
BOOK REVIEWS

K. S. Jachontov. *Katalog mandjurischer Handschriften und Blockdrucke in den Sammlungen der Bibliothek der Orientalischen Fakultät der Sankt-Petersburger Universität. Aus dem russischen Manuscript übersetzt und herausgegeben von Hartmut Walravens. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2001. — Orientalistik Bibliographien und Documentationen. Band 14.*

St. Petersburg Oriental book and manuscript collections are known to be the richest in Europe. The Manchu materials are mainly divided between three depositories: the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies (Russian Academy of Sciences), the National Library of Russia and the St. Petersburg State University Oriental faculty library. Nowadays, all collections have scientific catalogues, and their publication was started by M. Volkova in 1965 with the *Opisanie man'chzhurskikh rukopisei Instituta narodov Azii AN SSSR* (Description of the Manchu Manuscripts of the Institute of the Peoples of Asia, USSR Academy of Sciences). Later it was followed by two other catalogues of the Institute Manchu collection (M. P. Volkova, *Opisanie man'chzhurskikh ksilografov Instituta vostokovedeniia AN SSSR* (Description of the Manchu Blockprints of the Institute of Oriental Studies, USSR Academy of Sciences), issue 1, Moscow, 1988; and T. Pang, *Descriptive Catalogue of Manchu Manuscripts and Blockprints in the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences*, issue 2, Wiesbaden, 2001). There is also a catalogue compiled by K. S. Jachontov: *Man'chzhurskie rukopisi i ksilografy Gosudarstvennoi Publichnoi biblioteki imeni M. E. Saltykova-Shchedrina* (Manchu Manuscripts and Blockprints at the Saltykov-Schedrin State Public Library), Leningrad, 1991. Thus, the catalogue under review can be considered as the final publication in a series of descriptions of Manchu holdings at St. Petersburg.

The Manchu collection of the St. Petersburg State University Oriental faculty library was officially started in 1856 when the Kazan University Oriental library manuscripts and blockprints were transferred to St. Petersburg. The collection already contained the books of the members of the Russian Ecclesiastical mission to Peking — Z. Leontyevsky (1799—1874), I. Voicekhovskiy (1793—1850), as well as of O. Kovalevskiy (1800—1778) and many others. Later it was systematically enlarged to meet the needs of professors and students of the University. For example, the first dean of the faculty, V. Vasilyev (1818—1900), who had spent many years in China, bought, on his

own initiative, the samples of Chinese and Manchu literature in 5—10 copies which now constitute the so-called Vasilyev students fond. His personal interest was Buddhist literature, and thanks to him the library possesses a rich set of Buddhist texts in Manchu translation. The Manchu holdings also include private collections of the former professors of Manchu like I. I. Zakharov (1816—1889) and A. Ivanovskiy (1863—1903). The students and professors of the Oriental faculty used to take part in annual expeditions to Manchuria, and China proper, and purchased there materials for the library.

The repertoire of Manchu manuscripts and blockprints in the St. Petersburg University collection is very similar to that of European collections and includes translations from Chinese of various historical, classical, religious texts and literature works, not to mention a rich set of teaching materials like dictionaries and readers. However, the collection stands out because of some rare samples it possesses. After the St. Petersburg collections had been described, it became clear that the St. Petersburg State University collection may be considered the second in size and importance (not the first as the author of the catalogue under review states on p. 9) in Europe after a big collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies.

It is a considerable step forward that this collection has finally got its printed catalogue. But the fate of the catalogue by Jachontov was not easy at all. It was made as a master degree work in 1986, and to this work of him he never returned. The translator and editor of the catalogue, H. Walravens, took the Russian manuscript from the author for probable future publication. Wholly understanding the importance of the material Jachontov's work contained, Walravens prepared its German translation in 1989. But because of some technical reasons the translation has not been published until 2001.

While working on the present publication, the translator faced several specific problems. In the preface, Walravens remarks that “this work could be defined as a ‘youth work’ of the author who today most probably would have changed several things. In spite of the irrelevant time problem, the catalogue is published without revising”. He also notes that not being acquainted with the collection *de visu*, he corrects only evident mistakes in transcription and translation, using other published catalogues; he also adds that mistakes in the descriptions of rare editions can be found only by consulting them. “Nevertheless”, the editor says, “the work attains the main aim of making the big St. Petersburg University Manchu collection accessible”.