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Persian Popular Literature in the Qajar Period

Abstract

As folklore and popular literature of the past can only be assessed by way of recorded data, contemporary accounts containing larger amounts of information are of particular importance. Following an introduction into the meaning of popular literature in the Persian context, this essay presents and discusses a unique document: a catalogue of printed popular reading matter available in Qajar Iran in the year 1282/1865. The catalogue shows the range and topics of popular reading matter available in the Qajar period and documents the traditional concepts that later fulfilled their potential of surviving well into the modern era.

Keywords: Popular literature—Qajar folklore—history of printing in Iran—lithography

IN THE ISLAMIC CULTURAL AREA, all discussions of the historical development of popular literature are dominated by one particular historical item as an indispensable source of information on reading matter in medieval times. The catalogue of books compiled by the Baghdad bookseller Muhammad b. Ishāq b. al-Nadīm in the second half of the tenth century, commonly known by its generic title as *al-Fihrist*, is universally acknowledged as a work of unique importance for the study of Arabic literature (DODGE 1970). Its ninth chapter is devoted to tales (and magic) and contains a wealth of information on contemporary narrative literature (GROTZFELD and GROTZFELD 1984, 15–18; IRWIN 1994, 49–50), including one of the earliest known statements on the history of the *Arabian Nights*, the mention of Alexander the Great as the first emperor to encourage storytelling, and an eye-witness account of the gigantic encyclopedia of popular tales compiled by Muhammad b. ‘Abdūs al-Jahšiyārī, of which, alas, nothing has come down to the present day. Ibn al-Nadīm’s catalogue of books remains a singular case in terms of approach and documentation, as no other work of a similar scope is preserved for the following centuries nor, in fact, for any other period or region in the Islamic world. The field of medieval Persian narrative culture, for which the *Fihrist* also contains a number of early references, has been reconstructed to a certain extent from disparate statements that are particularly helpful for the history of epic literature (OMIDSALAR 1984; OMIDSALAR and OMIDSALAR 1999; YAMAMOTO 2000, 48–57). Yet there are no clues to a general evaluation of the content and role of popular literature in Iran, a statement that holds true for just about any period of Iranian history. The present paper contributes to filling this gap in our knowledge with particular reference to the Qajar epoch (1794–1924), a period that in many ways constitutes an intermediary between tradition and modernity.

Taking a closer look at the subject of popular literature in the Qajar period, it appears at first necessary to define the scope of “popular literature” in the present context. Prominent scholars of Persian folklore such as

William Hanaway, Jr. and Mohammad Ja'far Mahjub have outlined their notion of "popular literature" predominantly by criteria relating to form and content. Hanaway's prime interest was in epic literature, and accordingly he adopts a rather narrow understanding of popular literature as "a body of narrative prose literature derived from, or in the formal tradition of, the Persian national legend" (HANAWAY 1971, 59). Mahjub, on the other hand, was able to profit from his intimate knowledge of a wide array of "popular" reading matter available in his youth. Mahjub's extensive series of articles published in the scholarly Iranian journal *Soxan* was initially intended as a concise survey of all kinds of popular literature, alphabetically arranged. Incidentally, the series was initiated by a treatment of the *Abu Moslem-nāme*, a work Mahjub later was to return to in detail (MAHJUB 1989/90). The different categories of stories (*dāstān*) that Mahjub intended to discuss were outlined in an introductory essay (MAHJUB 1959, 66) as follows: (1) stories originating purely from the storytellers' imagination, such as *Amir Arsalān*, *Malek Bahman*, *Badi' al-molq*, or *Nuš-āfarin-e Gawhartāj*; (2) stories drawing on some kind of historical understanding, such as *Romuz-e Hamze*, *Eškandar-nāme*, *Rostam-nāme*, or *Hosayn-e Kord*; (3) stories about famous religious characters, such as the *Xāvar-nāme*; (4) stories embellishing the historical role of religious characters, such as the *Moxtār-nāme*; (5) stories treating amorous or other adventures, such as *Haft paykar-e Bahrām-gur*, *Hātem-e Tā'i*, *Čahār darviš*, *Salim-e javāheri*, *Dalle-ye Moxtār*, *Makr-e zanān*; collections of stories such as *Alf layle* or the *Sendebād-nāme* were also included in this category; (6) stories or collections thereof focusing on animal actors, such as the *Čehel tuti*, *Xāle Suske*, *Āqā Muše*, and *Muš va gorbe*; (7) minor works of classical Persian poets in popular editions. Even though Mahjub's series was left unfinished (breaking off at letter *B* after treating *Bahrām va Gol-andām*), until the present day it remains useful as an extremely well-informed and highly readable treatment of the subject.

Neither Hanaway's nor Mahjub's approach takes into account the mechanisms of production and distribution of "popular literature" that in recent research are evaluated as much more decisive for understanding the popularity, or rather popularization, of certain kinds of literature (SCHENDA 1993, 217–38). While Hanaway has dealt largely with works of the manuscript period, Mahjub might have been more aware of the extended possibilities of distribution offered by the introduction of printing in Iran. Moreover, while Mahjub aimed at discussing the "popular literature" of his day, he inadvertently also introduced his readers to a survey of popular literature produced—and, to a large extent, available—towards the end of the Qājār epoch. Mahjub was born in 1923, and when in the 1950s he wrote about his reading experience as a youth, he must have had in mind the pop-

ular literature available in the 1930s.

In this respect, it is notable that the lineage of early twentieth-century popular literature does not differ decisively from that of contemporary oral narrative. Collections such as the repertoire of tales narrated by the Persian maid Mašdi Galin Xānom, in her seventies at the time when her tales were taken down in the mid-1940s, reveal a perspective on orally transmitted folktales in the late Qajar period: the storyteller lived through the final decades of this period and must have memorized the tales as well as social patterns of her early experience (ELWELL-SUTTON 1980; MARZOLPH et al. 1995; MARZOLPH 2000, 450). Moreover, while contemporary testimonies to the character of oral tradition in the Qajar period do not exist, even at the beginning of the twenty-first century a grandfather relating tales told to him by his own grandfather would easily bridge the span of four to five generations needed to link up with the mid-nineteenth century when Qajar culture was flourishing. Similarly, the majority of popular literature available as late as the middle of the twentieth century (MARZOLPH 1994a) can be shown to derive from sources printed in the nineteenth century. This kind of chapbook literature, for which no generic term has yet been proposed in the Persian language, might justly be termed *adabiyāt-e tanābi*, a designation corresponding to the Spanish *pliegos de cordel* (MARCO 1977), since even today newspaper stalls and sidewalk peddlers in the cities display their cheap items pinned to cords that are strung between two trees. To some degree, popular literature has proved to be even more resistant to cultural change than oral tradition: the oral performance of the adventures of the jeweler Salim, *Salim-e javāheri*, recorded in the second half of the twentieth century (MILLS 1992, 96–158), goes back to chapbooks sold in the mid-twentieth century (MARZOLPH 1994a, xlii) that in turn reproduce a text printed in mid-nineteenth century Qajar Iran (MARZOLPH 2001, 261); the embedded moral and cultural values originate even further back, in the Safavid period, when the romance was most likely compiled (MARZOLPH 1994b). An even more revealing example of the permanence and continuity of popular literature is found in the neighboring field of Arabic literature: the popular encyclopedia *al-Mustatraf*, compiled by al-Ibšihī early in the fifteenth century and profiting from sources going back as far as the first centuries of Islam, still enjoyed a wide readership at the end of the twentieth century and, in addition to reprints and new editions, continued to be popularized in short excerpts of a chapbook character (MARZOLPH 1997, 415). In Iran, where changes in living oral tradition had already been enforced by political and ensuing socio-economical developments as early as the 1950s, a decisive new orientation in popular literature and, in fact, a breach with nineteenth-century tradition, took effect only after the revolution in 1979. Of course, such a statement should

not be taken at its apodictic face value, as it does not hold true for each and every item of popular literature: obviously, the publishing of certain items might have been discontinued at an earlier stage, while others were added to the standard repertoire of booksellers. Even so, as will be argued in what follows, it may safely be surmised that popular reading matter up to the middle of the twentieth century corresponded more or less to the items available a century earlier.

On a different level, one has to keep in mind that the term “literature” had gained a whole new meaning during the Qajar period. The traditional understanding of “literature” in the Persian context would primarily denote works of the classical poets that in written format were solely available as manuscripts. The introduction of printing to Iran in the early nineteenth century resulted in new modes of text production, transmission, and distribution. The wider—though still limited—accessibility of written matter possessed the potential to distribute to a large number of people, and thus literally to “popularize” all kinds of literature that previously had mostly been available by way of recitation or oral performance from a manuscript source. While the exact circumstances of this process remain to be studied in detail, it is obvious that the introduction of printing would also have a bearing on the concept of popular literature. In times of manuscript production, it might have been useful to outline the “popular” character of literature by way of content and form, as discussed above. In contrast, the greater availability of reading matter in the Qajar period makes it imperative to consider defining “popular literature” as the particular kind of literature that was produced in large quantities. This understanding a priori does not necessarily exclude learned literature or historical works. Literature of a learned character might have been produced in equally large numbers and might have been as “popular” within the respective groups of recipients as anything else. The following considerations, however, are restricted to “popular” literature in the traditional sense of “folk” literature, implying a narrative quality. As is well known, this kind of narrative literature often practices a pseudo-historical approach incorporating elements of fiction, fantasy, and magic, as the converse of historical literature’s being blended with folktale motifs (PERRY 1986; LEDER 1998).

Summarizing the various arguments, “popular literature” as considered here refers to narrative works of a pseudo-historical or purely fictional character printed and distributed in relatively large quantities. A like evaluation will have to take into account both overall genres of literature and specific single items. Their production in large quantities would inevitably result in a larger readership, which by way of recitation or retelling might distribute contents once read to an even larger community of non-literate recipients.

Even so, while the practice of printing in Iran greatly enhanced the capacity to produce popular literature, print runs were not at all comparable to present-day standards of thousands of copies. In the Qajar period, the overwhelming percentage of books were printed by way of lithography, a technique invented just before the end of the eighteenth century that had been introduced to Iran during the third decade of the nineteenth century. Print runs of lithographed books would probably comprise only 300 to 400 copies before the surface of the printing stone wore out and new master copies for printing would have to be prepared. This in turn would necessitate the production of new master copies on paper and hence a whole new edition.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON QAJAR POPULAR LITERATURE

Anybody aiming to take a closer look at the production of popular literature in the Qajar period is frustrated by the lack of adequate bibliographical information. The history of the printed book in Iran has long been neglected in favor of research into the fascinating world of manuscript production, and particularly illustrated manuscripts. All existing bibliographical tools are incomplete and faulty as far as Qajar production goes. Moreover, due to neglect and disregard, many items produced in the Qajar period are physically endangered or have even disappeared completely. Comparatively large holdings exist in libraries in Iran and various European countries, above all in Russia, England, France, and Germany. Still, first-hand information remains an invaluable addition to the data extracted by way of autopsy from existing items. It is thus an extraordinary stroke of luck that various contemporary book-lists from the Qajar period have been preserved. Besides the catalogues of personal collections such as those by the French scholars Jules MOHL (1876) and Charles SCHEFER (1899), most of the relevant contemporary information on book-production in Qajar Iran has been published by Western orientalist scholars such as Bernhard von DORN (1852) and Moritz STEINSCHNEIDER (1884).

Dorn's catalogue of "books printed and lithographed in Tehran and Tabriz" is an unsorted inventory mentioning no further specification, and though most of the items mentioned for Tehran (35) and Tabriz (48) are fairly easy to identify, it remains extremely difficult to evaluate their relevance in terms of popularity. The only item mentioned for both places of publication is "Jawhari" —in this case not denoting the name of a book but rather its author, Mirzā Ebrāhim b. Mohammad-Bāqer Jawhari, who finished his well-known work *Tufān al-boḳā'* ("Tempest of tears") in the year 1250/1834. According to a later testimony dated 1282/1865, this book was one of several that were printed so often that the exact number of their editions was unknown even then (*"ba'zi az ānhā qarāran va marāran be-tab'*

reside ke 'edde-ye ān mošaxxas va ma'lum nist)—citing as examples the Koran, “Jawhari,” and Mollā Mohammad-Bāqer Majlesi’s *Zād al-ma’ād* (NAŠĀT 1865, 345). Being the most prominent of a large group of books treating the pivotal tragedy experienced by the Shiite world in the martyrdom of Hosayn b. ‘Ali at Karbalā’, *Tufān al-boḳā’* in terms of content constitutes as it were a religious counterpart to Somadeva’s famous *Kathāsaritsāgara* (“Ocean of Stories”)—and the striking similarity in the titular catchwords might be more than sheer coincidence. Besides this particularly prominent item, Dorn’s list contains mention of a few books, or rather booklets, that later are known to belong to the standard stock of popular narrative literature, such as *Nuṣ-āfarin*, *Čehel tuti*, or *Dozd va qāzi*. Most of the books mentioned in Dorn’s list should today be available in the St. Petersburg libraries whose holdings in Persian lithographed books have been scrupulously catalogued by the Russian scholar Olimpiada P. ŠČEGLOVA (1975, 1989).

Next in chronological order is a collection of Persian books acquired by Julius Freiherr von Minutoli (1805–1860), the importance of which lies in its physical documentation of contemporary Qajar book production. The catalogue of the Minutoli collection was published by Moritz STEINSCHNEIDER (1884), an orientalist librarian at the Berlin Royal Library. Steinschneider’s catalogue, which is not without a certain pride in the richness of its scope, lists some 100 items, and even though the listings are alphabetically arranged rather than classified according to content, it is easy to identify a large number of narrative works. These are characterized by generic designations such as “Geschichte[n]” (Bidel, Gilani, *Hosayn-e Kord*, *Xāvar-nāme*, *Qesas al-anbeyā’* etc.), “Erzählung” (*Zarir-e Xozā’i*, *Jāme’ al-heḳāyāt*), “Legenden” (*Hezār mas’ale*), “Sage” (*Eṣḳandar-nāme*), “Märchen” (*Qahramān-e qātel*), “Heldengeschichte[n]” (*Rostam-nāme*, *Širuye*). A striking characteristic of these books is that many of them bear illustrations (although at times of a modest quality), a feature that I have recently treated in detail (MARZOLPH 2001).

Considering the scarcity of solid information, it is an extreme stroke of luck that we also possess a native catalogue of books published in nineteenth-century Iran that is somewhat like a minor Persian equivalent to Ibn al-Nadīm’s *Fihrist*. This catalogue, whose importance has already been mentioned by ŠČEGLOVA (1979, 157) and QĀSEMI (2000), is appended to the 1281–82/1864–65 edition of the *Ketāb-e Ganjine* (ŠČEGLOVA 1989, no. 554), a collection of writings by Mirzā ‘Abd al-Vahhāb Mo’tamed al-Dawle Našāt (d. 1244/1828). Not unusual for the early years of publishing in Iran, the actual text of Našāt’s work (which itself is irrelevant to the present discussion) is supplemented by a lengthy lament on the low quality of contemporary book production, which is claimed to result in cheap but faulty texts. Such laments are legion in early printed books in Iran, and they were often

justified, since the qualified production of lithographed books relied to a large extent on the competence of the persons who established the text from the manuscript original. Moreover, qualified scribes were needed in order to prepare a correct and faithful master copy of the text. Both these categories of collaborators apparently were often hard to find. The editor on the very first page makes the point that the present text has been subjected to diligent proof-reading (*tashih*), while the person signing as scribe is 'Ali-Asġar Tafreši, an experienced member of his profession who between 1261 and 1288 was active for a period of more than twenty-five years (cf. MARZOLPH 2001, 276). In order to appreciate the publisher's incentive to supply a list of books published in Iran up to his day, it is helpful to conceive his initial pride in being able to produce what he considers a flawless exemplary edition. Unfortunately, but also not unusually for the present context, the book's publisher Hājji Musā Tājer Tehrāni is known only by name and no further details of his activities are available.

After his lament for the low quality of previous publications and due praise to his own initiative, Hājji Musā introduces the catalogue by yet another few lines of complaint about the rudimentary character of knowledge on printed books in Iran. The supplement, followed by a final page of criticism and promise (to improve the quality of printed books by personal effort), consists of a three-page catalogue of printed books prepared prior to, or available at the time of, publication in 1282/1865. Before discussing this catalogue in greater detail, a few more introductory remarks are needed. Though both printing from movable type and lithography were known and available in Iran, the compiler of the list does not distinguish books prepared in either technique. The terms used in the prefatory passage to the catalogue are the Turkish term *bāsmē* and the Arabic term *tab'*. The latter term may or may not explicitly refer to printing from movable type, while the final sentence employs the expression *entebā' yāfte* without further specification. On the other hand, though printing from movable type had been introduced to Iran prior to lithography, the former art fell into disuse for about two decades, the last of the earlier items printed from movable type known at present being a copy of Jawhari's *Tufān al-boḳā'* of 1272/1855. Considering the fact that only some fifty items were printed from movable type in the age of incunabula (MARZOLPH 2001, 13), it may safely be assumed that the majority of items listed in the catalogue have been prepared by way of lithography. As a further point worth mentioning, it should be made clear that the list gives only names of books (or authors) without including dates, places of publication, size or volume. It becomes, however, a truly fascinating document by the fact that it is classified according to subject area, following a traditional arrangement.

HĀJJI MUSĀ'S CATALOGUE OF PRINTED BOOKS

Hājjī Musā's catalogue lists a total of 320 Persian and 14 Arabic items. After mentioning books treating the basic fields of Islamic law (*feqh*), dogmatics (*osul*), and commentary on the Koran (*tafsir*), the list proceeds to name items related to a large variety of secular sciences, ranging from language (dictionaries) and history to medicine, philosophy and (Arabic) grammar. After a list of books relating to such lesser fields as geography or the interpretation of dreams (*ta'bir-e xvāb*), the final sections are concerned with non-scientific educational and entertainment literature. It is these sections that are of particular interest to the subject of popular literature. The relevant sections are labeled as follows:

- *ketāb-e* [read: *ketob-e*] *ahādīs va axbār va ġayreh* (books on persons or events considered to be historical); this is the only section in the whole list that explicitly distinguishes between books in Persian (30 items) and Arabic (14 items).
- *ketob-e ad'iye va ġayre*, further divided into
 - *ketob-e ad'iye* (books on prayers; 14 items).
 - *ketob-e mosibat* (books treating the "calamity," the martyrdom of Hosayn b. 'Ali and his companions at Karbalā'; 21 [recte: 18] items).
- *divānāt* (collections of poetry; 32 items).
- *qesse va hekāyāt* (tales and stories; 11 items).
- *bačče-x'āni* (reading matter for children).

Apart from the second category (*ketob-e ad'iye va ġayreh*) and the fourth (*divānāt*), the works of the remaining sections are predominantly of a narrative character. The first category contains a number of well-known narrative works that in terms of both content and degree of distribution might justly be termed popular—such as Āqā Sabur's *Jāme' al-mo'jezāt*, Mollā Mohammad Jovayni's *Qesas al-anbeyā'* or Hosayn b. 'Ali Vā'ez Kāšefi's *Axlāq-e mohseni*. For pragmatic reasons, it will have to be excluded from the following discussion, as most of the works mentioned are neither known to the present author nor available for inspection. In order to document the data for future research and for those who might not have access to the catalogue, here is a list of the names of the 30 items included in the Persian section of *ketob-e ahādīs va axbār va ġayreh*: *Hayāt al-qolub*, *Ayn al-hayāt*, *Jalā' al-'oyun*, *Helyat al-mottaqin*, *Abvāb al-jenān*, *Zobdat al-ma'āref*, *Zobdat al-tasānif*, *Me'rāj al-'āliye* [?], *Tohfāt al-majāles*, *Serāj al-qolub*, *Hadis-e qods*, *Šarh-e arba'in*, *Kefāyat al-xesām*, *Hadiqat al-šī'a*, *Aqā'ed al-šī'a*, *Tazkerat al-a'emma*, *Exteyārāt*, *Jāme' al-mo'jezāt*, *Xolāsat al-axbār*, *Asrār al-salāt*, *Sayf al-omma*, *Nur*

al-anvār, Tohfāt al-moluḳ, Jām[e']-e ‘abbāsi, Qesas al-anbeyā’, Eršād al-‘olum, Axlāq-e mohsen[i], Tarjome-ye Nahj al-balāḡe, Dalil al-bahrayn, Ādāb al-šari’a.

Before proceeding to evaluate the catalogue, let us first identify in detail the books in the remaining sections.¹

KOTOB-E MOSIBAT

Reyāz al-šahāda (*Ḍarī’a* 11: no. 1971; *Fehrest*: col. 1809) = *Reyāz al-šahāda va ḵonuz al-sāda fī manāqeb al-sāda va masā’eb al-ḡorar al-mayāmin al-qāda* [*Fehrest*: *fī zekr masā’eb al-sāda*], by Mawlā Mohammad-Hasan b. al-Hājj Mohammad Ma’sum Qazvini Hā’eri (d. 1240/1824); printed 1274 (Bombay).

Mātamḵade (*Ḍarī’a* 19: no. 71; *Fehrest*: col. 2841), by Qorbān b. Ramazān Qazvini Rudbāri “Bidel” (13th/19th century); printed 1266, 1270 (Calcutta), 1274, 1277.

Lesān al-va’ezin (*Ḍarī’a* 18: no. 255; *Fehrest*: col. 2807), by Mohammad-‘Ali b. Musā b. Ja’far b. Mahmud b. Ḡolām-‘Ali Najafi Kāzemi Asadi (completed ca. 1260/1843); printed 1262 (Hend), 1270 (Hend).

Majāles al-mottaqin (*Ḍarī’a* 19: no. 1626; *Fehrest*: col. 2891 f.), by Mollā Mohammad-Taqi b. Mohammad Baraḡāni Qazvini “šahid-e sāles” (completed 1258/1842); printed 1263, 1266, 1270, 1271, 1274, 1275, 1280, 1281.

Jawhari (*Ḍarī’a* 15: no. 1208; *Fehrest*: col. 2269; BĀBĀZĀDE 1999: no. 18) = *Tufān al-boḵā’*, by Mirzā Ebrāhim b. Mohammad-Bāqer Jawhari (completed 1250/1834); printed 1258, 1260, 1263, 1269, 1271, 1271, 1272, 1274, 1275, 1277, 1280, 1281.

Bayt al-ahzān (*Ḍarī’a* 2: no. 658; *Fehrest*: col. 553; EDWARDS 1922: col. 21) = *Bayt al-ahzān fī masā’eb sādāt al-zamān al-xamsa al-tāhera min valad Adnān*, by ‘Abd al-Xāleq b. ‘Abd al-Rahim al-Yazdi al-Mašhadi (d. 1268); printed 1275.

Mohayyej al-ahzān (*Ḍarī’a* 23: no. 9057; *Fehrest*: col. 3196 f.), by Mawlā Hasan b. Mohammad Yazdi Hā’eri (completed 1237/1821); printed 1263, 1275, 1277.

Hamle-ye Mollā Bamun-‘Ali (*Ḍarī’a* 7: no. 472; *Fehrest*: col. 1223) = *Hamle-ye haydariye*, by Mawlā Bamān-‘Ali (Bamun-‘Ali) Rāji Kermāni (lived early 13th/19th century); printed 1264, 1269, 1270, 1277.

Kanz al-masā’eb (*Ḍarī’a* 18: no. 166; *Fehrest*: col. 2688), by Mirzā Mohammad-Ebrāhim al-Esfahāni “Sāgher” (d. 1302); printed 1274 (Bombay).

Maxzan al-boḵā’ (*Ḍarī’a* 20: no. 2685; *Fehrest*: col. 2962), by Mollā

Mohammad-Sāleh b. Ahmad Baraḡāni Qazvini (completed 1261/1845); printed 1729.

Bidel = *Mātamḡade* (see above).

Moxtār-nāme (*Ḍarī'a* 11: no. 1804; *Fehrest*: col. 2953) = *Rawzat al-mojāhedīn*, by 'Atā'allāh b. Hosām Vā'ez Haravi (completed 981/1573); printed 1261.

Mosayyab-nāme (*Fehrest*: col. 3014); anonymous compilation; printed 1265, 1270, 1271.

'*Omān al-boḡā*' (*Ḍarī'a* 15: no. 2147; *Fehrest*: col. 2346), by 'Omāni; printed 1276.

Hozn al-mo'menin (*Ḍarī'a* 6: no. 2473; *Fehrest*: col. 1166) = *Hozn al-mo'menin fi marāsi Āl-e xatm al-morsalin va masā'eb-e Āl-e Tāhā va Yāsīn*; by Mohammad-'Ali b. Musā b. Ja'far b. Mahmud b. Ḡolām-'Ali Najafī Kāzemi Asadi (completed 1255/1839); printed 1260 (Bombay).

Sarbāz = *Asrār al-šahāda*

Yusofīye (*Ḍarī'a* 25: no. 242; *Fehrest*: col. 3461), by Mirzā Hādi b. Abu'l-Hasan Nā'ini (completed 1243/1827); printed 1261, 1269, 1270, 1281.

Farhang-e xodā-parasti (*Ḍarī'a* 16: no. 694; *Fehrest*: col. 2425; SCHEFER 1899: no. 854), by Lesān al-Haqq 'Abd al-Vahhāb b. Mohammad-'Ali Moharram Yazdi (completed 1276/1859); printed 1276, 1281.

Tohfāt al-zāḡerīn (*Ḍarī'a* 2: no. 1568; *Fehrest*: col. 799), by Mohammad b. 'Ali-Mohammad Čelābi Māzanderāni "Bidel" Kermānšāhāni (completed 1250/1834); printed 1280.

Asrār al-šahāda (*Ḍarī'a* 2, 185; *Fehrest*: col. 203), by Esmā'il-Xān Sarbāz Borujerdi (early 13th/19th century); printed 1268, 1274, 1277, 1279.

Maxzan = *Maxzan al-boḡā* [?]

QESSE VA HEKĀYĀT

Eškandar-nāme (*Fehrest*: col. 214); printed 1273–74.

Alf layle (*Ḍarī'a* 2: no. 1189; *Fehrest*: col. 319), Persian translation from the Arabic, by 'Abd al-Latif Tasuji and Mirzā Soruš (completed 1259/1843); printed 1259–61, 1272, 1275.

Romuz-e Hamze (*Ḍarī'a* 11: no. 1540; *Fehrest*: col. 1747); printed 1274–76.

Anvār-e Sohayli (*Ḍarī'a* 2: no. 1692; *Fehrest*: col. 386–389), by Hosayn b. 'Ali Vā'ez Kāšefi (d. 910/1504); printed 1261, 1263, 1267, 1274, 1277, 1281.

Jāme' al-tamsil (*Ḍarī'a* 5: no. 181; *Fehrest*: col. 988 f.), by Mohammad-'Ali Hablerudi (completed 1054/1644); printed 1269, 1273, 1275, 1276, 1280.

Ājā'eb al-maxluqāt (*Ādarī'a* 15: no. 1444; *Fehrest*: col. 2290), anonymous Persian version of the Arabic original by Muhammad b. Zakarīyā al-Qazwīnī (d. 682/1283); printed 1264.

Šams-e Qahqahe (*Ādarī'a* 14: no. 2303; *Fehrest*: col. 2942 f.) = *Mahbub al-qolub*, by Barx'ordār b. Mahmud Torkmāni Farāhi "Momtāz" (11th/17th century); printed 1267 (Bombay).

Faras-nāme (EDWARDS 1922: col. 206; ŠČEGLOVA 1975: no. 1891); printed 1279.

Jang-nāme-ye Karbalā' [?; not identified].

Montaxab-e Alf layle (EDWARDS 1922: col. 129); printed 1280.

Rostam-nāme (*Fehrest*: col. 1729); printed 1279.

BAČĀE-X'ĀNI

Hosayn-e Kord (*Fehrest*: col. 1175); printed 1265, 1276, 1280.

Nuš-āfarin (*Fehrest*: col. 3327); printed 1263, 1263, 1264, 1268, 1273.

Xāvar-nāme (*Fehrest*: col. 1248); printed 1275, 1280.

Nāz va Neyāz (*Fehrest*: col. 3218); printed 1275.

Bahrām-e Gol-andām (*Fehrest*: col. 543) = *Bahrām va Gol-andām*; printed 1270.

Muš-e gorbe (*Fehrest*: col. 3187; SCHEFER 1899: no. 948) = *Muš va gorbe*, in imitation of 'Obayd-Allāh Zākāni; printed 1266.

Layli-ye Majnun (*Fehrest*: col. 2822 f.) = *Layli va Majnun*, by Maktabi Širāzi (completed 895/1489; printed 1259, 1262, 1270, 1276).

Širin-e Farhād (*Ādarī'a* 14: no. 2543; *Fehrest*: col. 2191, 2413) = *Širin va Farhād*, by Mollā Vahši Bāfqi (d. 991/1583), completed by Mirzā Mohammad-Šafi' Vesāl Širāzi (d. 1262/1846); printed 1263, 1267, 1281.

Dalle-ye Moxtār (*Ādarī'a* 8: no. 1061; *Fehrest*: col. 1452); printed 1263.

Dozd-e qāzi (*Ādarī'a* 8: no. 585; *Fehrest*: col. 1412) = *Dozd va qāzi*; printed 1262, ca 1265, 1274.

Ra'nā va Zibā (*Ādarī'a* 11: no. 1471; *Fehrest*: col. 1736; SCHEFER 1899: no. 906), final chapter of *Mahbub al-qolub* (= *Šamse va Qahqahe*; see above), by Barx'ordār b. Mahmud Torkmāni Farāhi "Momtāz" (11th/18th century); printed 1264.

Xazān-e Bahār (*Ādarī'a* 7: no. 823; *Fehrest*: col. 1263) = *Xazān va Bahār*; by Mohammad-Šarif b. Šams al-din Mohammad Māzanderāni (also author of *Serāj al-monir*; below); printed 1263, 1271, 1276.

Nesāb-e torqi (*Ādarī'a* 24: no. 844) = *Nesāb-e torqi be-fārsi* by Mirzā 'Ali (b. Mostafā) al-Bādkub[e']i, also author of *Tajrid al-logāt* (*Ādarī'a* 3: no.

- 355), completed in 1264/1848 (and printed in 1286/1869); no edition prior to 1282 identified.
- Haft ketāb* (ŠČEGLOVA 1975: nos. 1575–1579); no edition prior to 1282 identified.
- Golšan-e 'Otāred* [not identified].
- Golestān-e Eram* (*Ḍarī'a* 18: no. 96; *Fehrest*: col. 512) = *Beḳṭāš-nāme*, by Rezā-Qoli Xān Hedāyat (d. 1288/1871); printed 1270.
- Rend va zāhed* (*Fehrest*: col. 1750), by Mohammad b. Solaymān Fozuli (d. 963/1556); printed 1275.
- Čehel tuti* (*Ḍarī'a* 5: no. 1508; *Fehrest*: col. 1133 f.); printed 1263, 1264, 1268, 1274.
- Zarir-e Xozā'i*; printed 1265, 1268, 1270.
- Me'rāj-nāme* (*Fehrest*: col. 3051 f.), by Šojā'i (13th/19th century); printed 1268, 1271, 1276.
- Haydar-beg* (*Fehrest*: col. 1327); no edition prior to 1282 identified.
- Tawbe-ye Nasuh* [popular edifying tale in verse, drawn from Jalāl al-din Rumi's *Maṣnavi*]; no edition prior to 1282 identified.
- Kolsum-nane* (*Fehrest*: col. 2650; SCHEFER 1899: no. 892) = *Aqā'ed al-nesā'*, by Jamāl al-din Mohammad b. Hosayn al-X'ānsāri (d. ca. 1115/1703); printed 1262.
- Mohammad-e Hanafiye* = *Jang-nāme-ye Mohammad-e Hanafiye*; printed 1268.
- Yusof-e Zolayxā* (*Ḍarī'a* 25: no. 196; *Fehrest*: col. 3460) = *Yusof va Zolayxā*, often attributed to Ferdawsi; printed 1271, 1279.
- Javāher al-'oqul* (*Ḍarī'a* 5: no. 1284; *Fehrest*: col. 1077; SCHEFER 1899: no. 801), attributed to Mollā Mohammad-Bāqer b. Mohammad-Taqi Majlesi (d. 1111/1699); printed 1265, 1280.
- Širuye* (*Fehrest*: col. 1329) = *Ketāb-e Širuye-ye nāmdār*; printed 1271, 1275, 1276, 1277, 1280.
- Qahramān* (*Fehrest*: col. 2573) = *Qahramān-e qātel*; printed 1270, 1274, 1275.
- Hormoz* (*Fehrest*: col. 2080) = *Šāhzāde-ye Hormoz va Gol*; printed 1263.
- Hezār mas'ale* (BERTELS 1934, 88f.; STEINSCHNEIDER 1884, 317) = *Jāme' al-heḳāyāt*; printed, n.d.
- Č[ah]ār darviš*; printed 1275.
- Serāj al-monir* (*Ḍarī'a* 12: no. 1081; *Fehrest*: col. 1953), by Mohammad-Šarif b. Šams al-din Mohammad Māzanderāni (completed ca. 1030/1620); printed 1261, 1265, 1270.

Ahmad-e Julā (SCHEFER 1899: no. 730); no edition prior to 1282 identified.

Hājji Musā's catalogue can be evaluated from different angles. A philological evaluation might go into details such as completeness or appropriate categorization. Obviously, the criterion of form, i.e., whether a work is compiled in prose (*nasr*) or poetry (*nazm*), is not considered as a significant dis-

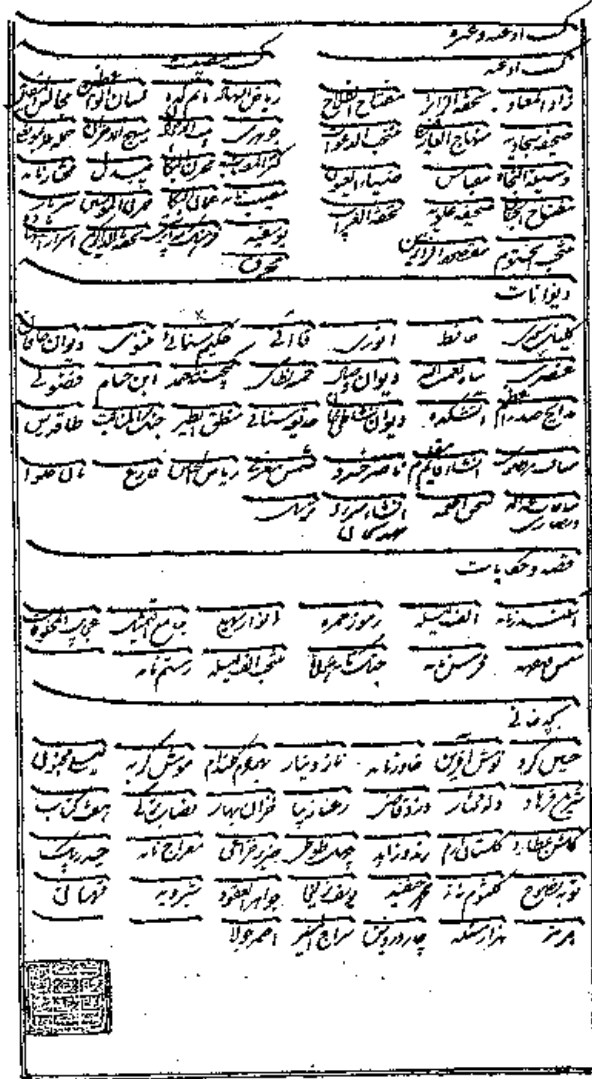


FIGURE 1. Final page of Hājji Musā's catalogue.

tinguishing criterion, as both the sections *mosibat* and *bačče-x'āni* contain works in prose and poetry. Moreover, the various rubrics are not applied too strictly. The section *divānāt*, besides narrative works in poetry such as *Tāqdis* (*Darī'a* 15: no. 894; *Fehrest*: col. 2264, 2806), a book of edifying tales in verse by Ahmad b. Mohammad-Mahdi Narāqi (d. 1244/1828; printed 1271, 1275, 1280), also lists—whether by error or intentionally—the *Reyāz al-mohebbin* (*Darī'a* 11: no. 1994; *Fehrest*: col. 1810), a collection of moralizing and martyrological tales in prose by Rezā-Qoli Xān b. Mohammad-Hādi Hedāyat (d. 1288/1871; printed 1270) that would better fit the category of *bačče-x'āni*. In addition, a number of other items might better fit into different sections: the *Hezār mas'ale*, a Shiite catechism by a certain Abu Nasr Sa'id b. Mohammad b. al-'Attān listed under *bačče-x'āni*, would better fit under *ḳotob-e ahādīs*. The *Jang-nāme-ye Karbalā'* (if this reading of the as yet unidentified title proves to be correct) listed under *qesse va hekāyāt* would better fit under the rubric of *mosibat*; and *Ajā'eb al-maxluqāt* as well as *Faras-nāme*, beyond their narrative character, are works with a claim to “serious” natural history that might have been listed as “miscellaneous.”

The lack of distinction between books printed from movable type and those produced by lithography has already been mentioned. Since it is not relevant for the present discussion, it is sufficient to mention that only a few of the books in the first list produced prior to 1272 were printed from movable type. Not a single item of entertaining narrative literature is known to have been so produced. This probably reflects the relatively high cost of printing books with movable type, a fact that resulted in the use of this particular technique solely for the production of “serious” books, mostly those of a religious nature. Narrative works of an entertaining character and lacking the moralizing attitude of *rawze-x'āni* were only produced after lithography had been introduced to Iran as a comparatively inexpensive way of printing.

One might also fault the list as being incomplete and lacking some well-known items of *bačče-x'āni* (see MARZOLPH 2001, 236, 250, 261, 263) such as *Hekāyat-e Xosraw-e divzād* (printed 1264, 1270), *Baxtyār-nāme* (*Fehrest*: col. 543; printed 1263, 1279), *Salīm-e Javāheri* (first printed 1271), or the *Qesse-ye Solaymān* (followed by *Qesse-ye Musā*; printed together 1266, 1273). The section on *ahādīs va axbār* might have listed the *Axbār-nāme* (SCHEFER 1899: no. 732; ŠČEGLOVA 1975: no. 1920; printed 1267), a contemporary versified version of the *qesas al-anbeyā'* genre. Missing items such as these lead one to wonder whether items of popular literature for which at present only later editions are known might already have been available when the catalogue was compiled. These items would include the Persian version of *Kalīle va Demne* prepared by Abu al-Ma'ālī Nasr Allāh Monshi (first printed 1282), versified versions of folktales such as *Šangul va Mangul*

(first printed ca. 1300), *Xāle Qurbāqe* (first printed 1300, 1301), *Xāle Suske* (printed 1299, 1307), and *Xorus va rubāh* (first printed 1299), the anonymous collection of humorous and entertaining tales *Lata'ef va zarā'ef* (first printed 1295, 1298), or the anecdotes of Mollā Nasr al-din (first printed 1299; MARZOLPH 1995, 167). Beyond these points of criticism, the catalogue appears to provide a fair survey of the range and topics of popular literature available in mid-nineteenth century Iran. While it is not possible here to discuss each and every case in detail, the following remarks aim to point out the major tendencies and developments for each of the three categories under discussion.

As for the first section, the large variety of books on *mosibat* can be seen against the general popularity the tragedy of Karbalā' gained in the early Qajar epoch. It is generally agreed that during this period the ceremonies of public mourning practiced in the month of Moharram gradually matured into the Shiite dramatic performance *ta'ziye* (CHELKOWSKI 1979; HOMĀYUNI 1989; FONTANA 1994) through the merging of a mobile procession and a stationary recitation. The latter is known by the generic term of *rawze-xvāni*, referring to the recitation of the particularly popular work *Rawzat al-šohadā'*, compiled by Hosayn b. Vā'ez Kāšefi (d. 910/1504). While this work apparently was not printed prior to 1285 (*Fehrest*: col. 1790; ŠČEGLOVA: no. 169), the genre itself, also known as *marsiye* (lament) or *maqṭal* ([narrative about a] scene of combat), apparently was particularly popular with contemporary Shiite authors. In fact, with the single exception of the sixteenth-century *Moxtār-nāme*, all works mentioned in this category were more or less compiled during the first half of the nineteenth century. Some of these books were so well known as to be designated by name of author (Jawhari, Bidel, Sarbāz), while the most popular of them, Jawhari's *Tufān al-bokā'*, was printed almost a dozen times in the period under consideration and up until the present day is available in cheap bazaar editions. The numerous episodes of the tragic events at Karbalā' have never been studied in detail, but it may safely be surmised that Shiite Iranians are still familiar with them and can readily identify the major themes such as Hosayn's farewell, Ali-Akbar's death or Abu al-Fazl's vain attempt to fetch water for the thirsty warriors. Besides oral recitation and recitation from written sources, these episodes have also been popularized by visual representations such as the oil-paintings on large canvasses used by popular storytellers that are known as "coffee-house paintings" (*Naqqāšī-ye qahve-xāne*; SAYF 1980) or illustrated tile-work in meeting-places designed for ritual mourning such as the *Hosayniye-ye Mošir* in Širāz (HOMĀYUNI 1977). Another point worth mentioning is the fact that a considerable number of books in the category of *mosibat* were printed in India such as *Reyāz al-šahāda*, *Mātamkade*, *Lesān al-vā'ezin*, *Kanz*

al-masā'eb, *Hozn al-mo'menin*, besides the numerous, albeit later, editions of *Rawzat al-šohadā'*. The rationale behind this fact has not been studied, and it remains unclear whether the Indian publications relate to the conscious religious propaganda of an expatriate Indian Shiite community or whether they constitute the commercial response to the requirements of the book-market, for which Indian publishers such as the indefatigable Newal Kishore in many ways were better equipped (DIEHL 1973; SCHEGLOVA 1999).

The second and the third sections have to be viewed together since the works listed in both sections show a rather disparate character and at the same time display a high degree of overlap. Both sections suggest a homogenous character, but while items in the section *mosibat* are unified by their common topic, the section *qesse va hekāyāt* proposes to list items from a specific formal genre (= tales and stories), and the section *bačče-x'āni* suggests a common readership or audience (= children). Contrary to the expectations raised by these suggestions, each of the two sections constitutes a veritable *omnium gatherum* comprising a variety of items treating different subjects and belonging to different genres. The second section includes two large epics (*Eškandar-nāme*, *Romuz-e Hamze*), whose present versions probably derive from the oral performance of contemporary storytellers; the Persian translation of the *Arabian Nights* (up to the present day popularly known as *Hezār-o yeke šab* or, more oddly, as *Alf al-layl*; see MAHJUB 1959, installments 7–10), prepared from the Arabic text of the Bulaq edition (1835); the classical collection of proverbs and the tales that (supposedly or allegedly) gave rise to their existence, *Jāme' al-tamsil*, compiled in Mughal India (MARZOLPH 1999a); the cosmographical work on the “wonders of the world,” *Ājā'eb al-maxluqāt*; the collection of ethical stories *Mahbub al-qolub*, compiled in the eighteenth century; the *Faras-nāme*, “a work on horsemanship and farriery” (EDWARDS 1922, col. 206); a small selection of tales from the *Arabian Nights* (see above); and the *Rostam-nāme*, an anonymous prose elaboration on the exploits of Iran's national hero Rostam. Similarly, the third section contains works of an epic character (e.g., *Hosayn-e Kord* [MARZOLPH 1999b], *Nuš-āfarin*, *Širuye*, *Qahramān-e qātel*), stories from the classical inventory of romance (*Bahrām va Gol-andām*, *Layli va Majnun*, *Širin va Farhād*, *Yusof va Zolayxā'*), a trickster tale (*Dalle-ye Moxtār*), a versified tale on the prophet Mohammad's ascent to heaven (*Me'rāj-nāme*), ethical and moralizing works (*Xazān va Bahār*, *Serāj al-monir*; *Kolsum-nane*), collections of tales (*Čehel tuti*, *Javāher al-'oqul*; *Čahār darviš*), humorous and satirical tales (*Dozd va qāzi*, *Muš va gorbe*), and a variety of other works often difficult to categorize.

One of the criteria distinguishing the majority of works in the second category from most of those in the third is sheer length of text: while the items of “children's literature” often comprise no more than a hundred

pages in small format, all of the editions of the *Arabian Nights* have about 600 pages, the 1273–74 edition of the *Eskandar-nāme* has close to 800 pages, the 1274–76 edition of the *Romuz-e Hamze* close to 1200, all of them in large folio size. Moreover, several of the works classified as *qesse* or *heḳāyāt* relate to the serious issue of Persian national identity, in the same way as the works of the *mosibat* category relate to Shiite religious identity. Otherwise, the rationale for the compiler's inclusion of certain works under either rubric remains unfathomable. Similarly, his labeling of the final category is mysterious. Given the low level of literacy in nineteenth-century Iran, the designation "children's reading" was most likely not meant to imply reading by but rather reading for children; in other words, it lists topics that were deemed suitable to be read to minors in terms of their entertaining, moralizing, or educative quality while at the same time not being too voluminous to be presented in a limited period of time. As for sources of inspiration, the stock of literature these topics derive from is vast and comprises both classical and contemporary production in prose and verse.

In assessing the popularity of the items in the two final sections in terms of quantity, only two items from the section *qesse va heḳāyāt* went through a considerable number of editions prior to 1282: *Anvār-e Sohayli* and *Jāme' al-tamsil*, the latter of which has been praised as "the most often printed book in the Persian language" (cf. MARZOLPH 1999a, 170). Both works, incidentally, though compiled with different agendas, share the characteristic of being composed from short anecdotes or tales. While the long epic narratives and even the shorter romances require continuous reading, both these works offered themselves for browsing and casual reading, thus already in the Qajar period proposing a way of reading that in the latter half of the twentieth century would come to be seen as "modern." In the section *Bačče-x'āni*, a number of works went through three or more editions prior to 1282. With the exception of the religiously-oriented *Me'rāj-nāme*, all of these works contain entertainment literature such as love stories, epics (often with a romantic touch), and tales of magic or trickery. This kind of literature would not necessarily be regarded as educational, even though it would transport and teach a significant number of social concepts embedded in its entertaining text.

EPILOGUE

The Qajar epoch has often been evaluated as a period of cultural decline. While this assessment may hold true in terms of political and economic development, from the folklorist's point of view the epoch constitutes a fascinating period, in which Qajar society was poised between tradition and modernity. This position is clearly documented by the catalogue discussed

here. On the one hand, the available popular literature was exclusively derived from Persian tradition, as translations of European narrative literature had not yet been published (ŠČEGLOVA 1983). This development was only to occur later with milestones of European literature such as Alexandre Dumas's *Comte de Monte Cristo* (translated 1312/1894), the French *Mille et un jours* (*Alf al-nahār*; 1314/1896), or Boccaccio's *Decameron* (1322/1904). On the other hand, the majority of items in Hājji Musā's catalogue proved to be "evergreens" that continued to be produced and read well into the second half of the twentieth century. In this way, Qajar popular literature holds a unique position as the cultural expression of a transitional period. The present essay is but an introduction to a field deserving further study that might elaborate on aspects such as language development or the role of key social concepts. Probably most important of all, the general circumstances of production and distribution of literature in the Qajar period need to be explored for us to apprehend the motivation and rationale behind the production of Qajar popular literature. After all, both in sheer bulk and in number and variety of items, Qajar popular literature had a tremendous effect on popular perceptions in a period constituting the direct predecessor to modernity.

NOTE

1. The relevant bibliographical documentation is constructed according to the following format: *original title* as given in the catalogue; references to Āqā Buzurg al-Tihrānī's catalogue of Shiite books (*Darī'a*) and the catalogue of Persian printed books as compiled by Xān-Bābā Mošār, in the revised and enlarged version edited by Ehsān Yāršāter (*Fehrest*; other references are included only if the information in the preceding ones is not complete); *full title* (if necessary) according to the bibliographical sources; *author* (plus dating of either author or work); *known printed editions prior to the catalogue's compilation* (the place of publication is only mentioned if other than Iran).

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