

Preface

This book has been on the way for a very long time. Already in the 1960's when I collected material for a critical edition of the Sufi *mathnavī Ṭarīq ut-tahqīq* (published in 1973) I came across a number of very fine old manuscripts of the Sufi didactic poem *Miṣbāḥ ul-arvāḥ*, “The Lantern of Spirits”, and started planning an edition of this interesting but still neglected text. An edition of it prepared by the eminent Iranian expert in Classical Persian Sufi texts, Badī‘ uz-zamān Furūzānfar, was published posthumously in 1970, but, as the editor himself had realized, it was based on relatively recent and not particularly reliable manuscripts. I therefore decided that a new edition would still be worthwhile and looked for more manuscripts of it during travels in Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, India and the Soviet Union.

The authorship of the poem had been much discussed, but from the 1970 edition onwards most scholars agreed that it is the work of a little known author: Sheikh Shams ud-dīn Muhammad b. ʿĪl-Tughān Bardasīrī Kirmānī. My Iranian colleague Muhammad Ibrāhīm Bāstānī-Pārīzī, who passed away in 2014, suggested that this sheikh was one of the Saljuq princes of 12th century Kirman and supplied me with a hand-written essay arguing for this identification. Unfortunately, I have lost the original and it appears that he himself never published the text, but his conjectures are reflected in his notes to the history of Kirman by Afzal ud-dīn, which I have quoted below.

After a very long delay, I had the opportunity to finish my work on the critical text during a period as a fellow of the Swedish Collegium for Advance Study in 2005–06. In this work I applied the methodology that I had developed through many years of work on Persian manuscripts. My Uppsala friends and colleagues Dariush Kargar (who died in 2012) and Ali Muhaddis read the final version and made a number of useful comments and suggestions, for which I am very grateful. Finally, during my recent work on the introduction my colleague in New York, Mohsen Ashtiany, helped me with bibliographical material. My department at Uppsala university, nowadays called the Department of Linguistics and Philology, and especially my successor on the chair of Iranian studies, Carina Jahani, have been most supportive throughout this project. I offer my deeply felt thanks to all of them as well as to many other colleagues who have helped me on the way.