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Introduction

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Introduction

Michael Kemper

Ignatii Iul'ianovich Krachkovskii (1883–1951) was an iconic scholar, and *Among Arabic Manuscripts* gives us a good indication of what made him so outstanding. This autobiographic text is the success story of strong will and endurance, of total dedication to Arabic literature and language. It tells of Krachkovskii's enormous achievements in the field, in a very personal manner and in an easily accessible form. Though not in chronological order, the book provides glimpses at the major phases of Krachkovskii's life, including his youth in Vilnius, his studies in St. Petersburg, his field work in Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Egypt (June 1908–July 1910), and another trip to Holland (via Leipzig and Halle, June/July 1914). From reading the present work we also get a clear idea of what it was like to work in the Public Library in Leningrad, in the collections of the Asiatic Museum (since 1925: Institute of Oriental Studies), and to teach at Leningrad University. And Krachkovskii also depicts some of the enormous hardships he had to endure during the two World Wars.¹

But above all *Among Arabic Manuscripts* is organized around individual Arabic texts and their authors. In each chapter, Krachkovskii explains how he came into contact with a given text, how he fell under its spell, how he disclosed the manuscripts' fate and significance; and equally important, how this study brought him into contact with other Arabists in Russia and Europe, but also with litterateurs and scholars in the Middle East. Krachkovskii's goal was, as he stated in the preface, “to make a little propaganda” for Arabic studies; accordingly, the style of this book is very emotional, even sentimental and romantic—at times the manuscripts speak to him, invite him to not slacken in their investigation; or they approach him as “the prey comes to the hunter”. This book therefore differs markedly from the style he employed in his academic writings.

One of Krachkovskii's favorite mottos was that “books have their life stories”, and the present work is no exclusion to this wisdom. He finished its first draft in August 1943 in Moscow, to which he had been evacuated from Leningrad, where he went through the horrors of the German siege. Most

1 For Krachkovskii's biography see Anna A. Dolinina, *Nevol'nik dolga* (St. Petersburg: Sankt Peterburgskoe vostokovedenie, 1994); for a concise summary in German see the obituary by Heinz Helmut Giesecke, in *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 105.1 (1955), 6–17.

co-workers of the Institute of Oriental Studies had been evacuated to Tashkent, but Krachkovskii insisted on staying in Leningrad and took on the directorship of what was left of the city's academic infrastructure. He oversaw the transfer of the Oriental manuscript collections to shelters and showed extreme determination to keep up a minimum of scientific life in the Academy of Sciences. While the Germans were shelling the city and starving its population to death, and with diseases rampant, Krachkovskii continued to organize scholarly meetings in the cold premises; and he even chaired the defense of a PhD dissertation in Oriental studies, on the topic of the famous archives of the Khan of Khiva.² His time in Leningrad was thus one of utmost deprivation but also of strong determination to hold on and to resist the destruction of what he had contributed to establishing in the past decades. When, completely exhausted, he finally agreed to be evacuated, Krachkovskii insisted on being sent no further than Moscow, and it is there that he finished the present book.

The decision to write this popular book is often seen as compensation for the fact that in Moscow Krachkovskii was left without his Arabic manuscripts, since the Moscow libraries had little to offer him. So he turned to writing a non-academic book, largely from his memory.

Yet some parts of *Among Arabic Manuscripts* had already been written in Leningrad. The first chapter, "In the Manuscript Department", goes back to a lecture that Krachkovskii gave before the war, on 13 May 1941, in the Arabic Studies section of the Institute. Section VI.3, "The Kufic Quran and the Arab Grandmother", he wrote in March 1942, before evacuation. But during the blockade he was above all doing research on his beloved Arab geographers; the idea of making this a whole book seems to have matured only in Moscow.³

The preface mentions that he wrote *Among Arabic Manuscripts* in the Uzkoe sanatorium of the Academy of Sciences, located in what was back then a suburb of Moscow. We imagine a senior scholar sitting on the terrace of a spa and writing up his memories, in an atmosphere of relaxation after the Leningrad horrors. But this is misleading, for his time in Moscow was also full of hardship.

Flown out from Leningrad on 25 July 1942 with barely any luggage, Krachkovskii was indeed on the list for getting a place in the Uzkoe sanatorium because of his bad health. But the sanatorium premises were still used by the Soviet military. So Ignatii Iulianovich, his wife Vera Aleksandrova Krachkovskaia (1884–1974), and her sister who had been living with them in besieged Leningrad—all extremely weakened—were first sheltered in a hotel, but then rented a place in another sanatorium, Sosnovyi Bor. It is there that

2 Dolinina, *Nevol'nik dolga*, 315.

3 Dolinina, *Nevol'nik dolga*, 330–331.

Krachkovskii resumed work on the book, producing chapters 11.2–4. Then, seemingly in September 1942, the Krachkovskii were temporarily housed in an empty and largely unfurnished apartment in Moscow city, and in May 1943 they had to move again to another apartment. To the Uzkoie Sanatorium they were transferred only in early July 1943, and Krachkovskii indeed completed the book there. The book was supported by a committee for popular literature chaired by the president of the Academy of Sciences, S. I. Vavilov, and by October the manuscript was in the publishing house; but there it languished for almost two years.⁴

Like its author, *Among Arabic Manuscripts* also gained iconic status. The book came out on 5 May 1945, just a few days before the final victory over Nazi Germany. A second, slightly enlarged and more beautifully equipped edition appeared in 1946, which was several times republished (at least in 1948, 1956 and 1965); and there soon followed translations into German, French, English, Polish and other languages.⁵ Eventually, *Among Arabic Manuscripts* was the prelude to Krachkovskii's equally famous *Overview of the History of Russian Arabic Studies* (1950), which analyzes the development of Russian Arabic studies in a systematical and academic fashion and in much more detail. Also this work saw a number of editions in foreign languages.⁶

Already in May 1944 Krachkovskii had been decorated by a Lenin Order for his steadfastness during the Leningrad blockade. But in 1951 he received another and much more distinguished decoration, the Stalin Award of First Degree (in the category for “popular-scientific works”), for exactly the work that we are republishing here, *Among Arabic Manuscripts*. As Stalin himself used to sit on the Award committee, we must assume that he read and liked the book.

But the regime's friendly embrace of Krachkovskii at the end of his life—he passed away on 24 January of that year—camouflages what Krachkovskii had been through in the Soviet Union. In the following I would like to address what it was like to be Russia's major Arabist under Stalin. In order to tackle this question we will have to look not only at what is in the book but, more importantly,

4 Dolinina, *Nevol'nik dolga*, 327–332.

5 I. J. Kratschkowski, *Über arabische Handschriften gebeugt: Erinnerungen an Bücher und Menschen*, German transl. Oskar P. Trautmann (Leipzig: Koehler und Amelang, 1949); I. Kratchkovsky, *Avec les manuscrits arabes*, French transl. Michel Canard (Algiers: Publications de l'Institut d'Études Orientales de la Faculté des Lettres d'Alger, no. 14, 1954).

6 Ignatii Iu. Krachkovskii, *Ocherki po istorii russkoi arabistiki* (Moscow-Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk, 1950); I. J. Kratschkowski, *Die russische Arabistik: Umriss ihrer Entwicklung*, German transl. by Otto Mehlitz (Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1957).

at what Krachkovskii left untold; for this purpose we can draw on additional sources that report about the scholarly environment in which he was active.

Being an Arabist under Stalin

“Prisoner of Duty” (*Nevol'nik dolga*) is the title that Anna A. Dolinina (b. 1923, one of Krachkovskii's last student generation) gave to her excellent 1994 biography of Krachkovskii, for which she used the scholar's personal archive and the memories of his widow. This title aptly captures the spirit of *Among Arabic Manuscripts*, where “duty” refers to the study of Arabic literature, to the gigantic endeavor to rescue the manuscript texts from oblivion, and to make them accessible to scholarship. At the same time Krachkovskii felt tremendously indebted to his academic predecessors in Russia, and also a multitude of other scholars with whom he was in contact or whose works guided his own studies. And finally, a strong sense of duty and responsibility he also felt towards his disciples, whose academic projects often followed up on his own scholarly activities.

In many of its chapters, Krachkovskii's *Among Arabic Manuscripts* reflects the history of one school of Oriental Studies, namely that of St. Petersburg/Leningrad Arabists that he shaped so much. In Soviet parlance, the major heroes of his narratives—including “the quiet Girgas” and the “Baron Rozen”—were bourgeois scholars of the old regime, often with distinctly aristocratic attitudes. Krachkovskii associated himself with this old generation, and he had made himself a name long before the October Revolution. In Soviet accounts of the history of Soviet Orientology, scholars like him were reproached for lacking class-conscience, for being alien to the interests of the proletariat and to the demands of the state, and for implicitly being opposed to Soviet power. Their research was regarded as “academic”, as dealing only with the distant past, and thus as devoid of political relevance and bringing no direct benefit to the Soviet state. In the best case their work could be used as compilations of factual information that other, more politically engaged analysts might use in scholarship that directly responded to the needs of the Party.

In the 1920s, the Bolsheviks sidelined this pre-revolutionary generation of Orientalists by establishing a new kind of political Orientology in Moscow, in the form of the Moscow Institute of Oriental Studies (MIV). This institute—established in 1922 on the basis of the Lazarev Institute, a former Armenian school where Oriental languages had been taught—became a school for educating cadres who would find employment in the Party, state administration, and in diplomatic service. MIV co-workers also produced overviews of the

recent political history of Iran, Turkey, and the Middle East. Yet this politicization made the Moscow Institute of Oriental Studies highly vulnerable to changes in the party line and to factional strife within the Party; the MIV soon came under heavy critique for ideological mistakes and shortcomings. By 1929, its journal, with the emblematic title “The New Orient” (*Novyi Vostok*), was closed down. Similar political journals and associations focusing on the East were equally short-lived, in spite of their pronounced obedience to Stalin.⁷

The Bolshevik government soon began to put direct pressure on the non-Marxist scholars (and there were hardly any Marxists in the Academy). When in June 1922 Krachkovskii himself was arrested, under the accusation of being a Finnish spy, the Academy of Sciences under its secretary (chairman) Sergei F. Ol'denburg wrote a number of petitions to the highest echelons of Soviet power. Ol'denburg indeed achieved Krachkovskii's release, in January 1923; reportedly, the other detainees to whom his case had been attached were executed.⁸

The new regime understood the limitations of the new Marxist scholarship on the Orient and kept the old Asiatic Museum alive. Indeed, Krachkovskii soon made an impressive career in the Academy of Sciences: between 1922 and 1929 he was head of one of its sections,⁹ and he often served as deputy to the Academy's secretary, the Indologist Ol'denburg. In spite of their efforts to resist, Ol'denburg, Krachkovskii and other scholars were in no position to resist the creeping expansion of Soviet control over the Academy. In 1925 the Soviet government transformed the Asiatic Museum into an Institute of Oriental Studies of the Soviet Academy of Sciences; as Krachkovskii mentions (p. 87 [80]), the Leningrad scholars had mixed feelings about this transformation, and this is certainly an understatement. The co-workers of the Asiatic Museum understood that their research focus on Oriental manuscripts—that is, on the major assets of the Asiatic Museum—would now be secondary to new tasks set by the government; in fact, the classical scholars would soon be a minority

7 On MIV and *Novyi Vostok* see Michael Kemper, “Red Orientalism: Mikhail Pavlovich and Marxist Oriental Studies in Early Soviet Russia”, *Die Welt des Islams* 50:3–4 (2010), 435–476.

8 *Liudy i sud'by. Bibliograficheskii slovar' vostokovedov-zhertv politicheskogo terrora v sovetskii period, 1917–1991*, edited by Iaroslav Vasil'kov and Mariia Iu. Sorokina (St. Petersburg: Sankt Peterburgskoe vostokovedenie, 2003), 220.

9 Reportedly, this was the “Section for Social Sciences” (*Otdelenie obshchestvennykh nauk*), but on Krachkovskii's letterhead it appears as “Section of Humanities” (*Otdelenie gumanitarnykh nauk*); Krachkovskii to Krymskii, 1 Oct. 1927, as reproduced in Irina M. Smilianskaia, “Perepiska akademikov A. E. Krymskogo i I.Iu. Krachkovskogo 1920–1930-kh godov”, in *Neizvestnye straniy otechestvennogo vostokovedeniia* [vol. 1], ed. V. V. Naumkin and I.M. Smilianskaia (Moscow: Vostochnaia literatura RAN, 1997), 155–368, here: 195.

against a new generation of scholars who would busy themselves with writing on political demand. Denunciations and intrigues were the order of the day. And when in 1929 the government had brought political figures into leadership positions of the Academy, both Ol'denburg and Krachkovskii lost their offices of authority.¹⁰

In the subsequent years, and in particular during Stalin's atrocious terror of 1936–1938, many Orientalists were arrested, exiled, put into Gulag camps, or executed under fabricated accusations. The repression also targeted scholars who actively supported the Soviet system and who worked on state projects; one of these was the renowned Turkologist Aleksandr N. Samoilovich, who between 1936 and 1938 served as director of the Oriental Institute in Leningrad where Krachkovskii was employed and who provided the scientific basis for the Sovietization of Central Asian literatures and languages. In 1939 Samoilovich was executed on charges that he was a spy for Japan.¹¹

It is under these precarious circumstances that Krachkovskii continued his historical, literary, and linguistic studies in the same manner as before; and more than that, he used his tremendous scholarly authority to speak up against the ideological reorganizations of science and education, and on many occasions wrote letters of support for arrested colleagues. While Krachkovskii was largely left untouched in the 1930s, several of his disciples were exiled and imprisoned; others perished in WWII. *Among Arabic Manuscripts* contains several hints at their fates.

The Names that Could Not be Mentioned

From early 1928 to June 1930, Krachkovskii organized the “Rosen Circle of Arabists”, as a scientific group that regularly met in Krachkovskii's apartment; altogether no less than 50 meetings took place, each with a scholarly paper given by one of the participants. With this unconventional organization

10 On this old school around Rozen, Bartol'd and Ol'denburg (though with surprisingly little attention to Krachkovskii) see Vera Tolz, *Russia's Own Orient: the Politics of Identity and Oriental Studies in the Late Imperial and Early Soviet Periods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

11 Fedor D. Ashnin, Vladimir M. Alpatov and Dmitrii M. Nasilov, “Arkhivnye dokumenty o gibeli A. N. Samoilovicha”, in F. D. Ashnin, V. M. Alpatov, D. M. Nasilov, *Repressirovannaia Tiurkologiia* (Moscow: Vostochnaia Litaratura RAN, 2002), 7–20.

Krachkovskii wanted to put pressure on the Institute to establish an Arabic studies research unit.¹²

One of the contributors was Krachkovskii's disciple Klavdiia Ode-(‘Awda)-Vasil’eva (1892–1965). Her name is not mentioned in *Among Arabic Manuscripts*; yet one passage is a clear reference to her (p. 68 [56]). Born near Bethlehem, she had been a teacher in one of the Russian Orthodox missionary schools in Palestine that Krachkovskii visited during his trip to the Levant; he met her first in Nazareth.¹³ Ode then married a Russian and ended up in Russia in 1914 when the war broke out. During the Civil War she worked as a nurse; and in 1924, after the death of her husband, she became, with the help of Krachkovskii, a teacher of Arabic at the Leningrad Institute of Living Languages of the Orient (a new institution based on the dissolved Oriental Faculty of St. Petersburg University). Subsequently Ode-Vasil’eva authored a number of Arabic course books that included samples from modern authors. In 1938 Ode-Vasil’eva, together with two other scholars, had the courage to protest against the arrest of their Jewish colleagues A. M. Shami and S. E. Roginskaia; this brought her several months in prison. After release, in 1939, she once again lobbied for Shami’s release, not knowing that he, just like Roginskaia, had already been executed. Ode-Vasil’eva later moved to Moscow, where she found employment in the Foreign Ministry. When in 1949 a new defamation campaign against Krachkovskii started in the ministry as well as in several institutions of Soviet Oriental studies, Ode-Vasil’eva openly defended her former teacher.¹⁴ While in *Among Arabic Manuscripts* Krachkovskii preferred to not mention her name, in his 1950 history of Russian Arabic studies he praises Ode-Vasil’eva openly, rightfully describing her as a pioneer in the study of modern Arabic literature.¹⁵

Another disciple whose fate took a very tragic turn under Krachkovskii’s eyes was Vasilii A. Eberman (1899–1937), who had studied under Krachkovskii and then, in 1923, became co-worker at the Asiatic Museum. Eberman must have been very close to Krachkovskii because he continued the latter’s interest in Arabic poetry. In the 1920s Eberman published a number of articles (also on Persian poets), and by 1930 he was in the last stages of his major work on

12 Dolinina, *Nevol’nik dolga*, 224–231. On the repression of Leningrad Orientalists in the 1920s and 1930s, including some of the personalities mentioned below, see Mikhail Rodionov, “Profiles under Pressure: Orientalists in Petrograd/Leningrad, 1918–1956”, in *The Heritage of Soviet Oriental Studies*, edited by Michael Kemper and Stephan Conermann (London: Routledge, 2011), 47–65.

13 *Liudy i sud’ by*, 289.

14 *Liudy i sud’ by*, 289.

15 Krachkovskii, *Ocherki po istorii russkoi arabistiki*, 214.

the early Islamic poet Waddah al-Yaman (d. 709). His mentor Krachkovskii was using his international relations to get this monograph published, and in January 1930 he asked the Leiden scholar Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje (1857–1936) whether Brill would be interested in this book:

17 I 1930

Sehr verehrter Herr Kollege.

Einer von meinen Schülern W. Ebermann, Hilfsarbeiter im Asiatischen Museum,¹⁶ bereitet seit langer Zeit die Monographie über den Waḍḍāh al-Yaman (von Kremer's Zeiten bekannt, s. Culturgeschichte I 145–146, II 345–366)¹⁷ vor. Seit der Zeit hat die Arbeit solchen Umfang (ca. 10–12 Druckbögen = 180–200 Seiten) [an]genommen, dass es bei uns kaum möglich sein wird sie drucken zu lassen. Nun möchte ich Sie fragen, ob es möglich wäre sie in einer von holländischen Serien oder bei Brill herauszugeben? In diesem Falle wird der Autor //fol. 2// sie in deutscher Sprache überarbeiten.

Ich muss nicht besonders betonen, dass die Arbeit, welche mir sehr gut bekannt ist, nicht nur neues Material aus den handschriftlichen Quellen bringt, sondern [auch] viele wertvolle literarische Probleme methodologisch interessant beleuchtet.

Mit den besten Grüßen

Ihr stets ergebener

Ign. Kratschkowsky¹⁸

Snouck Hurgronje must have given a positive response to this request, for in March 1930 Krachkovskii replied with a letter in French:

16 [Here Krachkovskii ignores the Asiatic Museum's transformation into a Soviet Institute of Oriental Studies.]

17 [A reference to Alfred von Kremer, *Studien zur vergleichenden Culturgeschichte, vorzüglich nach arabischen Quellen* (two parts in one) (Wien, 1889).]

18 Letter Krachkovskii to Chr. Snouck Hurgronje, 17 January 1930, Leiden University Library, Or8952, A594 (available online), fols. 8–9.

21 III 1930

Leningrad

Très cher Maître.

En Vous remerciant de votre aimable letter du 3 III 1930 je Vous envoie ci-inclus le petit prospectus composé par M. Ebermann d'après ma prière.¹⁹ Comme Vous le verrez, ce travail est purement scientifique et destiné plutôt aux spécialistes. J'ai écrit déjà à Prof. Wensinck que je peux garantir que l'étude va apporter non seulement des matériaux inconnus jusqu'à present mais aussi une analyse intéressante au point de vue méthodologique. L'auteur sera //fol. 2// très reconnaissant, si son ouvrage trouve une place dans n'importe quelle série ou une édition à part chez Brill ou bien ailleurs. La question de subvention pour le moment est irréaliste: jusqu'à present nous ne pouvons pas régler la subvention régulière pour l'Enc. de Isl.,²⁰ que dire des travaux personnels!

Ma femme et moi nous vous prions d'agréer nos salutations les plus sincères en remerciant pour le souvenir. Nous vivons toujours . . .

Agréez, cher Maître, l'assurance de ma consideration distinguée

Votre dévoué

Ign. Kratchkovsky²¹

Kratchkovskii's "We are still alive . . ." must be a subtle allusion to the difficulties that he was facing in Soviet Russia. We do not know whether Arent Jan Wensinck (1882–1939) and Snouck Hurgronje's interest in Eberman's work put the latter on the radar of the NKVD, the Soviet political police; in any event, three months later, in June 1930, Eberman was arrested in the course of a bigger campaign against members of the Academy of Sciences, and sentenced to five

19 [A curious rendition of the Russian *po moei pros'be*, "on my demand".—Kratchkovskii's letter included a two-page content description of Eberman's unpublished monograph, composed in German with Arabic items inserted.]

20 [Brill's first edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (1918–1938, in three languages) was supported by financial contributions from various scholarly organizations.]

21 Leiden University Library, Or. 8952, A594, fols. 10–15.

years of forced labor.²² His wife Kseniia Il'ina (who worked as an Iranist) was brought to another camp.

Eberman's unpublished monograph on Waddah al-Yaman was lost in the process. Yet what has come down to us is a Russian-language sonnet entitled "Vaddakh" that Eberman composed in 1933, during his imprisonment in Medvezh'egorsk (Karelia). In this Russian poem Eberman experimented with using Arabic rhyme patterns and other stylistic instruments (e.g. the repetition of a stanza's last line into the first of the following).²³ In contrast to Ode-Vasil'eva, Eberman never returned to work in Leningrad; in 1933 he was temporarily freed but then again tried and sent to Magadan in Siberia. In 1936 he was released but had to remain in exile, in the Orel region, where he was employed as a teacher of German, at least rejoined by his wife. Krachkovskii tried to get him back to the Institute, but in 1937 Eberman drowned in a river. His wife was executed in 1941.²⁴

Another field of Arabic studies discussed in this book is Arabic-language literature from the North Caucasus, and also here Krachkovskii employed disciples to continue his explorations. Among the many Muslim nations of Daghestan, Arabic continued to be the most important language not only for Islamic sciences and history-writing but also for written communication, and Daghestan also produced a number of outstanding poets who wrote in Arabic. As Krachkovskii notes, the Daghestani Muslim scholars preserved the literary Arabic language of the classical era, in all its purity—a result of their relative isolation from the Arab-speaking world.²⁵ At the same time Daghestani scholars introduced an innovation that is not found anywhere else: in order to ease the comprehension of difficult Arabic sentences, they marked syntactical relations by a special set of dots and other signs, indicating the relations between, for instance, the subject, the predicate, and the object of a given clause (pp. 150–1 [161]). Krachkovskii does not mention the name of the person who disclosed the riddle of these signs to Russian scholarship, but we know that this was his disciple A. M. Barabanov.²⁶ Barabanov was drafted into the Red Army and died at the front. When writing in 1943, Krachkovskii might not have

22 *Liudy i sud'by*, 433–434.

23 Teodor A. Shumovskii, "Venok sonetov' arabista V. A. Eberman", in *Neizvestnye stranitsy otechestvennogo vostokovedeniia* [vol. 1], ed. V. V. Naumkin and I. M. Smilianskaia (Moscow: Vostochnaia literatura RAN, 1997), 369–380.

24 *Liudy i sud'by*, 433–434 (Eberman) and 179–180 (Il'ina).

25 See e.g. I. Kratchkovsky, "Dagestan et Yemen", *Mélanges de géographie et d'orientalisme offerts à É.-F. Gautier* (Tours: Arrault, 1937), 288–296.

26 A. M. Barabanov, "Poiasnitel'nye znachki v arabskikh rukopisiakh i dokumentakh Severnogo Kavkaza", *Sovetskoe vostokovedenie* III (1945), 183–214.

known what happened to Barabanov, so he decided not to mention him by name.

Under Krachkovskii's supervision, Barabanov had also been working on a major project, the translation and edition of the Arabic-language "history of Shamil" that Krachkovskii mentions in *Among Arabic Manuscripts* (pp. 150-1 [161]), again without indicating Barabanov's name. This manuscript was written by a certain Muhammad-Tahir al-Qarakhi, the court historian of the famous Imam Shamil, who between 1834 and 1859 ruled over parts of Daghestan and Chechnya and organized the Islamic resistance against Russian colonialism. Barabanov's Russian translation of the text came out in 1941, with Krachkovskii's preface; and after Barabanov's death in the war Krachkovskii also published Barabanov's Arabic text edition, indicating Barabanov as translator and himself as editor.²⁷ To write on the nineteenth-century jihad leader was not without risk, because since the early 1930s Soviet ideology held that Imam Shamil was a religious fanatic and a feudal exploiter of his countrymen. And when considering Krachkovskii's writings on North Caucasus literature we should remember that in 1944 the Chechens and Ingush (and several other nations of the Caucasus, plus the Crimean Tatars) had been wholesale deported to Central Asia to punish them for their alleged collaboration with the Nazis. And while the Soviet Autonomous Republic of Chechnya-Ingushetia was dissolved and wiped from the map, Krachkovskii still refers to the area as "the country of the Chechen and Ingush", as if these nations were still inhabiting the area (p. 146 [156]). The name of Barabanov was better not drawn into this.

Another of Krachkovskii's co-workers specializing in the Caucasus was the linguist and ethnographer Anatolii N. Genko (1896–1941; cf. page 78 [69], where he is briefly mentioned by name); with him Krachkovskii published some of Shamil's Arabic letters.²⁸ Like the younger Barabanov, Genko also perished in 1941, yet not at the front but in a Soviet prison.²⁹ Prisoners were of course the last to get food during the siege of Leningrad.

Let us now briefly consider a paragraph in Krachkovskii's account of "Vasoda Gama's Pilot", Ahmad ibn Majid. Krachkovskii writes that he had "a very gifted pupil" whom he charged with the analysis of Ahmad ibn Majid's Arabic

27 *Khronika Mukhammeda Takhira al-Karakhi o dagestanskikh voynakh v period Shamilia*, Russ. transl. Barabanov, edited by Krachkovskii (Moscow; Leningrad 1941); *Khronika Mukhammeda Takhira al-Karakhi o dagestanskikh voynakh v period Shamilia*, Arabic text edition by A. M. Barabanov, edited by I.Iu. Krachkovskii (Moscow; Leningrad, 1946).

28 I.Iu. Krachkovskii and A. N. Genko, "Arabskie pis'ma Shamilia v Severnoi Ossetii", *Sovetskoe vostokovedenie* III (1945), 51–53, 56–58.

29 *Liudy i sud'by*, 113–114.

poem of nautic instructions that he had discovered in the Asiatic Museum; “his unfailing enthusiasm promised good results and I watched his progress, but a series of circumstances put an end to his work in the very beginning.” (p. 95 [90]). This disciple was Teodor A. Shumovskii (1913–2012), and the circumstances that interrupted his research were political persecution. Shumovskii was arrested in February 1938 and accused of high treason, together with two other students of the Oriental faculty—one of them being the famous Lev Nikolaevich Gumilev.³⁰ In prison Shumovskii happened to meet the above-mentioned Caucasianist Genko, who was arrested for the first time in 1938. Eventually Shumovskii received eight years of forced labor (later reduced to five) in Siberia. Released in 1944, he was still forced to work in a timber company, but in 1946, on a petition by the Academy of Sciences (probably by Krachkovskii), was permitted to enroll again at Leningrad University. While he was not permitted to settle in Leningrad, Shumovskii still managed to defend his PhD dissertation, on Ahmad ibn Majid, in 1948. This allowed Krachkovskii to add a sentence in the third edition of *Among Arabic Manuscripts*, expressing his satisfaction with the fact that the dissertation on Ahmad ibn Majid was successfully defended in 1948 (albeit still without mentioning Shumovskii by name).³¹

Yet one year later Shumovskii was again arrested and this time sentenced to ten years of forced labor in Siberia. In one of her articles, Anna A. Dolinina provides the text of Krachkovskii’s letter to the Soviet Supreme Court, in which he asked to turn Shumovskii’s camp sentence into simple exile, so that Shumovskii could continue his scientific work; as Krachkovskii wrote, “I have not encountered a person who is more filled with scientific enthusiasm, dedicating all his time to scientific activities.”³²

Shumovskii was released only in 1956, when most political inmates were freed; this time he could return to Leningrad, where he found a job at what was now the Leningrad Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies. Already two years later he published Ahmad ibn Majid’s book, with a Russian translation that he obviously had no time to prepare very diligently. Anna Dolinina insinuates that this speedy 1958 publication was done on state demand, as an expression of Soviet solidarity with the Arab world in the light of the Suez Crisis of the time. And Dolinina is harsh on the author himself, who, she says, grossly overstates his own role in the rediscovery of the Arabs’ knowledge of

30 Teodor A. Shumovskii, *Svet s Vostoka* (St. Petersburg: Dilia, 2009), esp. 67–82.

31 Anna A. Dolinina, *Arabeski* (St. Petersburg: Nestor-Istoriia, 2010), ch. “U rukopisi svoi sud’by”, 391–411, here: 391.

32 Dolinina, *Arabeski*, ch. “U rukopisi svoi sud’by”, 391–411, here: 403.

seafaring.³³ But one can also sympathize with Shumovskii, who must have feared that he might soon find himself in prison again.

Finally, there are also great manuscript edition projects that Krachkovskii clearly avoided mentioning for political reasons. One of the most exciting explorations of this sort was about Ahmad ibn Fadlan, a diplomat of the Caliph in Baghdad who wrote a book on his mission to the Bulghar Khanate in the Volga Area in 922 CE. The original text was thought to be lost until 1923, when Ahmad Zeki Velidi-Togan (1890–1970), a Bashkir politician and historian who had fallen out with the Bolsheviks and fled the USSR, discovered one unique copy of Ibn Fadlan's travel book in a library in Mashhad, Iran. As his own work on the manuscript dragged on, in 1931 Velidi sent a letter to Krachkovskii to inquire whether anybody in Russia was working on this manuscript. But this was not the case; so Velidi continued, and in 1935 defended his PhD at Bonn University, with a historical and philological analysis of this manuscript. Yet in the same year the Soviet government also obtained a photocopy of the Mashhad manuscript and decided that a Soviet scholar must be the first to publish it, before the enemy in exile. As a result Krachkovskii charged one of his disciples with this project, Andrei P. Kovalevskii (1895–1969). As we know from the work of Marsil' Farkhshatov, Krachkovskii must have been completely aware of the political nature of this competition for academic fame; still he supported the race, be it because competition is good for science or simply out of patriotism.³⁴ Kovalevskii was however arrested in 1938, before the completion of his work, and spent five years of forced labor in the Komi and Mordva regions of Russia. Again Krachkovskii is reported to have petitioned for his release, albeit in vain. Krachkovskii then finished Kovalevskii's work himself and published the Russian translation on Ibn Fadlan in 1939—indeed, very shortly before Zeki Velidi Togan's German translation appeared in Leipzig.³⁵ The Russian edition was curious: the cover was silent on Kovalevskii who achieved the translation and provided the commentaries, just mentioning Krachkovskii as the editor of

33 Dolinina, *Arabeski*, ch. "More arabistiki' i etika uchenogo" [originally published in *Izvestiia AN Azerb. SSR, seriia literatury, iazyka i iskusstva*, 1977, no. 4, 101–105], 412–423, here: 416–417.

34 Marsil N. Farkhshatov, "Ahmet-Zeki Validi Togan and the Travel Accounts of Ahmad ibn Fadlan", *St. Petersburg Annual of Asian and African Studies*, vol. 1 (Würzburg: Ergon, 2012), 15–37.

35 *Put'shestvie Ibn Fadlana na Volge*. Pervod i komentarii pod red. Akademika I.Iu. Krachkovskogo (Moscow and Leningrad: Akademiia nauk SSSR, 1939); Zaki Validi Togan, *Ibn Fadlân's Reisebericht* (Abhandlungen der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft. Bd. 24, 3) (Leipzig 1939).

the work. To the insider this was a clear token of respect to a living un-person. Kovalevskii was released in 1945, and two years later he returned to Leningrad, where he continued to work on Ibn Fadlan, under Krachkovskii's guidance. Later he became professor in Kharkov.³⁶

Yet it was not only junior scholars whom Krachkovskii could not mention in *Among Arabic Manuscripts*; one also misses the name of the eminent Ukrainian Orientalist Agafangel E. Krymskii (1871–1942), although there is a clear hint at him (121 [124]). More than a decade senior to Krachkovskii, Krymskii had worked at the Lazarev Institute in Moscow, and from 1918 he was the driving force behind the organization of Ukrainian Orientology in Kiev. While Krachkovskii specialized in Arabic studies, Krymskii was a veritable all-round scholar: his enormous research output covers Arabic, Persian, and Turkic studies, and occasionally other Oriental languages; and with a book on Sufism (1895) and another one on “Islam and Its Future” (1904), the versatile Krymskii was also a pioneer of Islamic studies in Russia. In addition, Krymskii was a prominent contributor to Ukrainian literature and history and a gifted poet. Like Krachkovskii ten years later, Krymskii had made an extensive research trip to the Levant, in 1896–98, to practice spoken Arabic and to collect popular tales and other folklore; and it seems already before his trip he developed an interest in what would later become one of Krachkovskii's trade marks, namely modern Syrian literature.³⁷

Krachkovskii once confessed that it was Krymskii who awakened his interest in the Arabic world.³⁸ Indeed, Krachkovskii contacted him as early as 1903,³⁹ and their correspondence (much of which has been published by Irina Smilianskaia, b. 1925) continued all through to 1940. The Ukrainian Krymskii soon saw the Belorussian Krachkovskii as one of his best colleagues, and in 1925 Krachkovskii and his wife Vera Krachkovskaia (who was to become an acknowledged specialist on Arabic epigraphics) followed Krymskii's invitation to spend their summer vacation in Kiev.⁴⁰

While Krachkovskii was drawn into high administrative positions in the Leningrad institutions of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, Krymskii was, between 1918 and 1929, chairman (“first secretary”) of the All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences; and both lost their offices of influence in the late

36 *Liudy i sud'by*, 205.

37 Letter Krymskii to Krachkovskii, 5 May 1932, edited in Smilianskaia, “Perepiska”, 206.

38 Letter Krachkovskii to Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, 7 November 1929, in Smilianskaia, “Perepiska”, 205.

39 Smilianskaia, “Perepiska”, 155.

40 Smilianskaia, “Perepiska”, 157.

1920s, when the Bolsheviks effectively broke the spine of the two academies.⁴¹ Yet while Krachkovskii remained Russia's major authority on Arabic studies, Krymskii was largely deprived of opportunities to publish and fell into sheer poverty. The two scholars met again briefly in June 1932 when Krymskii passed through Leningrad on his way to the place where his adopted son and close co-worker, Nikolai Z. Levchenko, had been imprisoned.⁴² The detainment of Levchenko was, as Krymskii believed, the authorities' revenge on himself: "I personally cannot be touched, so they hit me at my weakest point, from another side", as he explained in a letter to Krachkovskii.⁴³ The Leningrad Arabist must have understood this tragedy only too well.

Krachkovskii, by nature not very sociable (as he describes himself in *Among Arabic Manuscripts*), employs a rather factual style in his letters to Krymskii. In contrast, Krymskii's letters to Krachkovskii are extremely open and emotional and tell of the political intrigues spun against him and of his trouble to simply make a living. In one letter he expresses his love for Krachkovskii, in most sentimental terms.

The two scholars met two more times in Leningrad, on the occasion of small conferences of Arabic studies organized by Krachkovskii in 1935 and 1937. In 1940 the Soviet Ukrainian government suddenly began to extend favors to Krymskii, obviously with the goal of establishing a new Oriental center in Ukraine; and his 70th birthday was officially celebrated by the All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, in January 1941, with Krachkovskii attending.⁴⁴ Yet on 20 July 1941, a month after the German attack on the USSR, Krymskii was again arrested, under the accusation of being member of a Ukrainian nationalist organization. The old man was brought to a prison in Kostanai (Kazakhstan), where he died in the prison hospital on 25 January 1942.⁴⁵

The absence of any reference to Krymskii in *Among Arabic Manuscripts* (for example in the chapters on modern Arabic writers) indicates that Krachkovskii knew about Krymskii's tragic end and therefore decided not to refer to him. Yet some years later, in his 1950 overview of the history of Arabic studies in Russia, Krachkovskii is full of praise for Krymskii, both as a scholar and as a tremendously efficient popularizer of Oriental studies.⁴⁶

41 Smilianskaia, "Perepiska", 161.

42 Smilianskaia, "Perepiska", 158; 211.

43 Letter Krymskii to Krachkovskii, 19 August 1932, in Smilianskaia, "Perepiska", 201–205. Levchenko later committed suicide at his place of detainment.

44 Smilianskaia, "Perepiska", 158.

45 *Liudy i sud'by*, 225–226.

46 Krachkovskii, *Ocherki po istorii russkoi arabistiki*, esp. 168–172.

Soviet Patriotism and Internationalism

Another political issue were Krachkovskii's international contacts. His most vicious slanderer was Liutsian Klimovich (1907–1989), a half-educated producer of anti-Islamic pamphlets and Marxist revisions of the literatures of the Soviet Turkic nations. Starting in the late 1930s, Klimovich attacked Krachkovskii as a traitor to Soviet scholarship who would “bow to the West” by publishing in Western journals like *Die Welt des Islams* and in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, both hosted by Brill in Leiden. Klimovich's denunciations in the Soviet press and at official meetings did not translate into direct persecution but they deeply troubled Krachkovskii.⁴⁷

Krachkovskii was indeed an easy target for such ideological critiques of “wrong” internationalism. On the one hand, “internationalism” was also a Soviet slogan, and Krachkovskii seems to make use of that by declaring scholars are united in an “Internationale of Science” (p. 86 [80]). But on the other hand, Stalin's USSR had taken an isolationist course in the 1930s, and a scholar's international contacts could easily be taken as evidence for being a spy.

Krachkovskii was member of several European Orientalist associations (including the Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft and the Royal Asiatic Society) and corresponded with a multitude of colleagues in Spain, Germany, France, and many other countries; and the Leiden University Library holds some of his letters to the eminent Dutch scholar Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, from the time around Krachkovskii's trip to Leiden in 1914 through the 1930s. Even in the 1930s Krachkovskii continued to publish in the West, even in Germany, as mentioned in *Among Arabic Manuscripts* with regard to his contribution to the *Festschrift* Georg Jacob (p. 167 [182]). Renowned French, Italian, and German colleagues expressed their high esteem for Krachkovskii's works in a flow of book reviews.

At times this was a dubious service to the Leningrad Arabist. In 1930 *Die Welt des Islams* published an article by Krachkovskii on the historical novel in modern Arabic literature, translated into German by Gerhard von Mende (1904–1963).⁴⁸ A Baltic German who fled Soviet Russia, Gerhard von Mende

47 Michael Kemper, “Ljucian Klimovič, der ideologische Bluthund der sowjetischen Islamkunde und Zentralasienliteratur”, *Asiatische Studien—Études Asiatiques*, vol. LXIII–1 (2009), 93–134.

48 Ignaz Kračkovskij, “Der historische Roman in der neueren arabischen Literatur” [introd. by Georg Kampffmeyer, transl. by Gerhard von Mende], *Die Welt des Islams* 12.1–2 (1930), 49–87.

would later write a monograph on “The National Struggle of Russia’s Turks,”⁴⁹ and become the Nazis’ major expert on how to exploit the national aspirations of Russia’s Muslims against the Bolsheviks. Head of a section in Alfred Rosenberg’s Ministry for the Occupied Territories in the East, von Mende was in charge of organizing Soviet Muslim prisoners of war into Wehrmacht units; and also after the war he remained in the anti-Soviet intelligence community.⁵⁰

Equally risky was Krachkovskii’s insistence on the German roots of Russian Arabic studies. In *Among Arabic Manuscripts*, Arabic studies in St. Petersburg from the early 19th to the early 20th centuries appear as largely a German enterprise. Krachkovskii expressed his particular admiration for Christian Martin Fraehn (1782–1851), a German scholar from Rostock who was the first to occupy the chair of Arabic at the University of Kazan until he transferred, in 1815, to St. Petersburg, where three years later he established the Asiatic Museum. The German Fraehn and the Baltic German Viktor R. Rozen were, in Krachkovskii’s words, the “pillars of our [Arabic] studies” (p. 169 [184]). Other scholars and library keepers that are prominent in this book—especially Bernhard Dorn, Sergei F. Ol’denburg, O. E. Lemm, and K. G. Zaleman—were equally of Baltic German origin. In the manuscript library, Rosenberg and Lemm even talk to each other in the German language, in the presence of Russian student Krachkovskii (p. 75 [64]); this seems to reflect their aristocratic attitude.

But Krachkovskii’s account was also quite patriotic and thus conforming to the spirit of Stalin’s Russia; after all, with Krachkovskii it was a Russian (true, of Belarusian background) who took over academic leadership in Leningrad from the German professors. Moreover, Krachkovskii often stresses that certain important findings were made by Russian scholars, with Western colleagues just following up on what the Russians had pioneered.

This was especially the case with his achievements in the establishment of Modern Arabic literature as a legitimate object of research. As he describes in *Among Arabic Manuscripts*, Krachkovskii came to this topic by accident—during his two-year trip to the Middle East he had the chance to encounter Amin Rihani and other writers who would soon, and not the least through Krachkovskii’s works, gain world fame as innovative novelists and poets. This turn to contemporary literary movements (including of Lebanese exiles in America) was of course much closer to what Soviet politicians wanted Arabists to do than Krachkovskii’s work on medieval poets; and the ensuing prestige

49 Gerhard von Mende, *Der nationale Kampf der Russland-Türken. Ein Beitrag zur nationalen Frage in der Sovetunion* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1936).

50 See Iskander Giliuzov, *Na drugoi storone: Kollaboratsionisty iz povolzhsko-priural'skikh tatar v gody Vtoroi mirovoi voiny* (Kazan: Panorama-Forum, 1998), esp. 166–186.

that Krachkovskii enjoyed in the Near East could be exploited for Soviet foreign propaganda.

Equally in line with Soviet approaches to cultural heritage was that in *Among Arabic Manuscripts*, religion was never central. True, Islam and Christianity were mentioned throughout the book, but usually from a perspective that emphasized religiously motivated violence and exploitation, or resistance to religious dogma. Thus the book starts with a Christian manuscript that “the church [has] excluded [it] from its canonical writings—because it mirrors human passions far too vividly, not at all as suits monastic rules” (p. 26 [3]). And one of Krachkovskii’s favorite Muslim authors is the blind poet Abu-l A’la al-Ma’arri, well known for his satires and his rejection of Islamic dogma—a topic that many Soviet anti-religious writers, including Krachkovskii’s slanderer Klimovich, would subsequently also love to refer to to emphasize the Muslims’ struggle for liberation from Islam. The topos of resistance to Islam comes up in Krachkovskii’s chapter on Soghdian documents that witness the Arab-Islamic conquest of Central Asia. And finally, the sub-chapter on the Quran (VI.4) is carefully designed not as a discussion of the Holy Book but as a praise of Colonel Boguslavskii, who achieved a Russian translation of the Quran.⁵¹ Krachkovskii carefully wrapped the reference to the Quran into a narrative about cultured military men, in a form that was certainly not resented in 1943/1945. In line with patriotic sentiment is also Krachkovskii’s account of an Arab nationalist who fled to Russia from political persecution in the Ottoman Empire and who then translated Krylov’s fables into Arabic.

Finally, there is one slight hint at the repression of Islam in the USSR, but it is well hidden in the narrative about the “Arab Grandma” who visited Krachkovskii to sell pages of an old Quran. This woman stubbornly refused to give information about the true provenance of these manuscripts, and in this context Krachkovskii notes that “often the people who offered books or manuscripts for sale feared that these might be confiscated or that they themselves might be compromised if they revealed their relationship with former owners of big libraries, or their connection with formerly well-known names” (p. 143 [152]). This is a clear hint at the Soviet practices of incriminating citizens related to former imams or Muslim national activists; and to put it bluntly, state repression of Islam also increased the collections of the Academy of Sciences.

To sum up this brief discussion of patriotism and internationalism in *Among Arabic Manuscripts*, in 1945 a celebration of imperial and Soviet Arabic

51 Boguslavskii’s translation would appear in print only in the 1990s: *Koran. Perevod i kommentarii D. N. Boguslavskogo*, ed. by Efim A. Rezvan (Moscow and St. Petersburg: Tsentr Peterburgskoe vostokovedenie, 1995).

studies from the pen of an internationally renowned Leningrad scholar would just augment Russia's standing in the world. But at home Krachkovskii's avowed internationalism remained precarious. In the late Stalin years, a new form of repression started to rage in the form of the "anti-cosmopolitanism" campaign, in which anti-Semitism went hand-in-hand with a new emphasis on the leading role of the Great Russians. In Oriental studies, political pressure was exerted to demonstrate that each of the nations of the Soviet East was autochthonous and had their own literary geniuses. Persian, Turkic and Arabic sources from Central Asia and the Caucasus could no longer be studied as reflections of a wider Arabic-speaking or Persianate world, but had to be celebrated as expressions of the respective national culture of this or that Soviet nation. For Arabists like Krachkovskii, this was a dangerous situation; and in 1949 Liutsian Klimovich resumed his venomous attacks on the Arabist. While this had no direct consequences for Krachkovskii (except for a delay in the publication of his *Overview of the History of Russian Arabic Studies*), we must assume that the public pressure affected his health and contributed to his death in 1951.⁵²

Krachkovskii's Heritage

In 1956, the new Khrushchev regime heavily criticized the deplorable state of Soviet Oriental studies. In the new Cold War constellation, Oriental studies was called upon to provide knowledge about the de-colonizing world, in order to support the USSR in the expansion of its global influence. And Soviet Oriental studies cautiously moved out of its Stalinist isolation: already in 1954, the Soviets for the first time sent a delegation to the regular International Congress of Orientalists (which took place in Cambridge that year), with a delegation that was almost completely composed of philologists and historians. In 1960 the Soviets themselves organized the 25th International Congress of Orientalists, in Moscow—yet this time more aggressively, to demonstrate the superiority of Soviet scholarship to the West and to assure the progressive leaders in the "Orient" of the USSR's solidarity.⁵³

⁵² Dolinina, *Nevol'nik dolga*, 381–390.

⁵³ Michael Kemper, "Propaganda for the East, Scholarship for the West: Soviet Strategies at the 1960 International Congress of Orientalists in Moscow", in *Reassessing Orientalism: Interlocking Orientologies during the Cold War*, edited by Michael Kemper and Artemy M. Kalinovsky (London: Routledge, 2015), 170–210, here: 174–176.

While this expansion was specifically geared towards studies on the contemporary East (and thus resembled the political Orientalology of the 1920s, as briefly discussed above), historical and philological studies also came to blossom. Between the 1940s and the 1970s, new institutes of Oriental studies were established in the southern Soviet Union republics, in Tashkent, Baku, Tbilisi, Yerevan, and Dushanbe; also in some autonomous republics (like Daghستان), Oriental research on manuscripts became an official priority, above all for providing the source base for new Soviet histories of the respective regions. In many cases the war-time evacuation of Leningrad scholars to places in the USSR's south had given a stimulus for the development of new research centers in the periphery.

Already in 1950 the Institute of Oriental Studies (IVAN) was officially moved from Leningrad to Moscow, where scholars like Krachkovskii had been active in evacuation, and where the Oriental studies infrastructure was gradually enlarged. The great manuscript repository of the former Asiatic Museum, however, remained in Leningrad, in what now was called the Leningrad Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies. For the rest of the Soviet era, and partly even today, there was an official division of labor (with some overlap): in the Leningrad Branch, scholars would work on manuscripts and continue the philological schools, whereas in Moscow more political and socio-economic research lines were developed. The old Moscow Institute of Oriental Studies (MIV) that had been established in the early 1920s on the basis of the old Lazarev Institute was closed down in 1954.

What also changed was the method of work. As Alfrid Bustanov has shown, more work was being done in the frameworks of "great projects" that were based on the cooperation between various disciplines.⁵⁴ Among the first projects of this collaborative kind were grand re-editions of the works of outstanding Russian "bourgeois" Orientalists, among them Vasili Bartol'd (d. 1930) and Ignatii Krachkovskii. These re-edition projects were meant to take stock of what had been achieved before the war and to make that dispersed knowledge more accessible, with proper scientific commentaries and indices.

Former disciples of the old masters had a guiding role in these projects, and for them these official projects meant a political rehabilitation, both of their professors and of themselves (after the witch-hunts in Stalin's last years). This supported their sense of still belonging to the "schools" of their old professors. Re-publication projects thus embodied a conservative turn in Soviet

54 Alfrid K. Bustanov, *Soviet Orientalism and the Creation of Central Asian Nations* (London: Routledge, 2015), 2–3.

scholarship, while at the same time fostering Soviet forms of collective work. They also provided the training ground for a younger generation of scholars who would rise to important positions in the 1960s and 1970s.

It is in this context that we have to see the production of Krachkovskii's *Selected Writings (Izbrannye sochineniia)*, which included his most important publications as well as some of his works that he had been unable to publish during lifetime. The project was announced in June 1951, five months after Krachkovskii's death, and resulted in six volumes that appeared between 1956 and 1960. The series was thus complete just in time for the 25th International Congress of Orientalists that took place in Moscow in the summer of 1960.⁵⁵

Not surprisingly, the very first text to be included in volume one was *Among Arabic Manuscripts*, clearly envisaged as a guiding line to Krachkovskii's complete oeuvre. In addition, this first volume (co-edited by his disciple V. I. Beliaev) also contained other writings that referred directly to chapters of *Among Arabic Manuscripts*, as for instance Krachkovskii's various papers on Tantawi, Makarios of Antioch, Sablukov, the ancient manuscripts from Central Asia, and South Arabian inscriptions. Added to these were Krachkovskii's writings on Arabic sources on the history of Eastern Europe. Volume two contained Krachkovskii's studies of medieval Arabic literature (including al-Ma'arri), while volume three was devoted to Krachkovskii's writings on Modern Arabic literature. His studies of Arabic geographers found a home in volume four.

Krachkovskii's work on the history of Russian Orientology (including his 1950 monograph on the topic, *Ocherki*) was compiled as volume 5. The last volume focused on Ibn al-Mu'tazz, the "Caliph of one day" that is referred to several times in *Among Arabic Manuscripts*; and this volume also included Krachkovskii's publications on Arabic materials from the North Caucasus, among other items. Taken as a whole, the re-edition project ensured that Arabic studies in the USSR would continue to unfold in the shadow of this giant.

One particular manuscript from Krachkovskii's heritage was not included in these *Selected Writings*: this was his Russian draft translation of the Quran. Already in *Among Arabic Manuscripts* Krachkovskii mentioned that he was doing work on the Quran (p. 108 [108] and p. 147 [156]), but he did not go into

55 I.Iu. Krachkovskii, *Izbrannye sochineniia* (Moscow-Leningrad: Izd. Akademii nauk SSSR), vol. I (1955, ed. V. I. Beliaev and G. V. Tsereteli), II (1956, ed. Beliaev), III (1956, ed. E. Bertel's and Kh. I. Kil'berg), IV (1957, ed. Tsereteli), V (1958, ed. B. Zakhoder), VI (1960, ed. V.I. Gordlevskii). For an overview of their contents see the diligent reviews by Michel Canard in *Arabica* 5 (1958), 197–200 (on vols. 1–4) and *Arabica* 8 (1961), 315–321 (vols. 5 and 6).

details there. There was an urgent need for a reliable Quran translation, simply for the fact that the only available Russian translation from the Arabic original was still that published in 1876 by Gordii S. Sablukov (1804–1880), a missionary teacher at the Kazan Orthodox Seminary; Sablukov's translation was wrapped in an archaic Russian reminiscent of the Bible. Therefore the Leningrad Arabists Viktor I. Beliaev (1902–1976, a close co-worker of Krachkovskii) and Petr A. Griaznevich (1929–1997) worked on Krachkovskii's Quran translation, and published it in 1963.⁵⁶

The problem with this work was that Krachkovskii's draft translation was unfinished, and for huge parts still raw and preliminary; he might have never intended to see it published. Equally problematic was that Krachkovskii never brought his university lectures on the Quran into a coherent text. As a result, the 1963 edition had only limited philological commentaries, plus some of Krachkovskii's raw notes on the Quran. In their preface the compilers acknowledged this shortcoming but phrased it as an advantage: as Krachkovskii did not employ the usual works of the Islamic exegetical tradition, his translation was sold as undiluted by the Islamic commentators of later centuries, and thus a true literary rendition of the Quran as a *literary* monument of the Arabs. The work was republished in 1986, 2005, and 2008 and is still widely in use.

Ironically, it was this unfinished Quran translation that made Krachkovskii enormously popular also among Soviet and Russian Muslims, who equally suffered from the lack of readable translations. Krachkovskii's Quran found its way into a multitude of Islamic libraries all over the USSR, and even Russia's prominent Islamic dignitaries sometimes used the Quran in Krachkovskii's translation for their sermons and publications. That an Orientalist's reading of the Quran became so popular among the believers can of course be explained by his scholarly authority in Arabic language and literature, by his image of uprightness and honesty, and by his friendship with Muslims in the Middle East—a clear advantage against the missionary Sablukov.

Yet perhaps the lack of historical commentaries and of any ideological contextualization in the 1963 edition also played a role. On a side note, in Dagestan there was until recently a small close-knit Muslim group known as the Krachkovtsy (“Krachkovskians”), because they used to study the Quran exclusively in Krachkovskii's translation and rejected much of the mainstream Sunni tradition. And while this particular “sect” was eventually dismantled, there are still discussions on the Muslim internet on whether or not Krachkovskii secretly converted to Islam.

56 *Koran. Perevod i kommentarii I.Iu. Krachkovskogo* (Moscow: Izdate'l'stvo Vostochnoi literatury, 1963).

There is no evidence for assuming he did; but his work provided opportunities for building bridges between Muslim and secular studies of Arabic manuscripts. Again a case in point is Daghestan, the rich Arabic tradition of which Krachkovskii noted in several publications. Already in the 1960s, the Institute of History, Archeology and Ethnography in Daghestan's capital Makhachkala established an Oriental manuscript department, largely on the basis of what had been brought to the institute by local Jadids. It was Amri R. Shikhsaidov (b. 1928), another representative of Krachkovskii's last student generation, who integrated the textual work of this pre-Soviet local Daghestani school of Arabic studies with the strong methodology of Krachkovskii's Leningrad school, leading to first-class work not only on the local tradition of Arabic historiography but also in the field of Arabic epigraphics.⁵⁷

Krachkovskii takes a special place among the scholars who shaped the sub-disciplines of Oriental studies. His assumptions, methods, and preferences have become mainstream. It is therefore very laudable that Brill has included Krachkovskii's *Among Arabic Manuscripts* into its classics re-edition program, next to works by scholars like Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje and Ignaz Goldziher (both of whom Krachkovskii met in the summer of 1914, in Leiden and Katwijk). In fact, reading *Among Arabic Manuscripts* is a good antidote for every one of us who believes he is an outstanding scholar. While also in the early 21st century, Arabists usually develop two or more fields of expertise, I know of no one who would, like Krachkovskii, be equally at home in pre-Islamic and medieval Islamic poetry and in modern Arabic literature, encompass the circles of classical Arabic historiography and geography, write authoritatively on Christian manuscripts from the Levant and Muslim writings from the Northern Caucasus, while at the same time making tremendous contributions to the historiography of the discipline. And this all in addition to the assiduous cataloging work that he conducted over decades, his contributions to popular translations of Arabic literature, and his editing work on Kharlampii Baranov's Russian-Arabic dictionary, still a standard work.⁵⁸ Our respect for Krachkovskii as a scholarly authority only increases if we keep in mind that the conditions under which he worked were, as I attempted to demonstrate, not only precarious but at times deadly.

57 Amri R. Shikhsaidov, "Arabic Historical Studies in Twentieth-Century Daghestan", in *The Heritage of Soviet Oriental Studies*, ed. Kemper and Conermann, 203–216.

58 Kharlampii K. Baranov, *Arabsko-russkii slovar' sovremennogo literaturnogo iazyka*, ed. by I.Iu. Krachkovskii (Moscow and Leningrad, 1946).

A last note on the English translation of the first 1953 Brill edition that we re-publish here. This work was accomplished by Tatiana Minorsky (d. 1987), the wife of the most eminent Russian scholar of Caucasian and Iranian history of the time, Wladimir Minorsky (1877–1966). Needless to say, the translation is done with utmost professionalism; only here and there did the translator add a footnote to explain references that might not be self-evident to the Western reader.