



BEREZIN, IL'YA NIKOLAEVICH

BEREZIN, IL'YA NIKOLAEVICH (1818-96), Russian orientalist known for his works on Iranian, Arabic, and Turkish philology and dialectology and on Mongol history (mainly on Rašid-al-Dīn) and for his travel accounts of Transcaucasia and northern Persia. He was born to a government official, at Yugokamsk, in the region of Perm, on 19 (31, Julian calendar) July 1818 (or 1819; see *Entsiklopedičeskii slovar'*, p. 511; Kuznetsova and Dantsig, p. 92 n. 1) and studied at the district school of Ekaterinburg (Sverdlovsk), at the gymnasium of Perm, and at the Oriental Faculty of the University of Kazan (1834) with the Arabist F. Erdmann and the Turcologist and Iranist A. K. Kazem-Beg. He graduated (1837), obtained a master's degree in Oriental literature (1841), and was sent by his university (together with Wilhelm Dittel, another postgraduate) on a scholarly voyage (1842-45) to Transcaucasia, Persia, Mesopotamia, Syria, Egypt, Constantinople (where he stayed one year), and the Crimea. From 1846, he was professor extraordinary of Turkish at the University of Kazan (Dugat, pp. 15f.; Vengerov, pp. 66f.; Kononova, pp. 123f.; Barthold, pp. 737ff.). He was appointed to the professorship of Turkish at Kazan (1854) and then at St. Petersburg, where the Oriental Faculty was moved in 1855. His other official appointments included curator of coins and medals and censor of Oriental books printed at Kazan (1849-55), editor of the Kazan provincial bulletin (1852-54), member of a commission (at St. Petersburg) to foster learned publications (1860-63; treasurer, 1861-62), editor of the Oriental section of the Great Russian Encyclopaedia (1861-63), member of a commission to reform Russian universities (1863), from 1865 head keeper of Oriental coins (Vengerov, pp. 67f.), and state counselor. In 1858, he started



traveling in Europe (Paris, London, Germany) and became a member of the Société Asiatique in Paris and Leipzig (Barthold, p. 754).

His doctoral thesis, “An outline of the internal structure of the *olūs* of Jowšī” (1863), was an amended study of “The internal structure of the Golden Horde” (1850), both viewed rather negatively by Barthold (pp. 748, 751ff.). From the mid-1870s, he was increasingly involved in official functions (Dugat, p. 19) and less active in learned circles; however, he took part in the fourth Congress of Orientalists at Florence in 1878 (Barthold, p. 754). The jubilee or fiftieth anniversary of his activity was celebrated in 1890 (Barthold, p. 755; in 1889 according to Vengerov, p. 68). He died at St. Petersburg on 22 March (3 April, Julian calendar) 1896.

Appreciations of his works and career vary considerably, the most critical authors writing in the post-revolutionary period (e.g., S. I. Vavilov, *Bol'shaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya* III, 1950, p. 638). His French contemporary Dugat praises his scholarly and official achievements and cites his being named “chevalier” of the Order of the Lion and Sun (Dugat, p. 20). More neutral appreciations are given in the *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar'* (p. 515), by Vengerov (p. 68), and in recent Soviet Russian writings (e.g., Kononova, p. 124). Former authors were more critical. For Barthold (p. 737), he belonged to a generation of orientalists who could not limit themselves to philological and linguistic tasks. Important changes that occurred in Russian orientalism had little influence on his works, his most fruitful period being completed when he was sixty (i.e., by 1878-79). While noting his negative views on the Islamic world, Barthold commended Berezin's regret for his contemporaries' lack of interest in Persian Muslim architecture and praised the value of his well-written (and popular) travel accounts (pp. 740ff.). He also noted the shortcomings in his philological training, some of his errors being repeated by others in important reference works (pp. 750ff.). Data on his courses are very scarce. In lectures that he attended, Barthold notes that Berezin used some of Radloff's works without mentioning him (pp. 754ff.).

The value of Berezin's travel accounts has been recognized by many authors. Although he was hampered by illness and local political conditions, he studied Turkish, Persian, and Arabic languages and dialects, and during his Middle Eastern tour (June, 1842-August, 1845) reported on customs, religions, laws, culture, architecture, inscriptions, etc. (Kuznetsova and Dantsig, p. 93). The two volumes published represent partly the results of his travels in his early twenties. The major part of his drawings (nearly 300 landscapes and inhabited



places, 40 maps of cities and fortresses) and various accounts and personal impressions were published separately (*ibid.*, pp. 94ff., 99). The most valuable information on economics, politics, religions, customs, folklore, etc., is given in his second travelogue (1852), limited to northern Persia, although he proceeded to the Persian Gulf via Qom, Kāšān, Isfahan, and Shiraz. From his lengthy account about Tabrīz and Tehran, a section concerning “Foreign firms in Tabriz, 1830s” (pp. 58-66) has been translated into English (see Ch. Issawi, ed., *The Economic History of Iran 1800-1914*, Chicago, 1971, pp. 105-08). The section on Tehran, Moḥarram ceremonies, the *takīa* of Ḥājī Mīrẓā Āqāsī, etc. (pp. 292-347) has been partly translated (see J. Calmard, “Le mécénat des représentations de ta’ziye I: Les précurseurs de Nâseroddin Châh,” *Le monde iranien et l’Islam* 2, 1974, pp. 73-126, esp. pp. 94-126, which includes Berezin’s map of Tehran with commentary). Descriptions of Bushire (Būšehr), the Island of Kārg, Baṣra, Baghdad, etc., as well as an account on the ‘*Atabāt*, particularly the pilgrimage to Karbalā’ (and related socioeconomic activities) shortly after a rising of Persian and Arab Shi’ites had been quelled by the pasha of Baghdad, were published in various Russian periodicals (see the bibliography and *ibid.*, pp. 96ff.). He also studied Muslim, Christian, Yezīdī, and various nomad communities under Ottoman rule (*ibid.*, pp. 98ff.).

His studies on Iranian dialects and languages include Gīlānī, Tāti, Ṭālešī, Lahījānī, Māzandarānī, Kurdish and “Gabr.” Although the materials he gathered were limited, his contributions, together with Chodzko’s, were pioneering efforts in Iranian dialect studies. However, his *Persian Grammar* (1853) contains nothing new or original (Ol’denburg, pp. 175f.).

A little-known aspect of Berezin’s activities is his early interest in poetry and novel writing which he pursued during his travels. Out of linguistic curiosity he also studied Romance literature (Petrarch, Ariosto) and was among the first Russian scholars interested in Provençal literature (Krachkovskii, pp. 177ff.).

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p. 737]; his publications in Russian and French range from highly specialized studies to more popular travel accounts, editions, and contributions to encyclopedias, newspapers, and various Russian series never gathered in specialized publications): “Opisanie turetsko-tatarskikh rukopisei v bibliotekakh S. Peterburga” (Description of Turco-Tatar mss. in the libraries of St. Petersburg), *Journal of the Ministry of Public Instruction* 47-49, 1846.

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to Karbalā’.

For further references, also to his works on Turkish studies, see Barthold; Kononova, pp. 124ff.; Vengerov, pp. 68f; Samoïlovitch).

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Biographical data on Berezin are found in both tsarist and Russian writings, many of which are not readily available.

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