

Preface

Paola Orsatti studied in Rome, her hometown, at La Sapienza University, where she was a student of Angelo Michele Piemontese for Persian, Giorgio Raimondo Cardona for linguistics, Armando Petrucci and Paola Supino Martini for palaeography, Marco Palma for codicology, and Alfredo Serrai for the history of libraries. In 1983 she was appointed Researcher in Persian Language and Literature at her alma mater and became an Associate Professor in 2005, a position she has held ever since.

In the course of a long and distinguished academic career combined with an impressive record of dedicated teaching, she has made significant contributions to the study of classical Persian poetry, its connections with pre-Islamic traditions, the history of the Persian language, Islamic palaeography and codicology, and the history of Persian studies and Oriental manuscript collections in Italy and Europe, as witnessed by the nearly two hundred publications listed in our bibliography here.

Mention should also be made of Paola Orsatti's commitment to Persian studies on an international level as a member of the editorial board of the journal *Iranian studies* (London) and the scientific board of *Scripta: an international journal of codicology and palaeography* (Pisa). Over the years, she has also been one of the most valuable and highly regarded contributors to the two main projects at the Center for Iranian Studies at Columbia University (now renamed The Yarshater Center for Iranian Studies). Her scholarly entries in the *Encyclopaedia Iranica* are often quoted as main sources of reference. Even more significantly, she has authored four comprehensive chapters in the forthcoming volume III of *A history of Persian literature*, entitled *Persian narrative poetry in the classical era, 1800–1500. Romantic and didactic genres*. Her contribution is by itself a major work of scholarship, a substantial monograph providing a perceptive commentary on several masterpieces of Persian narrative literature.

Paola Orsatti's research for *A history of Persian literature* happily coincided with her occasional family trips to New York to visit her sister and nieces, thereby also giving her the opportunity to visit the Butler Library and the Center for Iranian Studies at Columbia and meet with colleagues there. Prior to these visits, the frequent correspondence between her and the volume editor, Mohsen Ashtiany, had already established a relationship of profound mutual respect and a flow of scholarly information and critical assessments in numerous emails.

Mauro Maggi's collaboration dates back to the mid-1990s and to a two-year research project on non-standard varieties in the history of Persian, which resulted in a workshop convened in Rome in 2006 and their joint editorship of *The Persian language in history* appeared in this very series in 2011.

It was therefore only natural that, on the initiative of Mauro Maggi, he and Mohsen Ashtiany decided in the spring of 2018 to offer Paola Orsatti a volume of studies in Persian language and literature on the occasion of her approaching 65th birthday on 25 January 2021.

The scope of the volume mirrors the diverse research interests of the dedicatee. The seventeen papers collected here deal with a variety of themes relating to Persian literature from

Middle Persian texts to twentieth-century poetry—approached philologically, historically, and critically—, to the history of manuscript collections, to the Persian language, including Middle Persian, and to the dialects of Iran. Also included are significant Persian literary texts edited and translated for the first time in this volume. The very variety of these contributions is a testament to the Paola Orsatti's commendable learning and scholarly curiosity.

A large number of the articles deals with literary texts from different periods.

Middle Persian prose texts are the subject of two studies:

Carlo G. Cereti (Rome) demonstrates that the *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr*, a dry and concise list of cities accompanied by the names of their founders with only a few literary insertions from the Zoroastrian tradition, is comparable in style to the Sasanian *Xwadāy-nāmag* and that it basically originates from late Sasanian times as a comparison with Sasanian glyptics, inscriptions, and coins indicates;

Judith Josephson (Göteborg) presents and analyses two Zoroastrian narratives in Middle Persian—King Wištāsp's conversion to the *dēn* and Sṛīd's killing of the bull on the border between Iran and Turan at the instigation of Kayōs—as examples of texts where the vivid dialogues between the protagonists suggest that the narratives were performed orally for entertainment and instruction.

As for New Persian literature, most of the articles are devoted to poetry:

Bo Utas (Uppsala) compares Gorgāni's *Vis o Rāmin* with the legend of Tristan and Iseult and concludes that the Persian poem appears as a rather thinly Islamized pre-Islamic Iranian story, while the European chivalric romance is set in an entirely Christian context;

Anna Livia Beelaert (Leiden) edits and interprets fourteen previously unknown poems by Xāqāni Šerwāni preserved in the Saint Petersburg manuscript C 1424, whose contents she describes in detail;

Daniela Meneghini (Venice) surveys passages on friendship in Nezāmi's *Xosrow o Širin* as seen in the relationships among Xosrow, Šāpur, and Širin in the framework of courtly etiquette as well as of wider ethical concerns;

Saeed Yousef (Chicago) attempts critically to assess whether the distinct style and language of the poet Mehdi Axavān-Šāleṣ justify using a designation like 'Axavān's School', what did his followers achieve, and what has remained of them;

and Riccardo Zipoli (Venice) offers, in a thought-provoking article inspired by 'Abbās Kiyārostami's works dedicated to various classical Persian poets, a translation of sixty-five single hemistichs (*mešrā'*) of the Indian style poet Bidel with the intention of highlighting their individual sense and autonomous value by breaking the traditionally inseparable concatenation of the two hemistichs that form a verse line.

While Zipoli's chapter deals with the work of a Sufi poet like Bidel as poetry, the two remaining articles that deal with literary texts consider other Sufi works in different perspectives:

Negin Yavari (New York) investigates historically the strategy of institutionalisation of the Naqshbandiyya Sufi order and the concept of authorship moved from the divine realm to the human as they appear in Kāšefi's prologue to his collected biography of Naqshbandi masters, the *Rašāḩāt 'eyn al-ḩayāt*;

and Denita Haverić (Sarajevo) dedicates her contribution to the interesting topic of the influence of Rumi, 'Attār, Sa'di, ḩāfez, and Jāmi on the Persian, Turkish, and Arabic literary works by Ottoman Bosnian authors of Mevlevi Sufi orientation from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries.

In the context of the history of manuscript collections, Olga M. Yastrebova (Saint Petersburg), traces the manuscript Borgiano Persiano 9 of the Vatican Library to the libraries

of the Timurid ruler Šāhroḡ (r. 1405–1447) and the Ottoman Sultan Bayezid II (r. 1481–1512), as is revealed by their seal stamps on it. The manuscript can therefore be added to the list of manuscripts in Šāhroḡ’s library, thirty-three of which, including the Vatican one, have been identified so far and are now kept in twenty different institutions.

Several articles are devoted to the Persian language, one to its historical morphology and five others to various aspects of its vocabulary:

Agnès Lenepveu-Hotz (Strasbourg) offers an in-depth study of the trends of development and the distribution of complex predicates in Persian in texts from the tenth to the sixteenth century and observes the appearance of new complex predicates to replace simple verbs and the creation of regular verbs with the suffix *-idan* added to the present stem (e.g. *yābidan/yāftan*);

Claudia A. Ciancaglini (Rome) discusses the distribution and etymology of the Middle Persian terms for ‘arm’ and concludes that *bāzūg* is the regular word for the part of body and that *bāzā(y)* is an Avestan loanword with specialised religio-juridical meanings;

Djalal Khaleghi-Motlagh (Hamburg) focuses on a selection of twenty-eight words that are either unique to the *Šāhnāme* or else occur rarely elsewhere with different meanings or phonology and discusses them with an eye to the Middle Persian language and literature;

Mohammad Hasandust (Tehran) suggests an Iranian etymology, instead of the traditional Arabic one, for Persian *tornā*—a large piece of linen twisted and used for striking at each other in the traditional game *tornā-bāzi*, which he describes in some detail—and an Old Persian origin for the name of the city of *Ize* in Khuzestan;

Kinga Paraskiewicz (Krakow) surveys the some twenty Persian loanwords that reached Polish mainly through Turkish and outlines their ways of transmission, including their earliest attestations in Ottoman Turkish and Polish;

and Ramin Hassanzadeh-Nodehi and Mauro Maggi (Rome) examine the use of Persian *manāt* ‘rouble’—a Russian loanword used in Qajar Iran—and of its counterparts in other Iranian and non-Iranian languages and the dialects of Iran and show that it was borrowed, through Azerbaijani, from dialectal Russian *monet* ‘silver rouble coin’, used in the Caucasus and the Caspian region.

Finally, Gerardo Barbera (Naples) concentrates on the dialect of the city of Mināb (Southeast Iran) and produces the text and the translation of a folk tale, accompanied by a short grammatical sketch that summarises the linguistic features of Minābi and facilitates the understanding of the text.

Given the variety and the wide range of the texts in the volume, it has been left to the authors to choose their own preferred transcription system for Persian and other languages.

This collected volume profited from the advice and support of many friends and colleagues. First of all, we would like to express our gratitude to Angelo Arioli, a friend and former colleague of Paola Orsatti, for writing an appreciation of her, and to Nicholas Sims-Williams for accepting the volume for publication in the series ‘Beiträge zur Iranistik’ of which he is editor.

We are grateful also to other colleagues who have not been able to contribute because of time constraints or other reasons but have expressed their appreciation for our initiative: Mario Casari (Rome), Alessia Dal Bianco (Padova), François de Blois (London), Federico Dragoni (Leiden), Ela Filippone (Viterbo), Mas‘ud Ja‘fari-Jazi (Tehran), Éva M. Jeremiás (Budapest), Ludwig Paul (Hamburg), John Perry (Chicago), Julia Rubanovich (Jerusalem), Anousha Sedighi (Portland), and Pounch Shabani-Jadidi (Montreal).