MALĀ MUḤAMMAD SHARĪF QAḌĪ'S ACCOUNT ON THE HISTORY OF KURDISTĀN: A UNIQUE MANUSCRIPT FROM THE CENTRAL LIBRARY OF TEHRĀN UNIVERSITY

Although the major principles for writing the history of any period are the same, each historical period or topic has its own particular problems or considerations. The Kurdish topic is a difficult phase of history about which it is difficult to write because of the much great limits on sources. There are large gaps where the sources are either non-existent or problematic for historical reconstruction. The primary sources that do exist frequently do not lend themselves to constructing a historical narrative or at least a narrative of any length: artefacts or texts whose purpose was entirely different from describing contemporary events (e.g. legal documents, lists of commodities, receipts).

The present manuscript is a new material in the Kurdish history, encompassing political events and intellectual developments, and provides some new materials to us for constructing the history of Kurdistān and especially Iranian Kurdistān. There are and will continue to remain large gaps in our knowledge, but, at the same time, this unique manuscript and its contents can provide some important primary materials of the Kurdish history which analyze and evaluate the other sources and discriminate between them as to their value, problems, uncertainties, and relative merits for providing usable historical data.

The manuscript has been preserved for years in the collection of the Central Library, University of Tehrān. The Manuscript part of the Department of Documents, Rare Books and Special Collections of the Central Library includes manuscripts and historical documents in the Arabic, Persian, and Turkish languages [1]. The collections of the Central Library also have a considerable number of historic photos, and ethnographic pictures related almost always to the Qājārīd people and dynasty [2].

The provenance of the manuscript of Malā Muḥammad Ṣharīf Qaḍī's [3] account on the history of Kurdistān is almost clear. In the library the manuscript (call. No. 6578) is referred to the “achievements of Saʿīd Nafṣī” [4]. An Iranian Kurd, Ayyūb Ḥabīb Dūstār, sent the manuscript for Nafṣī and it reached from Sanandaj to Central Library in the winter of 1965 [5].

The manuscript, unfortunately, is not complete and at present contains 29 folios. The text is organized in one column with 37 lines on each page [6]. The manuscript has been restored and during restoration some margins were slightly trimmed. There are no imprints of owners' seals, or ex libris labels. There is only Nafṣī’s signature on the fly-leaf of the manuscript. The size of the folio is 35×21 cm; the size of the text is 30×18 cm. The pagination is late and Oriental. The paper is of European manufacture (forangī). All of the manuscript is written with black ink. The binding is late of brown colour. The manuscript is written in the Arabic script in the Persian language. On the fly-leaf, Nafṣī gives the date 1175 AH: too early to be accepted for this manuscript. According to the contents, the last date and events both suggest a much later date for the production of the manuscript: 1224 AH [7].

The manuscript is written in nastaʿlīq, and does not have a title page with the name of the work. In official drafts of the library, the manuscript is called Tārīḵ-i Kurdistān. The text of the manuscript includes only one of the last chapters of the original book. There were 40 chapters in the original version [8].

The focus of its text is on Iranian Kurdistān and very much on Ardalān [9]. A major section of the manuscript is devoted to the Kurds under Šafawīds (1135—1722) and especially Šhāḥ ʿAbbās (1571—1629). This history conceives itself as a full history, covering political history, societies, personalities, as well as “events”. The heart of the manuscript is found in the sections regarding Khusraw Khān (I and II), the wāli of Kurdistān, which try to bring together the written data into order — with due attention to the many oral accounts — and answer the questions that can be answered. It has been written with a certain economy, with avoidance of repetition. Most topics are treated fully in only one place, but some subjects are not placed in the appropriate sections of the manuscript.

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