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Ilya V. Zaytsev and Tatiana A. Anikeeva

Introduction

1 The study of the written heritage of Islamic civilization is based primarily on the study of extant manuscripts. The necessary first stage of the scientific use, publication, historical, cultural, textual and philological study is the description of manuscripts.

2 The arabographic collections of manuscripts in Turkish, Arabic and Persian in Russia and particularly in Moscow has been studied insufficiently. For example, in Moscow only the relevant collections of the Moscow State University, Institute of Oriental studies of RAS and the State Public Historical library are fully described See, for example: (Khalido, 1978, 73; Polosin, 1990, 192-193; Zaytsev, 2007, 252-278). At the same time, there are a number of arabographic manuscript collections in various storages of Russia (in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Ivanovo, Novosibirsk and other cities), which are relatively unexplored. For example, manuscripts in Turkic (Tatar, Ottoman Turkish, Chagatai), Arabic and Persian languages from the collection of the Scientific library of MGIMO[1] (University) of the MFA of the Russian Federation have been just described (its catalogue is in print: see (Anikeeva, Zaytsev, 2019)) – thus, a significant part of this collection still cannot be used by researchers. The total amount of this collection is over 200 manuscripts (part of which was copied in Central Asia, Turkey, Iran, Syria); the material is distributed chronologically from the 15th century till the beginning of

the 20th century; this collection combines both unique and little-known texts and well known treatises.

3 Thus, the current state of research in the field of cataloguing and describing arabographic manuscripts is characterized, on the one hand, by the introduction into circulation of an increasing number of previously unaccounted copies of known texts, as well as new works, on the other — the creation of consolidated large-scale databases that combine the materials of various world collections. Digitization of individual manuscripts and collections is an important dynamic trend in Oriental studies (the list of resources is constantly updated) (see, for example: van Lit, 2019). This approach is due to the fact that the Museum/library/archive collection is considered primarily as an information resource of historical science, and, respectively, there is a need for structuring and systematization of such funds.

The work on “Manuscripta Islamica Rossica”

4 In 2017, we created (on the initiative of the Institute of Scientific Information for Social Sciences of the RAS as the part of the Federal historical and documentary educational portal with the support of the Russian Historical Society) a special electronic resource “Manuscripta Islamica Rossica” (http://manuscriptaislamica.ru). This resource already functions as a unique electronic library resource and access point to the information about Arabic, Persian and Turkic manuscripts which are kept in different Russian collections. This project is actually the only one of its kind in Russia at the moment.

5 The significance and relevance of the project are associated with the increasing digitalization of humanitarian knowledge in general and in Oriental studies particularly. In addition, digitization of manuscripts helps to solve the problem of its preservation.

6 Currently, free access to digitized copies of the eleven manuscripts of the Qur'an (the full manuscripts and as well as its sections – juz’) of the 17-19 cc. and about a dozen manuscripts of commentaries (tafsirs), prayer books, theological works, collections of poems is provided on the website. The participants of the project who provided the manuscripts, are the Archive of Russian Academy of Sciences (Moscow), Institute of Oriental Studies of the RAS (Moscow), Scientific library, MGIMO(University) of the MFA of the Russian Federation, All- Russia State Library for Foreign Literature, State Public Scientific-Technological Library of the Siberian branch of the RAS (in Novosibirsk), Astrakhan Regional Scientific Library, and the Institute of History, Archeology and Ethnography of the Dagestan Scientific Centre of the RAS (Makhachkala).

7 The manuscripts are presented on the website in high resolution, but without the possibility to download them in whole or in parts; the watermark is used as an additional protection.

8 The structure of the description of each of the submitted manuscripts corresponds to the general principles of the description of such manuscripts (Khalidov, 1986; Gacek, 2001): code of the manuscript; the title of the work in the Arabic script; translation of the title of the manuscript into Russian; the name of the work. By specifying the name of the author of the work, we also indicate (if it is possible) differences in the definition of the name, the middle name, nickname, place of origin and possible literary pseudonym; date of copy of the manuscript; name and nickname of the copyist;

receipts of former owners, containing names and dates, brief characteristics of other attributes; seals that are stamped on the manuscript; the name of the former owner or a collection, which included the manuscript. We also indicate the size of the manuscript, number of pages, information about the oriental catchwords and pagination with possible errors in it, the number of lines per page, text size, characteristics of paper, ink, type of handwriting, decorations and miniatures of the cover (i.e., description of execution and the name of the bookbinder). In addition, in the bibliographic section provides: a mention of the manuscript in the indexes, descriptions, and scientific literature; editions and translations of the works or part thereof on the East and Western languages (especially Russian), reference to other manuscripts of this work in national and international meetings.

Conclusion

9 The creation of such an open library of manuscripts, as we think, will promote interaction between different branches of academic Oriental science. The project will become a reliable source of information for everyone interested in the history and culture of Islam, the development of Muslim book culture, the history of Islam in Russia. Such work can significantly help specialists in the field of Oriental archaeography, codicology, sphragistics, historians of Oriental manuscript books and miniatures, philologists, specialists in the history of literature, book culture and art, scholars, students and postgraduates.

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NOTES

1. https://english.mgimo.ru/

ABSTRACTS

The paper discusses the current state of digitizing Islamic manuscript in Russia and the gradual building of the digital collection "Manuscripta Islamica Rossica". It outlines some of the challenges and the benefits from providing digital access to these resources.

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Keywords: digitization, Islamic manuscripts, Russian libraries

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