MALĀ MUḤAMMAD SHARĪF QAḌĪ’S ACCOUNT ON THE HISTORY OF KURDISTĀN: A UNIQUE MANUSCRIPT FROM THE CENTRAL LIBRARY OF TEHRĀN UNIVERSITY

Although the major principles for writing the history of any period are the same, each historical period or topic has its own particular problems or considerations. The Kurdish topic is a difficult phase of history about which it is difficult to write because of the much great limits on sources. There are large gaps where the sources are either non-existent or problematic for historical reconstruction. The primary sources that do exist frequently do not lend themselves to constructing a historical narrative or at least a narrative of any length: artefacts or texts whose purpose was entirely different from describing contemporary events (e.g. legal documents, lists of commodities, receipts).

The present manuscript is a new material in the Kurdish history, encompassing political events and intellectual developments, and provides some new materials to us for constructing the history of Kurdistan and especially Iranian Kurdistan. There are and will continue to remain large gaps in our knowledge, but, at the same time, this unique manuscript and its contents can provide some important primary materials of the Kurdish history which analyze and evaluate the other sources and discriminate between them as to their value, problems, uncertainties, and relative merits for providing usable historical data.

The manuscript has been preserved for years in the collection of the Central Library, University of Tehran. The Manuscript part of the Department of Documents, Rare Books and Special Collections of the Central Library includes manuscripts and historical documents in the Arabic, Persian, and Turkish languages [1]. The collections of the Central Library also have a considerable number of historic photos, and ethnographic pictures related almost always to the Qajarid people and dynasty [2].

The provenance of the manuscript of Malā Muhammad Sharīf Qaḍī’s [3] account on the history of Kurdistan is almost clear. In the library the manuscript (call. No. 6578) is referred to the “achievements of Sa’īd Nafīṣi” [4]. An Iranian Kurd, Ayyāb Ḥālib Dāstādūr, sent the manuscript for Nafīṣi and it reached from Sa‘āndāj to Central Library in the winter of 1965 [5]. The manuscript, unfortunately, is not complete but at present contains 29folios. The text is organized in one column with 37 lines on each page [6]. The manuscript has been restored and during restoration some margins were slightly trimmed. There are no imprints of owners’ seals, or ex libris labels. There is only Nafīṣi’s signature on the fly-leaf of the manuscript. The size of the folio is 35 × 21 cm; the size of the text is 30 × 18 cm. The pagination is late and Oriental. The paper is of European manufacture (François). All of the manuscript is written with black ink. The binding is late of brown colour. The manuscript is written in the Arabic script in the Persian language. On the fly-leaf, Nafīṣi gives the date 1175 AH; too early to be accepted for this manuscript. According to the contents, the last date and events both suggest a much later date for the production of the manuscript: 1224 AH [7].

The manuscript is written in nasta’līq, and does not have a title page with the name of the work. In official drafts of the library, the manuscript is called Turākb- Kūrdistān. The text of the manuscript includes only one of the last chapters of the original book. There were 40 chapters in the original version [8].

The focus of its text is on Iranian Kurdistan and very much on Ardakan [9]. A major section of the manuscript is devoted to the Kurds under Safavid (1315—1722) and especially Shih “Abbas (1571—1628). This history conceives itself as a full history, covering political history, societies, personalities, as well as “events”. The heart of the manuscript is found in the sections regarding Khuwārizm Khán (I and II), the wa‘f of Kurdistan, which try to bring together the written data into order — with due attention to the many oral accounts — and answer the questions that can be answered. It has been written with a certain economy, with avoidance of repetition. Most topics are treated fully in only one place, but some subjects are not placed in the appropriate sections of the manuscript.
Notes
1. For basic work of all manuscripts of Central Library I refer the reader to M.T. Dinshaghzadeh, Fəhrezi-i muqəssə-hə-yi khərəf-yi Kitəbəxana-yi maqazə wa markazi amalı-i Dinshagh-zadeh-i Tibrın (The Catalogue of the Manuscripts of Central Library and the Department of Documents, University of Tehran) (Tehran, 1978).
3. Who is Malā Muhammad Sharif Qafiz? To my knowledge, there is no information regarding this historian. According to some oral accounts, he is from the Qafiz clan of Malek Kordishand—but that looks to me a bit far-fetched.
4. A mid-career Persian who gathered many manuscripts for the Central Library. For a very short account of Naft's life and works, see: S. Naft, Tərəvəz-i jəmā'it wa riyādə-yi İrən dar dövərsi ya məʼrîf (A Socio-Political History of Contemporary Iran) (Tehran, 2004), i, pp. 11—2.
5. Thanks are due to Mrs. Hsan of Central Library for this point.
6. See Dinshaghzadeh, op. cit., xvi, p. 301.
7. Compare S. Aslif, “Barrasi-yi muqəssə-hə-yi khərəf-yi Tibrin-i muhəfiz” maqazə dur Kitəbəxana-yi markazi wa markazi amalı-i Dinshagh-zadeh-i Tibrın (‘The manuscripts of ‘Local History’ at the Central Library and the Department of Documents, University of Tehran: A report’), Majma‘a maqazə-in məqaləsin hamayebi-ni maksi-tesi (Iran, 2004), p. 15, where the present date as the only date of the manuscript is given. There are some mistakes in her presentation of Malā Muhammad Sharif Qafiz's work.
8. See Asli, op. cit., p. 15.

Illustrations
Fig. 1. Tərəvəz-i Kordishand, 35 x 21 cm, the farangi paper, 1224 AH. The Central Library of Tehran University, call No. 6578, fol. 1r. Courtesy of the Library.
Fig. 2. The same MS, fol. 29v. Courtesy of the Library.

ORIENTAL PANTHEON

“TAI-PING GUANG JI”: MOTIVES RELATED TO THE DEAD SOULS

A well-known anthology of the early Chinese prose “Tai-ping guang ji” (“太平廣記”, “Extended Records of Tai-ping Years”), hereinafter referred to as TPGJ was completed in 978. This compilation was drawn up under the order of the Song emperor Tai-zyong (ruled from 967 to 998) by a board of scientists directed by a famous minister and erudite Li Fang (李昉, 924—996). The introduction to TPGJ tells that during its compilation the board used 344 prose collections (recent research shows that there were about five hundred collections) that date back to the Han era till the beginning of the Song era (from 206 BC to 977 AD). Material in TPGJ is organized in 52 thematic sections, whose titles include key concepts (categories) of the traditional Chinese culture. All these circumstances as well as the fact that many of those collections that Li Fang's board used in the given anthology have been lost, make TPGJ a unique writing artefact from different perspectives. We are interested in TPGJ above all as a source of invaluable information on traditional Chinese beliefs about the spirits of the dead (死灵, gǔn).

Speaking about traditional culture or traditional world image in the course of studying the written sources, we don't consider the universe integral and consistent. It reflects the views of people from different social classes from intelligent scribes to ignorant “silent majority”. On the one hand these views are similar in respect to those common things that a member of a certain culture takes in with mother's milk. On the other hand they have significant differences caused by such factors as education, religious denomination, etc. Usually the views of educated minority are analyzed, mostly because they are reflected in theoretical tracts, official papers and writings, i.e. in the so-called “classic literature”, while the layer of ordinary cultural is often disregarded. This is also true for the Chinese culture. We have a much better idea about the world-view of specific philosophers and the religious-philosophical systems per se, than about the “silent majority” worldview. Nevertheless, the ordinary world image (or some of its significant elements) can be restored on the basis of Chinese written sources and above all on the basis of the prose materials of xiaohuo (小話) that constitutes the main part of TPGJ. Traditional xiaohuo prose doesn't refer to classic literature, however it was created not by ordinary people but by educated scribes. It was in the prose xiaohuo (that of course isn't literature in the modern sense of the word) that personal and mental peculiarities of the authors, became blurred and less evident, while the subject matter was ordinary, common, and equally familiar to the top and to the bottom. The authors of xiaohuo regarded these texts from the cultural viewpoint, compiling crumbs of information, history, and tales into a comprehensive whole. They knew the same things as ordinary people and even more, that is why their cultural intention was able to arrange heterogeneous material and develop a common universe for different authors. Xiaohuo shows folk beliefs and traditional views not in a natural and spontaneous form of their existence, but in a manner arranged by the culture representatives themselves. This is the case with TPGJ, since the task of the compilers was to make a most representative compendium choosing the most characteristic, striking, and typical features. The collection compiled in the 10th century claims to explain the essence of notions or categories included in the titles of 52 sections as they were represented in classic “low” prose and, consequently, in the common consciousness of that time to a certain extent. Without exaggerating, TPGJ can be called a mirror of traditional spiritual Chinese culture of the 10th century.

© I. Alimov, 2009
## CONTENTS

**TEXTS AND MANUSCRIPTS: DESCRIPTION AND RESEARCH** ................................................. 3

A. Fedeli, Relevance of the Oldest Qur'anic Manuscripts for the Readings Mentioned by Commentaries. 3
A. Ambartsumian, On the Manuscripts of Pahlavi Work “Aylyqgär i Zärfrän” ............................... 11
A. Grib, In-Between the “Elite” and the “Pagan”: Qur'anic Boards from West Africa ..................... 22

**PRESENTING THE COLLECTION** .................................................................................... 35

I. Pavlinskaya, On the History of Photo-Illustrative Collections of the Department of Siberia of MAE RAS. I: The Concept of the Clan Ancestor Spirit and the Territory Host-Spirit Among the Peoples of South-Eastern Siberia in the Context of Ethno- and Culture-Genesis Processes ......................... 35

**PRESENTING THE MANUSCRIPT** ................................................................................ 41

A. Kudelin, Muhammad ‘Abdi’s Letter to Leo Tolstol (History of Russian-Arabic Cultural Dialogue in the Beginning of the 20th Century) .............................................................................. 41
M. Dehqan, Malal Muhammad Shari‘i Quli's Account on the History of Kurdistan: a Unique Manuscript from the Central Library of Tehran University ...................................................... 50

**ORIENTAL PANTHEON** ............................................................................................... 53

I. Alimov, “Tai-ping guang ji”: Motives Related to the Dead Souls ............................................. 53

**BOOK REVIEWS** ...................................................................................................... 66

**IN MEMORIAM** ....................................................................................................... 71
Karen Nikiitch Yuzbashian (1927—2009) .................................................................................... 71

---

**Front cover:**

Plate 1. Sacrifice at a home altar of ancestors before a wedding ceremony. Watercolour on pith, 33 x 21 cm, China, 19th century. MAE RAS, No. 311-1-12 (7e). Photo by S. Shapiro. Courtesy of the Museum.

**Back cover:**

years of exile in the ice and dirty states of New England, the intellectual frigidity and provincialism, the horrible weather and dismal light, the existential isolation gradually took apart what was left of my life, yearly trips to St. Petersburg became my only link to authentic culture and human warmth. I stayed often at Karen's apartment on Orbeli Street, and as he chided his chaise lounge we had long and intricate conversations about Russian and Armenian literature and politics. Roundabout midnight Karen would rouze me from my reading: James Jan, Kflrence? "Dear James, will you have supper?" and we'd sit down in the tiny kitchen for a snack and a glass of vodka. Karen was thin as a rail. I write these lines in a bed in Jerusalem, Israel, where I am recovering very slowly from a terrible motorcycle crash. Gradually I am restoring the muscles of my shattered leg, but when the poor thing was first released from its casts and bandages and startled in horror at its switchstick proportions it reminded me of Karen's skeletal limbs. He used to look up from his meals and tell me he had the zapasol appetit blokadas, "the reserve appetite of a Leningrad blockade survivor".

Karen was not just a warm friend, not just a captivating scholar, not just a fascinating Russian Armenian intellectual. He was also the centre of a large circle of friends that began in Petersburg and radiated outward across the planet. His goodness warmed more people than he knew. That warm heart has ceased to beat here on earth, and this is a colder place for it. Karen believed always in the essential affinities of Jews and Armenians. After all, he grew up in the Soviet Union, not the Middle East. He was entirely free of the anti-Semitic, hyper-nationalist virus that has disfigured Armenian life and scholarship in recent years; and despite his vulnerable stature and imposing credentials, the yellow press in Erivan attacked him. His friendship with foreigners was a mark against him. "James", he used to tell me, "Our enemies have everything on their side... except the truth". Karen visited Israel and liked this country. In the last couple of years he was far too weak to travel; so my hope of his visiting the home here I hope to have will be one more item for the days of the coming of the Messiah, I guess.

Dear Karen, may the earth, as Russians say, rest as lightly as a feather over your earthly remains. And for all of us left behind, mitrave govrom — "slain by grief" — God grant us strength to live out our lives in the light of his bright memory and he granted the consolation of being reunited with his enfranchised soul in the regions of the truth beyond space and time.

Barukh Dayan ha'Emet. Blessed is the one true Judge.

James Russell

AUTHORS

Dr. Igor A. Alimov — Head of the Department of East and Southwest Asia of the Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera), Russian Academy of Sciences (St. Petersburg), specialist in Far Eastern ethno-cultural texts. Author of the series of monographs in the field.

Mr. Arthur A. Ambartsumian — Independent researcher, graduated from Department of Iranian Languages at the Faculty of Asian and African Studies (St. Petersburg University), made postgraduate research at the Department of the Ancient Near East in the Institute of Oriental Studies (St. Petersburg Branch). Main interests — Old and Middle Iranian languages, culture and history of Ancient Iran. Author of the series of articles in the field of Iranian studies.

Mr. Mustafa Dehban, MA — specialist in Kurdish Studies with an interest in the literature and religions of Kurdistan. He earned a bachelor's degree in Historical Studies and a master's in Historical Linguistics from the University of Tehran. Author of the numerous articles in the field.

Mrs. Anastasia S. Grib — post-graduate student of the Oriental Department at the State Hermitage Museum. Specialist in the Qur'anic calligraphy and indigenous art in West Africa. Author of the internet-based Guide to Islamic Calligraphy (www.khatt.ru); formerly a special reporter in Cairo for the "Around the World" magazine, an intern at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Department of Islamic Art), managing editor of the "Hermitage Magazine".

Dr. Alba Fedeli — Lecturer in Arabic in the University of Milan (Università degli studi di Milano, Italy). PhD student in the Sorbonne Nouvelle University (Paris 3) on the earliest Qur'anic manuscripts.

Prof. Dr. Shimon M. Jakovson — Leading researcher at the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, Russian Academy of Sciences, specialist in the History of Hebrew manuscripts and incunabula, author of a series of monographs and articles.

Prof. Dr. Alexander B. Kudelin — Full member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Director of the World Literature Institute, Russian Academy of Sciences, specialist in the history of the Arabic literature; author of the series of monographs in the field.

Dr. Larisa R. Pavlinskaya — Head of the Department of Siberia of the Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera), Russian Academy of Sciences (St. Petersburg), specialist in ethnography and history of Siberia, history of Russian ethnology and Kunstkamera Museum collections. Author of the series of works in the field.


Dr. Igor N. Wujnowski — Chief Librarian in the library of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, specialist in Semitic studies, author of several articles dealing with the history of Islamic and Judaic culture.

Notes to Contributors

Manuscripts must be written in English.
Manuscripts must be clearly typewritten with numbered pages, double lines spacing and wide margins throughout. The title should be as brief and informative as possible. The institute at which the work has been done should be indicated at the head of each paper. Authors are requested to indicate their e-mail address.

Submissions

Manuscripts should be sent in duplicate to the Editor-in-Chief: Dr. Efim A. Revzan, Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera), Russian Academy of Sciences, 3 Universitetskaya nab., 199034, St. Petersburg, Russia, e-mail: revzan@kunstkamera.ru.