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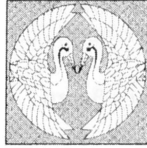
Front cover:

Portrait of the Georgian translators of “Kalila and Dimna”, king Vakhtang VI, and of the poet and scholar Saba Sulhan Orbeliani. Manuscript P 2 in the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, fol. 3a, 22.0×19.0 cm.

Back cover:

Illustration to the story “Disservice”, the same manuscript, fol. 97a, 19.0×22.5 cm.

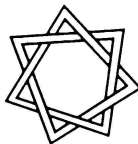
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AN ANCIENT RUSSIAN MANUSCRIPT ON CENTRAL ASIAN PAPER

In 1985, while preparing a catalogue of ancient Russian parchment manuscripts held at the Central State Archive of Ancient Statements (today the Russian State Archive of Ancient Statements, henceforth cited as RSAAS), O. A. Kniazevskaya discovered that one of them — *Lestvitsa* (“The Stairs”) by a Sinai monk John Lestvichnik (ca. 525 — ca. 600), dated to the thirteenth century (*φ*. 181, No. 452; *CK* No. 354), — was written on interleaved parchment and paper [1]. Palaeographic dating indicated that “the present case represents the earliest use of paper in ancient Russian manuscripts” [2]. O. A. Kniazevskaya noted that “the paper is thick, well glossed, without watermarks. Judging by its quality, it resembles paper of Byzantine manuscripts” [3]. The last remark is of special interest, as it enumerates the distinguishing characteristics of *Eastern* paper, not attested previously in ancient Russian manuscripts, although the question of its possible use has been raised previously by some scholars.

The probability of using Eastern paper in Rus was a special matter of interest of N. P. Likhachev, the outstanding Russian expert in paper. He noted that “despite searching through and reviewing a very significant number of manuscripts and legal documents”, he failed to find a single old Russian manuscript or even a single document written on Eastern paper [4]. True, the scholar pointed out that he knew one exception: it is Greek parchment-paper fragments, partially a palimpsest from late thirteenth — early fourteenth century, apparently copied in Palestine and preserved in the National Library of Russia (henceforth cited as NLR) — NLR Grech. 70 [5]. Later, in 1928, it was E. F. Karsky who once again noted that we know of no Cyrillic manuscripts on Eastern paper, however, its use is indicated by the name of the paper and its dimensions [6]. In the most recent work on palaeography by L. V. Cherepnin, it is said that “paper from the East (from Central Asia and Iran) could have made its way to Russia through Astrakhan” [7], though providing no examples.

We know that paper was invented in China, and that as a result of the Arab conquest in Central Asia and the expansion of international contacts, papermaking began first in Samarkand, later in the large centres of the Near East and the Muslim states of the Pyrenean peninsula and Sicily, and finally in other parts of Europe. The paper produced in various areas must have depended on local raw materials, in turn dependent on climate. Moreover, various systems and

traditions of writing engendered their own requirements of paper quality, which caused corresponding changes in production technology. Paper produced in Muslim states had to be convenient for writing in Arabic script with a reed stick from right to left with pressure on lines of a certain angle, which led to a tendency to make paper with as smooth a surface as possible. For European Latin writing, with its vertical pressure, this quality was not necessary, and paper produced in Europe was generally rough. But this roughness of European paper was also linked to the replacement of starch as a component part for gluing fibre together with gelatine paste of animal origin.

The difference between the two types of paper — Eastern and Western — can be easily seen in materials for Greek manuscripts executed on both varieties of paper and represented in various manuscript collections. A comparison conducted by J. Irigoien [8] revealed several characteristic features of these paper types. In Eastern paper, the *vergé* lines are sometimes twisted or run slantwise and the *pontuseaux* lines are sometimes entirely indiscernible, while in Western paper, the *vergé* lines are always straight [9]. In fact, these characteristics of Eastern paper are present in the manuscript of *Lestvitsa*. What was determined by O. A. Kniazevskaya as the “paper of Byzantine manuscripts” can undoubtedly be referred to Eastern paper, although they are not identical, as we will explain below.

In trying to find paper types closer to the paper of *Lestvitsa*, it is reasonable to review the most accessible examples of Eastern paper at that time, represented primarily in Arabic-script manuscripts, nearly all in the Arabic language. We must also establish specific chronological limits. From the end of the fourteenth century, Western paper began to supplant its Eastern counterpart even in Arabic-script manuscripts. The final replacement of Eastern paper with Western in the Near East was evidently linked with the Ottoman conquest of the Arab countries in the sixteenth century and the Ottoman encouragement of import [10], which included Western paper. Imported paper underwent additional processing to bring its external appearance into line with traditional variants. The production of Eastern paper undoubtedly continued in Central Asia, Iran, and certain other places, in particular Daghestan [11]. This continued until relatively recently; but in the case at hand, we can limit ourselves to examples dated circumstantially to the fourteenth century alone, citing analogues from the fifteenth century.

We succeeded in discovering in Moscow a number of Arabic-script manuscripts which meet these criteria; they are enumerated below in chronological order. Because some of them are introduced here into scholarly circulation for the first time, and because they are of textological interest thanks to their age, we cite the Arabic titles of the works they contain where there is no standard Russian equivalent:

1. the State Library of Russia (henceforth cited as SLR), *φ*. 179, No. 154, 19.0×10.5 cm. Fols. 1—73, dated to 1130. Collection of astronomical treatises in Arabic by Iranian and Central Asian authors. Also includes one treatise in Persian on the final folios;

2. SLR, *φ*. 726, No. 1, 18.8×15.1 cm. Collection of mathematical treatises by Central Asian authors. Some treatises close with dates that correspond to 22 January 1218 (fol. 109b), 1235/6 (fol. 13), and there is a marginal note in the copyist's hand with the date 13 August 1219 (fol. 101);

3. the State Institute of International Relations in Moscow (henceforth cited as SIIRM), No. 51, 26.0×18.5—19 cm, (?) 1281. Medical encyclopaedia, supplanted by Ibn Sīnā's *Qānūn* (Canon):

كامل الصناعة الطبية المعروف بالملكي لعلي بن عباس الجوسى:

4. SLR, *φ*. 179, No. 126, 21.0×17.0 cm. No later than 1288 (date written on fol. 4). The dating of "no later than 1345" found in several sources is based on an obvious note on the manuscript's final folio. Collection of poetry by Abū-l-'Alā al-Ma'arrī (979—1058), "Flint Sparks", with commentary by al-Tibrizī (1030—1109);

5. SLR, *φ*. 179, No. 125, 22.0×16.0 cm. 1331, Damascus. Work on *fiqh* of the Ḥanafī school:

كنز الوصول الى معرفة الاصول:

6. SIIRM, No. 49, 24.0×16.5 cm, 1332 and 1335, Jurjāniya (Urgench), Khorezm. Convolute of an astronomical treatise and philological commentary copied in various hands;

7. SIIRM, No. 31, 26.0×18.0 cm, 1392. Edirne (Adrianople). Work on *fiqh* of the Ḥanafī school:

شرح الوقاية لعبد الله المحبوبي صدر الشريعة:

8. The State Public Historical Library, section of the East, No. 9, 1416. Commentary on the philosophical work:

حاشية ملازاده على هداية الحكمة للابهرى:

9. SLR, *φ*. 185, No. 1, 1425. *Shāh-nāma* by Firdawsī (in Persian);

10. RSAAS, *φ*. 181, *on*. 13, *ed. xp*. 1262, (?) 1452. The date is written on a page of this frequently restored and augmented manuscript, and may have been transferred from a page which contained the colophon at the time of restoration. *Maqāmāt* by al-Ḥarfīrī (1054/5—1122);

11. SLR, *φ*. 185, No. 10, 1464. Popular geographical work in Persian;

12. SLR, *φ*. 185, No. 50, 1478/9. *Gulistān* by Sa'dī in Persian with a partial Turkish interline translation in a different hand;

13. SIIRM, No. 172, 1489. Shiraz. Collection of poetry by 'Abd al-Rahmān Jāmī (1414—1492) in Persian;

14. SLR, *φ*. 185, No. 13, 1491/2. The date, which is indicated at the end of the manuscript only in numeral form (٨٩٧), appears to have been traced in ink later and corrected to ٩٩٧ ([1]197 / 1782—83). Historical work in Persian;

15. The State Historical Museum (henceforth, SHM), *φ*. 77, No. 156, 1500. Work on *fiqh* of the Ḥanafī school (same as No. 7);

16. SHM, *φ*. 77, No. 140. No later than 1503, the date in a table of contents written in a different hand on separate folios. Collection of *ḥadīths* drawn up in 1336.

مشكاة المصابيح الخطيب التبريزي.

The manuscripts enumerated above are not always precisely dated and localised. Nonetheless, in reviewing them, a number of regular features — format (which in the end depends on the size of the paper folio) and paper colour — emerge. Relying on them, one can divide the manuscripts into four groups:

I. manuscripts of literary content in Arabic (which presumes an origin in an Arabic-speaking region). 4 and 10 are executed on grey-brownish paper and have the format of Egyptian quarto. Manuscript 2 can be grouped with them on the basis of these characteristics;

II. manuscript 7, precisely dated and localised, copied in Adrianople in 1392, is in format close to large European octavo and was executed on paper of a bright grey shade;

III. manuscript 5, precisely dated and localised, copied in Damascus in 1331, is in format close to quarto and was executed on yellow-brown paper;

IV. manuscripts from the Central Asian-Iranian region. With few exceptions, one can *a priori* include in this group all manuscripts in Persian. The following are in format analogous to European octavo or are even more extended, executed on markedly yellow paper: 1, 3, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16. There may be among them manuscripts copied in the Ottoman Empire, where Iranian cultural traditions were retained during the period in question.

As can be seen from the classification of available examples of Eastern paper of the twelfth—fourteenth centuries, the paper of *Lestvitsa* corresponds best to group IV — the Central Asian and Iranian manuscripts. The paper of Byzantine manuscripts relatively well-known and available to researchers, however, is analogous or close to groups I and II. A review of a Greek codex on paper [12] contemporary to *Lestvitsa* entirely confirms its similarity with the paper of group I.

The exception which proves the rule is the oldest Greek manuscript on paper (Vat. Gr. 2200), dated to *ca.* 800 and, according to B. L. Fonkich, who reviewed it *de visu*, yellow in colour. Since paper production in the Near East began only in the second half of the tenth century [13], the paper of this codex must have been produced in Samarkand, which at that time retained a monopoly on production.

One can presume that the unusual yellow colour of *Lestvitsa*'s paper and its smooth surface are what caused the paper section of the manuscript to remain unnoticed for so long, although the manuscript itself has been known to scholars for at least a century.

One also notes the nearly identical formats of *Lestvitsa* (23.0×16.0—16.3 cm) and manuscript No. 6, copied in 1332 and 1335 in Urgench, Khorezm (24.0×16.5 cm). For comparison, one can examine other copies of *Lestvitsa* on parchment in the *Svodnyi katalog slaviano-russkikh rukopisnykh knig, khраниashchikhsia v SSSR, XI—XIII vv.* ("Comprehensive Catalogue of Slavic-Russian Manuscript Books Held in the USSR: 11th—13th Centuries"), Moscow, 1984: Nos. 62 (26.5×22.0 cm), 206 (34.0×26.5 cm), 269 (20.0×13.5 cm).

One feature of *Lestvitsa's* preservation is undoubtedly linked to the composition of the paper. In the lower half of the side margin along the entire block, a strip of several millimetres was lost. But where the folios are firmly stitched together (around fol. 30), the paper juts out somewhat above the parchment. One can guess that rodents destroyed this strip, most frequently handled by fingers, only on the parchment folios, while on neighbouring paper folios this strip crumbled later, during page-turning. Apparently, Eastern paper was treated for preservation against insects and rodents not only in India, where this is attested by sources [14], but also in other centres of paper production. In any case, in a number of collections one notes the contrast between manuscripts on Russian paper

of the nineteenth century, which are badly damaged by rodents, and somewhat older examples on Eastern paper, which are beautifully preserved, although they were hardly stored in better conditions. In Europe, this characteristic of Eastern paper could cost careless readers dearly, a theme touched upon by Umberto Eco in his novel "The Name of the Rose".

The proposed Central Asian origins of *Lestvitsa's* paper are in good accord with the palaeographic dating to the second half of the thirteenth century. It was at that time that Eastern paper still surpassed its Western counterpart in quality; in the Western tradition, parchment continued to prevail for such codices. The well-known events of the thirteenth century and the numerous embassies to the Horde probably caused a somewhat greater familiarity with the material culture of Central Asia, which was controlled at the time by the same Mongol rulers. One can allow that *Lestvitsa* was copied during one of those embassies, which frequently lasted longer than intended. A. A. Turilov proposed in conversation that it could also have been copied at the court of the Saray bishop. A definitive answer to the question will come only with the discovery of new historical sources from the period.

Notes

1. *Katalog slaviano-russkikh rukopisnykh knig XI—XIV vv., khраниashchikhsia v TsGADA SSSR* (Catalogue of Slavic-Russian Manuscript Books of the 11th—14th Centuries Held at the USSR Central State Archive of Ancient Statements), pt. 1 (Moscow, 1988), p. 12.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*

4. N. P. Likhachev, *Paleograficheskoe znachenie bumazhnykh vodiannykh znakov* (The Palaeographic Significance of Paper Watermarks), pt. 1 (St. Petersburg, 1899), p. LXV.

5. *Ibid.*, p. CXCIV. For more information on this manuscript and other fragments of the same codex, see V. M. Zagrebin, "O proiskhozhdenii i sud'be nekotorykh slavianskikh palimpsestov Sinaia" ("On the origin and fate of several Slavic palimpsests from Sinai"), in *Iz istorii rukopisnykh i staropechatnykh sobranii* (Leningrad, 1979), pp. 61—80.

6. E. F. Karskiĭ, *Slavianskaia kirillovskaia paleografiia* (Slavic Cyrillic Palaeography) (Moscow, 1979), p. 99.

7. L. V. Cherepnin, *Russkaia paleografiia* (Russian Palaeography) (Moscow, 1959), p. 219.

8. J. Irigoien, "Les premiers manuscrits grecs écrits sur papier et le problème du bombycin", in *Griechische Kodikologie und Textüberlieferung*, hrsg. Dieter Harlfinger (Darmstadt, 1980), pp. 132—43. I am grateful to Mr. B. L. Fonkich for referring me to this article and for his valuable advice.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 135.

10. N. A. Ivanov, *Osmanskoe zavoevanie arabskikh stran 1516—1574* (The Ottoman Conquest of the Arab Countries: 1516—1574) (Moscow, 1984), p. 211.

11. T. M. Aĭberov, "Dagestanskije dokumenty XV—XVII vv." ("Dagestani documents of the 14th—17th centuries"), in *Pis'mennye pamiatniki Vostoka. Year Book. 1975* (Moscow, 1982), p. 5, n. 1.

12. SHM, manuscript department, No. 436 in the catalogue of Vladimir (=No. 298) (second half of the 13th century, Trapezund), see B. L. Fonkich, "O rukopisi "Strategikon" Kekavmena" ("On the manuscript *Strategikon* by Cecaumenes"), in *Vizantiĭskii vremennik*, XXXI (1971), pp. 108—20; *idem*, "Zametki o grecheskikh rukopisiakh sovetskikh khranilishch. 13" ("Notes on Greek manuscripts in Soviet repositories. 13"), in *Vizantiĭskie ocherki* (Moscow, 1991), pp. 111—21. The manuscript was reviewed as being of interest for Arabic textology in terms of its content; codicologically, its selection can be considered random.

13. See, for example, A. B. Khalidov, *Arabskie rukopisi i arabskaia rukopisnaia traditsiia* (Arabic Manuscripts and the Arabic Manuscript Tradition) (Moscow, 1985), p. 164; A. Mets, *Musul'manskiĭ renessans* (A. Mez, *Die Renaissance des Islams*), trans. into Russian by D. E. Berthels (Moscow, 1973), p. 372.

14. See, for example, M. I. Vorob'eva-Desiatovskaia, "Rukopisnaia kniga v kul'ture Indii" ("The manuscript book in the culture of India"), in *Rukopisnaia kniga v kul'ture narodov Vostoka* (Moscow, 1988), ii, pp. 45—6.