

Introducing Bayani Kermani and the Manuscripts of His Monsha'at

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Abstract

Reviving the works of Persian Empire's writers and grandees, both in terms of the newly discovered points in books and discourses and also including indications of their era's social, political and cultural state, is highly essential and valuable; so much so that if no efforts are made on their correction and restoration, a vast part of this extremely rich cultural heritage will be buried among the manuscripts. It is incumbent on the scientific community to take steps, however brief, in order to stimulate such precious works which in turn represent a cultural legacy.

One of these works is Bayani Kermani's Monsha'at, dated back to Iran's Timurid and early Safavid period. Since he was a Timurid court clerk later becoming the Chancellor and has mentioned many important literary and political figures in his work, the correction of this book greatly contributes to the recognition the individuals and understanding the social culture and customs of the Timurid era.

This paper briefly introduces Bayani, his works, and the remaining manuscripts of Monsha'at, hoping for it to be of some benefit.

Keywords: Bayani Kermani, Shahabuddin Abdullah Morvarid, Monsha'at, Timurid prose

1. Introduction

In the Persian Empire there have, since ancient times, been scribes and secretaries of whose important tasks was to inscribe the kings' commands and charters. Their quill played a large role in establishing or cutting ties with other territories; for such reason they were often chosen among educated, scholarly, and ethical individuals who, in addition, benefited from influential and penetrating verbal and non-verbal skills. Predecessors believed that a secretary must "be a native, have great reputation, careful comments, clear and profound intellect. Politeness and its fruits must have greatly fallen upon him and he must not a stranger to rational postulation. He must appreciate the position of entities and know the people of his time" (Aroozi, 1997:29). Once these secretaries proved their loyalty and competence to the king, they would get elected for higher ranks.

Bayani is also one of such secretaries, who in the court of Sultan Hussein Bayquara – an outstanding Timurid monarch - even became a minister. In addition to political activities, he was never unaware of writing and left a priceless legacy behind. Of his most significant works, which simultaneously denotes his aptitudes as a writer and gives a clearer insight of the socio-political state of the Timurid period and its leaders and dignitaries, is Monsha'at which is later introduced in detail.

2. Khwaje Shahabuddin Abdullah Morvarid

Khwaje Shahabuddin Abdullah Morvarid, son of Khwaje Shams al-Din Muhammad Morvarid, had the poetic pseudonym of Bayani and for his father's birthplace of Kerman, became known as Bayani Kermani. On the reason of choosing such title he explains in his Monsha'at: "Once his King ordered him to pick Bayani as his pen name, he had no alternative and his tongue did not protest."

Many biographers praise Bayani on his sublime ethics and manners and present him as a bearer of virtues and perfections and believe that, along with what he had inherited, he possessed so much acquired excellence and brilliance that his ethics made him a legend of his time; "Never in the skies of time appeared a star so majestic and precious; and celebrated for his abundant merits and qualities and the diversity of ethics" (Vasefi, 1970:244). "Almighty God has granted this nobleman with all needed to be one, be it of knowledge, grace, elegance, clear

conscience, decent morals and art" (Dolatshah Samarghandi, 1987:382) and it is said elsewhere "He was all to the utmost perfection and most historians praise his wisdom, grace, and passion"(Amin Ahmad Razi, 1999:297).

In his youth, Bayani found his way to Sultan Hussain Mirza's court as his and proved such a high competence and skill that the king placed him within the Grand Associate Rulers, and signed letters on behalf of Amiralī Shirnavaei. In the time of Sultan Hussain Bayghra, he received great authority and even became a minister and accompanied him in every battle. After the death of Sultan Hussein in 1506 AD, "he chose seclusion and made a living by scripting the Quran" (Isfahani, 1990:83). With Shah Ismail taking the throne, he was comforted and hired again. As the king urged, he accepted the ministry and began writing a history on the monarchy and soon after he finished it in 1516, he died of smallpox. On his death date, in some biographies, it has been said: "they date Abdullah Morvarid's death to 1535, 1536, or 1541 and that's not true." (Nafisi, 1984:777) "He died in Herat and is buried in the Mosalla" (Azarbigdeli, 1957:123). Bayani was of popular figures of his time. He kept in close contact with most poets and writers of his period such as Jami, Ahli Shirazi, and Amir Ali Shir Navaee, and has written a foreword on Divan Hafez which is recorded in Monsha'at; many believe that is the first posted introduction to Divan Hafez. Names of many political figures, courtiers, poets and scholars of this era, in addition to Monsha'at, are mentioned in the works of his contemporaries including Habib Alsyair, Dastoor Alvozara, Badaye' Alvaghaye', Fara'ed Ghiasi, Mansha' Alensha, Tohfeye Salami, and more. Thus the correction of this book can illuminate dark and unknown corners of history and their lives. These add to the importance and value of Monsha'at.

3. Bayani's Works

It is perceived of biographies and history books that Khwaje Abdullah was very dexterous in poetry and prose. Khand Mir talks of his writing: "His proses, like Sahban Speeches, are mighty elegant and his poems, like Monsha'at, resemble the pearls of Oman, free of all fault and imperfection." (Khand Mir, 1959:325)

His works include:

(a) *Collection (Divan) of Odes and Sonnets which includes*: "nearly two thousand verses of odes, sonnets, quatrains, and pieces." (Bigdeli, 1961:123) Sam Mirza, acknowledges Bayani among the grandees who, "even though, were not poets, enjoyed a little poetry every now and again" (Mirza, Undated, 102). Several of his sonnets, especially ones responding Jami's, clearly imply he has not been among the greater poets.

(b) *Set of quatrains called Moones Alahbab*, about which many sayings exist. Some call his Divan Moones Alahbab. Nafisi acknowledges "Moones Alahbab as a collection of poems" and Azar Bigdeli states "The Moones Alahbab Masnavi has not been by the unworthy" (Bigdeli, 1961:123). Thus, Azar Bigdeli knows it to be a Masnavi. It is only the author of Habib Alsyair who says Bayani's quatrains are called Moones Alahbab. The author of Alzari'e recalls seeing a copy of Moones Alahbab in Meshkat library which had only included his quatrains and the name only refers to them and not his complete Divan" (Behzadi Andoohjerdi, 1975). What appears in number 1504/1 of the Parliament Library is Moones Alahbab – a set of Bayani's quatrains. "He provided this book for what his friends had requested and what Ibn Hossein Mirza son of Soltan Hossein Bayghra had ordered and named its introductory after him"(Mirafzali, 2011:44).

(c) *Royal history introduces the series of events during the reign of Shah Ismail Safavi in prose*. "Royal history is of his most prestigious works" (Esfahani, 1990:83).

(d) *Poetic History (epic) "was written in favour of Shah Ismail*. Though he didn't live long enough to complete it" (Bigdeli, 1961:123).

(e) *The Khosrow and Shirin Masnavi* was yet another book that he didn't get to finish.

(f) *Monsha'at* "is widely popular and known as the sacred book" (Nafisi, 1984:777). Other biographers have also recognized it as Bayani's effort. Nafisi believes that, other than Monsha'at, Bayani has had a book which "once taught primary school children how to write and was very common"(Nafisi, 1984:260). Morvarid's Monsha'at is known as 'book of honors' or 'the sacred book' in some books, which is probably based on its first page quatrain. Such naming cannot be found in literature close to the time of the author. Sam Mirza names Bayani's works in a more comprehensive way and since he was Bayani's student, his words are more trustworthy. "Of his works Divan of Odes, Sonnets and quatrains called Moones Alahbab, Royal History, and Monsha'at are very well-known among the people; though the poetic history and Khosrow and Shirin Masnavi, due to their incompleteness, did not go very far"(Mirza, Undated: 103, 104).

4. Morvarid, the Artist

Bayani, by the acknowledgement of all biographers, is the undisputed master of music and calligraphy. He was good at all types of writing but his Naskh, Sols were very commendable. Furthermore, "he was a master of Nasta'liq." (Saba, 1967: 125) (Naskh, Sols, Nasta'liq and Ta'liq are different types of Persian writing)

"He was also had very skillfull in music and, in his time, was the best at playing the Qanun." (Nafisi, 1984:260) He was so perfect that the Poet Laureate claims: "With his grace and talent, his calligraphy is as stunning as a peacock feather. The beauty of his Naskh diminishes Yaghoot's (a well-known calligrapher), and the melody of his Qanun captivates hearts" (Samarkandi, 1984:382).

5. The Necessity of Correcting Monsha'at

Bayani Kermani's Monsha'at has great literary value, including imagery and metaphors, many poems and proverbs in Arabic and Persian, and verses from the Quran. Plus, the relevance and linkage of such poems with the verses from the Quran adds even more to the value of this work. Studying the words and expressions in Monsha'at gives a better understanding of common words and poetic terms of the Timurid period. As well as its literary value, Monsha'at gives political and historical information through the letters. In addition, famous names, relationships and events that are expressed via the letters and the presentation of some given positions are historically respected. The mentioning of names and geographical location of some places is also fascinating. Revealing some of the common customs, traditions, cultures and rules of society is sociologically important. Hence, Monsha'at cannot be viewed only as a literary work. These prove the importance of editing the book.

6. Introducing Different Versions of Bayani's Monsha'at

Several versions of Monsha'at remain which are presented below. Some scripted versions have wrongly been considered a version of Monsha'at; an example is number 6785 of the National Library of Iran which has the same beginning as Bayani's Monsha'at but in actual fact belongs to Mirza Mohammad Mahdi, alias as Kavakeb. Incomplete copies of Monsha'at also exist which only contain a few leaves, like a copy owned by the Esfahan's Rozati Library. Introduced in what follows are the most valuable and complete versions of Monsha'at in order of their importance in the correction process.

6.1 The As Version

Asset number 1504/1 in the Library of Parliament is a set of Abdullah Morvarid's Monsha'at and Mounes Alhobab treatise written on September 28th, 1563. Monsha'at's beginning and ending in this version are:

Beginning: "Abdullah Mohammed Morvarid, the author, informs you that some intellectuals have blessed this humble man with their endless love and kindness and asked for my post. Thus, I have collected some of them".

Ending: a quatrain meaning: "oh dearest friend, your absence has turned my spring into fall and my body has grown feeble and puny".

This manuscript contains 184 pages, each of which has 15 rows. From the beginning up to page 165 includes Monsha'at and then comes Mounes Alahbab. This is a valuable version in broken Nastaliq, with a very neat handwriting, and includes 154 letters. Spelling errors are very few. Letter titles, verses of Quran, traditions and quotes which are in Arabic, are in red. Except two missing pages, this version still holds the original data and is, therefore, the most complete available version. One of its letters, "The Sign" is repeated twice and several other versions have recurrently duplicated it, proving either they were all written from a base script, or that all versions are grounded on one single version. Where a word is missing it can be found either above the line or in the margin. Once a word is misspelled, in order not to cross out his writings and distort the text, the scribe has put the letter M (for mistake) in the margin and announced the right word after.

The title of each letter comes at the line centre with a minor space from the previous letter. In some cases the corrections are visible, though not enough to lessen the cleanliness of the document.

(a) In writing some of the letters and words no single rule has been applied; for example:

- The Persian preposition of "را" (that) is found in both connected and disconnected forms. The same applies to the adjective or demonstrative of "آن" (that). This can also be found in "Mak" and "Mar" version. The present continuous "می" (-ing) is also written in both joined and separated forms which also happens in the "Mak" version.

(b) The following has been a constant throughout the script:

- The preposition of "به" (to) is linked to its following word.

Errors made in this version:

- The verses from the Quran are wrong in a few cases.

Due to its prominent features and that it is the most comprehensive version among those closer to the author's time, this version is chosen as the base manuscript and is compared with other versions and will be critically corrected.

6.2 *The Mak Version*

This one is asset number 3798 of Malek National Library in Tehran; a very clean copy in Nastaliq. It has 142 pages with 14 lines on each. The scribe has been greatly cautious in writing since there are no corrections made.

This copy starts with a quatrain saying: "oh, one who has created mankind and the universe...", and the quatrain ends with: "I was saddened, miserable for the distant love when an angel came to me and informed me of her homecoming. I kept hearing the tidings to stop the crying and impatience for the return of my love is near".

Then, in Arabic, it is stated that this version is written by Mohammad Kateb Tabrizi in 1572 AD.

(a) The features of this edition:

(a.1) It includes 139 letters.

(a.2) The bottom of some pages have been labelled, making it impossible to read what it says underneath them; as on pages 5, 6, 7, and 8.

(b) Some textual features of this version:

(b.1) Nowhere other than pages 4 and 5 in this manuscript, are the verses of Quran highlighted by a line above them. It is clear that these were drawn by one other than the scribe.

(b.2) Punctuation is accurate, but once the overload of dots threatens the beauty, the scribe has not hesitated in leaving them out.

(b.3) The preposition of "اَ" (to) is consistently linked to its following word.

(b.4) Some spelling errors are evident in the release.

6.3 *The Shi Version*

It is lot number 9022 of Ayatollah Mar'ashi Najafi Library in Qom and includes 149 letters. Second to the base edition, this is the most comprehensive version in terms of the number of letters; and is very similar to the base manuscript. It seems that either this has been copied from the base manuscript or both scribes have copied them from a single book. Though this is the latter version, due to their similarity, it greatly helps with the unreadable parts of the base manuscript. This version doesn't miss anything of the beginning, but it ends in the middle of letter 150 with this statement: "giving thanks and appreciation for this high honour is truly necessary for the continuation of such great blessings". Most features of other versions in terms of linked or unlinked letters and expressions are also true here, with the exception of few typos in this version.

6.4 *The Maj Version*

Number 9454 of the Parliament Library is called Sharaf Nameh which has missing parts at its beginning and ending. The exact date is not inscribed line but it belongs to the 17th century AD. A square stamp print is at both ends which reads "There is no God but God, master of truth and victory, whose worshipper is Mohammad Taghi". On the front cover it is recorded "Monsha'at and Court commands, composed and inscribed by Khwaje Abdullah Morvarid known as Bayani". This copy starts in the middle of a letter corresponding to Amir Alishir Navaee and ends within a letter about the conquest of India in 1487 AD.

(a) Some of its features include:

(a) Has a total of 88 letters in 76 pages, written in Ta'liq style.

(a) The aim of the scribe in writing this book has been more producing calligraphy than recording a literary-historic work. Therefore not much attention is paid to what is being written. On several occasions when a word is repeated a few lines later, the visual error and carelessness of the writer have caused him to miss the lines in between.

(a.1) Where letters are short, they immediately follow one another with only their red titles in between, whereas longer letters have a slight space in between them.

(a.2) Frequent typos in this version are evident.

(a.3) In linked or separated spelling of words, this version follows no rules. Whichever makes the calligraphy look nicer is used.

(a.4) The advantage of this version over the others is that since its scribe has been of great calligraphers who probably knew different styles of writing, he has been able to read and record words that other scribes couldn't.

6.5 The Mas Version

Number 516/2 of the Parliament Library which reads on its cover "a collection of three essays of Persian, Arabic, and Composition; 1- Royal Scriptures by Hossein Ibn Ali Alkashefi known as Prince, Abu Almohsen completed in the name of Sultan Hossein, 2- Sharaf Nameh or Monsha'at which is 86 pages" and no mention of the third essay.

There are no missing parts at the beginning; however it starts with several letters that do not exist in other versions. It ends with verses that read: "Once the King ordered Abdullah Morvarid to pick Bayani as his pen name, his tongue did not protest."

This version includes 89 letters which immediately follow one another. The important point about this version is that it has had several writers as the handwritings differ and their accuracy level has made different parts of the book unique. Some pages neither have typos nor do they miss a word or expression whereas some other pages include an abundance of errors i.e. wrong verses of the Quran and plenty of cross outs; as if inscribing this book has been an unwilling task to the writer - one that he has only wanted to get rid of.

6.6 The Mar Version

In 191 pages, lot number 9606 of Ayatollah Mar'ashi Najafi Library in Qom is a set of 3 parts; from the beginning up to page 109 is the Monsha'at associated with Jami, a great Iranian poet and writer who lived contemporaneous to Bayani Kermani in the 15th century. The second part is Bayani's Monsha'at to page 156, which is complete at the start, but after introduction jumps to letter number 58. This letter is recorded with an incomplete title. This part ends with the verse: "for as long as the world exists, I wish the spring of your life out of the danger of being overcome by a fall"; and has 80 letters. The third part, which starts on page 156 and continues to the end of the book, is a copy of Jame' AlMonsha'at by Hossein Ibn Moein al-Din Mabdi.

Each page comprises of 13 lines, written in Naskh for the first part and Nasta'liq for the rest. Letters are consecutive. Many spelling errors appear in this version. Compared to the other versions of this book, the number of missing words is high. Some Arabic and even Persian lines are completely signed with vowels.

6.7 The Ash Version

This is number 8783 of Ayatollah Mar'ashi Najafi Library in Qom. On the front cover of this manuscript it says: Sharaf Nameh, Khwaje Abdullah Ibn Mohammad Morvarid Kermani (Bayati) – as a mistake for Bayani. This manuscript has 121 pages with 17 lines on each page. Its beginning and end match those of the Mak version. At the end it reads in Arabic: "With God's blessings, this humble servant, Amrullah Ibn Shams al-Din Mohammad Qomi, finished inscribing this book on the 17th of September, 1575".

(a) Some of its features are:

(a) Inclusive of 33 letters.

(a) Drops of black ink are on many pages, making numerous parts completely black and unreadable.

(a) Letters come after one another with no space in between. The titles, which seem to be written with coloured ink, have faded more than the text. The scribe pays no attention to the letter titles in previous versions and chooses his own title for each letter after reading it. In some cases he includes all the appellation of a person in the title of the letter, therefore making the titles inconsistent with the other versions.

(a.1) On many occasions the scribe has incorrectly read and written a phrase or word.

(a.2) A line is drawn above the verses of Quran, traditions, prayers, and great Arabic sayings.

(a.3) No set rule is followed in separating or linking the prepositions.

(a.4) Many pages contain misprints.

7. Conclusion

Bayani is of the great literary figures of the Timurid era, since he has held high positions within the Timurid court, dealt with many political characters, and named them in his letters. He has also had a close friendship with some of the greatest poets of his time such as Jami, Ahli Shirazi, and Amir Alishir Navaee and has written them many letters. In addition, he has written a foreword on Hafez's collected works (Divan), recorded in his

Monsha'at; this book is an outstanding example of bureaucratic prose of the Timurid era and through considering it, common bureaucratic jargon of that period is understood. Also, the name of personalities, relationships and events that are expressed through letters and the presentation of some available positions are significant historical information. The remarks made on the names of several places and their geographical locations are also worth noting. From a sociological point of view, mentioning some of the common customs, traditions, rules, and principles of society is of importance.

All in all, Monsha'at is not just a literary work. These remarks make the correction of this work seem very necessary. Through editing Monsha'at and achieving a legible text, the authors try to contribute, even a little, to the Persian language and literature.

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