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# PRESENTING THE COLLECTIONS

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## THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF RUSSIA: NEW ACQUISITIONS OF ORIENTAL MANUSCRIPTS IN 1992—1996

The National Library of Russia (henceforth NLR) has a valuable collection of Oriental manuscripts (about 26 thousand items), mainly Hebrew and Arabographic codices and documents. The predominance of the Near Eastern and Middle Eastern materials here, which the author of the present article had a chance to note elsewhere [1], is a feature characteristic of the collection of the NLR as a whole. It also reveals itself in acquisitions of 1992—1996. During this period 4 Hebrew, 1 Georgian and 43 Arabographic (Arabic, Persian, Old Uzbek, Turkish) manuscripts, 4 block-prints (3 Japanese and 1 Chinese) and 1 Chinese painting have been acquired: in 1992 only one item came to the library, in 1993 — 5, in 1994 — 21, in 1995 — 22, and in January 1996 — 4 items. When comparing with the Russian [2] and West European acquisitions of the same period, the Oriental ones demonstrate an obvious tendency of constant increasing. Such a phenomenon can be explained by the recent changes in economic situation in the country, which make the owners part with their family rel-

ics. First of all the owners part with the Oriental objects, since these materials usually proves to be less significant for them. As a rule, those who sell Oriental manuscripts do not know the languages in which they were written. At the same time the financial capacities of the NLR make it the only purchaser of Oriental manuscripts in St. Petersburg. Another significant factor for increasing the number of Oriental manuscripts is the renewal of archaeological activities; we mean not outside (“field”) work, but that within the city, by means of establishing contacts with manuscript collectors and their heirs.

In the reports of The Imperial Public Library (the former name of the NLR), which have been published since 1808, the new acquisitions are presented as the following: first the gifts (collections or single manuscripts) are named, as well as the names of their donators; then a list of collections and manuscripts purchased by the NLR goes (the names of the former owners usually are not mentioned). Here we follow the same scheme [3].

### Donations

1. E. K. Sagidova, head of the Department of National Literatures of the NLR, donated two 19th century manuscripts formerly belonged to her father, turkologist Abdul-Karim Sagidov:

a) a collection of works in Turkish containing treatises on *shaykhs*, versification, instructions on reading and orthography, verse on the meaning of letters and on the correct way of writing them;

b) a collection of verse by different authors in the Tatar language.

2. N. N. Neelova donated two parchment leaves from a Georgian manuscript, apparently a collection of copies of documents which belonged to some noble Georgian family. The manuscript was most likely a family chronicle copied and illuminated with multicoloured miniatures on its bor-

ders. It was perhaps executed in St. Petersburg in the second quarter of the 19th century. The parchment leaves contain a fragment from a document dealing with the return of Tarkhān, the son of Aghām-aghā, from Persia to Tbilisi. Because of his great services performed to his country Tarkhān was pardoned by the Georgian Tsar, and a sword — a sign of an ancestral honour and glory — was presented to him. The fragment has no date and the Georgian Tsar is not named.

3. A scroll of the *Torah* (Exodus, 35.6 — to the end) in Old Hebrew, which was brought for expertise from the Kengisepp (a town on the Russian-Estonian frontier) customs and left to the Library. It was written at the end of the 19th—early 20th century on whitewashed parchment.

### Library's Purchases

#### Collections

1. Two manuscript anthologies (late 18th—early 19th century) and a lithograph in Arabic, presenting a collection of comments, glosses and supra-comments to the most popular Islamic work *Al-'Aqā'id al-'aḡudiyya* by 'Aḡud al-Dīn al-'Ijī, copied in Central Asia. Many of its

pages bear additions and corrections which are written in the text or on the margins; there are some extra folios glued into the book with supplements from other commentaries. Its owner, most likely a theologian, apparently used these books for his investigations or perhaps worked on his own