issue of *Manuscripta Orientalia* we were pleased to publish Dr. Alba Fedeli's article, entitled "Mingana and the manuscript of Mrs. Agnes Smith Lewis, one century later" [1]. It was devoted to the re-examination and re-evaluation of the data obtained nearly hundred years ago as a result of a thorough study of a palimpsest, whose *scriptio inferior*, containing part of the Qur'anic text, was written with three principal kinds of script [2]. List of the various readings, omissions and interpolations found in comparison with the established *textus receptus* seems to be

still very important for the study of the early history of the Qur'anic text.

The Arabic Christian texts (selections from the Fathers, St. Athanasius, St. Chrysostom, etc.) date from the *end of 9th—beginning of the 10th century*. While thinking about the palimpsest in question one can easily ask: how could it happen that on the territory controlled by the Muslim authorities, somebody could destroy the holy text of the Muslim scripture with the goal of re-using the parchment and writing texts of Christian origin on it?

#### What is a palimpsest?

This was a period of growing disappointment in the state and in "official Islam". The uprisings of the ninth—tenth centuries challenged the power of the caliphate: "the truth has appeared to the world, the *mahdī* has risen, the power of the 'Abbāsids, the jurists, the readers of the Qur'ān and the preachers of the tradition is coming to an end...".

The empire seethed. In 930, the Qarmatians spirited away the black stone of the Ka'ba, in 939 the "concealment" (*ghayba*) of the Shi'ite *imām* began, the message of the Ismā'īlī *du'ā* attracted thousands of followers, Ismā'īlī exegetes interpreted the hidden (*bāṭin*) meaning of the Qur'ān, and the dawn of the New Persian literary language, into which the Qur'ān was translated, began. Finally, in 945 the Shi'ite Buwayhids seized Baghdād. The power of the caliph was abruptly diminished.

The study of extant Qur'anic manuscripts shows that *the tenth century was marked by fundamental changes in the history of the Qur'anic text*. In addition to the appearance of Ibn Mujāhid's work, it was then that new forms of Qur'anic script began to spread; they were distinguished by greater decorative embellishment in comparison to their predecessors. Primary among them were "Eastern *kūfī*" (the oldest dated copy is from AD 972) and cursive *naskhī* (the oldest dated copy is from AD 1001) [3].

In the ninth century, the centre of scholarly activity shifted from al-Baṣra and al-Kūfa to Baghdād, capital of the caliphate. The business of translation thrived there,

famous philosophers, exegetes and lawyers worked there, a grammatical school which brought together elements of previous systems arose there, the eminent grammarians al-Mubarrad (d. 900) and his pupil al-Sarrāj (d. 928) created there their famous works. And there, the beginning of the tenth century was marked by several attempts to achieve a new level of unification in the Qur'anic text. Three works entitled *Kitāb al-Maṣāḥif* were dedicated to the problem of *al-qirā'āt*. Their authors were Ibn Abī Dāwūd (d. 928) [4], Ibn Anbārī (d. 938/9) and Ibn Aṣḥta al-Iṣfahānī (d. 970/1). The main role, however, would fall to Ibn Mujāhid (859—935), a pupil of Ibn Abī Dāwūd. A noted authority on the Qur'anic sciences, who as the people believed, read the Qur'ān even in his grave, worked in Baghdād and enjoyed the successive protection of two extremely influential grand *wazīrs*, Ibn Muqla (famous reformer of the Arabic calligraphy) and Ibn 'Isā, whose power and influence can be likened to the power of a regent to the caliph.

Ibn Mujāhid's work bore the title *Al-Qirā'āt al-sab'a* ("The Seven Readings"), pretended to near official status and established a system of permissible Qur'anic "readings". The system proposed in the work relied on the consonantal basis of the "Uṭhmānic version" and limited the number of systems of variant vowelings of the text to seven; these belonged, correspondingly, to seven authorities *of the eighth century*. All of them were ac-

## CONTENTS

<i>EDITORIAL BOARD</i> . . . . .	3
<b>E. Rezvan.</b> Peter the Great Kunstkamera — 290 years . . . . .	3
<i>TEXTS AND MANUSCRIPTS: DESCRIPTION AND RESEARCH</i> . . . . .	6
<b>K. Vasil'tsov.</b> Afḡal al-Dīn Kāshānī and His Treaties "The Book of Everlasting" (Based on the MS B 2496 from the SPIOs Collection) . . . . .	6
<i>TEXT AND ITS CULTURAL INTERPRETATION</i> . . . . .	20
<b>A. Kudelin.</b> Arabic Literature: Poetics and Stylistics. IV: Medieval Arabic Panegyric: Tradition and Creative Personality. . . . .	20
<b>M. Reisner.</b> The Life of the Text and the Fate of Tradition. V: Method of Allegorical Interpretation of the Qur'ān ( <i>ta'wīl</i> ) and the Symbolic Language of Persian Poetry of the 11th—12th Centuries . . . . .	27
<b>M. Rezvan.</b> "If somebody dreams about reading the Qur'ān, it is a good dream" (On the Modern Interpretation of the Medieval Tradition) . . . . .	34
<i>PRESENTING THE COLLECTION</i> . . . . .	40
<b>S. Chernetsov.</b> Ethiopian "Magic Scrolls" from the MAE Collection. . . . .	40
<i>BOOK REVIEWS</i> . . . . .	69

### Front cover:

**Plate 1.** "An Angel with a Sword", 12.2×21.5 cm (painting). No. 6607–14, MAE RAS. 12.5×218 cm (whole). Africa, middle of the 20th c. Photo by S. Shapiro. Courtesy of the Museum.

### Back cover:

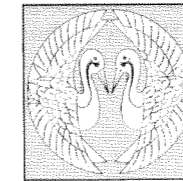
**Plate 2.** "Angels", 12×13.5 cm (painting). No. 4055–10, MAE RAS. 13×190 cm (whole). Africa, second half of the 19th—beginning of the 20th c. Photo by S. Shapiro. Courtesy of the Museum.

**Plate 3.** "Tied-up Demons", 12×12 cm (painting). Same MS. Photo by S. Shapiro. Courtesy of the Museum.

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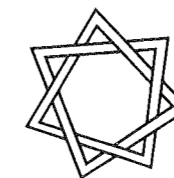


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