

Further Notes on the Babar-Nama MSS.: The Elphinstone Codex

Author(s): Annette S. Beveridge and Wm. Erskine

Source: *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, Jan., 1907, (Jan., 1907), pp. 131-144

Published by: Cambridge University Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25210370>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



Cambridge University Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*

JSTOR

IX.

FURTHER NOTES ON THE BABAR-NAMA MSS.

THE ELPHINSTONE CODEx.

By ANNETTE S. BEVERIDGE.

THE missing Elphinstone Codex of the *Bābar-nāma* having been found in the Advocates' Library by the Keeper, Mr. William K. Dickson, a first-hand description of it can be offered in supplement of the earlier notices published in the R.A.S. Journal in July 1900 and 1902, and in October 1905.

To this description the following letter of Mr. William Erskine, which covered the gift of the codex, and which the courtesy of the Curators of the Advocates' Library enables me to reproduce, will be found an interesting introduction.

*“To the Curators of the Library of the
Honourable Faculty of Advocates, Edinburgh.*

“GENTLEMEN,—At the desire of the Hon. Mountstuart Elphinstone, the Governor of Bombay, I have the pleasure of sending you five Toorkee Manuscripts, for the purpose of being deposited in the valuable Library of which you have charge.

“The first contains the Memoirs of the Emperor Baber, (Toozook e Bāberee), written by that prince in his native language, the Jaghataee Toorkee. It was procured by Mr. Elphinstone when on his embassy to Caubul, and is perhaps the only copy of the work that has been brought to Europe. Indeed, I know of no other copy, even in the East, though I have heard it vaguely suggested that there is one, which Dr. Leyden consulted, in the Library of the College of Calcutta. The Persian translation of these Memoirs is sometimes to be met with. There is one in the Royal Library at Paris, and there are others in England.

“The Toorkee volume now sent was the foundation of the late Dr. Leyden's translation of Baber's Memoirs recently published,

and is mentioned in the Preface to that work. It is unfortunately imperfect.

“The second volume is a Vocabulary, Persian and Hindoostance, printed at Calcutta, I believe under Dr. Leyden’s inspection, for the purpose of collecting Comparative Vocabularies of the Indian Tongues. In the copy now sent, Mr. Elphinstone got inserted in Manuscript, three corresponding Vocabularies of different Toorkee Dialects, the first that of the Toorkee Dialect of Constantinople (which is the modern Turkish or Osmanlee)—the second that of the Jaghataee Tribes north of the Oxus (which is the old Tartar language, and corresponds with that of the Memoirs, allowing for the changes produced by upwards of three centuries)—and the third that of the Toorkee Tribes of Persia. These Vocabularies were compiled by the agency of Muhammed Ali, a native of Ganj, in Persia. The third Manuscript is a Toorkee and Arabic Grammar, by Moulana Salikh Effendi.

“The fourth is a Toorkee and Persian Vocabulary.

“The fifth Manuscript contains the Forms of the Toorkee Verbs with a Persian translation, and is imperfect.

“So little is known in Europe of the original Toorkee tongue, that these papers may be considered as curious, and will be found especially valuable to those who study the history of language.

“I have the honour to be, Gentlemen,

Your Obed. Humb. Servt.,

(Signed) WM. ERSKINE.

“EDINBURGH, 14, MELVILLE STREET.

19 Decem. 1826.”

The facts of the Elphinstone Codex dispel some hopes and negative some conjectures that had been aroused in its absence by Mr. Erskine’s statement that with it were “marginal notes of Humāyūn.” Some part of what it was hoped to find true of it must be relegated now to its archetype. It is the oldest known example of the *Bābar-nāma*, but it is not Bābar’s original manuscript, as some statements about it had given ground to hope; with it is nothing in Humāyūn’s handwriting, and the two “marginal notes” quoted as his by Mr. Erskine are copies and are interpolated in the text.

Nevertheless, it is a highly distinguished codex, and it is this for a reason apart from its age and apart from its association with men who had been born and bred where Turkī was a familiar tongue, and who, as such and as at home in its matter, were capable of criticizing and correcting it. Its great and unique distinction is given by its annotation, all of which, so far as it is in Turkī, may be referred, without stretch of probability, to Humāyūn. Of its numerous notes and glosses, Turkī and Persian, a few only have found their way through the Memoirs into European literature; two of these are attested as Humāyūn's; it has others so attested, and there are still more which are his with show of right.

THE BOOK.

The existing covers of the book measure $9\frac{1}{4} \times 6$ inches, and, within and without, are of clove-carnation leather. Like those of the Haydarābād Codex, they were found padded with two leaves of an account-book. These leaves Mr. Blumhardt has been so kind as to examine; they are written in Marwarī, probably in the Bombay Presidency, and their general appearance agrees with a date entered in the middle of one of them, Samvat 1836 (A.D. 1779). These two leaves, it may be said, will be placed now as 'exhibits' at the end of the codex.

Samvat 1836, then, is the approximate date of the re-binding of the book, at which time injury was done to marginal notes by shearing-down, and to the shrunken codex of flyleaves additions were made of the outer mount to the first folio (now removed), of f. 206, and of some nine leaves at the end of the original paper.

Another entry, however, may throw clearer light on the date of re-binding. Beneath a title, *Tūrikh-i-bābarī dar sabān-i-turkī*, inscribed on the first flyleaf, stand two numbers, ۱۲۰۰, which, if read as A.H. 1200, would give 1786 as the year of re-binding and entry of title, and would allow an interval for accounts of 1779 to become waste-paper.

The manuscript is written on paper of good quality, dyed to an uncommon shade of terra-cotta pink. I am indebted to Sayyid 'Ali *Bilgrāmi* for the information that no chronological importance attaches to this colour, which implies merely the more henna in the dye, and occurs *à plaisir* or accidentally. The added leaves are of whitish, light and inferior paper. Some of the early pages of the book have been repaired more than once, at the stitching place and by outer marginal bands. The first folio has been injured; its frontispiece is mutilated, and its manuscript has lost a few letters, some of which were made good neatly on a lining paper, pasted behind it, presumably, before the rebinding. Of all those that remain, this is the only damaged leaf; the book is indeed well preserved; its margins are a little perforated and damp-stained, but its text is intact.

THE MANUSCRIPT.

The writing of the codex is clear and uniform *nasta'liq*, bordering here and there on *shikast*. Of it there remains as much as there was when Mr. Erskine enumerated its lacunæ in notes to the Memoirs. The book allows inference of the dates at which these losses had occurred. Retracing them in the order of time, it is clear that one—from within 935 A.H. to the recognized end of the *Bābar-nāma*—existed when the book was rebound, and is due to loss of pages. A few tattered but still legible folios seem to have been then with the rest, and to have supplied the short length of text which is inscribed on some of the newer leaves. This surmise fits f. 206 also, and is strengthened there by spaces left where material failed the copyist.

The second major lacuna must have occurred also in the archetype of the codex, because it is in mid-page. It is the one which loses material from a few sentences before Shaikh Zain's Persian account of the battle of Kānwāha in 933 A.H., and extends to 935 A.H. The scribe makes no remark on the loss, but a commentator who writes in Persian and frequently, has set in the margin of the page—

از این جا آنچه از ترجمه معلوم شد ۱۶ ورق افتاده اند

("Sixteen leaves of what is known by the translation have perished from this place.")

It may be said, in passing, that the word *tarjama* of this note allows its entry to be deferred to beyond 998 A.H. (1590), the time of the presentation of the 'Abdu-r-rahīm translation to Akbar.

Also in the archetype must have been the gap of 908 A.H., which is in the Persian text and was first filled for European literature through the Kāzūn imprint and its French translation. It is the one which draws attention to the fact that the Persian translations were made from a mutilated codex which had this gap and had not the Revenue Accounts of Hindūstān. Both losses occur in the Elphinstone Codex, and both are referable to its archetype.¹

THE AGE OF THE CODEX.

When entrusted to me for examination, the book showed no definite marks from which to know its age except the surmised 1200 A.H. already mentioned as on the flyleaf, where it is near a "W. E(rs)kine, No. I," and a faintly pencilled *Wāq'āt*.

A second item of its history was visible on the upper margin of the folio which was once the fourth and is now the second. This is an indistinct Persian inscription, entered before rebinding, and now sheared through. We have not deciphered it fully, but it seems to refer to the pledging of the book by a person of rank. We read provisionally *matn-i-bābari* and *wa in az chizhā Şāhib Mihrbān Mirzā Jān* (or *Khān*) *Jiu kharūda budand*, and *agar āyinda* and *bāz mārā bidihand*.

¹ The fact of absent matter in the Persian translations is the more surprising that the Haydarābād Codex exists, competently estimated to be of later date than those translations and demanding a complete archetype. The explanation may lie in the vicissitudes of the royal family fortune and its resultant scattering of Bābar's sons and daughters, which would well allow his own original MS. to have been taken to Kābul and to have remained long there, or would have taken far from Āgra or Dihli a direct transcript belonging to a son or daughter.

Visible written testimony as to age was given by these two items only, and of them the second has so far not given a definite date, because the persons named have not been identified. From the evidence of the handwriting and paper of the codex, Mir Musharrāfu'l-ḥaq, who in July 1906 catalogued the MSS. belonging to the Advocates' Library, judged that it dated from the tenth century of the Hijra. Mr. A. G. Ellis more definitely conjectured that it had been transcribed between 950 A.H. and 1000 A.H. (1543–1593), and later examination has proved the correctness of his judgment. What this examination was and how satisfactory will be told in detail.

The injured first folio had been cut down to its manuscript and frontispiece, and mounted on a leaf of lighter paper. By inserting an ivory knife it slipped easily off, and was then seen to be firmly affixed to a second mount which had been cut down with it and which was too opaque to be seen through. On damping this mount, a clear inscription was read, and a faint seal and some further writing were seen. The damped paper was then removed, with a good deal of difficulty but without injury to the entries, when a second seal and several other records were disclosed, some of the latter injured by cutting down. Happily, what is essential for deciding the age of the codex is intact and sufficiently clear, and will now be left uncovered and open to further interpretation.

The fragile condition of the frontispiece forbade examination of its reverse, and all the entries I shall enumerate are below its level. Of these the most conspicuous item is boldly written in excellent ink behind the upper lines of the manuscript. It is as follows:—

الله اكبر از بابت اموال ميرزا محمد سلطان

(“Allāhu-Akbar! From the estate (property) of Mirzā Muḥammad Sulṭān.”)

The formula *Allāhu-Akbar* identifies the prince named as living or recently dead in Akbar's reign. It was used

officially in 983 A.H. (1575-6), but it might have been entered earlier in a private possession, or this inscription may not have been made promptly on receipt of the book.

The man whom the time would fit is that Sulṭān Muḥammad Mirzā, who was doubly a Timūrid, grandson and grand-nephew of Sulṭān Ḥusain Mirzā *Bāy-qarā* of Harāt, a follower of Bābar from 932 A.H., an amīr of Humāyūn, and the father of the rebel "Mirzās" of Akbar's reign. He died, a state prisoner, in Bāyāna Fort in or shortly after 974 A.H. (1567). His circumstances and the form of the inscription are in agreement; his goods would be confiscate to his sovereign; the entry may indicate reception into the royal library.

No other sign of his ownership has survived, but just below this one is a confused entry of a price or prices which it is more fitting to refer to his purchase of the book than to Akbar's succession to it. His name may have been behind the frontispiece, possibly is there still, or it may have been cut off with the margins.

This entry and the following item of evidence which is given within the codex, fix as the date of transcription a period of narrow limits. To the "shaving passage" the scribe has appended the words *انا لله برهانه*, which indicate the previous death of Humāyūn and give 963 A.H. (January, 1556) as the minor term for transcription. The major is that of Sulṭān Muḥammad Mirzā's death, and a maximum period of ten to eleven years (1556 to 1567 *cirā*) is thus established within which the Elphinstone Codex must have been copied.

Disregarding for the present the less interesting entry of prices, which has already been mentioned, we find a library seal, now somewhat faint, on the upper part of which *Ghāzi*, a part of Akbar's style, seems legible, and on the lower of which is a clear *Ikhhlāṣ Khān ḥājib*. This seal may be accepted with some security as that of the custodian of the harem library of Akbar. Humāyūn had a servant who was known by the title *Ikhhlāṣ Khān*

and who was taken over by Akbar and became Commander of One Thousand. One of Abū'l-faḥl's anecdotes, told in illustration of the retentiveness of Akbar's memory, shows at the same time, that a servant so styled was a familiar presence in the royal household. At a date stated to be seventeen years after this man's death (16th Dai, 1004 A.H.—Dec. 1595 or Jan. 1596) the Emperor, who was inspecting the wardrobe-room, said of a certain coat that it looked like Ikhlaṣ Khān's, and his surmise was verified from the old registers. This incident would refer the impression of the Khān's seal to a date anterior to 1579.

Again passing over an intermediate and written entry, we come to a second seal stamped close to the bottom of the oblong of manuscript. It, too, is a librarian's, and on it are clear the words *Shāh-jahān* and *fidarī* and '*Ināyat*. Other seals of Shāh-jahān's reign bear the title '*Ināyat Khān*, and there is no difficulty in identifying the owner of it as Muḥammad Tāhir, the author of the *Shāh-jahān-nāma*, who was appointed superintendent of the royal library in Rabi' I. 1068 A.H. (November, 1657).¹

Several other entries probably commemorate library inspections. There is a group of mutilated writings at the top of the oblong of manuscript; there is the sheared off and long note on the left side of it, and there is an interlaced puzzle about prices just below the *Allāhu-Akbar* inscription where may be read a *qimat rupiya* from above which figures seem to have been deleted; there seems to be a *kharīda shud* through which the pen has been passed with attempt to express *haftād* or *hashtād*; there is a *nūd* and, in figures, there is 98. I set down these inconclusive and tentative details because of the help careful conjectures, even if disproved, give to a next examiner.

It would be in order if a sign of ownership by Jahāngīr appeared between those of his father and his son, but no such sign has been definitely read. At this place is entered a name of which part is clear, *Ḥuzūr Muḥammad Quḥī* (?)

¹ "History of India," Elliot & Dowson, vol. vi, p. 340.

Khān Bahādur Isfarayīnī (?); also *Ramzān muazzam* (?) and a date which may be *sana* 11, or *sana* 111, i.e. 1011 A.H., or may represent the "eleventh year of the *jalūs*." Time and a revival of the ink will doubtless clear up at least some of the open questions of the page, and any help towards it will be welcomed by those who have worked thus far on it.

In all that has been said about the seals and difficult entries, help has been given to me by three advisors: by my husband, who has brought to their elucidation his close acquaintance with the history of the time involved and the long and patient consideration that never fails me; by our friend Mr. William Irvine, who has spared to them much time and close attention; and by Mr. A. G. Ellis, whose expert knowledge has given weight to his doubts or corroborations of the suggestions of others.

THE ANNOTATION OF THE CODEx.

Of the numerous Turkī notes with the codex, two are attested by Humāyūn's copied signature. One is that which records his first use of the razor, and which has been so often referred to already in my "Notes on the Bābar-nāma MSS." that a few words further are needed now that it lies before our eyes. Until it was seen there was always the possibility that it varied much from its rendering in the Persian text, and that this variation allowed Mr. Erskine's reading of its contents. This is not so, however, as the subjoined copy of it shows, and as Mr. Erskine would no doubt have seen for himself if he had not worked at the disadvantage of not translating from the Turkī text. For here the note is clear in itself and in its additions; the passage written by Humāyūn as for Bābar, is marked off by overlines; after this, quotation marks distinguish Humāyūn's signed reason for making the entry that at such a date he first used the razor¹; the scribe's note following is in Persian, and, emphatic in import, a prayer for Humāyūn ends the interpolation.

¹ f. 216; *Memoirs*, 302; *Iluinsky*, 340.

An important variant here from the Persian text may be recorded in passing; 48 is the age Humāyūn mentions as his when he made the note, and not 46. This age brings his perusal of his father's book to the period at which he might have read it preparatory to attempting the reconquest of Hind or to that of his brief second rule in Dihli, apt occasions both.

To return now to the note itself; in the Persian text its place differs slightly from its place in the Elphinstone transcript, a variation which points to differing views of workers on the same marginal entry. The note is not marginal in the Elphinstone Codex, but was almost certainly so in its archetype; it is interpolated here in the text, in all its parts, and someone, who is not the scribe of the codex but the frequent commentator in Persian, has entered in the margin opposite its initial words—

این عبارت از همایون بادشاه است که کاتب در متن داخل کرد
 (“This passage which the scribe enters in the text is
 Humāyūn Būdshāh's.”)

(جمادی الاول آی نینگ یگیرمه سیکیزیدا آفتاب حمل برجی
 غه تحویل قیلدی) اشبو (sic) یورت دا اشبو (sic) گون همایون یوزیگا
 استره یا مقراض تیکوردی ”چون حضرت مرحومی استره قویماقی
 یوزگا اول وقایع دا ذکر قیلیب تورلر بنده داعی بتتعا آنی ذکر
 قیلدی اول تاریخ دا اون سیکیز یاش دا ایدیم ودر حالا قرق سیکیز
 یاش دا من کیم بولغای حرره محمد همایون نقل از خط آنحضرت
 انار الله برهانه (ابراهیم نینگ)¹

¹ The following is the only other known Turki version of this note and is quoted from the Kāsān imprint:—

(تحویل قیلدی) * اون سیکیز یاش دا ایدیم او شبو یورت ته

The second note attested by signature is written in the margin of the manuscript, is in the first person, and gives Humāyūn's experience in Bengal of the lime as an antidote to poison.¹ It is in the scribe's handwriting, is introduced by *ایضاً*, is somewhat damaged by shearing-off, and is not known elsewhere.

Of another class of notes are two attributed by the scribe of the codex to Humāyūn. One is written in the margin and is parallel to the last in giving the personal experience of the writer. Its topic is the occurrence of ice in Hindūstān,² and it contains the words "the year when I conquered Gujrāt" (1535). The scribe has prefaced it by *نقل خط همايون بادشاه* and followed it by *صحیح* (correct). It appears to testify to direct copying from Humāyūn's autograph note.

The second of this class is that on the amrat fruit, which Mr. Erskine reproduces in the Memoirs.³ It is inserted in the text and there partly misplaced, perhaps because its length confused its marginal form. It is begun in the middle of a sentence about the *amil-būd* fruit,⁴ and it runs on nearly to the end of Mr. Erskine's first paragraph.

همايون يوزيکه استره يا مقراض تیکوردی تاریخ سنه بولغای *
(ابراهيم نینگ)

The asterisks denote difficulties with Dr. Kehr's transcript. I doubt if it is safe to base any opinion about the note on this form of it, and unfortunately Dr. Kehr's manuscript has not yet been lent to me to examine.

¹ f. 238; Mems. 328 absent.

² f. 2086; Mems. 293 absent.

³ f. 2366, l. 6 from foot, to f. 239, l. 3, and f. 239, l. 6, to f. 239b, l. 1; Mems. 329 n.

⁴ In an earlier mention of this note, I made the mistaken conjecture that it was Shāh-jahān's. I had chanced upon it, without context and in Persian, in a volume of Mr. Erskine's literary remains. Imagination failed to warn me that it might be a translation; it was open to suppose it 'marginal' in the Elphinstone MS., and propriety forbade the thought that a son would strengthen the case for the merit of a fruit by recalling the deprivation of his father's taste through inebriety. Therefore I absolved Humāyūn from this reproach, passed over Juhāngir because he made his additions to the *Bābar-nāma* in Turkī, and surmised Shāh-jahān. I am proved wrong (though the last-named emperor owned the codex), because the note is incorporated, is in Turkī, and the age of the transcript is known.

Three lines of text follow, about the flowers of Hind, after which the note resumes and runs to its end.

Opposite its first words, the Persian commentator has written in the margin of the manuscript,

این عبارت حاشیه همایون بادشاه است

("This passage is a marginal note of Humāyūn Bādshāh's.")

At the break in it another person—if the scribe, his upstrokes are less firm than usual—has set in the margin,

این عبارت زایدہ غالباً از همایون بادشاه است از راه سہو کاتب
در متن نوشت

("This additional passage seems to be by Humāyūn Bādshāh; the scribe writes it in the text by mistake.")

A third class of Turkī notes supplements the text in a way that allows their attribution to Humāyūn as to a person better acquainted with their topics than Bābar was.

The first to mention explains Humāyūn's delay in joining his father in 932 A.H.¹ It is selected from numerous others parallel in supplementary aim and in form, and like it in having been washed over and hereby removed from the text. The scribe wrote it into the text with prefix of the mark (v) he uses to indicate transfer, actual or due, from margin to text. He also placed a part of its information in the margin, lower in the same sentence, and to this also prefixed the sign for insertion (v). Both glosses explain Humāyūn's delay, for which his father blamed him; a time is mentioned as that at which the joining was desired; the purport of Bābar's correspondence is defined and delay attributed to the unpreparedness of the Badakhshān army. All is written as if for insertion in the text, not as by Humāyūn, not in the first person, and not attested. The passage is parallel to the one about Humāyūn's first use of the razor; it is the gloss of a person who knows supplementary matter, and it pleads excuse for Humāyūn. Unfortunately

¹ f. 207; Mems. 291 absent.

loss of text prevents reference to another instance where Humāyūn must have wished to excuse himself, namely, that of his unauthorized removal of treasure from Dihli. Though this illustration of the character of the notes fails, others do not and are easy to find.

I have examined all the longer glosses, and I find that their erasure brings the text into agreement with the Haydarābād Codex. Their removal indicates collation with Humāyūn's annotated *Bābar-nāma*. Of all it can be said that they supplement the text with fuller information and that their erasure purifies it from foreign matter. Their occurrence raises a difficulty in accepting the Elphinstone Codex as arbiter amongst variants of contents; their best place would be with the notes of a revised English text.

The codex is abundantly annotated in Persian also, and this mostly has been done before the rebinding. The Persian notes are rarely entered by the scribe, and their writers have not used ink that withstands deletion so well as his. Many are so faint as to need longer study than so far could be given to them. Down to the end of 908 A.H. there is much interlinear and marginal Persian explanation of the Turkī; there are supplementary biographical details, and there are many notes of which no more can be said than that they are not clear.

One important Persian note (ff. 198-9) throws light upon the history of the Elphinstone Codex. It has been expunged from the text, and can be taken safely as copied from one which was marginal in the archetype. It is as follows:—

تا اینجا در دیگر رسالها بود باقی از مسوده اصل یافته شد

("Up to this place was in other writings (*rasālahā*, perhaps letters from Bābar to Humāyūn); the rest was taken from the original draft.")

The well-known remark at the broken end of 908 A.H. is in Persian and written conterminous with the text and by its scribe. Where in 933 A.H. the great loss of text occurs,

the Persian commentator has written the note I have quoted in the account of the lacunæ. I have described another Persian note, the one read as referring to a pledging of the book. It is clear that until all have been deciphered, there is no certainty that the interest of this precious codex has been exhausted.

THE ELPHINSTONE AND HAYDARĀBĀD CODICES COMPARED.

Amongst known transcripts of the *Bābar-nāma*, the Elphinstone has but one rival, the Haydarābād Codex. A few words of recapitulation will define their respective positions.

The first is the older, and it is known to have a merit not known of the second, viz., it had in source and early ownership the advantage of Turkī atmosphere; it is unique in its preservation of royal annotation; its history is varied, interesting, and in great part known.

The second is unique in being complete and also by allowing a fair inference that it is a direct copy of Bābar's original and finished manuscript.

The recovery of the first is a matter of great congratulation to all who care for the study of Turkī, for the history of the *Bābar-nāma*, and for records of Humāyūn. Its return to light, however, in no way endangers the legitimacy of its rival's claim to be the fitter for the honour of multiplication; it must yield place not only as incomplete, but because of its special excellence as the preserver of valuable notes and glosses. These annotations lower its purity and lessen its authority as a *Bābar-nāma*. It alone could not over-rule the Haydarābād MS. in any divergence of their contents, since the presumption of accuracy must remain with the unannotated transcript.

For the present I leave untouched the comparative linguistic rank of the two manuscripts. I hope at a later date to offer material that will allow the formation of opinion upon the matter.