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*An Analytical Survey of Persian Works
on Indian Learned Traditions*

OFFPRINT

PERSO-INDICA.

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is published on line at: www.perso-indica.net
ISSN: 2267-2753

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Ajay Čand-nāma

The *Ajay Čand-nāma*, a versified vocabulary (*niṣāb*) of Arabic, Persian, and Hindawī terms, was prepared in 960/1552-3. The author, a Hindu *kāyasth*, describes himself in the vocabulary as “Ajay Čand, the slave of the court [...] the son of Dīp Čand, the maker of poems” (*shi‘r kunanda*, an unusual Persian compound) and “resident of the city of Sikandarābād,” a town located fifty five kilometers to the east of Delhi in Bulandshahr district. Nothing else is known about him. Ajay Čand arranges its 375 distich verses into 36 sections, described in the text as the workshops (*kār-hāna*) of a king (*pādšāh*). The *Ajay Čand-nāma* is reminiscent of a classical mnemonic technology, the memory palace, whose invention Cicero and Quintilian attributed to the Greek poet Simonides (Yates 1966, pp. 1-4). Children committing the work to memory could do so by depositing verses into different imaginary rooms, and then, in recounting it, wander back through the palace to retrieve them.

Prepared in the final years of Sūr hegemony (1540-1556) and a few decades after Yūsufī’s *Qaṣīda dar luġāt-i hindī*, the *Ajay Čand-nāma* is the third known *niṣāb* to provide Hindawī equivalents for Persian and Arabic terms (for a discussion of what may be the first of these works, the *Ḥāliq bārī* attributed to Amīr Ḥusraw, who died in 1325, see Hakala 2014). There exist two different versions of the *Ajay Čand-nāma*. A 375-verse manuscript of 21 folios was described in a 1961 essay by ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq, which he called *Miṭl-i ḥāliq bārī* (A *ḥāliq bārī* analogue) (Ḥaqq 1961, p. 199). From the introductory sections, he is able to determine the name of the author to be Ajay Čand, son of Danī Čand, and the date of completion 960/1552-3. While the copyist indicated a date of completion in the colophon, Ḥaqq was not able to decipher it (he reproduces it as *ba-roz-i jum‘a-yi tāriḥ-i rajab sana-i ...*) (Ḥaqq 1961, p. 207). This manuscript appears in 29 sections, the titles for which Ḥaqq found similar to those enumerated in the first book (The Imperial Household) of the *Ā’in-i akbarī* (Ḥaqq 1961, p. 200; cf. Abū al-Faḍl 1873). Ḥaqq transcribes only eight verses in their entirety. Unfortunately,

he does not provide additional information about where this particular manuscript is housed, though it may be present in the Anjuman-i Taraqqī-yi Urdū in Karachi (cf. Amrohawī 1982).

Naḏīr Aḥmad transcribed the complete text of a different manuscript copy (Aḥmad 2002). The manuscript, consisting of 506 verses on 19 folios, was preserved in Ḥamīdiya Library in Bhopal and transferred to the Mawlānā Āzād Central Library, also in Bhopal. The colophon of the Bhopal manuscript reproduced by Naḏīr Aḥmad is entirely different from that examined by Ḥaqq: “This book, the *Ajay Ćand-nāma*, for the purpose of reciting, on [this] prosperous, pleasing day, [for] Biṣṇ Rā’o Kiṣan, by the hand of Ḥakīm Jhīn Rā’e, was written on the 19th date of the lunar month of *ramazān al-mubārak*.” The name of the copyist, Jhīn, is unusual, even improbable, and Aḥmad ignored it (Aḥmad 2002, p. 123).

The Bhopal manuscript is arranged in the following 36 sections: i) *daḡātīr ḡāna* (registers room, archives), ii) *sarā-yi maḡrūs ḡāna* (guarded apartments, harem), iii) *ta’līm ḡāna* (tuitions room, school), iv) *tanbūl-dār ḡāna* (betel leaf preparer’s quarters), v) *’iṡrīyāt ḡāna* (fragrance room, perfumery), vi) *maṡbaḡ ḡāna* (cooking room, kitchen), vii) *āb-dār ḡāna* (a repository of drinking-water, cistern), viii) *ṡasht ḡāna* (hand-washing basin room, bathroom), ix) *ḡizāna ḡāna* (treasure house, treasury), x) *jawāḡhir ḡāna* (jewels room, treasury), xi) *jāmadār ḡāna* (wardrobe), xii) *pāy-gāḡ ḡāna* (shoe-holding room, toilet, privy), xiii) *ṡutur ḡāna* (camel-stable), xiv) *rikāb-dār ḡāna* (stirrup-holding house, saddle-room, pantry), xv) *farrāṡ ḡāna* (chamberlain’s quarters, carpets room), xvi) *silah-dār ḡāna* (armorer’s room, armory, arsenal), xvii) *jang ḡāna* (war room), xviii) *ṡam’ ḡāna* (candle house, Chandler’s quarters), xix) *ṡās ḡāna* (cupboard), xx) *ḡayyāt ḡāna* (tailor’s quarters), xxi) *kitāb-dār ḡāna* (library), xxii) *ṡarāb-dār ḡāna* (wine cellar), xxiii) *ṡikār ḡāna* (hunting room, hunting-hut), xxiv) *mewa ḡāna* (fruit-loft), xxv) *’imārat ḡāna* (mason’s quarters), xxvi) *kaṡṡī ḡāna* (boat house), xxvii) *gardūn ḡāna* (chariot-shed, garage), xxviii) *’alam ḡāna* (flag room, room in which banners or flags are kept), xxix) *nawbat ḡāna* (kettle-drum house, watchtower, guardhouse, xxx) *ṡabīb ḡāna* (hospital, clinic, apothecary), xxxi) *anbār-dar ḡāna* (granary, storehouse), xxxii) *mawāṡī ḡāna* (quadrupeds’ house, cattle shed), xxxiii) *dār al-ṡarb ḡāna* (mint), xxxiv) *maḡbūs ḡāna* (prison), xxxv) *bewa ḡāna* (widows’ quarters), xxxvi) *yādgār ḡāna* (memorial room, museum).

The opening section of the text (4 verses of which are included below) provides an elaborate series of verses that equate Islamic and Indic qualities of the divine: *bārī*

ta`ālā nām-i gosā`ī / base buzurgī bahut badā`ī [for *baṛā`ī*] [1] // *ḥāliq jin jag paidā kiyā / rāziq sab ko bhojan diyā* [2] // *wāḥid yik parastīš pūjā / lā-sharīk ko`ī aur na dūjā* [3] // *be-či-gūn* [for *be-či-gūnagī*] *jinḥah* [for *jin kā*] *rūp nirekhā / be-namūn vah jā`e na-dekhā* [4]. Rendered in English, the text translates to “‘Almighty Creator’, the name of *gosā`īn* [‘Lord of the Senses’] / *base buzurgī* [‘very great, very noble’], much greatness [or ‘much honor [on the deity] // Creator (*ḥāliq*), who created the world / Sustainer (*rāziq*) gave food to all // *Wāḥid*, ‘one’, *parastīš*, / *lā-šarīk* [without an associate], there is no second // *be-či-gūn* [without quality, matter], whose form is not seen / Unshowing, that place unseen.” The author continues in this matter with his praise of the deity by pairing Persianate phrases, such as “without want” (*be-niyāz*), “without compare” (*be-qiyās*), “without place” (*be-makān*), and “without parallel” (*be-mānand*), with brief Indic explanations (compare with the similar phrases appearing in introductions of the *premākhyān* genre of Sufī romances written in the Avadhī dialect of Hindī, discussed in Behl and Doniger, 2012, 34-46).

Additional biographical details are recorded in verses 20 through 26, including references to the author as a “servant of the court” (*bandah-i dargāh*), his father Dīp Čand, and his residence in Sikandarābād, a city “Attached to the capital / Noble Dihlī of unique fame (*muttaṣil-i dār al-mulk-i maqām / ḥaṣrat dihlī/ḥaṣrat-i dihlī-i nādir nām*). Each section of the poem ends with a signature verse, whose brief references to the author are occasionally charming, as in this verse from the section *mewa ḥāna* (fruit-loft): *bāḡ gulistān ham bustān / ajay čand ṣuḥbat bā dustān* (“‘Garden’, ‘flower-garden’, also ‘scent garden’ / Ajay Čand, in the company of friends”).

Ḥaqq points out that Ajay Čand refers to his language throughout as Hindawī, not once referring to it as Hindī (e.g., *pūd fārsī hindawī bānā*; “‘a weaver’s woof’, Persian; [in] Hindawī, *bānā*”) (207). Arabic terms are labelled *tāzī* (e.g., *hai bādām ba-tāzī lawz*; the [Hindī] *bādām* is in Arabic *lawz*). Both Persian and Hindawī serve as glossing metalanguages, sometimes in the same hemistich: *ma`rūf ast lafz-i ḥarbūza / hindwānah kahi`e tarbūza* (“Well known is the word for ‘marsh-melon’ [Persian metalanguage] / Watermelon, call *tarbūza* [Hindawī metalanguage]”). Both Persian- and Arabic-derived synonyms are frequently provided for single Hindawī equivalents (e.g., *far` šaḥ sūn* [= *hai* in Haqq 1961] *ḍāl bakhān bi-ḥwā*, “Define as ‘branch’, *far`*, *ḍāl*”), while occasionally only an Arabic equivalent is offered for a Persian term (e.g., *ḥawḥ nām-i šaft-ālū jān*, “*ḥawḥ* know as the name of ‘peach’”; *ḥaiyat taḥayyat/ḥayyāt taḥayyuṭ darzī jānoḥ*, “Tailor, sewing, know as *darzī*”), suggesting that the lexical

incorporation of Persian terms into Hindawī had begun long before the composition of this text. Like Yūsufī in the *Qaṣīda dar luġat-i hindī*, the author of the *Ajay Čand-nāma* sometimes resorts to inexact Perso-Arabic equivalents for Indic flora and fauna (e.g., ‘*andalīb hai ko ’il kārī*, “The nightingale is the *ko ’il* [Indian black cuckoo]”).

The *Ajay Čand-nāma* is very similar to the *Hāliq bārī*, attributed to Amīr Ḥusraw, with some hemistiches nearly identical. Verse 207, quoted above, is similar to the eighth verse of Šīrānī’s edition of the *Hāliq bārī*: *tānāñ bānāñ tāro pūd* (“*tānāñ, bānāñ*: warp and woof”). Elsewhere, the lexical overlap appears entirely accidental. With its shorter meters, Ajay Čand often must express in two verses what the author of the *Hāliq bārī* accomplishes in a single verse. Both texts use a similar mixture of Hindawī and Persian as glossing metalanguages, with the Indic imperatives *jān* (know) and *pahčān* (recognize) and the Persian *bi-dānī* (know) and *bi-ḥwānī* (call) frequently paired as rhyme terms (Aḥmad 2002, p. 125). While the similarity of these texts does not in and of itself establish an early provenance for the *Hāliq bārī*, it does suggest a consolidation of the conventions of the *niṣāb* genre even at this early stage.

Still, the apparent use of domestic spaces as organizing principle and possible mnemonic device does not seem to have been emulated by subsequent authors of *niṣābs*. The technique outlined in antiquity by Cicero and Quintilian of constructing memory palaces requires one to place the items (Latin *res*) that one intends to remember in memorable places (Yates 1966, pp. 8-9). To give an example, the penultimate “room” in Ajay Čand’s vocabulary is what he calls the *bewa-ḥāna*, or ‘Hall of Widows’. The items contained within it are not just the widows themselves, but also the paraphernalia associated with their traditional occupation, weaving: *bewa ḥāna kaḥiye raṇḍ-sālā / baḥa* [for *barḥa*] *rū’ī bāḡanda gālā* (“The widow’s house, call *raṇḍ-sālā* [for *raṇḍ-šālā*] / Teased cotton, *rū’ī*, carded cotton, *gālā*”). Ajay Čand’s vocabulary is thus reminiscent of an elaborate doll house. The objects are stationary, isolated from the context of ordinary speech and fixed in place through interlingual equivalences. Their selection, however, tells us about what this particular individual thought to be worth preserving. For example, Ajay Čand poignantly names the final hall in his memory palace the *yād-gar ḥāna*, or ‘memorial hall’: *yād-gār ḥāna kaḥiye saharotī / irsāl-i ḥidmat baithonī // ... // pahunā’ī kaḥiye mihmānī / ajay čand saugāt nishānī* (“Memorial-hall call *saharotī* / Also, a dispatch for service, *baithoni* // ... // Call *pahunā’ī* hospitality / Ajay Čand’s keepsake, an offering”).

The relative paucity of manuscripts of this vocabulary, especially when compared with those of the *Ḥāliq bārī*, which number in the dozens if not hundreds, and the absence of references - whether implicit or explicit - to the *Ajay Čand-nāma* in subsequent works of this genre, suggest its readership to have always been limited. This was more the result of Ajay Čand's relatively marginal status in the northern Indian hinterlands (and the fame of Amīr Ḥusraw, to whom the latter work was commonly attributed) rather than to the great inherent potential of his vocabulary as a pedagogical text. This early document of the variety of Hindi spoken in present-day western Uttar Pradesh remains a work of immense value, however, inasmuch as it provides us with glimpses of a wide variety of objects that populated the domestic spaces of a nobleman's household (these may be fruitfully compared, for example, with those listed in Roy 1955).

Manuscripts: **Karachi**, Anjuman-i Taraqqī-yi Urdū, 3/697, ff. 21, **ii)** *jum 'a*, 8 *rajab* (no year), **v)** *tamām tamām šud kar-i man nižām šud ba-ruz-i jum 'a-yi tārīḥ-i haštum-i rajab sana-i ...* (rest of text missing), **vii)** 16 to 23 lines per page, **viii)** Amrohawī 1982, pp. 152-153. **Bhopal**, Maulānā Āzād Central Library, 19 ff., **ii)** 19 *ramazān* (no year), **iii)** Ḥakīm Jain Rā'e, **iv)** Bishṇ Rā'o Kišan, **v)** *in kitāb ajay čand nāma jihat-i ḥwānadan sa 'ādat-mand dil-pasand ruz bišn rā'o kišan ba-ḥaṭṭ-i ḥakīm jain rā'e taḥrīr fī al-tārīḥ-i nuwazdahum šahr-i ramazān al-mubārak sana-yi ālah nawišta šud. har kih ḥwānad du 'ā ṭama' dāram / zānkih man banda-yi gunah gāram*, **vii)** 16 to 19 lines per page, *nasta'liq* script.

Legend: i) Place of copying; ii) Period of copying; iii) Copyist; iv) Commissioner; v) Information on colophon; vi) Description of miniatures/illustrations; vii) Other remarks; viii) Information on catalogue(s)

Edition: *Ajay Čand-nāma*, Naḍīr Aḥmad, ed., New Delhi, Ghalib Institute, 2002, pp. 31.

Secondary sources bibliography: Abū al-Faẓl, 1873, *Akbar-nāma*, English translation: *The Ain i Akbari*, Vol. I, H. Blochmann, ed., Calcutta, Asiatic Society of Bengal. Aḥmad, Naḍīr, 2002, "Ajay Čand-nāma," in: *Maqālāt-i Naḍīr*, New Delhi, Ghalib Institute, pp. 121–57. Amrohawī, Afsar Šiddīqī, 1982, *Maḥḥūtāt-i Anjuman-*

i Taraqqī-yi Urdū, Karachi, Anjuman-i Taraqqī-i Urdū Pākistān, vol. 6. **Behl**, Aditya-Doniger, Wendy, 2012, *Love's Subtle Magic: An Indian Islamic Literary Tradition, 1379-1545*, New York, Oxford University Press. **Hakala**, Walter N., 2014, "The Authorial Problem in the *Khāliq Bārī* of 'Khusrāu'," *Indian Economic & Social History Review*, 51, 4, pp. 481-496. **Ḥaqq**, 'Abd al-, 1961, "*Mitl-i ḥāliq bārī: Ek qadīmtarīn kitāb*," in: *Qadīm urdū*, Karachi, Kull Pākistān Anjuman-i Taraqqī-yi Urdū, pp. 198–207. **Roy**, N. B., 1955, "A Note on the Household Effects of an Ordinary Noble Man of the 18th Century A.D.," *Bengal Past & Present*, 74, 2, pp. 147–50. **Yates**, Frances Amelia, 1966, *The Art of Memory*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

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Originally published: 15 novembre 2018

How to quote this article:

Hakala, Walter N., 2018, "*Ajay Čand-nāma*", *Perso-Indica. An Analytical Survey of Persian Works on Indian Learned Traditions*, F. Speziale - C. W. Ernst, eds. available at http://www.perso-indica.net/work/ajay_cand-nama.

ISSN: 2267-2753

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