

A MANUSCRIPT OF "TALES OF SOME LOVERS OF THE PAST"
IN THE COLLECTION OF THE ORIENTAL FACULTY
OF THE ST. PETERSBURG UNIVERSITY

An eighteenth-century manuscript of the "Tales of Some Lovers of the Past" (No. 734) in the library of the Oriental Faculty of St. Petersburg University entered the holdings of the library in the collection of manuscripts belonging to Shaykh Ṭaṭāwī (1810—1861). I. Yu. Krachkovsky's article entitled "Shaykh Ṭaṭāwī, professor at the St. Petersburg University (1810—1861)" [1] contains brief information about this manuscript. It is also mentioned in V. I. Beliayev and P. G. Bulgakov's article "Arabic manuscripts in the collection of LGU" [2], where it is termed "little-known". Two sheets of paper inserted into the manuscript have survived; they contain a list, in V. I. Beliayev's hand, of the stories which make up the manuscript. One can assume that the scholar attributed a certain significance to this manuscript and planned to study it further.

Manuscript No. 734 is entitled كتاب ذكر فيه اخبار بعض العشاق السالفين ("A Book of Reports about Some Lovers of the Past"). It contains tales about famous poets in love: Qays b. al-Mulawwah (Majnūn, d. A.D. 689), Tawb b. al-Ḥumayyir (7th—8th centuries A.D.), Laylā al-Akhyaliyya (d. A.D. 704), Qays b. Dharīḥ (d. A.D. 687), Jamīl b. Ma'mar (d. A.D. 701), al-'Abbās b. al-Aḥnaf (A.D. 750—808), 'Urwa b. Ḥizām (7th—8th centuries A.D.), and Kuthayyir (d. A.D. 723). It also presents love tales connected with the caliphs Sulaymān b. 'Abd al-Malik (8th century A.D.), Hārūn al-Rashīd (8th century A.D.), the vizier Ja'far al-Barmakī (8th century A.D.), and others.

The manuscript contains 137 folios: 20.0 × 15.0 cm.; the end is missing. The text is written in black and red ink. The handwriting is large *naskh* with the following characteristics: the copyist sometimes puts in vowelings, frequently omits medial and final *hamzas*, replaces *alif maqṣūra* with *alif mamdūda*, always puts dots below *alif maqṣūra*; if the seat of the *hamza* is a *yā*, the copyist also puts dots below it. Oriental paper; later paper binding.

The copyist's colophon has survived on fol. 75 b. It notes the date of the manuscript: A.H. 1118 (A.D. 1706—07). The title page contains the names of owners and dates: Aḥmad al-Bābilī, A.H. 1203 (1788—89) and al-Ṭaṭāwī, A.H. 1254 (1838—39). The name of the manuscript's compiler is missing.

The manuscript contains an anthology of tales about well-known heroes of Arabic literature and folklore and includes many lines of poetry. (Some of the poetry is supplied with lexical and grammatical commentaries.) The begin-

ning, which belongs to the compiler, is written in rhymed prose.

Beginning on fol. 1b:

الحمد لله الذي حكم الحبين بلواعج الشوق والغرام...

Contents of the manuscript:

1) fols. 3a—52b:

Story of Qays b. al-Mulawwah (Majnūn). There is a gap between fols. 29b and 30a.

2) fols. 53a—75b:

Tale of Laylā al-Akhyaliyya. The end of the tale contains the colophon of the copyist with the date of the manuscript:

و كان الفراغ من كتابته يوم الخميس المبارك عاشر جماد
الاول الذي هو من شهور سنة ثمانية عشر و مائة و الف

3) fols. 76b—83a:

Tale of Qays b. Dharīḥ and his beloved, Lubnā. Fol. 83b contains the copyist's colophon, which concludes the tale of Qays and Lubnā:

و هذا ما انتهى الينا من حديث قيس و لبنا و الله اعلم
باصواب و اليه المرجع و المعاد و صلى الله على سيدنا محمد
و على آله و صحبه و سلم

4) fols. 83b—86b:

Tale of Jamīl and Buthayna.

Fol. 86b contains the compiler's colophon:

و هذا ما انتهى الينا من قصة بئينة و جميل الخ

5) fols. 87a—90b:

Tale of the love of 'Urwa b. Ḥizām and 'Afra.

6) fols. 90b—92a:

Verses by 'Abbās b. al-Aḥnaf. Very little prose text.

7) fols. 92a—133b and 134b—137b:

92a—94b: tale of two lovers, from al-Ṭufayl b. 'Āmirī;
94b—95b: tale of the death of Sulaymān b. 'Abd al-Malik;

95b—96a: tale of Hārūn al-Rashīd and his female slave,
from al-Aṣma'ī;