Editorial choices in preparing the critical edition of the *Bābur-nāma*

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Historical records concerning pre-modern Islam have come down to us in almost all cases in the form of written manuscripts which are copies of lost originals. Whether the language employed therein is Arabic, Persian, or Turkish, the manuscript copy is seldom in the hand of the original author. Original manuscripts have been lost over the course of changing times, and at present they are impossible to obtain in most cases. For this reason, if one wishes to learn about the form of an original manuscript, it is necessary to produce a critical edition.

Despite this fact, when it comes to the history of Islam, the number of critical editions that can be safely relied upon is even smaller. This is an unfortunate situation, and it might be said that its amelioration is a common task faced by all students of Islam throughout the world.

In the process of creating a critical edition, one is continually confronted with the problems of selection, such as which of several manuscripts will serve as the basic text, which words and which passages will be employed, and on the basis of which criteria. As an example of the problems of selection an editor may face in the process of creating a critical edition, I would like to share with you the problems of selection that I experienced when creating the critical edition in Arabic script of the *Bābur-nāma*, which was written in Chaghatai Turkic. The *Bābur-nāma* is the memoirs of Bābur (1483-1530), who was born as a prince of the Timurids (1370-1507) in Central Asia in the second half of the fifteenth century and established the Mughal Empire (1526-38, 1555-1858) in India in the first half of the sixteenth century.

1. *Selection of the basic text*

There are known to be at least ten varieties of manuscripts of the *Bābur-nāma* written in Chaghatai extant in libraries in India, Iran, the United Kingdom, and Russia. Which of these manuscripts was to be chosen as the base manuscript for

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1 Mano 1995.
2. The selection of manuscripts to be compared

I chose the Edinburgh and London (copied in 1039/1629-30) mss. as well as the Kazan edition published by N. Iljimskié from among the manuscripts available at the time of publication to compare them against the Haydarabad ms. because they were thought to be valuable in terms of quality. Were I making the choice today, I would add the Tehran ms. and the Kehr mss. in St. Petersburg (copied in 1737) to the list of manuscripts to be used in comparison. In preparing a critical edition, employing all manuscripts would be the ideal. However, because manuscripts are often scattered around the world, or cannot be used at all for a variety of reasons, the realization of this ideal is an exceedingly difficult proposition. For these reasons, one can simply use those manuscripts to which one has access.

In the process of comparing manuscripts, I employed an older manuscript in addition to the Chaghatay texts, i.e., a manuscript produced closer in time to the original, which had been translated into Persian in India (copied in 1589). The reason for this choice is that I felt that the Persian translation produced closer to the time of the original, was more likely to have correctly preserved the form of the original than the various Chaghatay ms. that were copied at later dates.

As was once noted by W. Erskine and recently by W. Thackston, the Persian version of the Bābur-nāma is an extremely faithful translation of the Chaghatay original. The Persian translation follows not only the wording, which may perhaps go without saying, but also the syntax of the Chaghatay original. Of course, Persian and Chaghatay Turkic belong to utterly disparate language groups. Thus, by attempting to faithfully conform to the syntax of the Chaghatay original, some rather strange Persian was created. Yet, this ironically proved quite convenient when it came to preparing a critical edition of the Chaghatay original in light of the Persian translation. It was particularly useful when words that were not ordinarily used in Persian had been adopted as is in the translation, and for words that had not been clearly written in the Chaghatay original. For these reasons, in preparing the critical edition, I employed the Persian translation to the fullest extent possible when there were problems in the original Chaghatay text.

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6 Iljimskié 1857.
7 For example, as the Tehran ms. had been considered an extremely valuable volume of the former Iranian Royal Collection, and because Iran was passing through the vicissitudes of the Islamic Revolution, access to the manuscript was extremely limited. See Mano, 1999, 175-176.
8 Waqšat-i Bābur, British Library Or. 3714; Waqšat-i Bābur, Bibliothèque Nationale, Suppl. persan 265. The original Chaghatay text was translated into Persian by Abd al-Rahim Rizavi Khān in 1589.
9 Leyden, John & William Erskine 1826, ix.
10 Thackston 1993, i, xii-xv.
In comparing texts for a critical edition, it can be concluded that a translation that was produced at a time not far removed from the date of the preparation of the original may be an ideal tool of comparison and control.

3. Selecting words

It is frequently the case that a single word has been written in a completely different form in the basic text and another manuscript.

In such cases, although this might be deemed only common sense, one must chose what appears to be the appropriate word based on whether it is included in the Turkic dictionaries of Zenker11 and Clauson,12 etc., the context, and whether it can be understood as Chaghatai.

For example, in the case of the word SWWSWB SWWB in the Haydarabad ms. 276b, which appears as SWWSWHSWB in the Edinburgh ms. 228b, SWWSWHSWB in the London ms. 81b, and is missing from Kehr ms. 670 and Karan ed. 358, I employed the word from the London manuscript, which appears on page 444 of the critical edition. The reason for this choice is that the SWWSWHSWB of the London ms., that is to say the sǔṣtākip form, appears as the base form of the verb SWWSWHMEK in Zenker, and as SWWSWHSWB can readily be understood as the converb form, it appears that it is appropriate given the context, meaning “pushing their heads together, their horns collided.” Moreover, as the Persian translation uses the expression yāk dāgārā rīnda, “trying to repel one another,” in other words, almost the same meaning, this served as strong evidence for correctness of my choice of words. The fact that this was the correct choice was confirmed when the Tehran ms. 936a which later became available, revealed that it contained the same word form as that found in the London ms.

Additionally, there are extremely rare cases in which a certain word is not found in any of the manuscripts that have been employed, but one can surmise what in fact the word was from the context. In such cases, I entered the presumed correct word into the text of the critical edition and identified its nature using a symbol (*). For example, the word AWQ aq, meaning arrow, on page 269 of the critical edition, does not appear in any of the manuscripts. However, it is clear from the sentence uin aqra bhatman yan biš ni aitp, “let fly 30 to 40 [bhatman] with a bow” that a word should be inserted between “let fly” and “with a bow.” That the word should be aq, arrow, can also be seen from the expression aqet aitp that appears four lines later in the text. It was not possible to confirm this from the Persian translation, as this passage is not found therein.

4. The choice of spellings

Because the orthography of Chaghatai Turkic has not been fixed, a single word is often represented by a number of different spellings. For example, rīgh, meaning big, has been rendered in four different ways in the Haydarabad ms. alone, i.e., rīgh/WG/WG/WG/ALGH. In such cases, I have chosen not to follow a standardized uniform spelling, but have maintained the original forms found in the basic text in the critical edition. This is because I wished to indicate the multiplicity of Chaghatai spellings in the critical edition. Nevertheless, I did venture to standardize the spelling of certain words, such as bīz, meaning one and written BYR/BR, because of the difficulty of distinguishing them in the manuscript. However, this was done only in the case of nine words.13

In effect, I chose in principle to respect the spellings found in the basic text.

5. Selecting passages

In some cases, rather lengthy passages, of perhaps three lines or even a page, are missing from the Haydarabad ms. Both the Persian translation and the other Chaghatai ms. have been useful in restoring the lost passages. In other words, when a passage is found in Chaghatai manuscripts and also in the Persian translation, it is clear that the passage was found in the original, and I have employed it in the critical edition without hesitation.14

Such cases occur quite frequently, and in creating the critical edition one is reminded of the importance of the existence of a translation produced at a time not far removed from the creation of the original.

6. The problem of selecting wording to be used in footnotes

In the process of editing the critical edition, when correcting the basic Haydarabad ms. in light of the other manuscripts, I have, with only a few exceptions, indicated in footnotes the name of each manuscript that served as the source of

14 An example: The Haydarabad ms. 85a has bn ish bīz bū bū ashīdā bāsp fāṣy bār dur. The Edinburgh ms. 61a has bn ish bīl bū bū ashīdā tafṣīrāt bār dur bu bū ashīdā bāsp fāṣy bār dur. The Persian translation, 108b has dar majān-i in kar bān bū ashīdā tafṣīr bāsp bār dur, 109b has dar majān-i in girāfān wān bū girāfān bāsp bār ndur. The Critical edition, 125 has bn ish bīl bū bū ashīdā tafṣīrāt bār dur bu bū ashīdā bāsp fāṣy bār dur.
the emendation. This method allows users of the critical edition to ascertain the basis for the emendation and should provide them the means to confirm the validity of the correction themselves.

There are cases in which wording does not correspond in each manuscript. In such cases, when it was unclear which wording should be adopted for the critical edition,15 or when certain wording was not adopted but it was thought to have value as a reference,16 these word forms were quoted in footnotes with the abbreviations for the manuscript as much as possible. This method should also provide users of the critical edition with sufficient material to judge for themselves the appropriateness of the wording selected for the critical edition.

However, I did not indicate in the footnotes those variants in the mss. that seemed to be particularly obvious errors.17 As I was attempting to restore the original text, had I indicated such errors in the footnotes, it would have had little significance. Moreover, I felt that to indicate all such errors would make the text cumbersome and difficult to read.

There are no perfect critical editions. No matter how close to the original one comes, it is impossible to perfectly reproduce it. In this sense this author's critical edition is nothing more than one step forward in the development of further research to come.

In an effort that should secure this step forward, this author is now employing the Tehran ms. in the process of revising the critical edition. The number of revisions is not large, but it would be an unanticipated pleasure, were it possible to publish a more accurate second edition at some time in the future.

Bibliography

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15 For example, the word arānida found near the end of line 3 in the Haydarabad ms. appears as wāqita in the Kazan edition and as zamānida in the Edinburgh ms., while this part is missing altogether from the London ms. In a situation such as this, one can only say with confidence that there was some word in the original text meaning “at the time when.”

16 For example, the place name Mustād found on line 14 in the Haydarabad ms. and also in the Edinburgh ms. appears as Mustāh in the Kazan edition and as Mustāh in the Persian translation, while this part is missing altogether from the London ms.

17 For example, I corrected istāgh found on line 3 in the Haydarabad ms. to istāq meaning “mountain,” shahr-nīng ywaghtīdin on line 44 to shahr-nīng ywaghtīdin meaning “from the neighbourhood of the town.” Copyist’s errors are obvious.