

I. Y. Krachkovsky.

(10th March, 1883–24th January, 1951.)

Academic career : in 1905, graduated at the Faculty of Oriental Languages of St. Petersburg University ; gold medal for the diploma work “ Reign of the Caliph al-Mehdy according to the Arab sources ”. In 1914, dissertation for the grade of magister on “ ’Abu-l-Faraj al-Wa’wā of Damascus ”. In 1918, professor at the above-mentioned faculty. In 1921, member of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

A man of vast erudition, knowing twenty-six languages, the brilliant pupil of such great orientalists as S. Oldenburg, N. Marr, P. Kokovtsov, and Baron V. Rosen, Krachkovsky early discovered his vocation for Arabic studies and deliberately limited his great productivity to this sphere, considering Arabic literature his speciality. Except perhaps when dealing with modern Arabic literature, he tended to avoid larger problems, preferring to treat limited questions or single personalities. He excelled in monographs, very often in the form of short articles, characterized by the thoroughness of their documentation, the precision of their arguments, and the studied moderation and carefulness of their conclusions. A just appraisal of his contribution to knowledge presupposes a detailed familiarity with all aspects of his work, and such an appraisal is hardly possible abroad even as regards his published works (in 1936 they totalled more than 366), since many are not available outside Russia. A final judgment will be possible only after investigation of what, like his translation of the Qur’an, is left unpublished, and when the conditions under which he worked are known. For these reasons the following remarks are necessarily superficial and of a preliminary character.

Krachkovsky’s greatest achievement was his contribution to the study of modern Arabic literature. His stay in 1908–1910 in Arab countries and his personal contacts with some Arab writers certainly helped him in this work. His last and greatest work *Arabic Literature in the XXth Century*, appeared in 1946. In studying ancient Arab literature, especially poetry, he made a psychological approach, trying to penetrate the creative genius of a given author. But his contributions to almost all other branches of Arabic studies were hardly less substantial, especially his papers on the history of the Arab world and culture, historical geography (particularly as relating to the ancient history of Russia), philology, especially that

of modern dialects, the Arabic language in north-east Caucasus, and the history of Arabic studies in Russia, to which he devoted his last work, *Sketches on Arabic Studies* (1950). After the end of the last war he published his *Reading Arabic Manuscripts*, being his memoirs as an Arabist, in which he showed himself a writer of great talent.

In 1947 the semi-periodical publication, *Soviet Oriental Knowledge*, issued by the Oriental Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences, devoted a special number (Nr. IV) to celebrate the forty years of his scholastic activity, in which the first articles paid homage to the independence of his views and to his goodheartedness as colleague and teacher.

It is not surprising that not only did he succeed in replacing Baron V. Rosen as head of Arabic studies in Russia, but almost from the beginning of his appointment as professor he created his own school of Arabists: everything which was achieved there in this sphere was done under his direct guidance. The history of Arabic studies in Russia since 1914 is the history of his scholastic activity.

L. BOHDANOWICZ.
