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# TEXTS AND MANUSCRIPTS: DESCRIPTION AND RESEARCH

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## THE AUTHOR AND THE BOOK: THE TURKISH TRANSLATION OF SA'DĪ'S *GULISTĀN*

The circumstances that inspired medieval Muslim authors to engage in creative work are always individual, although they are often similar. Turkish authors are no exception. Unfortunately, the authors themselves are usually too laconic in their explanations of the reasons that compelled them to take up the pen. The personal and individual are elusive in their works, although the texts themselves, whether their authors wished it or not, can tell us a great deal about the creators of these compositions. One can only add to this that the individual elements disappear almost entirely in translated works. The author of the translation dissolves without a trace in the text he translates. As we read the traditional, streamlined formulae the translators use to explain their reasons for translating, we can only guess at the real reasons they picked up the pen. They may be deeply buried in the culture itself, or there may be psychological motives for the creative impulse and the translation of a specific work [1]. The individual, personal element is deeply hidden in Muslim literature, although one finds exceptions. In the marvelous *Bābur-nāma* ("Records") by Bābur, for example, the person of the author sparkles like a diamond, illuminating the thoughts and feelings of people from the medieval Muslim East. But Bābur's "Records" are not a translation. They are an original, autobiographical work [2].

Medieval Muslim texts appeared in a cultural context. They contain intellectual subtexts that are of interest to the modern researcher. What we know about the era and its culture can illuminate these contexts, just as what we know about the author can assist us. Of course, the task of obtaining this knowledge is more difficult when we deal with a translation. Yet it is not a hopeless task. Information about the author makes available to us the concealed, underlying characteristics of the views held by the authors of Muslim works as carriers of their own culture.

As I explored the Turkish manuscript collection at the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, my attention was drawn by a copy of the Turkish verse translation of Sa'dī's *Gulistān*. It was done by the seventeenth-century Turkish poet Ḍa'īfī. The manuscript is an autograph, and intriguing in many respects. One finds a brief description of it in the catalogue of Turkic manu-

scripts compiled by L. V. Dmitrieva [3]. The manuscript contains 02 + 54 + 004 folios (27.0×18.0 cm). The paper is European, with water-marks, the most frequent of which consists of two crossed arrows tips down (in the form of the letter 'x'). The text (22.0×13.0 cm) in verses is written in four columns in a common border composed of a red line. The columns are set off by thin red lines. One should add that the poetic texts in medieval Turkish manuscripts were commonly formatted in this fashion, following the early-medieval Persian tradition. The text is written in a neat, small *naskh* and is vowelled everywhere. The title of the translation is: *Kitāb-i nigāristān-i shahristān-i dirakhtistān-i sabzistān* ("Picture Gallery of the [Kingdom] of Cities, Plants, and Grasses"). It is in a large *thuluth* (vermilion). Somewhat lower, the *basmla* forms the second line, also in *thuluth*. Both lines (the title and the *basmla*) are vowelled. Enclosed in a common border, they form a kind of '*unwān*, though lacking the floral ornament that is usually a part of '*unwāns* (see *fig. 1*) [4]. The pagination is Eastern (custodes) and late-European (in pencil).

The binding is paper-board with a cherry-coloured leather spine. The covers are edged in leather of the same cherry colour. Grey-pink paper with white patterns and black-pink leaves was pasted above the binding's paper-board. The manuscript is held in a paper-board case with a brown leather spine, on which there is an inscription embossed in gold in Latin letters: *Kitab Nekaristan Cod. Turc. bomb.* The paper-board of the case is pasted over with brown patterned paper. The paper-board shows the manuscript's old call number: II. 4. 27. The binding and case seem to be of quite late European origin (or at least the case is). V. D. Smirnov, who was the first to describe the manuscript in the second half of the nineteenth century, and later L. V. Dmitrieva, ascertain that the binding is of late Eastern origin (Dimitrieva specifies that it is Turkish) [5].

Beginning of the text (first *bayt*) (fol. 1b):

حَدَايَه حَمْدُور كَوْنِيْنَه زِيْنَتْ  
آكَ اَوْلَسُوْن تَنَا وَ شُكْرُوْمِيْنَتْ