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Dāstān-hā-yi Bīdpāy

Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Buḥārī’s *Dāstān-hā-yi Bīdpāy* is a Persian translation of the Arabic *Kalīla wa Dimna* by Ibn al-Muqaffa‘ (d. 140/757), which was itself a translation of the original middle Persian of the work into Arabic in the 2nd/8th century. The lost middle Persian original was compiled by the physician Burzūya, who mostly relied on Sanskrit sources of the *Sasanian* period of the 6th century (de Blois 2009, p. 335). Almost nothing is known about Buḥārī, except what can be deduced from his preface to the text. No account of Buḥārī and his work has been found in pre-modern sources. The author’s place-name (*nisba*) links him to the city of Bukhara, and some linguistic features of the text confirm that the author was an erudite Bukharan. He introduces himself as Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Buḥārī and states that he joined the court of the atābak Abū al-Muẓaffar Ġāzī ibn Zangī ibn Aq Sunqur (r. 1146-1149), one of the Zangid rulers in Mosul (Bosworth 1996, p. 190). Ġāzī ibn Zangī promoted Buḥārī to the rank of one of his personal court attendants (*ḥawāṣṣ*). Buḥārī claims that he had composed several works on various subjects which he dedicated to this atābak.

One day Ġāzī ibn Zangī summoned Buḥārī and ordered him to translate the *Kalīla wa Dimna* from Arabic into Persian. He did so in order to honor the request of some of his attendants who enjoyed Buḥārī’s style, and because he wanted to make the wisdom of the book’s contents available to a larger public. Buḥārī obeyed his lord’s command and translated the work (Buḥārī 1361š./1982, pp. 36-38). The translation must have been completed sometime in the reign of Ġāzī ibn Zangī, before *ṣafar* 544/ June 1149, which is the completion date of the only known manuscript copy of the text. Although the Zangids were a Turkmen dynasty (Heidemann 2002, pp. 452-453), the atābak’s patronage of the translation of the book from Arabic into Persian indicates the significant presence of Persian language at the court of the Zangids. Besides the

work by Buḥārī, there are several other works in Persian that were prepared for the court of the Zangids (see Beelaert 2000, pp. 115-116; Šafarī Āq-Qal‘a 1389š./2010).

Buḥārī refers to the work by its Arabic title of *Kalīla wa Dimna*. The title *Dāstān-hā-yi Bīdpāy* (fables of Bīdpāy) was chosen by the editors of the text (see Buḥārī 1361š./1982) in order to differentiate it from the better-known Persian translation of the *Kalīla wa Dimna* by Naṣr Allāh Munšī (d. sometime between 555-582/1160-1187). Bīdpāy is the name of the Indian sage who is the narrator of the stories of the *Kalīla wa Dimna*. Buḥārī’s Persian translation of the *Kalīla wa Dimna* is almost contemporary with that by Naṣr Allāh Munšī, which was probably done around the year 536/1142 or between the years 538/1144 and 540/1146 (Omidšalar 2015). Unlike Munšī’s work, which soon achieved widespread fame in the Islamicate world, Buḥārī’s translation remained unknown until the 20th century (Gehlhar 1976, p. xlv). Naṣr Allāh Munšī completed his rendering between 536/1142 and 540/1146 in Ghazna, the capital of the Ghaznavid ruler Bahrām Šāh (r. 1117-?1157), to whom the work was dedicated (Omidšalar 2015). Most probably, Buḥārī did his translation independently, not being aware of Munšī’s text. The reason could be that on the one hand, Munšī’s work had been composed only a couple of years earlier than that of Buḥārī, and on the other hand, there was a long distance between their cities of residence, i.e., Ghazna and Mosul. Therefore, it is doubtful that Buḥārī was aware of Munšī’s translation (Nātil-Ḥānlarī 1361š./1982, p. 21).

There are considerable discrepancies between the texts of the extant versions of the Arabic *Kalīla wa Dimna* (de Blois 1990, p. 3). These discrepancies have been reflected in the Persian translations by Naṣr Allāh Munšī and by Buḥārī, for they most likely used different versions of Ibn al-Muqaffa’s work. The substantial discrepancies between Buḥārī’s translation, Munšī’s rendering, and the published Arabic versions may be categorized as follows: (i) chapters/stories/anecdotes that exist in Arabic version/s but are lacking in Munšī’s and Buḥārī’s translations; (ii) stories/anecdotes that are found in Arabic version/s and Buḥārī’s rendering but are absent in Munšī’s text; (iii) stories/anecdotes that occur in Munšī’s version but are missing in Arabic version/s and Buḥārī’s text; (iv) chapters/stories/anecdotes present in Arabic version/s and Munšī’s text but lacking in Buḥārī’s translation; (v) corrupted anecdotes (for more details on the differences between these categories, see Gelhar 1976, pp. 221-230, Nātil-Ḥānlarī 1361š./1982, pp. 23-25).

The single surviving codex of the work consists of: (i) a preface by Buḥārī to his translation followed by three introductory chapters, namely (i) Burzūya’s voyage, (ii) the introduction by Ibn al-Muqaffa‘, (iii) life of Burzūy, and eleven principal chapters (throughout the text referred to as *dāstān* but at the end as *bāb*): (i) the lion and the ox, (ii) the investigation of Dimna, (iii) the ring-dove, (iv) the owls and the crows, (v) the ape and the tortoise (vi) the ascetic and the weasel, (vii) the mouse and the cat, (viii) the king and the bird, (ix) the lion and the jackal, (x) the king and the 8 dreams, (xi) the king’s son and his companions (abridged names of the chapters: de Blois 1990, p. 62). Compared with Naṣr Allāh Munšī’s adaptation, the following three chapters are missing from Buḥārī’s text: (i) the lioness and the horseman, (ii) the ascetic and his guest, (iii) the traveler and the goldsmith. In addition, ‘Azzām’s edition of Ibn al-Muqaffa‘ Arabic version of *Kalīla wa Dimna* includes two more chapters, which exist neither in Munšī’s rendering nor in Buḥārī’s translation: (i) the king of the mice, (ii) the dove, fox and heron. Considering the language and style of the text, ‘Azzām believes the latter two chapters not to be composed by Ibn al-Muqaffa‘ (‘Azzām 1401/1981, pp. 31-32).

It is written at the end of the text: “The book of *Kalīla wa Dimna* was concluded in fifteen chapters” (*siparī šud kitāb-i Kalīla wa Dimna dar pānzdah bāb*) (Buḥārī 1361š./1982, p. 281). However, as mentioned before, excluding its introductory chapters, the manuscript includes only eleven chapters of the Arabic text. One possible explanation is that Buḥārī’s translation, excluding the introductory chapters, had 14 principal chapters, of which three (that exist in Munšī’s rendering and in the editions of the Arabic original) are missing from the Persian manuscript. If so, then in addition to the 14 chapters, one of the introductory chapters, most probably the chapter on the life of Burzūy, was also considered as a main chapter (*bāb*) (Nātil-Ḥānlarī 1361š./1982, pp. 22-23). The other possibility is that Buḥārī’s translation was not incomplete and the manuscript’s lacuna (on p. 272 of the edition) amounts to no whole chapter. If that is the case, then the book’s total number of chapters - Buḥārī’s own preface and the three introductory chapters plus the eleven that form its main part - must be fifteen, as stated at the end of the text (Gehlhar 1976, p. li; Nātil-Ḥānlarī 1361š./1982, p.22).

Unlike Naṣr Allāh Munšī’s adaptation, Buḥārī’s translation resembles its source, i.e., the Arabic *Kalīla wa Dimna* of Ibn al-Muqaffa‘, and is not adorned with lines of poetry and Arabic quotations except in Buḥārī’s own preface and once in the chapter

about Burzūya's voyage (Nātil-Ḥānlarī 1361š./1982, p. 21). Buḥārī specifies in his preface that at the command of his patron he translated the text precisely as it was, although he could have made additions to the original (al-Buḥārī, p. 38). In contrast to Munšī's translation, which is considered the beginning of ornate Persian prose and one of its best examples (Omidisalar 2015), Buḥārī's translation represents the simple style of Persian composition and is characterized by the use of generally short sentences, limited loanwords, rare literary artifice, and the avoidance of Arabic quotations from the Quran or secular literary sources (Gehlhar 1976, p. xlvi, 1, 232).

Certain linguistic features of the text are regional. For instance, the second person plural ending *īt* instead of *īd*, e.g., *kardīt* instead of *kardīd* (Nātil-Ḥānlarī 1361š./1982, p. 285). This characteristic is mostly observed in Persian texts that were composed in Transoxiana (Rawāqī 1394š./2015, p. 29), the region that included Bukhara. It should be noted, however, that in comparison with other texts that were composed in Transoxiana, the number of provincial and dialectal words in Buḥārī's translation, which was completed in Mosul, is limited. It should be also mentioned that there are other works from that region, in which the "colloquial variety" rarely occurs (Rawāqī 1394š./2015, p. 15).

The single manuscript of Buḥārī's translation is kept at the Library of the Topkapı Palace in Istanbul (Ms. Istanbul, Topkapı Palace Library, Y.Y. 777, former classification H. 979). A brief and erroneous description of the manuscript was given by Fehmi Edhem Karatay in the catalogue of Persian manuscripts of Topkapı (Karatay 1961, p. 300). This manuscript lacks some folios which are indicated with dotted lines in Nātil-Ḥānlarī-Rawšan's edition (e.g., pp. 138, 261, 272). The unique manuscript of the *Dāstān-hā-i Bīdpāy* is of great significance, because it was copied about the time of the preparation of the translation. Furthermore, it is the earliest manuscript of the *Kalīla wa Dimna* among all preserved translations of the work in Islamic languages (Gehlhar 1976, p. 233), and it is even older than the earliest dated codex of the Arabic *Kalīla wa Dimna*, which is dated 618/1221 ('Azzām 1401/1981, p. 13), as well as the Persian adaptation of the work by Naṣr Allāh Munšī that is dated 551/1156 (Mīnuwī 1343š./1964, p. xix).

The fidelity of Buḥārī to his exemplar sheds more light on reconstructing the contents of the archetype of the different versions of the corrupted Arabic *Kalīla wa Dimna* (Gehlhar 1976, p. 233, Nātil-Ḥānlarī 1361š./1982, p. 21). The manuscript of

Buḥārī's version was copied by one Zafar ibn Mas'ūd ibn al-Ḥasan, surnamed as (*al-mukannā bi*) Abī al-Barakāt al-Faqīh al-Jurbādaqānī (Gehlhar 1976, pp. xlv-xlvi, 239). Based on the dedication notice written on the opening folio of the manuscript, it was copied for the library (*ḥizāna-i kutub*) of Abū al-Muẓaffār Ġāzī ibn Zangī ibn Aq Sunqur (Gehlhar 1976, pp. 236, 240), at whose command the translation was done by Buḥārī. It has been suggested that this manuscript is the sole existing copy of the translation and that most probably the work was never copied again (Gehlhar 1976, pp. 232-233). This assumption is based on the fact that the manuscript was copied for the library of Buḥārī's patron and that no mention of it exists in any earlier sources until it was described in the catalogue of Persian manuscripts of the Topkapi library.

James Norman Gehlhar was the first to study the text of Buḥārī's translation of the *Kalīla wa Dimna* (Gehlhar 1976). He also edited the first five chapters of the text (Buḥārī's preface, three introductory chapters and the chapter "the lion and the ox") based on the Topkapi manuscript, and included them as the appendix of his dissertation. This study remains unpublished. A few years later, the whole text of Buḥārī was jointly edited by Parwīz Nātil-Ḥānlarī (1914-1990) and Muḥammad Rawšan and was published in 1361š./1982 (the date of the introduction is 1359š./1980) in Tehran. The editors were apparently unaware of Gehlhar's dissertation, for they do not mention it at all. Their edition is nevertheless considered the standard edition of the work. According to the editors, the microfilm of the manuscript that they had at their disposal was of poor quality and they could not be certain about some of their readings (Buḥārī 1361š./1982, pp. 283, 285). The need for a revised edition of the work on the basis of a high-quality digital copy of the codex remains.

Manuscript: Istanbul, Topkapi Palace Library, Y.Y. 777 (former classification H. 979), ff. 117, **i**) Mosul, **ii**) early *ṣafar* 544/June 1149, **iii**) Zafar ibn Mas'ūd ibn al-Ḥasan, surnamed as Abī al-Barakāt al-Faqīh al-Jurbādaqānī, **viii**) Karatay 1961, p. 300.

Legend: i) Place of copying; ii) Period of copying; iii) Copyist; iv) Commissioner; v) Information on colophon; vi) Description of miniatures/illustrations; vii) Other remarks; viii) Information on catalogue(s)

Edition: *Dāstān-hā-yi Bīdpāy*, Parwīz Nātil-Ḥānlarī - Muḥammad Rawšan, eds., Tehran, Ḥwārazmī, 1361/1982, pp. 342.

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