

PREFACE

It is the unanimous wish of the contributors to this volume that it be dedicated to Professor Angelo Michele Piemontese to honour him on the occasion of his seventieth birthday.

The volume was originally meant to contain some of the papers presented at a workshop convened by Paola Orsatti in Rome in 2006 at the end of a two-year-long period of research on the history of the Persian language and its non-standard varieties carried out in conjunction with Mauro Maggi within the framework of wider research on the history of Persian directed by Riccardo Zipoli (Venice) and funded by the Italian Ministry of University. It was subsequently decided that other scholars should be invited to contribute articles so as to widen the scope of the volume and enhance its thematic coherence and usefulness: of those invited, Desmond Durkin-Meisterernst, Mohammad Hasandust, Judith Josephson, Gilbert Lazard, Elio Provasi, and Hassan Rezai Baghbidi generously accepted our invitation. We also took the opportunity of this volume to publish a posthumous work by the late David N. MacKenzie.

The volume contains fourteen papers on various aspects of the history of the Persian language, including Middle Persian. The papers, grouped thematically, cover a diversity of themes relating to the historical and descriptive grammar and the vocabulary of Persian, Middle Persian texts, non-standard and mainly early varieties of Persian, and dialects of Iran considered in their relationship to Persian. Editions of so far unpublished texts are also included.

In the part on “Historical and descriptive grammar of Persian”, Claudia A. Ciancaglini traces the formation of the periphrastic verbs of the “noun + *kardan*” type back to Indo-Iranian and suggests that such verbs in neighbouring non-Iranian languages are due to the influence of Persian and other Iranian languages; Judith Josephson surveys the devices developed in Middle Persian to convey various degrees of definiteness and deixis, including a construction with indefinite *-ē* that expresses strong individualisation; Paola Orsatti recognises a deictic suffix *-i* in contemporary Persian and documents its history in early and classical texts, both literary and non-literary; and Gilbert Lazard provides a theoretical reference frame for the much debated problem whether New Persian has one or more postnominal suffixes *-i*.

In the “Middle Persian” part, Desmond Durkin-Meisterernst surveys the history of research on the Manichaean Middle Persian texts from Turfan and their language, also taking into account the interconnections with other languages and religions; and Hassan Rezai Baghbidi presents a fresh study, with a new edition and translation, of the bilingual inscription from Xi’an in Middle Persian and Chinese.

The four papers in the part entitled “Non-standard New Persian” are each devoted to a religiously or linguistically peripheral documentation of (Early) New Persian that enriches the overall picture of the history of the language: Elio Provasi provides an edition and translation with commentary and glossary of seven unpublished New Persian fragments in Manichaean script from Turfan; Ela Filippone studies in detail the language and translation technique of the early interlinear translation of the Koran in dialectal Persian preserved in the manuscript known as the *Qor’ān-e Qods*; David N. MacKenzie’s posthumous work is an index to the “Early Jewish-Persian argument” published by him in 1968; and Mauro Maggi and Paola Orsatti’s article is devoted to two New Persian hymns in Syriac script from two manuscript copies in the Mingana Collection (Birmingham).

The part dealing with “Literary New Persian” contains two papers by Mohammad Hasandust, who identifies eight words occurring in literary sources but so far ignored by Persian lexicography and provides them with an etymology, and by Riccardo Zipoli, who gives a sample of a dictionary of obscene terms that, once completed, will assist in the edition and study of literary texts tabooed on account of their vocabulary.

In the last part on “Dialectology”, Gerardo Barbera gives an exhaustive presentation of the lexicon relating to the palm in Minābi (Southeast Iran) in comparison with other dialects of the area as well as with Persian and other languages, while Daniele Guizzo deals with the terms for celestial bodies and weather phenomena in Tāleši dialects (Northwest Iran) and studies the position of Tāleši dialects relative to neighbouring languages.

This volume profited from the collaboration and support of many people. First of all, we are grateful to all colleagues who have contributed articles and to Nicholas Sims-Williams who readily accepted the volume for publication in the series “Beiträge zur Iranistik” of which he is editor. But we should also like to thank the many colleagues and friends who have helped us in every possible way: Angelo Arioli (Rome), Johnny Cheung (Leiden), Paolo De Troia (Rome), Maria Macuch (Berlin), Matilde Mastrangelo (Rome), Antonello Palumbo (London), as well as Maggi’s former students Matteo De Chiara and Giuliana Martini. Thanks are also due to Geraint D. Evans for revising the English of most of the articles, as well as to our spouses Luisa Tettamanti and Mansoor Farahpoor for their constant support.

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Mauro Maggi and Paola Orsatti
University of Rome La Sapienza