

# PRESENTING THE MANUSCRIPT

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## A KURDISH VERSE VERSION OF *SHĀH-NĀMA* FROM MALEK NATIONAL LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

From the beginning of the 19th century, some Persian poets played a secondary part in the development of Kurdish literature, oral and written [1]. The number known was relatively small, but one at least was inevitably familiar: Firdawsī. Now, the importance of *Shāh-nāma* and Persian writing to Kurdish writers was no sudden occurrence but the result of a long process that had begun nearly 110–120 years before the 19th century, when the first Gōranī and Kurdish translations of Firdawsī's principal *Shāh-nāma* were completed (in ca. 1690) [2]. The 19th century, indeed, witnessed the appearance, in the field of epic and lyric literature, of a number of texts translated from Persian, following on certain epic and lyric writings of the same provenance. In any case, we shall not here try to show the effects of these Gōranī and Kurdish translations varied in character and in depth. We also shall not attempt a detailed study of their history (or what is known of it; many points are still obscure); certain essential characteristics must however be brought out. We shall confine ourselves, needless to say, only to the presentation of the Kurdish manuscript of *Kitāb-i Jawāhirpūsh* "The Book of Jawāhirpūsh" — an 18th century version of an episode of *Shāh-nāma* that has been preserved for years in the collection of the Malek National Library and Museum.

Malek National Library and Museum is situated in Tehrān. Hāj Ḥusayn Āqā Malik (1871–1972), son of Hāj Muḥammad Kāzīm, was the founder and the collector of the manuscripts of the Library [3]. The Malek Library accumulated a series of wonderful Arabic, Persian, and Turkish manuscripts (totally 19,000 MSS) connected with the traditional culture of Irān and the Middle East. Among those specially worth mentioning are manuscripts of *al-Uṣūl bi al-istiḡsāt* by Euclid, dated AH 343; *al-Fuz al-aṣghar* by Ibn Muskūya, dated AH 410; treatises of al-Fārābī, dated AH 463, *Murūj al-dhahab* by Mas'ūdī, dated AH 867, *Arafāt al-āshiqīn wa 'arāsāt al-ārifīn* by Daqāqī, dated AH 1024, etc. [4]. Also, at the "Malek Public Library" — as the Malek National Library and Museum was called in the early years — an extensive collection of diverse items including 42,000 volumes of rare publications (both the lithography and the typography), numis-

matic collections (both pre-Islamic and Islamic), and stamp collections was acquired, which was gathered by the same prominent collector, Hāj Ḥusayn Āqā Malik, and bequeathed by him to the Library and Museum [5]. As I have said before, the Library contains manuscripts in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish languages, but there is also a unique unknown Kurdish manuscript of an episode of *Shāh-nāma* [6], which is much more original than other Kurdish versions of *Shāh-nāma* tales [7].

The manuscript of this work, with the name *Kitāb-i Jawāhirpūsh* "The Book of Jawāhirpūsh" is kept in the Holding Section of the Library (call No. 4616, 17×11cm). The poet of this *mathnawī* is Muṣṭafā b. Maḥmūd Gūrānī, a Kurdish Sunnite *littérateur* of the 18th century, whom is difficult to attribute to any Kurdish family or tribe [8].

The manuscript certainly was brought from Irānian Kurdistān, possibly Gōran district, to Tehrān by Hāj Ḥusayn Āqā Malik in 1952 [9], but its exactly depository is still unknown. The manuscript is written in a type of *shikasta nasta'liq* in the old Gōranī dialect [10] by a professional scribe, Bahrām Mīrzā Līk [*sic*], son of 'Abbās Khushkhān. The manuscript is of 197 folios and the text takes up both sides of the folio, with 13 lines on each side; it is organized in two columns. There are some crossed-out words, letters, and words written above the lines, which were left out or did not fit in the line. The binding is European, of black leather. The pagination is late, and Eastern. There are two imprints of owners' (i. e. Library) seals (fol. 1r). The paper is of European manufacture. Most of the manuscript is written with black ink, but individual titles — except the title of book, i. e. *Kitāb-i Jawāhirpūsh* (fig. 1) — are in *shanjarf* or red ink. On the last page (fig. 2), the scribe gives the date: *Shanba 13 Shahr-i Rajab-i 1307* of the Hijra.

In this source, the "Book of Jawāhirpūsh", which we may call the epic account, it is generally related that Jawāhirpūsh, the epithet of Bahrām Shāh-i Tabardār and a descendant of Rostam, was a warrior who participated in several wars between Irān and Tūrān [11]. The story of the wars between Irān and Tūrān, which occupy many pages in Irānian epic, is repeated here by Gūrānī in his story and it gave evidently a somewhat garbled version

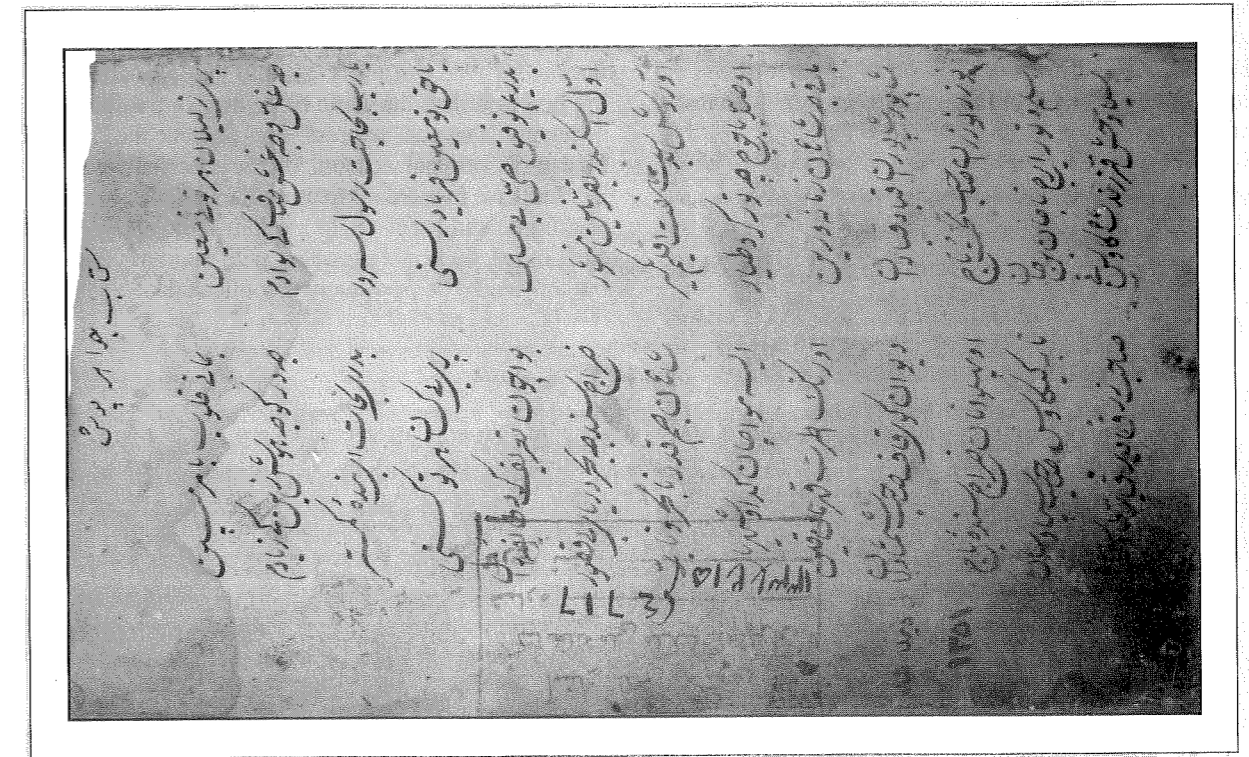


Fig. 1

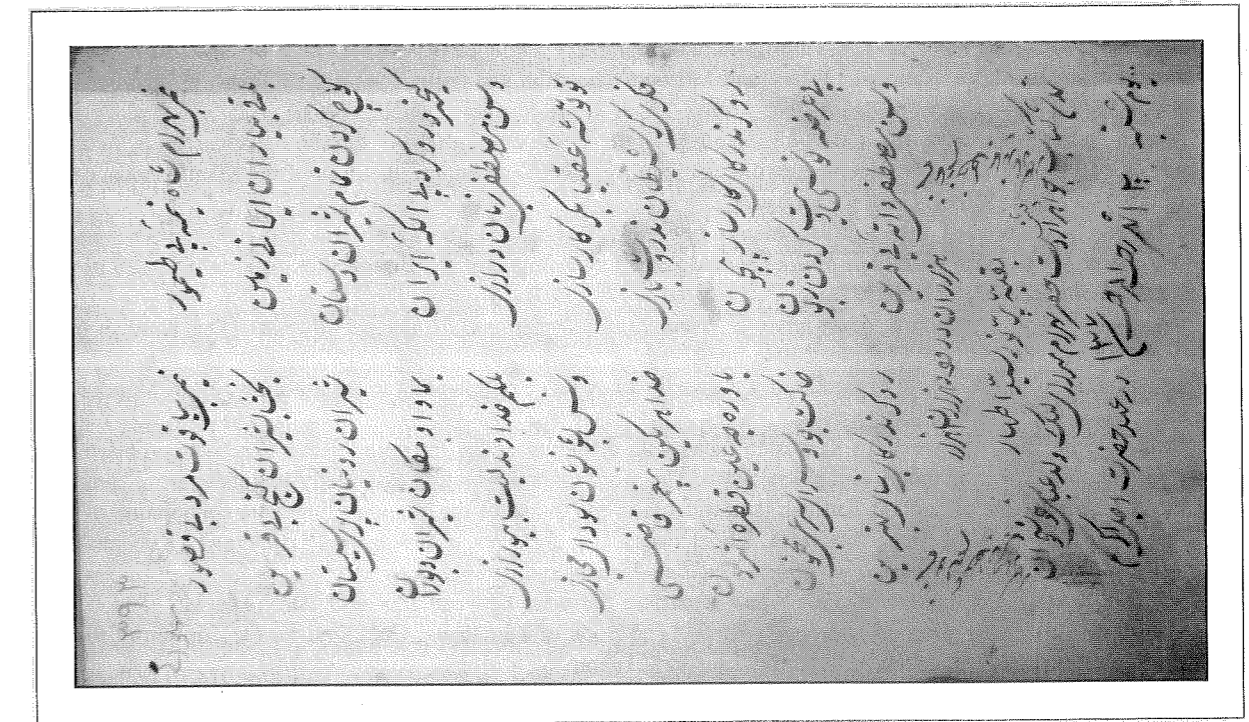


Fig. 2

of the *Shāh-nāma*. Therefore an obscurity does exist about the exact relationship between Jawāhirpūsh and Rustam, Kay Khusrāw, the Turanian king Afrāsīyāb, and other Irānian and Tūrānian heroes. The conflicts of Irān and Tūrān, light and darkness, followers of Rustam and followers of Afrāsīyāb, are all summed up in the Kurdish version of the struggle between Irān and Tūrān.

The structure of the work of Gūrānī is as follows. At first the author gives a prose passage in Persian which contains 45 *faṣls*:

Incipit (fol. 1r) پری ز لیلان هر نونی معین / بمانی قلوب بامر پسین  
Excipit (fol. 197v) هزاران درود هزاران هزار / بقیه پر نور سید اطهار

After that Gūrānī gives his version of the episode of Irān and Tūrān wars in verse which contains a poem of more than 5061 lines in rhyming couplets (*mathnawī*). The rhyme and actually the sense are sometimes destroyed by a *lapsus calami*. There are also some important disparities between the Persian text and the image created by Gūrānī. In text we find the Kurdish and new tradition ascribed to the heroes. We can fairly assume that all variant forms of the heroes reflect the same basic Irānian tradition, and consequently that all express, or reflect, the synopsis of Firdawsī's original account of the wars between Irān and Tūrān. If we insisted on treating the variants as independent traditions, and went on to explain them independently of each other, we could come up with alternative hypotheses; but this would be perversely complicated.

### Notes

1. For the important Kurdish translations, and the Kurdish versions of Persian classical works see, for example, P. I. Lerch, *Forschungen über die Kurden und die iranischen Nordchaldäer* (St. Petersburg, 1857–58), pp. 98–103; Kh. Muradova, *Kurdskie èpicheskie pesni-skazy* (Kurdish Epic Tale Songs) (Moscow—Leningrad, 1962), pp. 163–9; Kh. Bitlisi, *Leyli i Medzhnun* (Layla and Majnūn), ed. by M. B. Rudenko (Moscow, 1965); D. N. McKenzie, *Kurdish Dialect Studies* (London, 1961–62), ii, pp. 188–200; M. Khiznadār, “Al-Rawāya al-shi‘riya Laylā wa Majnūn fi al-adab al-Kurdī” (The Poetical Version of Laylā and Majnūn in the Kurdish Literature), *Majalla kulliya al-adab XX* (Baghdād, 1976), pp. 205–20; ‘A. Kāzim, “Qissa Shūrīn wa Farhād” (“The story of Shūrīn and Farhād”), *Rôjî Kurdistan* (1980), pp. 16–23; M. B. Rudenko, *Literaturnaia i fol’klornye versii kurdskoï poëmy “Yusuf i Zelikha”* (Literary and Folklore Versions of the Kurdish Poem “Yūsuf and Zelikha”) (Moscow, 1986).
2. The Kurdish episodes of *Shāh-nāma* and the best information may be found in the writings of M. Urang, *Jilwagarī-hā-yi Shāh-nāma dar miyān-i kurdān* (Manifestations of the *Shāh-nāma* Among Kurds) (Tehrān, 1971); M. Mokri, *La légende de Bizhan-ū Manija* (Paris, 1966); *idem*, *Babr-i bayan (le tigre blanc)* (Paris—Louvain, 2003); M. T. al-Wardī, *Nawruz wa Thawra Kāwa al-haddād* (Nawruz and Thawra of Kāwa, the Blacksmith) (Najaf, 1973); A. Christensen, “Der Schmied Kaweh und das alte persische Reichsbanner”, *Iranistische Mitteilungen XII* (1978), SS. 40–70; and Y. Kemal, *Die Ararat-Legende* (Zürich, 1981).
3. For the life of Hāj Hūsayn Āqā Malik see B. ‘Aqilī, *Sharḥ-i hāl-i rijāl-i siyāsī wa niẓāmī-yi mu‘āṣir-i Irān* (The Account of the Contemporary Iranian Politicians and Military Men) (Tehrān, 2001), iii, pp. 1532–4.
4. See: Ī. Afshār, M. T. Dānishpazhūh, *Fihrist-i nuskhā-hā-yi khattī-yi Kitābkhāna-yi Millī-yi Malik* (The Catalogue of the Malek National Library MSS) (Tehrān, 1982–1993), where the complete catalogue of Arabic, Persian, and Turkish MSS is given.
5. A good summary of Malek National Library and Museum's position and collections can be found in Anonymous, *Malek Public Library and Museum: Affiliated to Astan Qods Razavi (Imam Reza's Shrine)* (Tehrān, 1996).
6. I know of no other manuscript of *Kitāb-i Jawāhirpūsh*. There is only a microfilm of the same manuscript in Astan Quds, in Mashhad (call No. ML 4616). This reference is due to the amiability of Mr. F. Hāshimī, the dean of the Manuscript and Microfilm Collections of the Astan Quds Razavi Central Library.
7. There is only a citation of this Kurdish manuscript in Q. Pīshnamāzzāda, *Fihrist-i alifbā‘ī-yi ‘unwān-i kitāb-hā dar nuskhā-hā-yi khattī-yi Kitābkhāna-yi Millī-yi Malik* (The Alphabetic Catalogue of the Book Titles Among the MSS of the Malek National Library MSS) (Tehrān, 1997), p. 397.
8. See the discussion in Ī. Bahrāmī, *Shāh-nāma-yi Kurdī (Jawāhirpūsh wa Bizhan wa Manija)* (The Kurdish *Shāh-nāma* (Jawāhirpūsh and Bizhan and Manija)) (Tehrān, 2004), pp. 41–2.
9. This date is cited in *daftar-i thabt* of the Library. I owe my knowledge of this point to the kindness of Mr. Mahdī Karīmī, the dean of the Library.
10. Researchers who study the world of Kurdistan faced with difficulty of finding an adjective exactly appropriate to Gōranī literature and Gōranī *koinē* of Irānian and ‘Irāqī Kurdistan. The word Gōranī which is essentially linguistic term, cannot be used about such subjects as literature or history; Kurdish is unsuitable if one thinks of the ethnic or linguistic connotation of that word. On the Gōranī dialects see A. M. Benedictsens, A. Christensen, *Les dialectes d'Awroman et de Pawā* (København, 1921); D. N. McKenzie, *The Dialect of Awroman (Hawrāmān-i Lihōn)* (København, 1966).
11. For another Kurdish manuscript of *Shāh-nāma* regarding the wars between Irān and Tūrān see MS 9504 (i. e. *Kitāb-i Zardāhang, manẓūma dar sharḥ-i jang-hā-yi Irān wa Tūrān* (The Book of Zardāhang, Compiled for Description of the Wars between Irān and Tūrān)), Islamic Consultative Assembly Library I, Tehrān.

### Illustrations

Fig. 1. Muṣṭafā b. Maḥmūd Gūrānī, *Kitāb-i Jawāhirpūsh* (“The Book of Jawāhirpūsh”), 17×11cm. Rajab AH 1307. Malek National Library and Museum, call No. 4616, fol. 1r. Courtesy of the Library.

Fig. 2. The same MS, fol. 197v.

## IN MEMORIAM

### “FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE”: PROF. SERGIO NOJA NOSEDA (1931—2008)

On January 31, Prof. Sergio Noja Nosedá, member of the Editorial Committee of our journal, was tragically killed in a traffic accident. He was one of the leading European specialists in Islamic and Arabic studies, a person who had many friends in Russia. He lived a truly fantastic life. At the age of 10, this son of the Italian general over Italy's air force who had fought against Russians in Spain's civil war, had started studying Russian with the aim to help Soviet war prisoners kept in Italian camps. When he was 12 he declared his personal war against the Nazis and was nearly captured by a roving guard of the SS with six grenades he had just stolen from a German military truck. In July 1944, at 14, he ran away from home, crossed the battle line, declared in the military camp that he was 19 already, and came into the Italian Army fighting against the Germans. The only problem was his voice: it was not loud enough for the bombardier corporal of the 3 inch mortar. His 68th line infantry regiment was fighting against the “Green Devils”, the German paratroopers, which took part in the liberation of Cassino, Florence and Bologna. He could never forget the moment when a German soldier gave him his “Luger” saying: “So ended ein Krieg”. On August 15, 1945 when his real age was discovered accidentally he was disbanded from the Italian Army. His colonel told him: “You can stay in the army all your life but let me give you some advice — go home, return to the Lyceum, and after... after... you should come back”.

He chose this other way and was able to combine a successful business career with thorough studies of Middle Eastern languages and cultures. His first scholarly work “La lingua nelle Sacre Scritture” was written eight years before he graduated from the university (1956). He had started his scholarly career at the Biblioteca Ambrosiana and in 1964 together with Monsignor Giovanni Galbiati, Prefect of the library, published the facsimile of the manuscript *Aḥkām al-‘aṭīqa* and its translation (“Canoni giuridico-morali per arabi cristiani”). Later the Ambrosiana presented him with another discovery: a hitherto unknown copy in Arabic of the apocryphal Gospel attributed to Thomas.

In 1967 he was appointed to the University of Turin and for ten years was teaching there a course devoted to the Muslim Law. One of the results of the thorough study of the topic was the publication of the “Detti e fatti del Profeta dell'Islam raccolti da al-Buhari” (Turin, 1983). He prepared also the “Catalogo dei manoscritti arabi, persiani e turchi” of the Biblioteca nazionale di Torino (Roma, 1974) and ten years later the “Catalogo dei manoscritti arabi” of the Biblioteca Reale di Torino (Roma, 1984).

The broad scholarly experience obtained by Sergio Noja by this time made it possible to start the research series devoted to the history of Islamic civilization in general. In 1975 he published the biography of Muḥammad widely using in his work the pre-Islamic Arabic poetry and the archaeological data obtained by this time. The work was followed by four volumes of “Storia dei popoli dell'Islam” published by “Mondadori”, Milano (“Maometto, Profeta dell'Islam”, 1990; “L'Islam dell'espansione, dalla morte del Profeta all' invasione mongola, 632—1258”, 1993; “L'Islam dell'immobilismo, caduta di Bagdad allo sbarco di Napoleone in Egitto, 1258—1798”, 1994; “L'Islam moderno, dalla conquista napoleonica dell'Egitto all'ultima guerra del Golfo”, 2003 — revised edition of the volume published in 1995). The series is not only the most important work in Italian on the topic. As one of the serious results of twentieth century Arabic and Islamic studies in Europe it brought to the author the reputation of being a new Leone Caetani. The “Breve storia dei popoli arabi” (Milano, 1997) was his last book devoted to the general problems of the Arabic and Islamic history.

Following the proposal of Francesco Gabrieli, he was appointed to teach Arabic language and literature at the Università Cattolica di Milano. For many years he was the Professor at the University and it was characteristic that he organized his official farewell university meeting in the student discotheque (2001).

In 1991 he was elected member of the Istituto Lombardo, Academy of Science and Literature. Cardinal Martini also nominated him as Curator of the Biblioteca Ambrosiana. In 1998 he received the title of Grand Ufficiale of the “Ordine al Merito della Repubblica”.

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Front cover:

Plate 1. Qur’ān B 2, beginning of *sūra* “al-Baqara”. Paper, 43×33 cm, 499 ff. 1777/8. The British Library, BL Or. 16127, ff. 2v. Courtesy of the Library.

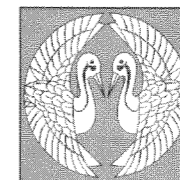
Back cover:

Plate 2. Qur’ān A 2. Paper, 42×32 cm, 277 ff. Şabah, [ca. 1800]. The British Library, BL Or. 15913, ff. 1v—2r. Courtesy of the Library.  
Plate 3. Qur’ān B 2. Ff. 497v—498r.

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