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**Perho, Irmeli. *Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts: Codices Persici, Codices Eyseriani, Codex Persicus Add.* Copenhagen: NIAS Press and Det Kongelige Bibliotek, 2017. Hardback, pp. 706. ISBN: 978-87-7694-216-8.**

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The *Catalogue of Oriental Manuscripts, Xylographs, etc. in Danish Collections* (COMDC) is a book series edited by Stig T. Rasmussen, and the product of a long-term partnership between Det Kongelige Bibliotek (Danish Royal Library) and the Nordic Institute for Asian Studies (NIAS). The series has so far produced catalogues of manuscripts in various, chiefly Asian, languages: Ceylonese (1 vol.), Pali, Laotian, Siamese, Thai (1 vol.), Mongol (1 vol.), Indonesian (2 vols.), Arabic (3 vols.), Tibetan (2 vols.), Sanskrit (1 vol.), Persian (2 vols.), Chinese (1 vol.), Japanese (1 vol.), Korean (1 vol.), Yao (1 vol.), and Ethiopic (1 vol.).

The Persian catalogue has been published in two volumes, both written and edited by Irmeli Perho. The first of the two, entitled *Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts: Codices Persici Arthur Christenseniani, Codices Simonseniani*

*Persici, Codices Persici Additamenta*, is volume 8.1 (books 1-2) in the COMDC series and was released in 2014. The second, entitled *Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts: Codices Persici, Codices Eyseriani, Codex Persicus Add.*, is volume 8.2 of the COMDC series, published in 2017. The second volume includes information on 143 manuscripts in the *Codices Persici* collection of the Danish Royal Library, 13 manuscripts in the *Eyseriani* collection, as well as “the description of Cod. Pers. Add. 103 that was acquired in 1956 but has not been catalogued earlier” (ix). A large part of the manuscripts in Cod. Pers. “originates in India: the manuscripts were copied in India or authored by Indian scholars or Persian scholars who had moved to India” (ix).

The Indian predominance in the collection and the existence of a large number of manuscripts at Danish libraries is explained through the “Danish colonial presence in India from 1620 to 1845” (xi). Figures such as Christoper Mundt, Peter Johan Flor, Nathanael Wallich, and Jørgen Hendrik Berner worked for a variety reasons in the Indian subcontinent, where they acquired most of the manuscripts and transferred them to Denmark; later on, they either presented the manuscripts as gifts or sold their collections to libraries or individual collectors.

A major feature of the Persian catalogue is the wealth of comprehensive and well-researched information that provides detailed data on each manuscript, described with the Title, Subject, Author, Scribe, Copying Date, Number of Folios, Number of Lines to the Page, Size, Description, Notes, Owners’ Remarks, Beginning of the Text, Ending of the Text, and Provenance. The Description provides a summary of each manuscript which includes the table of contents, if any, or a general overview of the contents. Owners’ Remarks offer background information on the history of the ownership of each manuscript and further information is offered, where available, about its ownership with reference to the stamps visible on a number of first folios. In case authors or titles are known by other names or registered differently in other libraries and databases, further information is provided to facilitate research on specific manuscripts, books or authors.

The catalogue is printed and bound with prime quality, and despite the size of the volume, it is easy to leaf through. The arrangement is simple, efficient and straightforward: information pages are followed by black-and-white images of the first and last folios of the manuscript—where available; in specific cases, images of other pages are also reproduced, which are complemented by a selected number of colored images that reflect the rich texts and exquisite colors of the original manuscripts.

This and other catalogues in the COMDC series are vital for historical research. Even though such manuscripts are often valued primarily for historical or artistic reasons, the catalogue exposes a rich variety of epistemic knowledges, which though forgotten or outdated, register a stage of scientific development recorded in Persian, and reveal research methods both in the Indian subcontinent and in the Islamic world at large.

The diversity of the subjects of catalogued manuscripts is stunning: history, poetry, prose writing, and medicine dominate the subjects; but there are manuscripts on other subject such as theology, Sufism, children's medicine, veterinary medicine, astrology, natural science, sexual training, magic and occult sciences, history of Christianity, rhetoric, lexicography, ethics, army regulations, epistolography, oneirocriticism, and falconry. Given that some of these manuscripts were reproduced centuries after the original work was created, they shed light on a book production and dissemination industry which was in many cases, as evidenced by the dedications of a number of the manuscripts, sponsored by royal houses.

Despite the great effort invested in the production of this outstanding catalogue, there are a few issues, mostly of aesthetic nature, that, if elevated, would contribute to rendering the manuscript flawless. A majority of the issues are relevant to Persian texts, which require revision to upgrade them to the level of the quality of the catalogue.

First, some manuscripts come with a number of illustrations, like that of a Simorq and a dragon on pages 84-85 (in black-and-white) and 342-843 (in color).

It would have been a great advantage for researchers, particularly those working on illustrated Persian manuscripts, if information had been provided on the quantity illustrations in each manuscript, as well as, where known, on illustrators. Such illustrations are significant to the history of science, displaying how specific notions were conceived, but they are also relevant to art history.

The second issue is of an aesthetic nature. The font chosen for explanatory notes is Times New Roman for both English and Persian texts. Part of the appeal of catalogued manuscripts is the artistic presentation of the material, embodied in the art of calligraphy, illustrated pages, or elaborately colorful margins. A partial reflection of the beauty of the folios in the catalogue would therefore have been fitting. The English notes are printed in a standard font; the choice of an elegant Persian font with softer edges or a more official look (e.g. Lotus, Nazanin, Mitra, or even Calibri/Calibri Light) would have made them more appealing to the eye.

What is more, the punctuation of Persian notes uses English symbols. Commas and slashes, for instance, are inverted and do not follow the right punctuation system; as a result, instead of the Persian comma (ۛ) or slash (/), reverse commas and slashes (, and \) are in use. The insertion of a right-to-left (i.e. Persian) writing system in a predominantly left-to-right text makes compliance with the proper punctuation system difficult. That is probably why there has at times been confusion in the use of slashes: on page 24, for instance, inverted slashes are used in the Persian text; then on page 25, the correct slash is used and just a bit later, on the same page, mixed slashes are inserted into the Persian text.

Moreover, even though a transliteration guide is not provided, the transliteration system is generally consistent, with only minor inconsistencies: to refer to the scripture of Islam, both *Qor'an* and *al-Qur'an* have been used. This may have been due to loyalty to Persian and Arabic texts to reflect the Persian and Arabic pronunciations, but no explanation is provided for such cases.

Fifth, reference to online sources could have been used more tastefully. There are several citations from the website of *Encyclopedia Iranica* and other websites for biographical information on poets and authors. Given that this catalogue is a reference book and highly likely to outlast the websites, or the provided URL addresses, a different referencing system would be needed that is in tune with the uses and envisioned longevity of the catalogue. The use of such references is inevitable; so, they could be organized in a way to avoid unnecessary repetitions: on pages 66, 67 and 75, for example, the same link to an entry in *Encyclopedia Iranica* is printed for information about the same author. Such links could be collected under the “Index of authors, compilers and translators” at the end of the book in a future edition of the catalogue.

In the description of each manuscript, the opening and ending lines are cited. This section of the catalogue requires thorough editing to make them consistent and trim other issues. On a number of occasions, there are mistakes in reporting the lines: on page 380, for example, the opening of a manuscript of Sa’di’s *Golestan* is reported to be *مَنْتَ مر خدای را*. In *Cod. Pers. 87 fol. 002b*, from which the description is reported, the word *مر* does not exist. Similarly, on page 439, the first line of a *Masnavi Ma’navi* manuscript is reported to be *از خدایها شکایت می کند*; obviously, the second word should have been *جداییها*, as is readable from the provided folio image.

Similarly, there is a considerable number of typos in Persian texts. On page 21, *باب هفتم* should be *هفتم*; on page 24, *مقدمه الصلاة* should be *مقدمه الصلاة*; one page 51, *پاسنیدیه* has been reported as *پاسنیدیه*; on page 87, *کثیر* has been printed as *کثیر*; on page 170, *کث* should be *که*; and on page 213, *الله اکبر*, has a redundant *alef* at the beginning. A problem the typos create is that it is not clear whether uncommon cases, like when *k* (ک) and *g* (گ) are used interchangeably, are actual typos or reflect the manuscript; as only one or two folios of each manuscript are provided, consistency would be very helpful.

Finally, the author has had to deal with an important historical element: in classical Persian texts, which used the Arabic alphabet before it was modified for

and adapted to Persian, four letters are lacking: g (گ), ch (چ), p (پ), zh (ژ). As a result, an important decision in the writing of the description has been to whether reproduce the opening and ending lines in the manuscript as is, or to report them with reference to modern Persian alphabet. While in some cases it seems the former strategy has been implemented, in other cases the latter seems to be true.

Given the excellence of the catalogue and the continuous work on this and other manuscripts, it may be useful to reconsider the choice of terms for labeling the manuscripts. On page 414, for instance, “Anthology of poetry” has been translated into مجموعه شعر. This is in principle fine; however, a proper title in classical Persian for such collections would be کَشکول because مجموعه شعر in modern Persian often refers to a collection of poems by one poet, rather than an anthology of poems by different poets.

The above issues notwithstanding, this catalogue is an important and essential reference book for research, and it is recommended that Iranian libraries make copies of both Persian catalogues—as well as those in other languages—accessible to students and scholars for encouraging innovative research in the humanities. This catalogue is a wonderful model to emulate for museums and libraries which hold similar manuscripts among their collections. A previously published example in Iran is Badri Atabai’s two-volume catalogue of handwritten manuscripts, and one-volume catalogue of albums at the Iranian Royal Library, collections that seem to be now preserved at the Golestan Palace Museum and the Iranian National Library. Until museums and libraries resume such efforts, the efforts of NIAS Press for preserving part of the collective human cultural heritage and sharing that with a global audience is highly appreciated.