

PRESENTING THE MANUSCRIPT

F. I. Abdullaeva

A TURKISH PROSE VERSION OF FIRDAWSĪ'S *SHĀH-NĀMA* IN THE MANUSCRIPT COLLECTION OF THE ST. PETERSBURG STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY*

The collection of Oriental manuscripts in the St. Petersburg State University Library cannot compare with famous St. Petersburg manuscript depositories, such as the National Library of Russia and the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies (Russian Academy of Sciences). Islamic manuscripts in the University are now concentrated in the Oriental Department of the University Library which serves the needs of the Oriental Faculty of the University. The teaching of three Oriental languages — Arabic, Persian, and Turkish — had been provided since the foundation of the Imperial St. Petersburg University in 1819, and a significant amount of books and manuscripts in these languages began to come to the University from different sources.

In the middle of the nineteenth century manuscripts came from three large depositories: from the Imperial Kazan University, the Lycée de Richelieu in Odessa, and the 1st Gymnasium of Kazan. Manuscripts from these three places remain the most valuable part of the collection. All were registered in the lists of Arabic, Persian and Turkish manuscripts, made by the University scholars. The first was compiled and published by C. Salemann (1849—1916), with the help of Baron V. R. Rosen (1849—1908) in 1888 [1], the second one was edited by Professor Alexander Romaskevich (1885—1942) in 1925 [2]; and the last, a catalogue of the newly arrived or newly discovered Persian and Turkish manuscripts in the University collection, was prepared by Professor A. Tagirdjanov (1907—1983) in 1967 [3].

It seems rather strange that the manuscript we would like to discuss in the present article [4] was mentioned only in the last list of 1967. It is also difficult to imagine that Salemann, who won his fame as an extra-thorough librarian, would have omitted it in his edition. Be that as it may, the earliest information on this codex in the University Library is contained in the 1967 catalogue by Professor Tagirdjanov. The MS has been registered under the title

Tarjuma-yi nathrī-yi Shāh-nāma. Jild-i duwwum (call number 1378) [5]. One can easily assume that it is the translation of the celebrated *Shāh-nāma* by Abū'l-Qāsim Firdawsī-yi Tūsī, popular at the Turkic courts to such extent that during the last Saljuqs, for instance, even the town walls of their capital were adorned with Firdawsī's verses [6].

It is well known that Turkish literature in the early Middle Ages was greatly influenced by literature of Persia and partly of Mawarannahr. Turkish court poets had a good command of the Persian and Arabic languages and were well trained in Persian and Arabic poetry. Probably it was one of the reasons why Firdawsī's *Shāh-nāma* was translated into Turkish rather late, as compared, for example, with the brief Arabic version of the poem dated back to the beginning of the thirteenth century. This was made between 615/1218 and 623/1227 by the Arabic historian Qawām al-Dīn al-Bundārī, who dedicated his work to the Damascus ruler Malik al-Mu'azzam 'Isā (d. 1227) [7].

As far as I know, there are two Turkish translations considered to be among the earliest ones so far survived [8]. A versified Turkish translation was made by Tātār 'Alī Efendī in 916/1510—11 for the Mamlūk Sulṭān Qansūh Ghūrī (r. 1501—17) [9]. According to Ch. Rieu, G. N. Meredith-Owens and others, the author of this version calls himself either Sharīf or Sharīfī [10], or Sharīf Amīdī [11], or Ḥusayn b. Ḥasan Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī al-Amīdī [12], or Ḥusayn b. Ḥasan Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī al-Ḥanafī [13]. He finished his work on Monday 2 Dhū'l-Ḥijja 916/2 March 1511.

The second Turkish version of *Shāh-nāma* (in prose) was observed by A. A. Romaskevich in his article published in a special volume on the occasion of the 1000th anniversary of Firdawsī. As Romaskevich believed, the translation had been executed in 1030/1621—22 by some Maḥdī, a court official of the Ottoman Sultan Osman II (1618—22) [14]. This information of Romaskevich was

*I would like to thank Eleanor Sims, Ernst Grube, Tim Stanley, Efim Rezwan, Adel Adamova, and Oleg Akimushkin for reading an earlier draft of this paper and making many helpful comments and valuable references. Their help has led to many improvements. They are, of course, in no way responsible for the paper's shortcomings. I am also grateful to Tamara Deryagina of the Oriental Department at the St. Petersburg State University Library and to Aleksey Pylev of the Department of Turkic Philology at the St. Petersburg State University for their help and cooperation.