

Utas, Bo, *Manuscript, Text and Literature. Collected essays on Middle and New Persian texts*. (Beiträge zur Iranistik, 29), ed. by Carina Jahani and Dariush Kargar, Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 2008, 272 pp.

The book under review is a collection of papers by Bo Utas, a most outstanding Swedish Iranist, dedicated to him on his 70th birthday. It starts with a paper by his talented pupil (who now holds the chair in Iranian studies at Uppsala) – Carina Jahani – consisting of a detailed description of the events of his life and a bibliography of his scholarly works. This bibliography includes 126 books and articles in Swedish, English, Persian, German, Danish, Russian, and French. One immediately singles out his brilliant translations from Persian into Swedish, including such chef-d’œuvres as the famous “Song of the Flute” (the opening of the famous *Mathnavi* by the great 13th-century Persian mystical poet Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī) and “The Blind Owl” (an outstanding story by the famous 20th-century Persian author Ṣādiq Hidāyat, in Persian entitled *Būf-i kūr*).

In the first paper, “On the composition of the Ayyātkār ī Zarērān”, Utas follows Jamasp-Asana, Geiger, Nöldeke, Pagliaro, Benveniste, and Nyberg and reconstructs an epic poetic text (based on the extant fragment), systematically confronting and comparing it with the corresponding verses in the Persian epic poem *Šāhnāmah*. Bo Utas’s conclusion is that this text without doubt functioned before it was written down in the 14th century.

The next paper is entitled “Non-religious Book Pahlavi literature as a source to the history of Central Asia”. Here Utas tries to find specific data in four Middle Persian works which he investigates with a maximum of thoroughness. The paper “Jang u āštī: War and peace in Iran” contains textual and etymological analyses of words for these two phenomena in Persian, including Arabic loanwords. Utas underlines the greater prevalence of words for war rather than peace.

Then comes “The manuscript tradition of Mišbāḥ ul-arvāḥ and the application of the stemmatic method to New Persian texts”. Here Utas analyses the Sufi mathnavi *Mišbāḥ ul-arvāḥ* and uses a stemmatic method to compare the existing manuscripts of this work. He does, however, raise a warning about this method, which may cause unsurpassable problems for larger texts such as the *Šāhnāmah*.

In the next article, “The *Munājāt* or *Ilāhī-nāmah* of ‘Abdu’llāh Anṣārī”, Utas underlines the difficulties arising in the process of interpreting the works of this Sufi master (d. 1089). It is known that Anṣārī himself did not write anything and that all texts attributed to him are either lecture notes taken by his pupils or were written by his pupils in his memory. Thus, we have at our disposal a considerable number of texts which show great differences in style. Utas pays due tribute to the leading specialist of the heritage of this great Sufi master, the monk Serge de Laugier de Beaurequeil (1917–2005), who wrote several works of paramount importance about Anṣārī.

The article “Towards a computerized method for the construction of stemmas of Persian manuscripts” shows its author from a rather unexpected side. Bo Utas is not only a first-class Orientalist, but also a highly qualified mathematician. In this article, he turns to the studies of G. P. Zarri about automatic computer analysis of texts to construct manuscript stemmas.

The next paper, “Some trends in modern Persian literature”, discloses all the supreme qualities of Bo Utas as a first-class specialist in literature. Here he analyses the heritage of three of the 20th century’s most outstanding Persian authors; Muḥammad ‘Alī Jamālzādah, Ṣādiq Hidāyat and Ṣādiq Čūbak.

The paper “Did ‘Adhrā remain a virgin?” proves that the legend about the two lovers Vāmiq and ‘Adhrā comes from Middle Persian times and that its topic and heroes are very close to the Greek legend about Metiokhos and Parthenope. Utas here demonstrates his great skill in discovering Greek names written in Arabic script.

In the article “A journey to the other world according to the Lantern of Spirits”, Utas again analyses the *Mišbāḥ ul-arvāḥ*, and proves convincingly that it is one of the sources of Dante

Alighieri's *Divina commedia*. Moreover, this paper is enriched to a considerable extent by a brilliant English rendering of several parts of the text *Miṣbāḥ ul-arvāḥ*.

Then comes a series of articles in French first published in *Dictionnaire universel des littératures* about the great Sufi classics 'Aṭṭār, Rūmī, and Sanā'ī with informative bibliographies (till 1994). In the article in the same encyclopedia about Sufism, Bo Utas especially stresses the activities of two great theoreticians: Muḥammad Ghazālī (d. 1111) and Ibn 'Arabī (d. 1240). Many other great Sufi masters are mentioned as well, and in the section on Sufism today the author gives a broad perspective from Africa to China.

The article "Arabic and Iranian elements in New Persian prosody" contains a deep comparative analysis of two metric traditions in interaction, the Iranian tonic system based on word stress and the Arabic quantitative metre based on the distribution of heavy and light syllables. The next article contains a linguistic analysis of the Ṣavāniḥ of Aḥmad Ghazālī (d. 1126), the younger brother of the great philosopher and theologian Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad Ghazālī. Utas establishes a number of causes of semantic ambiguity in this work, among others the ambiguous reference of the pronouns, the multiple functions of the conjunction *kih*, the incomplete orthographic representation of the *izāfah*, and the multiple uses of the suffix *-ī*.

In the paper "The ardent lover and the virgin – a Greeek romance in Muslim lands", Utas analyses the legend of Vāmiq and 'Adhrā in the version given by the famous Orientalist from Vienna, Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall (1774–1856). Bo Utas convincingly proves that this legend can be traced as far back as 'Unṣurī (d. ca. 1040), and that it has as its source the Ancient Greek story about Metiokhos and Parthenope. The next paper in the collection also deals with Perso-Greek contacts and attributes the (mythical?) invention of the lute (Pers. *barbat*, Ar. 'ūd) to Hermes Trismegistos (Pers. Hurmuz).

The article "The aesthetic use of New Persian" belongs to the field of literary criticism. Utas here describes the New Persian language as a refined aesthetic tool, comparing New Persian aesthetics with the Indian and Arabic aesthetic traditions. The final paper in the collection, "'Genres' in Persian literature 900–1900", can be attributed to the same realm of study. Here we find a discussion on the concept of literature followed by a similar discussion about what a genre actually is. The article contains five classificatory trees and a discussion of genres in Persian literature, both oral and written. It also presents many learned and witty observations about New Persian terminology in the field of literary science and a detailed description of Iranian literary views.

At the end of the book there is an index of "primary sources" and names. The book clearly demonstrates Bo Utas's skills as a first-rank scholar in the field of Iranian philology. May he continue to work for many years!

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