



Original paper



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“For us, the necessity of studying the peoples of the Christian East is not a matter of debate”:¹

Towards an Understanding of the Scholarly Legacy of C.A. Panchenko (1968–2024)

Abstract

This article is dedicated to the memory of the outstanding Russian Orientalist, Professor Panchenko (1968–2024), whose scholarly legacy represents a significant contribution to the study of the Christian East. Dr. Panchenko regarded this field of inquiry to a considerable extent as part of Russia’s own cultural-historical self-understanding, emphasizing the profound connection between the Orthodox East and the Russian historical process. His publications encompassed a wide range of topics: from the history of Middle Eastern Orthodoxy in the Ottoman period to sacred geography and the everyday life of Levantine Christian communities.

¹ Панченко К.А. О Христианском Востоке в телеграмм-канале // https://t.me/Oriens_Christianus/2. It should be noted that the Russian text of the article contains two variants of the historical and geographical name *Christian East* – written both with lowercase (*христианский*) and uppercase (*Христианский*) initial letters. In all quotations, the author’s original usage is preserved. However, in recent years (at least since 2019), K. A. Panchenko has advocated for the use of the uppercase *Христианский Восток*, with both words capitalized.



Special attention is given to Panchenko's research method, which combined meticulous work with primary sources and a balanced engagement with contemporary historiographical trends, while rejecting the allure of superficial postmodernist interpretations. Among his key achievements were the discovery of unique Arabic manuscripts that challenged entrenched historical narratives, the reconstruction of obscure chapters in the medieval history of Middle Eastern Christians, and the creation of a comprehensive history of Orthodox Christianity in the Middle East during the Ottoman era.

Professor Panchenko also proved himself a gifted academic organizer, uniting researchers through conferences and collective projects. His teaching at the Institute of Asian and African Studies of Moscow State University, as well as his international presentations—including his plenary lecture at the conference *The Orthodox Church of Antioch from the 15th to the 18th Century: Towards a Proper Understanding of History* (2023) at Balamand University—further strengthened the authority of the Russian school of Oriental studies. The publication underscores the continuity between Dr. Panchenko and the classical tradition of Russian Orientalists—Viktor von Rosen, Ignaty Krachkovsky, and Boris Turaev. The present essay serves both as a tribute to the scholar and as an invitation to further exploration of the Christian East within the research framework he helped to shape.

Keywords:

Christian East, sacred geography of the Middle East, Middle Eastern Christian elites, Dr. Panchenko, Patriarchate of Antioch, Jerusalem Patriarchate, Orthodox Arabs, Middle Eastern Orthodoxy, Russian Oriental studies.

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radiant and distinctive constellation of cultures of the Christian East, which flourished in the Early Middle Ages from Carthage to Lake Baikal, from the Caucasus to Ethiopia, and adorned Christian civilization with the deeds of hundreds of martyrs, ascetics, and thinkers” — thus Dr. Panchenko formulated the subject of his scholarly vocation, to which he remained faithful until the end².

His research gaze, filled with sympathetic attentiveness to his chosen field, was always accompanied by an awareness of the centuries-long unbreakable connection between the Orthodox East and Russia. As Dr. Panchenko wrote in 2010: “We ourselves are, in a certain sense, a part of the Christian East—at least if one looks from the West”³. Moreover, “for those of Russian culture, the study of the Christian East is almost a process of self-discovery”⁴. It was for this reason that Professor Panchenko found his kindred spirits and dearest

² The last recorded dialogue with *Dr. Panchenko* concerned the publication of photographs of Christian frescoes from the collection of the National Museum in Khartoum (Sudan).

³ *Панченко К.А.* Арабо-христианские исследования в современной зарубежной науке // Вестник Московского университета. Сер. 13: Востоковедение. 2010. № 2. P. 22.

⁴ *Панченко К.А.* О Христианском Востоке...

“co-authors” in the Russian pioneers of the Near East: Vasily Grigorovich-Barsky, Ioann Lukyanov, Arseny Sukhanov, Archimandrite Porfirius (Uspensky), Hippolyt Vishensky, and others. The pages of his writings are richly interspersed with vivid quotations from these “wayfarers” and “watchers of the East”. With Vasily Grigorovich-Barsky, in particular, he shared not only scholarly interests but also a love for graphic representations of the Christian East.

Dr. Panchenko made a major contribution to the development of historical scholarship. He authored nearly two hundred works, widely recognized not only in Russia but also abroad (his writings were translated into English and Arabic — a highly uncommon precedent in Russian Oriental studies)⁵. It is therefore not by chance that the introduction to the English translation of what remains the most significant study in global Oriental scholarship on the history of Middle Eastern Orthodoxy in the Ottoman period was written by John X (Yazigi), Patriarch of Antioch and All the East⁶. In his works, Panchenko examined the most important questions of the formation and crisis of Eastern Christian civilization, the flourishing and decline of social structures, the history of everyday life and regional elites, and the rise and fall of spiritual culture: “The Christian East deserves to be studied in the same

⁵ *Panchenko C.A.* Arab Orthodox Christians under the Ottomans: 1516–1831. New York, 2016; *Panchenko C.A.* Orthodoxy and Islam in the Middle East: The Seventh to the Sixteenth Century / B. Pheiffer Noble, S. Noble, trans. Jordanville, 2021. Bānšīnkū Q.A. [*Panchenko C.A.*]. Ittiḥād Flūrinsā wa-kanīsat Anṭākiya: Naḥra ilā at-tārīḥ // Al-Kanīsa al-urṭūduksiyya al-anṭākiyya min al-qarn al-ḥāmis ‘ašar ilā al-qarn at-tāmin ‘ašar: Naḥwa fahm daḡīq li-t-tārīḥ / ḥarrara an-naṣṣ al-aršimandrīt Ya’qūb Ḥalīl = [*Панченко К.А.* Флорентийская уния и Антиохийская Церковь: взгляд на историю // Антиохийская православная Церковь с XV по XVIII в.: К более глубокому пониманию истории/ Под ред. архим. Иакова Халиля]. Balamand: Ğāmi‘at al-Balamand, 2025. P. 25–41.

⁶ *Panchenko C.A.* Arab Orthodox Christians under the Ottomans: 1516–1831. New York, 2016.



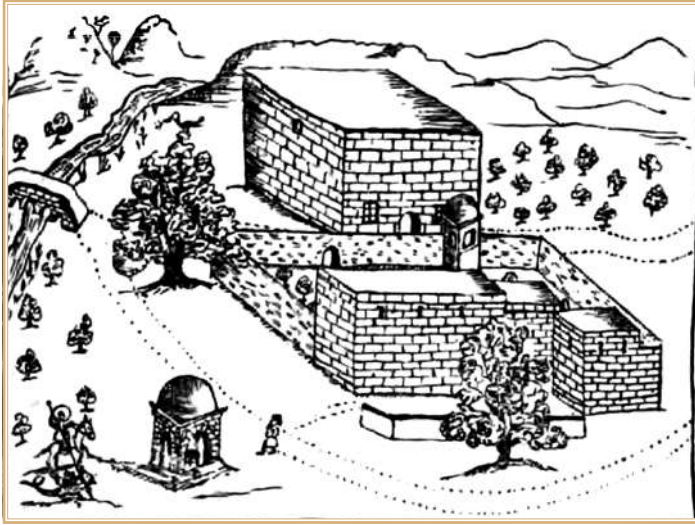
Professor Panchenko at the 3rd International Conference
 “Current Issues in the Study of the Christian East”. Sergiev Posad,
 Moscow Theological Academy, November 12, 2019.
From the archive of Professor Panchenko

perspectives as other cultural-historical worlds, including its material culture, its interaction with the natural environment, its economy, the dynamics of social ties, and demographic trends”⁷. He was particularly concerned with the asymmetry in the academic field, marked by a disproportionate attention to issues of Eastern Christian philology to the detriment of historical inquiry: “The Christian East is not only a subject for theology and philology. It represents almost as complete a civilization as the Muslim world or the Byzantine Empire”⁸. Nevertheless, Dr. Panchenko himself systematically contributed to the expansion of the source base for Arab-Christian studies, becoming the initiator and editor of the *Anthology of the Orthodox Arab Literature*⁹.

⁷ Панченко К.А. Арабо-христианские исследования... Р. 25.

⁸ Панченко К.А. Арабо-христианские исследования... Р. 25.

⁹ Антология литературы православных арабов. Т. 1: История / Под ред. К.А. Панченко. М., 2020.



The place where St. George slew the dragon.

From the publication *Travels of Vasily Grigorovich-Barsky to the Holy Places of the East from 1723 to 1747. Part 2.*

In recent years, Professor Panchenko's enduring passion for source-based research brought him particular professional successes. Unique information about the eventful history of the Christian East, its spiritual concerns, manuscript production, textual circulation, and cultural contacts among Arab Christians of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries was discovered in Arabic manuscripts preserved in the library of the Jerusalem Orthodox Patriarchate. At a time when the narrative corpus of sources on the history of the Orthodox East in the Early Modern period appeared exhausted, scholarly attention turned to "the colophons and marginalia of these books (from the Holy Sepulchre collection — *author*), which had not yet received due attention from scholars". These materials revealed "unexpected episodes in the ecclesiastical history of the Christian East and the cultural interactions of Orthodox peoples who encountered one another in the monasteries of the Holy Land"¹⁰.

¹⁰ Панченко К.А. Православные арабы и лавра св. Саввы в XVI — нач. XVII вв. по данным арабо-христианских рукописей // Вестник ПСТГУ. Серия III: Филология. 2020. Вып. 65. Р. 71.

This helped to rescue from oblivion many pages of the history of Middle Eastern Orthodoxy. As the Professor remarked: “Whole centuries of the real history of Middle Eastern Christians remain unknown — [...] and not only the dates of reigns, but even the very names of many Middle Eastern patriarchs of the 14th and 15th centuries”¹¹. Yet sometimes his findings produced the opposite effect. An exemplary source-critical study, *The Parchment Gospel of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, RAS, D-227: The Fate of a Manuscript in Historical Context*, allowed the removal from Joseph Nasrallah’s list of the hierarchs of Antioch (under the year 1344) of the “phantom”¹² Patriarch Joachim I, who in fact had never existed.

Archival discoveries and comprehensive studies by Dr. Panchenko make it possible to reestablish continuity in Russian historiography of the Christian East, summing up its rich experience from the final decades of the pre-revolutionary period. Reflecting on the trajectories of Russian and Western Oriental studies, he observed: “Russian scholars turned to this subject three hundred years later than their European counterparts, and within the span of just two generations have risen to the level of the leading Western schools. It is enough to recall the names of Rosen, Bartold, Krachkovsky, Bolotov, Marr, Turaev”¹³. To this list we may now add Professor Panchenko himself.

It is unlikely that the “ascetic Professor”¹⁴, renowned for his modesty, would have said it himself. Yet certain parallels can

¹¹ Паченко К.А. Арабо-христианские исследования... Р. 25.

¹² Паченко К.А. Пергаменное Евангелие ИВР РАН D-227: Судьба рукописи в историческом контексте // Вестник церковной истории. 2019. Т. 1. Вып. 53–54. Р. 382.

¹³ Паченко К.А. Арабо-христианские исследования... Р. 23.

¹⁴ Thus Archpriest *Nikolai Chukov* (the future Metropolitan of Leningrad and Novgorod, Gregory) called *В.А. Тураев*. (Чуков Н.К., прот. Слово пред отпением Профессора-Академика Б.А. Тураева 26/13 июля 1920 г. / Восток Христианский. Т.2 (VIII): Новая серия. СПб.: Алетейя, 2001. Р. 369).



Treatise by Macarius III al-Za'im on the Antiochian dioceses and bishops.
 Autograph manuscript of the Patriarch, completed in Georgia in 1665.
 Marginal notes by Macarius's grandson, Patriarch Cyril V al-Za'im
 (Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg. B 1227)

hardly be ignored. When the “Eastern ‘Prince of the Church’”¹⁵ Gregory IV (Haddad)¹⁶ twice turned away the young Ignaty Krachkovsky, who sought access to his library, the latter could scarcely have imagined that in the distant future the Patriarch of Antioch would compose the preface to a monograph by a Russian Orientalist who had written the history of his own church, and would invite him to speak immediately after himself at a major international conference central to the Patriarchate. It may thus be concluded that continuity was not only restored but advanced yet another step.

¹⁵ Крачковский И.Ю. Над арабскими рукописями: Листки воспоминаний о книгах и людях. Изд. 2-е., доп. М., 1946. P. 33.

¹⁶ Gregory IV (Haddad) (1859–1928) – Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, 1906–1928.

A defining feature of Dr. Panchenko's scholarly workshop was a fine sense of measure. On the one hand, he strove to cover the centuries-long history of the rise and fall of the civilizational rhythms of the Christian East¹⁷. On the other, he devoted close attention to the smallest details of the subjects under study (down to questions of diet and daily life), seeking precise linguistic means of description. Despite his excellent familiarity with the achievements of modern historical scholarship, the Professor preferred to keep a respectful distance from the shifting fashions of historiographical trends: "Unfortunately, many researchers consider it beneath their dignity to dig into small facts. They are drawn instead to abstract analyses unburdened by factuality — some 'image of the Other,' 'perceptions of distance,' 'representations of innovation,' and so forth"¹⁸. His scholarly credo was grounded in work with primary sources and the principle of historicism: "It is difficult to understand the contemporary postmodernist enthusiasms of historians. Has historical science really exhausted itself, having fully grasped the whole of the real history, so that scholars have nothing left but to rummage in the consciousness and subconsciousness of past ages? Fortunately, this is not so. The 'positivist' science has yet to answer many questions, and without those answers any abstract generalizations will be premature"¹⁹.

At the same time, he could not accept, in Pierre Bourdieu's apt phrase, "positivist capitulation", when "instead of seeking the truth where it is to be found, one searches for it under the streetlight, where it is easy to see"²⁰. The well-trodden histo-

¹⁷ Панченко К.А. Ритмы истории христианского Востока: Попытка обобщения // Вестник Московского университета. Сер. 13: Востоковедение. 2012. № 4. Р. 3–19.

¹⁸ Панченко К.А. Арабо-христианские исследования... Р. 33.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Бурдьё П. О государстве: курс лекций в Коллеж де Франс (1989–1992). М., 2016. Р. 164.

riographical paths never inspired the Professor. This applied to every aspect of his work. Ambitious goals required a broad range of bold, at times provocative, research tasks.

His attention was drawn to the social structures of the Orthodox East, the ecological factors of the region's development, external relations with the Catholic West and the Orthodox North, Greco-Arab national interactions, monastic centers of cultural reproduction, and urban agglomerations that formed the Orthodox elite. Sacred geography, as a prism through which the vital forces of Middle Eastern society could be comprehended, became a distinct line of inquiry. And of course, he made enormous effort to reconstruct the biographies of a whole constellation of half-forgotten martyrs, patriarchs, and scribes — the work he carried out especially during his long-standing collaboration with the *Orthodox Encyclopedia* (since 2000). Nor did Dr. Panchenko neglect more traditional questions of geopolitics; he rarely approached them schematically. More often, he explored them via individual personalities set against the background of their epoch — Russian pilgrims to the East, or Arab travelers reaching the northern border of the Orthodox world. He also responded vividly to the issues of the present, drawing attention to historical parallels²¹.

Dr. Panchenko's scholarly and pedagogical activity was inseparably linked to the Institute of Asian and African Studies of Moscow State University. It was here that he defended both his candidate and doctoral dissertations, and here that he worked as a faculty member in the Department of History of the Near and Middle East (from 2001 as Assistant Profes-

²¹ “One need not look far for an example of rivalry over holy places: one can point to the current situation around the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra. This case, of course, goes beyond the geographical scope of this issue, but it vividly demonstrates what sacred geography is and the meaning it carries even in our secular age”. Панченко К.А. Сакральная география в истории авраамических религий Востока Т. 48. М., 2024. Р. 29.

sor, and from 2017 as Associate Professor). At his alma mater he read the courses *History of Middle Eastern Christianity*, *History of the Arab Lands in the Middle Ages*, *Modern History of the Arab Lands*, and *Source Studies and Historiography of the History of the Arab Lands*. These courses were consistently popular with students. His passion, vivid imagination, and brilliant command of material left neither freshmen — who traditionally heard their very first introductory lecture from him — nor experts indifferent.

Yet the Professor's special gift was his ability to unite researchers of the Christian East — often engaged in permanent debates with one another — and to inspire them toward new inquiries. I believe it is no exaggeration to say that there is not a single colleague in the field who did not experience this fruitful influence. Joint projects inspired by the Professor proved capable of transcending²² not only the geographical boundaries but also the disciplinary and institutional ones. In this regard, one cannot but recall the lines from a 1910 letter by the Orientalist Ahatanhel Krymsky, dedicated to Viktor von Rosen and Valentin Zhukovsky: “Your image and that of the late Baron Rosen served for me as a radiant beacon and support amidst the heavy, oppressive black darkness of barbarism that presses upon everything here”²³. For many contemporary scholars of the East, both in Russia and abroad, the living and written word of Dr. Panchenko was precisely such a “radiant beacon”.

As Head of the Subsection *Christian East*²⁴ at the “Lomonosov Readings”, Dr. Panchenko succeeded in conjuring up an atmosphere of mutual respect, scholarly tact, and creative

²² Often with great difficulty for the initiator himself, who had to act not only as editor but also as psychologist and motivator.

²³ Архив востоковедов ИВР РАН. Ф. 17. Оп. 2. Д. 30. Письма от А.Е. Крымского (1903–1917). Л. 14.

²⁴ Formally established within the “Oriental Studies and African Studies” section in 2019, though meetings on this subject had been held earlier on a designated day.



Participants of the III International Conference “Atambov Readings: Sacred Geography of the Near and Middle East through Centuries and Generations”.

Moscow, ISAA of Lomonosov Moscow State University, June 30, 2023.

K.A. Panchenko is standing in the center of the first row.

From the archive of K.A. Panchenko

exploration. His leadership in this intellectual space, concerned with the spiritual dimension of society’s life, was grounded in the traditions established by one of his own mentors, Feride Atsamba²⁵. Within the framework of the Subsection, it became a regular practice to hold the following round tables:

· *Why Did the Arab Conquests Succeed? An Analysis of the Military and Socio-Political Factors Behind the Success of Muslim Expansion in the Seventh Century* (2013);

· *The Birth of the Christian East: Ethno-Cultural Explosions of Late Antiquity* (2017);

· *Middle Eastern Empires of Late Antiquity: Identity, Ideological and Political Bonds, Imperial Continuity* (2018);

· *Saints and Sanctuaries as the Basis of Ethno-Confessional Identity in the Christian East, Fourth–Fifteenth Centuries* (2019);

· *The Birth of the Christian East: New Perspectives* (2020);

· *Church History and Regional Elites* (2021);

²⁵ More: Мейер М.С. Ф.М. Ацамба и ее ближнее окружение по истфаку МГУ в 1940–1955 гг. // Исторический вестник. М., 2019. Т. 29. Р. 240–247.



Professor Panchenko at the 12th Congress for Southeast European Studies.
Romania, Bucharest, 2019.

From the archive of Professor Panchenko

· *Christian Elites and Church History: A New Reading* (2022);

· *The Evolution of Sacred Geography of the Christian East* (2023);

· *The 7th Century as an ‘Axial Age’ of the Middle East: The Concept of the Birth of Islamic Civilization in Patricia Crone and Michael Cook’s Hagarism — Pros and Cons* (2024).

The discussions generated in this format laid the foundation for the collective monograph *The Christian East: The Diversity of Regional Elites from Late Antiquity to the Early Modern Period* (2025), as well as for two thematic issues of *The Historical Reporter*²⁶.

These projects were subordinated, in his view, to “our most important task” — “the creation and reproduction of a schol-

²⁶ Исторический вестник. М., 2017. Т. 20: Христианство на Ближнем Востоке / под ред. К.А. Панченко; Исторический вестник. М., 2024. Т. 48: Сакральная география Ближнего Востока / под ред. К.А. Панченко.

arly milieu, a circle of authors systematically engaged in the study of the Christian East”²⁷. While dreaming of a community of researchers capable of generating new ideas, he would emphasize in conversation that scholarly inquiry was inevitably linked to solitude—sometimes bordering on isolation. A balance rarely attainable in practice.

On the other hand, organizational efforts inevitably consume resources for research. At such moments the correspondence between Baron Rosen and Sergei Oldenburg often came to mind, in which the eminent Orientalist categorically rejected any initiatives to establish a Russian Oriental Society if these would require sacrificing his own scholarly pursuits to administrative tasks²⁸. For him, as for Dr. Panchenko, the priority always lay with science itself.

On the international stage, Professor Panchenko consistently represented Russian Oriental studies with dignity. He presented papers at such authoritative conferences as the IX Congress of Arab-Christian Studies (Malta, 2012); the III Syro-Arabic Symposium (Kaslik, Lebanon, 2015); the conference *Arab-Christian Cultural Semantics on the Eve of the Nahda* (St Andrews, UK, 2017); and the XII Congress of Southeast European Studies (Romania, 2019). In 2023, he delivered the plenary lecture *Unia of Florence and the Church of Antioch: A Retrospect* at the major conference *The Orthodox Church of Antioch from the 15th to the 18th Century: Towards a Proper Understanding of History*, convened on the occasion of the 300th anniversary of the Unia in the Patriarchate, held at Balamand University²⁹. Addressing more than

²⁷ Панченко К.А. Арабо-христианские исследования... Р. 38.

²⁸ Переписка В.Р. Розена и С.Ф. Ольденбурга: (1887–1907) / Публ.: Д.Е. Мишин и др.; прим.: А.А. Вигасин, Д.Е. Мишин, И.М. Смилянская // Неизвестные страницы отеч. востоковедения. Вып. 2. М., 2004. Р. 201–399.

²⁹ This topic is further developed in this special issue, largely thanks to friendly and inspiring dialogues between the author and *Professor Panchenko*, who offered his ideas and remarks.

five hundred participants—including the Prime Minister of Lebanon, Orthodox members of Parliament, and the heads of all Lebanese religious institutions—he remarked with characteristic modesty: “I have never before spoken before such an audience, and I suppose I never will again”³⁰. The honor of speaking immediately after the keynote address by John X (Yazigi), Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, confirmed Panchenko’s recognized status as a leading contemporary scholar of Eastern Christianity.

Another trait linking the Professor to the old school, and in particular to Ignaty Krachkovsky, was his love for his vocation and his desire to generously share it with others. “As far as I was able, I sought to show that in Oriental philology”, wrote Ignaty Krachkovsky, “people work not merely because they are drawn by what some suppose to be a strange personal taste, not only because it appeals to lovers of the exotic or hermits fleeing from life. Reflecting on my own experiences with manuscripts, I could not but speak of how the smallest detail of work here is connected with broader questions of cultural history, and how everything in the end flows into the powerful movement toward the highest ideals of humanity. This is what always filled my thoughts”³¹.

Dr. Panchenko must have written with a similar inner sense for the Russian State Library’s journal *Vostochnaya Kolleksiya* (*Oriental Collection*)³², shared his ethnographic observations in the journal *Khristianstvo na Blizhnem Vostoke* (*Christianity in*

³⁰ Панченко К.А. Антиохийская Церковь в попытке самопознания: впечатления от конференции *The Orthodox Church of Antioch from the 15th to the 18th centuries. Toward a Proper Understanding of History*, Баламанда, 16–18 октября 2023. // Вестник ПСТГУ. Серия III: Филология. 2023. Вып. 77. Р. 161.

³¹ Крачковский И.Ю. Над арабскими рукописями: Листки воспоминаний о книгах и людях. Изд. 2-е., доп. М., 1946. Р. 5–6.

³² Панченко К.А. Страна мертвых городов // Восточная коллекция. 2011. № 4(47). Р. 78–94; Панченко К.А. Вверх по долине Кадиша // Восточная коллекция. 2012. № 4(51). Р. 113–125; Панченко К.А. Мальга, почти Восток // Восточная коллекция. 2013. № 1(52). Р. 82–91 и др.



Professor Panchenko at the international conference “The Orthodox Church of Antioch from the 15th to the 18th Century: Towards a Proper Understanding of History”.

Lebanon, University of Balamand, October 16, 2023.

From the archive of Professor Panchenko

the Middle East)³³, and authored a number of publications in the Telegram channel @Oriens_Christianus. In this creative fervor one discerns a clear affinity with another one of his great predecessors, Boris Turaev. “He was a true beacon of knowledge, which shone all the brighter the more light was drawn from it; he never felt satisfied so long as his discoveries, searches, thoughts and conclusions remained only his own possession; he strove to embody them in print as quickly as possible, to share them with all who wished”³⁴, — thus Ignaty Krachkovsky characterized this trait of his teacher. All who heard Dr. Panchenko speak (especially in informal settings), would agree that no better description of his scholarly work could be offered.

³³ Панченко К.А. Опыт полевой этнографии христианского Востока (Баламанд, декабрь 2016) // Христианство на Ближнем Востоке. 2019. № 4. Р. 24–36.

³⁴ Крачковский И.Ю. Памяти Б.А. Тураева / Литература Востока. Сб. ст. Вып. 2. Петербург, 1920. Р. 169.

For him, visualization of images was of special importance, and with it came a particular attention to the expressiveness of the language he employed. One need only glance at the titles of some of his articles: “*Orthodox Atlantis...*”, “*Christian Intelligence in the Mamluk State...*”, “*From Flock to Pack (The Phenomenon of Social Degradation in the Christian East)...*”, “*Fragments of the Christian East...*”, “*The Umayyads and a Bit of Adrenaline...*”. All of them testify to the author’s desire to bring to life for the reader a world long since consigned to the abyss of oblivion. Here, too, one can detect an inner connection with Ignaty Krachkovsky’s cinematic quality of prose: “And through these lines, as if alive, I see hermits as though descended from the pages of Leskov’s apologues³⁵. A desert separates them, but it cannot hinder their friendly exchange of literature; the wild Bedouin tribes block the manuscript as it makes its way from Palestine to Sinai”³⁶.

A similar literary form was merely the result of a shared essence — love for the East. To paraphrase Ignaty Krachkovsky, one might say that a century and a desert of oblivion concerning the East-Christian tradition separated him from Professor Panchenko, yet this interval was powerless to disrupt the continuity of the finest scholarly traditions of Russian Oriental studies.

Academic disciplines often guard their intellectual independence no less jealously than states defend their territorial integrity. The boundaries between university departments and academic institutes can at times prove as insurmountable as well-fortified lines of defense. For Dr. Panchenko, a guiding value was the consistent struggle against this fragmenta-

³⁵ Symbolically, in his Telegram channel *Dr. Panchenko* signed his texts “The Enchanted Wanderer”.

³⁶ *Крачковский И.Ю.* Старый апокриф / Над арабскими рукописями: Листки воспоминаний о книгах и людях. Изд. 2-е., доп. М., 1946. P. 9.



Wondrous Mountain, drawing by Professor Panchenko, 2021.
From the archive of Professor Panchenko

tion of the scholarly domain, a “stitching together” of its parts through collaborative academic projects. This aspiration resembles the notion of Boris Turaev, who had formulated the idea of a “cloister of scholarly monks”, presented in 1917 to the Preliminary Council and the All-Russian Local Council of the Russian Orthodox Church³⁷.

Service — “I have fought the good fight”³⁸ — to the East-Christian civilization, not only as a researcher but also as an organizer of academic teams, must be recognized as one of the most significant achievements of Professor Panchenko. The overall tenor is best expressed in the words of the scholar himself: “Many of us study the ascetics similar to those who once lived upon this mountain”³⁹. The diversity of our scholarly specializations is akin to a bouquet of the ethnoses and sub-

³⁷ Тураев Б.А. Проект обители ученых иноков. / Восток Христианский. Т. 2 (VIII): Новая серия. СПб.: Алетейя, 2001. Р. 370–374.

³⁸ Second Epistle of the Apostle Paul to Timothy, 4:7.

³⁹ Refers to the monastic brotherhood “The Wonderful/Wondrous/Admirable/Black Mountain”, which flourished near Antioch in the High Middle Ages.

cultures of the Wondrous Mountain dwellers. This monastic republic disappeared without a trace, just as our Christian East is disappearing, whose memory we endeavor to preserve”⁴⁰.

Summing up, it is essential to underscore the principal point: in theory, in practice, and in his system of values, the scholarly path of Professor Panchenko was a continuation of the best traditions of the Russian school of Oriental studies, established by Viktor von Rosen, Boris Turaev, Ignaty Krachkovsky, and Feride Atsamba. Just as “the inhabitants of Kalamun could not but perceive themselves as part of a broader spiritual space, a system of sacred geography stretching from Mount Sinai to the Wondrous Mountain on the Orontes”⁴¹, so too is it impossible for us — bound by countless scholarly ties — not to feel ourselves part of the intellectual space of Russian Oriental studies, from Krachkovsky and Turaev at the turn of the 19th to 20th centuries to the “good fight” of Professor Panchenko in the early 21st century.

Conflict of interests

The author declares no relevant conflict of interests.



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⁴⁰ From personal correspondence with *Dr. Panchenko*. December 25, 2021.

⁴¹ Панченко К.А. Христианская сакральная география плато Каламун в Средневековье и Новое время // Исторический вестник. Т. 48. М., 2024. Р. 119–120.

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