IN MEMORIAM

“FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE”
PROF. SERGIO NOJA NOSEDA (1931—2008)

On January 31, Prof. Sergio Noja Noseda, member of the Editorial Committee of our journal, was tragically killed in a traffic accident. He was one of the leading European specialists in Islamic and Arabic studies, a person who had many friends in Russia. He lived a truly fantastic life. At the age of 10, this son of the Italian general over Italy’s air force who had fought against the Poem of Tartar and Tartar wars in verse which contains a poem of more than 5061 lines in rhyming couplets (masnavi). The rhyme and actually the movement of the thimble-laced samuri.

We can fairly assume that all variant forms of the heroes reflect the same basic Islamic tradition, and consequently that all express, or reflect, the synthesis of Ferdowsi’s original account of the wars between Iran and Turan. If we insist on treating the variants as independent traditions, and went on to explain them independently of each other, we could come up with alternative hypotheses, but this would be unnecessarily complicated.

Notes
1. For the important Persian translations, and the Persian versions of classical works see, for example, P. L. Lorch, Forschungen über die Künste und die iranischen Volksdichter (St. Petersburg, 1857-58), pp. 96-103; Kh. Murdaba, Kūrdiske persiske tekst paa persisk og tilfeldiger tilskuddet, forbi (The Book of Jawaharipour)...

Fig. 1. Mustafa b. Malekuddin Quli, Kitāb-i Jawaharipour (The Book of Jawaharipour), 1711-11cm. Rajah Ali 1307, Malé National Library and Museum, call No. 4461, fol. 1r. Courtesy of the Library.

Fig. 2. The same MS, fol. 17v.
But even with these achievements, perhaps the greatest of the life-works of Prof. Noja can be said to be the enormous international research and publication project he pioneered devoted to the earliest existing Qur’anic manuscripts. In 1999 he founded the Fondazione Ferri Noja Novea di Studi Arabo-Islamici as a headquarters for the project. The first two volumes were devoted to the most important Qur’anic MSS stored in Paris and London and were published by him together with Prof. Fr. Derecho in 1999 and 2001 respectively. Seven more volumes of the series are projected under the new title, “Early Qur’ans. The Era of the Prophet, the Rightly-Guided Caliphs and the Umayyades”. These are currently in different stages of preparation.

He was especially proud of the success of his attempts to organize collaboration between Arab-Muslim and non-Muslim specialists in the early Qur’anic MSS tradition. The “Centro interdisciplinare per Videntificazione, la catalogazione e lo studio dei più antichi manoscritti arabi” was founded and two scholarly sessions were held in Cairo in 2006 and 2007. One of his last achievements is the partnership contract devoted to the publication of the series of the Qur’anic manuscripts including the famous Qur’anic palimpsest kept in San’ā’ “Dir al-Makhritat”. It was supported by the President of the Yemeni Republic, financed by the French Academy and co-organized by Prof. Christian Robin. Sergio Noja was caught by the idea of the “virtual restoration” of the palimpsest and the publication of the scriptio inferior. We were preparing to jointly produce a documentary devoted to this project.

I met Prof. Noja for the last time in Tallinn where we took part in the opening of the exhibition “They were fighting for our freedom” devoted to the joint struggle against the Nazis and organized by our museum with the help of our American and Dutch partners. Prof. Noja finished his short speech with the following: “I am the young man of the White Nights in my love for Russia. Also, if you will not be married with your first love you can never forget it. So, this evening I found it again. She is a serious lady, no more the girl on a bridge of Saint-Petersburg, but I love her like 60 years ago, Russia, my love!”

In the summer of 2007 we started shooting a documentary devoted to Sergio Noja, his fantastic life and scholarly career. On my table there is the last article of Sergio entitled “Laying the foundations of a study at the textual transmission: the project of the Fondazione Ferri Noja Novea”. On the screen of my PC is his last message dated January 23th and it is full of jokes as usual. I still can’t believe he has left us.

Efim Rezvan

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Notes to Contributors

Manuscripts must be written in English.

Manuscripts must be clearly typewritten with numbered pages, double lines-spacing and wide margins throughout. 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 email 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, 2 Universitetskaya nab., 199034, St. Petersburg, Russia, e-mail: rezvan@kunstkamera.ru.
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