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CHAPTER 19

THE RISE OF THE NEW PERSIAN LANGUAGE

I. INTRODUCTION

New Persian literature, like that of many other countries, begins with poetry. According to the earliest anthology, the *Lubāb al-albāb* of Muḥammad ‘Aufī (618/1221-2), the first Persian poem was a *qaṣīda* composed in 193/809 by a certain ‘Abbās or Abu’l-‘Abbās of Marv on the occasion of the entry into that city of the future caliph Ma’mūn. This information is very questionable, however, and the few couplets quoted by ‘Aufī are certainly apocryphal, for the command of classical rhetoric in them is unlikely to be achieved in a first attempt. In fact the earliest poems which have been preserved date from the middle of the 3rd/9th century. The *Tāriḫ-i Sīstān*, a local chronicle compiled in the 5th/11th century, attributes the production of the first poetry in Persian to the Sīstānians. According to this interesting account, the victory of Ya‘qūb b. al-Laith the Ṣaffārid over the Khārijite ‘Ammār in 251/865 was celebrated after the custom of the time by panegyrics in Arabic. Ya‘qūb was an uneducated military leader (condottiere) with no knowledge of Arabic. “Why,” he asked, “do you compose verses which I do not understand?” One of his secretaries, Muḥammad b. Vaṣīf, then had the idea of composing in the same strain a *qaṣīda* in Persian, which is quoted in the *Tāriḫ-i Sīstān*, and his example was followed by two of his compatriots. The anthologies make no mention of these Sīstānian poets, but the *Chahār maqāla* of Nizāmī ‘Arūḍī (550-1/1155-7) and the *Lubāb al-albāb* of ‘Aufī quote some verses by a poet of the Herāt region, Ḥanzala of Bādghīs, whose work is certainly earlier in date than 259/873. Both traditions therefore attribute the beginnings of Persian classical poetry to the same period.

In addition to Ḥanzala, ‘Aufī mentions a small number of poets living at the time of the Ṭāhirid and Ṣaffārid dynasties, and many more in the Sāmānid period. The court at Bukhārā remained throughout the century a brilliant centre of Persian and Arabic literature, while the local courts of Khurāsān and Transoxiana also patronized poets. The output

was certainly abundant, but only isolated fragments have survived. These however suffice to give an idea of the splendour and variety of this first poetic activity. Henceforth Persian poetry could be considered mature; its subjects and forms were fixed and the same tradition was to inform all the poetry which followed, from the rich output of the first Ghaznavid period onwards. It was also in the 4th/10th century and in the same part of Iran that Persian prose had its origin; the first extant works date from the middle of the century.

Until this time literary activity in Persia had been confined to eastern Iran. It began in such regions as Sistān, Khurāsān and Transoxiana, and penetrated only gradually into western Iran. Towards the end of the 4th/10th century several poets writing in Persian were to be found at the court of Qābūs b. Vushmgīr, amīr of Gurgān, and in the entourage of the Šāhib Ismā'īl b. 'Abbād at Ray. It was not until the following century, however, that Persian literature was to become the main form of expression of the Iranian territories as a whole.

The language known as New Persian, which was usually called at this period by the name of *darī* or *parsi-i darī*, can be classified linguistically as a continuation of Middle Persian, the official, religious and literary language of Sāsānian Iran, itself a continuation of Old Persian, the language of the Achaemenids. Unlike the other languages and dialects, ancient and modern, of the Iranian group such as Avestan, Parthian, Soghdian, Kurdish, Pashto, etc., Old, Middle and New Persian represent one and the same language at three stages of its history. It had its origin in Fārs (the true Persian country from the historical point of view) and is differentiated by dialectal features, still easily recognizable from the dialects prevailing in north-western and eastern Iran.

Phonetically and grammatically, the degree of evolution from Old Persian to Middle Persian is considerable, the differences being comparable with the differences between Latin and French, for example. On the other hand New Persian remains in many respects quite close to Middle Persian. The adoption of the Arabic script, which reflects and marks the break with Middle Persian tradition, is an event of enormous importance to civilization, but it must not hide the fact that the phonetic development from Middle to New Persian is very slight, especially New Persian at its early stage. The relationship existing between Old, Middle and New Persian is well illustrated by the word for "king" – Old Persian *kešbāyathiya*, but Middle Persian and New

Persian *šāh*. Phonetic differences between Middle and New Persian are generally not greater than in the example Middle Persian *ārāstag* "decorated" and New Persian *ārāsta*. The grammatical structure has also undergone only minor changes, chiefly in relation to verbal morphology and syntax. It is particularly in its vocabulary that New Persian departs from Middle Persian, in two different ways. First, New Persian contains many words which are originally foreign to Persian proper and are betrayed by their form as belonging to other, northern or eastern Iranian dialects: New Persian owes much to Parthian and to related dialects and it has also borrowed from Soghdian. Secondly, it has admitted a considerable proportion of Arabic words, a proportion which has increased with time in the literary language and which also varies between the different literary forms: rare in epic poetry, considerable from the outset in lyrical poetry and significant even in the earliest prose. It is evident that no one has ever written "pure" Persian, that is completely free from Arabic elements. An Arab author, Abū Ḥātim of Ray (d. 322/934), observes that in order to express many ideas it is necessary for a Persian to have recourse to Arabic words.¹ The mixed character of the New Persian vocabulary, as well as being an important fact of civilization, is a basic feature of the language, so that in this respect Persian may be compared with English, the Arabic element holding the same place and playing the same part in Persian as the Latin element combined with the original Anglo-Saxon in English. On the whole, therefore, New Persian appears to have been from the start a mixed language, based on the Persian dialect but bearing marked traces of other Iranian dialects and infiltrated with Arabic words. It may be thought that this diversity was a factor in making it the common language of the Iranian countries and, over the centuries, the main literary and cultural language of the eastern Muslim world.

The emergence of the New Persian language and literature presents considerable historical problems. How was this new literary language formed? What necessity gave rise to it? How does it happen that, in spite of its original connection with the regions of the south-west, it seems to have appeared first in the east, at the opposite extremity of the plateau? Why did literature develop initially in Transoxiana, an outlying region where, until the Islamic conquest at the beginning of the 2nd/8th century, the common and literary language was Soghdian, a

¹ *Kitāb al-zīna*, ed. al-Hamdāni (Cairo, 1957), p. 71.

fundamentally different Iranian language? Moreover, from its beginning or very nearly so, Persian poetry is in full possession of its techniques, verse-forms, rhetorical devices, genres and subjects. It emerged like Minerva from the head of Jupiter, fully equipped from the shadows of history. How were its literary rules formed? On what sources did the early writers draw and how much did they owe to Iranian tradition and how much to the imitation of Arabic poetry? Such questions are controversial for the documents naturally do not give a direct answer. Nevertheless sufficient indications may be found for the consideration of certain probabilities.

II. THE LANGUAGES SPOKEN IN IRAN DURING THE FIRST CENTURIES UNDER ISLAM

In an account passed down by the *Fihrist*, Ibn al-Muqaffa' describes the linguistic situation in Iran at the end of the Sāsānian period. The Iranians, he says in effect, have five languages: *pahlavī*, the language of the Fahla country, that is to say of ancient Media, the Jibāl of the Muslims, *darī*, the language of the capital (Ctesiphon or Madā'in), *pārsī*, language of the *mōbads* and scholars, *suryānī*, spoken in Sawād, and *khūzī*, used in *Khūzistān*. Of these five languages two are not Iranian in the sense accepted by linguists; *suryānī* is Aramaic, at that time the common language of the population of Mesopotamia, while *khūzī* was probably a relic of the ancient Elamite. The official language of the state and of the Zoroastrian religion was evidently *pārsī*, that is to say literary Middle Persian, the vehicle of literature later known as Pahlavī; for, as the result of a shift of meaning which has caused much confusion, the name Pahlavī, originally meaning Parthian, was used in the Islamic period to indicate the only ancient language then still known, Middle Persian, and continues to be the name usually applied to it today. Ibn al-Muqaffa', however, had no knowledge of such a usage; he gave Middle Persian its proper name of *pārsī* (in Middle Persian itself *pārsīg*) and used the term *pahlavī* to describe the dialect of Media, historically close to Parthian. As regards *darī*, it was the usual spoken language not only in the capital but probably throughout a large part of the empire too.

This description, which is limited to western Iran, makes it possible to reconstruct the situation as follows. The official language, and the only written one, was Middle Persian, a language already fixed in its

archaic form before the beginning of the Sāsānian period and reserved for official and literary use. In everyday talk *darī* was employed, its name being derived from *dar*, the "Porte", that is to say the court or the capital. Originally this language must scarcely have differed from the written language, but while the latter remained almost static, the spoken tongue developed to such an extent that towards the end of the Sāsānian period the differences were finally noticed and the need was felt to give it a proper name. *Pārsī* (Middle Persian literary) and *darī* were not, strictly speaking, two languages, nor even two separate dialects, but rather two stylistic levels of the same language, *pārsī* being the medium of the administration, of religion and of written literature, and *darī* that of everyday oral communication, that is to say the common vernacular of Iran. Alongside *darī* there existed of course local dialects, the most important of which was *pahlavī*, probably upheld by the prestige of an oral literature inherited from the Parthian poetic tradition.

During the first centuries under Islam the sources do not provide a general picture of the languages of Iran, but it is possible to glean some items of information from the geographers and the historians. There were numerous local dialects. *Khūzī* persisted in *Khūzistān*; it was said to be a language which could not be put into Arabic script. *Āzarbāijān* was the domain of *ādhari*, an important Iranian dialect which Mas'ūdi mentions together with *darī* and *pahlavī*; other idioms also occurred which may have been "Caucasian". The Ardabil district was remarkable for its mixture of languages: according to Muqaddasī there were seventy of them in use. Among Caspian dialects *dailamī* was the language of the rough soldiery who spread over western Iran and Iraq; *ṭabarī* was sufficiently vigorous to become the vehicle of a written literature in about the 4th/10th century. At Astarābād, in Gurgān, two distinct idioms were spoken. The Pahlavī of Jibāl gave its name to the *fahlawiyyāt*, which were poems in dialect. There were dialects in the open country of Kirmān; the *Kōfch* (or *Kōch*, Arabic Qufṣ) tribes and the *Balūchīs* had their languages, probably different from one another, as did the inhabitants of Makrān. In the north-east *Khwārazmian*, the mother-tongue of *Birūnī*, flourished. Under the Muslim conquest *Soghḍian* lost its function as an official and cultural language, but it survived as the spoken language of the region of Samarqand. Not long after the conquest the inhabitants of *Bukhārā* were speaking a dialect very much like *Soghḍian* which persisted in the country districts until

at least the 4th/10th century. *Ushrūsana* also had its dialect. In what is now Afghanistan, *Gharchistān* had its own idiom, as did the land of *Ghūr*, whose inhabitants in 411/1020 could communicate with Mas'ūd of *Ghazna* only by means of an interpreter. Many other dialects existed in the Iranian countries and Muqaddasī in his description of *Khurāsān* stated explicitly that almost everywhere in the country districts "another tongue" was spoken, that is to say a dialect distinct from the common language.

This common language was of course *darī* and a most important feature of this period was the fact that it spread considerably. It probably lost ground in Iraq (though it remained in use among the townspeople at least until the 4th/10th century), but it gained immense territory in the east. Probably already in the Sāsānian period it had ousted from *Khurāsān* proper the Parthian which had been the common language there in the 3rd century A.D. Supported by the prestige of the empire *darī* had perhaps also begun to spread quite widely in Bactria and beyond the Oxus. It was certainly at the time when Transoxiana and the present Afghanistan had been integrated into the caliphate that the Muslim conquerors imposed it in all north-eastern regions. Even the name *tājīk*, which is still used today to designate the Persian-speaking populations of Transoxiana and of the whole of the eastern part of the plateau, is the Soghdian form of the Persian word *tāzī*, which was the Iranian name for Arabs, but could also mean "Muslim", as shown by Tavadiā.¹ These "Arabs" were actually for the most part Iranians converted to Islam: their victory was also that of the *darī* language which, first taking root in the towns, eliminated from there the local dialects and confined them to the country districts with the result that eventually most of them died out. In the 3rd/9th century, perhaps even earlier, it had become the common spoken language of the Iranian lands as a whole.

A spoken language which extends over vast territories without having the support of a written tradition tends to assume a diversity of forms and *darī* was no exception to this rule. Its local variants in the different regions where it took root were influenced to a greater or lesser degree by the dialects which it replaced. In the Sāsānian period the *darī* spoken in *Khurāsān* was certainly not identical with that of Fārs or of Iraq and even today the Persian spoken in Kabul and the colloquial Persian of Tehrān are very different and the users of these

¹ *ZDMG*, vol. cii (1952), p. 384.

two colloquial forms cannot easily understand each other. Even within the frontiers of each Persian-speaking country, despite the tendency towards unification imposed by modern social conditions, there are many local forms of speech. In Iran those of *Khurāsān* and of *Sistān* for instance preserve a markedly individual character, while in Afghanistan and also in Tājikistān there are numerous Persian dialects. These differences are of ancient date. The geographer Muqaddasī in his description of each region always devotes a few lines to the language of its inhabitants. The forms of speech to which he refers are for the most part only local variants of the common language, but he distinguishes practically as many of them as there are important towns or political districts. The indications given by him, although both summary and subjective, are interesting as evidence of the existence of linguistic discrepancies which were apparent to people living at that time. On the other hand, a close examination of early Persian texts enables us to gain some idea of the dialectology of *darī*. The output of the 4th/10th and 5th/11th centuries, especially in prose (since prose works are less literary and have been better preserved in their original form than the poetry), reveals various dialectical shades of difference. The early Judaeo-Persian writings provide a quantity of instructive information on the forms of speech in south-western Iran and supplement what can be deduced from texts in Arabic script, which were composed mostly in eastern regions. Taking them as a whole, it is possible to detect among the local forms of the common language of about a thousand years ago two main groups, belonging to the east and to the west respectively, each group containing sundry variants. The *darī* used in the south-west, both in its vocabulary and in various grammatical features, remained closer to Middle Persian, while the *darī* of *Khurāsān* was encumbered with more elements coming from non-Persian Iranian dialects, particularly Parthian. It was the *darī* of *Khurāsān* which penetrated into what is now Afghanistan and into Transoxiana; in this latter region it acquired a number of Soghdian words.

Alongside both the early dialects and *darī*, which had spread everywhere with a greater or lesser degree of local variation, Arabic had also taken root in Iran. It was of course the everyday language of the Arab immigrants: certain towns such as Dīnavar, Zanjān, Nihāvand, Kāshān, Qum and Nīshāpūr had a considerable Arab population and Arab tribes had also settled in *Khurāsān*. However, these Arab elements

were more or less rapidly assimilated: in the middle of the 2nd/8th century the majority of the Arabs in the army of Abū Muslim spoke *dari*. Arabic gained little ground among the Iranian population except as a cultural language and in this respect the Iranian countries differed fundamentally from almost all other parts of the empire of the caliphs. While in the Fertile Crescent and in Africa Arabic was gradually taking the place of Aramaic, Egyptian and the Berber languages as the language of daily communication, the same function was being performed in the east by *dari* at the expense of the other Iranian languages. It was *dari*, not Arabic, which was the language of the eastern conquests. Paradoxically Arab domination and the extension of Islam had the effect of largely unifying the spoken language of the Iranian countries, a factor which was decisive in the formation of literary New Persian.

III. LITERARY LANGUAGES IN USE UNTIL THE 3RD/9TH CENTURY

During the first two centuries of Islam, the medium for written expression and literature in Iran was provided by two languages of unequal importance, one of them declining and the other in the ascendant – Middle Persian (called *Pahlavi*) and Arabic. It is well known that at first the conquerors were necessarily dependent on the former Iranian civil service and that its officials continued to keep the financial registers in Middle Persian until 78/697–8 (or 82/701–2) in the west and until 124/741–2 in *Khurāsān*, the years in which Arabic replaced Middle Persian as the administrative language. Although it is fairly safe to assume that during the same period Middle Persian continued to be the medium by which the intellectual activity of the cultivated Iranian was expressed, its use became increasingly restricted with the progress of Islamic influence and the vigorous development of Arab culture. Abandoned by the new Muslim converts, it persisted only among the Zoroastrians, particularly – perhaps even exclusively – among the priests, who were the trustees of the ancient culture. The major part of *Pahlavi* literature which has survived dates from the 3rd/9th century, a period of relatively intense productivity, but this activity was limited to subjects connected with the Mazdaean religion, which the priests wanted to defend against the triumphant extension of Islam. It was the work of clerics and remained geographically confined to *Fārs*.

Indeed from the 2nd/8th century onwards, the principal cultural language of Iran was Arabic and it had been openly adopted as such by the Islamicized Iranian aristocracy. Although in certain remote provinces it was still ignored by such local princes as *Vindādhurmuzd*, king of *Ṭabaristān*, who was able to converse with the caliph *Hārūn al-Rashīd* only by means of an interpreter, it was understood and used by many Iranian nobles and by the intelligentsia. It was not merely the administrative language, essential for anyone who held a position of any authority, but also the medium of science and of literature. That Arabic should have fared thus in Iran was due not simply to its being the language of the *Qur'ān*, the Word of God, and of the exegesis and of the cult recently adopted by the mass of the population, but also resulted from its having become the repository of most of the treasures of the Iranian tradition. The ancient books of history, wisdom and science, the romances, stories and fables had all been translated into Arabic and they were known to educated Iranians much more from these translations than from the original works in Middle Persian. Even some Arabic poetry was, as it seems, permeated with the influence of *Sāsānian* poetry. In the 3rd/9th century, with the exception of those works which were strictly Mazdaean, there was probably nothing of importance to be found in Middle Persian texts which was not available, more conveniently, in Arabic. Arabic literature was therefore not foreign to the Iranians: they contributed to it themselves as translators and as original writers and it is known that many of the greatest "Arabic" writers and scholars were Iranians. In the Golden Age of 'Abbāsīd civilization Arabic literature no longer belonged to the Arabs alone, but was the common property of the peoples of the caliphate, among whom Iranians played a leading part. It offered them riches obtained from various sources, Arab, Iranian, Greek and Syriac, and all alike rediscovered and reanimated their own traditions, renewing them with those of their neighbours. This does not mean that the peoples were blended and lost their separate identities; far from it. The controversy of the *Shu'ūbiyya* provides a striking demonstration of the extent to which the Iranians were aware of their own ethnic affiliations, when they came up against the Arabs. This "national" consciousness did not, however, manifest itself in the sphere of language; linguistic nationalism is a modern invention and did not exist in those days, as is best proved by the fact that the arguments of the *Shu'ūbites* were all conducted in Arabic. The Arabic language was the instrument which

important influence on the mind of the king Naṣr I b. Aḥmad. Poets of his own time paid homage to his genius and he was regarded as the father of Persian poetry. In fact, as has been observed, the themes and the forms had already been established before him, but he doubtless gave to them a breadth and a brilliance hitherto unknown. One of his contemporaries from western Iran, Abū Ḥātim of Ray (d. 322/934), who wrote in Arabic but probably knew Persian, stated contemptuously: "What has recently been created in Persian by way of poetry is only talk without meaning, without titles and without usefulness: there is no *divān* among the Persians",¹ a remark which proves that the predecessors of Rūdakī had not yet succeeded in bringing their work to the notice of literary circles and having it recognized as true literature. After him, however, it had become an accomplished fact. The fragments of his poems which have survived make it possible to surmise the reason for his reputation. They reveal a generous disposition and a free and brilliant style, in which nobility is allied to simplicity.

The poets of the Sāmānid epoch mentioned in the anthologies are quite numerous, and the isolated verses or fragments of poems which have been preserved give some idea of the general features of that poetry but not, usually, of the personality of the individual authors. It is possible, however, to discern some characteristics of several of the contemporaries or successors of Rūdakī. *Shahīd* of Balkh was older than Rūdakī, who composed a funeral elegy on his death. He was a poet who wrote in both Persian and Arabic and also a philosopher, known as such because of a controversy in which he engaged with Abū Zakariyyā' Rāzī (Rhazes) on the nature of pleasure. The appearance of a personality like *Shahīd* in the early days of Persian poetry suggests that poetry was not simply the work of "entertainers" concerned solely with pleasing their patrons by some happy verbal invention. It could contain more serious thought and some verses by *Shahīd*, Rūdakī and others reveal an inspiration both philosophical and religious. Such preoccupations played an important part during the reign of Naṣr I b. Aḥmad, under the influence of Ismā'ilism which was active in propaganda and had succeeded in gaining the favour of the sovereign, and they must to some extent have left their mark on the Persian poetry of the day. Further evidence is to be found in the curious *qaṣīda* of the Ismā'ili Abu'l-Haiṭham of Gurgān, a kind of catalogue in verse of philosophical questions designed to stimulate reflection, with commen-

¹ *Kitāb al-zīna*, *op. cit.*, pp. 122-3.

taries in prose firstly by an anonymous disciple of Abu'l-Haiṭham and later by Nāṣir-i *Khusrau*.

Daqīqī (d. between 365/975 and 370/980), well known as a predecessor of Firdausī in the creation of epic poetry, was also one of the most talented lyrical poets of this period. He appears to have made an important contribution to the development of rhetoric and himself declared in verse:

Panegyric was bare when he came to me;
I gave him all his finery.
Now decked in cloak and robe goes he.

He is mentioned with reverence by his successors. Abu'l-'Abbās of Rabinjan (*f.* 331/943) seems to stand apart from the poets of his time: most of the verses preserved are satirical and recall the humble realities of daily life. Satirical inspiration also has an important place in the work of Munjīk of Tirmidh (about the end of the 4th/10th century), who was equally famous as a panegyrist. Rābi'a of Quṣḍār was the first poetess of the Persian language and the author of love-poems of a touching sincerity. Kisā'i of Marv (b. 341/953, died at an advanced age), after singing the praises of the Sāmānids and of Sulṭān Maḥmūd of Ghazna, turned later to religious poetry of *Shī'i* inspiration and was the first to compose poems glorifying the twelve Imāms.

The western regions of Iran had remained devoted exclusively to Arabic literature until about the middle of the 4th/10th century. At this period the literary movement which had originated in *Khurāsān* spread westward to the courts of Qabūs b. Vuṣḥmgīr, the Ziyārid amīr of Gurgān (366-403/976-1012) and of Majd al-Daula, the Būyid prince of Ray, whose vizier, the *Ṣāhib* Ismā'il b. 'Abbād (367-85/977-95), the protector and cultivator of Arab learning, also gave encouragement to Persian poetry. The output from Gurgān and from Ray is known only from fragments but seems, so far as can be judged, to have come particularly under the influence of Arab rhetoric. Mantīqī of Ray, for example, one of the protégés of the *Ṣāhib* who appreciated his work, is found to have indulged in subtle figures of speech, in contrast with the simplicity of the early masters. This taste for artifice is perhaps less a characteristic of the poet himself than of the court of Ray, where refinements of style were highly esteemed. It was before the *Ṣāhib* that Badī' al-Zamān al-Hamadānī, the future author of the *Maqāmāt* in Arabic, famous for their florid style, made his first appearance.

At the beginning of the 5th/11th century the centre of Persian literary life was transferred to Ghazna. Poets were naturally attracted by the brilliance of the court of the most powerful prince of the day and by the hope of obtaining greater honours and more ample rewards from him than from amīrs of lesser importance. This concentration of literary men and scientists at Ghazna, however (according to legend the poets alone numbered four hundred), also resulted from the deliberate policy of Maḥmūd, who realized the importance of associating intellectual prestige with political and military power. He gathered around him, whether they liked it or not, a large proportion of the best poets and the greatest minds of his time. This attention paid to what is now called propaganda was rewarded by the legendary popularity which clung to his name in the Persian literary tradition and even in folklore. Maḥmūd created the title and the office of *malik al-shu'arā*, "prince of poets", which implies some organization of poetical activities at court. In fact the output was abundant and brilliant. While the works of the previous century seem to have been lost very early, those of some of the poets belonging to this first Ghaznavid period have remained as models of the style known as *ḵhurāsānī* which lyrical poetry followed until the 7th/13th century.

The most famous poet of the time of Maḥmūd was 'Unsurī of Balkh (d. 431/1039-40), "prince of poets", who retained the favour of the sultan throughout his life and was the leader of a school. His *divān*, of which only quite a small part has been preserved, is of interest mainly because of his skill in panegyric. Farrukhī of Sistān (d. 429/1037-8) is now considered to have been the best poet of the period. He excelled at describing the seasons and the aristocratic festivals in a style of noble ease infused with gaiety and provides a good example of a poet whose inspiration is in agreement, it would seem spontaneously, with the rhythm of life at court. The fact that more than nine thousand couplets from his *divān* have survived until the present day shows the extent of his popularity over the centuries. Manūchihri of Dāmghān (d. c. 432/1040-1), the panegyrist of the Sulṭān Mas'ūd, son of Maḥmūd, occupies a special position slightly apart from the main stream: a lover of pre-Islamic Arabic poetry, which he imitated in several poems, he was also the author of numerous descriptions of nature, abounding in beautifully observed details relieved by ingenious comparisons and metaphors which have lost none of their charm for the modern reader. He was the first to employ, in addition to the *qaṣīda*, strophic forms

(*musammaʿ*) which gave a new breadth to lyrical poetry. Of the work of other poets of the period there are only fragments or isolated remnants.

The themes of Persian lyrical poetry during this first period were relatively few in number. Constantly repeated and refined they impress the reader with a very special aesthetic vision of the world. Panegyric of the patron was the essential aim of the poem: it praised his fame, his power, his virtues, the happiness of his peoples, his unconquerable bravery in battle, or, if a vizier was the subject, the wisdom of his administration, and in any case certainly his inexhaustible liberality, which the poet expected to see in the form of a handsome reward. These praises were sung in an exaggerated style which very soon became the rule for this kind of poetry. It was, however, the first part of the *qaṣīda*, on another subject, which gave the poem lasting interest. In early Arabic poetry this first part often recalled the love of the poet for some beauty from whom nomadic life had parted him, the grief of separation and the journey, on a faithful steed, over a perilous desert. This theme is treated repeatedly by Manūchihri, but it rarely occurs in Persian poetry, where it is purely conventional. Far more often the Persian poet takes his inspiration from life at court. He often sings of festivals, especially the great Iranian feasts, *naurūz*, the feast of the New Year and the spring, *mihragān*, the feast of autumn and the wine-harvest, *sada*, the feast of mid-winter celebrated by great fires at night. Descriptions of the seasons, of spring, autumn and winter in the country and in the gardens are usually associated with royal entertainments, at which, in pomp and luxury, the cup is handed round among the guests, to the sound of musical instruments. The glorification of wine is an important subject: sometimes the poet describes the ripening of the grape, the harvests and the miraculous transformation of the juice into a delectable wine; in other passages he invites the guests to intoxicate themselves with this vintage which dispels the cares of the world and turns a man into a superman. These themes are closely related to the aristocratic life of the time; it is sufficient to read the chronicle of Abu'l-Faḍl Baihaqī to see the importance of drinking-parties (*majlis-i sharāb*) in the lives of kings and important personages. Love is naturally not absent from this poetry: the beauty of the loved one and the grief of the lover dying of desire are described in accordance with a convention which became standardized at an early date. Among other subjects treated in the *qaṣīdas* or in the shorter pieces which may be either extracts from *qaṣīdas* or were perhaps deliberately composed as

“fragments” (*qit‘a*), mention should be made of the enigma, in which the subject is not actually named but ingeniously implied by allusions, the funerary lament, moral reflections on the inconstancy and injustice of the world, and more personal themes such as regret for youth (a celebrated *qaṣīda* by Rūdakī is one of the best examples of this type), complaints by the poet about his own state and the satirising of such rivals and enemies as he could not fail to have at court.

All these subjects are treated in a language which shows marked traces of Arabic influence and reflects the great impact of Arabic models on the development of lyrical poetry in Persian.

VII. NARRATIVE AND DIDACTIC POETRY

Here we shall deal with narrative poetry, with the exception of epic poetry which will be dealt with in the next section. The difference between them depends solely on the subject-matter and its treatment, for the verse-form is the same for each. It is the *mathnavī*, a poem in rhyming couplets, the length of which is not subject to any rules. Having much greater freedom than the *qaṣīda*, it lends itself to long descriptions as well as to brief anecdotes and to the exposition of moral, philosophical, mystical and even scientific reflections. Although very rare in Arabic poetry, it was widely used in Iran from the beginnings of Persian literature and occupied a position at least equal to that of lyrical poetry.

Romances and collections of stories and fables existed in the literature of pre-Islamic Iran; the most famous of them was a collection of fables of Indian origin, the *Panchatantra*. A Pahlavī version of it was produced under Khusrau I Anūshīrvān and it was translated into Arabic by Ibn al-Muqaffa‘ under the title of *Kalīla wa Dimna* (the names of the two jackals who were the leading characters in one of the stories). Renowned as a manual of wisdom, this same book provided the material for the first known Persian *mathnavī*. It was rendered into verse by Rūdakī himself at the request of Abu‘l-Faḍl Bal‘amī, vizier to the Sāmānid Naṣr II b. Aḥmad, but the poem has unfortunately been lost, apart from some fragments. The same fate has overtaken other *mathnavīs* composed by Rūdakī, notably a *Sindbād-nāma*, another collection of stories also of Indian origin and also transmitted in an Arabic version. The extant fragments show that Rūdakī employed the same metres which were to occur most frequently in *mathnavī* throughout the whole of

Persian literature – *mutaqārib*, *baḥāj*, *khafīf*, *ramal*; this last metre, which was used in *Kalīla* and in the *Sindbād-nāma*, and in many other poems, was also to be the metre of the great mystical poem by Jalāl al-Dīn (Maulavī), known as the “*Mathnavī*” *par excellence*. On this point it may be noted that the tradition had been well established from the beginning of the 4th/10th century.

The first successor of Rūdakī was Abū Shukūr of Balkh, who also composed several *mathnavīs* and, in particular, an *Āfarīn-nāma* (written in 333–6/944–8), a poem of moral import in which the ideas were probably illustrated by anecdotes. These works are lost, but from such verses as have been preserved it may be seen that Abu Shukūr was a direct heir to the moralizing literature of pre-Islamic times; many of the sentences which he put into verse are to be found in the Middle Persian books of *andarz*. He had an important influence on Persian didactic poetry, for the Iranians always had a taste for this moral literature and remained constant to the same source of very ancient ideas.

W. B. Henning has discovered a fragment, in Manichaean script, of a rendering in Persian verse of the famous romance of Buddhist origin *Bilauhar-u Būdāsaf* (“Barlaam and Josaphat”), which also dates from the time of Rūdakī. This piece is the single example of its kind belonging to the 4th/10th century, but in the following century ‘Unsuri was the author of several verse romances, all of which have disappeared. They included a narrative, *Shādbakht-u ‘ain al-bayāt*, which was summarized in Arabic by Bīrūnī, *Khingbut-u surkhubut*, “The white and the red idols”, a local legend connected with the two great statues of Buddha which can still be seen at Bāmiyān in Afghanistan, *Vāmiq-u ‘Adbrā*, the story of two lovers which seems to have been of Hellenistic origin. Another romance, named *Varqa-u Gulshāh*, the work of a certain ‘Ayyūqī, can probably also be attributed to the time of Maḥmūd of Ghazna. This poem tells a love story in an Arab setting; although rather weak in plot and in style, it is interesting as the earliest extant example of a genre destined to have a brilliant future. In the period under consideration it is especially interesting to note the diversity of origin of the narratives put into verse: Iranian, Indian, Arab and Hellenistic sources alike contributed to the making of a literary form which appears to have been very much in fashion.

The *Zarātusht-nāma*, a legendary history of Zoroaster written by a Mazdaean poet, stands somewhat apart from the main tradition. C.

Rempis has shown that this poem, which was for a long time attributed to the 7th/13th century, was actually composed by a certain Kai Kā'ūs, son of Kai *Khusrau* of Ray, a little before 368/978. It is thus the earliest *mathnavī* which has survived to the present day. Mention should also be made of one other poem of the same period but of quite a different type, the *Dānīsh-nāma*, "Book of Science" by Maisarī, written in 367-70/978-81, which is simply a medical treatise in verse. Without having any poetical pretensions, it is significant in providing evidence of a genre, that of scientific exposition in verse, not otherwise known to have existed in Persian at so early a date. The style of Maisarī, which is firm and clear, suggests that he was heir to an already established tradition.

VIII. EPIC POETRY

Persian epic, which is completely unique in type, consists of the recital in verse of the whole of the history, factual or imaginary, of Iran from the creation of the world to the end of the Sāsānian dynasty. It comprises elements of various origins, the most ancient of which are the old Indo-Iranian myths already recalled in the *Avesta*. Then come evocations of the periods before and after the beginning of Zoroastrian Mazdaism, a history of Alexander derived chiefly from the fictional work of the pseudo-Callisthenes and finally the history of the Sāsānians. In addition to tales of royal deeds, there are legends relating to various local heroes, the most important of which are those concerning Rustam, the prince of Sīstān who became the great champion of epic Iran. This mass of material was accumulated gradually over many centuries. *Khurāsān* appears to have been the principal centre of this activity, but other Iranian regions also contributed to it. Towards the end of the Sāsānian period the essential elements were collected and arranged in chronological order in a book written in Middle Persian entitled *Khwadāy-nāmag*, the "Book of Kings", the last edition of which appeared at the very end of the Sāsānian epoch under Yazdgard III (632-51). This work, which has long since disappeared, was a learned compilation. In addition to it there certainly existed a multitude of fragmentary accounts composed more freely in prose or in verse. *Ḥamza al-Isfahānī* (d. 360/970), in an interesting passage translated by Shaked, says: "As regards the Persians, their dispersed [historical] accounts and reports, and their scattered stories concerning lovers, were turned into verse for their kings, registered in books and per-

manently deposited in storehouses which were libraries. The number of these books assembled was so large that it cannot be specified. Most of them were lost when their kingdom disappeared, though remnants of them survived, the number of which exceeds ten thousand sheets written in their Persian script. These are poems all composed in a single metre which is similar to *rajaḡ*. They resemble Arabic verse by the fact that they are composed in regular metres but they differ from it by the fact that they have no rhyme." A single example has survived – the poem entitled *Yādgar ī Zarērān*, the "Memorial of Zarēr", which describes the exploits of an Iranian hero of the time of Zoroaster.

The *Khwadāy-nāmag* was translated or adapted into Arabic several times. The translation which was both the earliest and the best known was the work of Ibn al-Muqaffa' (d. c. 142/759-60). The names are recorded of eight other adaptations, complete or partial, but all have been lost. The little that is known suggests that they were subject to important variations of contents, implying that their authors had used various other sources apart from the *Khwadāy-nāmag*. With the development of New Persian literature it was inevitable that similar works in Persian should appear. Under the Sāmānids a lively interest in ancient Iran was encouraged by the amīrs themselves and certain of their vassals. Abu'l-Mu'ayyad of *Balkh*, also known as a poet of the time of Nūḡ II b. Maṣṣūr (365-87/976-97), was the author of a lengthy *Shāh-nāma*, "Book of Kings", in prose, fragments of which have survived. Of another *Shāh-nāma*, written by a certain Abū 'Alī also of *Balkh*, hardly anything is known except the name. There is a little more information regarding a third work, compiled in 346/957 by order of Abū Maṣṣūr Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Razzāq, governor of the city of Ṭūs. The preface, which alone has been preserved, explains that it was put together by a college of four Zoroastrians who apparently used accounts from various sources in addition to the *Khwadāy-nāmag*.

All these works were in prose, but the notion of putting the material into verse was bound to occur before long. Indeed, this immense collection of narratives constituted the national memorial of the Iranian people and was a valuable treasure, rich in information, which it was essential to preserve. Versification could help to perpetuate it. Firdausī himself was well aware of this fact and he stated, with regard to the book of *Kalīla wa Dimna* rendered into verse by Rūdakī: "He bound together by means of metre the words of this prose work . . . For an

educated reader this form lends an additional grace; for an ignorant person it is beneficial; a prose narrative (*parākanda*) disperses (*parākanad*) the recollection of it, but when it is bound together by metre (*paivasta*) it satisfies the soul and the mind."¹ Narratives which were historical or regarded as such were therefore a subject of poetry in the same way as the tales and maxims already turned into verse by Rūdakī: the *mathnavī* was the ideal form for them. Moreover, they had already been treated in poetry in Middle Persian. Many of them certainly remained very popular and continued to be circulated in oral literature: there is no reason why some of them should not have been in verse. The existence of epic poems based on folklore among the Kurds and the Baluchis of the present day makes this a probable hypothesis. It is known, moreover, that elegies on the death of the hero Siyāvush were sung at Bukhārā by popular minstrels.

The first poem of this kind in New Persian mentioned in our sources was composed by a certain Mas'ūdī of Marv, probably near the beginning of the 4th/10th century; the three couplets which remain and several allusions to it indicate that it embraced all the traditional history of the kings of Iran from their origin to the end of the Sāsānian dynasty, but its precise extent is not known. It is said to have been held in great esteem among the Iranians. Several decades later Daqīqī in his turn undertook the composition of a *Shāh-nāma* in verse, but the work was cut short by his premature death. About a thousand couplets of it, telling of the preaching of Zoroaster under king Guštāsp, were preserved by Firdausī and incorporated into his own poem. It is known from Bīrūnī that Daqīqī composed more than this. His epic talent has been assessed in varying terms by the experts, some of them finding him dull and dry, compared with his great successor, while others perceive scarcely any differences of style between the passage by Daqīqī and the rest of the *Shāh-nāma*. It is certain in any case that the epic style was already well established before Firdausī. The *mutaqārib* metre employed by Daqīqī remained the only one used in epic and the language was clearly differentiated from that of lyrical poetry: it was much less arabicized, and instead was full of archaic Iranian words, which were probably already no longer in daily use at that time. This low proportion of Arabic vocabulary was also a feature of prose works on the same subjects, to judge from the preface to the *Shāh-nāma* of Abū Manṣūr. These particular characteristics of the language of epic

¹ *Shāh-nāma*, p. 2507.

were most likely the result of the influence of Middle Persian sources and perhaps also of the influence of the oral tradition.

Firdausī (b. between 320/932 and 330/941-2; d. 411/1020-1 or 416/1025-6), dihqān of the neighbourhood of Tūs, began his work in about 365/975-6 and finished it probably in 400/1009-10; the whole poem amounts to some fifty thousand couplets. After being supported in his work by members of the aristocracy of his native city, the poet sought the patronage of the Sultān Maḥmūd of Ghazna, when the latter had become the most powerful sovereign of the age. General hearsay and the more reliable but less specific indications furnished by the *Shāh-nāma* suggest that this attempt met with no success. For Firdausī, like his contemporaries, the subject he was treating was the real history of ancient Iran and his work was scientific as well as poetical (witness the epithet *hakīm*, "doctor", which has remained appended to his name). As a scholar he did not write fiction, but scrupulously followed his sources, chief of which was the prose *Shāh-nāma* of Abū Manṣūr, though he also made use of others. One of the merits of Firdausī was that he carefully selected from the mass of material available to him and that he compiled a corpus of the stories which were to remain in the memory of the Iranians and of the other peoples, Turks and Indians, who were at one time nurtured on Persian literature. He incorporated once and for all the "Sistānian cycle" concerning Rostam and his family into the national tradition; on the other hand he omitted various legends of lesser interest, some of which were treated by his successors and imitators. Nevertheless he owed his fame even more to his art, which consisted in giving life, by means of brilliant narrative, to the great men of the past. "Rostam," he exclaimed, "was hitherto merely a warrior of Sistān; I have made him Rostam the son of Dastān." "From this verse," writes Bausani, "it may be seen how Firdausī understood his task, which was not to revitalize symbolic 'legends', but to transfigure, by means of poetry, the true facts which, when presented simply as historical material, remained arid."¹

The *Shāh-nāma* has miscellaneous contents. Alongside heroic narrative, which constitutes the central and strictly epic section, it includes romantic descriptions, like the charming story of Bizhan and Manizha, instructive or amusing anecdotes and collections of aphorisms (*andarz* or *pand*) derived directly from moral literature in Middle Persian. The ideology which is found in the work and unifies the poem belongs to

¹ Bausani, "Letteratura", p. 614.

Sāsānian Iran, a time when the major preoccupations were with the legitimacy of kings, the loyalty of vassals towards their sovereign and the eternal struggle of good and evil reflected in the war between Iran and Tūrān. Only the characteristic features of the Mazdaean religion are blurred, to the point of disappearing completely, in favour of a vague monotheism compatible with Islam. The *Shāh-nāma* is a compendium of all kinds of legacies from Iranian antiquity. In the 4th/10th century, these memories were still vivid, especially among the class of the dihqāns to which Firdausī belonged, and for them it was not a matter of simple narrative, of a curious or instructive nature, which was to be found in ancient books, but the very essence of their past and the mainstay of their national consciousness.

It was this feeling which gave Firdausī the inspiration necessary to bring his gigantic poem to a successful conclusion, and his greatness lies in his having used his exceptional poetic gifts in its service. He was aware of the value of his work and believed in the eminent dignity of the art of language. "The soul of the poet," he said, "finds happiness when speech (*sukhan*) is united with intelligence (*khīrad*)."¹ As regards the art of speech, he was clearly indebted to his predecessors, all those Persian poets who, for more than a century, had cultivated the language, constructed the system of rhetoric and had brought to perfection the literary instrument by means of which he was able to work the very rich but amorphous material into the brilliant form which gave it eternal life. However great the genius of Firdausī, the *Shāh-nāma* could not have been produced if the Persian language and the Persian art of poetry had not been brought already to maturity. Ancient in content, modern in form, it was the product of a unique moment of equilibrium when the memories of the past still lived on in the Iranian mind (the class of dihqāns was soon to disappear and the ideology to undergo a fundamental transformation) and when the new literary language was already sufficiently well developed to allow the composition of a masterpiece.

IX. PROSE

Of the prose works produced before the end of the first thirty odd years of the 5th/11th century, there are very few, in fact scarcely a dozen, which have not been lost, but the total output was certainly more numerous. We know the titles of some books whose text is missing and

¹ *Shāh-nāma*, p. 523.

manuscripts of unknown works may be discovered (there are precedents). It is a relatively varied literature. The prose *Shāh-nāmas* have already been mentioned, and history in the strict sense of the term is represented by the adaptation made in 352/963-4 by Abū 'Alī Bal'amī, vizier of the Sāmānid amir Maṣṣūr b. Nūḥ, at the latter's command, of the Arabic *Annals* of Ṭabarī; it is the earliest large piece of New Persian prose to have been preserved to the present day. It remained the standard work of general history in Iran until the Mongol period. Geography is treated in the interesting *Ḥudūd al-'ālam*, "The Regions of the World", written in 372/982-3 for a prince of Jūzjān. The demands of religious propaganda, revived by the struggle between Sunnism and Ismā'īlī Shī'ism, played an important part in the development of Persian prose. The commentary on the Qur'ān (*tafsīr*) by Ṭabarī was rendered into Persian by a college of learned men convened by order of Maṣṣūr b. Nūḥ (350-65/961-76). It was the first tafsīr in Persian; two others, anonymous and undated, the so-called Cambridge and Lahore tafsīrs, were also written at a very early period. The commentary on the sacred text is limited to descriptions of the preaching of Muḥammad and the history of earlier prophets; it is patently addressed not to experts, but to a wide public. To combat the progress of heresy, Nūḥ b. Maṣṣūr (365-87/976-97) ordered the translation of a brief treatise on orthodoxy written by a Ḥanafite doctor, Abū'l-Qāsim Samarqandī (d. 342/953-4), the text of which has been preserved. There was also some Ismā'īlī literature in Persian, from which an anonymous commentary has survived on the philosophical qaṣida of Abū'l-Haiṭham mentioned above. Finally the first mystical work in Persian appeared in the 5th/11th century - a commentary on the *Kitāb al-ta'arruf* of Kalābādī by Abū Ibrāhīm Mustamlī of Bukhārā (d. 434/1042).

All the other extant books are on science or philosophy. The *Hidāyat al-muta'allimīn*, "Guide to Students", by Abū Bakr Akhḥavainī of Bukhārā, a pupil of the celebrated Abū Zakariyyā' Rāzī (Rhazes) is an interesting medical treatise, the author of which, by his scholarly spirit and his clinical observations, chiefly of mental disorders, shows himself to be worthy of his master. The *Kitāb al-abniyya 'an ḥaqqā'iq al-adwiyya*, "Book of the Foundations of Pharmacology" by Abū Maṣṣūr Muvaffaq of Herāt, has survived in a manuscript copied in 447/1056 by the poet Asadī of Tūs, which is the most ancient Persian manuscript known. Astronomy and astrology are represented by two works, the *Kitāb al-mudkhal ilā 'ilm al-ḥakām al-nujūm*, "Introduction to Astrology", by

Abū Naṣr of Qum, and the *Kitāb al-tafhīm li-awā'il šinā'at al-tanjīm* by Bīrūnī. An Arabic version of both of them also exists and in both cases it is probably the original. The *Kitāb al-mudkhal* was compiled at Qum in 364-5/975-6 and the *Kitāb al-tafhīm* at Ghazna in 419-20/1028-9; the Persian translations must have been made a little later. Finally Avicenna, who resided in Iṣfahān from 412/1021 until his death in 428/1037, wrote two of his works in Persian there for the Kākūyid amīr 'Alā' al-Daula: the encyclopaedia of philosophy and science entitled *Dānīsh-nāma-yi 'Alā'i*, "Book of Science for 'Alā'", and a medical treatise dealing with the pulse.

As may be observed, prose literature was still purely utilitarian and had no aesthetic pretensions, for at this time literary art was concerned exclusively with poetry. If an author wrote in prose, it was solely for purposes of instruction or of propaganda. Commentaries on the Qur'ān, religious controversy, mysticism, history, geography, mathematics and astronomy, medicine and natural sciences and philosophy, the area staked out by these works covered a large part of what was considered science at that time. Most of them were translations, from Middle Persian chiefly for the *Shāh-nāmas*, from Arabic for all the rest. Arabic remained beyond question the principal language of thought and of science in Iran; it was used quite naturally for their basic works by scholars such as Avicenna and Bīrūnī, both of whom spent the whole of their lives in Iranian countries. The interesting fact is, however, that a need was felt to render into Persian a part of the knowledge accumulated by Arabic-speaking authors. The translators were aware of the reasons for their work and often explained them. It is stated, for example, in the Arabic preface to the Persian adaptation of the *Annals* of Ṭabarī: "I have translated this book in order that all, princes and subjects alike, may have access to it, so as to read it and know it." The introduction to the *Tafsīr-i Ṭabarī* mentioned that the Arabic original had been brought to Bukhārā from Baghdad and that the amīr Maṣṣūr b. Nūḥ, finding it difficult to read, took steps to have it translated into Persian. The translator of the dogmatic pamphlet of Abu'l-Qāsim Samarqandī wrote: "The amīr of Khurāsān (Nūḥ b. Maṣṣūr) ordered that this book should be translated into Persian, so that, being already available to experts (*khāṣṣ*), it might also be useful to the masses (*'āmm*), to the end that all might have a good knowledge of religion and keep themselves apart from innovation."¹ Similar statements are to be found

in various other works of the 4th/10th and 5th/11th centuries. They show that there existed in Iran a wide public sufficiently interested in intellectual matters to wish to be informed, but not very familiar with the Arabic language; the Sāmānid amīrs were among them and their individual action contributed to the development of Persian prose.

Prose was not able to advance, however, without a considerable effort being made to improve the language. The fact was that neither the darī spoken in daily usage nor the language of poetry provided the whole vocabulary needed for dealing with matters of doctrine or science. This difficulty was fully realized by Bīrūnī who, in a famous passage, spoke with some severity about the Persian language: "If I compare Arabic with Persian," he wrote in the preface to the *Ṣaidana*, "two languages of which I have an intimate knowledge, I confess that I prefer invective in Arabic to praise in Persian. And anyone will acknowledge that my remark is well founded if he examines what happens to a scientific text when translated into Persian; it loses all clarity, its horizon becomes blurred and its practical application disappears. The function of the Persian language is to immortalize historical epics about the kings of bygone ages and to provide stories to tell on night-watches."¹ The polemical tone is rather surprising – Bīrūnī was probably irritated, at a time when the Persian language was in full expansion, by some adulators who extolled it beyond its justifiable claims – but it must be recognized that his judgement was valid for that period. Arabic was then a precision instrument for the expression of scientific thought; Persian had given brilliant proofs of its ability in poetry, but abstract and technical vocabularies still had to be invented. A comparison of the two versions of the *Kitāb al-tafhīm* is sufficient to demonstrate this truth.

The effort of Persian authors and translators is thus all the more noteworthy. When writing about religion, they easily surmounted the difficulty by adopting, as was natural, Arabic terms. In scientific and philosophical treatises they made very interesting attempts to produce technical vocabularies from Iranian stock. This effort is particularly apparent in Ismā'īlī literature, firstly in the anonymous commentary on the qaṣīda of Abu'l-Haiṭham and later in the works of Nāṣir-i Khusrāu; it can be observed also in the *Dānīsh-nāma* of Avicenna. These authors did not abstain from using Arabic words, but their work also contains

¹ After Massignon's French translation in *Al-Bīrūnī commemorative volume* (Calcutta, 1951), p. 218.

¹ Quoted by Ṣadiqī, p. 118.

a number of abstract Iranian words, which are partly neologisms and partly philosophical terms existing in Middle Persian, so that some contact with Pahlavi literature is indicated. The same tendency is revealed in science and may be observed in the Persian version of the *Kitāb al-tafhīm*, the author of which, instead of reproducing Arabic technical terms, often endeavoured to translate them, or, failing anything better, to paraphrase them.

Indeed he was not the only one to do so. A later author, *Shahmardān* b. *Abi'l-Khair*, in his *Raudat al-munajjimīn*, "Garden of the Astronomers", written in 466/1073-4, criticized his predecessors in the following terms: "The most astonishing thing is that, when they write a book in Persian, they state that they have adopted this language in order that those who do not know Arabic may be able to use the book. Yet they have recourse to words of pure Persian (*dari-yi viṣṣḥa-yi mutlaq*) which are more difficult than Arabic. If they employed the terms currently in use it would be easier to understand them." He adds that for his part he does not avail himself of any but ordinary terms, that is to say Arabic, which can be learned by anyone in five days.¹ This interesting passage confirms that in the 4th-5th/10th-11th centuries there was a definite movement for the creation of a scientific vocabulary which was authentically Persian. At the same time it makes it clear that the movement was unsuccessful: in the second half of the 5th/11th century it was the Arabic vocabulary which prevailed.

¹ Boldyrev, "Iz istorii", p. 85; Lazard, *La langue*, p. 105.