

ON THE DATE OF *AL-ŞIĤĀĤ AL-'AJAMIYYA*'S COMPOSITION

Among a significant group of Persian dictionaries composed in the medieval Middle East a special place belongs to *al-Şiĥāĥ al-'Ajamiyya*. A certain priority of this work was determined presumably by the following factors: i) it is probably one of the oldest surviving Persian-Oghūz (Azerbaijani) dictionaries; ii) a considerable volume of Persian vocabulary is represented there (over five and a half thousand lexems); iii) practically every author working on lexicography used this work [1]; iv) judging by the number of the surviving copies (about 40), the dictionary was well-known and was circulated among different social groups.

The dictionary contains a wide range of the common and everyday Persian words along with a whole layer of Arabic words which became interwoven into the fabric of the Persian literary language. The dictionary is not supplied with quotations from poems to confirm the meaning of the words. This last means that it was not designed to be a dictionary of rhymes but, as it is marked by its author in a brief introduction in Arabic, it was intended to give a precise meaning and explanation of a Persian word in Turkic.

Besides this introduction the dictionary actually consists of two parts (*qism*) and a supplement (*tatimma*). The first part is a dictionary of nouns, the second — of infinitives, while the supplement provides brief explanations of the grammatical structure of the Persian language, focusing mainly on the conjugation of Persian verbs. It is not necessary to consider here in all detail the structure of this lexicographic work — this information one can find in reference-books and in numerous catalogues [2]. The work was published in Tabrīz in 1983 by Professor Ghulām-Husayn Bigdilī on the basis of a single copy from the University Library of Bratislava (Slovakia) [3].

The controversy which arose around rather vague evidence of the seventeenth century Turkish bibliographer Ḥājjī Khalīfa concerning the authorship of the dictionary (none of the existing copies reveal the name of the author) [4] was decided in favour of a famous scholar originating from Nakhichevan (Azerbaijan), Fakhr al-Dīn Hindūshāh b. Sanjar Şāhibī Gīrānī Nakhchiwānī. He stays in the history of Persian and Azerbaijan culture as a connoisseur of Arabic, a historian, lexicographer, and writer. Among his works is the anthology of Arabic poetry *Mawārid al-adab* composed in Tabrīz in 707/1308. In 724/1324 he wrote a historical treatise — *Tajārib al-salaf* containing two parts. The first one is a translation from Arabic into Persian of the historical section of *Kitāb al-Fakhrī* by Ibn al-Tiqtāqa (701/1301). The second part is an original writing that contains much additional informa-

tion on the history of the Fatimid dynasty in Egypt, on the Buwayhids, and the Seljukids in Iran [5].

The date of birth of Hindūshāh is considered to be unknown, as well as the exact date of his death. He died presumably in 730/1329—30. There is, however, a reason to believe that he had died after the accomplishment of *Tajārib al-salaf*, but before 728/1327—28, since his son, the famous *munshī* Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad (b. 687/1288 in Nakhchiwān) mentions him as “departed to the other world” in his Persian explanatory dictionary entitled *Şiĥāĥ al-Furs* (2,300 entries) which he began in 728/1327—28.

Until recently a number of specialists in Turkic and Iranian studies were dubious of Hindūshāh's authorship of *al-Şiĥāĥ al-'Ajamiyya*, suggesting that its author had been either one *shaykh* Yahyā al-Amīrī al-Rūmī al-Qurashī or Taqī al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Pīr 'Alī Barkawī (or Birghilī). The latter died in 981/1573—74. According to the same Ḥājjī Khalīfa, he compiled a work under the same title. If we accept the last point of view [6], then the Persian-Turkic dictionary *al-Şiĥāĥ al-'Ajamiyya* should have been composed in the middle of the sixteenth century. In this case, it cannot be regarded as one of the earliest Persian-Oghūz dictionaries.

The controversy, however, may be settled in a very simple way, if evidence of a man of letters, a scribe who lived 500 years ago, be taken into account. Owing to his careful attitude to his work and to the text of the protograph he was ordered to copy, we have all necessary information on the subject. That scribe, one Mīr Ḥusayn, in the middle of the month of Dhū'l-Ḥijja 878/early May 1474 made a copy of a volume (preserved now in the Library of the Cambridge University, call No. L1. 6.10) folios 1b—106a of which were occupied by the dictionary *al-Şiĥāĥ al-'Ajamiyya*. In this volume Mīr Ḥusayn had copied out the colophon by the author of the writing that runs as follows:

“With the good assistance and help [of Allah] accomplished is *al-Şiĥāĥ al-'Ajamiyya*, without which no one striving to get the knowledge of the Persian language can do, be he a youth or a grown-up, after the sunrise on Tuesday, at the end of the noble month of Dhū'l-Ḥijja of the year 677, let Allah help the author of this work and all other Muslims”.

Now, due to the scribe Mīr Ḥusayn, we can safely say that Hindūshāh Nakhchiwānī accomplished his lexicographic work on Tuesday, 8 May 1279, and that the old controversy is settled at last.

Notes

1. The most famous of these are: a) *Shāmil al-lughāt*, composed ca. 900/1496—97 by Ḥasan b. Ḥusayn Qarā-Ḥiṣārī; b) *Lughāt-i Ḥalīmī*, composed in 917/1511—12 by Luṭfallāh b. Abī Yūsuf al-Ḥalīmī; c) *Lughāt-i Ni'matallāh*, composed not later than 947/1540—41 by Ni'matallāh b. Aḥmad al-Rūmī.

2. On the catalogues and the work see, C. A. Storey, *Persian Literature. A Bio-Bibliographical Survey* (Leiden, 1984), iii, pt. 1, pp. 7—8.

3. Call No. TD 13. See *Arabische, türkische und persische Handschriften der Universitätsbibliothek in Bratislava* (Bratislava, 1961), p. 497, No. 549.

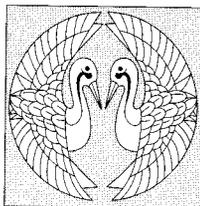
4. Ḥājjī Khalīfa calls this work *Ṣiḥāḥ al-'ajam*, attributing it to Hindūshāh al-Nakhchiwānī. He mentions also that two versions of the work are known to him — “the old and the new one”. The beginning of the work quoted by Ḥājjī Khalīfa is identical with the beginning of the “anonymous” dictionary *al-Ṣiḥāḥ al-'Ajamiyya*.

5. This work is published in Iran by Amīr Ḥasan Rawḍātī (Isfahan, 1360/1981). It is supplemented with a facsimile of a mid-15th century manuscript.

6. The most straightforward and systematic presentation of this point of view appears in the most recent publication dealing with this problem, see Sayyid Muḥammad and Muḥīt Ṭabāṭaba'ī, “*Ṣiḥāḥ al-'Ajam*. Kitāb-i nawsākhta wa nāshinākhta”, *Āyanda*, IX/12 (1362/1984), pp. 895—903.

7. See *A Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the Library of the University of Cambridge* by Ed. G. Browne (Cambridge, 1896), p. 253, No. 170. Ed. G. Browne is quoting the whole colophon, but his reading of the name of the scribe and of the date is incorrect: “Raṣūl b. Ḥusayn, 868 A.H.” He does not quote the author's colophon reproduced in the copy — probably he did not realise its significance.

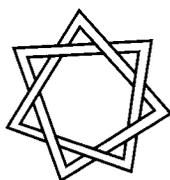
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Front cover:

"A Ship Among the Blocks of Ice", a colour drawing from the book 2 of the manuscript *Kankai Ibun* preserved in the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies (C 191), fol. 14a, 14.0 × 20.5 cm.

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