



KRYMSKIĬ, AGFANGEL EFIMOVICH

KRYMSKIĬ, AGFANGEL (Agatangel) EFIMOVICH (b. 3 January Julian calendar = 15 January 1871, Vladimir-Volinskiy, Ukraine; d. 25 January 1942, Kustanay, Kazakhstan). Ukrainian Orientalist, specialist in Slavonic philology, member of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences (1918), author of over 1000 works on the history and culture of Iran, Arab countries, Turkey, the Khanate of the Crimea, and Azarbaijan; also generally regarded as an accomplished writer, poet, and translator.

Krymskiĭ's father was a teacher of history and geography (the name Krymskiĭ is related to the Crimean roots of the family). From 1885 to 1889 Krymskiĭ studied at the Pavel Galagan College at Kiev, where he learnt Greek and Latin and taught himself Sanskrit, Hebrew, and Turkish. His primary interest at the time was focused on the influence of the neighboring countries of the East on the historical development of Russia and the Ukraine, and he regarded the learning of these languages as a prerequisite for this task (*Istoriya Vostokovedeniya* 1997, p. 76). The remarkable achievements of Oriental studies in Russia and the influence and impact of Orientalism on the Russian literature of the Silver Age further increased his interest in the East. In 1889 Krymskiĭ enrolled as a student in the Lazarevsky Institute of Oriental Languages in Moscow, where he studied Arabic, Persian, and Turkish with such eminent teachers as Professors Mikhail Attaya, Vsevolod Miller, and Feodor Korsh. Upon his graduation in 1892 he entered the Historical and



Philological Faculty (Slavonic Department) of Moscow University, where he was taught by Professors Roman Brandt, Alexander Veselovskii, and Ivan Kholmogorov. Having completed his education in 1896, he specialized in two branches of philology, Slavonic and Oriental, and was acquainted with fifteen Oriental and Western European languages.

From 1893 Krymskiĭ was an editor and regular contributor of entries on the Near and Middle East to the *Brockhaus and Efron Encyclopaedia*. In 1896 he left for the Levant where he spent two years working with manuscripts in libraries and learning Arabic dialects (primarily Syrian) and contributing to the Arabic periodicals (see *Pis'ma iz Livana: 1896-1898*, Moscow 1975; reissued, Beirut, 1981, in Arabic). From 1898 to 1919 he taught at the Lazarevsky Institute in Moscow at the Department of Arabic Philology and History of the Muslim East. He began as a lecturer and was made professor in 1900 and appointed as the head of the department in 1912. His lecture courses included Arabic language and literature, folklore, history of Islam, and Persian and Turkish literature. He was the mentor of many an eminent scholar of the next generation including Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Semyonov (Semenov), and Vladimir Minorsky in Iranian Studies, and Vladimir Aleksandrovich Gordlevskii in Turkic Studies.

After the 1918 October Revolution, Krymskiĭ moved to Kiev, the capital of the Ukraine, and became one of the organizers of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences. He was the head of the Historical and Philological Department of the Academy until 1929 and taught at Kiev State University. Krymskiĭ is regarded as the founder of Oriental Studies in Ukraine because of his leading role in establishing special Academic committees on Arabic Studies, Iranology, Turkology, Byzantology, and Ancient Hebrew Studies. He also undertook the first direct translations of Arabic and Persian poems into Ukrainian (*Palmove Gill'a*, "The Palm leaves," 1902; and *Hafez*, 1924). After the advent of Stalin's fierce repression, the Historical and Philological Department of the Ukrainian Academy was closed down along with all Oriental studies institutions; Krymskiĭ was relieved of his posts and spent eight years out of favor. In 1936 the scholar was partially rehabilitated and a year later received an invitation to write a history of modern Arabic literature. In 1939, after the annexation of western Ukraine by the USSR, Krymskiĭ was sent along to Lvov as a living embodiment of the greatness of the Ukrainian Academia. His 70th birthday (January 1941) was celebrated with official festivities. However, on July 20, 1941 he was arrested and proclaimed an ideologist of Ukrainian nationalism



and deported and imprisoned in Kustanay. He died in January 1942 in the prison hospital; his burial place is not known.

Krymskiĭ's research and teaching activities can be divided into two periods—Muscovite (1898-1918), and Ukrainian—clearly distinguishable from each other by the place of residence (Moscow and Kiev, Lvov), and historical situation (pre-revolutionary Russia, Soviet Ukraine). The great bulk of his works in Oriental studies date from the Muscovite period (many of them were translated into Ukrainian by himself and published later in Kiev). Although diverse in subject matter, his contributions are united and informed by his ultimate goal of including the history and culture of the East as an integral part of the world's cultural processes. Krymskiĭ's main books and articles contain detailed bibliographical surveys, so that at the beginning of the 20th century they were thought of by his students to be a "window on the European study of the East," to quote the well-known lines from Pushkin's *Bronze Horseman*. The scope of his academic interests was dictated by the immediate teaching requirements at the Lazarevsky Institute, and foremost by the need to provide up-to-date teaching manuals. His early years of teaching were mostly devoted to Arabic and Semitic studies. In the spring of 1898 he defended a 'Magister' thesis on Arabic folklore based on material he had himself collected in Syria and Palestine. His lecture courses in the ensuing years formed the basis for numerous early editions revised and supplemented later (*Istoriya musul'manstva* 1912; *Semitskie yazyki* 1910-1912; *Istoriya arabov* 1911-1913; *Arabskaya literatura* 1911). In the opinion of I. Yu. Krachkovskiĭ, "steadily, but at a fast pace, he created a comprehensive library of the necessary textbooks for Arabic studies" (*Ocherki*, p. 118). Krymskiĭ made an important contribution to the translation and study of the Qur'ān in Russia (*Istochniki* 1902; *Lektsii po Koranu* 1902). His long-term discussion with Professor Krachkovskiĭ on the meaning of certain Meccan suras has been partially preserved in his letters (*Pis'ma A. E. Krymskogo I. Yu. Krachkovskomu*. ed. A. Nedvedskiĭ, I. Smilyanskaya, *Vostok* 3, 1993, pp. 150-69); Leo Tolstoy, by his own admission, taught himself the Qur'ān "through Krymskiĭ's works" (Dieterix, pp. 115-16). The scholar also had a hand in preparing specialists in Turkic philology (*Istoriya Turtsii i eyo literatury* 1910; rev. ed. 1916). Krymskiĭ's contributions to Iranology date from the beginning of the 20th century. He considered political history as the determining factor in cultural development; consequently, his early works in the field covered the history of Iranian dynasties (*Arshakidy*, 1900; *Sasanidy*, 1904). His views on the early Middle Ages were summed up in his book *Istoriya Sasanidov* (1905),



which was based on his lectures, and included chapters on the Parthians, Arsacids, Sasanids, the Arab conquest of Iran, and the main stages in the literary history of Syriac Christians.

The first edition of Krymskiĭ's history of Persian literature appeared in 1903-06 (*Istoriya Persii...*). Its full title "The History of Persia, Its Literature, and Dervish Theosophy," already points to a mode of organization that links literary heritage to a historical framework based on the succession of ruling dynasties (from the Samanids up to the Safavids and the Great Mughals of India), and on some changes in religious beliefs and practices. Krymskiĭ attempted to rebut the thesis that the world of Islam comprised a monolithic culture. He concentrated his attention upon the national features of the imaginative literature of Persia, and stressed the close links between the pre- and post-Islamic stages of Persian creativity that in his view successfully resisted "Islamization." The same approach could be seen in his representation of Iranian Sufism or "Dervish theosophy." He supports the version of the indigenous origin of its eastern branch and also traces a strong influence of Indian religions on Sufism during its formative stage (see also *Ocherk razvitiya sufisma ... do kontsa III veka Gidzhry*, Moscow, 1896). Along with historical chapters on each period, *Istoriya* incorporates bio-biographical sketches (Rudaki, Sanā'i, Anwari, Kāqāni, Nezami, Rumi, Sa'di etc.) that contain a wide-ranging bibliographical survey of European works relevant to the case, along with examples of poetry, mostly in the author's own translation. After Professor Feodor Korsh's death in 1915, Krymskiĭ took upon himself the bulk of the Iranian literature course and became the leading authority of the time on the Persian Classics.

Though Krymskiĭ's main achievement was to make the works of European Orientalists available to Russian students of the East, at least two books written in the last decade of his life had been based directly on primary sources, namely, the History of Modern Arabic Literature (*Istoriya novoĭ arabskoĭ literatury*, 1971), and the monograph *Nezami and his contemporaries* (*Nezami*, 1981). The book on Nezami, innovative in spirit, provides a fascinating panorama of literary life in twelfth century Azarbaijan; however, the work was interrupted by Krymskiĭ's arrest in 1941 and the chapters on Nezami himself were left unwritten. On the full bibliography of Krymskiĭ's works see A. Krimskiy, *Bibliografichnyi Pokazhchik (1889-1971)*, Kiev, 1972, (in Ukrainian).



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For a list of books and articles on Krymskiĭ's life and activity see S. D. Miliband, *Biobibliograficheskiĭ slovar' otechestvennykh vostokovedov* (Biobibliographical Dictionary of National/Russian/Soviet Orientalists, Moscow, 1995, Vol. 1, pp. 622-24.