

## WAS MUHAMMAD AL-SAMARQANDĪ A POLYGLOT POET?

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It was Edgar Blochet who first gave notice of the existence of the verses in four languages, namely Arabic, Persian, Turkish and Mongolian, at the end of a copy of Juvainī's *Tārīkh-i Jahān-gushā*<sup>1</sup>. He ascribed the authorship of these verses to Muḥammad b. 'Umar b. Ḥasan b. Maḥmūd b. 'Abd al-Ghafūr al-Samarqandī called Muḥammad Bakhshi, who copied them in Mardin on 1st Jamādī, II, 724 (26 May 1324). Some 34 years later Blochet, while cataloguing the Persian MSS. of the Bibliothèque Nationale, as a result of closer examination of the colophon, corrected his former reading of 'Abd al-Ghafūr in 'Abd al-'Azīz, and modified his previous remarks, no longer stating that Muḥammad al-Samarqandī was the author of these verses, but merely holding him to be the copyist of the verses and the owner of the MS<sup>2</sup>. Hambis<sup>3</sup> and Poppe<sup>4</sup> who regarded the Mongolian poem as the composition of Muḥ. al-Samarqandī, obviously overlooked the later statement of Blochet, which amounted to a tacit withdrawal of the previous one.

In a recent article Igor de Rachewiltz having obtained a photocopy of these pages, leaving aside the Arabic and Persian verses, transcribes and translates the Mongolian section, and in the same article Poppe supplies the transcription and translation of the Turkish part<sup>5</sup>. The author, although well aware of the second statement of Blochet, whom he quotes *in extenso*, attributes the authorship of all four poems to Muḥ. al-Samarqandī. The main merit of this article is, in my opinion, the fact that the author provides us for the first

1. *Introduction à l'histoire des Mongols de Fadl Allah Rashid ed-Din*, (Leyden-London), 1910, 117.

2. *Catalogue des manuscrits persans*, (Paris 1934), iv, 253-4.

3. *Grammaire de la langue mongole écrite*, (Paris, 1945), 92.

4. *Stand und Aufgaben der Mongolistik*, *ZDMG*, 100 (1950), 58.

5. The Mongolian poem of Muḥammad al-Samarqandī, *Central Asiatic Journal* 12 (1969), 280 - 285.

time with the facsimile of the verses. This gives the opportunity for a fuller examination of this interesting document as a whole.

( a ) Arabic

فاذا كان في الفراق عناق  
جعل الله كل يوماً فراق

For يوم فراقاً Arabic grammar requires يوماً فراق

If there is an embracing as a result of separation,  
may God make each day a day of separation.

( b ) Persian

پدر کز من روایش باد پر نور  
مرا پیرانه پندی داد مشهور  
که از بی دولتان بگریز چون تیر  
سرا در کوی صاحب دولتان گیر

The father, may his soul be radiant through me,  
gave me a sage, well-known piece of advice :  
“Flay like an arrow from those without fortune, (and)  
make your home in the quarter of the people of fortune”.

These two verses are from the *Khusrau u Shīrīn* of Nizāmī. In the critical edition of this work, instead of *sarā* we find *buna* in the text, representing the reading of the earliest extant MS. ( dated 763 / 1362 ), and *sarā* and *waṭan* in the *apparatus* as variants of the later MSS<sup>6</sup>. Now the appearance of *sarā* in this document, which is some 40 years older than the earliest MS. , justifies the restitution of this reading in the text.

6. *Khusrau u Shīrīn* (Baku, 1960), 484.

## (c) Turkish

Professor Poppe transcribes and translates this verse as follows:—

qanī qanča bardīng ay-a dilberim  
tudun-ya mu kirding ay-a dilberim

Where to and when did you go, my beloved?  
Have you reached (or 'have you arrived at') the  
Tudun, my beloved?

The translation of the second hemistich is not convincing. The word *tudun*, which is explained as 'a well-known Ancient Turkic and Uighur title', is, in this context, out of the question. Moreover the verb *kir-* means simply 'to enter', and not 'to reach, to arrive at'. I regard the *tudun* or *tutun* of this text as a scribal error for *tutuq* 'veil, curtain'. Thus the translation would be: Did you enter the veil (did you hide yourself) o beloved? For *ay-a* read *ayā* (<Persian). This verse is composed in the heroic *mutaqārib*, which, in Turkish, can be considered a syllabic metre of 11 (6 + 5) type.

## (d) Mongolian

De Rachewiltz divides the three lines of the text, which contains a punctuation mark after the sixth word, into a quatrain, and remarks that the first, third and fourth lines alliterate, and gives the following transcription and translation:

bilig nigen dalai buyu  
göyar tendeče qariyu.  
bilgün yosuni  
biligtü kümün medeyü

Knowledge is a sea.  
The jewel retreats before it.  
The law of knowledge  
The wise man knows.

For *gögar* read *gühär*, this is not a loan-word from Persian *gauhar* but from its reduced form *guhar*. The letter  $\gamma$  in Uighur script of the Islamic period is used to represent beside  $\gamma$ ,  $q$ , also  $h$ ,  $\dot{h}$ ,  $\chi$ , 'ain. The author's assumption that the poem is alliterative is due to an optical illusion. The alliteration in Mongolian (and Turkish) consists of the identity of letters (in the case of vowels) or initial consonants with their following vowels, provided that it is not the result of the repetition of the same word. Here it is the word *bilig* which has been repeated three times.

The presence of the Persian word *guhar*, and the absence of alliteration and parallelism (two major characteristics of Mongolian poetry) in this rudimentary stanza, induce me to think that it is a translation of a Persian verse. If this is correct, then the punctuation mark in the second line of the MS. would indicate a division between two Persian hemistichs and allow a tentative explanation of the second line, which remains otherwise obscure. *qari-* means 'to return', in our context we need a verb meaning not 'to return' but 'to come out', 'to emerge'. This is the Persian compound verb *bar-āmadan*. The translator has in fact confused the verbs *bar-āmadan* and *bāz-āmadan*. The latter means 'to return'.

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The fact that Muḥammad al-Samarqandī in the colophon calls himself no more than a copyist (*kātib*) would be sufficient to exclude him as the author of the above verses. The Persian verses, as we saw, were by Nizāmī. The Arabic verse, which contains a well-known Sufi idea, can hardly be attributed to a man who commits a gross grammatical error in copying it. Were he the composer of the Turkish and Mongolian verses, he would certainly have introduced them by an appropriate formula, or, hinted to his authorship in the colophon.

In the circumstances, it seems likely that Muḥammad al-Samarqandī was not a poet, but a mere *bakhshī*, with proficiency in writing both Arabic and Uighur scripts, who had a certain interest in poetry and was familiar with four languages used under Ilkhanid rule.