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Color plates: 'Adjā'ib al-Makhlūqāt by Zakariyā' al-Qazwīnī (d. 682/1283), MS D 370 from the collection of St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences (see p. 56).

Front cover:

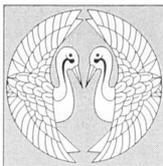
Fol. 34a. The Archangel 'Izra'īl, 160 × 124 mm.

Back cover:

Plate 1. Fol. 13b. The Planet Venus, 225 × 145 mm.

Plate 2. Fol. 35b. The Angels of the Second Heaven, 171 × 94 mm.

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BOOK REVIEW

“*Rasā’il al-Ḥikma*” I—XIV (“Poslaniya mudrosti” I—XIV): Iz druzskikh rukopisej CPbF IV RAN (A 173). Faksimile rukopisi; predisloviye, issledovaniye (gl. II, III), izbranniye perevody s arabskogo, glossariy M. A. Rodionova; gl. I issledovaniya Val. V. Polosina”. — SPb.: Tsentr “Peterburgskoe vostokovedenie” 1995. — 272 s.

“*Rasā’il al-Ḥikma* (“The Epistles of Wisdom”). Publication of the text, selected Russian translations, introduction, commentary and glossary”. St. Petersburg, 1995 (272 p.).

The Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences (St. Petersburg Branch) in cooperation with the St. Petersburg Centre for Oriental Studies, Publishing House (founded in 1992), have issued recently the book which represents the first publication in a new series “Pamyatniki kul’tury Vostoka. Sankt-Peterburgskaya nauchnaya seriya” (“The monuments of culture of the Orient. St. Petersburg scientific series”), offered by the Institute and based exclusively on materials from its rich collection of oriental manuscripts. The main aim of this series is the publication of unique or rare manuscripts from the Institute’s collection.

The book is devoted to the 11th century Druse religious canon formally named *Rasā’il al-Ḥikma*¹ and consists of three chapters: *Ch. I* “Druse manuscripts of the Institute of Oriental Studies” (by Val. V. Polosin); *Ch. II* “A survey of the Druse faith” and *Ch. III* “*Rasā’il al-Ḥikma* as a historical and cultural phenomenon” (both written by M. A. Rodionov.). It also includes a short editor’s preface, the Russian translation of four *rasā’il* and a glossary of religious and philosophical terms (about 110 items) — all by M. A. Rodionov, as well as a summary in English. The main part of the book (202 of its 272 pages) is a facsimile of the manuscript A-173 from the Institute’s collection.

This publication is valuable from many points of view. It is the first Russian edition of the Druse canon — the ba-

sic source of the Druse faith: the manuscript A-173 includes the first 14 of the 111 *rasā’il* forming the canon². It is supposed that these epistles go back to the Fatimid caliph al-Ḥākim (d. 411/1021) and Hamza b. ‘Alī (d. 433/1042), the founders of the Druse religious system. The excellent Russian translation is worth special attention. At the same time, the publication is of great importance to the world orientalia in general. One can find only few publications of selected texts and translations from the canon³. These publications do not include facsimiles, which in some cases are preferable for scholars. The supplement contributed by Val. V. Polosin is the first detailed description of all Druse manuscripts from the collection of the Institute of Oriental Studies (there are 12 manuscripts representing all the canonical texts and a number of medieval writings on the Druse religious system)⁴. In spite of many publications on the history and ideology of the Druses, there is not still serious complex study of their manuscript tradition. The author insists that the creation of a general catalogue of Druse works is one of the most urgent tasks in the field of modern Arabic and Islamic studies. He shows also the possible ways to realize it.

Apart from one unfortunate misprint on page 9 (two lines of preface are repeated), there are some minor remarks. It is not clear, for instance, why *rasā’il* I, II, IV and V were distinguished from the rest and chosen for translation; anyway, the reason for this selection is not explained. The epistles devoted to the basic Druse doctrines and “truths” (*al-ḥaqā’iq*), and to their interpretation (see folios 31a, 37b, 54a, 76b of the facsimile) seem to us much more important and worthy of translation.

The statement that *rasā’il* I—XV represent the “core” of the Druse canon, appears to be rather questionable, even though they are connected with the names of the founders. The cover of the book, contrary to its running title, has no indication that it represents only a part of the whole canon. The title *Rasā’il al-Ḥikma*, given on the cover, does not

¹ None of the manuscripts representing the Druse canon or its various parts, have title, except for the one from München (*Rasā’il al-Ḥikma*, 13—14).

² According to the list by Silvestre de Sacy, who was the first to classify all the *rasā’il* of the canon. See his *Exposé de la religion des Druzes* (Paris, 1838), ii.

³ S. de Sacy, *Chrestomathie arabe*, (Paris, 1826) ii; some translations from the canon are included in his “Exposé de la religion des Druzes”. See also: M. G. S. Hodgson, “Duruz”, *EI*, 2nd. ed., II, p. 634.

⁴ *Rasā’il al-Ḥikma*, 10—34.

reflect the real contents, which can hinder the publication of other canonical texts in this series¹.

The term "*al-tawhīd*" is used by M. Rodionov as a synonym of the Druse faith (pp. 35, 48, 65—6, 68, etc.). But '*ilm al-tawhīd*' is eponymous not only of their faith, but also of Ash'ari's *kalām*. The Druses, like the Isma'ilis, from whom they separated, adopted many points of the doctrine of the God's unity (*tawhīd*) and attributes (*sifāt Allah*) from *kalām*². On the other hand, all the Muslims consider themselves *al-muwahhīdūn* and identify themselves, in general terms, with *ahl al-tawhīd*. Following the Druse tradition, the author identifies "*ta'wīl*" with Shi'ism (p. 67), while in reality it is the method of symbolic and allegorical interpretation of the Qur'an (in opposition to

taqlīd "clothing with authority"). It was widely used not only by Shi'a authors, but also by the Ash'aris, Shafi'i and Hanbali Sufis, Isma'ilis and many others. Moreover, not all Shi'is use *ta'wīl* to interpret the Qur'an: for example, the Zaydites, in contrast to the Imamites, do not identify themselves with *ahl al-ta'wīl*. The latter term is close to *ahl al-bāṭin*, which is a self-definition of the Isma'ilis.

These minor remarks do not concern the essence of the problem considered in the book and therefore can not reduce its significance. We hope that the authors will succeed in publishing all the remaining texts of the Druse canon. This really will be a valuable contribution to Druse studies.

A. Alikberov

Giacomella Orofino. Sekoddeśa. A Critical Edition of the Tibetan Translations with an Appendix by Raniero Gnoli on the Sanskrit Text. — "Serie Orientale Roma", LXII, Roma, 1994.

The study of written sources in the languages of India, Central Asia and Far East has the strong and profound tradition in Italy. The school founded by Giuseppe Tucci is successfully maintained by his pupils and followers. The book considered here testifies to the fact convincingly. This book presents the starting point of a big project aimed at the study of the Kālacakra school. It was set in 1991 under the guidance of Prof. Raniero Gnoli. Two forthcoming volumes will contain commentaries on "Sekoddeśa": "Critical Edition of the Sanskrit Texts" (part 1) and "Critical Edition of the Tibetan Texts" (part 2). The translation of the Sanskrit text reconstructed by R. Gnoli, along with that of three commentaries will be included in the third volume (see p. 128).

G. Orofino has already acquired the reputation of a good specialist in textology after her paper "Divination with Mirrors. Observations on a Simile found in the Kālacakra Literature" delivered at the 6th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies in Fagernes (Norway), in 1992 (see "Proceedings of the 6th Seminar", vol. 2, Oslo, 1994, pp. 612—28). To evaluate the significance of Orofino's work, few words should be said about the Kālacakra system and some problems connected with its studies in Europe.

Though the Kālacakra system was being examined by scholars from the very beginning of the 19th century, it is still hardly possible to say anything definite about the place and the time of its creation as well as about the interpretation of its philosophy. The Kālacakra school seems to be

conceived not only as "the culmination of medieval Indian Buddhism before its decline", as Orofino truly states (p. 9), but as some specific teaching having its particular aim. In the texts the Vajrayāna was substantiated as a sacred system, that was later evolved in Central Asia and Tibet. Under the threat of being absorbed by other religious systems, especially after Buddhism had been influenced by some dogmas of Mani's teaching, Christianity and Islam, the efforts of Indian Buddhist philosophers was concentrated on creating and codifying the esoteric system addressed to the elite, but not to the common believers of Mahāyāna and Hinayāna. The development of the new system started beyond the boundaries of India, where the Vajrayāna had appeared about A.D. 1000 (see: D. S. Ruegg, "Problems in the Transmission of Vajrayāna Buddhism in Western Himalaya about the Year 1000", *Acta Indologica* 6, 1984, pp. 369—81). The texts of the Kālacakra system were never consolidated in the Indian literary tradition due to the time shortage, but, judging by a fair amount of quotations from it in many other Buddhist works, the Kālacakra was highly esteemed. Some Sanskrit commentaries on the Kālacakra literature, along with the texts of the Kālacakra system itself, were partly translated into Tibetan and Chinese.

The tasks set before the author of the book were the following: 1) to analyse the generally accepted theories about the place and the time of the creation of the Kālacakra system; 2) to bring together as many as possible Tibetan translations of the "Sekoddeśa"; 3) to evaluate these translations as well as the editors' part in the formation of the system; 4) to reveal possible differences from the Sanskrit original — linguistic mistakes and terminological errors. One of the aims of the work is to enable the reconstruction of the Sanskrit text.

¹ The texts of the whole canon are in the collection of the Institute of Oriental Studies in St. Petersburg: Ms A-175 includes 25 texts (XV—XL); Ms A-177 — 15 texts (XLI—LV), etc. (See: Val. V. Polosin, Druse manuscripts of the Institute of Oriental Studies — *Rasā'il al-Ḥikma*, 10—34).

² The specification of the Druse interpretation of this term is based on the assumption that caliph al-Ḥākim himself represented Allah in His unity; that's why Hamza b. 'Ali called this religion *al-tawhīd* and al-Ḥākim himself was called "Our Lord" by his followers (See: B. C. de Vaux, "Druses", *EI*, I, 1075—7).