M. Dehqan

"THE BOOK OF SHAMQAL AND RUSTAM": A KURDISH MANUSCRIPT

Kurdish manuscripts are our most important source of knowledge about Kurdish intellectual, religious and everyday life in the late medieval and early modern periods, and anyone wishing to engage with Kurdish history needs to know about the manuscripts themselves, how to study them, and the literary genres to which they belong. The collection of medieval and modern manuscripts at the Islamic Consultative Assembly Library contains some valuable materials on the Kurdish literature and history which helps to the present aim [1]. They are written in many different dialects and exist in hundreds of copies throughout the Kurdish world, but some items have one thing in particular: "unique manuscript". Let us dwell on a single example.

The Kithāb Shammāl wa Rustam ("The Book of Shammāl and Rustam") is an anonymous unique manuscript (call No. 9787, 8 fol., 19.5 x 11 cm) mentioned neither in the Fīrisat-i Mehdīnāy-ā-Malīd-i Shāh-nāma [2] nor in any other available catalogue [3]. "The Book of Shammāl and Rustam" is a Southern Kurdish verse version of "Shāhīdāt Rustam", a well-known episode of Shāh-nāma. The story describes the killing of the victorious knight Rustam by his brother, Shāhīdāt. The Shāh-nāma and accompanying texts were very popular in Kurdistan and, as we already have said, the popularity and the importance of Firdawsī's principal Shāh-nāma to Kurdish poets and writers was no sudden occurrence but the result of a long process that had begun nearly in the late 17th century [5].

The work we see here was copied by an anonymous Kurdish poet in 29 Dhu al-Qa'da AH 1308. The manuscript is written in the Arabic script in the Southern Kurdish dialect, including some important Gūrānī words, by a professional scribe, and begins with the hawmāla. The text is written in a type of nastā'īq, and takes up both sides of the folio, with 14—17 lines on each side. The first and the last folios (i.e. fol. 1r and fol. 8v) include two librarian seals. The arrangement of the text is uniform across the entire folio. But at the fol. 6r, the text is contained in a different frame divided in five columns. Unfinished words are encountered, with letters missed out and there are some lines and letters which were left out or did not fit in the line. The exact date when the manuscript of the "Book of Shammāl and Rustam" came to the library and its original depository is unknown.

The Kurdish version of Persian "Shāhīdāt Rustam" is simple, rarely displaying the rhetorical adornments so typical of its contemporaries. The present manuscript contains a series of hesitations not included in the original version and lacks any specific introduction. It is also worth noting that in some cases the manuscript employs Gūrānī technical terms while the secondary structure makes do with vague descriptions.

Notes

1. I am grateful to Mr. Hussein Marashi of Majlis Library for giving me various comments on this newly-found Kurdish collection.
4. For the original version of the present Kurdish episode, see: Abu al-Qāsim Firdawsī, Shāh-nāma, ed. J. Khaliq Mulaq (Tehran, 2007), pp. 439—467.

Illustrations

Fig. 1. Kitâb Şamqûl (waf Rûstam ("The Book of Shamqûl and Rûstam"). 19.5 × 11 cm, furangi paper, 8 folios. Qâb ûr-Qâda AH 1308. Islamic Consultative Assembly Library, call No. 9787, fol. 1r. Courtesy of the Library.

Fig. 2. The same MS, fol. 8v. Courtesy of the Library.
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A. Ghrib, In-Between the “Elite” and the “Pagan”: Qur’anic Boards from West Africa (in English), Manuscripta Orientalia, vol. 15, nos. 1—2, 2009, pp. 22—34.

TEXT AND ITS CULTURAL INTERPRETATION


PRESENTING THE COLLECTION


PRESENTING THE MANUSCRIPT


ORIENTAL PANTHEON


BOOK REVIEWS


Diego de Guadix, Recopilación de algunos nombres arábigos que los árabes pusieron a algunas ciudades y a otras muchas cosas. (by J. Wojewódzki), by J. Wojewódzki, Manuscripta Orientalia, vol. 15, nos. 1—2, 2009, pp. 68—70.


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IN MEMORIAM


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. Mustafa Dehqan, 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.

Dr. Alessandro Gori — Department of Linguistics, University of Florence (Italy). Specialist in Arabic Islamic literature of the Horn of Africa. Author of a series of articles and monographs in this field.

Dr. David James — the author of several works on the arts of the Islamic book, especially calligraphy and illumination. He was lecturer in Arabic at University College, Dublin, Islamic Curator of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin and Curator of the Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, London. Now he lives and works in Spain.

Dr. Mikhail Kizilov — Kreitman fellow at the Department of Jewish Thought at the Ben Gurion University of the Negev (B’er Sheva, Israel).

Dr. Khanna Omarkhali — Lecturer of Yazidiism, Kurdish language and Culture at the Institute of Iranian Studies, George August University of Göttingen, Germany. Specialization: Yazidiism and Pre-Islamic Kurdish Religions. Author of a number of articles and three monographs in the field.

Mrs. Olga V. Vasilyeva — Head of the Oriental sector in the Manuscript Department of the National Library of Russia. Fields of interest — the arts of the book in the Middle East, history of the Oriental manuscripts’ collections, old Turkish literary prose.

Dr. Igor N. Wojewódzki — 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

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