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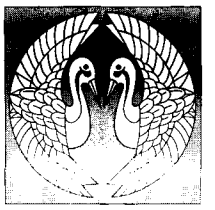
RUSSIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES
THE INSTITUTE OF ORIENTAL STUDIES
ST.PETERSBURG BRANCH



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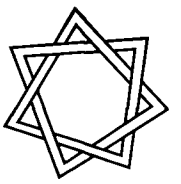

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A. I. Kolesnikov

ORIENTAL DOCUMENTS AND LETTERS OF A. P. BERGÉ IN THE ARCHIVES OF THE ST. PETERSBURG BRANCH OF THE INSTITUTE OF ORIENTAL STUDIES

The fund of documents of the famous Russian orientalist A. P. Bergé (1828—1886) preserved in the archives of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies includes a collection of documents and letters in several Oriental languages (Persian, Arabic, Turkic) — over 200 items. The main part of the collection, approximately 90%, is formed by Persian documents. These documents are of much interest both from the point of view of Iranian studies (the vocabulary of the documents' language and the letter style, structure and arrangement of business documents of the 19th and, to a lesser extent, of the 18th century, lexicon of the last century, now out of date or no longer used, etc.) and in a wider sense from the point of view of the investigation of the Russian-Persian relations in the 19th century, of the social and economic life of Iran under the first Qājārs. None of these materials have ever been published, neither in the *Akty Kavkazskoĭ Arkheograficheskoĭ Komissii* (Acts of the Caucasus Archaeographic Commission) of which Bergé had been the chief editor from 1866 till his death, nor in any other known periodicals.

The Persian part of A. Bergé's collection consists of forty leaves of different formats, each of them representing a single letter or document, and of six "scrolls" of documents and letters glued one to another, often with no logical connection with neighbouring documents, which makes the impression of a random selection. The smallest scroll contains 3 documents, the longest one — 70 documents. There is also a distinct group of letters in Arabic and a series of documents in Persian, Arabic and Turkic, which have nothing to do with official documents and correspondence. A contour portrait of a Persian dignitary, with a calligraphic inscription attached to it, can be mentioned as well.

The variety of the Oriental part of the fund and its informative value do not allow to characterize it briefly and in general terms. It could be done in a summary description, where more attention is given to the Persian part of Bergé's fund.

A description of the Oriental part of the fund of A. P. Bergé:

1. A series of 13 official documents and letters, most of them dated. The social status of their authors and of those to whom they were addressed varied significantly. Among the most important documents are the five *farmān*s of Fath ʻAlī-shāh and Naṣīr al-Dīn. The first two, dated correspondingly A.H. 1228/A.D. 1813 and A.H. 1238/A.D. 1822—1823 deal with the ratification of expenses within the country. The other three, of the second half of the 19th century, present records of Persian awards given to Russian subjects. The *farmān* of Naṣīr al-Dīn of Rabīʻ II 1277/October—November 1860 confirms that the director of the Moscow military hospital Lieutenant-General Nestor Myasoedov was awarded the insignia of "Lion and Sun" of the first grade with chain. As for A. P. Bergé himself, he was awarded twice. His first "Order of Lion and Sun" of the second grade was granted with the *farmān* of the Shaʻbān 1270/May 1854. The same order, but this time with star, was obtained by him on the 3d of Jumādā I 1281/4 October 1864. The royal *farmān*s are attested with signatures and seals of several Iranian officials. No less significant is the safeguard warrant given to General N. A. Khanykov (the famous Russian orientalist) and the officers of his suite for their voyage to Khurāsān. It is dated by Shawwāl 1274, *i. e.* May—June 1858 and attested with the seal of Mīrzā Aqā-khān, at that time the prime minister of Iran.

Among the other documents of the same group there are:

— Two official letters addressed to Iskandār-khān, the *ḥākim* of several districts of Iran, concerning the decision on disputes about property in some villages under his jurisdiction. One of them is dated by A.H. 1270/1853—1854 (*fig. 1*), the other has a more precise date — the 7th of Ṣafar 1270, *i. e.* 9 November 1853.

— A private letter addressed to a Russian subject Adar (?) Lev Fedorovich or, possibly, corrupted Adolph Petrovich Bergé (?) dated by Rabīʻ I 1270, *i. e.* December 1853. The author of the letter is recognised by the impression of his seal. It is one "*khalīfā* Ṭāṭūs" (artisan Tatos?).

— A business letter addressed to a merchant Khwāja Kālūs, not earlier than A.H. 1258/A.D. 1842.

— A business letter addressed to Mīrzā Ibrāhīm-khān, not earlier than A.H. 1243/1827—1828.

— A document attesting the rights of each of the three persons — Khwāja Kālūs, Mīrzā Gevorg and Muḥammad Qāsim-bik — to own one third of the inheritance left by Qāsim-bik's mother. The text is confirmed by seals of several people, among them two impressions with the name "Muḥammad Kālūs" and the date — A.H. 1252, *i. e.* A.D. 1836—1837. Below the text is the actual date of the

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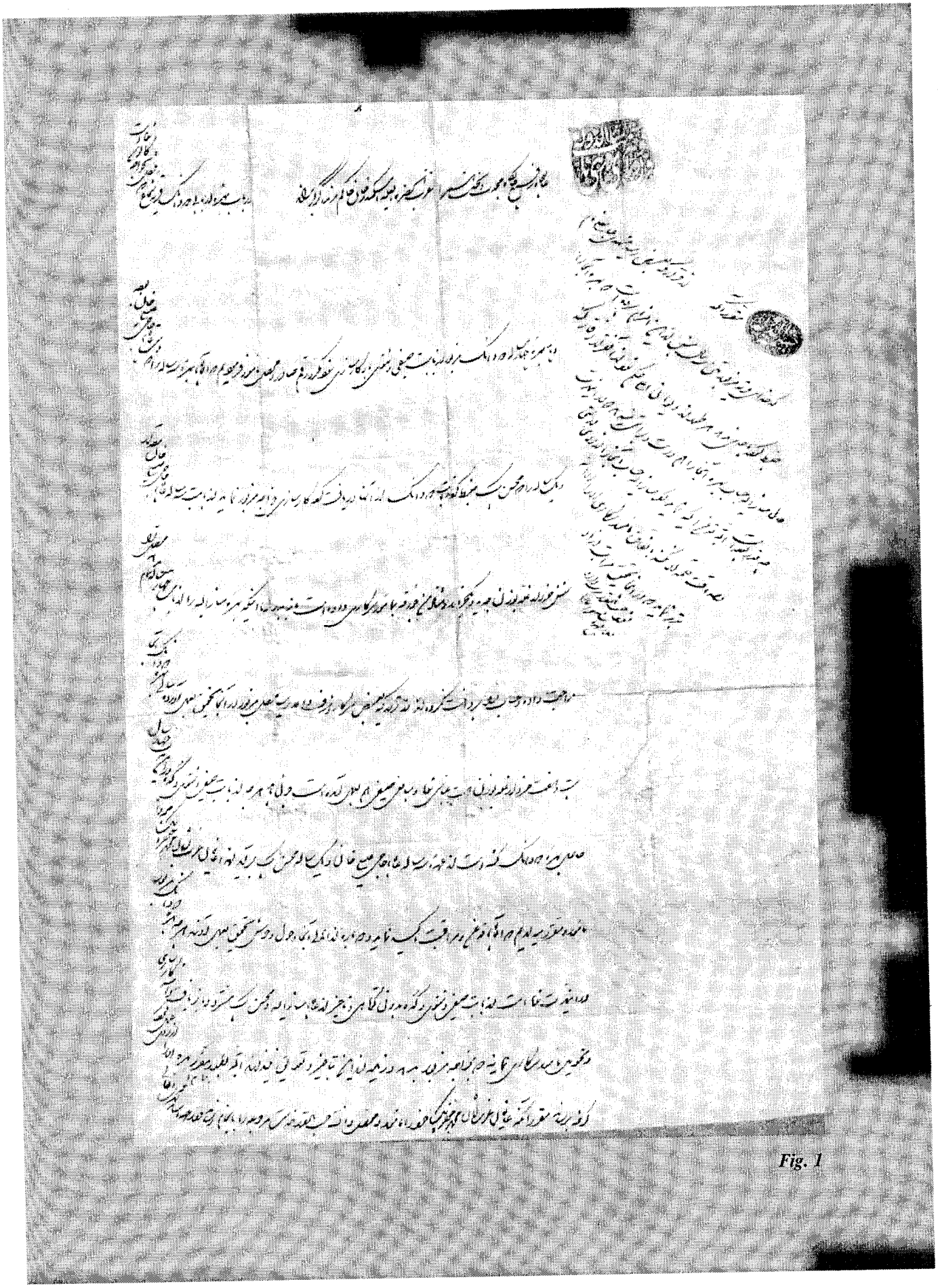

Fig. 1

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document — Dhu'l-Ḥijja 1270, *i. e.* August—September 1854. On the other side of the document there is a text in Armenian with the date 1854.

— A private letter by Imām-Qūlī to the head of merchants Khwāja Kālūs, not earlier than A.H. 1273/A.D. 1856—1857. The date is on the stamp of the sender.

2. Accounts of the expenses of the Qarābāgh copper mines in 1841—1842, in Persian and Armenian (24 leaves).

3. Scroll under call number C V, three business letters glued together. The letters deal with financial transactions of Khwāja Kālūs. One of the letters, undated, is addressed to him. In the other two, written around A.H. 1269/A.D. 1852—1853 and on the 11th of Ramaḍān 1268, *i. e.* 29 June 1852, his name is mentioned in the text.

4. A scroll of 4 leaves making one document. On both sides the joints are stamped with the seals of the persons attesting the validity of the document. It contains an account of expenses from Rajab to Shawwāl 1258/August—November 1842.

5. Scroll C IV, originals and copies of official documents (7 items). Four of them are court decisions on debts and civil cases, the other three — orders of the Shāh of Iran to provincial authorities to ensure the freedom of movement of Russian subjects (in one case it concerns a pilgrim to Mecca, in the other two — the officials of the Russian General Consulate in Tabrīz and of the Russian Embassy in Tihrān). The documents are dated — the earliest is of Rabī' II 1259, *i. e.* April—May 1842, the latest — of Ramaḍān 1269, *i. e.* June—July 1853.

6. Scroll C III of 9 documents and letters, five of them dated. The earliest letter is addressed to Sulaymān-khān Ashraf. The stamp-seal of the sender has the date A.H. 1244/A.D. 1828—1829. It deals with financial accounts connected with the Russian Embassy. The other four, judging by the dates at the end of the documents and relative dates of stamp-seals, were written between A.H. 1269 and A.H. 1271/October 1852—April 1855. Their contents is different. There is an appeal of Khwāja Kālūs to the Supreme Court, documents concerning conscription, leave from the service, a supplication addressed to the district *ḥākim* asking for help (with a postscript in Armenian and Armenian stamp), financial accounts, a note explaining why and how money was stolen from foreigners in caravanserais, a request concerning a reward to be given to an interpreter for honest work.

7) Scroll C II including 51 documents and letters. If sorted by dates, they can be divided into three main groups:

a) Dated exactly, by day, month and year or by month and year only — 14 items;

b) Having a relative date, when only the year is indicated at the end of the document, or some date or dated event is mentioned in the text, or with some date on the stamp of the sender of the letter on its back (which means only, that the letter was written not earlier than the date on the stamp seal) — 27 items;

c) With no direct indications of date — 10 items.

The earliest letter in the scroll bears the date A.H. 1222, *i. e.* A.D. 1807—1808, on the stamp of the sender; the latest one with a date was written on the 10th of Ṣafar 1269, *i. e.* 23 November 1852. The latest one with a relative date is stamped with a seal marked A.H. 1280, *i. e.* A.D. 1863—1864. The documents are arranged at random, there is no chronological or thematic order. They were formed into a scroll at a later date (after 1864 at least), after they had lost their practical significance. It is testified by the fact that senders' stamps at the end of the documents confirming their authenticity are often covered by the next sheet of paper glued over them.

It is possible to distinguish groups of letters addressed by one person to different people or of letters by different authors sent to one man. Often these materials are concentrated in one place, though sometimes they are mixed with other documents. From this point of view, ideal is the arrangement of letters by 'Abd al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī Ṭaqī sent from St. Petersburg to his native city of Tabriz, which come at the end of the scroll (Nos. 45—51). One of them is addressed to his wife. None of the letters are properly dated — only the day of the month and of the week is mentioned in the text, but not the year. In three cases synchronous dates of the Gregorian calendar are indicated — 28th of June, 20th of May and 9th of June, but also without indication to the year. On the back side all letters are stamped with the sender's seal bearing the date A.H. 1243, *i. e.* A.D. 1827—1828 — the earliest chronological border for them. However, while knowing the days of the week in the text, it is possible with the help of synchronological tables to find the exact dates of sending.

Business letters by another person sent to different addresses approximately at the same time — Rabī' II—Jumādā II 1255/June—August 1839 can be found both at the beginning and in the middle of the scroll (Nos. 1—4, 17, 18). They are written by one and the same hand and stamped with the seal of their author.

The volume of the scroll allows to sort letters by the names of those to whom they were addressed. Six letters were sent to Mīrzā Jānī Lashkarnawīs (?) (Nos. 32, 37—40, 42), two — to Amīr Niẓām to Syria (Nos. 22, 23), four — to historian Mīrzā Aḥmad (the same as Khwājī Mīrzā Aḥmad) (Nos. 1, 17, 19, 24). Four letters on blue paper are addressed to Iranian dignitaries. The names of recipients are not often indicated on the obverse side of the letters. Usually they are replaced by a formula of a friendly or respectful official address. These names can be found on the other side of the page — usually the full name and titles of the recipient are indicated. The name of the sender or of the office from which the letter comes can be established by the text of the private or official stamp attesting the document. Some letters have neither addresses on the back side, nor stamps, which makes them anonymous. These are interesting only from the point of view of their lexicon and style.

The documents and letters of the scroll deal with various subjects. Two letters concern different aspects of Russian-Iranian relations: one is addressed to the first deputy of the General Consul (in Tabrīz?) — an Iranian is asking for an audience; the other is safeguarding the interests of a Muslim Russian subject in Iran (No. 5).

But the major part of the documents deal with Iranian problems: a copy of the Shah's order to the governor of Azerbaijan to produce records of expenses, different applications, legal cases, requests to make an investigation, reports on a pilgrimage to Mecca and Kerbela, letters concerning official appointments and promotions, official and private correspondence, etc.

8. Scroll C I of 72 leaves contains 70 documents, 32 of them dated, 10 have relative dates, 28 with no dates. The earliest document is dated by Shawwāl 1190, *i. e.* November—December 1776, the latest — by Rajab 1270, *i. e.*

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April 1854. In this scroll there are many documents of the beginning of the 19th century. One of them (a decision of the Shariat court on property matters, No. 20) has two dates: 26 Dhu'l-Ḥijja 1129, *i. e.* 1 December 1717 and near it, numerically — A.H. 1219, *i. e.* A.D. 1804—1805. The first date, doubtless, is a mistake. It is evident from the similar context of the neighbouring documents which can be surely dated to the beginning of the 19th century, moreover that the names of the evidence attesting the decisions of several Shariat courts are the same as in the document with the improbable alternative date.

At three points (after Nos. 35, 47 and 49) the scroll is torn. C I is different from C II not only by its size and by the presence of earlier documents and letters but also by the formal variety of its parts. Different is the format of its documents (folio, 2/3, 1/2, 1/3, 1/4 and even 1/6 of a folio), the quality and colour of paper (white, yellowish, light green, blue). Some of the letters are written on European paper with different water marks. The most important thing, of course, is the variety of documents it contains.

It opens with a series of letters addressed to the officials of the Russian General Consulate, to Russian subjects resident in Iran or to Iranians having business relations with them. One letter (No. 5) is addressed directly to the General Consul, another (No. 7) to a "Count", the third one (No. 8) to a "Baron". Personal names are not mentioned, only titles, but knowing the date of the letters it is easy to identify them. A letter sent to a Christian merchant in Tabriz Aka Kalus (whose name is mentioned in several other documents) concerns his dispute with shahsevens (No. 3); on the other side of the letter there are two impressions of an Armenian stamp-seal with the Russian letters *Г* and *П* and the date — 1825. One letter (No. 1) is a part of a correspondence with Iranian authorities concerning a dwelling house for the mission of the General Consulate and an orchard adjoining it. Another deals with some property acquired from a Russian subject, Christian Qara-bik. (No. 2).

This uniform group of 6 documents is interrupted by other materials.

One interesting group of documents presents verdicts of the Shariat court on the cases connected with property and inheritance (Nos. 17—21, 67). The earliest one is of 11 Rajab 1214, *i. e.* of 9 December 1799, the last one — of Rabī' I 1228, *i. e.* of March 1813. One of their specific features is the presence of numerous stamps (up to 15 impressions) from the personal seals of those participating in the case or attesting the authenticity of the documents. The 19th century Iranian sphragistics can be regarded as an independent field of study. Materials from the fund of A. P. Bergé provide abundant information on the style and palaeography of Iranian private seals used by different social groups.

It is possible to suggest that the verdicts of the Shariat court concern one and the same place, since the names of several counter-agents and evidence are repeated in several documents (Muḥammad Shafī' b. Muḥammad Shafī', Ismā'īl Muḥammad, Faḍlallāh b. Muḥammad Ismā'īl). Close to the court verdicts stand a will (No. 22) and an act on the transition of immovable property (No. 24) confirmed by the Shariat court; the names of the main participants and evidence are the same as in the court verdicts.

The names of the corespondents and participants demonstrate, that many documents of the scroll C I are connected, directly or indirectly, with the towns Shīrāz and Jahrūm in Fārs, in the south of Iran. Recipients in Shīrāz are: Shaykh Muḥammed Ḥusayn 'Arab (Nos. 26, 37—39), Fāṭima Sulṭān-bikūm (No. 34), *rūzakhān* Sayyid Naṣrallāh (No. 51), Mahdī Ibrāhim (No. 63); recipients in Jāhrum: Muḥammad 'Ārif (No. 53) and Karbalāyī Ibrāhīm (No. 54). *Nisbas*: Qurbān 'Alī Shīrāzī (Nos. 31, 27, 28), Shafī'-khān Shīrāzī (No. 22 — identical with the well-known Muḥammad Shafī', whose name appears on his seals), Ḥasan 'Alī Shīrāzī (No. 70), Muḥammad Ṭaqī Shīrāzī (No. 16) indicate to the provenance of a great deal of the document. The residents of Shīrāz or people originating from Shīrāz (judging by their *nisbas*) appear in a quarter of all documents in scroll C I.

There are not many letters addressed to relatives — about 10%. Business and household documents predominate: suits of different kinds, letters reminding of payments, agreements, reports on trade, etc. Stories about pilgrimages to the Holy Places of Islam also occur among these papers.

Judging by the character of the transactions mentioned, the sums and the profession of the people involved (trader in hay, baker, butcher, grosser, money-exchanger), most of them were taking place in the middle-class environment, among traders, artisans and businessmen. The style of private and business letters testifies to a high enough level of education of their authors.

9. Separate and occasional texts in Persian, Arabic and Turkic in no way related to official correspondence, private or business letters. All are undated. These include:

a) a fragment of Persian verse on 4 folios; b) a collection of verse by Sayfī — 8 folios; a mourning elegy by Wāthiqī — 1 folio; c) exercise in calligraphy (Persian and Arabic) — 1 folio each; d) versified prose or a love-poem in Persian — 1 folio; e) a fragment of an astrological text (in Arabic and Turkic) — 1 folio; f) an explanation of Arabic grammar terms for Turkic-speaking students (in Arabic and Turkic) — 1/2 of a folio. To the same group should be added a fragment of a manuscript in one of the Turkic dialects (2 folios) and the text of *Darband-nāma* in Azeri (12 folios). These last two texts also have no date.

10. Texts in Arabic. Most of these are letters addressed to Count M. T. Loris-Melikov (1825—1888), the military governor of south Daghestan, and to two officials of his administrations by the *madrasa* students from the villages of Daghestan (12 items on 12 folios). Only two letters bear the date — Muḥarram 1277, *i. e.* July—August 1860.

Four other texts have religious contents: the last leaf of the Qur'ān manuscript of the 17th—18th century; a religious treatise copied in A.H. 1148/1735—1736 — 4 folios; a fragment of a manuscript of Daghestan provenance — 2 folios; different religious sayings in Arabic translated into one of the Turkic dialects — 2 folios.

11. The attention of art historians will be doubtless attracted by the original contour portrait of an Iranian dignitary. An inscription made by A. P. Bergé testifies that it is the "portrait of Sardār-qūl made with the nails of the thumb and the small finger by Muḥammad Qāsim". Below the portrait — the signature of the Persian artist — "Muḥammad Kāẓim, and the date A.H. 1278", *i. e.* 1861—1862. The name of Muḥammad Kāẓim occurs in one of the documents of scroll C I (No. 28) among the participants of the transaction of the 10th of Jumādā I 1262, *i. e.* of 6 May 1845. It is difficult to say, if he was the same person or not. There is no reason to exclude the possibility of their iden-

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tity because the scroll and the portrait could come from the same archives.

A separate leaf attached to the portrait bears a calligraphic inscription executed in the same technique as the portrait (*i. e.* with finger-nails), it contains the sumptuous title of the dignitary.

The summary description of the fund proves that the documents, letters and texts from the Oriental part of the fund of A. P. Bergé in the archives of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies present considerable interest and deserve a thorough study and publication.

Illustrations

Fig. 1. An official letter addressed to Iskandār-khān, the governor of Hurmuzgard district of Iran. Fund 6, list 1, No. 39, 23.0 × 34.0 cm.

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