



THE OLDEST PERSIAN MANUSCRIPT

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Buriev Amanulla

Candidate of historical sciences, Senior researcher Institute of Oriental Studies, Uzbekistan Academy of Sciences, Uzbekistan

ABSTRACT

The following article includes a description of one particular manuscript from the fund of the Abu Rayhan Beruni Institute of Oriental Studies, Uzbekistan Academy of Science for the purpose of determining its time of copying and antiquity.

KEYWORDS

Oriental manuscripts, Persian manuscript book, paper, handwriting, copyist, author, content.

INTRODUCTION

The manuscript is kept under the No.5202 at the Abu Rayhan Beruni Institute of Oriental Studies, Uzbekistan Academy of Sciences. Its volume is 324 folios. The dimensions of the manuscript are 21 × 17 cm. On the flyleaf of the text (forzats) it is written that this book is one of the books donated by Khwaja Muhammad Porso (1345-1419) to the Dor ul-Fuqar libraries in the

Kuy-i Dehqan mahalla of Bukhara. This means that the date "1190 H (1776-1777 C.E.)" on the cover of the book, which dates back to the time of Khwaja Muhammad Porso, in the early 15th century, belongs only to the cover itself, and the manuscript was re-bound in the 18th century.



In folio 1a of the manuscript, in a short reference with a letter different from the main text, this manuscript is considered a single work and is called a "Majmu'a".

The author of the Majmu'a is Abu Muhsin Marwazi, who is said to be a follower of Imam A'zam Abu Hanifa Kufi. Briefly about the content of the works contained in the manuscript. We were directly acquainted with the text of the manuscript. This Majmu'a consists of three books, which are as follows: the first book contains 125 folios (folios 1b-125b); the second book has 82 folios (folios 127a - 210 b); the third book consists of 113 folios (folios 211a - 324 b).

The first book (folios 1b - 125b) contains three works. The author's name is not mentioned in it, probably the work by Abu Muhsin Marwazi, who created this collection.

The first work (pages 1b - 68b) - on page 1b of the manuscript, its title is given in the form of "Expressing the belief of the Sunnis and the community of Tawhid (monotheism) and the Usul-i Din (method of religion)." In terms of content, this work belongs to Kalam, that is, the 'Aqaid (creed), which deals with the issues of monotheism and the fundamentals of Islam. It is said to consist of ten chapters, but the existing text contains only four chapters.

The first chapter is the science of monotheism, written in a very broad way, consisting of ten chapters; they cover the views of the Sunnis and the congregation on the knowledge of God, the holy books, faith, the Day of Judgment, good and evil, faith and Islam, the law on legacy, and charity.

The second chapter is about the division of people into categories on the issue of faith, and the differences between the people of the Qibla.

The third chapter deals with the presentation of documents on various issues before the Ahl as-Sunnah and the congregation.

The fourth chapter deals with some issues of the Kalam.

This concludes the first work, and the remaining six chapters are not covered.

The second work (folios 68b-99a) is called "Kitab Usul al-Fiqh" and it deals with issues of Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence). The work is divided into chapters and sections. The text is structured in the form of jurisprudential issues and a specific problem is described in each issue. In matters of jurisprudence, there is talk of quoting from the Qur'an and hadiths. A total of five chapters and chapters consist of sections. However, the work is incomplete, with chapters and sections describing various collected issues.

The third work (folios 99a - 125b) - "Fi-l munazara va-l jadal (On discussion and arguments)" (other names: "On conditions of etiquette of debating" - folio 99a or "An etiquette of arguments and science of debating" - folio 125b). The work consists of chapters and sections. A total of four chapters. This work is also incomplete, the chapters are incomplete, in the form of a collection of data. It contains logic issues in terms of content. The debates and disputes that existed in Islam at that time were discussed, as well as ways to resolve them.

The main text ends with the sentence "Dar in miqdar kifayat ast" (This is enough).

Then the colophon was given (f. 125 b). It shows the date of completion of the book in Hijri lunar calendar (i.e. the time of copying the work): "Yawm al-jum'a, al-thani 'ashara dhilqa'da, sna sab'iina (wa) thalis mia" - 12 Dhil-Qa'da 370 (May 19, 981) and the name of the scribe: Muhammad Abdulkhaliq. This is the only date



recorded in the Majmu'a, as the texts of the next two works were interrupted halfway.

It should be noted that the scribe considers the above three works to be a single book and gives its title as "Kitab at-tawhid wa usul al-fiqh wa adab al-jadal."

The second book in the collection (folios 127a - 210b) consists of a single work; At the beginning (folio 127a) the name of the work and the name of the author are given "Majlis" ash-shaykh al-faqih al-alim al-Hasan ibn Yahya al-Vardonzi. The scribe notes that he copied this work from a book belonging to his teacher Ali ibn Muhammad al-Bawwani: "Nasakhtu min nuskhati ustozhi al-faqih 'Ali ibn Muhammad Bawwani".

The nisba "Vardonzi" in the author's name means that he is from Bukhara. The name of this place is written in the sources in such forms as Vardonze, Varzonzi, Vardona. Ibn Khurdadbeh called it Vardana in his Kitab al-Masalik wal Mamalik and mentioned it as one of the cities around Bukhara. Archaeological excavations have revealed an ancient fortress in the Bukhara region, the ruins of which are preserved in the present-day Shafirkan district under the name "Fortress Vardanzi".

The text of the work begins directly on folio 127 b, which consists of five chapters and sections. However, they are not complete; the material is in the form of data. The work deals with various issues in Islam, and each issue begins with the word "Majlis." They are written about the oneness of Allah, prayer, sectarian strife, asking for forgiveness, about humans and jeniis, possessing profession and its necessity, and what is beneficial and forbidden in Islam.

The book is incomplete, interrupted before the end of the text.

The third book in the collection (folios 211a - 324b) also consists of a single work, and its title is given in the reference book at the beginning of the manuscript as Tafsir min asmailahi ta'ala (Commentary on the Names of Allah). In this book, 99 names of Allah are first listed. Comments were then written on these names. The book is incomplete, interrupted before the end of the text, and ends with the phrase, "Bar khalq pushida badon sifat."

Concerning the antiquity of the manuscript. First of all, we would like to give brief information about the ancient Persian manuscripts. In his article on the history of Persian manuscripts, O.F. Akimushkin, based on the information of the Iranian scholar A. Munzawi, said that the total number of the oldest Persian manuscripts that have survived to our time is twelve. Four of them are works on medicine, two on astronomy, two on lexicography, one on mathematics, two on the science of the Qur'an, and one on Tasawwuf¹.

Of these, the date of the copying of the three manuscripts is recorded and is of particular importance for the Persian written heritage written in the Arabic alphabet.

The first is Abu Mansur Muwaffaq al-Haravi's Kitab al-abniyya an haqaiq al-adviya (The Book of the Fundamentals of Pharmacological Facts), written by Ali ibn Ahmad al-Asadi at-Tusi in Shawwal 447. Copied in January 1056. Its second title is "Rawzat al-uns wa manfa'at an-nafs." The manuscript is currently housed in the Austrian National Library. The work was first published in 1961 in the form of a photo facsimile in the

¹ O.F.Akimushkin. Persidskaia rukopisnaia kniga/ Rukopisnaia kniga v kul'ture narodov Vostoka. Ocherki. Kniga pervaiia.

Glavnaia redaktsiia vostochnoi literatury izdatel'stva "Nauka". M.,1987. Pp.330-406



size of a manuscript available in Iran. There is also a Persian edition and an English translation of the work.

Given the antiquity of the manuscript, a number of studies devoted to it have been published (1830, 1859, 1893, and 1963). In science, it is considered to be the oldest Persian manuscript to date.

According to O.F. Akimushkin, the style of writing in the manuscript is unique, it coincides with the period when the cursive [italic] style of writing began to gain popularity, and in the 11th century this style of writing was widely used, in which many copies of the Qur'an were copied.

The second ancient Persian work with the date of copying is the "Nur al-muridin wa fazihat al-muddain" (A light for the disciples and a disgrace for the claimants) by Bukharan scholar Mustamli (d. 434/1042). Part of this work was copied in Movarounnahr on April 7, 1081, 24 Shawwal 473, and has survived to the present day. It is now housed in the National Museum of Pakistan in Karachi.

This work consists of a written comments which are introductory parts to the second and third volumes of the book of another Bukhara scholar Abu Bakr Muhammad al-Kalabadi (d. 380/990) on Tasawwuf entitled "Kitab at-tarruf li mazhab ahl at-tasawwuf" ("Book of explanations on the Sufi sect").

The third ancient Persian work with a copied date is a work written in Bukhara during the Samanid period, authored by the Bukhara physician Abu Bakr Rabi 'ibn Ahmad Ahawani al-Bukhari. The work was written in the second half of the 10th century and is called "Kitab al-hidayat al-mutaallimin fi-t-tib" ("Guide for Medical Students", and one of the three copies that survived and was copied in the month of Rabi 'al-Awwal 478 (June-July 1085).

The oldest manuscript in the fund of the Abu Rayhan Beruni Institute of Oriental Studies, Uzbekistan Academy of Sciences is the Qur'an, which is stored under inventory No.579, and its date of copying is not recorded, it is considered to be about 9th century.

The earliest manuscript with a date of copying in this collection is the work "Gharib al-hadith" written in Arabic by Abul-Qasim ibn Sallam al-Harawi (d. 223/837) and copied by the calligrapher Ali ibn Muhammad ibn al-Hasan in Rabi al-thani 344 AD (July of 955). It is stored in this Fund under inventory number 3101. The text of the manuscript is written in the style of a mixture of Kufic and Naskh letters.

There are several signs confirming the antiquity of the manuscript No. 5202 in the Fund of the Institute of Oriental Studies, Uzbekistan Academy of Sciences:

1. There is a date in the manuscript confirming its antiquity, and it is mentioned on folio 125b of the text, i.e. at the end of the work "Fi-l munozara val jadal" from this manuscript reads Dhul-Qa'da 12, 370 (May 19, 981), scribe's name Muhammad Abdulkhaliq. binder This date means that this manuscript was copied 75 years before the first ancient Persian manuscript mentioned above, which is now known to science;
2. Cover of the manuscript. The cover is made of worn-out thick gray leather with the name and date of the binder on it: "'Amali Sayyid Muhammadamin ibn Hajikhwaja, 1190". The date of the cover is 1776-1777 CE.
The current cover belongs to a much later period and is painted on an old cover. This means that the original cover has become obsolete over the centuries and the book needs to be rebound.
3. The paper of the manuscript. The peculiar thickness of the paper on which the text of the manuscript is written and its obsolescence under the influence of time can serve as a basis for calling



it Samarkand paper, which has come down to us from the depths of centuries.

4. The style of writing corresponds to the period of transition from the ancient, Kufic script to the Naskh script. Because in the text there is a mixture of elements of Kufic and Naskh letters;
5. There are a few diacritical points in the text that should be placed above or below the letters, and this is also a sign that confirms its antiquity.
6. The ink on the text is also ancient;
7. There are very few Arabic words in the Persian passages in the text. It is in this style that the ancient Persian texts were written;
8. In terms of content, the manuscript reflects the realities (doctrinal issues, fiqh debates, etc.) related to the state of Islam in Movarounnahr in the 10th century.

The above information and analysis can serve as a basis for calling the manuscript No. 5202, preserved in the Fund of the Abu Rayhan Beruni Institute of Oriental Studies, Uzbekistan Academy of Sciences, the oldest Persian manuscript.

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