

## **Unpublished Correspondence of A. E. Krymsky and V.F. Minorsky**

**By**

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### **Abstract**

The life and academic legacy of the outstanding representatives of the classical Oriental studies of Russia, Ukraine and Europe – mentor A.Y. Krymsky (1871–1942) and his student V.F. Minorsky (1877–1966) reflect the personal events in the biographies of the two scholars and landmarks in the history of the research of the Islamic East from all over the world. During the periods when they lived in Russia, Ukraine, Iran, France and Britain, the two researchers held correspondence with each other.

**Keywords:** Russia, Ukraine, the East, Oriental studies, archives, epistolary legacy, A.Y. Krymsky, V.F. Minorsky, psychology of communication and scientific creativity.

### **1. Introduction**

The article pays the main attention to the short review of the surviving letters written by A.Y. Krymsky and V.F. Minorsky during the 1904–1925 period out of the entire vast epistolary legacy of these outstanding orientalists. The letters have been obtained from archival centers of Russia and Ukraine.

V.F. Minorsky's funds of the Orientalists' Archives of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg store several letters from A.Y. Krymsky to V.F. Minorsky. The total of 8 letters and 1 postcard have survived. These are mostly autographs and typewritten messages. These epistles were sent from Moscow, Trebizond, Zvenyhorodka and Kharkiv and are dated between 1910 and 1925.

The Institute of Manuscripts of the Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine contains in Kiev contains a collection of letters from V.F. Minorsky to A.Y. Krymsky. It includes 23 letters of an earlier period that were sent from Moscow, St. Petersburg, Tehran, Tabriz, and Baku and were written in the period from 1904 to 1911.

We also hereby publish the final letters of Professor A.Y. Krymsky dated 1925 and 1941 to his talented student in the Lazarev Institute of Oriental Languages from Zvenyhorodka, Kharkiv and Kiev.

## 2. Methods

The paradigm and methodology of the present research and the project are based on the system of various contemporary principles and ideas – worldview, gnoseological and logical, playing a defining role in studying regularities and objective content of the history of domestic and European Oriental studies, centers of academic and university Oriental studies in Russia and Europe and scholarly legacy of the founders of higher education in Oriental studies and scholarly thought concerning the East.

## 3. Results and discussion

Researcher of the Middle East and the Slavic world, academic and public figure A.Y. Krymsky (1871–1942) possessed encyclopedic knowledge, he made a significant contribution to the history of Arab, Iranian, Ottoman, Turkic and Slavic studies in Russia, Ukraine and Europe in general. The language and literature, history, culture and generally the legacy of the Arab-Islamic civilization were the main areas of A.Y. Krymsky's educational, and social work as well as his research (Bartold).

In many ways the biography of this Russian and Ukrainian arabist, iranist, turkologist and slavist is associated with three significant periods: the Moscow period (1889—1918), the Beirut period (1896–1898) and the Kiev period (1918–1942). A.Y. Krymsky was one of the outstanding pioneers of the Oriental studies in Russia and Ukraine at the turn of the 20th century.

A.Y. Krymsky crossed his own final frontier between life and death in the late 1941 and early 1942 in prisoner transport and in GULAG prison camps in Kazakhstan.

Of no less significance for the history of Oriental studies in Russia and Europe is the fate of his student at the Lazarev Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, famous iranist and turkologist V.F. Minorsky (1877–1966), who lived and worked in Iran, Turkey, France and England for many years. In 1900 V.F. Minorsky graduated from the law faculty of Moscow University (1896–1900). In 1903 V.F. Minorsky became a graduate of the Lazarev Institute of Oriental Languages. He was one of the closest students and companions of Professor A.Y. Krymsky.

After graduating from the Lazarev Institute of Oriental Languages, starting from 1904 V.F. Minorsky occupied various diplomatic positions in Persia and the Ottoman Empire.

During the time of his diplomatic service in Iran (1904 – 1907) he travelled around the North-Western part of Iran (Iranian Azerbaijan), which played an important role in him improving his knowledge of Persian and Turkic languages, and he published several original articles on the historical and cultural monuments and the cultural heritage of the peoples of the Middle East. In 1911 V.F. Minorsky worked in Iran as a member of an English-Russian-Turkish-Persian committee on the demarcation of the Turkish-Iranian border. In 1913—1914 he was the Russian commissioner of this international committee. In 1916 V.F. Minorsky was appointed the counsellor of the Russian embassy in Tehran.

After the October Revolution of 1917 V.F. Minorsky lived and conducted his research in academic centers of Iran, France, England and Turkey (1917 – 1966). In 1919 V.F.

Minorsky moved from Iran to France. From 1923 onwards he delivered lectures on Persian literature in École nationale des langues orientales vivantes in Paris, and later on the history of Islam and Turkey in various education centers of France. In 1932, in connection with his moving to England, V.F. Minorsky started to lecture on Persian language and literature and the history of Iran at the School of Oriental Studies of London University and published a number of works on the history, languages, literature, culture and geography of the peoples of the Middle East; these works later gained worldwide recognition. In 1944 V.F. Minorsky retired and was elected an honorary member of the School of Oriental and African Studies in England and lived with his wife in Cambridge. In 1948—1949 he also lectured at Cairo University.

Outstanding scholar V.F. Minorsky was a full member of the British and French academies of sciences, an honorary member and a corresponding member of a number of European academic societies, Doctor of Brussels and Cambridge Universities, Professor of London University; he was also awarded a gold medal of the Royal Asiatic Society (1962). In 1966 V.F. Minorsky and his wife became members of the 25th Congress of orientologists in Moscow and visited Leningrad, Baku, Tbilisi, Yerevan. Today we can pay tribute to the memory of V.F. Minorsky at his grave at the Novodevichy Cemetery in Moscow, where a monument with the following engraving is installed: "Vladimir Fedorovich Minorsky (1877–1966)" (Leningrad, 1925).

Professor A.Y. Krymsky always inquired about the life and research achievements of his students and corresponded with him while staying in Kiev in 1918, when V. Minorsky was in France and England.

After V.F. Minorsky's death on March 25, 1966, "under the will of V.F. Minorsky his rich library and the larger part of his personal archives were passed by the scholar's widow (Tatyana Alekseyevna, granddaughter of the famous Russian ottomanist and turkologist, Professor of Petersburg University V.D. Smirnov (1846–1922) – authors' note) to the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, and are currently stored in several science and research organizations of Russia, including the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences" (Danzig, 1973). This is why A.Y. Krymsky's letters addressed to V.F. Minorsky have been preserved in this personal archive of the scholar in the Orientalists' Archives of the the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

## **4. Summary**

The prominent representatives of Asian and African studies A.Y. Krymsky and V.F. Minorsky became the *spiritus movens* of the classical Oriental studies in Russia, Ukraine and Europe in general in the 19th - 20th centuries.

V.F. Minorsky's personal funds (F. 134, inv. 3, file 640) of the Orientalists' Archives of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg contain several letters from A.Y. Krymsky to V.F. Minorsky. The total of 8 letters and 1 postcard on 22 pages have survived, mostly these are autographs and typewritten letters.

These epistles were sent from Moscow, Trebizond, Zvenyhorodka and Kharkiv and are dated: June 4, 1910 (pp. 6–7 overleaf), October 10, 1916 (pp. 8–11), August 13, 1917 (pp. 1–2 overleaf), October 20, 1917 (pp. 3–4, postcard), October 21, 1917 (p. 5), Jnuary 20,

1925 (pp. 12–14 overleaf), date of receipt April 4, 1925 (pp. 15–16), August 22, 1925 (pp. 17–18 overleaf) and October 23, 1925 (pp. 19–21 overleaf).

The Institute of Manuscripts of the Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine contains in Kiev (F. 36, files 377–379) also contains a collection of letters from V.F. Minorsky to A.Y. Krymsky. These are 23 letters of an earlier period that were sent from Moscow, St. Petersburg, Tehran, Tabriz, and Baku and were written in the period from January 4, 1904 to April 21, 1911.

## 5. Conclusions

Up to this time in the Russian, Ukrainian and European historiography and source studies of the legacies of A.Y. Krymsky and V.F. Minorsky this correspondence has not been introduced into academic discourse. These letters also allow us to throw light on the political, social and psychological conditions and factors of their lives and works in Russia, Ukraine and Europe in the first quarter of the 20th century.

In general these are original autographs of A.Y. Krymsky and V.F. Minorsky of the first quarter of the 20th century; these letters reflect their research-related, social and political views and opinions, as well as provide some institutional and content-related information on the Arab, Iranian and Turkic research in Russia, Ukraine and Europe of that time. The attitudes and personal positions of these personalities, scholars and thinkers are quite palpable in these epistles.

We plan to publish the subsequent correspondence of A.Y. Krymsky and V.R. Rozen in a book devoted to the epistolary legacy of Russian orientalists at the turn of the century, and especially to the correspondence of the Russian and Ukrainian arabist, turkologist, iranist and slavist A.Y. Krymsky with his teachers, colleagues and students – V.R. Rozen, F.Y. Korsch, V.A. Zhukovsky, S.F. Oldenburg, V.V. Bartold, I.Y. Krachkovsky, N.A. Mednikov, P.K. Kokovtsov, B.V. Miller, V.F. Minorsky.

In the appendix to this article we publish the last three previously unpublished letters (dated 1925 and 1941) from the academician of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences A.Y. Krymsky to his student and colleague, renowned iranist V.F. Minorsky from the funds of the Orientalists' Archive of the the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

## Appendix.

Letters from A.Y. Krymsky to V.F. Minorsky<sup>1</sup>.

Orientalists' Archive of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences. F. 134. Inv. 3. File 640.

No 1

F. 134, inv. 3. File 640. P. 17–18 leafover (Not an autograph)

22. VIII. 1925.

Zvenyhorodka.

Dear Vladimir Fedorovich!

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<sup>1</sup> English translation by Dinar Khayrutdinov.

I am dictating this letter and not writing it personally, because I am experiencing some problems with my eyes. In February you wrote that the school of Modern Oriental Languages had, thanks to your mediation, sent to the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences a large batch of books for the total amount of 10,000 francs, and you added that these books that had been sent by sea would probably be received in May. Since then not only May, but also June and July have passed, and August is nearing its end as well, while we have not heard a smallest thing about those books. I am afraid that the sender provided the wrong address, so the books might have been mistakenly sent to some other place. I enquired from Krachkovsky<sup>2</sup> in early June about them, and he told me that the Russian Academy had not received any such cargo. I wonder who else I should ask about them: there is also the Academy of Material Culture in Petersburg, several socialist Academies and probably some other ones. The accurate information can only be received by the senders in Paris themselves, as they probably still have some document from the steamship agency. I ask you to kindly to see this noble matter through and, employing help from the authorities of the School of Modern Orien[tal] Languages, to find out whose hands the dispatched books got into. I remember that four months ago I noticed some word in the newspapers<sup>3</sup> about someone receiving certain books from the French government or French scholars for academic institutions of the USSR. I did not pay any attention to that news back then, but now I am beginning to worry whether the books that were sent to us thanks to you got into the common stock. In such a situation you are the only person who can render assistance, and, if it were so, to obtain a certificate from the School of or [iental] Languages confirming that its publications were intended for the Academy of Sciences and not for anyone else.

It is most important to ascertain which Baltic Sea port the French steamship delivered the cargo to, and what particular institution they handed it in to. And that could serve as some sort of a guiding idea for us.

When I moved out to Zvenyhorodka to take some rest, I managed to release my newest work "Persian Theater, Its Origins and Development"<sup>4</sup>. Incidentally, you are quoted in it more than once, including the chapter about Omar Koshan. I saw to it that the executive office sends you a couple of copies, as well as da Boyer, Deni and Mase. Without relying on the summer-time scrupulousness of our executive office, I ask you to inform me if you have received these items.

Warmest regards. Please give my best to your wife. Sincerely yours, A. Krymsky.  
Until September 24 my p[e]r[m]anent address is: Zvenyhorodka, Kiev governorate  
No 2

F. 134, inv. 3. File 640. P. 19–21 leafover (Not an autograph)  
23.X.25 Kharkiv.

Dear Vladimir Fedorovich!

Our letters have crossed. In the middle of the summer I wrote you that the books that had been sent by the School of Modern Oriental Languages did not arrive to the Ukr[anian] Academy of Sciences even after 7 months. This matter has still not changed: nothing has been heard of the books, and I suspect that they might have found their way to the Petersburg

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<sup>2</sup> Krachkovsky, Ignaty Yulianovich (1883 – 1851) was an outstanding orientalist, arabist, academician of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR.

<sup>3</sup> The word has been inserted.

<sup>4</sup> A.Y. Krymsky's work "Pers'ky teatr, zvidky vin uzyavs' i yak rozvyvavs'" ("Persian Theater, Its Development and Origins"). (Kiev, 1925).

Academy of Sciences. This would be like pouring water into a full well. I ask you to kindly inquire from the School's administration what agency, what route and what numbers these books were sent by and, of course, what address they were sent to.

You were inquiring about my personal life. In my opinion, as of now it presents no appeal. All my close relatives have died by now. Father died at the beginning of the war, my mother and my nephew Boris, who had been brightening our lives, died in the second year of the revolution; after that, my brother's wife separated from him: she stayed in Moscow while he continued living alone in Ukraine. In other words, my family broke up. The devastated state of the railroad deprived me of the opportunity to come back to my Zvenyhorodka *for six long years*<sup>5</sup>, and when I finally got there I clearly saw that my previous personal life had gone for good, while I got old, despicable senility is drawing near, and maybe blindness, too; at any rate my right eye has almost entirely lost its vision.

Waves of the revolution drove me from my deep academic bottom to the surface. I found myself to be an organizer, administrator, public figure and finally a statesman. I wasn't a Party member but I was still elected to the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee, i.e. the National Council. So I became a member of the Ukrainian government. And even now I'm in Kharkiv because there is a meeting of the A.U.C.E.C here. Yet such is my nature that I cannot spend a day without my research work. I have to combine social work with night-long research. And the result of this is premature burning out and premature aging. And as soon as I am left alone for an hour or two, I immediately hear my soul screaming: "It's time to get away from all this fuss! I need to devote my final years exclusively to science!" I dream, I want to believe that within the next two months I will rip off so much as a half of my shackles: that I will at least give up the secretarial duties. But it is not so easy to do, because for that I will need to obtain consent from the relevant bodies. I have never liked the life in Moscow because of its cold climate, and now I live in a mild climate with warm winters, which is very good for health, but nevertheless in my dreams I quite often relive those happy days when I lived in Moscow in my Faustian basement, amidst books and dried plants, with frost crackling outside, and when only a few select persons could find their way into my place, and even then they would have to follow a secret sign to do so. And how often I remember the nights I spent with your family! I close my eyes and see you late father sitting at your home and telling some story in his calm, extraordinarily nice voice, and this story is sometimes about you and sometimes simply about himself. And all that emanates some striking kindness and purity, it shows a perfectly crystal heart. And your mother is right there too, completing the picture. I have not known this kind of nights for the last eight years. Wherever I am, I get engaged in conversations about society, about building a new world, about a lot of very good social ideas and goals, but that intimate atmosphere, where people only interest me because of their personal qualities and moral virtues, and where I only interest them because of my individual self, like a memory about their long-missing son, – I no longer have those nights, and I'm not going to have them anymore<sup>6</sup>.

I have been dictating this letter to my secretary (who follows me around everywhere) so as not to tire my eyes. But to conclude the letter I am taking the quill myself. Please accept my greetings and my best wishes, similarly to the ones you sent me: and please send a word about your personal goings on. For even the story of your appearance in Paris is still a mystery to me. I suspect that your journey from Persia to Paris was not an easy one. Besides,

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<sup>5</sup> The expression has been inserted.

<sup>6</sup> The final part of the letter was written by A.Y. Krymsky.

I still haven't got the answer to my question that I asked you twice: is your mother still alive and where is she?

Sincerely yours, A. Krymsky.

No 3

Letter from V.F. Minorsky to A.Y. Krymsky.

F. 134, inv. 3. File 640. Pages are not mentioned. (Autograph).

[1941]<sup>7</sup>

Dear A.Y.,

Several months ago I saw in the papers that your research work gained great recognition and, as your student, I was ardently happy about that. I don't know whether you have received my article on Khalaj people that is dedicated to you and your 70th birthday. These days I often repeat a poem by Pushkin: "But tho' the unfeeling body can everywhere alike decay" (translation by Ivan Panin - D.K.), but how does one do that. All my latest works have the general subject of in-depth studying of the social history of the East. My interest to historical geography is not getting weaker either. Is there any demand for this? I had hopes that I would manage to publish several works that I had prepared until the deadline strikes, but this war has made publishing really difficult, so the main *raison d'être*<sup>8</sup> is off the table. I would love to hear your opinion on this matter so much.

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<sup>7</sup> The date of V.F. Minorsky's letter has been determined according to its content: birthday wishes to A.Y. Krymsky on the occasion of his 70th birthday.

<sup>8</sup> Fr.: right to exist; reasonable cause; meaning of life, of existence.

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## **Information About the Authors**

The works of Professor R. M. Valeev develop and implement fundamental and applied studies devoted to the history of Oriental education and Oriental research in Russia and Europe, including the phenomenon of the Kazan center of orientalism, the main trends of development and the key results of studying the important problems of the history of Russian and European orientalism.

The works of associate professor R. Z. Valeeva discuss the current issues of foreign language teaching and foreign language education quality in non-linguistic universities in Russia, study the history of foreign language teaching in Asia and Europe.