

**A MANUSCRIPT OF "TALES OF SOME LOVERS OF THE PAST"  
IN THE COLLECTION OF THE ORIENTAL FACULTY  
OF THE ST. PETERSBURG UNIVERSITY**

An eighteenth-century manuscript of the "Tales of Some Lovers of the Past" (No. 734) in the library of the Oriental Faculty of St. Petersburg University entered the holdings of the library in the collection of manuscripts belonging to Shaykh Ṭaṇṭāwī (1810—1861). I. Yu. Krachkovsky's article entitled "Shaykh Ṭaṇṭāwī, professor at the St. Petersburg University (1810—1861)" [1] contains brief information about this manuscript. It is also mentioned in V. I. Beliaev and P. G. Bulgakov's article "Arabic manuscripts in the collection of LGU" [2], where it is termed "little-known". Two sheets of paper inserted into the manuscript have survived; they contain a list, in V. I. Beliaev's hand, of the stories which make up the manuscript. One can assume that the scholar attributed a certain significance to this manuscript and planned to study it further.

Manuscript No. 734 is entitled كتاب ذكر فيه اخبار بعض العشاق السالفين ("A Book of Reports about Some Lovers of the Past"). It contains tales about famous poets in love: Qays b. al-Mulawwah (Majnūn, d. A.D. 689), Tawb b. al-Ḥumayyir (7th—8th centuries A.D.), Laylā al-Akhyaliyya (d. A.D. 704), Qays b. Dhariḥ (d. A.D. 687), Jamīl b. Ma'mar (d. A.D. 701), al-'Abbās b. al-Aḥnaf (A.D. 750—808), 'Urwa b. Ḥizām (7th—8th centuries A.D.), and Kuthayyir (d. A.D. 723). It also presents love tales connected with the caliphs Sulaymān b. 'Abd al-Malik (8th century A.D.), Hārūn al-Rashīd (8th century A.D.), the vizier Ja'far al-Barmakī (8th century A.D.), and others.

The manuscript contains 137 folios: 20.0 × 15.0 cm.; the end is missing. The text is written in black and red ink. The handwriting is large *naskh* with the following characteristics: the copyist sometimes puts in vowelings, frequently omits medial and final *hamzas*, replaces *alif maqṣūra* with *alif mamdūda*, always puts dots below *alif maqṣūra*; if the seat of the *ḥamza* is a *yā*, the copyist also puts dots below it. Oriental paper; later paper binding.

The copyist's colophon has survived on fol. 75 b. It notes the date of the manuscript: A.H. 1118 (A.D. 1706—07). The title page contains the names of owners and dates: Aḥmad al-Bābilī, A.H. 1203 (1788—89) and al-Ṭaṇṭāwī, A.H. 1254 (1838—39). The name of the manuscript's compiler is missing.

The manuscript contains an anthology of tales about well-known heroes of Arabic literature and folklore and includes many lines of poetry. (Some of the poetry is supplied with lexical and grammatical commentaries.) The begin-

ning, which belongs to the compiler, is written in rhymed prose.

Beginning on fol. 1b:

الحمد لله الذي حكم الحبين بلواعج الشوق والغرام...

Contents of the manuscript:

1) fols. 3a—52b:

Story of Qays b. al-Mulawwah (Majnūn). There is a gap between fols. 29b and 30a.

2) fols. 53a—75b:

Tale of Laylā al-Akhyaliyya. The end of the tale contains the colophon of the copyist with the date of the manuscript:

و كان الفراغ من كتابته يوم الخميس المبارك عاشر جماد  
الاول الذي هو من شهور سنة ثمانية عشر و مائة و الف

3) fols. 76b—83a:

Tale of Qays b. Dhariḥ and his beloved, Lubnā. Fol. 83b contains the copyist's colophon, which concludes the tale of Qays and Lubnā:

و هذا ما انتهى اليها من حديث قيس و لبنا و الله اعلم  
باصواب و اليه المرجع و المعاد و صلى الله على سيدنا محمد  
و على آله و صحبه و سلم

4) fols. 83b—86b:

Tale of Jamīl and Buthayna.

Fol. 86b contains the compiler's colophon:

و هذا ما انتهى اليها من قصة بثينة و جميل الخ

5) fols. 87a—90b:

Tale of the love of 'Urwa b. Ḥizām and 'Afra.

6) fols. 90b—92a:

Verses by 'Abbās b. al-Aḥnaf. Very little prose text.

7) fols. 92a—133b and 134b—137b:

92a—94b: tale of two lovers, from al-Ṭufayl b. 'Āmir al-'Āmirī;

94b—95b: tale of the death of Sulaymān b. 'Abd al-Malik;

95b—96a: tale of Hārūn al-Rashīd and his female slave, from al-Aṣma'ī;

96a—96b: a similar story about Hārūn al-Rashīd and his slave-girl, from Ḥammād b. Ishāq;

96b—97b: story about the caliph al-Mutawakkil and the slave-girls given to him as a gift, conveyed by 'Alī b. al-Jahm;

97b—98a: story about al-Rashīd and a cunning slave-girl;

98a—98b: story about the caliph al-Ma'mūn and his slave-girl;

98b—99b: story about the caliph al-Rashīd and his slave-girl;

99b—102a: story about the caliph al-Ma'mūn and his witty interlocutor;

102a—106a: story of Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī about al-Ma'mūn;

106a—107a: story of al-Ma'mūn and the cunning Arab;

107a—108a: story of the two lovers, from al-Jāhīz;

108a—112a: story of Ma'mar b. 'Abdallāh al-Qaysī, emir of the West;

112a—113a: story of Ja'far al-Barmakī and Hārūn al-Rashīd;

113a—114b: story of a youth in love, conveyed by b. al-Jawzī;

114b—115a: stories about Maḥmūd al-Warrāq and Dhī-l-Rumm, from al-Shāfa'ī;

115a—115b: story about al-Rashīd, from al-Ṣūlī;

115b—116a: story about al-Ma'mūn and the slave-girl;

116a: other stories about al-Rashīd and 'Alī b. al-Jahm;

116a—117a: story about an unknown king;

117a—119b: story about the singer Ma'bad;

119b—124a: story about an adventure of the caliph al-Manṣūr;

124a—125a: tale of Mu'awiya b. Abū Sufyān;

125a—129a: story about Abū-l-'Abbās al-Saffāh;

129a—131b: story about a female singer, from Ishāq al-Mawsilī;

131b—133b: story from the book of Shihāb al-Dīn b. Faḍlallāh *Masalik al-absār*;

133b: story about Yahyā b. Khālīd al-Barmakī, from Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm;

133b—134b: episodes concerning the poet Kuthayyir;

134b—136a: story about Ja'far al-Barmakī and Hārūn al-Rashīd;

136a—137a: tale of al-Amīn and al-Ma'mūn;

137a—137b: story from b. Ḥamdūn. The story breaks off here, as the end of the manuscript is missing.

As one can see, the compiler devoted the bulk of his attention to love tales involving the best-known Bedouin poets of the 7th—8th centuries: Majnūn and Laylā (49 fols.), Tawb and Laylā al-Akhyaliyya (23 fols.), Qays b. Dhariḥ and Lubnā (7.5 fols.), Jamīl and Buthayna (3 fols.), 'Urwa and 'Afra (3.5 fols.), Kuthayyir and 'Azza (1 folio) — 87 fols. out of 137, more than half. Hence, it is of interest to attempt to evaluate the significance of this manuscript in the textual history of the tales of poets in love. For this purpose, it was necessary to juxtapose the text with variants of the tales known in other sources.

The following works were employed:

1. "Book of Poetry and Poets" by Ibn Qutayba (9th century A.D.), the earliest surviving source.

2. "Book of Songs" by Abū-l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī (10th century) — the fullest collection of poetry and biographical information on poets of the fifth—tenth centuries.

Drawn up in the tenth century, this anthology remains one of the most reliable and fullest sources for scholars on medieval Arabic literature.

3. "Embellishment of the Markets with Detailed Stories of Lovers", the anthology by Da'ūd al-Anṭākī (17th century), also a fairly well-known late-medieval collection of stories about lovers. Unfortunately, it does not contain *isnāds*. Al-Anṭākī's anthology is, however, interesting as the source chronologically closest to the manuscript.

4. The *Dīwān* of Majnūn's poetry, employed in analysing the tale of Majnūn and Laylā. This *Dīwān* was drawn up by Abū Bakr al-Wālibī (11th century A.D.), who, like Ibn Qutayba and al-Anṭākī, does not list his sources.

As the stories of unhappy, violently separated lovers in which the heroes are the above-mentioned Bedouin poets are widely known both in the Arab world and beyond its borders, we did not deem it necessary to retell the stories here. Furthermore, biographical information on all six poets and their love stories can be found in any work on medieval Arabic literature [1].

We pause first on the content and composition of the tale of Majnūn and Laylā, the largest in scope. The general structure of this tale in the manuscript is the same as in the "Book of Songs": a series of episodes with verses, frequently without logical links between them. Each episode has its own *isnād*. The *isnāds* in the manuscripts very often differ from those in the "Book of Songs", even where the episodes are similar in content. Usually, only one or two names coincide in each series. In the manuscript, six names also found in the "Book of Songs" are most frequently encountered: Ayyūb b. Abāya (7th—8th centuries A.D.), 'Awāna b. al-Ḥakam (8th century A.D.), Ibn Da'b (8th century A.D.), al-Aṣma'ī (8th—9th centuries A.D.), al-Tanūkhī, Ibn al-Jawzī (11th century A.D.).

In juxtaposing the material in the manuscript with the materials in the "Book of Songs", we numbered the episodes in both sources (both those which comprise the plot and those not related to the plot) [2]. A calculation shows that the plot is presented more concisely in the manuscript: 50 episodes in the manuscript and 60 in the "Book of Songs".

A comparison of the manuscript text with other sources shows that the episodes in the manuscript can be divided into four plot groups:

1. Episodes which literally coincide with a particular source. There are 17 of these. Of them, 13 coincide with the "Book of Songs": for example, the story of how Majnūn and Laylā knew each other since childhood, when they herded cattle together [3]; the incident with the muezzīn who, upon hearing Majnūn's verses, jumbled the words of the prayer [4]; the story of how Majnūn killed a wolf which was eating an antelope and then buried the antelope, as the beautiful animal reminded him of his beloved [5]. The remaining four episodes, which are absent in the "Book of Songs", are contained in other sources: two in al-Anṭākī, one in Ibn Qutayba, and one in Ibn Sarrāj's anthology "Death of the Lovers" [6].

2. Episodes of identical content which are presented somewhat differently than in other literary sources. Thirteen episodes fall into this category. They include several incidents connected with genealogy [7] — the story of how Majnūn, passing on his camel a group of women in whose

midst stood Laylā, stopped and made her acquaintance [8]; the story of Majnūn's courtship [9], and others.

3. Episodes which partially coincide or have something in common with episodes in other sources. There are eight of these. For example, one of the tax collector Nawfal b. Musāḥiq's assistants tells of a meeting with Majnūn; this evokes an episode from the "Book of Songs" which describes a meeting between 'Umar b. 'Abd al-Rahmān [10] and the poet. Another episode tells of how Majnūn secretly came to Laylā's encampment in order to see her and was sheltered by a woman named Su'ād. This is similar to a story in which Majnūn stays with a woman from the Banū Hilāl who lived in Laylā's encampment and conveyed through her news of himself to his beloved [11].

4. Episodes which could not be found in any of the other texts employed for comparison. There are 12 episodes in this group. They include the story of the youth in love, who, standing on the bank of the Euphrates, heard the sailor's song about Laylā and began to recall his beloved. (The full text, translation and brief commentaries on these episodes are given in the final section of this article).

A juxtaposition of the episodes contained in the manuscript and the variants found in other sources shows that the manuscript retains the basic plot line: a genealogy of the heroes, their acquaintance, Laylā's marriage, the lovers attempts to see each other, the complaint about Majnūn to the ruler, the poet's madness and death. It is difficult to say which sources the compiler of the manuscript directly employed. Of course, one could claim that the version in the "Book of Songs" provided the basis, but all subsequent anthologies which contain Majnūn's verses and the story of his love were based on it and to all intents and purposes repeat it, with minor changes, of course.

Of the 60 episodes in the "Book of Songs", 24 are omitted in the manuscript. These belong either to the series of romantic episodes which demonstrate the power of Majnūn and Laylā's love, or those episodes which supplement the tale with details. Several extremely popular episodes are among those omitted. In particular, Majnūn's own stories of how his father sent him to Laylā's father, first to ask for fire, and then for oil for guests [12]. Also absent are those episodes in the "Book of Songs" in which the heroes display weakness: the heroes suffer (Laylā's torment in a conversation with a female neighbour) [13], commit desperate deeds (the married Laylā receives Majnūn at night) [14], engage in intrigues (Majnūn's father tries to blacken Laylā's image in his son's eyes) [15], and even gossip (Majnūn is accused of spreading rumours about Laylā) [16]. One forms the impression that the compiler left only the most "indispensable" episodes known through other sources, retaining the basic plot line. As a consequence of such omissions, the tale is emotionally impoverished and the depiction of the heroes narrows, becomes two-dimensional and schematic.

Episodes have been added to the text in which real historical figures appear: the Caliphs 'Abd al-Malik (7th—8th centuries) and Sulaymān b. 'Abd al-Malik (8th century A.D.), the ruler of Mecca Marwān b. al-Ḥakam (7th century A.D.), and their deputies. There are episodes which contain statements of praise about Majnūn, as well as about the compiler of the manuscript himself. Clearly, the majority of the added episodes are intended to stress the great fame of the poet and attest the fact of his existence.

Nearly all of the plot episodes in the manuscript were "taken" from the "Book of Songs". Exceptions are two episodes which tell of failed meetings between the lovers — one is borrowed from al-Anṭākī, the second could not be found in the sources referenced here (a tale about how Majnūn, calling himself a Khuzā'ait, tried to deceive one of Laylā's fellow tribesmen) [17]. There are also two episodes about the poet's death: the first is very reminiscent of the Murrīte Shaykh's story of Majnūn's death found in the "Book of Songs" [18]; the second (based on Kuthayyir's account of Majnūn's death on Laylā's grave) [19] is also absent in the sources enumerated above.

The material in the manuscript in which the tale of Majnūn and Laylā occupies a central place confirms I. Yu. Krachkovsky's conclusion that Majnūn gained popularity later than other poets of his circle. He notes that Majnūn grew popular only in the tenth century. "After this," writes I. Yu. Krachkovsky, "the expansion of the plot of the story in Arabic is noticeable only in the unsuccessful compilation of al-Wālibī, which arose no earlier than the eleventh century. Subsequently, only the poems of Majnūn grew steadily ..." [20]. However, the version contained in the manuscript still adds to the tale a certain quantity of new episodes. Nearly all of them are equipped with *isnāds* with little-known or unknown names: Ibn Ḥayawayhī, ibn al-Muḥibb, Karīma bint 'Abd al-Wahhāb and others.

The situation with the poet's verses is more complex. The manuscript contains a large quantity of verses, and many of them cannot be found in the sources employed for comparison. Some of the verses in the manuscript correspond exactly to verses in the literary texts cited here. At times, identical verses appear in connection with other episodes. *Bayts* are sometimes rearranged. There is a large group of verses in which one or several words are replaced; sometimes an entire hemistich is replaced with no harm to the meter. The verses of other poets are ascribed to Majnūn in the manuscript: Imru'-'l-Qays and Qays b. Dharīḥ.

A juxtaposition of the remaining five stories in the manuscript about Bedouin poets in love with the "Book of Songs" and al-Anṭākī's "Embellishment of the Markets" yields the following results.

The tale of Tawba and Laylā al-Akhyaliyya is nearly identical to the version presented by al-Iṣfahānī, to whom the compiler constantly refers. The *isnāds* in this tale also cite Abū 'Ubayda (8th century A.D.), al-Aṣma'ī (9th century A.D.) and ibn Qutayba (9th century). Even the "non-plot" episodes coincide with the "Book of Songs": there are five of them in the story. Only one plot episode is missing — on the deprivations of Tawba — and one is shifted to the beginning of the tale — yet another version of Laylā's death — while this episode is located at the end in the "Book of Songs". For the purpose of comparison, we cite here translations of these episodes.

"Book of Songs". Once Laylā al-Akhyaliyya was returning from a journey and passed by the grave of Tawba b. al-Ḥumayyir. Her husband was with her, and she was in a pālanquin. Laylā said: "I swear by Allah, I will not move from this place until I greet Tawba." Her husband began to dissuade her from it, but she insisted on approaching [the grave]. And while insisting even more firmly, she climbed the knoll on which Tawba's grave stood, and said: "Greetings to you, o Tawba!" Then she turned to those present and said: "I never knew him to lie before." They asked: "Why?" Laylā said: "Did he not say:

'If Laylā al-Akhyaliyya turns to me with words of greeting,  
when I am at rest in the earth beneath a gravestone,  
I will affectionately answer her greeting, or the owl which  
hides by the grave will answer [her] ...' [21].

Why did he not answer my greeting as he promised?"  
But an owl was hiding by the grave. Upon seeing the pālanquin, it grew uneasy, flapped its wings and flew toward the camel. The frightened animal broke into a run and threw off Laylā, who struck her head on the ground and died on the spot. They buried her alongside him [22].

Manuscript version:

Ibrāhīm b. Zayd al-Saysābūrī told once that after the death of Tawba Laylā took a husband. After this her husband was passing by Tawba's grave, and Laylā was with him. He said to her: "Laylā, do you know this grave?" She answered: "No." He said: "This is Tawba's grave. Greet him." She answered: "Go on! This does not concern you. What do you want from Tawba? His bones have already crumbled." "I want you to expose him in a lie. Was it not he who said:

'If Laylā al-Akhyaliyya turns to me with words of greeting,  
when I am at rest in the earth beneath a gravestone,  
I will affectionately answer her greeting, or the owl which  
hides by the grave will answer ...'

I swear by Allah, I will not leave until you greet him!"  
She said: "Peace unto you, o Tawba, and may Allah bless you where you lie." The story-teller said: suddenly a bird flew out of the grave and she (Laylā) cried out and died. She was buried next to him. Two trees grew on their graves; when they had grown high, their crowns grew together ... [23].

There is no doubt that the latter version appeared much later: it was obviously created on the basis of the first version. It contains no mention of the pālanquin in which Laylā rode, nor does it give a logical explanation for her death, as the first version does: the owl frightened the camel, which broke into a run and threw off Laylā, who struck her head on the ground and died. Moreover, the latter version contains the motif of the two trees on the lovers' graves. This motif is lacking in the stories of Bedouin poets in love in the "Book of Songs", but is found in al-Anṭākī in the tale of 'Urwa and 'Afra, from which one can conclude that this motif of the lovers united after death appeared later. One should also note that the motif of unity after death is also found in medieval tales of lovers common in the West, for example, in the tale of Tristan and Isolde.

The tale of Tawba and Laylā in al-Anṭākī is brief and found among the tales about little-known pairs of lovers. Surprisingly, his version retains the scene of the heroes' initial meeting, which is absent both in the manuscript and the "Book of Songs". It is, however, quite possible that it represents a later invention. We present here a brief re-telling of that scene. Tawba's tribe usually made raids together with the Banū Akhyal, to which Laylā belonged. One time, the women of the Banū Akhyal, among whom was one of remarkable beauty, came out to greet the warriors returning after a raid. The beauty was Laylā. It was then that Tawba saw Laylā and fell in love with her [24].

The tale of Tawba and Laylā is followed by the story of Qays and Lubnā. Although the *isnāds* for this tale are missing, it differs little from the version presented by

al-Iṣfahānī. The end of the tale is of especial interest. If al-Iṣfahānī and al-Anṭākī each provide two endings for the tale of Qays and Lubnā, the manuscript gives three: both versions from the "Book of Songs" and the third one taken from al-Anṭākī. Moreover, this is the only episode in the tale which is equipped with an *isnād*.

Translation of the excerpt:

Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Bāqī, who had it from Ayyūb b. 'Atāba, said: "Qays b. Dhariḥ went to Medina to sell one of his she-camels. Lubnā's husband bought it, and he did not know him Qays, and he said to him: "Come with me, and I will give you the money for the she-camel," and he (Qays) went with him. When he opened the door, it was Lubnā who received him. Qays broke into a run upon seeing her. Lubnā's husband followed with the money in order to pay him. [Then] Qays said to him: "Do not ever mount my two she-camels." He (Lubnā's husband) said: "Are you Qays b. Dhariḥ?" "Yes," replied Qays. He (Lubnā's husband) said: "This is Lubnā. You have seen her. Remain, that she might choose between us. If she chooses you, I will divorce her." The Qurayshit thought that in her heart there was room only for him and that she would not do this. Qays said: "Do this." The Qurayshit went to her, and she chose Qays. Her husband divorced her, and Qays remained to wait for the end of the *'idda* in order to marry her, but she died before the conclusion of the *'idda* [25].

Clearly, this excerpt appeared somewhat later than the "Book of Songs", otherwise al-Iṣfahānī would have included it in his work.

Another story, that of Jamīl and Buthayna, is given very briefly in the manuscript. It consists of only five episodes (not counting the genealogy of the poet), of which one is "non-plot": it is based on the account of Ibn Sarrāj, who saw the place where Jamīl and Buthayna used to meet. The remaining four episodes have *isnāds* which consist of one or two names. There is one reference to Ibn Sarrāj and one to Ibn Qutayba.

All of the episodes in the manuscript concerning Jamīl and Buthayna also exist in the "Book of Songs" and the "Embellishment of the Markets". Al-Anṭākī's version clearly forms the basis for the tale in the manuscript, as is indicated by the coincidence of the contents of the episodes and the similar order of their exposition. But the story in the manuscript is so heavily abridged that it lacks even the famous scene of Jamīl and Buthayna's initial meeting — their squabbling at Wādī-l-Baghīd. The scene in which Buthayna learns of her beloved's death is also abridged — it lacks the saying of the heroine: "If you told the truth, then you killed me; if you lied, then you disgraced me." [26]

The tale of 'Urwa and 'Afra is also told quite briefly. Certain episodes have *isnāds* which consist of one, rarely of two names. There is a clear similarity to al-Anṭākī's version: the number, content and arrangement of episodes coincide. The compiler retells the tale in his own words, but sticks close to the text of the anthology "Embellishment of the Markets". Some episodes correspond word for word. There are only two "non-plot" episodes in the manuscript and al-Anṭākī. The first is the story of the tax collector who saw 'Urwa ill with his mother [27]. The second describes the graves of the lovers, on which two trees with interlaced crowns grew [28].

The story of Kuthayyir and 'Azza consists of only two episodes, of which one is "non-plot". It presents a dispute

over who was more in love, Jamīl or Kuthayyir, in which all participants in it give their preference to Jamīl. The second relates to the plot — it is a story of how Kuthayyir, tormented by thirst, sought 'Azza. The last episode is missing in the "Book of Songs" and the anthology "Embellishment of the Markets".

Thus, a comparative analysis of the manuscript text of the remaining five stories of Bedouin poets in love has shown that:

— the tales of Tawba and Laylā al-Akhyaliyya and of Qays and Lubnā endured the least change over time (in comparison with the "Book of Songs");

— the story of 'Urwa and 'Afra is somewhat abridged; with the passage of time, its episodes came to be told in logical succession;

— the tale of Jamīl and Buthayra is told very briefly, notwithstanding the comparative popularity of the poet. It is difficult to explain this disregard for the personality of the poet and his verses;

— the story of Kuthayyir and 'Azza was, it appears, comparatively little-known, and by the eighteenth century only two episodes from this story had remained in the manuscript: for unknown reasons, the compiler did not concentrate attention on the plot itself.

We go on to provide the translation of all episodes from the tale of Majnūn and Laylā contained in the manuscript but not found in the sources cited in the comparative analysis.

F o l. 11 a:

Ibn Khalaf says: "How similar this tale is to the tale of a certain beloved woman of al-Naṣr b. Sa'īd al-Kilābī. He said: 'One man from among us fell in love with a girl who was called Laylā'. And one day, when he was on the bank of the Euphrates, a sailor passed him, who was steering a ship, repeating: 'Laylā! Laylā!' This aroused passion within him and made him disturbed. He recalled his beloved and said:

Woe unto you, oh sailor, who robbed my night of sleep,  
Calling out for Laylā as the ships made their way on the water.  
You call out, not knowing whom you call,  
Although you know what make you follow the true path  
and why you go astray.

F o l s. 14 b — 15 a:

Ribāḥ b. Ḥabīb said: a man of the Banū 'Āmir told me that once (after the marriage of Laylā and Qays' going mad) a certain man came to them and asked about Majnūn. They told him: "What do you need from him?" "I want to see him and tell him something." They answered him: "Tell us, for he will not understand what you say to him." "At least show him to me." They sent a man with him, and he searched for Majnūn until he found him. The man said to Majnūn: "Do you love Laylā?" He said: "Yes." "In that case, what distracts you from your love, for she is ill, and you do not come to her and ask about her." The story-teller says: "He (Majnūn) sighed deeply, so that I thought his soul had left his body. Then he raised his head and said:

They say that Laylā is ill in al-Ṣifāh [29].  
And why are you distracted [from her] if you are a friend  
[to her] [30]?  
May Allah give water to those ill in al-Ṣifāh.  
Truly, I have compassion for each miserable [man] in al-Ṣifāh.

F o l. 15 a—15 b:

Ibn al-Ba'ūnī, who had it from Abū Mu'ādh al-Numayrī, told us that Marwān b. al-Hakam had appointed a man from the tribe of Qays to collect the *sadaqa* from the tribe of Ka'b b. Rabī'a b. 'Āmir, and he is Qays, al-Ḥuraysh, and Ja'da.

This man heard the story of Qays b. Mu'ādh, that is, Majnūn of the Banū 'Āmir, and ordered that he be brought before him and questioned him about his condition, and [after that] asked him to read verses. Majnūn read, and found favour [with the tax collector] and he said: "Stay with me and I will employ a ruse in this matter of Laylā in order to bring you together with her." And Majnūn stayed with him. He began to come to this man and speak with him. And the Banū 'Āmir had a gathering place where they gathered every year, and the ruler of this place was present so that there would be no quarrel among them. And the time came [for the gathering]. Qays said to the tax collector: "Will you not permit me to attend this gathering together with you?" The latter gave his permission, and when Qays had prepared to go, people from the lineage of Qays came to the tax collector and said: "He requested to go with you only in order to see Laylā and speak with her. Someone from her lineage is incited against him, and the sultan has given permission to spill his blood, should he come to them." When they had said this, the tax collector forbade Majnūn to go with him and offered him several long-legged she-camels from among the camels received as part of the *sadaqa*. Majnūn rejected this and said:

I refused the she-camels of the Qurayshī,  
When his failure to keep his promise became evident to me.  
And they departed to their purpose and left me  
To great sorrow which I try to heal [31].

F o l. 22 b:

They say, that he (Majnūn) went out one day and approached her (Laylā's) encampment; but then a youth came out [from the encampment] and, seeing him, did not approve of this. The youth asked him: "Who are you and what is your business here?" Majnūn answered: "I am from [the tribe of] Khuzā'a. My she-camel has wandered off, and I came out to look for her." The youth said: "You lie! You are Qays. Return whence you came. If [the people of] the tribe seize you, they will kill you." Majnūn left, saying:

"Oh how shameful it is for me to stand before your tents  
And [hear] the words of your slanderer: 'Who are you, man?'  
I answered: 'Someone bewildered, someone who lost his path.  
Show me the road, and I will labour out of love for you.'  
He said: 'Return. The road is not here.'  
What am I to do? My fetters have become unbearable."

F o l. 25 b:

They told also a different thing of him. They say that Kuthayyir said: "At the time when I was with Majnūn of the Banū 'Āmir, a rider came and said: 'Bear your loss with strength, Qays.' He (Qays) said: '[Bear] the loss of whom [with strength]?' The rider answered: 'The loss of Laylā.' He (Majnūn) mounted his camel, I mounted mine, and we came to the encampment of Laylā's people. They showed him the grave, he approached and began to kiss [her grave], to press himself against it, to breath the air of her ashes and recite verses. Then he sighed deeply and died. I buried him."

F o l. 26 a—26 b:

Ibn al-Marzubān said: "Muḥammad b. al-Faḍl, from Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Azdī, who had it from 'Abdullāh b. Humām, told me: 'I went out to attend to some matters and suddenly saw Ibn Abī Mālik sitting in the desert between Ḥīra and Kūfa. I asked: 'What are you doing here?' He answered: 'What our friend usually did.' 'And who is your friend?' 'Majnūn of the Banū 'Āmir.'" The story-teller says: "And a rock lay next to him. He took it, ran after me, and the rock flew by me. I returned and sat down at a distance from him. He said to me: 'I swear by Allah, it is not good or beautiful what he said:

I fell in love with you when my eyes were shrouded,  
And when the shroud lifted, I tore myself away from  
[all] my friends.

Why did he not say as I said:  
Love struck me with its greatest grief,  
Separation from my beloved has besieged me.  
Patience! Perhaps fate will unite me openly  
With a loved friend or with death, which waits [for me]."

Then he said: "What is better than this? There is no God other than Allah, the One and Only. He is the Highest, He determined, decided, and leveled."

F o l. 26 b:

Al-Marzubān said: "Al-'Abbās b. Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Anṣārī told me, saying: I heard how 'Abdallāh b. Idrīs said: 'I saw Ibn Abī Mālik in a place covered in ash. He had a small piece of plaster, with which he wrote and tried to make out the whiteness of the plaster against the black of the ash. I said: 'Ibn Abī Mālik! By the name of your father, what are you doing?' He answered: 'What our friend did, that is, Majnūn of the Banū 'Āmir.'" [The story-teller] says: "I asked — 'And what did he do?' He said: 'Did you not hear what he said:

This evening I have no other but to take to gathering pebbles  
and write on ash.  
I write and strike out with my tear all I have already written,  
While the ravens [of separation] have already taken their place  
at home.'

I said: 'No, I did not hear.' He laughed, and then said: 'I heard the words of Allah the All-powerful and All-mighty — *Hast thou not regarded thy Lord, how He stretched out the shadow?* [32]. [And] did you hear him or see, Ibn Idrīs?" These are the words of the Arabs.

F o l s. 26 b—27 a:

Some who know the *adab* say, from Muḥammad b. Abī Naṣr al-Azdī who said: "'I saw in Basra a madman sitting by the side of the road in [the quarter of] Mirbad. Whenever riders would pass him, he read verses:

Oh ye riders of Yemen! Come to us,  
For our love has become Yemenite.  
We shall ask you, did the Na'mān [33] flow after us?  
Dear to us is the valley of Baṭn-Na'mān."

[The story-teller] says: "I asked about him. They told me: 'This man is from among those who live in Basra. He had a female cousin, and he loved her, but they married her to a man from the city of Taif, and he took her away, and he lost his mind because of her.'"

F o l. 28 a—28 b:

From 'Abbās b. 'Alī [who said]: "A certain Medinan called me to a woman who sang. And when we went in to see her, it so happened that she was one of the most beautiful from among [all] people, but she was pinched-looking, distracted and silent. We began to entertain her with jokes and conversation, but whatever she was concealing prevented her [from perceiving this]. I said to myself: 'I swear by Allah, she was in love and [is now] crazy'. And I approached her with the words — 'For the sake of Allah, why can you not entrust me with what troubles you?' She answered: '[It is] memories [that] torture [me], and constant thoughts, the emptiness of the dwellings and passion for he who has gone.' Then she took the 'ud and began to sing:

Allah willed that I should die from passionate love.  
I have no power over what God has decreed.  
Memories will bring me to the abyss where one perishes,  
But I do not abandon the memory of my beloved.  
There was in my heart, when he departed, a striving toward him.  
He left me all alone, target for lances.  
Communication between us broke off.  
For the goal is distant and the roads and paths stretch far."

[The story-teller] says: "I swear by Allah, I grew frightened that she had stolen my senses when she sang, and I said: 'May Allah make me your ransom. That which brought you to what I see is worthy [of such compassion]. But I swear by Allah, there are many people. If you took comfort with another, perhaps what is [taking place] with you would abate or grow easier: for the ancient [poet] said:

I refrained from pleasures when she left.  
I made it obligatory upon my soul, and [my soul] was  
[in this state].  
The soul is only what the youth makes of it:  
If it desires greatly, then it strives [toward that], and if not,  
it finds comfort.'

She drew near to me and said: 'I swear by Allah, I wished for that, but I was, as Qays b. Dhariḥ said:

When his heart rejected all but irrepressible desire,  
And neither money nor kin turned him away from Laylā,  
He took comfort with another, yet she,  
With whom he took comfort, fixed on Laylā and cannot help  
thinking of [her]."

[The story-teller] says: "I swear by Allah, proofs, one after the other, forced me to break off my conversation with her. I never saw [a woman] like her in appearance or equal to her in erudition."

F o l s. 28 b—29 b:

From Abū Rayhan, one of those who served 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwan, who said: "Two days out of every week 'Abd al-Malik received all [of his subjects]. And one day while he sat on the terrace, notes were brought to him. Suddenly an unsigned note found its way into his hands, and it read — 'Would the commander of the faithful not wish for a certain of his slave-girls to sing three melodies, and then let him pronounce whatever sentence he sees fit.' 'Abd al-Malik flew into a rage [at this] and said: 'Ribāh! Bring me whoever wrote this note.' [After] all of the people had left, they brought a youth in to the caliph. The youth was like chaste and most beautiful youths, [he was] as though tormented by suffering. And 'Abd al-Malik said: 'Oh youth! Is this your note?' 'Yes, oh commander of the faithful."

'What has deceived you in relation to me? I swear by Allah, I will surely maim you and turn you to ash. [But] your gaze is the gaze of a brave person. Bring in the slave-girl!' They brought in the girl who was like a fragment of the moon, and there was an *'ud* in her hands. They offered her a chair and she sat down. 'Abd al-Malik said: 'Order her, youth.' The latter said: 'Girl, sing me the verses of Qays b. Dharih:

It would be sufficient for my soul if her love continued,  
but the world is a deceitful thing.  
Before [our] love appeared, we were all in the happiest state  
of prosperity and joy.  
But the gossips did not cease [to talk], until love appeared  
to us reversed.'

She had sung. The youth tore up his garments. 'Abd al-Malik said: 'She will sing the second song.' The youth asked [her] — 'Sing me the verses of Jamil:

Oh if only I knew whether I will spend [another] night  
in Wadi-l-Qura, then I would be happy.  
If I say: Buthayna! What will kill me in my love [for you]?  
She will answer: That what is firm and grows.  
And if I say: Return [to me] some of my mind,  
I will live with it among people,  
She will say: This is far from you.  
I will not encounter refusal in that which I came to ask,  
and love for her, in renewal, brings no profit.  
My love dies each time I am with her, and revives when I part  
with her, and returns.'

[After] the slave-girl had sung, the youth fell, losing consciousness for a time, and then came to himself. 'Abd al-Malik said: 'Order her. Have her sing for you the third melody.' And he said: 'Girl, sing me the verses of Qays b. al-Mulawwah al-Majnun:

Among the neighbours leaving in the morning the valley  
of Wajra was a young gazelle which had lowered its eyes.  
Do not consider him, who leaves, to be a wanderer; a wanderer is  
whom you are leaving.

She finished her song, [and] the youth threw himself from the terrace and [his heart] broke before he reached the ground. 'Abd al-Malik said: 'Woe is him! He hurried to kill himself. I thought he would do something else.' He issued an order, and they brought the slave-girl out of the palace, and then he asked about the youth. They said that he was from another land, and all that was known was that three days ago he had cried out, placing his hand on his head:

Tomorrow there will be more who cry among us and among you.  
And my home will be more distant from your homes."

F o l s. 29 b—30 a:

They say that a similar thing happened at the council of Sulayman b. 'Abd al-Malik. Al-Jahiz said: "Once he sat, receiving complaints of injustice, and they presented notes to him. He suddenly found before him a note which said: 'Does not the commander of the faithful wish to have sent to me this certain one (one of the slave-girls is meant — A. S.), that she might sing for me three melodies.' Sulayman grew angry and ordered [the servants] to go out to him [the

author of the note] and bring his head. He then sent out another [servant] and ordered him to bring to him this man [34] ... of the Banu 'Amir, who wanders among the wild beasts and recites verses without interruption. The riders hear the verses in his recitation and convey them. Ibn al-Khalaf, who had it from al-Fakhdamī, said: 'When Majnun [once] recited [the verses]:

[Allah] decreed her to another, but not to me, and He tested me  
with my love for her.  
Could He not have tested me with some thing other than Layla?

— he lost his mind. And Ibn al-Jawzi says that he (Majnun) lost his vision [35]. Al-Ghazali said that he heard someone saying: 'You hinder Our sentence, you resist Our decision,' and [after that] his reason departed him." [36]

F o l. 52 b:

To him belong numerous *qaṣīdas* which are [too] long to be enumerated. And his verses are of a high quality, extremely fine and powerful. This Qays lived in the time [of the rule] of Marwan and his son 'Abd al-Malik. What is said of him from among the reports and tales is without measure or description, and most of it contains lies, which is why we have omitted it and quoted only that which the learned have conveyed [38], those whose witness is taken into account, reliable people from among the respected learned men. In "The Revival [of the Sciences of the Faith]" Al-Ghazali said [that] he saw Majnun of the Banu 'Amir in his sleep, and [that] it was said [to Majnun]: "What has Allah done to you?" "He has forgiven me and made me a reproach unto those who love [him]." [Al-Ghazali] said, from al-Junayd — may Allah mercy upon him — who said: "Majnun of the Banu 'Amir was one of the saints of Allah (great is He and glorious), for He covered his state with madness." [39]

The comparison of the contents of the manuscript "A Book of Reports about Some Lovers of the Past", with related materials surviving in other Arabic literary sources, enables to make some observations concerning developments which took place in the process of transmission of the folklore tales about most popular heroes of Arabic literature. Certainly, this process needs more profound investigation, which makes necessary to draw on new materials taken from extant manuscript anthologies. Moreover, it would be of use to examine the conditions, under which the tradition of Arabic popular tales was formed, re-formed, preserved and changed.

The material preserved by our eighteenth-century manuscript fixes only one stage in this long literature process, which gives little room for any far-reaching conclusions. Generally speaking, the comparison shows that while the tales about less popular literature characters underwent considerable abridgements and diminishment of a number of surrounding plot details, as it is seen from our manuscript, the tales about such popular heroes as Majnun changed but little. A huge popularity of this figure in Arabic literature contributed greatly to the appearance of numerous additions to well-known literary episodes, which is testified by the manuscript under review here.

## Notes

1. See, for example, I. M. Fil'shtinskii, *Istoriia arabskoï literatury* (History of Arabic Literature) (Moscow, 1985); Dayf Shawqī, *Tārīkh al-adab al-'Arabī al-'aṣr al-islāmī* (Cairo, 1962); *Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period*, eds. A. F. L. Beeston, T. M. Johnson, R. B. Serjeant and G. R. Smith (Cambridge—London—New York, 1983); Blachère Régis, *Histoire de la littérature arabe des origines à la fin du XV-e siècle de J. C.* (Paris, 1952—1966), i—iii; C. Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Literatur* (Leiden, 1943—1949), i—ii. Also especially on this, see V. S. Foteva, "Materialy o liricheskikh poétakh omeïadskogo perioda (poëty-beduiny)" ("Materials on lyric poets of the Umayyid period: Beduin poets"), *Voprosy istorii i literatury stran Zarubezhnogo Vostoka* (Moscow, 1960), pp. 24—43.

2. The episodes in any story about poets in love can be divided into two large groups: plot and non-plot, the latter being collateral episodes which do not play a direct role in plot development. These insertions can occur at any point in the tale. They speak of the poet's popularity; comments of eyewitnesses about the poet himself, his outward or inner qualities are given. These insertions can contain the reactions of contemporaries to the beauty or intelligence of the beloved. Also, these may be episodes in which deputies and sometimes the caliph himself express interest in the verses and personality of the poet.

3. Abū-l-Faraj al-İṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-aghānī* (Būlāq, 1285/1868—69), i, p. 170.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 170—1.

5. *Ibid.*, ii, p. 8.

6. The Russian translation of this episode with a reference to Ibn Sarrāj is cited in I. Yu. Krachkovsky's article "Ranniaia istoriia o Madzhnune i Leïle v arabskoï literature" ("The early history of Majnūn and Laylā in Arabic literature"), *Izbrannye sochineniia* (Moscow, 1956), ii, pp. 588—632.

7. *Kitāb al-aghānī*, i, p. 169.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 171.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 174—5.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 173. 'Umar b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān (d. A.D. 652) was the son of 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Awf, one of the companions of Muḥammad.

11. Da'ūd al-Anṭākī, *Tazyīn al-aswāq bi-tafṣīl ashwāq al-'ushshāq* (Cairo, 1319), p. 55.

12. *Kitāb al-aghānī*, i, pp. 178—9.

13. *Ibid.*, ii, pp. 2—3.

14. *Ibid.*, i, p. 177.

15. *Ibid.*, ii, p. 13.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

17. "Stories about Some Lovers of the Past", Arabic manuscript No. 734 in the holdings of the Oriental Faculty library of the St. Petersburg University, fol. 22b (henceforth — Manuscript).

18. *Kitāb al-aghānī*, ii, p. 13.

19. Manuscript, fol. 25b.

20. Krachkovskii, *op. cit.*, p. 631.

21. Russian translation by I. M. Fil'shtinsky in his *Istoriia arabskoï literatury*, p. 234.

22. *Kitāb al-aghānī*, x, p. 159.

23. Manuscript, fols. 55b—57a.

24. al-Anṭākī, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

25. Manuscript, fols. 82b—83a.

26. *Kitāb al-aghānī*, vii, p. 110.

27. al-Anṭākī, *op. cit.*, pp. 74—5.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

29. al-Şifāḥ — a place not far from Mecca, see Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al-buldān* (Leipzig, 1866—1870), iii, p. 398.

30. Lit. — if you are sincere [in your love].

31. This episode's version in the manuscript seems to be of late origin, as is seen from using the term "sulṭān" for "ruler". As W. Barthold notes, such usage is first encountered in al-Ṭabarī (d. A.D. 923), see V. V. Bartol'd, "Khalif i sultan" ("Caliph and sultan"), *Sochineniia* (Moscow, 1967), iv, pp. 15—78.

32. The Koran Interpreted by Arthur J. Arberry (London—New York, 1955), ii, p. 60.

33. Na'man — a river and its valley located between Mecca and Taif. It was inhabited by the Bānu 'Umar b. al-Ḥārith b. Tamīm b. Sa'd b. Hudhayl, see Yaqut, *op. cit.*, iv, p. 790.

34. There is an omission in the manuscript.

35. Perhaps, it should be translated as "reason".

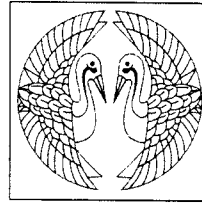
36. This episode is similar to the one, which precedes it: the popularity of "obsession", or "majnunism" is stressed there. In order to give these episodes special significance and veracity, the caliphs, who react with respect to those who have gone mad with love, are introduced into the narration: the youth does not pay for his audacity, and his wish is fulfilled. The slave-girl is asked to sing three melodies (a folkloric tradition), three poems by Qays b. Dhariḥ, Jamīl and Majnūn. The reaction of the youth in love to the verse of each poet depends on the level of "being in love" of the poet and his popularity. And as the motif of passionate love is in Majnūn's case driven to an extreme (madness), the youth is simply "compelled" to die.

37. It is possible that in the text of the manuscript the subject of رَأَى is omitted, or perhaps one should read رَأَيْتِي.

38. Experts in tradition are meant here.

39. This excerpt is contained in a fuller version in I. Yu. Krachkovsky's article "Ranniaia istoriia povesti o Majnune i Leïle v arabskoï literature", p. 624, with a reference to the fifteenth-century historian al-'Aynī who notes that this story undoubtedly goes back to an earlier source, most likely al-Ghazālī.

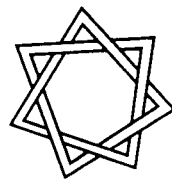
RUSSIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES  
THE INSTITUTE OF ORIENTAL STUDIES  
ST. PETERSBURG BRANCH



# **Manuscripta Orientalia**

*International Journal for Oriental Manuscript Research*

Vol. 4 No. 1 March 1998



**75ESA**  
**St. Petersburg-Helsinki**

T4/26  
D. 6.

## CONTENTS

<i>TEXTS AND MANUSCRIPTS: DESCRIPTION AND RESEARCH</i> . . . . .	3
N. Tumanovich. An Indian Collection of Persian Folk Tales . . . . .	3
A. Sadykhova. A Manuscript of "Tales of Some Lovers of the Past" in the Collection of the Oriental Faculty of the St. Petersburg University . . . . .	9
Sh. Iakerson. An Unknown List of Hebrew Books . . . . .	17
<i>TEXT AND ITS CULTURAL INTERPRETATION</i> . . . . .	26
E. Rezvan. The Qur'ān and Its World: V. Language, the Unconscious and the "Real World" . . . . .	26
<i>PRESENTING THE COLLECTIONS</i> . . . . .	40
V. Kushev. The Formation and Study of the Afghan Manuscript Collection in the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies . . . . .	40
<i>ORIENTAL MANUSCRIPTS AND NEW INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES</i> . . . . .	50
J. Gippert. Digitization of Tocharian Manuscripts from the Berlin Turfan Collection . . . . .	50
<i>PRESENTING THE MANUSCRIPT</i> . . . . .	58
A. Mikhaylova. An Illustrated Arabic Manuscript of a Translation of a Seventeenth-Century Greek Chronograph . . . . .	58
<i>BOOK REVIEWS</i> . . . . .	64

### Front cover:

The portrait of the Roman Emperor Constantine the Great (r. 324—337), the founder of the Byzantine Empire. Miniature from a Christian-Arabic manuscript entitled *al-Durr al-manzūm fī tārikh mulūk al-Rūm* (C 358) in the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, fol. 11b, 11.8 × 9.5 cm.

### Back cover:

**Plate 1.** Portrait of two Roman Emperors — Stauracius (r. 811) and Michael I (r. 811—813). Miniature from the same manuscript, fol. 101b, 11.9 × 7.5 cm.

**Plate 2.** Portrait of the Roman Emperor Leo VI the Wise (r. 886—912). Miniature from the same manuscript, fol. 120a, 11.2 × 10.0 cm.