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Foreword



From its foundation, the Royal Asiatic Society has published translations of work about Asia. The Oriental Translation Fund's first initiatives extended to Georgian, Armenian, and Turkish maritime history. An early Russian Foreign Member, Mirza Alexander Kazem Beg of Kazan University was commissioned to prepare a translation of Syed Muhammad Reza's Turkish history of the Crimean Khans, but in the event confined himself to a critical edition of the original. The Society's library even held Father Hyacinth's (Bichurin) Russian publications on the people of Central Asia and Eastern Turkestan, today's Uyghurs.

What follows is a translation with notes and commentary by Derek Davis, a current Fellow of the Society, of a work by the great Russian author Alexander Pushkin. It describes Pushkin's 1829 visit to friends in the army, political dissidents (Decembrists), who were about to defeat Ottoman Turkey and inaugurate a period of Russian dominance in the Middle East.

The article is published as a special Supplement to the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* as the Society approaches its 200th Anniversary.

The *Journal* thus continues a publishing tradition of making available for Anglophone readers translations of perceptive observations and studies of Asia which are too easily overlooked. Pushkin is well known for his outstanding literary contributions. This is the first complete English edition of his admired 1829 travelogue and the first comprehensive treatment of its political dimension and necessarily cloaked messages, an outline of which the translator presented to a conference in Russia in 2020.

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