BOOK REVIEWS

***Srednevekovye arabskie i persidskie rukopisi fiziko-matematicheskogo soderzhaniia v bibliotekakh byvshego Sovetskogo Soiuza.* Vypusk I: *Nasir ad-Din at-Tusi i ego trudy po matematike i astronomii v bibliotekakh Sankt-Peterburga, Kazani, Tashkenta i Dushanbe,* sost. M. M. Rozhanskaia, G. P. Matvievskaia, I. O. Liuter. Moskva: Izdatel'stvo Vostochnaia Literatura, 1999, 142 str.**

***Medieval Arab and Persian Manuscripts on Physics and Mathematics in Libraries of the Former Soviet Union.* Fasc. I: *Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī and His Works on Mathematics and Astronomy in the Libraries of St. Petersburg, Kazan, Tashkent, and Dushanbe.* Compiled by M. M. Rozhanskaya, G. P. Matvievskaya, I. O. Luther. Moscow: The Publishing House "Vostochnaia Literatura", 1999, 142 pp.**

The study, description, and publication of extant Arabic-Persian manuscripts are of primary importance for the continuation of research on the history of the exact sciences both in the East and in the West, on the transfer of knowledge and inter-civilizational dialogue in the Middle Ages, as well as for research on the currently popular topic of the "Arab" Archimedes, Euclid, and Ptolemy in medieval Europe through the prism of Latin translations of Arabic-language authors. Soviet scholars' works over the last 30—40 years played a significant role in triggering a substantial re-evaluation of the achievements of Arab-Muslim science. If earlier Muslim science was treated by scholars only as a "bridge" or "link" between Hellenism and the Renaissance, the recent studies based on the investigation of extant manuscripts by Arab and Persian authors has convincingly shown their primacy in a number of scientific fields.

The publication under review is the first one in a series *Medieval Arab and Persian Manuscripts on Physics and Mathematics in Libraries of the Former Soviet Union*. It covers the main issues in the history of physics and the mathematical sciences in works by both known and little-known authors. Among them are works by such scholars as Abū-l-Wafā, Ibn al-Haytham, al-Bīrūnī, al-Khāzinī, al-Ṭūsī, al-Naysābūrī, al-Shīrāzī, al-Kāshī, and others, as well as some anonymous works of interest for the history of science. If you see a book with no Arabic letters in it, you can hardly guess that you have to do with a catalogue of Arabic and Persian manuscripts. The aim of a catalogue as a reference book is to be available to as many readers as possible; the substitution of the original script by Russian transliteration considerably reduces the number of users who do not know Russian. But that is the very way the compilers of the book under review have chosen to present the material. Most of their names are well known to those interested in the history of Muslim science, and we do not know whether this form of publication was chosen because of technical possibilities of an academic Publishing House "Vostochnaia Literatura" or it was made intentionally by the compilers themselves. Whatever the case, such a form of publication has been chosen with their assent.

The first book in the series bears the title "Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī and His Works on Mathematics and Astronomy in the Libraries of St. Petersburg, Kazan, Tashkent, and Dushanbe", which is not quite exact, because its contents is much broader. First, apart from the works of Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, the publication includes the works of his followers. Second, being the first in the series, it has introductions to the series as a whole. Among them one can find a brief preface where the main difficulty of such kind of publications is indicated: the author must possess not only the knowledge of Eastern languages but also be expert in the exact sciences, which is a rare thing to meet. It should be added that such a specialist should be a codicologist as well. The preface provides a very brief account of the history of investigations in the field; the aim of the series is also proclaimed here.

There follows an overview entitled "The largest repositories of Eastern manuscripts in the former Soviet Union" which contains information available to the authors on fifteen collections in Russia, Transcaucasia, and Central Asia. Only the largest five among them are described in detail which, in the authors' view, "are naturally the most important", an opinion not, strictly speaking, correct, since the size of the collection and its scholarly value are not necessary coincide. Here we read about manuscripts on physics and mathematics which are kept in these and some other libraries, the state of their investigation, as well as the possible location of similar manuscripts in other repositories of Russia and Central Asia.

An overview "Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī. The main writings on physics and mathematics" then follows; it is also very brief and has to do directly with the present issue in the series.

An introduction to the catalogue itself indicates that the compilers examined materials held in six libraries. In addi-