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KHANYKOV, NIKOLAI

KHANYKOV, NIKOLAI (Nicolas de Khanikoff; b. 24 October 1819, d. 15 November 1878),one of the quintessential figures of 19th century Russia's nascent Oriental studies that were totally dependent on state political and military activities in the Orient. The overwhelming majority of his scholarly works, however, were written in French and published in France, and he spent his last eighteen years in France. So the French version of his name used for his publications in France and Great Britain can often be seen in references alongside the conventional transliteration of its Russian original.

In 1926, Vasiliĭ Barthold (q.v.; 1869-1930) put Khanykov together with those who had productively capitalized on their state missions for the advancement of scholarship and crowned him as "the most outstanding" (Bartol'd, 1977a, p. 329). In Barthold's opinion, only Vladimir Minorsky (q.v.; 1877-1966) was able to compete with Khanykov in this regard (Bartol'd, 1977a, p. 329; Volkov, 2018b, p. 207). Being heavily involved in the Oriental activities of Russian imperial diplomacy and the military in the 1830s to 1850s, Khanykov was at the spearhead of *Russkoe delo* ("the Russian Cause") in Central Asia, the Caucasus, Persia, and Afghanistan. A gifted orientalist and skillful negotiator who would represent Russian interests during secret negotiations with the ruler of Bukhara, Amir Naṣr-Allāh (1827-60); the ruler of Herat, Solṭān Aḥmad Khan (1857-63); and the ruler of Kabul, Dōst Moḥammad Khan (q.v.; 1826-39, 1842-63); and he was one of the last Europeans to speak to Captain Arthur Conolly (1807-42) and Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Stoddart (1806-42) when he attempted to avert their execution, Khanykov's memoranda on Oriental affairs

were directly demanded by the Russian tsars Nicolas I and Alexander II, and he personally advised Russia's ministers of war, education, and foreign affairs (Khalfin and Rassadina). Soviet and post-Soviet patriotic officialdom have always been putting Khanykov at the forefront of furthering Russia's national interests in foreign policy and orientalist scholarship (Vigasin and Khokhlov, pp. 116-18), whereas he, rather critical about his motherland, refused to stay in Russia and preferred to live in France and work for the French Academy of Sciences, although continuing his close ties with Russian government and capitalizing on them.

Western scholarship has practically nothing about Khanykov. Some researchers, *obiter dictum*, call him a "Russian-born French scholar and diplomat" (Ebrahimnejad, p. 206). Others repeat the mistakes of the pre-1917 Russian orientalists, giving Khanykov's birth date as 1822 (Sela, p. 24). The renowned Russian orientalist Nikolai Veselovskiĭ (1848-1918) had collected a good deal of material on Khanykov and intended to publish a monograph about him, but he failed to finalize it, although he published short articles based on the accumulated material; for unknown reasons, he assumed 1822 for Khanykov's birth year, and Western researchers borrowed this from his writings and those of Barthold (Khalfin and Rassadina, p. 6). There are no studies specifically dedicated to his political and academic activities.

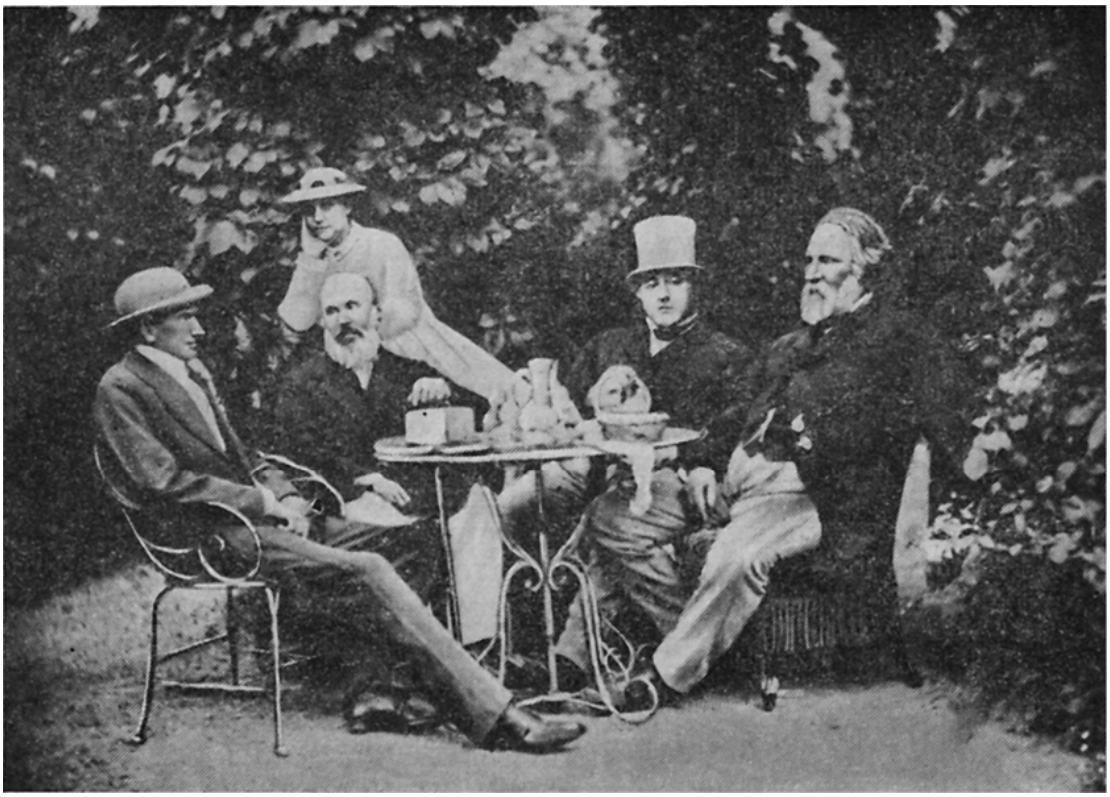

PLATE I Nikolai Khanykov with Ivan Turgenev at the summer home of Nikolai Milyutin in Baden Baden, 1867. From left to right: Konstantin K. Grot, N. A. Milyutin and his wife, Nikolai Khanykov, Ivan Turgenev. After Khalfin and Rassadina, p. 229.

In this sense, the situation in Russian scholarship is slightly better. Although Khanykov is invariably celebrated as a Russian scholar and diplomat and, moreover, is prominently mentioned in the context of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs' contribution to Russia's Oriental studies (Vigasin and Khokhlov, pp. 117-18), his numerous scholarly works both in French and in English were never translated into Russian. Nevertheless, the late Soviet period witnessed the publication of a scrupulously researched book-length study of Khanykov's life based solely on Russian archives and providing the fullest list of his publications, although not complete either (Khalfin and Rassadina, pp. 263-66). As the Soviet researchers of Khanykov state, archives in Russia failed to answer many important questions about his life (Khalfin and Rassadina, p. 236), including the underlying one. Why did he, in the prime of life, prefer to resign from active state service and point-blank refuse to live in Russia, while continuing to support strong ties with the Russian government and to elicit financial support from them?

Figure 1. Map of Khorasan and central Iran prepared under the direction of Nikolaĭ Khanykov for the Société de Géographie ("Carte sommaire des levées

faites en 1858 et 1859 dans le Khorâssan, l'Afghanistan occidental, le Seistan et le midi de la Perse sous la direction de N. Khanikof," Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Cartes et plans, GE D-9974). Used by permission of the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Born into a modest aristocratic family of an early-retired warrant officer on 24 October 1819, Khanykov graduated from the Imperial Lyceum in Tsarskoe Selo near St. Petersburg in 1836. The Lyceum was founded by Alexander I (r. 1801-25) in 1810 and was meant to foster Russian future statesmen. Many representatives of the highest strata of the Russian Empire's bureaucracy were graduates of the Imperial Lyceum throughout the 19th and the early 20th centuries, something on which Khanykov skilfully capitalised during his entire life, constructing his own version of the Foucauldian power/knowledge nexus of ultimate productiveness (Volkov, 2018a, pp. 70, 80). Being immensely attracted by all things Oriental, after his graduation from the Lyceum, Khanykov registered as an extern for Professor Osip Senkovsky's lectures at St. Petersburg University in 1836 (Khalfin and Rassadina, p. 11). Contrary to a remark that "Khanykov was a product of St. Petersburg University" (Morrison, 2009, p. 630), it should be noted that he mostly learnt Arabic, Persian, Ottoman Turkish, and Central-Asian Turkic languages, as well as the history of the region, on his own, for which Barthold would respectfully mention him in his works as "the orientalist-autodidact Khanykov" (Bartol'd, 1977b, p. 440).

On 22 February 1838, Nikolai Khanykov embarked on diplomatic service in the Russian Imperial Ministry for Foreign Affairs. After a series of internal reshuffles, a year later, he found himself, due to his own persistence, in the Asiatic Department and was appointed to the position of an interpreter at the Military Governorship of Orenburg, then the main Russian political, military, administrative, and economic outpost in the Orient and hence the center of practical Oriental studies. The same post would be occupied by another central figure of Russia's Oriental studies, Vasiliĭ Grigor'ev (1816-81), twelve years later. It is worth noting that Orenburg held this multifaceted importance until the late 1860s, the time of Russia's further impetuous advancement to the south, as a result of which this leadership was irrevocably passed over to Tashkent and Tiflis (Khalfin and Rassadina, p. 13; Volkov, 2014, pp. 916, 918, 921).

It was from Orenburg that the twenty-year-old Khanykov set off to accompany the military governor of Orenburg, Count Vasiliĭ Perovskiĭ (1795-1857), as his

aide, in his disgraceful punitive expedition to Khiva (November 1839-February 1840) that was aborted due to more than a thousand non-combat fatal casualties (the unit consisted of about 5,000 troops) as a result of malnutrition and frostbite caused by poor logistics (Morrison, 2014, pp. 282, 288-90; Burnaby, p. vii; Zakharina, 1898). However, this disastrous crusade turned out for the good of Khanykov's career. First, he gathered interesting scholarly material; second, he proved an irreplaceable expert on the region and excellent mediator between Russians and locals. Thus, as early as May 1841, Perovskiĭ sent him with a technical delegation to hold negotiations with the ruler of Bukhara, Amir Naṣr-Allāh, regarding the geological prospecting of minerals (mostly gold) in the khanate (Morgan, pp. 70-71).

This mission was turned by Khanykov into a full-fledged and rather protracted scholarly expedition that lasted more than one year. Although ultimately the stipulated diplomatic and economic goals were not achieved by the mission, Khanykov had succeeded in collecting valuable material related to the ethnography, linguistics, history, geography, and many other aspects of the khanate, which resulted in the publication of a ground-breaking scholarly monograph *Opisanie Bukharskogo khanstva* in 1843 (published in Britain two years later as *Bokhara: Its Amir and Its People*) that remained the main study of this khanate until early Soviet times (Bartol'd, 1977a, p. 329; Sukhareva, p. 8). In his work, Khanykov studied various aspects of Bukhara's geography, its ethnographical and administrative set-up, and the condition of industries and agriculture, as well as the cultural and political situation, including detailed maps of the cities of Bukhara and Samarqand and of the entire khanate. This came to be the first work providing a comprehensive amount of information at such a high level of detail and academic depth regarding one of the least studied and the most hard-to-get-into states of the region. Having made a name for Khanykov in Europe, this monograph, among dozens of his significantly later works, could only be compared, in terms of its impact, to his substantial works resulting from the 1858-59 Khorasan expedition—also an utter diplomatic failure but a triumph in terms of its rich scholarly outcomes: *Mémoire sur la partie méridionale de l'Asie Centrale* (1861) and *Mémoire sur l'ethnographie de la Perse* (1866). It is noteworthy that this interesting pattern—unachieved state goals of state-sponsored missions accompanied by very successful scholarly results—would be characteristic of all Khanykov's missions and, surprisingly, would not degrade his standing in Russia's state establishment.

Subsequently, Khanykov spent the years 1842-45 in St. Petersburg and dedicated them to the processing of the great amount of valuable scholarly material he had brought from Central Asia, publishing articles in Russian, French, and British academic journals, which quite often caused him political difficulties and even brought him under investigation on spying accusations, since a great deal of the material had strategic importance in military and political terms (Murchison, pp. 33-34; Khanykov, 1843, 1845; Khalfin and Rassadina, pp. 29-32). However, Perovskiĭ protected him, and, as early as February 1845, Khanykov was sent by the Ministry to Tiflis, at the disposal of the Viceroy of the Caucasus, Prince Mikhail Vorontsov (1782-1856), where he spent almost nine years. There, he went on with his academic orientalist quest, capitalizing on the Caucasian Headquarters' reconnaissance missions for his own detailed studies of Persian Azarbaijan, Kurdistan, and the southern Caspian. This resulted in numerous publications in Russia and Britain, but mostly in French academic journals, as well as in Khanykov gathering the world's richest private collection of Oriental manuscripts, which, after he went over to France, was sold by him to the Russian Academy of Sciences and constituted a highly valued primary-sources base for many studies by Russian scholars. During the same period, Khanykov headed the Caucasian Branch of the Russian Imperial Geographic Society and was elected a corresponding member of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Yaḡmāʾi, pp. 7-14; Vigasin and Khokhlov, pp. 117, 164).

These activities gradually grew into Khanykov being appointed to the post of general consul in Tabriz (1853-1857). Among his main tasks there were to prevent any kind of military and economic help to the Ottoman Empire on behalf of Persia, to support the preservation of Persia's neutrality in the Crimean War, and to counteract any British influence in Persian Azarbaijan. These efforts were quite successful, mostly not due to the diplomatic genius of Khanykov, but rather to the generally favorable status quo in Persia for Russian interests; however, bureaucratic duties took a severe toll on his research productivity, and he was obviously weighed down by the post. After he received the rank of actual state counsellor (a civil service rank equivalent to general) and when everybody envisaged him as next Russian Minister to Persia, he did all he could to return to St. Petersburg and to no longer undertake routine bureaucratic work (Khalfin and Rassadina, pp. 102, 116). Instead, following the new trends in the post-war foreign policies of the Russian Empire, namely the emphasis on Eastern advancement due to Russia's evident inability to strategically compete with the main European empires at

the front from the Black to the Northern seas, Khanykov came up with an ambitious project of his own, namely to entice the ruler of Kabul, Dōst Moḥammad Khan (q.v.), who was a British ally at the time, to the Russian side (Morgan, pp. 88-90; Khalfin, pp. 79-85).

Due to Khanykov's wide-ranging ties in the ministries of foreign affairs, interior, education, and the military, the project received the supreme consent of Alexander II (r. 1855-81), and it was decided to camouflage it under the guise of a big scientific expedition, in order to avoid possible premature diplomatic complications in relations with Britain (Morgan, p. 89; Khalfin, p. 83). The Russian state could hardly afford to fund such an enterprise, thus all interested ministries and scientific societies were to contribute to the significant budget of the expedition, but mostly Russian private capital, which was promised access to new markets and trade routes eventually leading to India. Judging by Khanykov's private notes written *post factum*, the scientific component appears to have been his main goal, since very little remorse about the total political fiasco of the mission was evident in them (Khalfin, pp. 143, 148-49; Volkov, 2018a, pp. 64-65). Having learnt from his bitter experience of Russia's eventual betrayal and refusal to fulfil the promises communicated through Captain Vitkevitch's mission, which also led to Vitkevitch's suicide in 1839 (Morrison, 2014; Morgan, pp. 48, 71-73), Dōst Moḥammad Khan refused to accept Khanykov and passed on his letter (which was in actual fact on behalf of Alexander II) to the British. However, it was precisely the 1858-59 Khorasan expedition that made Khanykov's name shine throughout the centuries in the worldwide orientalist community. The expedition made its way from Baku via the Caspian Sea to Astarābād (Gorgān; qq.v.), Sabzavār, Nishapur, and Mashhad, thereafter to Herat and from there, through Birjand (q.v.), Kerman (q.v.), Isfahan (q.v.), Qom, Tehran, Marāḡa, and Tiflis, and returned to St. Petersburg. In terms of the comprehensive and diverse scientific and scholarly character of the collected material and its amount, Khanykov's Khorasan expedition was acknowledged as the most successful for decades to come (Kiniapina, pp. 259-62; Volkov, 2018a, pp. 78-79).

Shortly afterwards, in March 1860, Khanykov set off for Paris where he spent most of the rest of his life, emphatically refusing to return to Russia. A noteworthy fact is that his departure was authorized by the head of the Asiatic Department and the foreign minister himself. Khanykov's letters and private notes maintain that he went to France to be able to process properly the accumulated scholarly material, which, of course, was extremely

unconventional for Russia at that time. This was, of course, facilitated by the fact that, by that time, some of Khanykov's former classmates and friends had risen to the very highest ranks in Russian ministries, and throughout the 1860s and 1870s Khanykov was financially maintained by the Russian government, at different times, as a courier of the Russian Embassy in Paris, as a representative of the Ministry of Education, and of the War Ministry, as well as in other insignificant capacities, and this all came with the rank of general. Scholarly works authored by Khanykov during the period (more than one hundred) were highly valued by the French, British, and German orientalist communities as well as in Russian ministries and scholarly societies. He died on 15 November 1878 and was buried at Père Lachaise by an intimate friend—the famous Russian novelist Ivan Turgenev (1818-83; "Nécrologie,"; Khalfin and Rassadina, pp. 231-37). It goes without saying that Khanykov's activities and personal life are seriously understudied, and, as demonstrated by research undertaken so far, conceal a lot of unclear and potentially surprising facts. Undoubtedly, all this demands its own researcher who would consolidate the information from Russian archives with those in France, Britain, Iran, and Central Asian countries.

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