



ZEĪMAL', EVEGENIĪ VLADISLAVOVICH

ZEĪMAL', Evegeniĭ Vladislavovich (b. Moscow, 10 March 1932; d. St. Petersburg, 6 May 1998), Russian numismatist and historian of ancient Iran and Central Asia. His father, Vladislav Ivanovich Zeĭmal', a Latvian, and his mother, Ol'ga Iosifovna, were repressed by Stalin's regime in 1937, and Evgeniĭ was brought up by his aunt in Leningrad. In 1950 Zeĭmal' became a student of the Oriental Faculty of the Leningrad (at present St. Petersburg) University, specializing in Turkology, but in 1953 he transferred to the Faculty of History. After graduating, he moved to Dushanbe (at that time, Stalinabad) in Tajikistan. At first he worked in the Tajik archeological expedition and later was employed by the Tajik Republican Radio broadcasting system. From 1956 to 1959 he acted as the director of the Department of History of the Dushanbe Museum. By that time, a circle of young intellectuals had formed in Dushanbe, who later became the elite of Russian Oriental studies, among them B. A. Litvinskiĭ, V. A. Livshits, [I. M. Oranskiĭ](#) (1923-1977), B. I. Marshak (1933-2006), and E. A. Davidovich. They grouped around the so-called Avestan Seminar directed by V. A. Livshits.

In 1956-57 Zeĭmal' joined the Tajik archeological expedition again, at that time directed by A. M. Belenitskiĭ (b. 1904), and later he headed his own archeological team which carried out excavations in the Gissar (see [HEṢĀR](#)) valley in Tajikistan. Zeĭmal' studied ancient coins in local museums and investigated the circumstances of the discovery of the famous [Oxus](#) Treasure,



suggesting that it had come from the site of Tahti Kubad (Taḡt-e Qobād) in southern Tajikistan. His first article on the Oxus Treasure appeared in 1962. In 1959 he returned to Leningrad to become a post-graduate student at the Hermitage Museum. Professor Kamilla Trever (1892-1974) became the supervisor of his doctorate thesis which was devoted to the study of coins of the Kushan kingdom. Zeĭmal' also participated in Trever's seminar on art and culture of the Hellenistic period.

Kushan chronology was, and still is, one of the principal problems in the history of Central Asia. Zeĭmal' wrote several works on the subject. The first publication appeared as abstracts in 1964; his book *Kushan Chronology* came out in 1968; and his last paper on the matter was delivered in 1996 at the Kushan conference in Vienna. The relatively late date (278 C.E.) suggested for the initial year of Kanishka's reign probably resulted from Zeĭmal's critical attitude towards the tendency to "antiquate" certain cultures by the scholars who studied them. His book *Kushan Chronology* became a starting point for polemics centered on this problem, urging many specialists all over the world to prove their own points of view. Zeĭmal' did much to inspire the last conference on Kushan chronology held in Vienna in April 1996.

Zeĭmal's archeological investigations were always connected with numismatics. When working in Tajikistan, he started to assemble materials for his monograph *Ancient Coins of Tajikistan* (published in 1983, written together with E. A. Davidovich). He published coins found at many sites in Central Asia, viewing them in connection with the stratigraphy of the sites and also within the general context of other finds. Zeĭmal's scholarly interests included history and culture of Hellenistic civilization and of the Parthian kingdom in different periods of its history, pre-Islamic Central Asia, Chinese Turkestan, archaeology, numismatics, Oriental metalwork, theoretical problems connected with monetary circulation, and the minting of the "barbaric imitations" of Hellenistic, Parthian, and Sasanian coins.

Among the works he translated into Russian are *The Heritage of Persia* by Richard Frye and *The Golden Peaches of Samarqand* by Edward Schafer (translated together with V. A. Livshits, edited by M. A. Dandamaev). Zeĭmal' also prepared for publication some of the Russian versions of the numerous scholarly works by [V. V. Barthold](#) (1869-1930). In the very last days of his life Zeĭmal' was working on the publication of Ya. I. Smirnov's book *Oriental Silverware*. Under the invitation of the British Museum, Zeĭmal' worked together with John Curtis on a new publication of the catalogue of the Oxus



Treasure, one of the favorite subjects of his studies.

For the last twelve years of his life Zeĭmal' was the head of the Ancient East section of the Oriental Department of the Hermitage Museum. He devoted all his energy and knowledge to the development and promotion of Oriental studies. His scholarly heritage includes over 150 publications. Several international conferences and exhibitions of Oriental art and archaeology took place due to his efforts.

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