

Acknowledgements

The idea of writing this book was conceived during a two-week period of quarantine which I was required to spend in a hotel near Tokyo's Narita Airport, upon arrival in Japan in late summer 2021. Time in dreary confinement – where staring at a window at the planes, either landing or taking off, was the only form of entertainment – gave me liberty to absorb myself in thinking and writing. It was under these circumstances that I embarked upon the initial steps of preparing the Russian edition and English translation of Nil Lykoshin's *Zapiska*. This work subsequently progressed during my fellowship at the Slavic Research Center at the Hokkaido University, where I was able to pursue the subject in a more systematic fashion. I am therefore very grateful to my colleagues from this respectful institution and especially to Norihiro Naganawa and Kanako Nakajima, who amid all uncertainties of the COVID-19 pandemic went to great lengths to enable my stay in Sapporo and who showed me the best sides of genuine Japanese *omotenashi*, making my sojourn most comfortable and productive.

I owe a great deal to the Austrian Science Found (*FWF Der Wissenschaftsfonds*) for approving my project proposal,¹ and thereby giving me an opportunity to return to what has become my second home – the Institute of Iranian Studies at the Austrian Academy of Sciences.

Paolo Sartori, the conceiver and editor-in-chief of the new book series titled *Central Eurasian Library* within the Austrian Academy of Sciences Press, not only sustained me in this quest all the way through, but furthermore proposed this series as a possible venue for publishing the book. Without his constant encouragement and friendship this work would not have seen the light of the day.

I also wish to extend my gratitude to my colleagues in Tashkent, who have been generous with advice, feedback, bibliographical

¹ FWF Project P 53433-G “Central Asia in Russian Diplomatic Archives”.

references. I am particularly grateful to Nizomiddin Gulboev, Zilola Khalilova, and Oksana Pugovkina. Komiljan Khudoybergenov from the Ichan-Qal'a Museum in Khiva has been wonderfully helpful in the selection of illustrations. Bakhtiyar Babadjanov, Velizar Sadovski, and Nuryoghdi Toshov were indispensable in helping me understand subtleties of the Russian pre-reformian orthography or in transliteration of Islamicate terms. I am extremely grateful for their true collegueship.

I am also indebted to Sergey Abashin for his tireless efforts at putting together a digital library on Central Asia. His web page on Academia.edu contains a large plethora of secondary literature related to the history and anthropology of the region, which has become a most valuable resource for students of Central Asia and related disciplines. The present book has substantially benefited from my access to this corpus of material, most of which would otherwise have been scarcely available to me given the current political developments. Sergey Abashin's labor of love deserves huge praise as a splendid example of genuine scholarship and global citizenship.

My further gratitude goes to two anonymous reviewers with the Austrian Academy of Sciences Press for their thoughtful comments and criticism.

Thomas Welsford has been *always* available to read the draft by the yard, helping me immensely with his insightful comments and especially with his enduring inspiration. He is also the ace copy editor of the current book.

In memory of Abduvahid Abdurasulov (1939–2014).