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Colour plates: *The Secret Visionary Autobiography* of the Fifth Dalai Lama (see pp. 54—65).

Front cover:

The *cakra* for the separation of the guardian deities from the person they are protecting.
A separate folio, 55×20 cm.

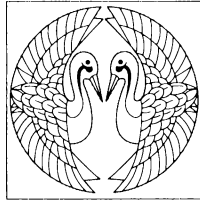
Back cover:

Plate 1. *Cakras* for summoning spirits of foes and for warding off evil spirits, as well as the articles used to perform the ritual for propitiating of the goddess lHa-mo. A separate folio, 55×20 cm.

Plate 2. The *cakra* for the suppression of the *dam-sri* spirits. A separate folio, 55×30 cm.

Plate 3. *Cakras* for calming illnesses and acquiring wealth, and the articles used to perform the corresponding ritual. A separate folio, 55×20 cm.

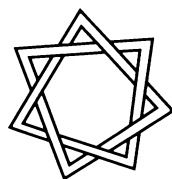
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EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear readers,

our journal has taken the first steps on the road of carrying out the programme which was declared by the editors in the first issue of 1995, by no means an easy task, as you may guess. You are in your own right to make assessments of what has been a success or not, but what you can notice for certain is that the journal's principal subject of scholarly investigations has been strictly kept throughout the first issues.

You can also notice that most of the first articles of the journal were written by scholars working at the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies. This was no deliberate preference of ours, but the inevitable result of an initial stage of the process of making the journal which has been basically projected and created by the St. Petersburg specialists in Oriental studies. We are now hoping that our appeal to Orientalists from abroad to contribute to the *Manuscripta Orientalia* which, from the very beginning, was expected to be an international issue, will be heard by them. The St. Petersburg scholars would be glad to see these contributions on the pages of the quarterly.

Estimating the first publication actions in 1995, however modest it could seem at first sight, we can point out with satisfaction that a number of scholars from Japan, Germany, the USA, Czechia, and Norway have already contributed to the *Manuscripta Orientalia*, delivering their articles and information of much interest.

To those who lack the first issue of the quarterly where the editorial programme has been published, we would like to present it once more, revealing the principal scholarly aims of the journal. The emphasis will be laid on the articles dedicated to Oriental manuscripts, be they Arabic, Persian, and Hebrew, or Japanese, Indian, Chinese, etc. Studies on Oriental textology, palaeography, codicology, as well as on philosophy, history, and culture will be published here, provided that these studies are based upon some Oriental manuscript or a group of manuscripts from the collections all over the world.

It should be mentioned that the *Manuscripta Orientalia* is also a journal dealing with Orientalistics heritage. The studies on Oriental manuscripts, which were not published for some reason in the past, could be published here. We intend also to reproduce in English, the language of the quarterly, the most important works on manuscripts previously published in Russian or in other languages if necessary. It is hardly necessary to say that all those who deal with the problems of conservation and restoration of Ori-

ental manuscripts, the priceless literary heritage of the Oriental peoples, are welcome to contribute to the journal as well. When it concerns the safety and the future destiny of this heritage, the editors regard it as one of their most important tasks to provide a necessary information on their keeping and restoration.

One more important point must be mentioned when speaking about the general programme of the journal. The rapid progress of the new information technologies and their introduction into all spheres of modern life and scholarship is, naturally, influencing the development of Orientalistics. Being applied to the study of Oriental manuscripts, they open new perspectives in this traditional branch of scholarship. A special section of our journal is dedicated to the new information technologies in their connection with manuscripts research.

It is also important to note that every issue of the journal is expected to include a publication concerning some manuscript of special artistic or scientific value belonging to the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies or to some other collection, with a number of its pages or miniatures reproduced in colour.

We have already had, and are still continuing, to receive the first appraisals of our work through 1995. They seem to be quite encouraging. In any event our colleagues from abroad appear to support the idea of publishing such a kind of quarterly and its scholarly programme. Highly appreciating this support, which is in effect important for us, the editors are glad to inform you, our readers, that a new section — "Cultural Traditions of the Orient as Reflected in Its Written Monuments" — is being introduced in the journal starting from the first issue of 1996. Information which concerns the most interesting or possibly less known literary monuments of the Orient will be published, including that on family life and its traditions, everyday life foundations and specific features of Oriental habitations, as well as on military organisation, various kinds of weapons, warriors' equipment, etc.

Another point of the journal editors' programme deserves special attention — a project of producing CD-ROM issues, which we are planning to carry out as the journal's supplement, starting from 1996. The CD-ROM issues are expected to contain a facsimile either of the whole texts or excerpts from various texts (in accordance with the topic chosen) of the manuscripts, dedicated to history, literature, religion, and philosophy, from the collection of the St. Pe-

tersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies. Some of these manuscripts are the unique objects of the book-art. In connection with this new CD-ROM programme a brief outline of this collection's contents will be published in the next issue of the journal.

This year at least two very interesting manuscripts from the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies collection are to be published within the CD-ROM project. One of them is the "Secret Visionary Autobiography" (rNam thar rgya can) of the Fifth Dalai Lama Ngag-dbang blo-bzang rgya-mtsho (1617—1682). This outstanding specimen of Tibetan spirituality represents the record of both years-long visionary experiences and a collection of precepts concerning the most esoteric rituals in Tibetan Buddhism. The "Autobiography" is arranged in three parts: the records of the visions (the "Mother" section), the instructions dealing with the rituals (the "Son" section), and illustrations to the text. The illuminated manuscript of the "Autobiography", preserved in the collection, is the most complete of the few survived, a considerable part of its text being scarcely known to scholars. It contains unique information dealing with the transmission of these most special rituals.

It should be also noted that studies on the "Autobiography" started in 1988 with the publication of the "Secret Visions" by Samten Karmay, which was undertaken by the Serindia Publishers. The publication of the St. Petersburg manuscript could provide a great deal of new information indispensable for those specializing in Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism.

The second CD-ROM publication will contain a three-volume manuscript of much interest. It is important from both textological and codicological points of view. It seems to be one of the earliest Arabic translations of the Bible to date, as well as the oldest surviving copy of this translation.

The manuscript was copied in Damascus in A.D. 1236 from the original which was executed in Antioch in A.D. 1022.

An excellent manuscript written in large regular *naskh* in black Indian ink and cinnabar, and properly collated with the original, as the copyist states it, represents a rare sample of the Arab Christian book-art. There are numerous black-and-white illustrations in it. The manuscript seems to be even more valuable if we take into account that it contains both the readers' and owners' marginal notes, a real treasure of precious information which is dated in some cases.

It is interesting that the manuscript was donated to the Russian Tsar Nicholas II by the Patriarch of Antioch Gregory IV in 1913, on the occasion of the 300th anniversary of the Romanovs' Royal Family, and was preserved in the private library of Nicholas in the Winter Palace (St. Petersburg) until it came, in 1919, into the manuscript collection of the Asiatic Museum (now the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies).

It is known that in 1579 a Jesuit Giovanni Battista Eliano made a copy of this very manuscript, which is now preserved in the Vatican. It was laid at the basis of the first printed edition of the whole Arabic Bible text, undertaken in 1671 in Rome. However, this edition lacks the illustrations the Institute manuscript contains.

These are the most important points of the editorial programme to be carried out in the near future.

Finally, we consider it a pleasant duty to express our profound gratitude to all those who have already supported the journal by word or deed. At the same time we are most hopeful about those who have not had a chance to contribute to the journal yet. The editors of the *Manuscripta Orientalia* wish every success to all of its present or future authors, to all of you, our dear readers, who are interested in the intriguing world of Oriental manuscripts, from both the professional and cultural points of view.

Yuri A. Petrosyan,
Editor-in-Chief