

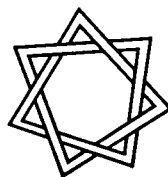
RUSSIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES  
THE INSTITUTE OF ORIENTAL STUDIES  
ST. PETERSBURG BRANCH



# **Manuscripta Orientalia**

*International Journal for Oriental Manuscript Research*

Vol. 5 No. 1 March 1999



**75ESA**  
**St. Petersburg-Helsinki**

*E. I. Vasilyeva*

## THE FIRST PERSIAN, FRENCH AND RUSSIAN EDITIONS OF THE *SHARAF-NĀMA*

The necessity of immediately publishing Sharaf-khān Bidlīsī's *Sharaf-nāma* was recognized as soon as the manuscript was noticed by European scholars. The first to obtain the *Sharaf-nāma* manuscript in Europe was John Malcolm, author of "The History of Persia". He cites Sharaf-khān's work many times, providing abstracts of its text. The manuscript of the composition was presented to Gore Ousley, President of the Committee for Translations in Great Britain and Ireland, who undertook the responsibility of publishing the *Sharaf-nāma* without delay. This mission, however, was to be carried out in Russia.

Among a number of rare oriental manuscripts, which were obtained by Russia after the signing of the Turkmanchay peace treaty in 1828, there was a precious manuscript of the *Sharaf-nāma*, originated from Ardebil. The commission, composed of Academician Christian D. Fraehn (1782–1851) and two professors of Persian, Mirza Jafar Topchibashev (1790–1868) and Francois-Bernard Charmoy (1793–1869) was unanimous in its high evaluation of the manuscript of the *Sharaf-nāma*. It is dated by Shawwāl 1007/May 1599, only two years after the work was completed. Moreover, the copy was reviewed and corrected by the author himself, as is indicated in the colophon of the work. In 1829, Christian Fraehn used the pages of the *St.-Petersburgischen Zeitung* to invite young orientologists to study this work by Sharaf-khān Bidlīsī, which he regarded as an excellent historical source.

It was F. B. Charmoy who soon began investigating the composition, which became his life's labour. A student of Silvestre de Sacy, he arrived in St. Petersburg from France in 1817. In Russia he held the posts of professor of the Persian language and literature at St. Petersburg University and professor of the Persian and Turkish languages at the Oriental Institute and became corresponding member of the Russian Imperial Academy of Sciences. But in 1835 he had to return to France. Although Charmoy left St. Petersburg with the intention of returning, this intention was never realised. He spent the rest of his life in France, far from Russia, retaining warm feelings for his "Patrie d'adoption" [1].

In France, F. Charmoy continued his work on the Persian text of the *Sharaf-nāma* to make its French translation [2]. However, as he later wrote in a letter dated March 1861, a prolonged and serious illness forced him for some time into "complete inactivity" [3]. In 1843, the *Saint-Petersburg Times* even published an obituary by the noted

Russian archaeologist and numismatist P. S. Savelyev (1814–1859), under the title "On the life and works of Francois Charmoy". It was a real surprise to Academician Fraehn to receive a letter from Charmoy two years later. In this letter, the scholar provided his colleague with information about his work on Sharaf-khān Bidlīsī's chronicle [4]. But after this letter a period of fifteen years followed without any information about this work's advance.

Meanwhile, efforts continued to publish Sharaf-khān Bidlīsī's writing and to introduce it to the scholarly circles. An article by Edward Kunik (1814–1899) appeared in 1852 on the pages of *Mélanges Asiatiques tirés du Bulletin historico-philologique de l'Académie Impériale des sciences de St.-Petersbourg*, in which Kunik calls the "Histoire des Kurdes composée par Cheref-eddin" a valuable source for the study of classical and medieval history. In his view, the publication of the *Sharaf-nāma*'s manuscript from the collection of the Imperial Public Library in St. Petersburg would respond to an acute academic need. As E. Kunik pointed out, the Kurds were perhaps the closest relatives of the ancient Assyrians and Medians. For this reason the history of the Kurdish tribes as presented in the *Sharaf-nāma* could provide material for interesting historical studies on "the history of Assyria, Babylonia and of Asia Minor". Chances of publishing the text of the *Sharaf-nāma* were best, Kunik concluded, in St. Petersburg, since "there were the best manuscripts of "The History of the Kurds" here" [5].

Also in 1852, the remarkable value of the *Sharaf-nāma* was recognised by Academician Iohannes Albrecht Bernhardt Dorn (1805–1881), who was responsible for the catalogue of oriental manuscripts and xylographs in the Imperial Public Library of St. Petersburg. Dorn held that the publication of Sharaf-khān Bidlīsī's work could serve to fill a considerable gap in the history of Asia.

The necessity of publishing the *Sharaf-nāma* was sufficiently apparent that the event itself soon came to pass. In 1860–1862, the Imperial Academy of Sciences of Russia issued the first edition of the *Sharaf-nāma*. The task was undertaken by Vladimir Velyaminov-Zernov (1830–1904). The rapidity with which he prepared his work was striking — within three years he prepared and published the text of the *Sharaf-nāma* on the basis of four manuscripts in St. Petersburg collections. It was perhaps some special charm of Sharaf-khān Bidlīsī's text that made the scholar to feel a real

passion for his work, which greatly contributed to the advance of the whole undertaking. V. Velyaminov-Zernov wrote in the foreword to his edition, possibly with some exaggeration, that “the chronicle has existed for more than 300 years, but nothing comparable has since emerged in the East” [6].

The edition was primarily based on a manuscript corrected by the work's author from the Imperial Public Library of St. Petersburg. A lacuna in the manuscript was filled by a copy belonging to N. V. Khanykov (1822—1878) whose manuscript was dated to 1836 and originated from the autograph. The other two manuscripts used for this edition were owned by the Asiatic Museum of the Imperial Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg (currently the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies). One of them contains the complete text of the chronicle; the other, only an abstract. Neither manuscript is dated.

It should be noted that all of the four above-mentioned manuscripts lack chapters 7, 8 and 9 from the second part of the *Sharaf-nāma*, although these chapters are mentioned in the author's foreword. These chapters are also absent in two other editions of the *Sharaf-nāma*. As was noted by V. Velyaminov-Zernov, these chapters were most probably left unwritten by the author despite his original intention to complete them.

V. Velyaminov-Zernov's edition was reviewed in the *Journal Asiatique* in the same year that it appeared, 1860. The review was written by the well-known French orientalist Charles Defrémery (1822—1883), who had published and translated a number of works by Persian and Arabic authors, such as the famed Sa'dī, Mīrkhwānd and Khwāndāmīr. The reviewer was impressed by the work of Velyaminov-Zernov as well as the Russian Academy of Sciences' efforts aimed at publishing the *Sharaf-nāma*. The reviewer's verdict was that “the text published by Mr. Velyaminov-Zernov seems to have been prepared with much care and exactitude” [7]. The choice of this particular manuscript for the edition was considered by Ch. Defrémery as both correct and logical. He wrote in his review: “The copy was transcribed two years after the work had been compiled and reviewed by the author himself. It is hardly necessary to say how this circumstance contributes to the value of the manuscript”.

The title page of the first volume of the *Sharaf-nāma* contained a promise that the edition of the Persian text would be followed by the publication of a translation and commentary — “Scheref-nameh ou Histoire des Kourdes par Scheref, Prince de Bidlis, publiée pour la première fois, traduite et annotée par V. Véliaminof-Zernof ... Tome I. Texte persan”. The editors of the Russian translation of C. A. Storey's well-known bio-bibliographical survey apparently considered the reference to translation and commentary in the V. Velyaminov-Zernov edition an oddity and marked it with the Latin *sic*. In fact, there is nothing at all strange about the reference.

Velyaminov-Zernov had been working on a French translation of the chronicle. One year after the first volume was published — 1861 — a substantial part of the work was ready. The historical-philological section of the Imperial Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg, in its session on May 3, 1861, reported that the French translation of the book was nearly complete [8]. An abstract of the minutes even describes the translation as completed [9]. Nevertheless, the French translation of the *Sharaf-nāma* undertaken

by Velyaminov-Zernov and mentioned in the first volume has never been published. In March 1861, something occurred which altered the fate of the work.

The historical-philological section of the Academy received a report from Velyaminov-Zernov with information about a letter from F. B. Charmoy dated February 16. In this letter, Charmoy writes that the publication of the *Sharaf-nāma* text came as a complete surprise to him and that since 1843 he had once again been actively engaged in the study of the Kurds. In conclusion, Charmoy expressed the hope that he would have the honour of publishing the *Sharaf-nāma*'s translation [10].

Velyaminov-Zernov had no doubts concerning what he should do with his translation of the *Sharaf-nāma*. His reaction was immediate: “Three years after my enrollment in the Academy, when I was sure that Mr. Charmoy had interrupted his work on the *Sharaf-nāma*, I published the text. Now, upon learning that Mr. Charmoy has completed a translation of the *Sharaf-nāma* and never abandoned the idea of publishing his “History of the Kurds”, I do not wish to see his many years of work go to waste, I am ready to sacrifice my translation ... Never had I the intention to obstruct Mr. Charmoy's undertaking. I regard him as an outstanding orientalist and scholar who has contributed greatly to oriental studies in Russia. If the Academy accepts Mr. Charmoy's proposition and publishes his translation in place of mine, I will consider my task as having been completed” [11]. From that moment on, all of Velyaminov-Zernov's efforts were concentrated on assisting the publication of Charmoy's translation.

A meeting of the historical-philological section took place on the same day when the presentation of Velyaminov-Zernov's report to the Academy became known. A decision was reached to propose to F. Charmoy that he forward his translation to the Academy Secretariat with the condition that Velyaminov-Zernov would have the right to withdraw his disclaimer from publishing his own translation [12]. As we know, Velyaminov-Zernov chose not to employ his right.

The letter travelled from the Imperial Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg to the suburb of Toulon, informing F. Charmoy that “l'Académie à laquelle vous appartenez comme membre correspondant, ne manquera pas de prendre mesures nécessaires pour vous faciliter cette publication” [13]. An extract from the minutes of the historical-philological section of the Academy demonstrates that the Academy was ready to make another step in this direction: the Academy proposed to publish Charmoy's translation of the *Sharaf-nāma* at the Academy's expense. This decision was met at the Academy with satisfaction.

After the requisite exchange of letters and notifications, the manuscript of F. Charmoy's translation was delivered to the Secretariat of the Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg through the Russian Embassy in Paris and the Department of Internal Affairs of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This took place in 1864. A special commission, which included J. Dorn and M. Brosset (1802—1880), was appointed. As for Velyaminov-Zernov, he was convened to study the manuscript. The three academicians came to a positive conclusion on the matter. The manuscript was subsequently passed to the printing house of the Academy. Four years later, in a letter to K. S. Veselovsky, a permanent secretary of the Academy, F. Charmoy asked that the first of the author's fifty copies be presented to the Russian

emperor. The work appeared under the title “Chèref-Nâme ou fastes de la nation kourde ..., tome I, première partie, contenant l’introduction ethnographique et géographique suivie des ... notes qui s’y rattachent”.

The Conference of the Academy deemed Charmoy's work worthy of this honour and augmented the copy with comments by academicians M. Brosset, J. Dorn and Velyaminov-Zernov. The St. Petersburg Branch of the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences holds the original review in French and its Russian translation. The French text was most probably written by Velyaminov-Zernov.

The review contains the highest praise for the redoubtable Charmoy's work on the “History of the Kurds”. It notes that “the scholar endured the most trying ordeals, and being now in a disastrous position, did his best to devote the remainder of his life to labouring for the good of Russia [14]. Thus was the estimation of Charmoy's work by three prominent Russian orientalists. The selflessness and nobility displayed by the first publisher of the *Sharaf-nāma* and the author of its first translation into a European language seems to befit the work which bears the title *Sharaf-nāma* (“Book of Nobility”), that is a history of the noble houses of Kurdistan.

Probably the reviewers knew about Charmoy's serious illness when they wrote their review of the edition: some months later F. Charmoy died (in 1868), the same year in which the first part of his Volume I of the *Sharaf-nāma* was published. Printing of the second part of the volume was suspended with more than 80 printer's sheets unfinished. A conference of the Russian Academy of Sciences charged academicians Brosset, Dorn, and Velyaminov-Zernov with finding a solution of this problem. On October 14, 1869, the commission proposed to address Joseph Gotvald (1813—1897) with a request that he assume “supervision over printing the last parts of Charmoy's work”. The same year, the Academy voiced its justified support for the employment of J. Gotvald, a former professor, and later librarian of Imperial Kazan University, terming him a scholar “who has justly earned fame among orientalists through his works on oriental literature and history” [15].

Thus, a new crusader joined those working on Sharaf-khān Bidlīsī's chronicle. J. Gotvald's mission was to correct proofs for six years. In 1875, the final part of Volume II of the French version of the *Sharaf-nāma* was published. The title which introduced the translation of Volume II included the following passage about Velyaminov-Zernov: “Traduction du second volume de texte du Chèref-nâme imprimé à St.-Pétersbourg, sous le suspice de l'Académie Impériale des Sciences de Russie, par les soins de Monsieur l'académicien V. Véliaminof-Zernof” [16]. The note bears witness to Velyaminov-Zernov's considerable contribution to the publication of Charmoy's work.

These were the intriguing circumstances in which appeared the first Persian edition of the *Sharaf-nāma* and its French translation. Many people contributed to bringing this work to readers, and they, no doubt, became an integral part of the *Sharaf-nāma*'s history. In the space of nearly 20 years, between 1853 and 1875, Sharaf-khān Bidlīsī's work was introduced to scholars not only in Persian, but also in French and in German [17].

The edition undertaken by Velyaminov-Zernov was the only one to appear for 70 years. Technically perfect, it appropriately conveyed the text contained in four manuscript copies of the *Sharaf-nāma*. Since the text on which Vely-

aminov-Zernov based his publication had been reviewed and corrected by the author himself, whatever remarks may have been made by later commentators, the text of the edition is indisputable, for it was confirmed by Sharaf-khān Bidlīsī himself.

This does not mean, of course, that the autograph is always free of slips, or even mistakes. Authors have been known to commit errors. Nevertheless, when one possesses a copy with proven authorial corrections such as the Ardebil manuscript, the author's text should be treated as inviolable, even in places which evoke doubts. All dubious passages and references, even the most obvious, should be treated in notes appended to the text.

This was precisely the approach adopted by Academician Velyaminov-Zernov. His careful treatment of the text precluded even the inclusion of variant readings from different manuscripts within the text; they are given independently after the author's conclusion to Volume II. He made a single exception in the case of a lacuna (“la lacune du manuscrit de la Bibliothèque Impériale: une lacune assez grande, elle commence au milieu du chapitre qui traite de la tribu Siah-mansour”) [18]. V. Velyaminov-Zernov wrote in his foreword to the first volume of *Sharaf-nāma*: “Je livre le texte tel qu'il est. Pour être aussi exact que possible, j'ai préféré conserver intactes les différentes manières d'écrire les noms propres employées par l'auteur ou le copiste. C'est ainsi ..., entre autres, le nom de tribu روزکی écrit tantôt روزکی, tantôt روزکی, tantôt روجکی. Je me réserve de relever dans mes notes les manières d'écrire qui me paraîtraient incorrectes” [19].

Velyaminov-Zernov's edition was carried out with the greatest possible respect for the author's text. As a result, his edition is of indisputable value, no matter what other editions of the *Sharaf-nāma* exist or may appear in the future.

The French edition of the *Sharaf-nāma* was the result of many years of work by F. B. Charmoy on Sharaf-khān Bidlīsī's text. A connoisseur of manuscripts and the author of a Persian Grammar lauded as an outstanding reference source by the Russian archaeologist and numismatist P. S. Savelyev [20], Charmoy applied himself to the French version of the *Sharaf-nāma* with diligence and care, employing all of his skills and knowledge of sources. The work opens with a word of appreciation of the Kurds. For Charmoy, the names of their outstanding figures went down in history as the incarnation of “génie belliqueux et de la bravoure” [21].

Charmoy was inspired to create his work by the unique historical fate of the Kurds and by the importance of Sharaf-khān Bidlīsī's chronicle. The published version of the chronicle, bracketed by an introduction and commentary, exceeds the original in length. Arabic, Persian and Turkish sources were cited in the introduction and commentary: works by Mas'ūdī, Iṣṭakhrī, Ibn al-Athīr, Ibn Khallikān, Abū'l-Fidā, Ḥamdallāh Mustawfī, Rashīd al-Dīn, and other authors, as well as Persian and Arabic glossaries. A considerable part of the introduction consists of excerpts from the *Jihānnūma* by Ḥājjī Khalīfa (a Turkish source from the mid-seventeenth century). Charmoy also studied European publications on the Kurds and Kurdistan, among them works by Le Père Maurice Garzoni, J. Malcolm, J. Saint-Martin, Cl. J. Rich, J. Hammer, D'Ohsson.

In translating the *Sharaf-nāma*, Charmoy used not only the Velyaminov-Zernov edition, but also a rare and valuable

manuscript of the work — a copy of an autograph transcribed in 1606/1607 and given to Charmoy by Gore Ousley for study. In the opinion of Charmoy, the manuscript was characterised by “extreme correction” [22]. He termed the manuscript “le plus complet de tous ceux que nous avons eus à notre disposition”. The employment of numerous sources and much literature on the Kurds, as well as reference to more than one manuscript, allowed Charmoy to produce an exceptional translation which is more than simply a recasting of the source in another language.

Charmoy not only reproduced the text in French with brilliance and virtuosity, but added detail and accuracy to geographic and personal names, especially in his translation of Part I. For example, he replaced قوش with Kirmanshah, قوما with Dakuka, جقندكان with Khuftidakan, the Banū ‘Ayyar with Banū ‘Annaz, etc.

Charmoy supplemented the text, occasionally filling in gaps with a hemistich lacking in his basic manuscript, or adding an entire excerpt [23]. Charmoy also reevaluated the manuscript from the Asiatic Museum employed by Velyaminov-Zernov in his edition of the *Sharaf-nāma*. Charmoy provided convincing proof that this manuscript is “تسويد ou Minute même de l’auteur” [24]. Charmoy found clear evidence for his hypothesis in the fact that the manuscript contains many chapters and pages not found elsewhere. Yet there is one important detail which hinders the formulation of a sure conclusion in this matter — the manuscript is not dated; the time and place of its transcribing are not known.

Charmoy undoubtedly modified the text where he felt that it contradicted common sense. Thus, on pages 43 and 317 of his translation (vol. I, pt. 2), we find a remarkable passage: “Au lieu du mot عدد — à secours, qui formerait un contre-sens,” Charmoy writes, “je n’hésite pas à lire جنگ ‘pour les combattre’”. I provide this example to demonstrate how Charmoy’s approach differed from that of Vely-

aminov-Zernov, who only allowed himself to place a question mark after the word عدد, although the error in the text was evident to him.

To be just, the text of the translation abounds in burdensome, repetitive clarifications, as well as in largely unnecessary excerpts from the sources given in the original Arabic. But, certainly, these shortcomings pale before the translation’s virtues.

V. Velyaminov-Zernov, F. Charmoy and H. Barb remain the legendary pioneers in the study of the text of the *Sharaf-nāma*. In the late 1950s, nearly a century after their works appeared, an acute need arose to translate the *Sharaf-nāma* into Russian. The project was initiated by Academician J. Orbeli and Dr. Qanat Kurdoev, great authorities in Kurdish studies in Leningrad.

The author of the current article had the honour of working on the Russian translation of the *Sharaf-nāma*, which was based on Velyaminov-Zernov’s edition [25]. I was much helped with my work by Prof. Leon Guzalyan. The translation of the text in this edition is accompanied by the foreword, indices of names, toponyms, ethnonyms, terms, and sources which render the Russian translation easier for readers to use. Now, I am not very much satisfied with my commentary of the text. Unfortunately, scholars mostly have a single chance with their vast text publications. Had I the opportunity to return to this work, I would re-work the commentary significantly.

Sharaf-khān Bidlīsī’s work is of permanent value. New generations of Kurds and oriental studies scholars will benefit from it, bringing new perspectives. Undoubtedly, some sections of the text will be understood and interpreted in new ways. Throughout, however, the words set down by Sharaf-khān Bidlīsī will remain, inspiring thought for years to come.

## Notes

1. Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg, *ф. 2, on. 1—1861, д. No. 6, pp. 47—8.*
2. *Ibid.*, p. 1.
3. *Ibid.*
4. P. S. Savel'ev, *O zhizni i trudakh F. F. Sharmua* (On the Life and Works of F.-B. Charmoy) (St. Petersburg, 1845).
5. E. Kunik, “Analyse d’un ouvrage manuscrit...”, *Mélanges Asiatiques tirés du Bulletin historico-philologique de l’Académie Impériale des sciences de St.-Petersbourg*, I (1852), p. 540; see also Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg, *ф. 95, on. 1, д. No. 377, p. 3.*
6. *Scheref-nameh ou Histoire des Kourdes par Scheref, Prince de Bidlis*, publiée pour la première fois ... par V. Véliaminof-Zernof, vol I (St. Pétersbourg, 1860), p. 10.
7. See review of Ch. Defrémery, *Scheref-nameh ou Histoire des Kourdes, par Scheref, Prince de Bidlis*, publiée pour la première fois par V. Véliaminof-Zernof, t. I, St.-Petersbourg, 1860, in *Journal Asiatique*, cinquième série, XVI (1860), pp. 456—7.
8. Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences, *ф. 2, on. 1—1861, д. No. 2, p. 1.*
9. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 1—2.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 11, 54.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 50—4.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 55—7, 69.
16. *Chèref-Nāmeḥ ou fastes de la nation kourde par Chèref-ou'd-dîne, prince de Bidlis, dans l’Iiâlet d’Arzeroûme.*, trad. du Persan et commentés par F. B. Charmoy, vol. II, pt. 1 (St.-Petersbourg, 1873), p. 447.
17. H. A. Barb, “Über die unter dem Namen Tarich el Akrad, bekannte Kurden-Chronik von Scheref”, *Sitzungsberichte der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien*, Bd. 10, H. 2 (1853); *idem*, “Geschichtliche Skizze der in der Chronik von Scheref behandelten dreiunddreissig verschiedenen kurdischen Fürstengeschlechter”, *ibid.*, Bd. 22, H. 1 (1856); *idem*, “Geschichte von fünf Kurden Dynastien”, *ibid.*, Bd.

28, H. 1 (1858), also Bd. 30, H. 1 (1859); *idem*, “Geschichte der kurdischen Fürstentherrschaft in Bidlis (aus dem "Scherefname", IV Buch)”, *ibid.*, Bd. 32, H. 1 (1859).

18. *Scheref-nameh ou Histoire des Kourdes*, vol. I, pp. 304—24.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

20. P. S. Savel'ev, *O zhizni i trudakh F. F. Sharmua* (On the Life and Works of F. F. Charmoy) (St. Petersburg, 1843), p. 9.

21. *Chèref-Nāme*, trad. par F.-B. Charmoy, vol. I, pt. 1 (St.-Pétersbourg, 1868), p. 1.

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 5—6.

23. See Velyaminov-Zernov's edition, pp. 83, 389; see also Charmoy's French edition, vol. I, pt. 2, pp. 106—7; vol. II, pt. 1, p. 264.

24. Charmoy's French edition, vol. I, pt. 1, pp. 4—5.

25. Sharaf-khān Bidlīsī, *Sharaf-nāme*, perevod, predislovie, primechaniia i prilozhenie E. I. Vasil'evoi (Sharaf-khān Bidlīsī, *Sharaf-nāma*, translation, foreword, commentaries and addenda by E. I. Vasilyeva), i—ii (Moscow, 1967—1976).