



# PERSO-INDICA

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

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## AN ANALYTICAL SURVEY OF PERSIAN WORKS ON INDIAN LEARNED TRADITIONS

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## *Qurrat al-mulk*

The *Qurrat al-mulk* (Delight of the kingdom) is an anonymous Persian adaptation of an Indic text on hippology which was prepared for Sultan Ġiyāṭ al-Dīn Šāh Ḥaljī (r. 1469-1500) of Malwa. The Sultan most likely ordered its translation on 21 *muḥarram* 883/3 May 1478, although the year given in the preface of the two known manuscript copies of the text is 783/1381-1382 and 983/1575-1576. Both manuscripts are later copies made in the 19th century and it is possible that copyists misread the year. The translator relates that he was ordered by the king to translate a copy of the *Śalihotra* (*nusha-yi Salotar*), on the origin, the colors, the food, the faults, the illnesses and the treatments of horses, and that he entitled the Persian version *Qurrat al-mulk*. Ġiyāṭ al-Dīn's interest in this subject may not seem to correspond to the image of this sultan as a zealous Muslim that is given in certain accounts. According to the historian Rizq Allāh Muštāqī (d. 989/1581), once the Sultan even freed a royal horse in the forest after he suspected that the animal could have been treated with a remedy including substances forbidden by Islamic law (Muštāqī 1993, pp. 214-215). However, such an image could be consistent with the attitude of denigration and appropriation of the source that is found in the preface of the Persian text. The translator writes that the text was rendered from the “terrifying Indian language” (*zabān-i hindī-yi mutawahḥiṣ*) into the “refined Persian language” (*lisān-i fārsī-yi dil-guṣā*) so that there will be no need any more of the unbelievers (*ahl-i kufr*) (see Speziale 2018, pp. 56, 172-173, 210-211).

It is not clear which version of the *Śalihotra* was used for the translation. The *Qurrat al-mulk* follows to some extent the *Śalihotra* of Bhoja (ca 1050). In particular the chapters on the color of horses (chapter four) and the deficits of horses (chapter five) of the Persian text bear a resemblance to chapter one and two of Bhoja's Sanskrit text (Bhoja 1953, x-xiii). However, the *Qurrat al-mulk* also contains parts which are not found in the *Śalihotra* of Bhoja and lacks some of the chapters of the latter.

Moreover, the translator did not use a single source. In the chapter on the Indic nomenclature of horses according to their color (chapter four), the translator refers to a Persian *faras-nāma*, that is to say, a treatise on hippology, which could have been an earlier Persian text including materials translated from Indic sources. This *faras-nāma* was certainly consulted in the process of translation, and two other paragraphs dealing with topics typical of Muslim treatises may have been taken from this text (see below).

In the first chapter of the *Qurrat al-mulk*, horse knowledge is presented as the result of an encounter between Śalihotra, a Brahman with a vast knowledge of horses, and his disciple Suśruta who queries his master on hippology. This Suśruta is mentioned in Sanskrit texts on hippology, where he appears as a son of Śalihotra who interrogates his father (Kulkarni 1953, p. vii; Mukhopadhyaya 2003, vol. 2, pp. 372-373). In spite of the setting, the *Qurrat al-mulk* is not written in the form of questions and answers, but is a running text allegedly expounded by Śalihotra. It does not comprise the mythical story about the removal of horses' wings which is found in Sanskrit texts as well as in the earlier *Tarjuma-yi Sālōtar* produced by 'Abd Allāh ibn Šafī for Sultan Aḥmad Walī (r. 1422-1435) of Gulbarga. On the other hand, the *Qurrat al-mulk* agrees with 'Abd Allāh ibn Šafī's version on the issue of the status of horses, which are considered the best animals in creation, inferior only to men in rank. According to the *Qurrat al-mulk*, they are especially associated with kings and mighty persons because greatness can only be achieved with them.

The *Qurrat al-mulk* is divided into twelve chapters (*bāb*) and a number of sub-chapters (*faṣl*), although only eleven *bāb* are enumerated in the preface and the content of the eleventh chapter is different from that stated. The first two chapters deal with the knowledge (*šināḥtan*) of horses and their origin. They emphasize the distinction between four breeds of horses. The distinction is based on their geographical origin: horses are either *tāzī*, coming from Arabia, Iraq or Khorasan; *turkī*, originating from Turkestan; *kūhī*, from the mountains; or *ulāḡ*, a term that may refer to a small horse or an ass in Persian. This latter breed is said to come from an island (*darīra* in the text, probably for *jazīra*) in the Indian Ocean close to Sind. The four breeds are associated with the four natural elements; *tāzī* horses are related to water, *turkī* horses to fire, *kūhī* horses to air and *ulāḡ* horses to earth. These associations are then applied to the understanding of the Indian environment and explained as follows: the watery horses are said to be Brahmins, that is to say, the *tāzī*; the fiery horses *kṣatriya*, i.e., the *turkī*; the airy horses *vaiśya*, i.e., the *kūhī*; and the earthy horses *śudra*, i.e., the *ulāḡ*.

This set of correlations thus clearly affirms the idea that the Brahminic kind of horse corresponds to the Arabian breed and so on. Such a view may refer to the well-known fact that the best horses available in India were those imported from Arab countries.

The association between the characters of horses and the four *varnas* is also a topic of some Sanskrit texts on hippology, such as the *Aśvaśāstra* of Nakula, as well as of other Persian translations, such as the one by ‘Abd Allāh ibn Ṣafī. However, the *varnas* are not associated with the horses’ place of origin and the four elements. Instead, in Nakula’s treatise the five elements of the Indian doctrine are related to different kinds of shades covering the body of horses (Nakula 1952, pp. 218-219). In the *Qurrat al-mulk*, the Brahminic, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya* and *śūdra* types of horses are furthermore associated with different paces (fast, looking left and right, leaping etc.) and activities. For example, for sowing one needs a *kṣatriya* horse, while for trading and business one needs a *śūdra* horse. The four breeds also smell differently: the Brahminic type of horse has the scent of roses, while the *śūdra* type smells like fish. This description may loosely resemble the account of the characters of horses associated with the four *varnas* that is given in Nakula’s *Aśvaśāstra*. However, there are no direct parallels between the two texts (Nakula 1952, p. 229).

Chapters three, four and five deal with the omens taken from different signs of horses. Chapter four, on colors (*rang*), and chapter five, on hair formations (*āvartas*) and deficiencies (‘*uyūb*’), resemble Sanskrit treatises, especially the *Śalihotra* of Bhoja, with which parallels in the nomenclature can also be established. On the contrary, chapter three (on *dalālat*, lit. indication) deals with omens taken from the behavior of horses in specific situations, like urinating after bridling, or looking right and left in the evening. This resembles to some extent the instructions given in the chapter on buying horses in ‘Abd Allāh ibn Ṣafī’s translation of the *Śalihotra* made in Gulbarga in the first half of the 15th century. In the *Qurrat al-mulk*, this is complemented by instructions about *ṣadaqa* (alms) to be given to repudiate all evil. The *ṣadaqa* is a typical Islamic practice and its use in association with horses has probably been taken from Muslim sources, maybe from the above-mentioned *faras-nāma*. The description of the five deficiencies called ‘*ayb-i šar’ī*’ (deficiencies according to sharia), which make it necessary to give the horse back according to Islamic law, also seems to be based on a Muslim source.

The following group of chapters deals with medical topics. Chapter six discusses the anatomy, the limbs (*a'zā*) and the dimensions of the horse. The next chapter deals with the diseases and the treatment of horses (*'illathā aspān wa 'ilāj-i ān*) and is divided into four sub-chapters. The first deals with the horse's pathology that is interpreted according to the humoral paradigm of Ayurvedic medicine. Ayurvedic wind (*vāta*) is translated by the Persian equivalent term *bād*, bile (*pitta*) as *talḥa*, and phlegm (*kapha*) by the Arabic term *balḡam*. Blood (*hūn*) is often mentioned as a humor. The second *faṣl* concerns eye disorders, in which the humoral etiology is still predominant, and it also refers to fevers. The text mentions mercury (*sīmāb*) among the remedies, which might indicate that the Indic source used for the translation was not much older than the Persian text. The next *faṣl* describes the appearance and color of the tongue, while the last, very brief one concerns the examination of the horse's breath. The eighth chapter deals with phlebotomy (*hūn kaṣīdan*). The text, divided into four sub-chapters, explains that the horse's body has twelve thousand veins but only fourteen points are suitable for the lancet (*nīstar*); it indicates how much blood to extract from each point and what food to use after phlebotomy.

The ninth chapter discusses the food (*ḥwuriš*) in the different seasons, while the next describes the food and medicines for fattening the horse, a practice which was often used by breeders before selling animals at fairs. According to the table of contents provided in the preface of the text, chapter eleven should deal with the knowledge of the age of horses by their teeth, which is a typical subject of Sanskrit texts on hippology. However, this chapter is missing in the text and is replaced in both existing manuscript copies by two other chapters. The second to last chapter is rather short and deals with a few remedies (*čīzhā-yi mutafarriq*). Chapter twelve discusses the auspicious (*sa'd*) and unlucky (*naḥs*) signs of horses, which is also a common topic of Sanskrit treatises on *aśvaśāstra*. They fit well with the kind of signs described in other horse treatises as well as in the fifth chapter of the *Qurrat al-mulk*. We may wonder if they have been placed in a separate chapter because they were taken from another source, e.g., in Dakhnī, since the translator mentions the Dakhnī denomination besides the Hindawī one for some of the signs.

In comparison with the other Persian translations referring to the *Śalihotra* which were produced during the Sultanate period, the *Qurrat al-mulk* seems to have experienced lesser diffusion. Only two manuscript copies are known; they are

preserved in London and one of them dates from 1848 (Ms. London, British Library, Or. 1697/2). Both copies are preserved as parts of codices including other Persian texts on hippology based on Indic sources. The manuscript dating from 1848 includes, after the *Qurrat al-mulk*, a copy of the adaptation of the *Šalihotra* materials made for the Mughal nobleman ‘Abd Allāh Hān Fīrūz-Jang (d. 1054/1644) that was based on the earlier version made by Hāšimī for the sultan of Gujarat Šams al-Dīn Muẓaffar Šāh II (r. 1511-1526). The other codex includes a copy of the translation done by ‘Abd Allāh ibn Šafī at Gulbarga (Ms. London, British Library, add. 14, 057). The approach to translation in the *Qurrat al-mulk* resembles that of the other Persian translations produced during the Sultanate period, such as the fact of providing many Indic technical terms and their meanings in Persian. On the other hand, the *Qurrat al-mulk* employs a less elaborate strategy of Islamization of the translated materials, in comparison with the translations of ‘Abd Allāh ibn Šafī and Hāšimī. In the *Qurrat al-mulk*, elements drawn from Muslim texts were certainly interpolated in the translation. However, the *Qurrat al-mulk* does not include quotations from the Quran or from Prophet Muḥammad’s traditions, such as Hāšimī does in his translation; it does not aim to Islamize Indic notions, such as in ‘Abd Allāh ibn Šafī’s translation where the Hindu mythical account of how horses lost their wings is presented in an elaborate Muslim garb.

**Manuscripts:** **London**, British Library, Or. 1697/2, ff. 331-374, **ii)** 12 August 1848, **iii)** Mawlā Baḥš, **viii)** Rieu 1883, p. 1011. **London**, British Library, Add. 14,057/2, ff. 61-73, **ii)** 19th century ca, **viii)** Rieu 1881, p. 481.

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)

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