AL-SIRA AL-NABAWIYYA BY IBN ISHAQ — IBN HISHAM: THE HISTORY OF THE TEXTS AND THE PROBLEM OF AUTHORSHIP

This article draws attention to the earliest and most famous of the extant texts composed in the medieval Arabic genre (al-Sira al-nabawiyah). For a long time the text has been known as Strut of Ibn Hisham [1], and it is commonly associated with the name of Abi Muhammad 'Abd al-Malik b. Hisham — whose name usually appears on the title pages of many modern editions [2].

However, the first publication of this monument, wonderfully prepared by F. Wustenfeld, is given the Arabic title Strut sayyidun Muhammad Rasul Allâh. Riviyyat Abî Muhammad 'Abd al-Malik b. Hisham 'an Zayyâd b. 'Abd Allâh al-Bakktâ'î 'an Muhammad b. Ishaq ("Life of Our Lord Muhammad, the Messenger of Allâh, as communicated by Abi Muhammad 'Abd al-Malik b. Hisham — from Zayyâd b. 'Abd Allâh al-Bakktâ'î — from Ibn Ishaq's Ishaq)". The intrinsically listing of the authors in the given title, which is put together according to the medieval tradition of "reverse" chronology, means that Ibn Hisham was the last one in the history of this text. And yet the text is inseparable of the names of Ibn Ishaq (d. 150/767), al-Bakktâ'î (d. 183/799), and Ibn Hisham (d. 218/832 or 213/828). The authorship line was "turned over" in German by the publisher, and Ibn Ishaq came first, and the name of Zayyâd b. 'Abd Allâh al-Bakktâ'î was omitted: "Life of Muhammad from Zayyâd b. Ishaq, processed by 'Abd al-Malik b. Hisham" [3].

Naturally, alternative reading of the titles does not just boil down to simple change of the "reverse" chronology to the "direct" one. It ultimately deals with the issue of the authorship of "Life of the Prophet". If Ibn Hisham is in the beginning of the Arabic line, then the roles of two other linkers are not diminished but are not magnified either — then it is natural to expect that in time the analyzed work gained in popularity in the medieval Arabic society, as did Sira of Ibn Hisham the "direct" one. What happened. In laying down the "direct" chronology in German, F. Wustenfeld does not just place Ibn Ishaq first, but contrary — in certain sense — to the medieval tradition, he makes him the primary author, whereas Ibn Hisham is given a role of the "processor", the editor of the procuror [4].

A. Kudelin

Even preliminary cursory inspection over the publication's titles and translations of "Life of the Prophet" is enough to understand how complex and intricately interrelated are the issues of the history of this monument and its authorship. In this current work we would like to sum up some of researches relating to these issues. With this end in view, we intend to roughly trace the changes the original text of Ibn Ishaq has undergone over time, and determine whether the text of Ibn Hisham was the result of mechanical computation, exact reproduction-copying of the two preceding links, or an independent version, distant from the original text of Ibn Ishaq.

We begin with certifying the fact that "Life of the Prophet" that we are analyzing is a monument of medieval Arabic written tradition with special features, which are first of all determined by a complex set of its elements. Here is the list of those:

Prose elements of Sira:
1. Out-of-plot prose elements.
   a. Qur'anic citations: — the passages with the so-called asbâb al-maazzîl (circumstances of the sending down of the al-ahza' and al-suras of the Qur'an).
2. Elements of interpretation (tafsîr) of sîra and al-ahza' of the Qur'an [5].
3. The speeches of the Prophet and his associates, official documents.
4. Various kinds of lists of names (enumerations).
5. Plot prose elements.
   a. Narratives of "miraculous" events and phenomena.
   b. Stories (akhbâr) [6].

Poetic elements of Sira are presented with the plays of various sizes. These elements, according to their purpose, may be divided into following groups:

   a. Verses — the object of philological discussions about debated authorship of poetic works.
   b. Verses — "genealogical" testimonies.
2. Verses — philological testimonies (lexicological, grammatical, etc.)
3. Verses — toponymical testimonies.
4. Verses — constituent element of the plot.
   a. Verses — quasihistorical testimonies.
   b. Verses — historical testimonies (the refutation of struggles within the tribe and intertribal struggles; religious propaganda and conflicts with religious motives, etc.).
5. Verses cited in the Sira in relation to the discussion of the theme "poetry and revelation" [7].

In our preliminary discussion let us now say a few words of the heterogeneous elements in the Sira mentioned above. Even without a comprehensive analysis we can safely state that the "Life" is neither an example of the so-called infallible combination of works of different genres in one text [8], nor a conglomerate, i.e., an incoherent combination of works of diverse genres. Sira is a certain formation constituted of heterogenous elements, fastened together by certain common principles [9], which testify to lengthy and purposeful labour of its compiler.

It is clear today that Sira was created with the help of famous and famous representatives of Arabo-Islamic culture. There are differing — at times diametrically opposite — opinions of their role in the formation of this text that came to us.

Indeed, in the history of this work, beginning with Ibn Ishaq, there are a lot of unclear moments, that are on principle not clarified on account of the lack of the sufficient number of manuscripts which we can't even claim its name for sure. According to various sources there are different names: Kitâb al-Maghâjil ("The Book of the journeys of the Prophet"), Kitâb al-sirta ("The Book of the Prophet's Life"), al-Kitâb al-kabîr ("The Big Book"), etc. The latter name of the book seems to correspond to the title of that edition, which Ibn Ishaq allegedly compiled on the instructions of the "Abbadîs Court in Baghdad in 1091 [10].

The complete text of Ibn Ishaq's work hasn't been preserved, which could be probably judged by the Ibn Hisham's edition, or by the fragments of various sizes, preserved in the form of quotes in works of other scholars, or by the incomplete manuscripts, of which we will speak later. The researchers know for sure, though, that the original version of Muhammad's "life", compiled by Ibn Ishaq included three parts: Kitâb al-mubâhâd (the history of biblical prophets matching with the Judeo-Christian tradition, Kitâb al-ma-zikâ'im — Muhammad's Makkan period of life, Kitâb al-Maghâjil — the narrative of aggressive campaigns during Muhammad's Median period of life [11].

The further destiny of the work of Ibn Ishaq is unclear in many of its important details. Perhaps, he had a text for the court. But we do not have that version, which existed in one or two copies in the library of the "Abbadîs. All that remains of it, first of all, on what Ibn Ishaq communicated to his students in the frameworks of his teaching. Multiple stories that were conveyed by the teacher should be added, too, among which were ahdîthh issued from the pen of Ibn Ishaq, as well as other ahdîthh outside of his large work that he propagated. Apparently, "Lifes" of Ibn Ishaq differed drastically [12]. "Iqîq region of the Islamic Empire alone claimed a few versions of Ibn Ishaq's book [13]. Later his work was known to exist in more than 15 editions in Madina, Kûfa, Bâşra, Bagdad and Ray [14].

Hence Ibn Ishaq's work came to us by way of his students, whom he dictated the text — which was the customary practice of that time — in special classes [15]. Here we need to introduce the activities of Ibn Ishaq's students in a more precise manner. While scholars are speaking of his students, usually the two most famous ones are noted — Zayyâd b. 'Abd Allâh al-Bakktâ'î (d. 183/799) and Yûnus b. Bâkhty (d. 199/815). They learned "Life" from their teacher, and then they "passed" this work on to others. According to the medieval sources, Ibn Ishaq allegedly dictated his work to the first and the best of his students, in two sitting [16]. In accordance with another story, al-Bakktâ'î apparently accompanied Ibn Ishaq on his "journeys after knowledge" until he "heard" the whole "Life". This line of communication — from Ibn Ishaq to al-Bakktâ'î — is extremely important, because it links Ibn Ishaq with Ibn Hisham directly. The latter, who is the last link in the edition of "Life of the Prophet", in our hands received all in formation from al-Bakktâ'î, which in turn came from Ibn Ishaq and was included into the text. The second student, Ibn Bâkhty, according to a medieval source, tried to secure his own name: "every word was a word for word, what he had been dictated by Ibn Ishaq" [17]. This statement, however, will be defined more accurately, as follows:

A less known third student, Salama b. Faqd (d. 1918/806-807), supposedly heard the work of Ibn Ishaq twice. Salama, they insist, made a copy of the whole work for Ibn Ishaq, and the teacher compared it with his own autograph. It should be added that the manuscripts left after Ibn Ishaq most likely crossed over to Salama — and only he, apparently — used the autographs of his teaching and the original of the work. Undoubtedly, it is for this reason alone Salama, via whom al-Jâbari cites Ibn Ishaq, has the reputation as the compiler of "the more complete set of books of al-Maghâjil" [18].

Whether fully or partially, different editions of the work of Ibn Ishaq have spread all over the Muslim world from the three students mentioned above.

1. The best known of them all, the edition of Ibn Hisham originates from al-Bakktâ'î's. We are familiar with its name: Ibn Ishaq — al-Bakktâ'î — Ibn Hisham. There is a assumption that al-Bakktâ'î, way before Ibn Hisham, considerably abridged the work of Ibn Ishaq.
2. Although the second student, Ibn Bâkhty, assured his listeners that he heard Ibn Ishaq's book for word for word, the medieval biographical literature tells us that "He took the text of Ibn Ishaq, and then combined it with other ahdîthh" that trace back to many

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authentic authors. And even though that which Ibn Bukayr "passed on" from Ibn Isḥāq "constitutes the larger portion of the book," the parts that he added to the work are not considered unimportant. Hence, the explanation of the fact that the work written by Ibn Bukayr is sometimes known as Zaydīyya is that it combines, in one work, the stories of other authors such as Ibn Isḥāq. In other words, the "transmitter" added so much of his own (al-ḥabībī) and information on his own behalf that he may be qualified as an independent compiler — and even an author — of a new work [19].

3. Salama b. Fadl is primarily mentioned in relation to the prominent historian al-Ṭabarī (d. 390/993). The work attributed to him is called al-Tarīkh, as well as the commentary on the Qurʾān (Tafsīr) contains quotes from the work of Ibn Isḥāq. Al-Ṭabarī, for whom the work of Ibn Isḥāq was the main source of life and activities of Muhammad, mostly quotes "Life" according to Salama b. Fadl, and sometimes he uses Yūnās b. Bukayr and other "transmitters" as well. In Tafsīr he cites lengthy passages from parts of Ibn Isḥāq's work that were abridged by Ibn Isḥāq, or that were too different from the passages cited by the latter [20].

We can now sum it up, preliminary. It has been said before that the work of Ibn Isḥāq exists in more than 15 various editions. Any work devoted to the life of Muḥammad derives information from his "Life." Modern scholars S. M. al-Samak ascend to the number of direct "transmitters" of Ibn Isḥāq exceeds fifty. Occasionally he verifies considerable differences between the texts with identical episodes or al-ḥabībī in apocryphal stories. As a whole, we are in keeping with most of both these authors refer to Ibn Isḥāq. S. M. al-Samak draws a very important conclusion, which many scholars agree with, that it is fundamentally impossible to accurately reconstruct the work of Ibn Isḥāq in its original form [21].

After a brief — due to necessity — survey of the history of the al-Shiʿa and the text, we can now turn to the question of its authorship. We need to ask a few questions: (i) Does the history of the text of ʿStrv testify to "mechanical" changes or qualitative evolution of the original? (ii) Did Ibn Isḥāq have a special approach — peculiar to him only — to compiling the "Life"? (iii) And has it been preserved in the final preserved form?

The researchers claim Ibn Isḥāq or Ibn Isḥāq or both Ibn Isḥāq and Ibn Ḥishām simultaneously to be the author(s) of the literary monument we are analyzing. Let us consider in full length what lines of thinking adherents of one theory of and the other are guided by.

What is clear to us is that Ibn Isḥāq was the last compiler of the al-Shiʿa and al-ḥabībī. As tradition goes — and of which Ibn Isḥāq himself partially testifies — he assumed the role of a radical editor of the original text. We now examine the principal points of the al-Shiʿa and the al-ḥabībī in the order of abandoned. Ibn Isḥāq does not express particularity of the work of Ibn Isḥāq that unfortunately did not reach us. We know from the medieval Arabic sources that Ibn Isḥāq is not the "author of the book of the Mevrezh" or "the book of the Mevrezh," but expresses his own version of Ḥabībī in the narrow framework and gave it a universal nature [29]. We will remind you that Ibn Ḥishām essentially abridged namely the "universal" part of the work of Ibn Isḥāq and his version starts with prophet Isḥāq, since he conducts his history from the beginning of proper Islamic proph-ecy.

Listing the authors, whom Ibn Isḥāq refers to in his "Life of the Prophet," R. Khoury attributes 27 to the primary ones [30]. Apart from all these authors, directly or indirectly related to various schools of al-ḥabībī particularly to the Madinan school, R. Khoury gives his special attention to the figure of Wahb b. Munabbih (34–110 or 114/654–728 or 732), who exerted great influence both on Ibn Isḥāq and Ibn Ḥishām. His influence did not only consist as an effect on the first part of "Strv of Ibn Isḥāq, where the researchers attribute all Judeo-Christian material to Ibn Munabbih, which served as a foundation for constructing the "universal history of the prophesy, but also on the material for the second and the third parts, which speak of proper Islamic history [31].

Thereupon, R. Khoury draws our attention to a special phenomenon of great influence of Wahb b. Munabbih upon Ibn Isḥāq and Ibn Ḥishām, he is cited only once! (1) in our "Strv text of Ibn Isḥāq we found. That one time citation of the text of Ibn Isḥāq and his later known authors such as Ibn Ḥishām [32]. To explain this fact only by saying that Wahb b. Munabbih gave the translation of the history of the prophet, the history of the prophet, Ibn Isḥāq is inaccurate, since Wahb was also a scholar, as we have just shared, of proper Islamic history. R. Khoury sees such attitude toward words Wahb b. Munabbih in radical difference of his approach to the historical materials from the approach of the Muslim theologians of Medina, specializing in passing of al-ḥabībī, the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad.

Thereupon, R. Khoury makes an important conclusion that Ibn Isḥāq has formed a European tradition in the study of Strv, that first works in the genre of the history of the Prophet of Islam were born in the bosom of Madinan school of traditionalists, when traditional era norms for the production of traditional texts were also those — were theologians and historians at the same time [34].

Even medieval scholars-traditionalists noticed the fundamental difference of Ibn Isḥāq from his predecessors. Dunayr the scholar of Ḥabībī b. Ḥishām (270–354/884–965) stated that Ibn Isḥāq is considered among those who can tell stories engagingly [35]. In view of J. Hovorse the same opinion sounds as follows:

Das Traditionsmaterial, das ihm von seinen Lehrern überliefert worden war und das er mit zahlreichen von ihm selbst gesammelten Feststelltungen erweiterte, stellte Ibn Isḥāq zu einer wohlgelungenen Darstellung des Lebens des Propheten zusammen [36].

Let us now briefly examine the characteristic features of the work of Ibn Isḥāq, as they are understood by modern scholars [37].

This issue is considered in detail by G. Schecler, having evaluated the different size passages from “The Book of Maghāli” of Ibn Isḥāq, which essentially came to us, he makes a conclusion that they (these passages) are sufficient to speak of its literary and — even — artistic nature. According to G. Schecler’s words, this is a "un ouvrage bien conçu", divided into chapters, where events are basically constructed chronologically in the beginning of various reports concerning a certain event Ibn Isḥāq often proposes preliminary remarks that sum-marize the previous reports of the authors, and sometimes often introduces transition statements between various stories; the main purpose of which is to organize a co-herent narrative. However — and this is even more important — other elements of the work of Ibn Isḥāq of material subjugating it to "une idée directrice"; "Il range l’histoire du prophète et de la nouvelle foi dans l’histoire de la révélation divine depuis le début du monde" [38].

After that, for the sake of illustration G. Schecler makes a demonstrative comparative analysis of "The Book of Maghāli" of Ibn Isḥāq with the work of the same name of his contemporary Ma’mar b. Rāḥid (d. 154/770). At first, it looks as though the events described in Ibn Isḥāq’s and Ma’mar b. Rāḥid’s works are sometimes parallel, sometimes contrast, sometimes chronological order. But if we are more attentive, we may verify that chronological order here is quite not observed: for instance, the treaty at Khadiriyah (6/628) preceded the story of the battle at Badr (2/624), the epi-sode at Bir’ Ma’īna (4/625) shows up in the text after Makkah is conquered (6/630) and the battle at Hunayn (6/630); having presided the events in the life of the Prophet, the author goes back in time and again talks of the times preceding hijra, the Muslim migration to Ethiopia, etc.

A special role of Ma’mar, according to G. Schecler, lacks in coherent narratives, so typical to Ibn Isḥāq; preliminary remarks and transition statements between various stories are missing altogether in the overall work, com-piled by different scholars isolated from one another. And finally, the major difference from the work of Ibn Isḥāq is that there is no underlying idea in the work of Ma’mar, in Ibn Isḥāq’s book, and therefore it is not considered a "well-organized" book [38].

The approach of Ibn Isḥāq to compiling a coherent narrative is defined by the researches as being influenced by the influence of the history of al-Shiʿa and in particular the so-called "narrators" (Ibn Munabbih, for instance) [39]. In the amalgamation of these two methods certain scholars see the origins of fātāliyya of Strv of Ibn Isḥāq; this blending of two genres (the prose of
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Notes
2. Thus, in the title of a qualitative prepared by M. al-Saqâ, L. al-Âbyûtî, “A. Shâbîlî, it is known as Al-Sira al-Nabawi” (The Life of the Prophet).
4. Approaches similar to that of F. Wüstenfeld in analyzing the authorship of the given document are not quite foreign to other scholars. For instance, in English translation the authorship is ascribed to Ibn Ishak only: The Life of Muhammad. A Translation of Ishak’s (s.î.) straw, Allî, with introduction and notes by A. Guillaume (London, 1955). The rich-in-content foreword, written by the translator, names Ibn Ishak as the author of “Life of the Prophet,” whereas Ibn Hishâm is considered as his editor only (ibid., p. xiv). The French translation, L. Al-Abûyûtî, L. A. Shâbîlî, Ibn L’sirat al-Nabawi, is again attributed only to the authorship chain of the Arabic title of the first published version: Ibn Ishak, La vie du Prophète, Muhammad (Ishak), L’Ismâ‘îlî, Recension d’Abd al-Malik ibn Hishâm d’après Zayd (s.î.) (Ibn al-’Abd al-Allâh ibn al-Bakhtîrîh d’après Muhammad ibn Ishak, traduction française avec introduction et notes par A. Badawî (Bâyûtî, 2001).
5. Apart from mentioned categories included in 1a, it is only reasonable to indicate other citations of the Qur’an (particularly in relation to the discussions of Jewish and Christian beliefs (Das Leben Muhammed’s, pp. 403—11); we would also like to note citations of the Gospel (ibid., pp. 124—5, 125—4, 149—50), when we speak of the sleeping youth (ibid., p. 129) and in mentioning the fable, the fable writer (ibid., p. 285, et al.). Since the data of the citation of the Qur’an and the Gospels in the examined “Sira” do not take much space, we will confine ourselves with mentioning it only.
8. D. S. Lichachev introduces this term, defining the construction of considerable amount of ancient Russian literature: “Works would often join mechanically with each other, as separate rooms into one suite. Each of these works, entering into a much bigger entity, is, in its own way, a finished work. Chronologies, chronographers, paterenics, genalogies, palaeo and even certain collections of uncertain make-up are constructed with the help of enfolding method.” (D. S. Lichachev, Poëtika drevnesrusskoi literatury (Poetics of Ancient Russian Literature) (Moscow, 1979), pp. 253—4).
9. We spoke of one of these principles earlier in our works. This is a principle of fictionalization, reforming and joining the separate components of the story (see: Kudelin, “Vlaaermspeisings Pokroko” Ibn Is̄haq — Ibn Khishâm: k harakterise, onomnicha komponenten pemanssatsa” (“‘Life of the Prophet’ by Ibn Is̄haq — Ibn Hishâm: toward the characteristics of the main components of the monument”), IV Monitorade vanoukna konference “Ikas, kisenu, obchestvata” (Moscow, 2007), pp. 66—76).
15. For further information see: R. G. Khozây, op. cit., p. 10.
16. For further information see: Scheler, Écrire et transmettre, p. 76.
17. For further information see: ibid., pp. 76—7.
18. For further information see: Scheler, Écrire et transmettre, p. 85. A much later book of Ahm. ’Abd al-Jabîr al-’Urdîfî from Kûfî (d. 727/880) goes back to the edition of Ibn Bideya (ibid.).
19. For further information see: ibid., p. 85.
22. A. Guillaume, followed by al-Badawî, apparently sees the greatest merit of Ibn Hishâm in his critical observations on the subject of the authenticity of the poetry in “Sitra” not only when he does not accept it but also when he corrects Ibn Ishaq and establishes the true author of the vers (The Life of Muhammad, p. XLII); Ibn Isâq, La vie du Prophète Mahomet, pp. VIII—IX). Here too, however, al-Badawî is not inclined to attach great importance to the merits of Ibn Hishâm, on account of two reasons: (i) Ibn Isâq does not mention the names of those ‘poetry’s experts’, who reject the authenticity of one or another (and (ii) he does not give any reason why these ‘poetry’s experts’ rejected the authenticity and ascription of one qâṣâ’ida or another (ibid.).
23. A. Guillaume did not fail to note, citing a medieval commentator of “Sitra”, al-Sa’dâwi (d. 381/1185), that these versions frequently turn out to be less fortunate and less accurate (The Life of Muhammad, p. XLII—XLIII).
24. Many of the elements which we have called “out-of-plot” (see classification above) went back exactly to Ibn Hishâm. A. Guillaume even had found it possible to place them as the endnotes in the very end of his “Sîra” English translation. This caused serious misrepresentation of the text composition (ibid., pp. 691—708).
25. Al-Badawî’s attempt at defining the meaning of Ibn Hishâm’s “editing”. For instance, he says that “Ibn Hishâm s’ait qu’abstraire un peu le texte original de Ibn Ishaq”, but later he claims that Ibn Hishâm presents “le — relativement — petit volume — de sa ressource” instead of “le très gros ouvrage de Ibn Ishaq” (Ibn Isâq, La vie du Prophète Mahomet, p. 1, IX). He claims this Ibn Hishâm “s’est generallement insignifiant”, but according to his own calculation they make up about 0.7% (ibid., p. 1) of the text of Ibn Ishak (ibid., p. 1). Based on their observations of Ibn Hishâm’s editing, A. Guillaume and al-Badawî, independently of each other, drew a distressing conclusion that “Ibn Hishâm avait, par sa version, beaucoup mai à l’ouvrage original de Ibn Ishaq” (ibid., p. IX), recognize the latter, as said above, the sole author of the literary monument analyzed and put his name on the title-page of their translations.
26. In the text of “the Sîra” the passages directly belonging to the work of Ibn Ishak are marked with the words qâṣâ’ida Ibn Ishaq (“The Ishaq said”), and the passages of Ibn Hishâm — with the words qâṣâ’ida Ibn Hishâm correspondingly. Even the most cursory comparison of the remains of the first and the second groups of the passages inevitably leads us to the conclusion of the unreserved prevailence of the first group.
27. The quotation from a work of a prominent philologist al-Marrîbî (297—348/910—949) is given in the dictionary of Yaqût (375—625/1179—1229) (Yaqût al-Umarî, Mu’jam al-adabîs (Thesaurus of the Muse of Letters) (al-Qurra, 1922, reprinted by: Shaykh (763—748/1267—1348), a historian, claims that this term dates back to a fair remark by K. A. Bello, the work of Ibn Ishaq was different from the works of his predecessors and contemporaries, since “its purpose was not to give the history of the Prophet only, but also expand on the history of the prophecy” (Bello, op. cit., p. 209).
30. For further information address ibid., pp. 23—5.
PRESENTING THE COLLECTION

V. Bobrovnikov

CATALOGUE OF MANUSCRIPTS AND OLD PRINTED BOOKS IN ARABIC, PERSIAN AND TURKIC LANGUAGES FROM KABARDINO-BALKARIA [1]

Over 70 years ago, the renowned Russian scholar I.I. Krakhkovskii posed to Russian Orientalists the task of studying local oriental sources on the history of Russia and its borders. He attached special interest to collecting and introducing into scholarly circulation materials in Arabic and in Arabic script from the Caucasus, in a number of regions of which Arabic (along with Turkish and Persian) remained the main language of written culture, law and government from the Middle Ages to the 1920s [2]. For a whole number of reasons, including the militant atheist policy of the state and the persecution of Islam in the Soviet period, in most Muslim regions this task was not fulfilled.

The study of Islam in the former eastern outskirts of the USSR leaves much to be desired. Without few exceptions, they remain outside of academic Islamic studies in Russia, the near and distant abroad. Important Islamic realities of these regions were not reflected in authoritative international reference books, such as the English-language “Encyclopedia of Islam”, the third edition of which is starting in Leiden, and the encyclopedia “Islam on the territory of the former Russian Empire”, which since 1998 has been published in Moscow under the editorship of S.M. Prokhorov [3]. These “blank spots” still include mosque and private collections in the Northwest Caucasus.

Serious study of Muslim societies in this region is only beginning. One of the first steps in this direction was the ethnographic expedition led by I.I. Bakhch (Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology RAS, Moscow) in Kabardino-Balkaria in July 2002 [4]. Although this expedition aimed at the study of modern religious practices of Muslims in the republic, during the investigation interesting archive material was gathered, among which special mention should be given to small but valuable collections of old printed and manuscript books and documents in Arabic, Old Ottoman and Persian. They make it possible to present the circle of reading of an educated Muslim in pre-revolutionary Kabarda. The copies of Arabic-language and Arabic script manuscripts and old printed books were presented by the head of expedition I.I. Bakhch to the author of the present article.

Based on photocopies made at the Kupov Collection in Nalchik (Archive of the Kabardino-Balkaria State Institute of Humanitarian Research, hereinafter KBSHR Archive), and also in a number of mosque and personal collections from the town of Tyumyaz, the villages of Bylym, Efbran, lamikol and others [5], I identified all the oriental manuscripts and old printed materials of the 18th — early 20th centuries gathered by the expedition trying as far as possible to establish their authorship, time of writing or publication, to divide them by theme, and finally compile a catalogue, reflecting the types and themes of the collected narrative and documentary materials.

The nature of the article predetermined its division into three parts: the catalogue and archeographical description of materials: (i) manuscripts; (ii) old printed books; (iii) preliminary conclusions and possible areas of subsequent research, which could be done by a comparison of the works and documents described in the first part.

The work offered to readers is the first attempt at cataloguing Muslim old printed books and manuscripts from the Northwest Caucasus [6]. Right up to the present day, archiological work on the territory of Kabardino-Balkaria and other republics and provinces of the Northwest Caucasus was not conducted. Owing to the lack of training Orientalists in the republic, the expedition was not able to make a detailed description of the collections and gather all the information necessary for a description of the texts in them. In many ways there was an accidental initial selection, which does not fully reflect the full complex of book production in pre-revolutionary Kabarda. Many materials were preserved in defective copies, without a beginning or an end.

Materials of the catalogue are described according to a single generally accepted scheme: (i) the author and brief information about him (if known); (ii) the work; (iii) its copy or publication, scribe / publisher; (iv) completeness or defectiveness of the copy, place and time of copying / publication (if determinable), format, handwriting, artistic design, carry-over words and pagination, glosses; (v) bibliography (if necessary and in existence).
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