From archetype to oral tradition: editing Persian and Turkish literary texts
by Barbara Flemming

The intricacies of the textual transmission of pre-modern Persian and Turkish literary texts have exercised generations of editors. They remind us of the fact that we are dealing, not with the remnants of a dead civilization, but with a transmission process which was very much alive. Unlike the Christian monks who recorded classical texts in the Middle Ages, Muslim copyists were preserving a tradition which still governed their lives. While some hardly understood the texts they copied and therefore committed mechanical errors, many were themselves authors who worried about the transmission of their own works[1] and who, when they recorded the works of others, reflected upon the texts which they recorded and felt prompted to add, enlarge, abridge or otherwise emend them [2]. Two seemingly contradictory generalizations are applied to the scribes: first, that they are to blame for an all-embracing corruption and deformation of manuscripts; and second, that many manuscripts, especially Ottoman ones, attest to a remarkable overall fidelity in the transmission of texts.

The canons of textual criticism, developed for editing Greek, Latin, and medieval European texts, are based on preconditions which are seldom met even in the fields of study for which they were developed. One basic rule on which textual criticism rested was the existence of a fairly uncontaminated textual tradition, in which relationships between manuscripts must be visible through common mistakes. A genesis other than that from a single 'lost original' (*Urtext*) was excluded; one archetype had to be established by the editor with, if necessary, hyparchetypes[3].

Two attitudes towards editing provide an instructive contrast: a 'corrective' one which makes use of the mechanical aspects of classical textual criticism in order to establish corrected standard texts, and a critical one in the classical sense adhering fully to the canons of textual criticism. To these may be added the scholars who increasingly concentrate on textual history, on the formation and function of literary texts through the ages.

The activities of scholars who aimed at producing corrected standard texts originated with the assumption that all manuscripts were in some way corrupt. These scholars collected and collated the best available textual witnesses, but then, setting aside *recensio* and stemmatic relationships, they chose the readings which they preferred as being nearest to the *usus scribendi* of their authors. This rectification process required great literary knowledge and considerable conjectural skills. Its intention was to attain the intended text of the author[4].

Undeniably first editions of Persian and Turkish texts produced in this way constituted a welcome first access to many literary works, and many of them will be considered definitive for a long time. Nevertheless, it has long been recognized that this method in establishing texts has certain shortcomings[5].

The second group of editors, then, considered it their primary task to establish the archetype; following the canon of textual criticism stemmas were drawn up, and hyparchetypes and archetypes established. Without doubt critical editions produced in this way, with an exhaustive critical apparatus and excluding conjectures or emendations unsupported by the manuscript sources, present a great advance in our fields of study.

Yet the relationships of manuscripts often do not conform to the preconditions laid down in the canon of textual criticism. Common mistakes do allow us to distinguish groups of manuscripts, but other patterns overlap between these groups: i.e. a mixture of deliberate editing and copyists' mistakes results in complicated relationships of textual witnesses, the evaluation of which becomes a daunting task; stemmas are often highly hypothetical[6].

Not only have texts been reworked and corrected by the author or later editors and 'deformed' by scribes, but a simultaneous or successive use of multiple models also has to be taken into consideration.

Some of this is illustrated by the fate of surviving autographs[7] in so far as they have been studied. Andreas Tietze, when editing two works by Muṣṭafā ʿĀlī (*Naṣīḥatnāme* and the description of Cairo), had in the first case a manuscript finalized and acknowledged by the author himself[8], and in the second, a copy of the author's 'presentation copy' made while the autograph was still being reworked[9]. G. M. Meredith-Owens[10] as well as Ş. Turan[11] had their authors' autograph drafts, the latter with hundreds of marginal and interlinear additions and corrections presumably

to be incorporated into the text, and with indications which passages were to be transposed.

The copying of autographs simultaneously with the author's reworking of companion volumes created a complex textual tradition not foreseen in the textbooks based on Karl Lachmann's principles, according to which a manuscript which can be shown to be directly dependent on another should be discarded. But that would deprive the editor of valuable guidance, if, as Ménage has shown, the author's instructions had been carried out in the 'dependent' manuscript[12].

In the case of the old Persian mathnawi *Hadīkatu l-hakīka* by Sanā'ī, the approach pursued by J.T.P. de Bruijn[13] resulted in the acknowledgement that we are not dealing with one original text, but with several texts emanating from the author himself. Shifts of emphasis and changes of function resulted in the transposition of sections of the work and, accordingly, in a change of the title.

Khāqānī's *Tuhfat al-'Irākayn*, too, provides an example. The author's copy, a 'virgin' as long as it was not dedicated, was worked over more than once for his successive patrons, presented in a half-completed form and then rededicated. Exceptionally, simultaneous praise of a series of people living in different places served as an account of the poet's career. After the official presentation some copies could be given to friends with personal dedications which afterwards were incorporated (A.L.F.A. Beelaert). On the other hand, an author might suppress certain passages in the course of rededication (Jan Schmidt).

Much effort has been spent on the reconstruction of the oldest version of the Persian Sufi mathnawi *Tarīku t-tahkīk*; finally its editor, Bo Utas[14], came to the conclusion that it was the product of a long series of users, any of whom could have made alterations and additions through the ages. Such late strata may be far removed from the lost original, if it ever existed, but have to be taken seriously.

It would be a laborious, but probably rewarding task to retrace the successive strata of the Turkish *Vesīletü n-nedjāt* (*Mevlid*) by Süleymān Çelebi. In all probability the oldest layer of its textual history was soon overshadowed by later layers which served various religious intentions, for which the text has not only been expanded, but also deliberately abridged.

Questions concerning the authenticity of, for example, the *Tarīku t-tahkīk* just mentioned — attributed to a multitude of authors — or of the *rubā'īs* of 'Omar Khayyam have puzzled generations of scholars.

Collections of letters, which have hitherto received only marginal attention as works of literature[15], illustrate the question of authenticity. The incorporation of a 'forgery' once prompted doubts on a famous 16th-century Ottoman collection.

It is a point of interest whether authenticity can be claimed for the old collection purporting to be an exchange of letters and treatises, in Arabic and Persian,

between Sadr ad-Dīn Konawī and Nasīr ad-Dīn Tūsī. The collection may have resulted from a conscious purpose of the compiler (Gudrun Schubert).

Authenticity is not in doubt in the case of the famous collection of hundreds of letters written by the Indian Nakshbandī Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindī and compiled under his personal supervision, whereas doubts seem to exist regarding some posthumous additions (J.G.J. Ter Haar).

Special editorial problems are raised by works built up in stages, such as the biographies of Ottoman Sheykhülislams. The first author of this collective work, Müstakīmzāde (1719-1788), incidentally, was a Nakshbandī who traced his Sufi *silsila* back to the Indian Shaykh Sirhindī just mentioned. Each of the seven parts of the collective *Devhatü l-meshāyikh*, built up by four successive authors, must be submitted separately to textual criticism (Barbara Kellner-Heinkele).

If some literary texts did have an exceedingly complex written tradition, others were transmitted by word of mouth in the first place. The origins of this practice go back many centuries to the beginnings of Persian and Turkish poetry; the earliest ghazals belonged to the oral poetry of the minstrels.

Oral transmission had three salient aspects: first, not only poets, but also some prose writers preferred dictating to writing (Bo Utas, Jan Just Witkam); second, a reliable oral transmission need not be excluded; indeed, singers may well have preserved the oldest collection of Sanā'ī's ghazals; and third, the oldest *dīvān* of ghazals in Persian, by Sanā'ī, did not even exist as a book which might be reconstructed. Each poem has to be treated as a separate case of textual transmission (J.T.P. de Bruijn). Similarly, the poems of the Turkish minstrel Karacaoğlan, never collected in a *dīvān*, but transmitted through centuries by word of mouth and partly sung, and printed in various versions, have to be studied individually[16].

All this adds to the objections which scholars in other fields have already raised against a canon of textual criticism which, with its stringency, fails to correspond to the realities. More plausible are assumptions regarding the formation of a text: assumptions that while texts were produced, even halfway through the process, copyists began to write and authors began to revise. The resulting texts were reshaped by early editors. The interest of several, or numerous, strata of revision lies in the function which they fulfilled for successive users.

Turning from textual history to the actual editing, the difficulty involved will depend on the conditions confronting each editor. To begin with dimensions and transmission, these can take one of four forms: 1) very voluminous texts, 2) very short texts, 3) a scarcity, and 4) a profusion of textual witnesses.

The editors of immense works such as the *Shāhnāma*, illustrating the first group, have to over-

come more than the usual difficulties; their work may be compared with the herculean labours of the editors of the *Mathnawī* and the *Dīwān* by Djalāl ad-Dīn Rūmī[17]. A future editor of Muṣṭafā ʿĀlī's *Künhü l-akhbār* has to wrestle with the problems provided by four volumes of prose interspersed with poetry; his task will be matched by the future edition of the ten volumes of Evliyā Çelebi's *Seyāḥāt-nāme,·* partially preserved in the author's draft.

Ghazals illustrate the second group; despite their small size they have a particular interest. Transmitted by word of mouth and only much later collected and written down, their textual history must be studied separately. Their rhyme words may help the editor, who must be aware that his edition creates the basis for all further assumptions; as Fritz Meier has observed, 'dass eine gute textausgabe das kriterium des reims schon voraussetzt und zugleich erst die bedingung für den einsatz dieses kriteriums schafft'[18].

Important old Persian and Turkish works which have widened our limits of awareness often survive in a single, sometimes late or faulty, manuscript; the old Turkish Book of Dede Ḳorḳut exists in 'one and a half' undated manuscripts (G.L. Lewis). The manuscript of the *Dīwān lughāt at-Turk* by Kāshghārī is an exception as it is taken from the autograph, and thanks to a stroke of good fortune the *Kutadghu Bilig* exists in three manuscripts.

On the other hand, texts of which a multitude of manuscripts and printed editions exist illustrate the fourth category. Hundreds of manuscripts all over the world survive of the *Munādjāt* attributed to Anṣārī (Utas). Eighty-five manuscripts exist of the *Künhü l-akhbār* (Jan Schmidt). There are at least sixty manuscripts of Rabghūzī's Turkish *Ḳiṣaṣ ul-anbiyāʾ*. Forty-five of the innumerable *Shāhnāma* manuscripts were selected by Djalal Khaleghi-Motlagh, and out of these fifteen for his edition. Forty-four manuscripts make up the collection of *Meshāyikh* biographies (Kellner-Heinkele).

Between the manuscripts and the modern editions come the lithographs and the first letterpress editions of Persian and Turkish literary works. The faults made by these booksellers and printers — obscure sources, reprint of previous editions — are too often allowed to overshadow the service which they gave to their customers. Publishing for the entertainment and edification of the general public, the printers would feel no scruples in printing from a single manuscript or from an earlier book. Their success seems to justify this; some works which were very much in demand appeared in dozens of lithographs and letterpress editions, which were reprinted many times. Recent offset prints by booksellers in Iran, and to some extent in Turkey, continue this practice, one example being a photomechanical reprint of Sirhindī's letters made in Istanbul in 1977 (Utas, Ter Haar).

The miscellaneous character of these printed books does leave us with a sense of gratitude for the careful editions based on old manuscripts which have been published so far. Special mention is due to Mehmed Çavuşoğlu, who died prematurely in 1987, a prolific editor of Turkish poetry.

As difficult as unravelling complexities of textual history is the eventual editing of such works. The discovery of an old manuscript can upset intricate stemmatic hypotheses. Prospective editors have to rely on good descriptions in manuscript catalogues before they can begin sorting out their textual witnesses. The editor, too, should give detailed descriptions of his textual witnesses; if they have survived in *medjmūʿa*s he should describe the manuscript as a whole. Palaeography and physical codicology may help in dating or ascribing undated manuscripts. Erroneous binding can be the origin of a defective tradition. Some *Künhü l-akhbār* manuscripts were made especially for collectors (Jan Schmidt).

The libraries of the Islamic countries and in the West still contain many manuscripts that may reveal unknown works and shed new light upon known ones. Handlists are merely expedients to meet the needs of scholars until detailed catalogues are completed. In Turkey, parts of the great Union Catalogue of Manuscripts have been printed, while others are in preparation (Günay Kut). Not only are indexes of titles and authors needed, but also inventories of incipits of Persian and Turkish works. Literary history, as R. Sellheim has said, is based on the knowledge of editions and descriptive manuscript catalogues[19].

Much can be said in favour of the growing practice of publishing photo-mechanical reproduction of unica, near-unica or of 'best' most legible manuscripts, like Grønbech's facsimile edition of the London *Ḳiṣaṣ ul-anbiyāʾ* by Rabghūzī. Notes can be collected at the foot of the photographic tables or in a special section at the end of the work (Meredith-Owens, Kappert, Kellner).

The editor cannot help becoming involved in issues of language. There was a time when passages which struck an editor as ungrammatical were confidently bracketed as textual corruptions. Whereas in some cases scribes are still blamed for the breach of numerous grammatical rules, in Middle Ottoman it is now recognized that an author as Evliyāʾ Çelebi has a right to a non-conformist attitude. Arabic loan-words which became Persianized or Turkified in spite of the endeavours of learned purists[20] are discussed on their phonological merits (Anhegger, Boeschoten).

Readers of classical Persian and Turkish literature have always been aware of the wealth of the poets' vocabulary; what the percentage of different words, dialect traits, and hapax legomena actually was, however, has yet to be ascertained.

The statistical treatment of the lexicon of New Persian and of Ottoman Turkish is only in its infancy; so far there is a frequency word-list of one Persian

Dīvān (Osmanov) and one of the Persian mathnawi *Tarīḵu t-taḥḳīḳ*, with a concordance. (Utas). It would need collaborative ventures involving several universities to offer computer-produced documentation for the main Persian and Turkish poets, including frequency word-lists and investigations on sufi terminology (Utas).

The essays on transcription reflect the Turcologist's constant preoccupation with phonology. It is assumed that the Turkish vowel system of the 15th century was preserved in the literary language of the late 16th century, the closed *é* having lost its phonemic value (Andreas Tietze). This runs parallel to the 'ma'rūfization' of the *ō* to *ū* and the *ē* to *ī* in Persian discussed by F. Meier, who also discussed the intermediate position of the so-called *madjhūl* vowels *ō* and *ē*, the struggle between *a* and *u furtivum*, and the branching-out of postvocal *ḏ* to *d* and *z*[21].

Latin characters have long been in use for transcribing Persian as well as Turkish; they show in detail how the text has been interpreted and make computer processing easier (Utas). Iranists use Latin characters according to a modification, with only two exceptions, of the transcription in common use for Classical Arabic.

Whereas the actual editing of Persian texts is done in Arabic script, type-setting in these characters[22] has all but stopped in Western countries, owing to the great expense. In Turkey, too, where Arabic characters were abolished for the use of Turkish, type-set editions in Arabic script have become the exception[23]. Generally the critical apparatus is attached to the edition in Latin transcription (Tietze, Anhegger).

'In modern Japan everyone reads earlier texts as if they were written in Tokyo Japanese.'[24] Similarly many modern Turkish editors vocalize their transcriptions almost regardless of their period. With the general reader in mind, Turkish literary texts are produced in versions which are as easy as possible to follow, while editorial interference is kept to the minimum, and the scholarly apparatus reduced (R. Anhegger, G.A. Tekin). Şinasi Tekin, in his editio princeps of the earliest Ottoman chancery manual, published the Turkish text (next to photographs) in a normalized Arabic script.

Outside Turkey, some scholars add symbols for phonemes not existing today (Andreas Tietze, Sir Gerard Clauson); others (van Damme and Braam in this volume) propose a transcription system as sophisticated as the textual material itself.

The opposite view is held by by H.E. Boeschoten, who argues that transcription in Latin characters would mean neglecting the editor's duty towards the careful, if unconventional, spelling in the author's hand in his important seventeenth-century Ottoman Turkish *Seyāḥāt-nāme*.

Textual and linguistic concordances are complementary. There are many ways in which the linguistic material can be broken down and presented: concordances, frequency lists, indexes, statistical tables. Bo Utas looks at terminology and poetical form. Structural qualities in the text are discussed by M. van Damme and H. Braam, who introduce the notion of a computer-produced 'texttree' and of 'nets' thrown over it. They envisage a lasting apparatus criticus to be used for analyzing the narrative structure of Rabghūzī's long prose work as well as the textual variants of the manuscripts.

Literary editions serve a twofold aim: they should show the text and its history, and they should arouse the reader's interest in these works. Eventually the reader is expected to go back to the Persian or Turkish originals.

But the literature with which we are concerned is not easy to go to — indeed, much of it is virtually inaccessible to the general reader, who will only get nearer to reading these literary works when finding them in translation. This difficult subject is not discussed in this volume, except as a measuring-stick with which to test the understanding of the editor himself, tacitly assuming that a correct rendering of the text in question is possible (Andreas Tietze, Jan Just Witkam).

Several of the contributors to this volume have performed this task; Andreas Tietze's editions are, for example, accompanied by translations. Instead of a word-for-word translation of a poem one may follow Bo Utas in giving a comprehensive description of its contents, including a large number of Persian/Turkish terms in transcription.

Confronted with their editorial tasks, the authors of this volume have addressed themselves to practical and concrete issues. The points raised here concern Persian and Turkish literary texts, but they are broader in their application, as the one article discussing Arabic material shows.

NOTES

[1] Hanna Sohrweide, 'Autoren- und Schreibersorgen im Istanbul des 18. Jahrhunderts', H. Franke, W. Heissig, W. Treue (eds.), *Folia Rara Wolfgang Voigt LXV. diem natalem celebranti... dedicata*, Wiesbaden, 1976, 120-125, with earlier literature.

[2] For a congenial description see Rosane Rocher, 'Overlapping Recensions and the Composing Process: Ceilings on Interest in the Vivādārṇavasetu', *JAOS* 105 (1985), 531.

[3] H. Fuhrmann, 'Überlegungen eines Editors', in *Probleme der Edition mittel- und neulateinischer Texte*, Boppard, 1978 (Kolloquium der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft, Bonn, 1973).

[4] Compare Muḥammad Niẓāmu'd-Dīn, Introduction to the *Javāmi'u'l-Ḥikāyāt*, London, 1929.

[5] Robert Anhegger, Review of A.N. Tarlan, *Şiir mecmualarında VI. ve XVII. asır Divan Şiiri*, in *Oriens* 5 (1952), 82-87; Ahmed Ateş, 'Metin Tenkidi Hakkında', *Türkiyat Mec-*

muası VII-VIII (1940-1942), 253-267; Robert Dankoff, 'Textual Problems in *Kutadgu Bilig*', *Journal of Turkish Studies* 3 (1979), 89.

[6] V.L. Ménage, 'MS Fatih 4205: An autograph of Kemālpashazāde's *Tevārīkh-i Āl-i 'Othmān*, Book VII', *BSOAS* XXIII (1960), 251.

[7] On autographs of famous Arabic and Persian scholars see Hellmut Ritter, 'Autographs in Turkish Libraries', *Oriens* 6 (1953), 63-90.

[8] Andreas Tietze, *Muṣṭafā 'Ālī's Counsel for Sultans of 1581. Edition, Translation, Notes*, 2 volumes, Vienna 1979-1982.

[9] Andreas Tietze, *Muṣṭafā 'Ālī's Description of Cairo of 1599. Text, Transliteration, Translation, Notes*, Vienna, 1975.

[10] G.M. Meredith-Owens, *Meşā'ir üş-Şu'arā or Tezkere of 'Aşık Çelebi*, London, 1971.

[11] Şerafettin Turan, *Ibn Kemal. Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman. VII. Defter*, Ankara, 1954.

[12] Ménage, 'MS Fatih 4205', 251.

[13] J.T.P. de Bruijn, *Of Piety and Poetry. The Interaction of Religion and Literature in the Life and Works of Hakīm Sanā'ī of Ghazna*, Leiden, 1983.

[14] Bo Utas, *Tarīq ut-taḥqīq. A critical edition, with a history of the text and a commentary*, Lund, 1973; idem, *A Persian Sufi Poem: Vocabulary and Terminology*, Lund, 1978.

[15] For two pioneer Turkish editions see Şinasi Tekin, *Menâhicü'l-Inşâ*, Roxbury, Mass., 1971, and V.L. Ménage, 'An Ottoman manual of provincial correspondence', *WZKM* 68 (1976), 31-45.

[16] Klaus Detlev Wannig, *Der Dichter Karaca Oğlan. Studien zur türkischen Liebeslyrik*, Freiburg 1980, 582-605.

[17] Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, Chapel Hill, 1975, 327.

[18] Fritz Meier, 'Aussprachefragen des älteren neupersisch', *Oriens* 27-28 (1981), 95.

[19] R. Sellheim, 'The cataloguing of Arabic as a literary problem', *Oriens* 23-24 (1974), 306 sq.

[20] Fahir İz, art. *İnal* in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.

[21] Fritz Meier, 'Aussprachefragen des älteren neupersisch', especially 78, 86, 94, 97, 104.

[22] Hellmut Ritter, 'Über einige Regeln, die beim Drucken mit Arabischen Typen zu beachten sind', *ZDMG* 100 (1951), 577-580.

[23] Take for example the careful edition by Ibrahim Kutluk, printed posthumously, of *Kınalı-Zade Hasan Çelebi. Tezkiretü'ş-Şuarâ*, Ankara, I 1978.

[24] Roy Andrew Miller, 'No Time for Literature', *JAOS* 107 (1987), 750.