

PRESENTING THE MANUSCRIPT

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A LATE OTTOMAN TURKISH VERSE VERSION OF XANÎ'S *MEM Û ZÎN* IN THE MANUSCRIPT COLLECTION OF THE ISLAMIC CONSULTATIVE ASSEMBLY LIBRARY I*

The collection of modern and medieval Turkic manuscripts in the Islamic Consultative Assembly Library I contains a lot of valuable materials on the Islamic literature and history. Some of them are well-known and exist in hundreds copies throughout the world, but a few items are rare or unique. This article is not aiming to give a full scholarly analysis of the Turkic manuscripts preserved in the collection of Islamic Consultative Assembly Library I. Our aim is much more modest — that is, to arouse only attention of specialists to a valuable Turkish version of Xanî's *Mem û Zîn* (written in 1694).

Among the early Kurdish poets of Kurdistan, if we leave out the great founders of Kurdish literature [1], the name of Ehmedê Xanî (1651—1707) [2] is entitled to hold one of the most distinguished places. The *Mem û Zîn* [3], or the most important work of Xanî in its broadest sense, is one of the great works of Kurdish literature. The study of the contents of this work, which centred about the tragic love story of Mem and Zîn, is important not only because they form the folkloric belief of the Kurds, but particularly also because of their nationalistic aspect [4], their linguistic nicety, and their intrinsic value. If we leave the written Kurdish *Mem û Zîn* wholly out of account we are still able to draw from other sources material for the study of Xanî's literary masterpiece. First and foremost, we may study the picture of the work of Xanî that can be drawn in outline from the oral versions of *Mem û Zîn* [5]. This may be further supplemented through the use of material found in a version which a Xanî's follower for his interest in him caused to be recorded in a non-Iranian language — that is, the Turkish translation manuscript which we would like to discuss in this brief presentation [6].

The *Kitāb Mamî wa Zîn* ("The Book of Mami [*sic*] and Zin") is an anonymous manuscript (call No. 9385, 59 fols., 19×22 cm) mentioned neither in the "Fihrist

makhtûât Majlis Shûrâ Millî" [7] nor in any other available catalogues [8]. The copy was initially registered in the National Parliament Library (now the Islamic Consultative Assembly Library I) in 1969 as received from Ja'far Sultân al-Qurâi (d. 1988) [9]. This version had been dated by the year 1273/1852 without the month and the day. It is unknown by whom and where it was written. It belongs to Sultân al-Qurâi family related to a Turkic merchant clan. Since the folios of the MS are lacking any Oriental owners' seal, the exact date when the MS of Turkish *Mem û Zîn* came to the Private Library of Sultân al-Qurâi and its original depository is unknown. Probably it was bought by chance in Eastern Anatolia or the Soviet Union for some rubles. The active tea merchant Ja'far Sultân al-Qurâi visited Turkey, Armenia, Nakhchiwân, and Russian Azerbayjân and the MS came probably from the districts of Turkish Kurdistan or Western Armenia, i. e. in a Kurdish-Turkish contact zone, to the Private Library of Sultân al-Qurâi [10].

The binding is European, of brown leather. There are 17 lines per folio. The paper is a kind of yellow-tinted *farangî* "European" paper and the text is written in Indian ink. There is no need for any description of the script. Only a point calls for comment. In the MS, rarely, some unimportant margins are marked. This neatly very correctly *naskh* manuscript contains almost all important parts of Kurdish version, and as being the ancestral Turkish version of the *Mem û Zîn* is of great value.

The structure of the work is as follows. At first the author gives a prose passage from the main body of Xanî's text in Persian which contains 41 *faşl* in *shanjarf* "red ink":

Incipit (fol. 1v) "دیباچه" کتاب ممی و زین"
Excipit (fol. 58r) "ملامت کردن خانی با قلم و جواب شنیدن از او"

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