

## In Memoriam

Tatiana Denisova

### PROFESSOR ELENA DAVIDOVICH AND HER CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ORIENTAL HISTORICAL SOURCE STUDIES (To the 100th Birth Anniversary)

Professor Elena Abramovna Davidovich (1922-2013) is a scholar known worldwide; a specialist in the fields of numismatics, textology, palaeography, and other special historical disciplines employed for studies on Oriental historical sources. She had written numerous scientific works including nine fundamental monographs and more than 200 articles.<sup>1</sup> These publications give treatment to a wide range of problems in the areas of history, economics, numismatics, archaeology, metrology, and source studies of Medieval Central Asia.

She was born on December 24, 1922, in Krasnoyarsk, Russia. In 1945, at the age of 23, she graduated from the Department of History from the Central Asian State University (SAGU, Tashkent, Uzbekistan). Then in 1950, at the age of 28, she obtained her Ph.D. in Historical Sciences with her doctorate thesis entitled, "*On Monetary Circulation in the State of Sheibanids, XVI Century.*" In 1965, she wrote her Postdoctoral dissertation, "*Numismatic Data on Socio-Economic and Political History of Central Asia in the 10th-18th Centuries.*" Professor Elena Davidovich was conferred her Professorship in 1969 in recognition of her many years of teaching and her significant scientific achievements. As a scholar, she served for over two decades (1951-1972) at the Institute of History, Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan, and then for four decades (1972-2013) at the Moscow Institute of Oriental Studies.

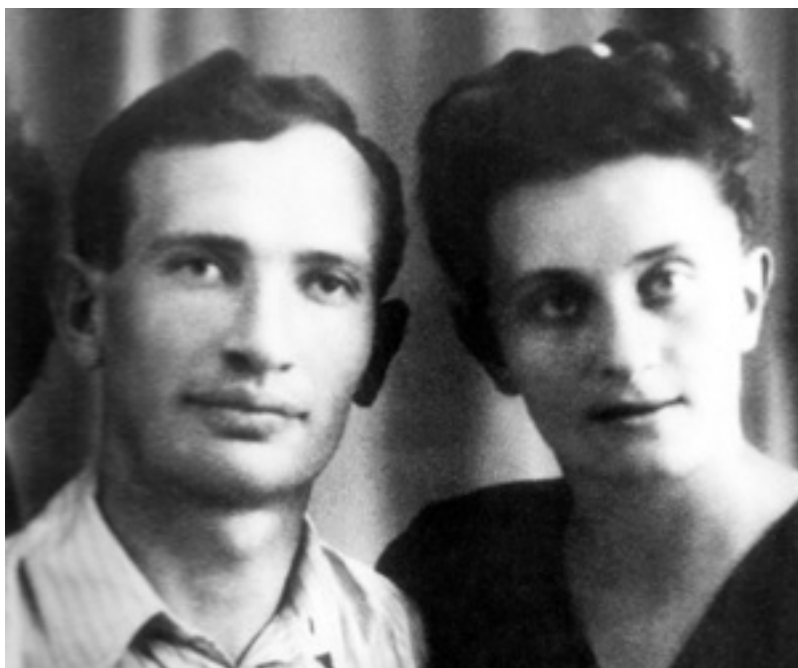
In her long and fruitful academic career, she had initiated many scientific forums and series, among them, the series of "Barthold Lectures" - the Annual International Seminar for Historians studying the Muslim Orient/Muslim World (1974-1993); and the journal "*Historical Oriental Studies and Specialist Historical Disciplines*" (1989-2004).

Her main focus and interest was in numismatics, as evidenced by the large series of articles and monographs she had written in the field, among them:

- *History of the Coinage of Central Asia in the 17th-18th Centuries: Gold and Silver Coins of the Janids.* Dushanbe, 1964, 318 p., 24 ill. in the text, 7 sec. tab.
- *The Monetary Economy of Central Asia After the Mongol Conquest and the Reform of Mas'ud-bek.* M., 1972, 174 p., 5 figs. in the text, 6 sec. photo tab.
- *Hoards of Ancient and Medieval Coins of Tajikistan.* M., 1979. 462 p. , 26 individual photo tables.
- *History of Money Circulation in Medieval Central Asia: Copper Coins of Mavarannahr of the 15th Century - the First Quarter of the 16th Century.* M., 1983, 360 p. , rice. in the text.
- *Corpus of Gold and Silver Coins of the Sheibanids. 16th Century.* M., 1992, 504 p., 22 sec. tab. fig., 56 photo tab.

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<sup>1</sup> List of the main works of Doctor of Historical Sciences, Professor E. A. Davidovich (On the occasion of her 60th birthday) in: "Peoples of Asia and Africa", 1983, No. 3, p. 207-210; Gulyamova E. Scientific works of Doctor of Historical Sciences, Professor E. A. Davidovich in: The Past of Central Asia (archaeology, numismatics and epigraphy, ethnography). Dushanbe, 1987, p. 25-32; List of scientific works by Professor E. A. Davidovich. 1983 - 1992.- in: Historical Oriental Studies and Special Historical Disciplines. Issue 3. M., 1995, p. 3-6, 320-322].



Elena Davidovich and her husband Boris Litvinskiy in early years (Stalinabad, 1950<sup>th</sup>)  
(picture from the book: Central Asia: sources, history, culture. Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference dedicated to the 80th anniversary of E.A. Davidovich and B.A. Litvinsky (Moscow, April 3-5, 2003), Moscow.: "Vostochnaia Literatura" 2005.)

Her works are of great interest to specialists from a broad range of disciplines, recognized by professionals and scholars in the fields of history, historiography, palaeography, numismatics, and other fields of Islamic studies throughout the world. Her studies are distinguished by her confidence and courage in setting goals, her innovative approach in methodology, the depth and complexity of her research, the fundamental nature of her conclusions, and the accuracy her of formulations and interpretations.

Professor Elena Davidovich recorded and processed numismatic materials of an enormous volume and unique scientific significance. Based on these materials, she formulated and introduced new methods for the scientific analysis of monetary sources, and identified new forms of coin-issuing based on their preliminary classification. Classification, she stresses, is the most important method for the study of primary historical sources, especially in numismatics.

*"The studies of primary sources in numismatics means first of all the formulation and the development of principles for the classification of coins, some kind of classification's hierarchy, i.e., the hierarchy of criteria at different classification levels and the determination of a specific value for each specific group of coins based on its type. The type is considered as a key unit/criteria for the classification in numismatics. Classification is not an end in itself. Experience has shown that the errors in classification would lead to narrow down further research opportunities, but a successful well done classification prompts and helps to get answers for many important research questions."*<sup>2</sup>

Her research on Muslim coinage and coin hoards covered a wide period of time i.e. spanning about a thousand years, from the 8th to 18th centuries. One of the significant contributions she made, as a result

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<sup>2</sup> Davidovich E. A. *History of Money Circulation in Medieval Central Asia* (Copper Coins of Mavarannahr of the 15th Century - the First Quarter of the 16th Century). M., 1983, p. 7 [Давидович Е.А. История денежного обращения средневековой Средней Азии. (медные монеты XV – первой четверти XVI вв. в Мавераннахре). М., 1983, с. 7].

of her scientific efforts, is that an extensive collection of numismatic sources which had either not been used or known prior, has now become available to researchers. Among her contributions are two unique editions of *Corpus of Muslim coins of the 16th and 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> centuries*<sup>3</sup> and the many articles on the coinage of Transoxiana.

Professor Elena Davidovich revolutionised the use of numismatic materials, which she had turned into a comprehensive historical source for solving a number of important historical problems, in particular in the study of monetary policy, monetary circulation, and commodity-money relations in Central Asia in the 8<sup>th</sup> -18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

*“The main source for the study on monetary circulation are both individual coins as well as coin hoards. ... A coin hoard is like an independent handwritten source, which is valuable not for separate facts and sheets, but, first of all, as a whole manuscript. Hoards of the same times are like different editions of the same work: they allow you to clarify the regular and exclude the random, to discover what is the general and the special characteristics of each time. Being the main source for the study of monetary circulation, the hoards ultimately allow us to turn to such a global problem as the study on commodity-money relations in general.”*<sup>4</sup>

This aspect of economic history, unfortunately, remains little-studied and under-researched.

She also introduced a unique methodology for extracting hidden and subtle information from coins, which has enabled researchers to achieve a different level of investigation for monetary circulation in Central Asia. In addition to the monographs mentioned above, she also devoted many articles for the treatment of this topic, i.e., on money circulation.

Her studies on monetary sources went alongside the study of documents and other written sources. Based on this complex approach, she discovered and comprehensively analysed the causes and consequences of monetary crises, numerous confiscatory and stabilizing monetary reforms, policies, and practices regarding the coins' weight, fineness, minting etc., the organization of coin circulation, as well as methods to extract fiscal revenues from coinage issues. In addition, she identified the general and specific features of monetary policy and practices in Central Asia, periods of rises and recessions in the money trade, the time of maximum growth of small-scale production, and retail trade. She also studied in depth the history of Bukharkhudat *dirhems*, clarified their classification (3 groups), and traced the reasons for their high rate and successful centuries-old existence. Further, she gave an entirely new interpretation of the so-called 'silver crisis' that had swept across the countries of the Muslim East in the 11th - 13th centuries. Apart from this, she also discovered and analysed the monetary reform of Mas'ud-bek, which ended this 'silver crisis' in Central Asia. This reform had not been mentioned in previous written sources.

The analysis of numismatic materials as a historical source allowed Professor Elena Davidovich to solve a number of important problems on the political history of Central Asia, in particular, to reconstruct some realities and events of the kingdoms of the Samanids, Qarakhanids, Janids (Ashtarkhanid), Sheibanids, etc.

Another area of scientific interest for Professor Elena Davidovich is metrology. The main challenge for this area is that so far, there has been no handwritten sources found that contains the complexities of metrological data for Central Asia in a compact form. Hence the study of each metrological unit requires independent and scrupulous research. Furthermore, with the continuing accumulation of relevant texts

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<sup>3</sup> Davidovich E. A. *History of the Coinage of Central Asia in the 17th-18th Centuries. (Gold and Silver Coins of the Janids)*. Dushanbe: Tajikistan Academy of Science Publishing House, 1964, p. 318; Davidovich E. A. *Corpus of Gold and Silver Coins of the Sheibanids. 16th Century*. Moscow: Nauka, 1992, p. 504.

<sup>4</sup> Davidovich E. A. *History of the Coinage of Central Asia in the 17th-18th Centuries. (Gold and Silver Coins of the Janids)*. Dushanbe: Tajikistan Academy of Science Publishing House, 1964, pp. 6-7.

and sources, the sheer volume of data keeps increasing. The results of Professor Davidovich's studies of metrological data have been published in several articles, as well as in a definitive textbook specialising on metrology in Central Asia, i.e., *The Materials on Metrology in Medieval Central Asia*.<sup>5</sup>

Professor Elena Davidovich is acknowledged to have made tremendous contributions to the study of Arabic and Persian manuscripts, earning her high praise in the field. Primarily through her inspiring scholarship, she developed new methods in conducting comparative analysis of different types of historical texts. These methodologies then provided new tools to allow for the reconstruction of important information regarding the economic history of the Muslim world. The employment of this framework, coupled with diligent content and comparative analysis of the texts in relations to monetary affairs and reforms, had resulted in the discovery of certain errors by medieval authors and scribes, errors which had not been previously noticed by researchers.

According to Dr. Vladimir Nastich: "*A broad outlook, mathematical skill and a brilliant analytical intellect allowed Professor Elena Abramovna to solve many complex issues of monetary circulation in medieval Central Asia based on her method of a comprehensive historical sources' studies, i.e., the study of a whole set of written, numismatic and epigraphic sources (History of the Coinage of Central Asia in the 17th-18th Centuries: Gold and Silver Coins of the Janids. Dushanbe, 1964; History of Money Circulation in Medieval Central Asia, Moscow 1983, etc)*"<sup>6</sup>.

Professor Elena Davidovich was the inspirer, founder and permanent chairman of the Organising Committee of the Barthold Lectures series - an International Seminar on History, Economics and Historical Source Studies of the Muslim Middle Ages. This conference was established in 1974 at the Moscow Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Within 20 years of its existence, this annual conference has significantly intensified the study of the political, economic, and intellectual history of the Muslim Orient, and determined the main trends in the Oriental and Islamic studies not only in post-Soviet countries, but globally as well.

'*Bartoldovtsy*' (i.e. 'Bartholdites', or followers of Barthold), who are permanent participants of the Barthold Lectures remain in touch, and subscribe to a common scientific worldview, based on proper and objective research methodology. They represent their respective countries' scientific intellectual elite (intelligentsia).

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<sup>5</sup> Davidovich E. A. *The Materials on Metrology in Medieval Central Asia*. Moscow: Nauka, 1970 [*Давидович Е.А. Материалы по метрологии средневековой Средней Азии*. М., 1970].

<sup>6</sup> Nastich V, Smirnova N. The Person with a Bright Soul: In Memory of Elena Davidovich. (*Светлая душой (памяти Елены Абрамовны Давидович)*). In *Numismatics and Epigraphy* (Нумизматика и эпиграфика) vol. XIX, 2015, pp. 6 - 25; see also: Nastich V., Davidovich E. A. (1922 - 2013). in: *Vostok (Oriens)*, 2014, vol.3, pp. 212 - 216.



Professor Elena Davidovich and 'Bartoldovtsy'. The "Barthold Lectures series", an International Seminar on History, Economics and Historical Source Studies of the Muslim Middle Age. Zvenigorod (Russia), 1982. (Picture from the personal collection of Tamaz Abashidze, Tbilisi, G. Tsereteli Institute of Oriental Studies)

For many years Professor Elena Davidovich was a regular contributor and member of the editorial board of the Russian scientific publications "*Epigraphy of the East*,"<sup>7</sup> "*Written Monuments of the East: Historical and Philological Research*,"<sup>8</sup> the international journal "*Central Asiatic Journal*,"<sup>9</sup> as well as many other scientific collections and monographs. However, the journal "*Historical Oriental Studies and Specialist Historical Disciplines*" (Issues 1-6, 1989-2004) series deserves special mention. Professor Elena Davidovich was its founder and general editor. This journal covered such broad topics as textology, epigraphy, palaeography, and numismatics, as well as on the history and historiography of the Medieval Muslim Orient.

The main focus of this series is in its comprehensive approach to source studies, i.e., the comprehensive study of all Islamic historical sources written in Arabic script - regardless of the technical methods of writing, the materials used (i.e., paper, stone, metal, etc.) or their position in the existing classifications of historical sources and historical disciplines. Professor Elena Davidovich had suggested to pay special attention to the development of the *methodology* for assessing the *reliability* of reports from historical sources, including conjectural textual criticism; she also suggested a methodology for the finding and extracting of hidden information.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> *Epigrafika Vostoka* (Эпиграфика Востока) published by the Institute of Oriental Studies Russian Academy of Science since 1947. For detailed information please refer to: <https://epigraphy.ivran.ru/>

<sup>8</sup> Scientific seria *Pamyatniki Pis'mennosti Vostoka* (Памятники письменности Востока: историко-филологические исследования) published from 1970 to 1987. Moscow Institute of Oriental Studies. For further information please refer: <http://www.orientalstudies.ru/rus/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=1780>.

<sup>9</sup> The *Central Asiatic Journal* has been published since 1955, focusing on the linguistic, cultural and historical heritage of Central Asia and historically contingent regions. For further information please refer: <https://www.jstor.org/journal/centasiaj>

<sup>10</sup> Davidovich, E. A. Series "Historical Oriental Studies and Special Historical Disciplines": main targets. (Давидович Е.А. Серия «Восточное историческое источниковедение и специальные исторические дисциплины» (Ближайшие задачи). in: *Historical Oriental Studies and Special Historical Disciplines [Восточное историческое источниковедение и специальные исторические дисциплины]*. issue 1, Moscow: Nauka, 1989, pp. 3-4.

In her words: “*The most important target of the source studies on history of the Muslim Orient, is to differentiate between the objective information from the subjective one, and from disinformation. This task is very complicated for any period (ancient, medieval, modern) and requires the mobilization of all methods and approaches in the discovery of the entire historical and cultural contexts in any of historical epochs. And with sharing our scientific experience we will be able to benefit each other as well to enrich our knowledge.*”<sup>11</sup>

The foundation of the special Division of Historical Source Studies at the Department of Oriental Written Sources in the Moscow Institute of Oriental Studies in 1972 is another significant contribution of Professor Elena Davidovich. She was made the Head of Division for many years, and it was here that she created a dynamic and impactful professional creative team - within a high level scientific school - conducting comprehensive research on original Oriental written sources, studies on history, historiography, and special historical disciplines.

Throughout her amazing career, she had guided several students and followers who are her academic and scientific heirs (this present writer included) – forever grateful, forever indebted to her for her scientific scholarship, for whom she had opened up new horizons, and even continued to influence their scientific interest for many years.



Professor Elena Davidovich with her husband Prof. Dr. Boris Litvinskiy, member of Russian Academy of Sciences, and with her colleagues from the Department of Oriental Written Sources in the Moscow Institute of Oriental Studies (Dr. Vladimir Nastich second row, in the middle), and from Japan. September 1996, Moscow (picture from the personal collection of V. Nastich)

Dr. Vladimir Nastich, her student and friend, who had been the Head of the Department of Oriental Written Sources in the Moscow Institute of Oriental Studies for many years, emphasised that Professor Elena Davidovich was a highly talented scholar with versatile interests and a charming personality: “*she was a person with a bright soul. She sought for knowledge and served science throughout her long life, the main subject of her interest was the Islamic numismatics of Central Asia.... She began her scientific career in her studenthood, she taught extensively, she did a lot of field research, she was the initiator and a leader of many scientific conferences and series publications, and, most importantly, a tireless researcher*

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* p. 7

and innovator. .... With her death, an entire era of Russian fundamental research and significant discoveries in Islamic numismatics has been ended”<sup>12</sup>.

Professor Dr. Dmitriy Mikulski, a good friend and one of Prof. Elena’s colleagues had mentioned: “*Scientific contributions and findings of Professor Elena Davidovich, one of the most outstanding Russian scholars, made her famous not only among the Soviet and post-Soviet, but also among foreign scholars. Some of the Western colleagues were even specially studying Russian in order to read her works in the original language. The publication of the volume of her selected works will make an honour to any celebrated Educational and Scholarly Institution*”<sup>13</sup>.

Dr. Natalia Smirnova from the Coins and Medal Department of the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Art, Moscow, is one of the individuals whose kind help and professional contribution to this current publication deserves due mention and praise. For many years she was a loyal friend and colleague of Professor Elena Davidovich. In the obituary on the death of the Professor, Dr. Smirnova wrote, “*Professor Davidovich was generous in the sharing of her knowledge and helped many other scholars as they wrote their dissertations, books and articles. She was a patient but at the same time demanding mentor: she would not tolerate works that “did not demand a conscientious and painstaking study of sources and of the literature, and leave room for arbitrary constructions or flights of fancy.*”<sup>14</sup>

I first met with Professor Elena Davidovich in 1982, when I had just graduated from the Leningrad State University, and joined the Moscow Institute of Oriental Studies as a junior research fellow, where she was the Head of the Division of Historical Source Studies in the Department of Oriental Written Sources. There, she introduced me to the great world of Islamic history and historiography, and demonstrated her mastery in the study of sources – on the ways of arriving at proper and reasoned conclusions, and the importance of scientific accuracy and honesty in one’s work.

She taught me the fundamental methodology of historical sources research. I was blessed to be accepted to visit her home, and to become a close friend of the family. How many hours had I spent with her, and her husband, Professor Boris Litvinsky, a great scholar in his own right. They were both the *living history* of Oriental and Islamic Studies in Russia, and in many post-Soviet countries – Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia. There were so many stories and amazing experiences that they used to share with us during our gatherings at their home – always with amazing pilaf and coffee, which she used to serve in beautiful porcelain cups with tiny silver spoons. I will never forget the special atmosphere of intellectual excellence, openness, and warmth, ever-present and always felt in their home.

Professor Elena Davidovich became my ‘scientific mom,’ who generously shared her knowledge and experience, who encouraged me to enjoy the science, and scholarly life, with such diligent and inspiring mastership that evokes due praise. I never will forget these experiences – *she* fashioned me into a scholar. Needless to say, her death was a huge loss, felt deeply both by myself, and by the scholarly community.

Perhaps the reader may say that this is too personal a reflection, but the relationship between a real Master and his student – yes, it is always personal; this is how real knowledge is shared, from soul to soul, from mouth to mouth. Its not a matter of ranking or degree, or any other ‘practical’ issue.

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<sup>12</sup> Nastich V, Smirnova N. The Person with a Bright Soul: In Memory of Elena Davidovich. (*Светлая духом (памяти Елены Абрамовны Давидович)*). In: *Numismatics and Epigraphy* (Нумизматика и эпиграфика) vol. XIX, 2015, pp. 6 - 25.

<sup>13</sup> Mikulski D. from private letter (08.06.2016, Moscow)

<sup>14</sup> Smirnova N. Elena Davidovich (1922 - 2013). Obituaries. In International Numismatic E-Newsletter, 16 February 2014, p. 12 <https://www.inc-cin.org/assets/pdf/newsletter/inen-16-2014.pdf>



Elena Davidovich and Boris Litvinsky, with Tatiana Denisova. Moscow, 2008.

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In 2013 her son, Anatoly Litvinsky, entrusted me with the manuscript of his mother's latest book project, to complete and to prepare for publication posthumously, I accepted it both as a huge honour, and as an honourable duty. The work being done on this, her latest book project, makes me feel as though she were still with us; I am very grateful to be given this opportunity to help spread her wisdom and intellectual contributions to the world at large.

At the end of 2022, this new book by Professor Elena Davidovich *Numismatica Transoxania*<sup>15</sup>, is *finally* published in Kuala Lumpur by Raja Zarith Sofiah Centre for Advanced Studies on Islam, Science and Civilization (RZS- CASIS (UTM) and Al-Sultan Abdullah History and Civilization research Centre (AL-ASAR) Pahang State Museum in Kuantan (Malaysia). It has taken almost a decade to publish posthumously. And now it's happened on the 100th anniversary of the author's birth year. Her ever-living memory unites her students, friends, and colleagues during these past ten years of labour in producing this book, as our token of reverence and gratitude to our mentor, Professor Elena Davidovich.

This book would have never been published without the generous contribution and hard work of Katharine Judelson, its translator and first editor. She has worked directly, over several years, with Professor Elena Davidovich - clarifying the terminologies and editing the text of each chapter under the guidance and supervision of the author. Due to her mastery and professionalism, Katharine did not only manage to translate the highly complicated and technical numismatic material into English, she also had the rare ability to preserve and convey to the English readership the unique writing style of the author herself. Remarkably, on the pages of this new publication, the author's voice, Professor Elena Davidovich, so fondly familiar to her students, friends, and colleagues, will be heard once more.

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<sup>15</sup> Elena Davidovich, K. Judelson (transl.), T. Denisova (ed.) *Numisatica Transoxania. From 9<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century*. 2022, Kuantan, RZS-CASIS UTM & AL-ASAR Pahang State Museum Corp., 812 pp.



Elena Davidovich and Boris Litvinskiy at home. (Moscow, 2009)  
(Picture from personal collection T. Mkrtichev)

We reproduce here, in her own words, Katharine Judelson's poignant letter which describes some of the history of this book, and her friendship with the Professor:

*"On returning from Moscow to England in 1974 with my husband and children, I was happy to be able to continue working as a free-lance translator/interpreter. I had been working for the Foreign Languages Publishing House in Moscow for eight years, gaining valuable experience in my 'craft', but now had to look for new openings in whichever town we happened to 'land' in England, where my husband was working as a junior doctor and needing to adapt to a hospital system very different from the Soviet one to which he had been accustomed.*

*Our arrival in Southampton in 1986 coincided very usefully with an important international meeting of the World Archaeological Congress (WAC)<sup>16</sup> held there, at which I not only worked as an interpreter in various sections of the Congress but was also called upon to translate at meetings aimed at involving Soviet archaeologists in a variety of research projects. This initiative would enable a dozen or so British archaeologists to take part in excavations at various sites in the Soviet Union and avail themselves of invaluable opportunities in places with which they were familiar from the academic literature but had not been able to visit in person before.*

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<sup>16</sup> The World Archaeological Congress (WAC) is a non-governmental, not for profit organisation and is the only archaeological organisation with elected global representation. Membership is open to archaeologists, heritage managers, students and members of the public. WAC is committed to redressing global inequities in archaeology through conferences, publications, and scholarly programs. It has a special interest in protecting the cultural heritage of Indigenous peoples, minorities and economically disadvantaged countries, and encourages the participation of Indigenous peoples, researchers from economically disadvantaged countries and members of the public. <https://worldarch.org/>

*One of these projects enabled them to travel to the city of Merv on the Great Silk Road, where the International Merv Project was set up by Dr. Georgina Herrmann<sup>17</sup> from the Institute of Archaeology<sup>18</sup> in London with a team involving British, Turkmen and Russian archaeologists and representatives of several other countries as well. Thanks to my work at the above-mentioned WAC, I was given the chance by Professor Peter Ucko<sup>19</sup> to work with this team in Turkmenistan as their interpreter over a period of almost ten years from 1992 and it broadened my horizons no end. This enabled me to meet many illustrious archaeologists from all over Russia and the previous Soviet republics.*

*One of the giants of that period was the world-famous numismatist Elena Davidovich, who was revered and admired as the leading authority on the coinage of Central Asia. At the time she was being encouraged by colleagues and fellow archaeologists to assemble some of her most important numismatic articles in a book which, if translated, could enable many numismatists outside Russia to better appreciate her knowledge and research skills. Professor Davidovich was keen for this book to appear in English, while she still had the strength to prepare it for publication for a wider international audience, despite suffering from serious insomnia and deteriorating eyesight and, when virtually housebound, needing to limit her 'outings' to important archaeological or numismatic gatherings. I was thrilled when she asked me to translate her articles.*

*Numismatics is not the easiest of subjects for a translator to come to grips with, but my affection and admiration for Elena Davidovich made me determined to do all I possibly could to help her book see the light of day. In the final three or four years, when working on her book mainly from England, there were limits to the amount of time I could spend alongside her. Whenever I was in Moscow, however, my visits and the days I spent in her flat with her and her charming and equally erudite husband, Professor Boris Litvinsky (renowned specialist in the history and archaeology of Central Asia), were unforgettable – a delightful honour I shall treasure till the end of my days.*

*The fate of this book – often beset by administrative, financial and other problems on its path to publication – has now come full circle for me as well, since it is to be published in Malaysia, the country where I spent the happiest years of my childhood!<sup>20</sup>*

The main subject of this book is the study of the numismatic sources of Transoxania and the utilisation of these sources in reconstructing the history of Transoxania during the eighth until the thirteenth centuries. The author provides her analysis of several hoards of coins which covers among others their physical features, the contents of their inscriptions and their positions, the purity of their metal content and the terms that were used to refer to the coins. She supplements her analysis of these numismatic sources by comparing her findings with the information contained in existing written sources that covers the history of Transoxania. Through her studies and analysis, the author has been able to address and fill in the lacunae in the history of Transoxania, especially with regard to the social, political and economic history of this region during these periods.

The first chapter of this book discusses Ghitrif b. Ata's coin reforms during his appointment as the governor of Khurasan (792-793 CE). The author focuses mainly on the metal content and the value of the

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<sup>17</sup> Honorary Professor Dr. Georgina Herrmann, (born 20 October 1937) is a British archaeologist and academic, specialising in Near Eastern archaeology. She had spent her career as an active field archaeologist and as a lecturer at University College London from 1994 to 2002. <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/fellows/georgina-herrmann-FBA/>

<sup>18</sup> For details regarding the Ancient Merv Project of London Institute of Archaeology please see: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology/research/ancient-merv-project>

<sup>19</sup> Professor Peter Peter John Ucko (1938 – 2007) was an influential English archaeologist. He served as Director of the Institute of Archaeology at University College London (UCL), and was a Fellow of both the Royal Anthropological Institute and the Society of Antiquaries of London. See in details: [https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-1-4419-0465-2\\_1227](https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-1-4419-0465-2_1227)

<sup>20</sup> Katharine Judelson, née Villiers – Southampton, 2022. From a private letter.

*ghitrifi* coins. This information is derived from a historical text known as the *History of Bukhara*, written in Arabic by Abu Bakar Muhammad b. Ja'far Narshakhi in 943-944 CE, and translated into Persian by Abu Nasr Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Nasr Qubawi in 1128 CE. The author mainly refers to a chapter titled "On the minting of dirhams and silver [coins] in Bukhara" and aims to assess its reliability as a historical source. This assessment is conducted by comparing it to other historical texts of the period and determining the truthfulness of its contents by cross-checking it with the physical artefacts, i.e., the coins.

The second chapter explores the circulation of money in Transoxania during the Samanid rule. The author firstly discusses the role of gold coins in the circulation of money in Central Asia during the tenth century, especially in Bukhara and Samarqand. She refers to the testimonies of Istakhri and Ibn Hawqal while also comparing them to the testimonies of other Muslim geographers to determine their reliability. Following that, she outlines the importance and the nature of Samanid silver dirhams. This includes their usage in foreign and internal trade as well as their purity standard. The chapter then further discusses on the *musayyabi*, *muhammadi* and *ghitrifi* dirhams. Among the aspects of the coins that were covered are their rate of exchange, and their metal composition. The final part of this chapter is concerned with the circulation of the copper *fulus*, their weight, size and denominations.

The third chapter talks about the Samanid *fulus* of Farghana, Uzgend and Akhsikat, with a particular emphasis on the classification of their formularies. The author aims to demonstrate the importance of copper coins as sources of information on the feudal fiefdoms. By referring to Narshakhi's *History of Bukhara*, she firstly outlined the development of the institution of feudal fiefdoms in return for service that was practiced by the Samanid during the ninth and tenth centuries, and the economic aspects of these fiefdoms. The nature of the relationships between the central power and the owner of the fiefdoms throughout the Samanid period were closely examined and compared alongside the contents and formularies of the coin inscriptions. This information was then used to determine the common features for the classification of formularies, such as the names that were inscribed on the coins and their positions.

The fourth chapter is concerned with the Samanid coins of Quba. The author describes three known coins which were produced in different years and during the reign of three different Samanid Amirs. The descriptions of these three coins include their weight, size, inscriptions, and the names of the individuals who appear on the coins. She also presents various studies done on the method of reading the names that were inscribed on the coins. By utilising all these information, she is able to demonstrate the degree of autonomy and independence of the rulers of such fiefdoms.

The fifth chapter of this book analyses the coins of Farghana as a source for characterising the fief system in Central Asia during the tenth century. The artefacts used by the author includes forty-seven coins from Farghana and Akhsikath which were then classified into thirty-seven variants. This chapter is divided into two parts; the first part describes the coins and their general characteristics whereas the second part examines the coins as historical sources for the study of the fief system in medieval Central Asia. By analysing the outward appearances of the coins and the arrangement of their inscriptions, the author determines the nature of the relationships between the central power and the ruler of the territories throughout different periods in the history of medieval Central Asia.

The sixth chapter presents new data on the history of the Samanids which were obtained from the hoard that was found in Samarqand in 1967. The hoard consists of 125 coins. Its details—such as inscriptions of the rulers' names and positions—are analysed and used to assess the economic and political importance of various cities and districts in Central Asia. This includes the history of Farghana as a fiefdom and its level of development during the Samanid period in the ninth century. By analysing these new numismatic data while taking into consideration the historical background of Central Asia during the ninth and tenth centuries, the author was able to determine the chronology and order of succession of rulers of cities like Akhsikat in a clearer manner. Further, this chapter also describes the *pishiz fulus* that were discovered among the Samanid hoard.

The seventh chapter contains an analysis of a hoard found in Samarqand in 1967 and it contains two specimens which revealed a new Samanid mint known as *Barab*. They were issued from 922-923 CE which coincided with the rule of Amir Nasr II b. Ahmad (r. 914-943 CE). Another collection of Samanid *fulus* of

Barab that was studied in this chapter were issued from 1210-1211 CE which coincided with the rule of Muhammad b. Tekesh. Through the study of the inscriptions, the author was able to extract information on the development of trade and economy of Central Asia during the ninth and tenth centuries. These coins also reveal the social and political aspects of the Samanid coinage of Barab as well as information that were not found in written sources, especially with regard to the senior-vassal relationship between the rulers of Central Asia.

The eighth chapter specifies and clarifies the chronology and genealogy of the Central Asian Qarakhanids during the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. This is achieved through a detailed analysis of the inscriptions on published and unpublished numismatic materials. Among the numismatic materials are the Uzjand and Samarqand issues, the Qadir coins and the Marghinan coins. Another artefact that is studied is the Northern Uzjand Mausoleum. Based on the information extracted from the analysis of these artefacts, the author is able to re-establish the list of Qarakhanid rulers as well as their lives and relationships with other rulers of their time. For instance, she establishes the life and death of Jalal al-Din Qadir-khan and his relationship with Muhammad Khwarazm-shah. The author's analysis of these numismatic materials also allowed her to re-examine the existing written accounts of these periods such as the account of Juwayni.

The ninth chapter describes the history and main phenomena of the circulation of money in Central Asia during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, as well as the thirteenth century to a lesser extent. Although this chapter prioritises on finding out the reason for the decline of silver dirhams and how it affected the circulation of money, various other related issues were also elaborated. She firstly analyses the period of the 'silver crisis' and the gradual debasement of silver from the eleventh until the thirteenth centuries. She then describes the coins of various metals, and the main characteristics and differences between the circulation of money during these periods as compared to the previous periods. Lastly, she establishes the reasons which contributed to the changes in the circulation of money and the minting of coins during the 'silver crisis' period. Her main sources include Narshakhi's *History of Bukhara* and Central Asian coins of different metals which were minted during various ruling powers. Consequently, both methods of textual and chemical analysis were utilised by the author to study and analyse these sources.

The tenth chapter studies the Kanibadam hoard of Qarakhanid coins and how it reflects the circulation of silver-plated copper dirhams in Central Asia during the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. She begins this chapter with the study of the inscriptions, weights, dimensions, decorative presentations, and dates of the coins in this hoard which includes those issued in Uzjand, Marghinan and Banakath. Through this information, she identifies the trends in the issue and circulation of these dirhams throughout the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries and how it differed during the reign of one ruler to another. The author also demonstrated the different ways in which silver and copper coins were used in the economic transactions of Central Asia, as well as the factors which led to the disruption of money circulation and inflation.

The eleventh chapter examines the inscriptions of coins that were issued in Quba. These coins were obtained from the Bishek hoard and from two hoards that were studied by R. Vasmer. As Quba represented one of the mints of the Qarakhanids, her analysis of the inscriptions provides information regarding the two Qarakhanid Qhaganates. The author analyses the dates, titles and names that were mentioned on the coins to determine the reign of the ruler in which they were issued. Other questions that were addressed includes on the identity of the ruler to whom the title Arslan-khan belongs to (i.e., whether it belonged to Muhammad b. Nasr or Sulayman b. Yusuf) and on how Ibrahim b. Nasr (Tamghach-khan) reformed the issue and circulation of money after his conquest of Farghana.

The twelfth chapter aims to prove that the Shirabad hoard, which consists of the Saghaniyan coins, serves as a valuable source of historical information on the political and economic developments of Central Asia during the second quarter of the eleventh century. Furthermore, the author aims to prove that these coins are able to supplement and amend information from written sources—such as the accounts of Bayhaqi—regarding the political and economic history of Central Asia during this period. She firstly

described the inscriptions on the Saghaniyan coins which includes among others the names of caliphs, their issue data and the names and titles of rulers. Through the study of these coins, the author was able to clarify several questions such as the identity of the ruler to whom the titles belonged to, the relations between Saghaniyan and Qarakhanid rulers and the changes in Saghaniyan's political position throughout this period.

The thirteenth chapter addresses the lacunae in the study of the Qarakhanids' political history, especially with regard to the study of the chronology and genealogy of the Qarakhanids during the second half of the twelfth century. By studying the inscriptions on the newly discovered and unpublished coins from the Toi-Tyube hoard and comparing the new data with those found in written sources, the author was able to clarify several important questions. These include questions on the order of succession in the Qarakhanid state, on the chronological framework for the reigns of three Qarakhanid rulers, on the level of accuracy of the old views on the chronology of the Qarakhanids, and on the nature of the relationships between some of the rulers in question.

The fourteenth chapter contains a review and criticism on M. N. Fyodorov's method of interpretation of manuscripts and academic literatures, as well as his approach towards the study of numismatic sources. These criticisms are based on two of his articles whose main subjects include the restoration of the Afrasiyab hoard, the reconstruction of the Qarakhanids' dynastic history during the 1160s and 1170s, and the Qarakhanid ruler Mas'ud's genealogy and the chronology of his reign. By criticising Fyodorov's methodologies and interpretations, the author demonstrates the confusions and inaccuracies that are present within his articles. In addition, she also provides the corrections for Fyodorov's interpretation on the political history of the Qarakhanids along with evidences which support the validity of her claims.

The fifteenth chapter discusses the problems of attribution with regards to the Qarakhanid *fulus* of 390 AH/999-1000 CE from Khujanda. She refers to various studies conducted on these *fulus* which were kept in the British Museum and first published by St. Lane-Poole. These studies include the writings of M.N. Fedorov, B.D. Kochnev, W.W. Barthold and R. Vasmer. Some of the questions that were addressed in these studies as well as the author's own study is on the owner of the title *qara-khaqan* and the *laqab* Nasir al-Haqq, and on the position of names in the inscriptions of copper *fulus* and how they reflect the actual hierarchy of the Qarakhanids. Further, this chapter also presents the differences between the *fals* from the British Museum and the *fals* from Farghana, on top of her criticisms on the reading of the inscriptions that was published by St. Lane-Poole.

The sixteenth chapter presents the author's findings based on her study on the newly discovered *dirhams* of Akhsikat that were obtained from the Asht hoard. These Akhsikat *dirhams* provide supplementary information on the history of the Qarakhanids in the first quarter of the eleventh century. She firstly describes the contents of the hoard and the inscriptions found on the coins. She then compares the Akhsikat *dirhams* in the Asht hoard with the silver Akhsikat *dirhams* of the same period which had already been published. The findings from this comparison demonstrate the changes that had occurred within the Qarakhanid state in 415 AH. Some of the changes that were studied include the identity of rulers who held certain titles, the formularies on the coins and the changes in their marginal inscriptions.

The seventeenth and final chapter presents the reading of inscriptions and analysis of the unpublished Termez hoard containing copper silver-plated *dirhams* from the thirteenth century. The author firstly describes the physical features of these coins including the content of their inscriptions. Specifically, she applies epigraphic methods in examining the marginal inscriptions of the Termez coins. The study of these coins, alongside the reference to existing written sources, allows the author to clarify various questions on the political and economic history of Termez, including questions on the nature of the relationship between the Sultan and the Caliph, the reasons for the issuing of these coins, and their characteristics.

Professor Elena Davidovich will remain in the history of Oriental Studies as a highly qualified professional with a worldwide reputation; whose scientific contribution is indisputable, whose methods and approaches are universal, and whose findings and conclusions are fundamental and not subject to momentary conjuncture. She developed and enriched the intellectual tradition of Russian Oriental studies, founded by the great scholars of the past.

In the words of Dr. Natalia Smirnova:

*The immense legacy of Elena Davidovich cannot be fully appreciated yet. Until almost the very end of her life she was working on the manuscript of her book in English, which incorporated the main results of her work over an incredibly productive lifetime.<sup>21</sup>*

Her scientific heritage offers an opportunity for a new generation of scholars the world over to discover the depths of professional historical source studies and to appreciate properly the approaches and prospects of scientific numismatics and its ultimately significance as a complex historical source.

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<sup>21</sup> Smirnova N. Elena Davidovich (1922 - 2013). Obituaries. In International Numismatic E-Newsletter, 16 February 2014, p. 12 <https://www.inc-cin.org/assets/pdf/newsletter/inen-16-2014.pdf>