

TEXT AND ITS CULTURAL INTERPRETATION

S. Tourkin

ANOTHER LOOK ON THE *PETITION* ('*ARDADĀŠT*) BY JA'FAR BĀYSUNĠURĪ ADDRESSED TO HIS PATRON BĀYSUNĠUR B. ŠĀHRUḤ B. TĪMŪR

Since the time of being discovered and first reported by Prof. Zeki Veledi Toghan in 1948 [1], the document under discussion has been the subject of a number of publications [2]. In these studies the *Petition* has been translated into Turkish, English (several times) and Russian. The scholarship estimated it as a significant source for studying the history of culture and art of Timurid Iran. At present the document is preserved in Istanbul, at Topkapı Saray Library (MS H. 2153, f. 98a). It measures 46 × 13.5 cm.

As it is evident from the title of this article, I support the opinion of W. Thackston and O. Akimushkin that Bāysunġur (1397—1433) was the person to whom this document was addressed and also that Ja'far Bāysunġurī was its author. However, before focussing on the contents of the document, I would like to discuss its title.

In all studies and translations published to date, the document is called in English *Petition*, while nothing is petitioned, or asked in it, except for the eternal power of the addressee which is nothing more but a formal prayer. In Persian original, the document is entitled '*ardadāšt*', and a more exact translation into English of its title should be "report". Such suggestion is also based upon numerous cases of using the very word in this meaning in historical sources of the same period (...*wa šūrat-i ḥāl 'arḍa dāšt* / ~ '*ardadāšt kard*). Therefore, hereinafter I will be referring to the document as the *Report*.

Structurewise and contentwise, the *Report* consists of three parts. The first part mainly deals with various works on transcribing, illuminating and binding the manuscripts and preparing miniatures for them. This part also mentions the manufacturing of a decorated saddle and a little chest, as well as painting the tent. The second part lists those construction works on different sites of Bāysunġur's real property which were either completed or still under way at the moment when the *Report* was being written. This, second part has a heading *Private Realty* ('*imārāt-i ḥāṣṣa*). In the third part, different works on the tent are described, and this part is entitled *The Tent* (*ḥirgāh*).

On the general background of speaking about manuscript production in part 1, three bands stand aside. These are the bands for the saddle, the little chest and the tent.

One could guess about the reason of including the band on painting the tent into part 1 and not into part 3, as the latter is entirely dedicated to the tent. As far as the bands for the saddle and the chest are concerned, they would have looked no less differing from the main subject in both parts 2 and 3 as well. In any event, these items should have been quite important to be mentioned in the discussed document.

If the existing translations of the *Report* (parts 1 and 2 of it) are considered with thorough attention, there arises an impression of certain chaos and disorder in the sequence of matters. One can not help concluding that the author of the document had very little care in jumping from one composition or type of works to another, and that he did not mind returning to similar or mutually connected issues a few bands later, to finish the story.

The only logically connected bands in the existing translations of the *Report* are two bands in the first part for the binding of the copy of *Rasā'il* (while, in fact, four bands in the document deal with this manuscript), and three bands in the same part telling about the completion of four albums (*kaštī*). However, in my opinion, there exists another possibility of reading the *Report* and understanding its structure.

In the first and second parts of the document, the text is arranged in three vertical columns which are clearly separated from one another by equal spaces. Inside each column, the text is further subdivided into bands which are also distinguished from one another by spaces, but in this case the spaces are far not equal. This difference can be seen with the naked eye. I can not provide exact measurements of these spaces, as I was not able to study the original of the document and my study is based on its photographic reproductions in publications only.

If the columns of the text are named by Latin letters as A (the right column), B (the middle column) and C (the left column), and the bands inside each column are given their sequence numbers within a column, the order of the bands in all the published translations of the document will be as follows: A-1, B-1, C-1, A-2, B-2, C-2, A-3, B-3, C-3, and so forth.

However, even mechanically such a way of reading the document is rather complicated for a reader. The bands