ii) the latter rings are recorded among many ethnic groups and castes of Northwest India, and have long been linked with regions of north Afghanistan, through which Arabs passed on their way to Mā warāʾ al-nahr.

Thus, as a working assumption we wish to propose the conclusion that at the turn of the 15th—16th centuries women of the Arab tribe which settled in Mā warāʾ al-nahr already wore talisman rings in the bridge of the nose, and not just in the sides of the nose, as was the custom previously. This argument is also confirmed by the above-mentioned “Travelling tortoise” miniature, dated to the 16th—17th centuries. As far as we know, in earlier miniatures this type of jewellery is not recorded.

From Arab women, the fashion for nose rings spread to other regions of Central Asia. The change in the manner of wearing the rings among the Arabs evidently took place as a result of a borrowing from women in the northeastern regions of Hindistan and Afghanistan. They brought this custom to Central Asia, where it was not previously encountered. In Mā warāʾ al-nahr, as a unique phenomenon, this type of nose jewellery became an ethnically distinct sign of the Arabs; it is preserved to this day in the Arab milieu. Women from various Central Asian ethnic groups (local, not Arab) saw this type of nose jewellery as fashionable, and the fashion spread among Turkmen, Uzbek, some settled Tajiks, Kazakhs and Qaraqalpasqs, and among city dwellers in Khiva, Tashkent, Bokhara and Samarkand, from where several types of rings came into our museum collections. By the 20th century this fashion has vanished completely, which did not affect the tradition of wearing this jewellery in the Arab milieu.

N o t e s
1. RNL, Dorn 425, fol. 46a.

I l l u s t r a t i o n s


Inside the text:


Fig. 3. Nose ring. Ur-Tush, early 20th century. Gold, pearls, D = 2.5 cm. MAE RAS, No. 3540-35. Photo by the author. Courtesy of the Museum.

Fig. 4. Nose ring, Old Urgun, late 19th century. Gold, beads, D = 3 cm. MAE RAS, No. 1279-1. Photo by the author. Courtesy of the Museum.

Fig. 5. Nose ring, Khiva, early 20th century. Silver, coral beads, D = 3 cm. MAE RAS, No. 1275-2. Photo by the author. Courtesy of the Museum.

Fig. 6. Nose jewellery, Turkmenia, early 20th century. Silver, copper, D = 2 cm. MAE RAS, No. 3903-87. Photo by the author. Courtesy of the Museum.

P R E S E N T I N G T H E M U S E U N S C R I P T

TĀRĪKH-I KURD:
AN UNKNOWN PERSIAN MANUSCRIPT OF THE CHRONICLE OF SANANDAJ IN THE IRANIAN NATIONAL LIBRARY

M. Dehqan

In Sīrānī-speaking communities [1], from sometime in the eighteenth century until virtually the present day, several chronicles have circulated according to which Sanandaj, the most important Sīrānī city in the late medieval history of Iran (Kurdistan) [2], received the various reports of its events from the Kurdish historians. The chronicles are couched within the framework of a local narrative which build sometimes on earlier historical materials in Persian composed in the early years of Erdenal local dynasty. Almost all the previous texts have been published since the years 1947—2000, but Tārīkh-i Kurd ("The History of Kurds"), that is the subject of my account, has not attracted the attention of any scholar. It is the purpose of this brief note to present the newly-manuscript of this important chronicle.

1. The Manuscript

The Manuscript Section of Iranian National Library contains manuscripts in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish languages, which can be divided into smaller collections according to the date of their accession, though most are from modern times. The manuscripts of refined calligraphy are highly decorated with miniatures, executed in polychrome and gold [3]. These Library collections are not united in a single whole, but are categorized in several sections—Arabic Section, Persian Section, Record Section, and Rare Books Section. Some important miniatures and historical photos are also part of Iranian National Library Collections [4].

The provenance of the manuscript of Tārīkh-i Kurd or Sanandaj under Erdenal is not obvious. In the dafīat-i hāfiz of Iranian National Library the manuscript (call No. 2213F) is referred to the so-called Arabic and Persian Manuscript Section, but is mentioned neither in the catalogues of the Library nor in any other available catalogue [5].

The manuscript is in Persian. The farangi paper and text have been excellently preserved. The binding is laid with brown leather. The Persian manuscript of Tārīkh-i Kurd is written in a type of nastaliq, and does not have a title page with the name of the work. In some unpublished internal notes by Persian librarians, the manuscript is called Tārīkh-i Kurd [6]. It is written with black ink and there is no qurnaf title. The complete text of each folio consists of 15 lines. There are a total of 70 folios (text: fol. 5v—fol. 66v) in the manuscript and the size of the folio is 21 × 17 cm.

Incipit
(fo. 5v, fig. 1)

Script
(fo. 66v, fig. 2)

There are 8 blank folios (fol. 1r—fol. 4v and fol. 67r—fol. 70v). It is difficult to attribute the manuscript to any particular scribe. The date is given as Şāhān 1273 /March—April 1857. The author is Mesfire Kurdani (1797—1843), the girl of Abu al-Hasan Beg, the second wife of Khuraw Khan, and the most well-known poetess of Sanandaj [7].

1 Sponsored by Iran National Science Foundation.
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2. The Topics

The chronicle of Sanandaj and its outskirts under Erdelans has survived in both complete and defective versions. The Persian manuscripts known to contain it are of a relatively recent vintage. While they all agree on the essential outline of the history of Sanandaj, there are so many variations in the telling that in their careless editions of the text Kurdish researchers opted to publish the complete and defective recensions side by side rather than to attempt to reconstitute the original form from which, in their judgment, they may be presumed to descend.

What is in fact important to notice about this newly-found manuscript's use of events is its fuller account and careful designation of the process of events in which only the Kurds play the definite roles.

The main topics in the chronicles of Sanandaj and Erdelans have always included the life of Khusraw Khan (I and II). The chronicle-line is here the same, but there is a more exactly frame-chronicle in which the author tells of her encounter with the Kurdish noblemen and officials. The narrator first recounts the origin of Kurdish tribes, tells of the course of Islamic history, as reflected in Iranian Kurdistan, from the time of Shâh Ijmâ'î I (1487—1524) to the time of 'Abbâs Mirzâ Nîtb al-Sâlâmâ (1782—1828), and sometimes of her experience of historical events under Erdelans.

In the present version of Sanandaj's chronicle the Iranian Kurdistan and especially Khusraw Khan sections are the most important features, and they occupy by far the most space in the texts. The prominence of the Sanandaj and the Iranian Kurdistan's genre is not surprising, given the fact that in the all Kurdish-speaking tribes of Iran Sanandaj and its local dynasties were the most important political and national reactions to the challenge of central power of Persia, from the time of Shâh 'Abbâs I (1571—1629) until the time of Nâjur al-Dîn Shâh (1831—1896). Here, and throughout the Khusrav Khân sections of the manuscript there is a number of allusions to Persian history which have given scholars some points of reference to compare the events.

While the whole structure of the Târîh-i Kûrd clearly reflects the historical milieu of the late medieval period of Sanandaj, at least in terms of the order and development of the topics it addresses, the truly original part of the manuscript, as I have said, is in author's use of the events as they may be ascribed to Erdelans. But even in this line of narrating she sometimes declares her conclusions more than the argues for them. And for evidence she cites the power of Erdelans which could scarcely be expected to carry conviction with non-Erdeilan — i.e. the other Kurds of Iranian Kurdistan. Author herself seems to have been aware of this problem, because more than once, she makes a remark to the effect that adversaries should allow all the Kurds to argue on their own terms. This practice heightens the interpreter's perception that author's purpose is really to prove a point to the Kurds at second hand, through her readers' participation in Kurdish-Persian challenge.

Finally, one may say first of all about Târîh-i Kûrd that on every folio it reflects the milieu of Kurdistan and the historical concerns of Sanandaj. Secondly, it is clear that author intended to argue in Persian on the model of the chronicles of the contemporary Persian historians who wrote in Persian and Arabic: Iskandar Beg Münifî (1561—1633), Rida Qâš Kânū Hîdîyât (1794—1867), Muhammad Taqi Khân Sîfarî (1795—1876), etc.

Notes

1. Sfarzān belongs to the Central group of Kurdish language which is made up of the different dialects spoken in Iraqi and Iranian Kurdistan. On the Sfarzān Kurdish see: J. Blau, Moncel de kurde (diacritic soroit): grammaire, textes de lecture, vocabulaire kurde-français et francou-kurde (Paris, 1989).

2. Sanandaj is one of the central cities of Iranian Kurdistan which is situated in the north-west of Iran. For the geography and the history of Sanandaj, see: M. K. Qari, Sanandaj, dâr al-a'yâda-yi Kürdîstân-i Irân (Sanandaj: the Dîr al-A'yâda of Iranian Kurdistan) (Sanandaj, 2002).


4. See, for example, K. Kiyâî, "Ganjîya-ye 'Astar-bal-yi Târîhî" ("A treasury of the historical photo(s)"); Ganjîya-ye Astarî L— LIII (2003—2004), pp. 107—11, where a photo collection of Library is briefly described.

5. According to Persian librarians, having arrived in Tehran as a part of the "Kurdish personal collections"; the manuscript of the Târîh-i Kûrd, was nevertheless neither described nor even mentioned in the works on manuscript collections of Library.


7. See: A. Karamî, Dîvânî-yi Mülavvâre-yi Kürdîstânî, "Mîhî Sharâf Kûrdîstânî" (The Diwan of Mustafa Kurdîstânî or "Mîhî Sharâf Astarî") (Tehran, 2005), where the fullest modern study of her life and poems is given.

Illustrations

Fig. 1. Târîh-i Kûrd. 23×17 cm, the forangi paper. Şar-işin 1273 / March—April 1857, Tehran. National Library, call No. MS Pers. 2213F, fol. 5v. Courtesy of the Library.

Fig. 2. The same MS, fol. 6v. Courtesy of the Library.
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Notes to Contributors

Manuscripts must be written in English.

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Submissions

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