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## EDITORIAL BOARD

### LIVES DEVOTED TO LEARNING

The editorial board of *Manuscripta Orientalia*, a journal created with the single aim of aiding the research and study of the Eastern manuscript tradition, dedicates this issue to two outstanding Russian orientalists — Prof. A. B. Khalidov and Prof. O. F. Akimushkin. Both of them are members of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies. Both turn 70 years of age in 1999. Prof. Khalidov was born in Tataria, not far from Kazan, while Prof. Akimushkin — in Penza, both sites in the basin of the River Volga, the ancient water way to the countries of the East. From an early age, they took interest in the history of the Muslim East and its rich culture. The future scholars' paths crossed when they entered the Oriental faculty of Leningrad (St. Petersburg) University. But A. Khalidov's choice was Arabic studies, while O. Akimushkin's interest lay in the field of Iranian studies.

In the late 1940s, despite numerous ideological prohibitions and strict state control, the Oriental faculty remained to be a sort of island of culture deeply rooted in old, pre-Revolutionary Russia, which had flourished at the turn of the century. The representatives of this old Russian culture were I. Krachkovsky (1883—1951), who was among those university professors who viewed October revolution of 1917 as an event hostile to culture as a whole; I. Orbeli (1887—1961), N. D. Miklukho-Maklay (1915—1975), A. N. Kononov (1906—1986), A. N. Boldyrev (1909—1993), and others. All of them were born in pre-Revolutionary Russia and enjoyed the fruits of an excellent classical education. Besides, they all chose as their field the most elite discipline of their time — Oriental studies. They worked in 1930s and 1940s, when the communist authorities enforced a harshly repressive political system, and many outstanding scholars were labelled spies, “enemies of the people” or accused of cosmopolitanism. But luckily enough, Orientalistics was a special field of scholarly research even in these circumstances. Though Oriental studies were compelled to abide by the postulates of Marxism, scholarly discussion here was conducted with a greater freedom in comparison with adjoining disciplines of the humanities. Orientalists worked with rare and difficult for study languages. Luckily to those engaged in Oriental studies, their branch of science required extremely vast range of professional knowledge in keeping with world standards; they frequently studied the history, language, and culture of vanished peoples or civili-

sations. This was a saving grace, for even within the framework of a dominant communist ideology it permitted them to find their “asylum island” of ancient cultures, where they could somehow defend themselves against vulgar clichés and stereotypes imposed on their studies. It was also their fortune that they had to employ abundantly Western scholarly literature in their work, as well as to keep up with the results of the work of their colleagues in the West. This was the great advantage which permitted to smooth partly away a negative influence of obscurantism characteristic of many other branches of Soviet science in that period.

Also, both A. Khalidov and O. Akimushkin turned to have been lucky in their respective choices of Arabic and Iranian studies — they studied with great personalities who were not only significant figures in Oriental studies but in full sense men of the European cultural tradition. To the credit of the young scholars, they took the greatest possible advantage of these circumstances. Another important factor was that they did not succumb to the general temptation of political convenience. Unlike many of their contemporaries, they did not undertake the study of national-liberation movements in Eastern countries, despite the impetus of turbulent political events in the late 1940s and early 1950s and other circumstances of importance.

It was at this time that Leningrad (St. Petersburg) lost its status as the national centre of Oriental studies. By government decree, in 1951, the Institute of Oriental Studies was transferred to Moscow, where its primary focus became the study of the modern East. It seemed that irreparable damage had been done to classical Oriental studies in the country. A number of scholars moved from Leningrad to Moscow to work in the newly created institution. Only a small group of researchers remained then in Leningrad to take care of the enormous collection of Eastern manuscripts, which was not, thankfully, dispatched to Moscow. This group constituted the staff of the Department (Museum) of Eastern manuscripts, which was formally part of the Institute of Oriental Studies in Moscow. It was, in fact, this wonderfully rich collection of manuscripts, gathered in St. Petersburg over the course of over two centuries, which saved classical Oriental studies in the Soviet Union.

A. Khalidov entered the Group of Arabists at the Department of Eastern manuscripts in 1955, one year later than O. Akimushkin, who became a member of the De-

partment in 1954. Both were young scholars in a collective which continued the best traditions of Russian Oriental studies. This small collective of scholars treated Eastern manuscripts not as valuable exhibits, but as living bearers of Eastern cultures and the safe-keepers of invaluable cultural information. It was among such individuals that our two honored scholars began their careers, fully aware of the advantages of this special academic environment and its refined intellectual atmosphere. Their research brought both scholars together from the very beginning: A. Khalidov soon undertook the study of Arabic manuscripts, while O. Akimushkin busied himself with the Persian manuscript legacy — in effect, two branches of the single tree of Muslim literature.

One must note that both scholars began their careers during a period of political “thaw” in the country. They were lucky in another respect as well. Shortly afterwards, in 1956, the Institute of Oriental Studies, was reestablished in Leningrad (now, the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies) thanks to the efforts of Academician I. A. Orbeli, a great champion of scholarship and a fine connoisseur of Eastern culture. Many recent and older graduates of the Oriental faculty then joined the staff of the Institute. This collective of young scholars formed the backbone of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies which is today known throughout the world of Oriental studies. Academician Orbeli truly played a key role in these events, for it was he who assured the continuity of research in this difficult period and prevented from the perishing of classical Oriental studies in St. Petersburg. He succeeded in supporting longstanding traditions and in uniting them with the scholarly enthusiasm of the young generation. The diversity of the specialised sub-disciplines he gathered in the Institute created necessary conditions for a future fruitful synthesis of all branches of Oriental studies. His goal was to reconstruct as full as possible an ambivalent image of Eastern culture. The intellectual atmosphere at the Institute exerted a salutary influence. The Institute became home to people of one calling who strove to encompass with their knowledge and scholarly insight the culture of the East. Some of them had their additional advantage, since they found themselves in possession of invaluable numerous sources, dozens of thousands of Eastern manuscripts, each containing precious information.

The collection was especially rich in Arabic and Persian manuscripts which obtained their brilliant young observers, though while a graduate student, A. Khalidov turned his attention to modern Arabic literature. He has retained that interest throughout his life. His PhD dissertation was dedicated to the writings of Ṭāhā Ḥusayn (“The Prose of Ṭāhā Ḥusayn”, Leningrad, 1954). But soon his interest shifted and he dedicated himself to studying the classical Arabic language and its literature, which made him abundantly use Arabic manuscripts. Prof. Khalidov published a few outstanding Arabic writings (“The Second Note by Abū Dulaf”, Moscow, 1961; Usāma ibn-Munqidh, *Kitāb al-manāzil wa-l-diyār*, Moscow, 1961, etc.). His edition of *Kitāb al-awrāq* by Abū Bāqir Muḥammad al-Ṣūlī (St. Petersburg, 1998) was performed in the best tradition of the Petersburg school of Arabic studies. In this particular case, Prof. Khalidov completed the work which was begun by his teacher, V. I. Beliayev (1902—1976).

In addition to publishing a number of valuable Arabic writings found in unique or rare manuscripts, a great



Professor A. Khalidov

accomplishment of A. B. Khalidov was his catalogues of Arabic manuscripts held in the Institute's collection. First, “Catalogue of Arabic Manuscripts of the Institute of the Peoples of Asia of the USSR Academy of Sciences” (fasc. I: Prose fiction, Moscow, 1960), and then the two-volume “Brief Catalogue of Arabic Manuscripts” (Moscow, 1986) appeared. The latter was produced by a group of scholars, including Prof. Khalidov himself, who work at the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, but under his direction and general editorship. This Catalogue opens with an informative and helpful introduction by Prof. Khalidov, illuminating the significance of the collection described therein both for the history of the Arabic manuscript tradition and for the history of medieval Arabic literature. Thanks to this Catalogue, an enormous number of manuscripts previously unknown to researchers has entered scholarly circulation.

The completion of such a project would have been enough to ensure the reputation of a significant scholar who dedicated his life to the study of Arabic literature. However, it was only part of an ambitious project of this scholar whose goal was to create a work or works which would aid in establishing a comprehensive overview of the Arabic language and works written in it. Prof. Khalidov succeeded in accomplishing this thanks to his vast scholarship and erudition worthy of the best Oriental studies scholars. His magnificent study, “The Arabic language”, published in *Ocherki istorii arabskoĭ kul'tury V—XV vekov* (Essays on the History of Arabic Culture, Moscow, 1982), demonstrates not only the author's exceptional erudition, but also his keen philological understanding of the structure and character of the Arabic language. The scholarly description and profound analysis of this language provided by A. Khalidov form a firm basis for solving the extremely complex linguistic problems which commonly arise in the study and comprehension of the Arabs' vast literary heritage.

Among the author's unquestionable scholarly accomplishments is also his fundamental work entitled *Arabskie rukopisi i arabskaia rukopisnaia traditsiia* (Arabic Manuscripts and the Arab Manuscript Tradition, Moscow, 1985).

On the basis of a broad analysis of extant Arabic manuscripts, the scholar presents, in effect, the history of all Arabic literature. Taking into account these works by Prof. Khalidov, one can assert that his life's aim — to create a holistic survey of the Arabic language and works written in that language — has been accomplished. These studies, completely modern, and at the same time carried out in the best tradition of Russian Oriental studies, are based on the latest achievements of philology. They provide a comprehensive picture of the Arabs' astoundingly rich literary heritage.

These are, of course, not Prof. Khalidov's only accomplishments in the field of Arabic studies. He has written a significant number of works in various areas of the field. Throughout his career, he has shown special interest in the topic of Islam. In recent years, this theme has captivated Prof. Khalidov because of many political developments in Russia and the rest of the world. At the same time, Prof. Khalidov takes interest in the history of Islam and Muslims in Eastern Europe, the Volga basin, the former USSR and contemporary Russia. This interest is reflected in his numerous publications of late. Through all his works one of the most characteristic features of Russian Oriental studies — its comprehensiveness — can be traced. It was always important for Russian scholars not only to penetrate as deeply as possible into the cultural and historical depths of the legacies created by Eastern peoples, but to respond to issues in the modern East. For Russia, the East has been and remains not only and not so much an object of study, but a living social organism and cultural habitat with which Russia is in natural, constant, and mutually influential contact.

Naturally, Prof. Khalidov's accomplishments should be viewed as the result of his own work and outstanding scholarship. But he was also aided by the special circumstances in which he worked. We note them once again: in difficult political and ideological conditions of communist regime, he had the opportunity to absorb the living traditions of classical pre-Revolutionary Oriental studies and to take advantage of the European cultural tradition retained in that framework. To this we add the easing of political constraints which began in the late 1950s and the chance to work on a daily basis with a group of scholars who studied a broad array of problems related to the language, culture, and history of the entire East. All of this created a wonderful, nourishing environment for the development of his talents. All this contributed to realising his talent in full, despite the general ideological atmosphere not favourable to creative work. Ideological prohibitions and the denial of the Western humanist tradition's truly significant accomplishments affected the scholar's work only to a small degree thanks to the special environment in which he went about his life's work. Furthermore, like many of his colleagues, in the 1960s—1980s he already had the oppor-

tunity to communicate directly with colleagues abroad. However, the main source of support for his scholarly pursuits was in his own Institute, where many noted Oriental studies scholars worked with him. Broad possibilities for daily dialogue and the opportunity to discuss complex questions, which transcended the boundaries of specialisation, indubitably contributed to his professional growth, the appearance of new approaches, and the posing of new questions. All this provided constant food for thought.

The St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies can also take pride in another scholar who turns 70 in 1999, Prof. Akimushkin, who is a specialist in Iranian studies. Educated at the Oriental faculty of Leningrad (St. Petersburg) University during about the same years as A. Khalidov, he specialised in Iranian philology. After completing university in 1953, O. Akimushkin began work in the Department of Eastern Manuscripts of the recently dismantled Institute of Oriental Studies. He found himself among people entirely devoted to the preservation, description and study of the Eastern manuscripts which remained in Leningrad after the Institute's transfer to Moscow.

This collective of Oriental studies specialists deserves special comment. As their history still awaits its chronicler, we note only that most of them were not only highly educated, but also highly cultured. They were also young and witty. A team spirit reigned both in their scholarly work and personal relations. Individualism was foreign both to the time and to the characters of those who worked in the Department of manuscripts. It is hardly surprising that the atmosphere created by this small circle of scholars exerted a profound influence on the young O. Akimushkin. He took up the study of Persian manuscripts and made it the task of his life. The study of the Iranian peoples manuscript heri-



**Professor O. Akimushkin**

tage and Persian literature created in the Muslim period formed the major themes in the scholar's works. More specifically, he devoted special attention to questions of codicology, archeography, and the study of texts contained in the manuscripts with which he worked. Of course, the sphere of his scholarly interests widened significantly over the years. But overall he remained true to the path he chose at first.

One of Professor Akimushkin's most significant scholarly accomplish-

ments is the publication of the text of Shāh-Maḥmūd b. Mīrzā Fāḍil Churās's "Chronicle", one of the most important Central Asian works written in Persian — "*Khronika*" *Shakh-Makhmud b. mirza Fazil Churasa. Kriticheskii tekst, perevod, issledovanie, kommentarii O. F. Akimushkina* ("Chronicle" by Shāh-Maḥmūd b. Mīrzā Fāḍil Churās. Critical text, translation, study, commentary by O. F. Akimushkin, Leningrad, 1970). He defended this publication as his PhD dissertation in 1970. Prof. Akimushkin is also the author of two other detailed and profound studies of the Persian manuscript tradition — *Zametki o persidskoj*

*rukopisnoi knige i ee sozdателиakh* (Notes on the Persian Manuscript Book and its Creators) in *Ocherki istorii kul'tury srednevekovogo Irana* (Essays on the History of Medieval Iranian Culture, Moscow, 1984), and *Persidskaia rukopisnaia kniga* (The Persian Manuscript Book) in *Rukopisnaia kniga v kul'ture narodov Vostoka* (The Manuscript Book in the Culture of Eastern Peoples, Moscow, 1997), vol. 1. These works of high scholarship reflect the results of the scholar's many years-long study of the Persian manuscript tradition.

But these works represent only part of a large scholarly legacy of the scholar, which includes hundreds of articles not only on Persian manuscripts and Persian literature, but on Islam and, in particular, the history of Sūfism. As concerns the study of Sūfism, Prof. Akimushkin can be viewed as Russia's most erudite author in the field. The feature of the majority of his writings is his exceptional care and love for detail, which repeatedly led Prof. Akimushkin to important discoveries otherwise mostly impossible. His meticulous attention to every detail of the object under study is truly remarkable.

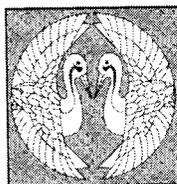
Prof. Akimushkin is also a great expert in Persian miniatures. In this area, he has achieved impressive results which find reflection not only in his numerous publications on the topic, but also in the practical sphere. His direct participation and scholarly help contributed greatly to the success of an exhibition of manuscripts from the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, which took place in Paris, New York, and Lugano (Switzerland). The exhibition, entitled "Pages of Perfection", demonstrated not only the exceptional manuscript

riches held at the Institute, but also the extreme professionalism of those who study them. Prof. Akimushkin is among those few in Russia whose work in the field of Iranian studies cannot be overestimated.

Both Prof. Khalidov and Prof. Akimushkin wholly enjoyed the opportunities to conduct scholarly research in most favourable atmosphere ever possible in the country. Like his Arabist colleague, Prof. Akimushkin was also able to maintain contact with Oriental studies scholars abroad by taking part in numerous international congresses and symposiums. He had frequent publications abroad. In recent years, with the creation of the journal *Manuscripta Orientalia*, both Prof. Khalidov and especially Prof. Akimushkin have been frequent contributors to it, which broadens possibilities of acquainting a larger scholarly audience with their work.

The editorial board of *Manuscripta Orientalia* heartily congratulates both scholars on the occasion of their seventieth birthday and wishes them many more years of fruitful scholarly activity. Much remains to be done. Eastern manuscripts with their mysteries, as well as enigmas of Eastern culture as a whole are awaiting the attention of both scholars of profound learning. The rationalism of modern scholarship seems to fail to deprive Oriental studies of the romantic aura which continues to attract both those who have worked in the field for many years and young scholars at the early stages of their careers. Undoubtedly, many of the latter will dedicate their lives to this endeavor, following the examples of A. Khalidov and O. Akimushkin.

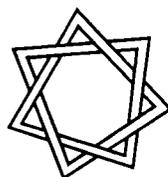
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### Front cover:

"The hunter sits atop a lion which has sunk its teeth into his elbow", miniature from manuscript A 448 in the holdings of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, fol. 24b, 7.5×6.5 cm.

### Back cover:

**Plate 1.** "A hunter stands with his hunting dog which grips in its teeth a cat it has dragged out its burrow", miniature from the same manuscript, fol. 5b, 8.0×7.5 cm.

**Plate 2.** "A dog licks blood off a wounded rabbit", miniature from the same manuscript, fol. 66a, 7.5×7.0 cm.

**Plate 3.** "The lion devours one of the two bulls", miniature from the same manuscript, fol. 57a, 7.0×6.5 cm.