

FORGOTTEN ORIENTAL DOCUMENTS

The collection of Arabic manuscripts and documents at the Russian State Archive of Ancient Documents (*Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv drevnikh aktov*; henceforth, *RGADA*) in Moscow, often directly connected with Russian history, is the oldest collection of its type in the country, yet it has not attracted serious scholarly attention. This is the understandable result of social conditions in various periods and the history of Russian Oriental studies. The materials in this collection were gathered, mainly, by a small group of individual enthusiasts; they are primarily of a coincidental nature and do not in specific instances provide an exhaustive overview of any particular question. On the other hand, serious research in Oriental studies on Eastern texts was, in fact, conducted in Leningrad (St. Petersburg) and relied on the unequally sized collections of the Asiatic Museum (today St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies) and the Saltykov-Shchedrin Public Library (today National Library of Russia), which were gathered by many generations of scholars over many decades. However, materials at *RGADA* are as well of value, since they refute many accepted judgments in Arab studies.

Ironically, the Arabic manuscripts from the *RGADA* collection best known to scholarship are not those that have survived to the present day, but those that were lost centuries ago but once belonged to groups of documents held at *RGADA*. (Some of them may never have existed at all). The earliest information on the presence of analogous manuscripts in the Tsar's archive, which finally made its way (with losses) into the Moscow Main Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Moskovskii glavnyi arkhiv Ministerstva inostrannykh del*; henceforth, *MGAMID*) collection, goes back to the sixteenth century. In the "Description of the Tsar's archive", we find, in particular, box 172 — "Tatar books", box 218 — "Tatar kuran (sic) on which the Tatars swear the *shert* (oath — *D. M.*)". It is noted that "in the year 78 (1570 — *D. M.*), May, Pyotr Grigoryev brought the Kuran to the sovereign" [1]. A reference in passim in the documents to an Arabic cosmography of the thirteenth century, manuscripts of which were most often decorated with splendid miniatures — "Our sovereign ordered [us] to seek that book in his stores, but [we] could not find it" — in its time served as an argument in a dispute about the library of Ivan the Terrible [2]. These books are no longer listed in the descriptions for 1614, 1626, and 1632 [3].

Arabic manuscripts and documents at *RGADA* can easily be divided into several groups on the basis of when and

how they were acquired. The earliest reliably attested acquisition is the archive and manuscript collection of G. J. Kehr (1692—1740) [4]; fourteen manuscripts were acquired from his widow in 1741. We cite here the list of these manuscripts, drawn up (in outdated Russian) upon their acquisition [5]:

- 1) "story about the imam Shafi, in Arabic", fol. 181, No. 1227 [6];
- 2) "story in the Arabic language (tales of the iman Maverdi)", fol. 181, No. 1230 [7];
- 3) "book in the Persian language called Diwan, written in verse (tales of the iman Shirachi)", fol. 181, No. 1492 or No. 1493;
- 4) "verses in the Persian language (about the same)", fol. 181, No. 1492 or No. 1493;
- 5) "book in the Arabic language (ceremony of the Mohammedan faith, in Turkish)", fol. 181, No. 1231 [8];
- 6) "book in the Arabic language (prophecy of the proph. Sinabi, in Persian)", fol. 181, No. 1259 [9];
- 7) "Persian sayings (and an elementary course for studying the same language)", fol. 181, No. 1460;
- 8) "description of the siege and conquest of Candia (Crete — *D. M.*) in 1677; with the names of Turkish provinces, the number of military men in those provinces who receive salary, and so on (in Turkish)", fol. 181, No. 1462;
- 9) "elucidation of the Mohammedan faith (through Li-mantsaed) in the Arabic language", fol. 181, No. 1239 [10];
- 10) "vocabulae in Arabic and Persian" (?);
- 11) "Mohammedan prayer-book, in the Arabic language", fol. 181, No. 1260 [11];
- 12) "part of the alkan (114 chapters) in the Arabic language", fol. 181, No. 1229 [12];
- 13) "the quire [contains] Turkish (Persian) songs" (?);
- 14) "a historical book in various Asiatic languages", fol. 181, No. (?)1459.

There is no doubt that these manuscripts are of Turkish origin or at least circulated in Turkish milieu in the European part of the Ottoman Empire and were later seized as trophies during the Austrian-Ottoman wars of the seventeenth century. Undoubtedly of the same origin are the originals of the many excerpts made by Kehr's hand from Arabic manuscripts from German collections, including the Leipzig "senator's" library, a catalogue of which was drawn