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РУКОПИСНАЯ КНИГА В КУЛЬТУРЕ НАРОДОВ ВОСТОКА

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Manuscript Books in Oriental Cultures. Book 2. The foreword to the first book of this edition tells the reader what made the authors undertake this study and what goals they pursued. Since early times to the mid-19th century the manuscript book was a means to retain and to communicate the cultural wealth accumulated by the peoples of the Orient during the millennia of their development. Manuscripts brought about various arts: production of writing stuff and instruments, the training of calligrapher-scribes, book-binding, text and binding decoration, library science and, finally, the marketing of manuscripts. In addition, manuscript books gave employment to many people. Thus, manuscript making and distribution was an element of culture of the early and medieval Oriental communities.

The essays of Book 2 deal with the manuscript tradition of three vast Asian areas—the Far East, South and Central Asia. The history of the manuscript book is an integral element of the historical and cultural development and has its own particulars in each region. In the Far East book making was largely patterned after the book culture of China, the centre of an earliest civilization. Chinese writing and forms of a manuscript book (roll, accordion, “butterfly”, brochure) were broadly used in the early and medieval states of the region. Chinese writing gave birth to several national writing systems. A more detailed account of the history of writing and manuscript book in China, Korea, Japan and the Tangut state of Hsi Hsia is given in a related essay.

Another original writing tradition evolved and developed in India. Gradually it spread over the countries of the Indian cultural region, most often via Buddhism. Among the variety of Indian writing systems priority belongs to brahmi used for putting down Sanskrit texts, and pali associated with southern Buddhism. Here palm-leaf books were modernized into pothi books which became a basic type of Indian manuscript tradition.

In Central Asia manuscript book making was a combined product of Indian and Chinese tradition. Indian cultural tradition is apparent in writing — to fix local languages Indian

brahmi was borrowed in the first centuries A. D.—and in the form of manuscripts. In Central Asia pothi manuscripts—Sanskrit, Tokhar, Khotanosak, Tibetan, and Uighur—were used to the 14th century. Via Tibet, pothi came to Mongolia. In the second half of the first millennium A. D. Chinese-like rolls came to use. The region is also known for its manuscripts on wooden tablets and birchbark. The Uighurs enriched Central Asian manuscript tradition with Middle Eastern elements. In the late Middle Ages, with the advent of Islam the Muslim manuscript tradition ousted all its predecessors.

The Oriental manuscript book, associated with scores of languages and writing systems, was a champion of several world religions, helped introduce the canons of many religious and ethical systems, and served to convey numerous ideological doctrines of the early and middle ages. The essays in this publication show the peculiarities in the development of manuscript tradition in individual countries and regions and, at the same time, the apparent typological unity of the social and cultural role the manuscript book played in the Orient. The book is designed to give the reader a deeper knowledge of the history of Oriental manuscript books and offers a more accurate account of Oriental cultural legacy.