



BERTHEL'S, EVGENIÏ ÈDUARDOVICH

BERTHEL'S, EVGENIÏ ÈDUARDOVICH BERTEL'S (b. 13 December Julian calendar = 25 December 1890, St. Petersburg, d. 7 October 1957, Moscow), Soviet Iranologist, head of the Soviet school of Persian and Central Asian Turkic studies in the 1930s-1950s. Born in a family of Russian free professionals of Danish ancestry Berthels, after a short-lived interest in entomology, went into legal studies, graduating from the St. Petersburg Imperial University (1914). He taught himself Persian and Turkish and in 1918 became a student of the Petrograd Conservatory and the Oriental Department of the Petrograd (later Leningrad) State University, where his teachers were A. A. Romaskevich, A. A. Freiman, V. Barthold, and S. Oldenburg. Berthels' first academic appointment (1920) was at the Asiatic Museum (later the Institute of Oriental Studies of USSR Academy of Sciences), then headed by Oldenburg. After a year he was appointed lecturer in Persian language and literature at the Petrograd Institute of Living Oriental Languages (later A. S. Enukidze Leningrad Oriental Institute and the Leningrad Oriental Institute) and in 1928, on Barthold's recommendation, professor of Persian language and literature at the Leningrad State University. In 1932 he became the Leningrad-based head of the history and linguistics department of the Tajikistan branch of the USSR Academy of Sciences (while retaining his other academic obligations) and in 1939 a corresponding member of the USSR Academy of Sciences. In 1942 Berthels was evacuated with the Institute of Oriental Studies of the USSR Academy of Sciences from embattled Leningrad to Tashkent. In 1946 he



became professor of the Moscow Institute of Oriental Studies; and in 1950, upon the transfer of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the USSR Academy of Sciences to Moscow, he was appointed head of its Soviet Orient Department. In the post-Stalin era Berthels became one of the first Soviet orientalists to participate in conferences and to publish abroad. From the late 1930s to the mid-1950s he was the mentor of most Soviet researchers of Persian and Muslim Turkic literatures.

The first of Berthels publications in the field of Persian language and literature was an excellent translation of selections from Sa'dī's *Golestān* (*Gulistan. Izbrannye rasskazy*, Berlin, 1922). His three other books from the 1920s—*Persidskiĭ teatr* (Leningrad, 1924), *Grammatika persidskogo yazyka* (Leningrad, 1926); and 1928 *Ocherk istorii persidskoĭ literatury* (Leningrad, 1928)—more or less lack originality and are sometimes not quite reliable.

From 1923 through 1929 Berthels published twenty-seven articles in the field of Sufi studies (republished together with some previously unpublished ones in his *Izbrannye* [III]: *Sufizm i sufĭskaya literatura* (articles originally in German in Russian translation; Pers. tr., Tehran, 1356 Š./1977), clearly the beginning of a comprehensive study of Sufism, its leading figures, and its expression in Persian and—to some extent—Turkic poetry (see, e.g., *Izbrannye* [III], pp. 109, 112, 124, 125, 229, 296 and n. 47; cf. pp. 513, 514). Two articles written in the mid-1940s, an untitled survey of the origins of Sufism and the emergence of Sufi literature (*ibid.*, pp. 13-54) and “*Izrechenie Ibrāhīma ibn Adhama v poème Kutadgu-bilik*” (*ibid.*, pp. 181-87), were not published, probably because of the anti-Sufism that was part of the so-called “Shamil discussion” of the late 1940s. Berthels returned to Sufism about 1955, when he prepared for publication his article “*Fuḍayl ibn 'Iyāḍ*” written in 1926 (publ. *ibid.*, pp. 188-213; see also *ibid.*, p. 514), but his life-long grand design remained unfulfilled.

In the mid-1930s Berthels wrote a small popular monograph on Ferdowsī, *Abu-l-Kasim Firdousi i ego tvorchestvo* (Moscow and Leningrad, 1935; for his later reserved evaluation of it see *Izbrannye* [I], p. 175; cf. p. 27 n. 4) and an important study, *Persidskaya poéziya v Bukhare. X vek* (Moscow and Leningrad, 1935; Pers. tr. in *Payām-e now*, 1323 Š./1944, nos. 2-6), in which he attempted from the limited material at his disposal to establish the main trends, genres, and tropological features of early Persian poetry. To the 1930s belong also the two most important of his few Afghan studies: “*Kandakharskoe narechie yazyka pushtu*” (*Sovetskoe yazykoznanie* 1, 1935, pp.



173-81) and *Stroï yazyka pushtu* (Leningrad, 1936) and his lucid translations of Nāṣer-e Ḳosrow's *Safar-nāma* (*Safar-nāma* [*Kniga puteshestviya*], Moscow and Leningrad, 1933) and of the *Qābūs-nāma* (*Kabus-namè*, Moscow, 1953), published in reduced form: the translator's afterword was drastically cut down, the chapter on lovemaking omitted, and paragraphs on traits of slaves from various ethnic groups, chiefly in the USSR, deleted).

On the occasion of Neẓāmī's 800th anniversary festivities, planned for 1941, Berthels and a group of collaborators began preparing a critical edition of Neẓāmī's *Ḳamsa*. He based the text on the oldest manuscript available (Bib. Nat., Suppl. Pers. 1817, dated 763/1362; see *Šaraf-nāma*, prepared by 'A. 'A. 'Alizāda and supervised by E. È. Bertel's, Baku, 1947, p. XVIII); nine other manuscripts were consulted (see *ibid.*, p. XX, *Izbrannye* [III], pp. 463-67, and *Sovetskoe vostokovedenie*, 1955, no. 3, p. 15). A critical text of the *Eskandar-nāma* was published in 1947 in two parts: *Šaraf-nāma* (for which Berthels and 'Alizāda were awarded the Stalin Prize of the Second Class) and *Eqbāl-nāma*. No other critical text was published during Berthels' lifetime. In 1939 Berthels wrote the popular monograph *Velikiï azerbaïdzhanskiï poet Nizami. Epokha—zhizn'—tvorchestvo* (Baku, 1940; Azeri tr. Baku, 1940; a shortened version in *Literaturnyï Azerbaïdžhan*, 1939, no. 3, pp. 60-69, no. 5, pp. 43-53, no. 6, pp. 16-29; 1940, no. 2, pp. 44-55; Azeri tr. in *Revoljusija və qultura*, 1939, nos. 4, 6, 10-11; 2nd and 3rd rev. eds.: *Nizami*, Moscow, 1947, and *Nizami. Tvorcheskiï put' poëta*, Moscow, 1956). At the end of 1940 he finished the first volume of a two-volume monograph on Neẓāmī, containing a survey of Neẓāmī studies and of the literary activities in Azarbaijan in Neẓāmī's time, a biography, analyses of *Maḳzan-al-asrār*, *Laylī o Majnūn*, and *Eskandar-nāma* with a chapter comparing it with the corresponding part of the *Šah-nāma*, and chapters about Neẓāmī's views on the art of poetry and social problems. This too appeared in Moscow and Baku scholarly journals and collections with some changes in 1940-41 but was not published in its entirety until five years after Berthels' death, under the title "Nizami. Monografiya," with chapters on *Ḳosrow o Širīn* and *Haft peykar* added from the third edition of the popular monograph, as the main part of *Izbrannye* [II]. The second volume was to have contained analyses of the remaining *maṭnawīs* of Neẓāmī and of his lyrical poetry, poetics and vocabulary, a discussion of the sources for his social views, and a chapter of textual criticism (see *Izbrannye* [II], p. 14). From 1939 to 1956 Berthels published another thirty-seven articles on Neẓāmī, mostly of popular character.



Berthels' interest in Central Asian languages and literatures dates from the late 1920s. The most remarkable of his works on Tajik literature is the article "Rukopisi proizvedeniĭ Akhmada Kallè" (*Trudy Tadzhikistanskoĭ Bazy AN SSSR*, 3, 1936, pp. 9-28) in which he surveyed Aḥmad Dāneš's principal works and defined him as the forerunner of Central Asian *jadīds*. Berthels' first study on 'Alī-Šēr Navā'ī is from 1928 ("Nevai i Attar," republ. as "Navoi i Attar" in *Izbrannye* [III], pp. 377-420). In 1938 (see Prigarina and Kazaryan, p. 224), in connection with Navā'ī's 500th anniversary festivities planned for 1941, Berthels became interested in him once more but it was only during the Tashkent period that Berthels began systematically working on his monograph about Navā'ī (*Navoi. Opyt tvorcheskoĭ biografii*, Moscow and Leningrad, 1948; republ. as "Navoi" in *Izbrannye* [IV], pp. 13-206; on the Tashkent period see *ibid.*, p. 15). Navā'ī's life and work are surveyed against the background of 15th-century Timurid history, with most attention given to his *Ḳamsa* (*ibid.*, pp. 126-70), while his Čaġatāy lyrical poetry is given less space (pp. 85-103), and his Persian *Dīvān-e fānī* is left undiscussed because the text was not available (see *ibid.*, p. 85). Of Navā'ī's prose he discusses primarily *Moḥākamāt al-loġatayn* (pp. 189-92) and *Maḥbūb al-qolūb* (pp. 192-96). Of great interest is his analysis of the technical refinement that Persian poetry had achieved by the time of Navā'ī (*ibid.*, pp. 38-42). About 40 percent of the text of the monograph *Dzhami. Epokha, zhizn', tvorchestvo* (Stalinabad, 1949), apparently written in haste, overlaps or repeats the text of his monograph on Navā'ī (most of the repetitions were deleted when it was republished as "Dzhami" in *Izbrannye* [IV], pp. 207-79). Attention is paid chiefly to *Haft ovrang* (pp. 256-72); the *Ḳerad-nāma-ye eskandarī* (pp. 266-69) and *Salāmān o Absāl* (pp. 270-71) are surveyed in relative detail; the discussion of *Laylī o Majnūn* (pp. 263-66) is a shortened version of the same in *Nižāmī. Monografiya* (cf. *Izbrannye* [II], pp. 281-86); other *maṭnawīs* are dealt with cursorily. The short subsection on Jāmī's lyrical poetry (pp. 249-55) deals almost exclusively with his two philosophical *qaṣīdas*. The *ġazals* are not analyzed at all. The section on prose (pp. 240-49) discusses chiefly *Bahārestān* but even this receives a rather shallow survey (pp. 246-48). In *Roman ob Aleksandre i ego glavnye versii na vostoġe* (Moscow, 1949; *Izbrannye* [IV], pp. 281-413) Berthels aimed at establishing what was new in Navā'ī's notions about Alexander (*ibid.*, p. 285) and about a third of the monograph (pp. 368-413) is devoted to a detailed survey and analysis of the poet's *Sadd-e Eskandarī*, which Berthels regarded as the apogee of the Alexander romance tradition in the Islamic cultural area. The other versions of the romance known to Berthels were given far less consideration. However, the discussions of the Alexander section of the *Šāh-*



nāma (ibid., pp. 295-304) and the *Āīna-ye sekandarī* by Amīr Ẓosrow Dehlavī (pp. 336-52) are quite detailed and those of Neẓāmī's *Eskandar-nāma* (pp. 315-36) and Jāmī's *Ārad-nāma-ye eskandarī* (pp. 352-63) even more elaborate than in the monographs on these poets (cf. *Izbrannye* [II], pp. 342-59; [IV], pp. 266-69). During the 1940s Berthels published fourteen articles about Navā'ī and twelve on other Central Asian Turkic literary subjects, including four on Turkman literature (for an evaluation see Karryev); these were mostly popular articles. The main features of poetry in Persian in Central Asia up to the 13th/19th century are discussed in "Perskidskaya literatura v Srednei Azii" (*Sovetskoe vostokovedenie* 5, 1948, pp. 199-228; Ger. tr. in *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientalforschung* 3/2, 1955, pp. 180-221); the article is uneven, containing a lengthy and erudite discussion of the development of Persian-language poetry in Central Asia during the 4th-9th/10th-15th centuries (pp. 204-24), while the period from the 10th/16th century is dealt with in short, sketchy notes (pp. 224-27) which did not incorporate all that was known about the period at the time.

In the 1930s Berthels began adapting to the ideological standards of the time (Boldyrev, p. 11). In "Persidskiĭ istoricheskiĭ roman XX veka" (*Problemy literatury Vostoka* 1, Trudy Instituta Vostokovedeniya Akademii Nauk SSSR 1, 1932, pp. 111-260) he declared that "the Persian historical novel was created by Persian trade capital" (p. 124). In the vein of "the imperative present-day requirements" (Boldyrev, p. 11) he discussed the problems of translating Lenin into Tajik ("Perevody sochineniĭ Lenina na tadzhikskii yazyk," *Pamyati V. I. Lenina [1924-1934]*, Moscow and Leningrad, 1934, pp. 831-46) and called for translating into "Oriental languages" all the classics of Marxism-Leninism ("Perevedem na vostochnye yazyki klassikov marksizma-leninizma," *Za sotsialisticheskuyu nauku*, September, 1934). In the late 1930s-1940s the number of party locutions in his writings grew steadily (see, e.g., *Velikiĭ azerbaĭdzhanskiĭ poet Nizami*, p. 5; *Izbrannye* [II], p. 431; "Uzbekskaya literatura," in *Bol'shaya sovetskaya èntsiklopediya*, 1st ed., vol. 55, 1947, cols. 615-16; "Gumanist-novator," *Literaturnaya gazeta*, 13 September 1947; "Rodonachal'nik uzbekskoi literatury," *Pravda*, 15 May 1948; "V oreole bessmertiya," *Literaturnaya gazeta*, 18 May 1948; *Navoi. Opyt tvorcheskoi biografii*, p. 268, *Izbrannye* [IV], pp. 67, 431). In early 1949, however, Berthels became one of the main targets of a fierce campaign against scholars studying the literary heritage of the peoples of the Islamic Orient; his works were criticized in harsh terms (Klimovich, 6 February 1949; Tursun-zade; Ibragimov; G. M. Petrov, quoted in "Nasushchnye"). The abundant use of



ideological clichés and party cant in Berthels' public addresses and publications from the early 1950s was to a great extent an attempt at parrying this onslaught, which was especially grave because at the time his son Dmitriĭ was behind bars (Voznesenskiĭ, p. 462; he was later released). On the occasion of Stalin's 70th anniversary Berthels delivered a paper, "L. V. Stalin i literatura narodov SSSR" (December, 1949; summary in *Vestnik Akademii Nauk SSSR*, 1950, no. 1, p. 136), saturated with references to Marxist-Leninist theory and Leninist-Stalinist national policy, criticism of "reactionary pan-Turkism," "bourgeois nationalists in the Oriental republics [of the USSR]," etc. In "Persidskiĭ—dari—tadzhikskiĭ" (*Sovetskaya ètnografiya*, 1950, no. 4, pp. 55-66; earlier version in *Izvestiya Tadzhikistanskogo Filiala AN SSSR*, 1946, no. 12, pp. 7-18) he blamed "bourgeois" scholarship for ignoring the Tajik people and supporting "the chimerical Great Iran ideas of the Iranian fascists," attractive to "Western imperialists" (*ibid.*, p. 65). At the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the Turkologist V. Gordlevskiĭ (1876-1956) he lauded "the sun of the Leninist-Stalinist national policy" and attacked the "chauvinist-colonialist spirit" of "most representatives of Oriental studies of other bourgeois countries [than tsarist Russia]" and "the pan-Turkism created by the reactionary circles of Turkey and striving for world rule" ("Vladimir Aleksandrovich Gordlevskiĭ," *Akademiku Vladimiru Aliksandrovichu Gordlevskomu k ego semi-desyatipyatiletyu*, Moscow, 1953, p. 9).

From 1954 Berthels led the preparation of a new critical edition of Ferdowsi's *Šāh-nāma*. He aimed at a text that would represent "in general . . . the redaction of the 13th century" (*Šāh-nāma*, Moscow, I, p. 18; Ger. tr. in *Iranistische Mitteilungen* 6, 1972, pp. 7-41). He proposed that only four manuscripts should be used (*ibid.*, pp. 12-15). The oldest of these, the British Museum ms. Add. 21, dated 675/1276 (the oldest known at that time) was considered the best (*ibid.*, p. 16). None of the manuscripts could alone serve as the basis of the text (*ibid.*), which had to rest on all of them (*ibid.*), but must also be cautiously (*ibid.*, p. 15) checked with Bondārī's translation into Arabic (615-29/1218-27; *ibid.* and "Shakhsname i kritika teksta," *Sovetskoe vostokovedenie*, 1955, no. 1, p. 94). In exceptional cases the Borūkīm edition was consulted (*Šāh-nāma* I, pp. 17-18). Berthels edited only the first two volumes, both published after his death (vol. I in 1960, vol. II in 1962). The whole nine-volume edition was completed in 1971 under the editorship of 'A. Nūšīn (vols. III-VI, IX) and 'A. Āḍar (vol. VIII). Despite the limited number of manuscripts used and the exaggerated importance given to Bondārī's translation (see *Ḳāleqī-Moṭlaq*, 1981, p. 86, 1986, p. 365; Osmanov, pp. 4, 6), there can be no



doubt that this is still the best edition of Ferdowsī's epic.

In 1955 Berthels became a contributor to *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, for which he wrote seven reviews up to 1957. (The one in *BO*, 1956/1-2, pp. 86-87, of Vil'chevskii's "Novyi istochnik dlya kharakteristiki mirovozzreniya gorodskogo naseleniya Irana v X-XI vekakh," *Sovetskoe vostokovedenie*, 1955, no. 1, pp. 96-103, is misleading: the alleged discovery was not a previously unknown work but just a part of Ġazālī's *Kīmīā-ye sa'adat*; see *ibid.*, 1957, no. 6, p. 208, and cf. Berthels, "K voprosu o filologicheskoi osnove . . .," p. 18.)

In the last decade or so of his life Berthels was writing a history of Persian (or "Persian-Tajik") literature up to the 15th century (*Izbrannye* [I], p. 25; see Braginskiĭ, 1960, pp. 16-17). This *Istoriya persidsko-tadhikskoi literatury* was to consist of four volumes (*ibid.*, p. 17, n. 2) but he managed to write only the first (to Ferdowsī), the second (mainly the Ghaznavids), and the beginning of the third (the Qarakhanids and the Saljuqs, cut off on an apparently unfinished subsection on Sufi literature of the 5th-6th/11th-12th centuries). These were published in 1960 as vol. I of his *Izbrannye* and bear unmistakable marks of being first drafts only: There are many lacunae and the work lacks polish and consolidation of its various parts. Nevertheless, it is instructive as the summing up by a great scholar of his vast reading and research in Persian classical literature in an attempt to view this literature as a continuum.

Berthels' selected works were published in six volumes (*Izbrannye trudy* [I]: *Istoriya persidsko-tadhikskoi literatury*, [II]: *Nizami i Fuzuli*, [III]: *Sufizm i sifiiskaya literatura*, [IV]: *Navoi i Dzhami*). Volumes I-IV appeared in 1960-65. The rest have not yet been published, although reports have it that they are ready (Prigarina and Kazaryan, p. 225).

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