

ON THE MANUSCRIPTS OF PAHLAVI WORK “AYĀDGĀR Ī ZARĒRĀN”*

The text “Ayādgār ī Zarērān” preserved in the oldest collection of Middle Persian secular and homiletic texts known as “Gushtasp’s *Shāhnāma*”, “Pahlavi *Shāhnāma*” or just “Pahlavi Texts”. It can be found in two Parsi manuscripts MK and JJ that are stored in Bombay, a cultural and religious centre of Zoroastrians in India [1]. The collection is called “Pahlavi *Shāhnāma*” due to the fact that it contains four texts that probably inspired Abū al-Qāsim Firdawsī in creating the great Iranian epical poem “*Shāhnāma*” (10th century). Besides “Ayādgār ī Zarērān” [2] these texts include “*Kārnāmag ī Ardaxšīr ī Pābagān*” (“The Book of Deeds of Ardaxšīr, Son of Pāpak”) [3], “*Wizārišn ī čatrang ud nihišn ī nēw-Ardaxšīr*” (“The Explanation of Chess and the Invention of Backgammon”) [4] and “*Ayādgār ī Wuzurgmihr*” (“Memorial of Wuzurgmihr”) [5].

The extant Middle Persian secular and homiletic texts were published for the first time in India in the end of the 19th century by *dastūr* Jāmāspjī Minochehrjī Jāmāsp-Āsānā (1830—1898) who was an outstanding Parsi priest, honorary professor of the University of Tübingen, and owner of a large collection of manuscripts. By the middle of the 19th century Europeans started to show notable interest in Zoroastrian literature. Investigations in this field were related to the work of German scholar M. Haug and English scholar E. W. West. In 1864 M. Haug studied a large corpus of Zoroastrian manuscripts from the collection of *dastūr* Jāmāspjī Minochehrjī Jāmāsp-Āsānā. Examining the same collection a bit later E. W. West turned to the manuscript MK that presented the most complete set of Middle Persian secular and homiletic texts. According to the colophons and plausible calculations of E. W. West the manuscript was written in 1255 by Dēn-panāh son of Ādurbād in Broach in Gujarat (Brūgach, Bharuch). Then, not later than 1278 it was copied by a famous priest and copyist of manuscripts Rustam Mihrabān. His great grandnephew Mihrabān Kay-Khusraw happened to be the third scribe to rewrite the manuscript in Tāmnak

(Thana), near Bombay, in AD 1321 (or 1322). Thus, this manuscript is considered the earliest among all extant Middle Persian ones.

Dastūr Jāmāspjī Minochehrjī Jāmāsp-Āsānā and E. W. West began a meticulous analysis of the manuscript preparing it for further publication. The scholars also used other less significant folios that might have been copied from the MK in various time periods. One of them was the manuscript JJ copied from the MK by *dastūr* Jamshīd Jāmāsp Āsā in Navsari in 1767. The manuscripts DP, TD, T_a, TD_a, JU were also used. In 1875 E. W. West made a very accurate copy of the MK taking into account the difference with the manuscript JJ trying to speed up *dastūr* Jāmāspjī’s work. For some texts he was using variants of the later manuscripts JE, MH₇, K₁, DP, K₅, J₂ and M₁₆. Jāmāspjī Minochehrjī Jāmāsp-Āsānā performed a lot of work comparing the MK to other manuscripts, editing the text, and restoring the collection. The first volume of the Middle Persian texts was published in 1897 [6]. One year later *dastūr* Jāmāspjī passed away. The second volume that had been compiled before *dastūr*’s death was published by a major Parsi scholar and editor B. T. Anklesaria a bit later in 1913 [7]. B. T. Anklesaria supplied it with brief but quite valuable descriptions of manuscripts, colophons and large part of the texts from the collection.

The edition of the handwritten collection MK consists of thirty two literary works and fragments of different genre and character. Most of them belong to religio-homiletic and secular literature. The collection features eighteen homiletic texts, three lyrical epic texts including a heroic epic poem “Memorial of Zarēr”, a debate “A Date-Tree and a She-Goat”, two historico-geographical texts, samples of a manual on writing letters, a marriage contract, a toast, a spell, and two calendars and texts of secular content.

Two texts of the collection (“Ayādgār ī Zarērān” and “Ayādgār ī Wuzurgmihr”) are considered *ayādgārs* (“books of remembrance, legends and stories”) despite

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