Nikolai N. Seleznyov

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Nikolai N. Seleznyov, my teacher and Doktorvater, passed away on May 13, 2021, five days before his birthday when he would have turned 50. I became acquainted with Nikolai Seleznyov first as a lector when back in 2007 he taught us the history of Syriac literature during our second year at Russian State University for the Humanities. Nikolai's pedagogical talent was outstanding. He always inspired us with his sincere and fervent interest in this new and mysterious world and showed how one could navigate it. His intellectual and academic path was also marked with this inspiration as well as with the curiosity and enthusiasm of a pioneer. Once he explored a subject and made several discoveries, he would find a new one and fearlessly move to it. Thus, having spent a decade on studying the history of the Church of the East and the figure of Nestorius, he went on to the fascinating subject of intercommunal and interreligious relationships in the medieval Middle East. After Nikolai had finished and defended his habilitation on the *Majālis* of Elias of Nisibis in 2020, he came up with a surprising and unorthodox theme – Buddhism as reflected in medieval Arabic sources. It is beyond doubt that he would have found something groundbreaking and exciting again as soon as he shared the results of his inquiry into Buddhism. Nikolai Seleznyov may very well be characterized as a great expert in East Syriac and Arabic Christianity, but his scholarly career suggests that he was first and foremost an independent and original thinker and a researcher, who mined new knowledge.

Nikolai belonged to a type of scholar, who can grasp the essence of a subject without going into much details. I believe that this feature helped him reveal previously unnoticed links between seemingly unrelated phenomena.

Nikolai not only developed the field of Syriac Studies with his own work, but he also greatly assisted his colleagues from Russia and abroad in their research, be it a piece of good advice or help with finding necessary publications. He had a great electronic collection of scholarly literature, which made it possible for numerous papers and theses to be completed, especially 10–15 years ago, when Russian libraries were not sufficiently stocked, and subscriptions to various electronic resources were not so widespread.

In the past decade, Syriac and Christian Arabic studies have been flourishing in Russia. Many new names and works appeared in the Russian-speaking and writing milieu. Nikolai himself wrote predominantly in Russian and promoted the Russian school among the international scholarly community. Together with Grigory Kessel, he compiled a list of publications on the subject issued in Russian and published this annual report in the journal of Syriac Studies *Hugoye*.

Nikolai passed away so early and unexpectedly. It is a great loss for the entire field and even a greater loss for the Russian academic circles. Nikolai gave a

powerful impulse to Syriac Studies in Russia, and it will surely continue beating in us, his colleagues, students, and friends ...

Dear teacher, you will be sorely missed.

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