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### Front cover:

"Desvarāṭī (Varāri, Varādi) Rāgīnī", watercolour, gouache and gold on paper.  
Deccan, second half of the 18th century. Album (*Muraqqa'*) X 3 in the Karl Fabergé collection  
at the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, fol. 25 a, 11.5×17.0 cm.

### Back cover:

"Lalita Rāgīnī", watercolour, gouache and gold on paper. Deccan, second half of the 18th century.  
Same Album, fol. 34 b, 13.5×23.0 cm.

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## FORGOTTEN ORIENTAL DOCUMENTS

The collection of Arabic manuscripts and documents at the Russian State Archive of Ancient Documents (*Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv drevnikh aktov*; henceforth, *RGADA*) in Moscow, often directly connected with Russian history, is the oldest collection of its type in the country, yet it has not attracted serious scholarly attention. This is the understandable result of social conditions in various periods and the history of Russian Oriental studies. The materials in this collection were gathered, mainly, by a small group of individual enthusiasts; they are primarily of a coincidental nature and do not in specific instances provide an exhaustive overview of any particular question. On the other hand, serious research in Oriental studies on Eastern texts was, in fact, conducted in Leningrad (St. Petersburg) and relied on the unequally sized collections of the Asiatic Museum (today St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies) and the Saltykov-Shchedrin Public Library (today National Library of Russia), which were gathered by many generations of scholars over many decades. However, materials at *RGADA* are as well of value, since they refute many accepted judgments in Arab studies.

Ironically, the Arabic manuscripts from the *RGADA* collection best known to scholarship are not those that have survived to the present day, but those that were lost centuries ago but once belonged to groups of documents held at *RGADA*. (Some of them may never have existed at all). The earliest information on the presence of analogous manuscripts in the Tsar's archive, which finally made its way (with losses) into the Moscow Main Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Moskovskii glavnyi arkhiv Ministerstva inostrannykh del*; henceforth, *MGAMID*) collection, goes back to the sixteenth century. In the "Description of the Tsar's archive", we find, in particular, box 172 — "Tatar books", box 218 — "Tatar kuran (sic) on which the Tatars swear the *shert* (oath — *D. M.*)". It is noted that "in the year 78 (1570 — *D. M.*), May, Pyotr Grigoryev brought the Kuran to the sovereign" [1]. A reference in passim in the documents to an Arabic cosmography of the thirteenth century, manuscripts of which were most often decorated with splendid miniatures — "Our sovereign ordered [us] to seek that book in his stores, but [we] could not find it" — in its time served as an argument in a dispute about the library of Ivan the Terrible [2]. These books are no longer listed in the descriptions for 1614, 1626, and 1632 [3].

Arabic manuscripts and documents at *RGADA* can easily be divided into several groups on the basis of when and

how they were acquired. The earliest reliably attested acquisition is the archive and manuscript collection of G. J. Kehr (1692—1740) [4]; fourteen manuscripts were acquired from his widow in 1741. We cite here the list of these manuscripts, drawn up (in outdated Russian) upon their acquisition [5]:

- 1) "story about the imam Shafi, in Arabic", fol. 181, No. 1227 [6];
- 2) "story in the Arabic language (tales of the iman Maverdi)", fol. 181, No. 1230 [7];
- 3) "book in the Persian language called Diwan, written in verse (tales of the iman Shirachi)", fol. 181, No. 1492 or No. 1493;
- 4) "verses in the Persian language (about the same)", fol. 181, No. 1492 or No. 1493;
- 5) "book in the Arabic language (ceremony of the Mohammedan faith, in Turkish)", fol. 181, No. 1231 [8];
- 6) "book in the Arabic language (prophecy of the proph. Sinabi, in Persian)", fol. 181, No. 1259 [9];
- 7) "Persian sayings (and an elementary course for studying the same language)", fol. 181, No. 1460;
- 8) "description of the siege and conquest of Candia (Crete — *D. M.*) in 1677; with the names of Turkish provinces, the number of military men in those provinces who receive salary, and so on (in Turkish)", fol. 181, No. 1462;
- 9) "elucidation of the Mohammedan faith (through Liamsaedi) in the Arabic language", fol. 181, No. 1239 [10];
- 10) "vocabulae in Arabic and Persian" (?);
- 11) "Mohammedan prayer-book, in the Arabic language", fol. 181, No. 1260 [11];
- 12) "part of the alkaran (114 chapters) in the Arabic language", fol. 181, No. 1229 [12];
- 13) "the quire [contains] Turkish (Persian) songs" (?);
- 14) "a historical book in various Asiatic languages", fol. 181, No. (?)1459.

There is no doubt that these manuscripts are of Turkish origin or at least circulated in Turkish milieu in the European part of the Ottoman Empire and were later seized as trophies during the Austrian-Ottoman wars of the seventeenth century. Undoubtedly of the same origin are the originals of the many excerpts made by Kehr's hand from Arabic manuscripts from German collections, including the Leipzig "senator's" library, a catalogue of which was drawn

up by Kehr. Excerpts from this catalogue and descriptions of certain Leipzig manuscripts completed with great care and extensive quotations are scattered among many items in the *RGADA* Kehr archive by topic.

His archive contains also the Arabic-language letters of several European scholars, which are of great interest to the history of Oriental studies. Among these scholars are: J. Chr. Clodius (1676—1745; Nos. 148—149), J. H. Callenberg (1694—1760; No. 141), and E. Gründler (letters from India; No. 144). Curious are the rough drafts of letters by Kehr himself; they are addressed to an “Armenian archbishop” (1720, No. 145), an “Ottoman envoy” (No. 146), the “padishah of Iran” (1734, No. 160), where he offers his services as an expert on many languages in a hope to make a voyage to the East. We recall that this was the time of Robinson Crusoe (1719) by Daniel Defoe and Gulliver’s Travels (1726) by Jonathan Swift, which reflected a growing interest in other peoples, and sometimes the possibility of seeing oneself through alien eyes.

Some documents from the Kehr archive are linked with the names of two Syrians who make a notable mark on European Arabic studies in the early eighteenth century [13]. One of them, Sulaymān al-‘Aswad al-Ṣāliḥānī (ca. 1665—1729), usually mentioned with the Europeanised name “Solomon (in the particular Russian spelling — Salomon — *D. M.*) Negri”, is known for his translations into Arabic, in particular the “small catechesis” by Martin Luther and teaching dialogues in Syrian dialect. Both of these texts can be found (the first in fragmentary form) among Kehr’s papers; copies were evidently made not from print editions, which appeared only in 1729, but while Kehr was studying the language under the direction of Solomon Negri (No. 139 and No. 87).

The autographs of his fellow countryman, known by the strange name of Carolus Rali Dadichi (1734) [14], are clearly calculated to make an impression. (They are also found in the collection of Jacob J. Björnsthål, who will be discussed later). This original, in his own way, and artistic figure is, perhaps, reminiscent of the heroes of *maqāmāt* with their virtues and flaws. Undoubtedly, self-promotion was the aim of two authorial copies of letters (No. 143) to the famed Joseph Assemani (Yūsuf al-Ṣimānī; 1688—1768), whose name provided the title for the Glagolitic “Assemani’s Gospel”, probably the most ancient Slavic manuscript. This letter, which may not have been sent, contains advice (which the intended recipient hardly needed) on a work on Syrian patristics, then only a project, but later the famous writing [15].

Many questions arise about the “Report on the current state of Syria” (No. 124) whose text is contained in a sort of critically annotated list by Kehr dated 1733. As is noted there, it was written by a certain Arab Christian (the name is most likely given in a distorted form and it is not among those that are well-known); for the famed Andrei Osterman (1686—1747) The latter, a native of Westfalen, entered the Russian service in 1703, and at the end of Peter the Great’s reign was one of the most important political figure in Russia. Later, under the Tsaritsa Anna Ioanovna he became an actual ruler in the internal and foreign affairs of Russia (he was sent to exile in 1741 by Peter’s daughter, the Empress Elizabeth). The author of the “Report”, the conditions of its composition, the reason for drawing up such an unimposing text in Arabic (really in Syrian dialect), and the

date of its composition are obscure. We failed to discover any mention of such a document in the literature, or at least in Oriental studies literature.

A certain counterpart to Kehr’s archive is the more modest collection of Björnsthål-Slutsky, gathered a half-century later. Its first owner, the Swedish philologist and traveller Jacob J. Björnsthål (1731—1779) [16], apparently journeyed no farther into the East than Constantinople. He did, however, know some Arabic, since a familiarity with Semitic languages was considered necessary for Protestant Biblical exegesis. The Arabic-language items in the collection are generally souvenirs linked to famed Orientalists. An exception is a letter from the Sultan in Arabic that promises to pardon *shayḫh* Ḍāhir al-‘Umar (No. 175). This document is of special interest, since Ḍāhir al-‘Umar, the ruler of Acre, became the ally of a Russian squadron during the Russo-Turkish war of 1768—1774. The episode is well-known and has been treated on numerous occasions in the historical literature [17]. The collection later belonged to S. S. Slutsky (1860—1903) [18], an employee of the Archive known in particular for his work on Syriac and Syro-Turkic inscriptions in Central Asia.

The second large acquisition took place in 1749. These were “books and manuscripts taken from Turkish prisoners of war; 68 books, nearly all in Arabic (several in Turkish). Among the books were: 7 alkarans, 1 [book of] verses in Turkish, one on the birth of Muhammad, 5 on Muslim law, 1 Arabic grammar, and 53 prayer books” [19]. Belokurov, who examined the inventory, points out that “the number of manuscripts among them is not indicated...; only in 5 instances do we find books noted as ‘written’ or ‘written out’, which gives reason to believe that they were in manuscript” [20]. Taking into account the history of book-printing in Arabic and Turkish, there is little doubt that all of the books should have been in manuscript. Five manuscripts in similar binding are of special interest in this group: they were copied around 1740 by Muḥammad, son of Aḥmad, from Karasu in the Crimea (Nos. 12–13) and Muḥammad, son of ‘Alī Riḍā’i (Nos. 2, ?3, ?4). Some of them (Nos. 2, 12, 13) contain a note about copying in the city of Veliky Ustyug.

The manuscript catalogue drawn up between 1824 and 1841 lists only 60 “Arabic” manuscripts [21]. The disappearance of 22 manuscripts is evidently due to the scandalous activities of Christian Friedrich Mattei (1744—1811) [22]. Fifteen of these appear to have turned up in Dresden together with the latter subsequently famed Greek collection between 1784 and 1789 [23].

In the mid-nineteenth century, several manuscripts were acquired from the Syrian Spiridon (Isbīr) ‘Abbūd (18??—1879) [24] or with his help. These are a fairly old copy (?1452) of the *Maqāmāt* al-Ḥarīrī (No. 105), a 1752 copy of an adaptation of the famed tenth-century encyclopaedia of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’ (No. 125). The copy of the “Journey of the Antioch patriarch Macarius” (No. 119) ordered with the help of Spiridon ‘Abbūd in Syria especially for the archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs played an important role in the study of seventeenth-century Russian culture. It was on this manuscript that G. A. Murkos, who will be discussed below, based his full Russian translation of the “Journey”, an indispensable source for all works on seventeenth-century Russia. It is appropriate to note here that lacunae in this copy of the “Journey” were undoubtedly filled with recourse to another

translation, also found in the archive, made from Belfour's well-known English translation, based on a fuller redaction (No. 122).

Finally, the last acquisition of Arabic-language materials was the collection of Murkos himself (Jūrjī Ibrāhīm Marquš) [25], a native of Syria who lived for more than three decades in Russia, yet retained close ties with his homeland and never lost touch with its social and cultural life. Numerous, long letters from Damascus, Beirut, Tripoli, Homs, Zahle, Latakia, Jaffa, Cairo, Aleksandria, Constantinople (Istanbul), Mersin, and also from Arabs in

St. Petersburg, Moscow and Kiev, contains a great deal of important information both on the Arab Orthodox community in Syria and Lebanon (of which Murkos himself was a member and which he represented in many journalistic works) and on affairs within the Ottoman Empire at the time.

To conclude, the materials held at *RGADA* are of interest less for the traditional study of Arab-Muslim literature than for resolving a broad array of questions, in particular, concerning Russian history, the history of culture, cross-cultural influence, the history of Oriental studies in Europe and Russia, the history of language study, and many other issues.

## Notes

1. The description is in manuscript QIV 70/1, fols. 313a and 346a, in the collection of the National Library of Russia. It has been published: (1) *Akty sobrannyye v bibliotekakh i arkhivakh Rossiiskoi Imperii Arkheograficheskoiu ekspeditsiei Imp. Akademii nauk* (Statements Collected by the Imperial Academy of Sciences Archaeographic Expedition from the Libraries and Archives of the Russian Empire) (St. Petersburg, 1836), iv, cited are pp. 347 and 352; (2) *Opisi Tsarskogo Arkhiva XVI veka i Arkhiva Posol'skogo prikaza 1614 g.* (16th-Century Inventories of the Tsar's Archive and the 1614 Ambassadors Court's Archive), ed. S. O. Schmidt (Moscow, 1960), cited is p. 42; (3) *Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossii XVI stoletia. Opyt rekonstruktsii* (The Sixteenth-Century State Archive of Russia. A Reconstruction Attempt), preparation of the text and commentaries by A. A. Zimin, editor and introduction's author L. V. Cherepnin (Moscow, 1978), fasc. 1, p. 75; fasc. 2, p. 385; fasc. 3, p. 506. The citations are quoted in many works, see, for example, N. P. Likhachev, *Biblioteka i arkhiv moskovskikh gosudarev v XVI stoletii* (The Library and Archive of the Muscovite Tsars in the 16th Century) (Moscow, 1894), pp. 62, 82; N. N. Zarubin, *Biblioteka Ivana Groznogo* (The Library of Ivan the Terrible) (Leningrad, 1982), pp. 55, 83; R. A. Simonov, A. A. Turilov, A. V. Chernitsov, *Drevnerusskaia knizhnost'* (Old-Russian Book Culture) (Moscow, 1994), p. 121; M. A. Usmanov, "O dokumentakh russko-vostochnoi perepiski na tiurkskikh iazykakh v XV—XVIII vv. i ikh istochnikovedcheskom znachenii" ("On the documents of Russian-Eastern correspondence in Turkic languages in the 15th—18th centuries and their importance as historical sources"), *Voctochnoe istoricheskoe istochnikovedenie i spetsial'nye istoricheskie distsipliny*, fasc. 2 (Moscow, 1994), pp. 127, 135; and A. Kruming, "Pervyye russkie perevody Korana, vypolnennyye pri Petre Velikom" ("The first Russian translations of the Qur'an made under Peter the Great"), *Archiv Russkoi istorii*, fasc. 5 (Moscow, 1994), p. 228.

There existed a controversy about the question of what one should understand under the "Tatar Books". Likhachev and Zimin consider them to be the books in Eastern languages and in Eastern script. If so, those might most likely be works in Arabic in Muslim law, which were then needed. A. N. Sobolevsky, the author of a review of Likhachev's work argued that the "Tatar books" should be understood as ordinary Ambassadors Court books in the Russian language. See *Zhurnal Ministerstva narodnogo prosveshcheniia* (December 1894), section 2.

2. See, for example, I. Iu. Krachkovskii, *Izbrannyye sochineniia* (Selected Works) (Moscow—Leningrad, 1957), iv, pp. 358—63, ills. 48—53 (inserts, among them four are in colour); A. D. Sidel'nikov, "Arabskaia kniga v tsarskoi kazne" ("Arabic book in the Tsar store"), in *Sbornik statei k sorokaletiiu uchenoi deiatel'nosti akademika A. S. Orlova* (Leningrad, 1934), pp. 165—7. One failed to find any manuscripts of this cosmography in Moscow collections. To ascertain possible influence of such kind of miniatures on the Old-Russian miniature painting, one can consult miniatures in extant Arabic cosmographies in R. Ettinghausen, *La peinture arabe* (Genève, 1962), pp. 138—9, 178, 181; M. Meissner, *Die Welt der sieben Meere* (Leipzig—Weimar, 1980), Tables 3, 9—17. See also H.-C. von Bothmer, *Die Illustrationen des "Münchener Qazwīn" von 1280* (München, 1971).

3. Belokurov, *O biblioteke*, p. 29. A copy of the Qur'an, with a seventeenth—early eighteenth centuries record of swearing the oath on it, kept in the *RGADA*, have watermarks dating to ca. 1628—1639, and consequently is a different manuscript. For the extant Qur'an, see D. A. Morozov, *Kratkii katalog arabskikh rikopisei i dokumentov Rossiiskogo gosudarstvennogo arkhiva drevnikh aktov* (A Concise Catalogue of Arabic Archive of Ancient Documents) (Moscow, 1996), No. 1.

4. M. Shuvalov, "Ocherk zhizni i deiatel'nosti orientalista Kera" ("An outline of the life and activities of the Orientalist Kehr"), in *Sbornik Moskovskogo Glavnogo Arkhiva Ministerstva Inostrannykh Del*, fasc. 5 (Moscow, 1893), pp. 91—110.

5. Belokurov, *op. cit.*, p. 92. The list is held at *RGADA*: "fund 180 (office of *MGAMID*. No. 17 (books of entries and going out papers... 1741). Fol. 188. Those are worked with by the translator Semyon Ivanov: No. 25 (books of entries and going out papers... 1749). Fols. 332—3; 344—5".

6. Morozov, *op. cit.*, No. 108.

7. *Ibid.*, No. 70.

8. *Ibid.*, Nos. 54, 71, 73.

9. *Ibid.*, No. 64.

10. *Ibid.*, No. 60.

11. *Ibid.*, No. 10.

12. *Ibid.*, Nos. 56, 71, 73.

13. For more on them, see, for example J. Fück, *Die arabischen Studien in Europa* (Leipzig, 1955), pp. 95—7: "Ein Zwischenspiel (Negri und Dadichi)".

14. C. F. Seybold, "Der gelehrte Syrer Carolus Dadichi". *Zeitschrift der Deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 64 (1910), pp. 591—601. *Idem*, 74 (1920), pp. 292, 464—5; W. Suchier, *C. R. Dadichi oder wie sich deutsche Orientalisten von einem Schwindler täupieren ließen* (Halle, 1919).

15. J. S. Assemanus, *Bibliotheca Orientalis Clementino-Vaticana...*, 3 vol. in 4 tomi (Romae, 1719—1728).
16. See *Svenskt biografiskt lexicon* (Stockholm, 1925), iv, pp. 722—6. *Jacob Jonas Björnståhl's Briefe auf seinen ausländischen Reisen*, 2 Aufl. I—II (Leipzig—Rostock, 1780).
17. See, for example, A. E. Krymskii, *Istoriia novoi' arabskoi' literatury* (History of Modern Arabic Literature) (Moscow, 1971), p. 140; *idem*, "Iz beirutskoi' tserkovnoi' letopisi" ("From a Beirut church chronicle"), *Drevnosti vostochnye*, III/1 (Moscow, 1907), p. 69 (separate pagination).
18. As established by A. I. Gamayunov, an employee of *RGADA*.
19. Belokurov, *op. cit.*, p. 90. The list has been preserved at *RGADA*, f. 180, (*MGAMID* office), No. 25 (Books of entries and going out papers... 1749), fol. 326.
20. *Ibid.*
21. *Ibid.*, p. 110. (At present, f. 181, inv. 18.) This undoubtedly means all Eastern manuscripts in Arabic writing, since neither Persian nor Turkish manuscripts are mentioned in this list, although they certainly existed. For example, XI 6/428 (=f. 181. No. 1460; not reflected in the current catalogue). The same catalogue lists one "Tatar" manuscript, IV 10/230 (=f. 181, No. 1458] — a Tatar translation of the Statute of the Police Office, 1787—1792, definitely from Russian — which evidently did not form part of the Eastern tradition.
22. On the Mattei affair, see Belokurov, *op. cit.*, pp. 1—23. There is an interesting, if not scholarly, work which treats the affair as well, see R. T. Peresvetov, *Tainy vytsvetshikh strok* (Mysteries of Faded Lines) (Moscow, 1961; reprinted in 1970), pp. 28—48; *idem*, *Po sledam nakhodok i utrat* (Tracing Finds and Losses) (Moscow, 1961; 2nd edn. Moscow, 1963), pp. 27—49.
23. Belokurov, *op. cit.*, p. 17. Belokurov cites an untranslated letter by Schnorr von Carolsfeld from 21 March 1898 with a list of materials acquired by the Dresden library from Mattei with reference to vol. 188, No. 10 of the library's archive. It lists: "Hierzu kommen noch 15 theils Arabische, theils Tatarische Handschriften" (There follow also 15 manuscripts, partly Arabic and partly Tatar), which is inaccurately translated by Peresvetov as "fifteen ancient Arabic and Tatar texts" (*Po sledam nakhodok i utrat*, p. 48). A translation of the letter is held at *RGADA*: f. 184 (S. A. Belokurov), inv. 1, No. 554, fol. 3. We were unable to find the original.
- In the Dresden library's catalogue of Eastern manuscripts (H. O. Fleischer, *Catalogus codicum manuscriptorum orientalium Bibliothecae Regiae Dresdenis*, Lipsiae, 1831) the name Mattei is understandably absent in the list of previous owners, although the time and source of acquisitions are often noted. Among manuscripts of uncertain origin — relatively late acquisitions, judging by the numbers — the following seem of interest (p. 72): Nos. 419—421, 423—424 (there are 454 descriptions in all), with indications of Tatar handwriting and/or language. Especially curious is manuscript, copied in 1740 in Orenburg with Russian marginal notes (MS 421).
24. On him, see, Krymskii, *Istoriia novoi' arabskoi' literatury*, pp. 305—6.
25. *Drevnosti vostochnye* (Eastern Antiquities), vol. 4 (Moscow, 1913), proceedings, pp. 69—77. "Murkos" is the dialectical Arabic form of the name "Markos, Mark", which was a last name in this case. The more correct form "Markos" is found in documents that appeared at the beginning of his time in Russia, but it was later supplanted by the more familiar oral form.
- In the Arabic autographs of relatives, the name/last name is written with a *ص* in accordance with the Arab Orthodox tradition; we find *س* in letters by those who did not know him well, as is the practice in modern literature.