
PRESENTING THE MANUSCRIPT

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A TURKISH TRANSLATION OF A COSMOGRAPHIC WORK BY IBN AL-WARDĪ AND ITS MANUSCRIPT IN THE COLLECTION OF THE ST. PETERSBURG BRANCH OF THE INSTITUTE OF ORIENTAL STUDIES

Turkish manuscript B 790 in the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies is a Turkish translation of an Arabic cosmographic work by Sirāj al-Dīn Abū Ḥafṣ ‘Umar b. al-Wardī. The manuscript is illustrated. In addition to a decorative *‘unwān*, it contains as many as 92 miniatures. Until now, the manuscript has not drawn scholarly attention. The original Arabic work was written in Syria in 1419 and was intended for the commandant of the fortress of Aleppo, Shāhīn al-Mu‘ayyidī. The Turkish manuscript, which consists of 277 folios, was dated to the sixteenth century by the compilers of a Catalogue of Turkic MSS of the above-mentioned collection [1]. The text written in black Indian ink and red vermilion was copied in an almost calligraphic *nasta‘līq*; both paper and binding are Eastern; the pasteboard binding is covered in leather; double pagination — Eastern and later European.

The manuscript displays many marginal notes, some of them in French or Latin. Folio 01a contains a note in Latin which reports that the manuscript was given as a gift in 1840 to the Asiatic Museum of the Imperial Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg by Buteneff. A small sheet was glued to folio 01a; it contains the following inscription: “Constantinople. 1832. A. Buteneff”, which makes us suppose that A. Butenev acquired the manuscript in Constantinople in 1832. We find in the same place a note in French which provides the title of Ibn al-Wardī’s work — his name is cited in the form “Omer-Seradjouldin” — and a brief description of its contents. The title of the work is found on folio 02a: *Tarjuma-yi Kharīdat al-‘ajā‘ib wa farīdat al-gharā‘ib li-Ibn al-Wardī*. Folio 02b contains the *fihrist* — section titles are in black Indian ink with page numbers listed beneath them in red. The margins of many folios bear notes in pencil which give the Arabic titles of works and the names of authors found in the main body of the text (for example, fols. 69a, 215a, and others).

The manuscript of the Turkish translation of Ibn al-Wardī’s work under consideration here is not unique. Several copies of it have survived, among which we are aware of manuscripts held in Uppsala, Oxford, Paris, Bratislava, and Istanbul [2]. Numerous copies of the translation tes-

tify to the popularity of this particular translation of Ibn al-Wardī’s composition.

The authors of the above-noted Catalogue of Turkic MSS indicate in their brief description of the St. Petersburg copy that, judging from the translator’s introduction, the translation was completed for presentation to a certain ‘Othmān Shāh b. Iskender Pasha [3]. They do not, however, provide any information on the person for whom the translation — completed in 970/1562—63, as the translator’s introduction runs [4] — was intended.

This date, taken together with the palaeographic characteristics of the manuscript, supports a dating to the second half of the sixteenth century. Thus, the St. Petersburg copy is in close chronological proximity to the actual translation. But what in effect make the manuscript especially interesting are numerous miniatures it contains. These are, as a rule, small in format and located largely within the text or on the margins.

The history of this Turkish translation is no doubt of interest as well. The translation includes two introductions, one in Arabic and the other — in Turkish. The Arabic one opens the translation and provides information on the contents of the work and its sources. In the Turkish introduction, which immediately follows the Arabic one, the translator, who calls himself Mevlānā Maḥmūd al-Khaṭīb [5], and in another place simply Mollā Maḥmūd [6], writes that he undertook his work at the advice of his “friends and brethren”. Following the accepted formula of self-abasement, common among Muslim authors, he complains of his inadequate abilities and the impossibility of avoiding mistakes and inaccuracies. To justify his literary undertaking, he cites a popular saying, according to which “he who has received an order is not guilty [of what he was ordered to do]”. For further justification, he notes that Ibn al-Wardī’s work was written in Arabic, and for this reason was not accessible to all. It was this latter consideration which, in his words, moved his friends to ask him to translate the composition into Turkī, that is, into Turkish [7].

The translator also writes that his efforts were supported by the court (*dergāh-i ‘izzet-i penāh*) and eulogizes his patron, the “great emir” (*amīr-i kabīr*) ‘Othmān Shāh