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The Milwarî Dexazim of Ja'far Qoli Zangali A Kurmancî Lyric Verse from Northern Khurasan

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Kurdish literature of Khurasan first appeared in Persian writing after the migration of the Kurds in 1009/1600, in the period of Shah 'Abbās'. The formal style of Khurasan's Kurds in Kurdish, known as *Kurmancî*, came to prominence in the middle period of the Qājārīd dynasty. Indissolubly linked with the story of its origins are the names of the cities in northern Khurasan where the new literature flourished: Qūchān, Bojnūrd, Daragaz, Shīrvān, and Isfarā'in². The most popular Khurasani Kurd of this area is Ja'far Qoli (or Ja'far, Ja'far Qoli Bīchāra, and sometimes Ja'far Qoli 'Andalib) Zangali (c.1830?-1899?) whose name we know and who made it a point to write the important parts of his *dīwān* in Kurdish. Today his name is widely recognized in the lay community in northern Khurasan because since the early nineteenth century, it has been associated with the influential *Ce'fer Qoli we Milwarî*, a popular love story, which has become indispensable to Kurds of Khurasan. The poems of Ja'far Qoli have only been available in a modern edition since 1990, with Kalīm Tavah.udi's careless publication of almost the unique text of this poet's *dīwān*³. Western studies, particularly those by A. Houtum-Schindler⁴, have called attention to some of the Kurdish words and phrases of a folkloric character produced by the Kurdish poets and writers of Khurasan in the early Qājārīd period. In 1918-1920, during W. Ivanow's residence in Khurasan, he collected about 400 specimens of Kurdish poetry and tales which give a more definite idea of the dialect which the Kurds of Khurasan speak⁵. With the exception of some very brief references to Ja'far Qoli in Ivanow's article⁶, to date no translations of his poems into a western language have appeared.

The purpose of the present essay is very briefly to state what is known about the life of Ja'far Qoli and to provide historical and linguistic data for Khurasani Kurdish; especially to translate his *Milwarî Dexazim* as an example of a genre of Khurasani Kurdish literature and the most well-known fragment of his *dīwān* that seems to have come into vogue in the late Qājārīd period and present-day Khurasan.

Ja'far Qoli's Life and Work

As is the case with so many of the Khurasani Kurdish writers of the Qājārīd period⁷, not much is known about the biography of Ja'far Qoli, son of Mullā Rizā Qoli Zanglānlū, beyond what can be gleaned from his surviving poems and from brief references to him in the oral literature. Only one date is known with precision. A note at the end of one of his poems mentions the year 1312 of the Hijra (i.e.1895)⁸, as the year in which he composed the text. This notice is sufficient to enable us to conclude that Ja'far Qoli lived during the middle years of the nineteenth century. Also, it is from the recently published poems containing the lists of Kurdish, Persian, and Turkish poems that one learns that Ja'far Qoli was a contemporary of the Shah-i Qājār, Nāṣir al-Dīn Shah (r.1848-96). From the oral accounts and the events which Ja'far Qoli mentions in passing in his *dīwān*. Tavaḥūdi has been able to argue convincingly that the *dīwān* must have been written not long after the beginning of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shah's reign⁹. Therefore, there can be no doubt that Ja'far Qoli followed his career as a Kurdish poet during the middle years of the Qājārīd dynasty. In the manuscripts, Ja'far Qoli is sometimes called Zangali or Zangāli, meaning that he was from, or at least associated with the Kurdish tribe of Zanglānlū and the Kurdish district of Lā'in at the city of Daragaz¹⁰.

While the Kurdish and non-Kurdish communities of northern Khurasan were famously multilingual, there can be no doubt that Kurdish was the mother tongue of Ja'far Qoli, and the dominant language of his poems. But along with Kurdish the indigenous languages of Khurasan also flourished in his *dīwān*. These were principally Persian and Turkish¹¹. The important parts of the *dīwān*, including the Kurdish, Persian, and Turkish fragments, were ordered to relate his distinctive Shiite doctrine. There are some scattered discussions of the doctrines of 'Alī and *imāms*, and some Shiite religious practices, in the light of words customarily voiced by the Shiite Kurds of Khurasan¹².

The most essential topics in Ja'far Qoli's life and folktales of Khurasan have always included the love story of Ja'far Qoli and Milwārī. These two persons are in fact the two faces of the same coin as they figure in these stories. The love of Ja'far Qoli for Milwārī, probably the daughter of a Kurdish family of Zanglānlū, is a commonly repeated folktale of northern Khurasan. Efforts to compose an exact story of Ja'far Qoli's beloved have concentrated only on a few poems of his *dīwān*, leaving essential questions unanswered concerning his family and life.

Another event in Ja'far Qoli's life, which the Kurdish community of Daragaz and the oral sources report with pride, is the occasion in the story of his love affair when Ja'far Qoli is said to have gone to Arabia and Damascus, probably in the company of his friends and for the purpose of forgetting his Milwārī.

The *Milwarî Dexazim*: The Text and the Translation

Ja'far Qoli's poem entitled *Milwarî Dexazim* is almost in the form of a lyric *chahâr pâra* of nine bands¹³ dedicated to his beloved, *Milwārī*, with whom the poet had been in conversation in the lovely sessions reported in the oral history of northern Khurasan. In private collections there are many hundreds of manuscripts of Ja'far Qoli's *Milwarî Dexazim*, but in this essay the published version of Tavahudi's edition in a standard Perso-Arabic script¹⁴ has been included because it represents the best of current popular versions of Khurasani Kurds from which future research seems most likely to profit. Since there are also many oral versions of *Milwarî Dexazim*, and both the manuscripts and the oral versions all agree on the essential outline of the poem, there is no reason to cite the variants of the fragment here. There are many unscientific transcriptions of the Kurdish language in Khurasan. We have chosen in this essay the Latin alphabet proposed by the late Emir J. Bedir Khan in Syria, and which has been adopted by the Kurdologists and the majority of literate Kurds belonging to the Kurmançî group¹⁵. The notes include most Kurdish words, which are not the same as Persian or Arabic. These are followed by some sources for the words or linguistic comments, where possible:

*Milwarî*¹⁶ *Dexazim*¹⁷ *I want Milwārī*

Evvel je¹⁸ Xudawend¹⁹, dowwom je 'Ebas,
*First from God, secondly from 'Abbās*²⁰,
Ta lêwê²¹ qewrê, *Milwarî dexazim*,
Until the side of my grave, I want Milwārī,
Delîlê gomrahan, ya Xizr û Ilyas,
*The guide of [the men] who are lost, O Khizr, and Elias*²²,
Ya *Milwarî xa*²³, ya *sewirê dexazim*.
Either I want Milwârî or I want the patience.

2

Adem we do derdan, bûye²⁴ mobtela,
Adam was affected by two sufferings,
Je dûrî bihiştê, je dûrî Hewa,
From paradise's remoteness, from Eve's remoteness,
'Umrê min²⁵ kûta k' e²⁶, derdê min dewa,
[O God] whether abridge my lifetime or remedy my suffering,
Ya Hewa-yê xa, ya sewirê dexazim.
Either I want [my] Eve (i.e. Milwâri) or I want the patience.

3

'Işq e Silêman k'ir, bê yar û enî
It is the love [that] made Solomon friendless and compassionless,
Her kes le²⁷ karê wî²⁸, k'ir mekr û telbîs,
Everyone deceived [him] and concealed his affair,
Bûye wisal axir, firaq-a Bilqîs,
Bilqîs's²⁹ remoteness [from Solomon and their love] came to fruition at the end
Ya Bilqîsê xa, ya sewirê dexazim.
Either I want [my] Bilqîs (i.e. Milwâri) or I want the patience.

4

Dilê min birîye³⁰, Milwâri mehbûb,
The lovely Milwâri has carried my heart,
Ez bûme lê³¹ talib, ewê bûye metlûb,
I have been her seeker, she has been desirable,
We moradê Yûsif, we sebrê Eyyûb,
For the sake of Joseph's desire, for the sake of Job's patience
Ya Zilêxa ya kû, sewirê dexazim.
Either I want [my] Zilkhah (i.e. Milwâri) or I want the patience.

5

Ez laçînim³², ewê tawûs-a xoşxiram,
I am a falcon, she is a good-natured peacock,
Ez Mecnûnim, ewê Leyla-yê gul-endam,

I am Majnūn, she is Laylā the flowered-body,
Heqq dūr k'e yarê min, je Ibn el-Selam,
O God, keep my beloved from Ibn-al-Salām³³,
Ya Leylî-yê xa, ya sewirê dexazim.
Either I want [my] Laylā (i.e. Milwārî) or I want the patience.

6

Dilê min defirî³⁴, nawi paberca,
My heart flies, [and] it does not become firm,
Ne Meşhedê rind³⁵e, neî Boxara,
It does not admire Mashhad [and] nor does Bukhara,
Ya wetenê yarê, ya jî³⁶ Kerwela,
Either the home of beloved or even Karbalā',
Her çî meslihet wi! Sewirê dexazim.
Whatever that it would be expedient! I want the patience.

7

Awazê 'îşqê min, tiji³⁷ k'ir 'alem,
My love fame covered [all over] the world,
Çi şah û çî gida, çî 'Erew û 'Ecem,
Whether king or beggar, whether Arab or Persian,
Heft salan şewitim³⁸, ez nala kurim,
I, like a glow-worm, burnt [with Milwārî's love] seven years³⁹,
Ya eslê xa ya kû, sewirê dexazim.
Either I want [my] original [Milwārî] or I want the patience.

8

Je omidwaran ra, Xadê omidê,
For helpful men, God is [their] hope,
Le qapûy Kirdigar, sewirê kilidê,
Before God's door, the patience is the Key,
Ax'ay min 'Ebas û Şahê Şehîdê,
My Lords are 'Abbās and King the Martyr⁴⁰,
Je wan yarê xa, ya sewirê dexazi
[Either] I want [my] beloved from them or I want the patience.

Ce'fer Qolî dewê⁴¹: mecbûrim, qasir,
Ja'far Qolî says: I am obligated [to be alone and I am] a failed lover,
Yar je min hilgirtin⁴², doşmenê cabir,
The coercive enemies held my beloved,
Le wî mosîbeta, ez bûme sabir,
In this calamity, I have been patient,
Barilaha sewirê, sewirê dexazim.
O God, I want the patience, [and] the patience.

ENDNOTES

1. For a general discussion of this theme see J. B. Fraser, *Narrative of Journey into Khorasan, in the Years 1821 and 1822, Including some Account of the Countries to the North-East of Persia* (London, 1825), Appendix B, p.42; 'A. Anvâr, *Ta'liqât bar Jahângoshâ-yi Nâdirî-yi Muh. ammad Mahdî Astarâbâdî* (Tehran, 1962), 537-538; M. H. Papoli-Yazdi, *Le nomadisme dans le nord du Khorasan, Iran* (Paris-Téhéran, 1991), 24-25.
2. The geography of these cities is completely discussed in C. E. Yate, *Khurasan and Sistan* (Edinburgh and London, 1900), 74ff.; M. I. Moqîmî, *Joghrâfiyâ-yi Târikhî-yi Shîrvân* (Mashhad, 1991); A. Fadâ'î, *Joghrâfiyâ-yi Shahrîstân-i Isfarâ'în* (Mashhad, 1994).
3. *Dîwân-i 'Irfânî-yi Ja'far Qolî Zangalî, Malik-al-Shu'arâ'-i Kurmânj* (Mashhad, 1990). Reprinted as *Dîwân-i 'Irfânî-yi Ja'far Qolî Zangalî, Malik-al-Shu'arâ'-i Kurmânj, Virâyish-i 2* (Mashhad, 2002). These editions are rather faulty and incomplete, so that a new publication taking into account the various MSS. (notably that in the personal collections and libraries of Ashgabat in Turkmenistan) would be most welcome.
4. "Beiträge zum kurdischen Wortschatze", *ZDMG* 38 (1884): 43-116; "Weitere Beiträge zum kurdischen Wortschatze", *ZDMG* 42 (1888): 73-79.
5. "Notes on Khorasani Kurdish", *Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* (New Series) 23 (1927): 167-236.
6. *Ibid.*, pp.214-216, where some short fragments of the poems of Ja'far Qolî is given.

7. On the Kurdish intellectuals and the history of northern Khurasan in Qājārīd period one may refer to M. J. Khormojī, *Haqāyiq-al-Akhbār Nās.iri*, ed. H. Khadiv Jam (Tehran, 1965), 33 and 52; M. T. Sipih, *Nāsikh-al-Tavārikh* (Tehran, 1965), 3/193,208,213,335-336; A. M. I'timād-al-Saltāna, *Mat.la'-al-Shams* (Tehran, 1976), 1/129.
8. See K. Tavah. udī, *Dīwān-i 'Irfānī-yi Ja'far Qolī* (Mashhad, 1990), 53-54.
9. *Ibid.*, p.54, without giving a source of course.
10. On the Kurdish tribe of Zanglānlū and the other tribes of northern Khurasan see M. H. Papoli-Yazdi, *Le nomadisme* (Paris-Téhéran, 1991), 27-32; K. Khādimiyan, *Farhang-i Joghrafiyā'i-yi Irān, Khorāsān* (Mashhad, 2001), 52-55.
11. See in particular K. Tavah. udī, *Dīwān-i 'Irfānī-yi Ja'far Qolī* (Mashhad, 1990), 380-384, 412, 481-483.
12. *Ibid.*, p.59, 110-115, 124-126, 160-162, etc.
13. On the Kurdish poetry of northern Khurasan in general and its varieties see A. 'Ad. udī, *Pand-i Kurmānjī va Andarz-i Fārsī, Gūyish-i D. arb-al-Mathal Mānand az Kurdān-i Shomāl-i Khorāsān* (Bojnūrd, 1988); idem, *Nuha Kurmānjī* (Bojnūrd, 1992); K. Tavah. udī, *Tarāna-hā-yi Kurmānjī-yi Khorāsān* (Mashhad, 1995).
14. See K. Tavah. udī, *Dīwān-i 'Irfānī-yi Ja'far Qolī* (Mashhad, 1990), 129-130.
15. On the alphabet see P. Rondot, "Trois essais de latinisation de l'alphabet kurde: Iraq, Syrie, U.R.S.S.", *Bulletin d'Etudes Orientales* 5 (1935): 1-31; J. Bedir Khan et R. Lescot, *Grammaire kurde (dialecte kurmandji)* (Paris, 1970), 3-7.
16. The proper noun Milwarī means literally 'pearl' and it has two alternative spellings in the Kurmancī texts of Khurasan : Milwarī as given here and in Ç'êlik'ê Ecîw, see I. I. Tsukerman, *Khorasanskiy Kurmandži, Issledovanie i Teksti* (Moskva, 1986), 264-265; and the more archaic spelling Milê, see K. Tavah. udī, *Dīwān-i 'Irfānī-yi Ja'far Qolī* (Mashhad, 1990), 24. Milê could be also an abbreviation of Milwarī.
17. dexazim or dixazim connects to the verb transitive xwestin (-xwaz/-xaz-) 'to want, wish; [+subj.] to want to (do something.)'. In Kurmancī dialect of Bahdīnan, xwestin means only 'to request'; 'to want' is expressed by viyan. See Č. Kh. Bakaev, *Kurdsko-Russkiy Slovar* (Moskva, 1957), 404; M. L. Chyet, *Kurdish-English Dictionary (Ferhengā Kurmancî-Inglîzî)* (New Haven and London, 2003), 674. On the Khurasani prefix de- instead of di- see I. I. Tsukerman, *Khorasanskiy Kurmandži* (Moskva, 1986), 143ff.

18. The reading of the preposition *je* 'from, of [often with plural], from among' is *ji* in Kurdistan, which is not possible in Khurasan's Kurmancî. Cf. also *je...ra/şa* (*je omîdwaran ra* in *band* 8, line 1) 'to [often shortened to simply *-re/-şa*], for'.
19. Persianism for original Kurdish *Xwedê/Xadê* (masculine) 'God' (cf. *band* 8, line 1), which is rarely *Xwed. awend* in the Kurmancî texts of Turkmenistan. See Kharis Bitlisi, *Leyli i Medžnun, Pervod, Predislovie i Primeçaniya*, ed. M. B. Rudenko (Moskva, 1965), 100, 102.
20. 'Abbās is a well-known saint in Shiite doctrines.
21. For the certain Kurdish form of *lêw*, i.e. *lêv*, feminine (-a;-ê) 'lip, shore, side', see M. L. Chyêt, *Kurdish-English Dictionary* (New Haven and London, 2003), 354.
22. *Khizr* and *Elias* (cf. also *Adam* and *Eve* in *band* 2, *Solomon* and *Bilqîs* in *band* 3, *Joseph* and *Job* in *band* 4 etc.) belong to the specific Islamic terminology and are also parts of the religious legendary literature introduced in Iran by Biblical traditions.
23. Here and in other places in this fragment *xa* stands for the expected present verb *dexazim*, perhaps to avoid confusion with the *qāfiya*. I know of no other occurrence of the expression form *xa* in Kurmancî of Khurasan.
24. The form *bûye* (cf. *bûme* in *band* 4, line 2, *nawî* in *band* 6, line 1, and *wî* in *band* 6, line 4) corresponds to the verb intransitive *wûn/bûn* (-w/-b-, -wû/-bû-) 'to be, to become, get'. Cf. I. I. Tsukerman, *Oçerki Kurdskey Grammatiki* (Moskva, 1962), 143; idem, *Khorasanskiy Kurmandži* (Moskva, 1986), 252, 261, 266.
25. *min* and sometimes *mi* are the oblique cases of *ez* (cf. *band* 4, line 2 etc.) 'I, me'.
26. The imperative mood *k'e* (cf. also *k'ir* in *band* 3, line 1 and 2), which is connected to the transitive verb *k'irin* (-k' /-k'e-) 'to make, do', could also be read as the Kurdistan's Kurmancî *kirin*. *K'irin* used in conjunction with a noun, adjective, adverb, or preposition to form compound verb, e.g., *kûta k'irin* 'to abridge, to short' in the present text. For this verb and its occurrences see I. I. Tsukerman, *Oçerki Kurdskey Grammatiki* (Moskva, 1962), 142; idem, *Khorasanskiy Kurmandži* (Moskva, 1986), 252-253; and see also R. L. Tsabolov, *Oçerk Istoričeskey Fonetiki Kurdskey Yazika* (Moskva, 1976), 28-30; where the value of the phoneme <k'> in *k'irin* is given.
27. *le* 'in, at [location; with or without motion]' is the Khurasan's Kurmancî form, while the Kurdistan's Kurmancî form is *li*.
28. The pronoun *wî* (cf. also *wan* in *band* 8, line 4) is the oblique case of pronoun *ew* ([e]wî [m.]; [e]wê [f.]; [e]wan [pl.]) 'he, she, it; they' (in direct case and as subject of the intransitive verb or tense of transitive verb); 'him, her, it; them' (in direct case and as

direct object of non-past tense of transitive verb or as object of preposition); 'his, her, its; their' (oblique case and normally following *izafe*). For a more detailed discussion and the complete inflection of Kurdish pronouns in direct and oblique cases, see R. L. Tsabolov, *Očerk Istoričeskoj Morfologii Kurdsogo Yazika* (Moskva, 1978), 21-22.

29. This is the name by which the Queen of Sheba is known in Islamic sources.

30. The Kurmancî infinitive for *birîye* is *birin* (-b-/be-) 'to carry, bring', sometimes reflected in the Khurasan's Kurmancî *birdin*. See A. Houtum-Schindler, "Beiträge zum kurdischen Wortschatze", *ZDMG* 38 (1884): 56; I. I. Tsukerman, *Khorasanskiy Kurmandži* (Moskva, 1986), 254, 258.

31. *lê* 'from him/her/it' is a pronoun. <li=from; to+ê/wê/wî> (=lê 'her, him').

32. *laçin* is a Turkish loanword (i.e. *laçın*), see M. A. Jaba, *Dictionnaire kurde-français* (St. Pétersbourg, 1879), 375; B. Atalay, *Divanü Lûgat-it-Türk Dizini, "Endex"* (Ankara, 1948), 404. It, for example, occurs in its Kurdish equivalent, i.e. *şahîn*, in Cegerxwîn's *Hozan û Bîrêñ Kurd*, see K. K. Kurdoev, *Grammatika Kurdsogo Yazika* (Moskva-Leningrad, 1957), 310.

33. Ibn-al-Salâm is the rival to Majnûn, the lover of Laylâ, in the love story of *Laylâ va Majnûn* by Niz. âmi Ganjavî (born about 1141 to before 1146).

34. The inflected form *defiri* corresponds to the intransitive verb *fiřin* (-fiř-) 'to fly'. For another example of its occurrence, see I. I. Tsukerman, *Khorasanskiy Kurmandži* (Moskva, 1986), 259.

35. Appear in Kurdistan as *řind* (adj.) 'good'.

36. *.jî* (adv.) 'also, too, as for, even [+subj.]'. Cf. I. I. Tsukerman, *Khorasanskiy Kurmandži* (Moskva, 1986), 255.

37. The Khurasan's Kurmancî *tijî* (adj.) 'full (of)' is replaced by Kurdistan's Kurmancî *t'ijî*.

38. The base is intransitive verb *şewitîn* (-şewit-) 'to burn, be on fire', alongside the transitive verb *şewitandin* (-şewitîn-) 'to set on fire, kindle'. The word occurs also in two Kurmancî fragments of Khurasan. See I. I. Tsukerman, *Khorasanskiy Kurmandži* (Moskva, 1986), 263, 267.

39. The translation here is based on oral versions of *Milwarî Dexazim*, where the noun *kurm/kurim* 'worm' is translated to 'glow-worm'. The translation reflects an attempt to interpret the verse according to the context, although the connection between this term and the concept of 'to burn' seems somewhat far-fetched.

40. King the Martyr, i.e. *imam* Hussein, the third successor of the Prophet in Shiite doctrines.

41. The inflected form of *dewê* corresponds to the transitive verb *gotin* (-bêj-/-bê-/-vêj-/-vê-/-wê-/-wegî-) 'to say, tell'. Cf. I. I. Tsukerman, *Khorasanskiy Kurmandži* (Moskva, 1986), 254.

42. The transitive verb *hilgirtin* (hil-g[i]r-) 'to pick out, lift, to take on, shoulder, load up, to hoist, to hold, to keep' is used in the Kurdish texts for different meanings. Cf., for example, Akhmed Khani, *Mam i Zin, Kritičeskiy Tekst, Perevod, Predisaovie i Ukazateai*, ed. M. B. Rudenko (Moskva, 1962), 144; Kharis Bitlisi, ed. M. B. Rudenko, *Leyli i Medžnun* (Moskva, 1965), 91; Ž. S. Musaelyan, *Zambil'froš, Kurds kaya Poema i Fol'klornie Versii* (Moskva, 1983), 53.

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