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## Historiography and language in 17th-century Ottoman Kurdistan: A study of two Turkish translations of the *Sharafnāma*

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### Abstract

In the closing decades of the 11th/17th century, two Turkish translations of the *Sharafnāma* were produced in the Kurdish princely courts of Bidlīs and Pālū. The translators were Muḥammad Bēg b. Aḥmad Bēg, a great-great-grandson of Sharaf Khān II, the author of the work, and Sham'ī, a secretary at the court of Amīr Yanšūr Bēg, prince of Pālū. While their works differed in style and purpose, both men offered a reflection on the demise of Persian and increasing prestige of Turkish in Ottoman Kurdistan. In the case of Sham'ī, this was supplemented by a more general observation on the various languages of the region. Evidence also suggests that while Persian was replaced by Turkish in the princely courts of Ottoman Kurdistan, some Kurdish *literati* and scholars instead chose to write part of their works in Kurdish. This article is a comparative study of Muḥammad Bēg and Sham'ī's translations, followed by a brief analysis of the associated sociolinguistic developments.

**Keywords:** *Sharafnāma*; Kurdish language; Ottoman Empire; historiography; translation.

### ABSTRACT IN KURMANJÎ

#### Dîroknivîsî û ziman di Kurdistanê Osmanî ya sedsala 17an de: Vekolînek li ser du wergerên tirkî yên *Şerefnameyê*

Di dehsalên dawî yên sedsala 11an/17an de, du wergerên tirkî yên *Şerefnameyê* li serayên mîrgehên Bidlîs û Palûyê hatin nivîsandin. Wergêrên van metnan Mihemed Beg kurê Ehmed Beg, kurê neviçirkeki Şeref Xanê duyem ê nivîskarê berhemê yê eslî, û Şem'î, munşiyekî Emîr Yensûr Begê mîrê Palûyê bûn. Tevî ku armanc û şeweyê karên wan cuda bûn jî, herdu wergêran amajê bi lawazketina zimanê farsî û bilindbûna qîmeta zimanê tirkî li Kurdistanê Osmanî kir. Li gel vê yekê, Şem'î herwiha nêrîneke giştî li ser zimanên cihê yên herêmê pêşkêş kir. Wekî din, tevî ku tirkî li serayên mîrên Kurdistanê Osmanî dewsa farsî girt, hin zanyar û rewşenbîrên kurd tercîh kir ku beşek ji berhemên xwe bi kurdî binivîsin. Ev gotar nîrxandîneke berhevdayî ya wergerên Şem'î û Mihemed Beg e, li gel pêdeçûneke kurt li ser pêşketinên civakî-zimanî yên pê ve girêdayî.

### ABSTRACT IN SORANI

#### Mêjûnûsî w ziman le Kurdistanî 'Usmanîy sedey 17hem da: twêjîneweyek bo dû wergêranî turkîy Şerefname

Le duwa deyekani sedey 11hem/17hem da dû wergêranî turkîy *Şerefname* le diwani mirayeti Bedlîs û Pallû berhem hatin. Wergêrrêkiyan Mihemed begî kurî Ehmed beg bû, ke newey newey nûserî xudî berhemeke, wate Şerefxanî dûweme, wergêrrêkey tiriş Şem'î, sikritêr le koşki mîr

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Yensûr beg mirî Pallû bû. Le katêk da karekanyan le rûy stayl û amancewe cuda bûn, herdû piyawekan amajey lawazbûnî zimanî farsî û hellkîşanî payey zimanî turkî le kurdistanî 'Usmanî xiste rû. Le halletî Şem'î da, eme be têrwanînêkî giştî ziyatir le merr zimanekanî herêmeke tewaw kira. Bellgekan ewe pêşniyar deken ke le katêk da le diwanî mirayetiyî Kurdistanî 'Usmanî da zimanî farsî be zimanî turkî cêgay degorêtewe, hendêk le roşinbîr û zana kurdekan eweyan hellbijard ke beşêk le karekanyan be kurdi binûsinewe. Em babete twêjîneweyekî berawirdkarîye bo herdû wergeranekeyî Mihemed beg û Şem'î, we kurte hellsengandinêkî peywest bew geşesendine komellayetî-zimanewaniyey be duwa da dêt.

## Introduction

The *Sharafnāma* is a well-known history of Kurdish dynasties and ruling houses, several versions of which were written in Persian in 1004-7/1596-99 by Amîr Sharaf Khān Bidlîsî, prince of Bidlîs in northern Kurdistan. The historical account starts with the dynasty of the Marwānids in the 5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century and includes, as is usually the case in Islamic historiography, many dynasties and events contemporaneous to the author. It comprises a *muqaddima* (prolegomena), four *şahîfas* (books) and a *khatima* (epilogue). There are, to the best of our knowledge, forty-two extant manuscripts of the *Sharafnāma*, very few of which have so far been studied. Among these forty-two manuscripts, we find an autograph dated 29 Zû al-Hijja 1005/13 August 1597, containing a first version of the text and illustrated with twenty miniatures (Ms. Elliott 332, Bodleian Library, Oxford), as well as two copies revised by the author in Muḥarram 1007/Aug.-Sept. 1598 (Ms. Hunt. Don. 13, Bodleian Library, Oxford) and Shavvāl 1007/May 1599 (Ms. Dorn 306, National Library of Russia, St. Petersburg). After a widespread distribution in the 11<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> century, with 16 extant manuscripts dated from this period, the book almost completely ceased to be copied in the 12<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> century (we know of only one copy from that epoch). It was rediscovered in the 13<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century, which saw the production of 25 manuscripts of the work.<sup>1</sup> Through this renewed interest on the part of Kurdish dynasts, it also drew the attention of Orientalists, and the text of the *Sharafnāma* was first published by Vladimir Veliaminov-Zernov (d. 1904) in St. Petersburg in 1860-62.<sup>2</sup>

In a previous publication, I have briefly described the history of the transmission of the *Sharafnāma* in Bidlîs in the century that followed its composition.<sup>3</sup> Putting aside the short-lived rule of princes Ziya' al-Dīn Khān II

<sup>1</sup> Sharaf Khān II (r. ca. 986-1009/1578-1600) was the leader of the Rōzhikî tribe and Diyādînid prince of Bidlîs, southwest of Lake Van (the name Diyādînid supposedly came from a man named Ziya' al-Dīn, founder of the dynasty; see Scheref, 1860-62: I, 364). Very few things are known of his life outside of what he himself says in his autobiography, added as a *zayl* (continuation) at the end of the fourth *şahîfa* (book) of the Kurdish chronicle, devoted to the Diyādînids. For more information on Sharaf Khān's biography, see Glassen (1989), and the more recent and detailed studies by Dehqan and Genç (2015a and 2015b). See my forthcoming PhD dissertation for an in-depth study of the different *Sharafnāma* manuscripts.

<sup>2</sup> Later editions and translations are all based on this edition, in which V. Veliaminov-Zernov used the manuscript Dorn 306 as a base text (he did not have knowledge of either Elliott 332 or Hunt. Don. 13).

<sup>3</sup> See Alsancakli (2016); on the sources used by Sharaf Khān II in composing the work, see also Alsancakli (2017a).

(r. 1009-10/1601 and 1011-19/1602-10),<sup>4</sup> ‘Ziyā’ al-Dīn Khān III (r. 1065-66/1655-56) and Badr al-Dīn Khān (r. 1076-78/1665-67/8), the 11<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> century was especially marked by the reigns of Abdāl Khān (r. 1019-65/1610-55 and 1066-76/1656-65) and his son, Sharaf Khān III (r. 1078-1103/1668-91).<sup>5</sup> Abdāl Khān is certainly the Kurdish prince of the period that is best known in history, in large part because his colourful character was recorded in the *Seyahatnâme*, or “Book of travels”, by the celebrated globe-trotter Evliyā Çelebi.<sup>6</sup> The Ottoman traveller spent several months in Bidlīs in the years 1065-66/1655-66, in the context of an ongoing conflict between Abdāl Khān and Melek Aḥmed Paşa, *beylerbeyi* (governor) of Van, and he spoke highly of the *khan*.

Nonetheless, after an economically and culturally prosperous reign that lasted for more than half a century, Abdāl Khān’s independent-mindedness finally seems to have cost him his position: in 1076/1665, he was demoted and exiled to Istanbul where he was executed in 1078/1667-68, on the order of the sultan Meḥmed IV (r. 1058-98/1648-87).<sup>7</sup> The reasons for his execution are unknown, although it might be related to the ousting of Abdāl Khān’s son, Badr al-Dīn Khān, nominated in his stead by the Porte in 1076/1665, and the coming to power of his other son, Sharaf Khān III, possibly as a result of a revolt against Badr al-Dīn Khān.<sup>8</sup>

Once he ruled Bidlīs, one of the very first decisions taken by Sharaf Khān III was to order his cousin, Muḥammad Bēg, son of a brother of Abdāl Khān named Aḥmad Bēg, to produce a Turkish translation of the *Sharafnāma*. Muḥammad Bēg indicates that he started his work in 1078/1667-68, and he completed it in 1080/1669. This translation is known to us through four different manuscripts: manuscript Or. 1127, dated Wednesday 24 Rajab 1080/18 December 1669 and kept in the British Library (London);<sup>9</sup> manuscript Muallim Cevdet O.29, dated Muḥarram 1188/March-April 1774 and kept in

<sup>4</sup> See Dehqan and Genç (2015b: 13).

<sup>5</sup> See Demir (2008: 282).

<sup>6</sup> The passages of the *Seyahatnâme* devoted to Bidlīs were edited, translated and published by Robert Dankoff in 1990. In view of the city’s size, the number of folios devoted to this account is rather important: R. Dankoff estimates it at nearly 2.5% of the narrative content, noting that “much more space is devoted to Bitlis than to hundreds of places of equal or greater significance – Vienna, for example, or, closer to our subject, Van, Erzurum, and Diyarbekir.” See Evliyā (1990: 6).

<sup>7</sup> See Köhler (1989: 39-40); also Dankoff in Evliyā (1990: 11, note 2).

<sup>8</sup> Some support for this assumption is provided by the inscription on Badr al-Dīn Khān’s tombstone, in which the word *shahīd* (“martyr”) has been written next to the prince’s name. Badr al-Dīn Khān died in 1084/1674 in unknown circumstances, and he was buried in a grave (*turba*) on Bidlīs’ Gökmeşdan, to the south of the Ikhlaṣiyya *madrassa* (see Ulugana (2015: 53-54); Pektaş (2001: 40-41); Oluş Anık (1971: 64) and Sinclair (1987: 302-4). Badr al-Dīn Khān and Sharaf Khān III were half-brothers; for more details, see Figure 2 of the Diyādinid family tree in Alsancaklı (2017b).

<sup>9</sup> This is indicated in the manuscript’s colophon (f. 372v, ll. 2-6), which reads: “Copied by the slave and sinner, the weak and lowly ‘Alā’ al-Dīn b. Muṣṭafa, on a Wednesday at the end of the honoured month of Rajab in the year 1080” (1080 رجب المرجب فی یوم اربعه سنه ۱۰۸۰ علاء الدین ابن مصطفی در اواخر رجب المرجب فی یوم اربعه سنه ۱۰۸۰ کتبه العبد المذنب الحقیر الضعیف نحیف علاء الدین ابن مصطفی در اواخر رجب المرجب فی یوم اربعه سنه ۱۰۸۰). (فی تاریخ ثمانین و الف

the İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kütüphanesi;<sup>10</sup> manuscript Tarih 364, dated 1296/1878-79 and kept in the Ali Emiri collection of the Millet Kütüphanesi (İstanbul);<sup>11</sup> and manuscript Add. 7860, undated (British Library, London).<sup>12</sup> Because it is the oldest, I will primarily use the manuscript Or. 1127 in this article, while always providing references to the other three copies and also quoting from them when relevant (however, the text is mostly identical in all four manuscripts).

Associated with two Persian copies of the *Sharafnāma* produced in 1083/1672, the existence of four manuscripts of Muḥammad Bēg's Turkish translation suggests that the reign of Sharaf Khān III saw the advent of a new period of diffusion of the book from Bidlīs to outside audiences, mostly in the neighbouring principalities of Ottoman Kurdistan. Furthermore, the Turkish translation allowed for a better access to the work: Muḥammad Bēg himself mentions that, due to it being in Persian, the *Sharafnāma* was no longer understood, and facilitating access to this capital text for the Diyādinids was thus an explicit objective of the translation.

This was also the case for another Turkish translation of the *Sharafnāma*, produced in 1092/1681 in the Kurdish principality of Pālū, about 90 kilometres to the northwest of Diyarbekir. This translation was penned by a man named Sham'ī, presumably a *munshī* (secretary) at the court of the Mirdāsīd prince of Pālū, Amīr Yanşūr Bēg, whom he mentions as the patron of the work. While his translation is less complete and written in a simpler prose than Muḥammad Bēg's, Sham'ī also supplemented it with a continuation of the chapter dedicated to the history of the princes of Pālū up to the time of writing. The autograph of this translation is kept at the library of the museum of the Topkapı Palace (Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi) under the call number Revan 1469. A second version of the translation was produced in 1095/1684 in Pālū's sister principality, that of the Mirdāsīd rulers of Agīl, by an unknown scribe who made minor changes to Sham'ī's translation and, most importantly, added a continuation on the history of the princes of Agīl to supplement that on the

<sup>10</sup> This manuscript ends with the fourth *şahīja* of the *Sharafnāma* and lacks its *kebatima*, as well as a colophon. However, the date of its copy is known through a note written on folio 1r, which states: "This is an elegant history devoted to the events of the princes of Kurdistan and dedicated to the conqueror of Eger [a city in the north of Hungary], Sultān Mehmed III. It was written in 1005 [1596-97] in the common tongue by an Iranian, grandson of Amīr Khān [Mawşillū], and it narrates the glorious deeds of the Ottoman sultans and some of their renowned viziers. The objective of the translation was that the text might be understood by anyone who would like to study it: this is why this discourse was written by the bay-coloured ink of the pen in Muḥarram 1188 [March-April 1774]." ("Biri beş tārīhi hīlālinda Egrī fātīhi Sultān Mehmed nāmına Emīr Hān duḥterzādesi bir İrānī ādem lisānında Kurdistān ümerāsının eḥvālını mutazāmın güzelve tārīhdır, münāsebetle mulūk-i 'oşmānī ve vüzera'-i şöhret-ünvānlardan ba'zılarının nām u şānī mezkūr ve meşūrdur resīde-i nazar olur, ya'nī ma'lūm ve icmāl-i tercemesi negāh konandegāne maḥfūm olmaḵ için bu maḳāle icāle-i kümeit-i ḳālem olmuşdur fī m sene 1188.")

<sup>11</sup> This is known thanks to a note by the copyist dated 1296/1878-79 and written on the first page of the manuscript.

<sup>12</sup> This manuscript unfortunately lacks a colophon or any other indication about its date of production.

princes of Pālū. This second version is included in a *majmū'a*, or collection of texts, kept with the call number Add. 18547 in the British Library (London). The text of Shamī's translation, including variants found in Add. 18547, was recently published by Adnan Oktay in Istanbul. In this paper, I will thus refer to the published edition as well as the two extant manuscripts.

In the first two parts of this article, I will present a comparative study of the two Turkish translations of the *Sharafnāma*. I will then strive to explain how they demonstrate a shift from Persian to Turkish as the official written language of Ottoman Kurdish courts in the 11<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> century. While Persian was a high literary language enjoying great prestige among the learned elite of the Kurds, Ottoman Turkish was primarily seen as a bureaucratic idiom devoid of such status. In the third part, I will argue that the demise of Persian also allowed for the development of written literature in Kurdish, mostly consisting of texts inspired by the classical Persian works and didactic books to be used for teaching pupils in the *medreses* of Kurdistan. Thus, as Persian was replaced by Turkish as the administrative language in Ottoman Kurdistan, Kurdish became a primary language of literary production in the region.

### **1. History as an instrument for the legitimization of dynastic power: Muḥammad Bēg's Turkish translation of the *Sharafnāma* (Bidlīs, 1078-80/1667/8-69)**

When Sharaf Khān III came to power, in 1078/1667-68, his first important act was apparently to commission an Ottoman Turkish translation of the *Sharafnāma*.<sup>13</sup> Multiple family connections played a role in this process. The *Sharafnāma* had, of course, been written by Sharaf Khān III's own great-grandfather, Sharaf Khān II, a little less than a century earlier, and the work was, already at the time of production, heavily centred around the Diyādīnīd dynasty of Bidlīs. It seems that one of the main objectives of this book was to bolster the Diyādīnīds' claim to primacy among the dynasts of Kurdistan, a claim they had maintained since at least the time of Sharaf Khān II's grandfather, Sharaf Khān I.<sup>14</sup> With regards to this claim, the diffusion of the *Sharafnāma* played a role as significant as its composition. Thus, at the turn of the 11<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> century, several versions of the work (at least four) were prepared under the supervision of the author, Sharaf Khān II, before being sent to various Kurdish princes, notably Halō Khān, ruler of the Ardalān and Ḥusayn Jānbūlād, ruler of Kilīs/Aleppo.<sup>15</sup>

Sharaf Khān II's grandson Abdāl Khān also had an interest in the *Sharafnāma*. According to Evliyā Çelebi (1990: 288-89), an autograph work of

<sup>13</sup> Sharaf Khān III was the great-grandson of Sharaf Khān II, author of the *Sharafnāma*, himself the grandson of Sharaf Khān I (r. 906-13/1500-7 and 920-40/1514-33), one of the most powerful Kurdish princes of the early 10<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>14</sup> See Scheref (1860-62: I, 361-62, 412, 415-16), etc.

<sup>15</sup> See Alsancaklı (2015) and my forthcoming PhD dissertation.

Sharaf Khān was in the *kehan's* library in 1065/1655.<sup>16</sup> We also know of another manuscript of the *Sharafnāma* produced at the request of Abdāl Khān,<sup>17</sup> in which a panegyric to the Diyādīnīd ruler was added just before the colophon, at the end of the book.<sup>18</sup> The text of this panegyric is remarkable because, aside from the usual eulogistic titles, the copyist also formulated wishes for the eternal prosperity of Abdāl Khān's "State and Power" (دولت و سلطنت). This is indicative of the *kehan's* independent-minded spirits, also demonstrated by his generally defiant behaviour, which led to frequent clashes with the governor of Van, chief representative of Ottoman authority in the region.<sup>19</sup> This situation reminds us of the conditions prevailing some sixty years earlier, when Abdāl Khān's grandfather, Sharaf Khān II, wrote the *Sharafnāma* and monitored its circulation. Like him, Abdāl Khān apparently made use of the work to bolster the Diyādīnīds' claims to independence from Ottoman central power in Bidlīs.

In cultural and political terms, however, Abdāl Khān was very much attached to an Ottoman perspective, contrasting with Sharaf Khān II's Persianate background and education.<sup>20</sup> This distinction showed in every aspect of dynastic life, from the Diyādīnīds' reconstructed ancestry (*nasab*) to the princes' matrimonial alliances. Thus, while Sharaf Khān II associated the Diyādīnīds with Sassanid royalty, styling himself "the Khusrawīd",<sup>21</sup> Abdāl Khān favoured an Abbasid story of origins, like several other dynasties in Ottoman Kurdistan.<sup>22</sup> As for alliances, Sharaf Khān II had married into the

<sup>16</sup> This was possibly the manuscript Elliott 332.

<sup>17</sup> This manuscript is unfortunately not extant. However, its text is known from two later copies, produced in 1083/1672 during the reign of Abdāl Khān's son Sharaf Khān III, in which this passage is also reproduced. One of these copies, dated 4 Sha'bān 1083/25 November 1672, is kept in the Biblioteca reale of Turin with the call number Or. 12, while the other, manuscript Supplément Persan 238 of the Bibliothèque nationale de France (Paris), was completed on 6 Sha'bān 1083/27 November 1672 by a copyist named Yaṣīn b. Mullā Isma'īl.

<sup>18</sup> The panegyric reads as follows (abbreviated for clarity): "The book was finished, with the help of God (...), may its author (...) Sharaf Khān, whose elegance is reminiscent of Paradise, rest in Peace, during the blossoming of the garden of virtue and the grove of the rose garden of knowledge, that is the rule of the occupant of the throne of the spiritual path and traveler of the way of the religious law, meaning (...) Abdāl Khān the glorious Khan and Anūshīrwān, source of generosity and justice, may God Almighty extend the days of his State and Power until the Day of Judgement and the coming of the end of times (...)."  
 (تم الكتاب ...) بعون الله ... المؤلف ... المرحوم المغفور ... یعنی شرف خان بهجت بهشت آیین السواد الوجه فی الدارین حور العین را تزیین و تمکین و تسکین و ممتحین گردد بحق سید المرسلین بر حمتک یا ارحم الراحمین که بعد از گلنگین حدیقهی فضیلت و شایسته گلشن معرفت و جای نشین مسند طریقت و راهروان زمردی شرعت یعنی ... ابدال خان خانی عظیم الشانی انوشیروانی منبع الجود و الاحسانی را ... ادامالله دولته و سلطنته الی يوم القیام و انقراض الدوران بماند ...  
 Ms. Or. 12, ff. 286r, l. 4 – 286v, l. 6; see also SP 238, ff. 242v, l. 11 – 243r, l. 1.) The title "Anūshīrwān" refers to the celebrated Sasanian king Khusraw I (r. 531-79), seen by Islamic authors as a characterisation of the ideal of the just and enlightened ruler.

<sup>19</sup> Thus, much of Evliyā's account of his time in Bidlīs is devoted to the conflict between his patron, the governor of Van Melek Ahmed Paşa, and Abdāl Khān.

<sup>20</sup> For Sharaf Khān II's own account of his formative years in the Safavid royal palace of Shāh Ṭahmāsp (r. 930-84/1524-76) in Qazvīn, see Scheref (1860-62: I, 449-50).

<sup>21</sup> See *Sharafnāma*, mss. Elliott 332, f. 246v, l. 14 and Hunt. Don. 13, f. 263v, l. 20. This is another reference to Khusraw I; in this context, it can be translated as "the Sassanid". On the Diyādīnīds' supposed links with the Sassanids, see Scheref (1860-62: I, 362).

<sup>22</sup> The *kehan* claimed to be descended from an Abbasid dignitary named Sulṭān Awhādahullāh, otherwise unknown; see Evliyā (1990: 46-47, 56-57, 64-65, 72-73, 80-81, 142-43, 174-75, 342-43 and 356-57). Other

Turkmen Mawşillū family, related to the Safavids, while Abdāl Khān had wed a woman bearing the title Khānim Sultān, great-granddaughter of the Ottoman sultan Selīm II (r. 974-82/1566-74).<sup>23</sup>

This cultural shift was most manifest in the language used at court and in administration. Already during the reign of Abdāl Khān, Persian seems to have been on the decline as the written language of the Diyādīnīd court, a fact which is demonstrated through many examples. While Evliyā Çelebi (1990: 96-97) notes that the *khan* himself was fluent in “Persian, Kurdish, Turkish and Arabic”, Abdāl Khān still commissioned several translations of Persian and maybe Arabic works into Turkish, some of which are extant. We can mention, for example, a translation of Ḥamdallāh Qazvīnī’s *Nuṣḥat al-Qulūb* (“Pleasure of the Hearts”),<sup>24</sup> or that of an otherwise unknown treatise on various arts and crafts called *Majmū‘a al-Şanāyi‘*, or *Şanāyi‘ al-Şanaw‘āt* (“The Compendium of the Arts” or “The Arts of the Crafts”).<sup>25</sup> As for the languages spoken at court, it seems to have been both Kurdish and an Azeri Turkish dialect specific to the Diyādīnīds and Rōzhikīds of the Lake Van region.<sup>26</sup> In light of these

Kurdish dynasties claiming Abbasid origins included the houses of Ḥakkārī, ‘Amādiya, Kilis and the Mirdāsīd rulers of Agil, Pālū and Charmūg. See Scheref (1860-62: I, 89, 106, 175-76 and 220-21).

<sup>23</sup> Khānim Sultān appears at several points in Evliyā’s story; see Evliyā (1990: 76-77, 154-55, 162-63, 304-13, 318-19, 326-27, 336-39, 342-45 and 352-55). On the matrimonial alliances of the Diyādīnīds, see Alsancaklı (2017b), notably pp. 238-40.

<sup>24</sup> A geographical work on Iran and Mesopotamia, written ca. 740/1340 by Ḥamdallāh Mustawfī Qazvīnī (d. ca. 744/1344) and including passages on Kurdistan that were used by Sharaf Khān II in the *Sharafnāma*. Compare Scheref (1860-62: I, 83, 335), and Mustawfī Qazvīnī (1915: 106-8, 214). Two manuscripts of this undated and anonymous Turkish translation are kept in Ankara’s Milli Kütüphanesi, with the call numbers A 957 and A 979. In the book’s *dibācha*, the translator relates how he carried out this work on the instructions of Abdāl Khān, because “since it [the book] was in Persian, persons who did not speak Persian could not benefit from [reading it]” (“lākin fārsī olduğı ecelden fārsī dilini bilmeyen andan maḥzūz ve mütemetti’ olmaz idi”; A 957, f. 1v, ll. 7-8; A 979, f. 1r, ll. 12-13).

<sup>25</sup> The manuscript of the Turkish translation of the *Majmū‘a al-Şanāyi‘* that we possess is a mixed codex, kept in the library of the University of Vienna with the call number Cod. Mixt 211a-d, and it is not the work’s original manuscript, as we are told by the text’s colophon: “The book was finished with the help of God, the munificent sovereign, and copied in the holy month of Zū al-Qa‘da 1112 [April-May 1701].” (تتمت الكتاب بعون 1112 لله الملك الوهاب تحريراً في ذو القعدة الشريف سنة 1112, f. 100r, ll. 4-6). Although the manuscript, which includes religious matters on the remaining folios, was copied not long after the reign of Abdāl Khān, it was apparently not produced in a Bidlisite, or even Kurdish context. Indeed, the manuscript’s copyist writes in red ink, ahead of the main text, that: “This book is the *Şanāyi‘ al-Şanaw‘āt*, written by Abdāl Khān. This Abdāl Khān was one of the Turkish begs” (*Ḥazā kitāb Şanāyi‘ al-Şanaw‘āt fī ta’līf Abdāl Ḥan. Bu Abdāl Ḥan dedikleri Atrak beglerinden bir beg imiş*, f. 1v, ll. 1-3), thus betraying his unfamiliarity with the work’s background. In this sentence, he also designates Abdāl Khān as the author of the book; however, we read further in the body of the text that he merely ordered its translation, again so as to make it easier for potential readers to understand it (f. 1v, l. 13 – 2v, l. 1). It is of course possible that Abdāl Khān ordered a translation of a book he himself had written, and Evliyā Çelebi (1990: 92-105) does speak of him, in a typical manner, as a prolific author, master of a thousand skills (*beḡār-fer*) and “versed in alchemy and magic and several hundred occult philosophical sciences”. On the book’s fore edge, we also read the mention “*Şanāyi‘ al-Şanaw‘āt* by Abdāl Khān” (صنایع الصنوعات لابدال خان), suggesting he was indeed both the author of the book and the one who had requested its translation.

<sup>26</sup> On this topic, see Evliyā (1990: 84-85), and Dankoff’s introduction, pp. 18-26; see also Hendrik Boeschoten in Evliyā (1988: 81-106) and Martin van Bruinessen (2000 and 1988: 20-21), where the author postulates that “the Rojiki, or at least their urban elite, spoke a mixed language, a Turkish dialect infused with numerous Arabo-Persian and Armenian expressions”. Van Bruinessen is probably right in pointing out that the use of

developments, the production of a Turkish translation of the *Sharafnāma* was the next logical step, and it was taken by another scion of the dynasty, Abdāl Khān's son and the principality's new ruler Sharaf Khān III, who in 1078/1667-68 asked his first cousin Muḥammad Bēg b. Aḥmad Bēg to complete the project.<sup>27</sup>

In the passage of the translation's preface (*dibācha*) where he explains the context of its production, Muḥammad Bēg b. Aḥmad Bēg subtly suggests his displeasure at having been asked to undertake this task, writing:

“It shall not stay concealed from the sun-like brightness of the brilliant spirits of the noble companions that the honourable commander-in-chief, great among the great, protector of the weak and the destitute, support of the warriors of the holy faith, endowed with the favours of the Lord of the worlds and glory of state and religion, Sharaf Khān, source of justice and blessings, son of Abdāl Khān, whose dwelling is in Paradise, may God Almighty and glorious extend the days of his state and increase the strength of his power, and may peace be upon his forefathers, gave in 1078 [1667-68] to the most despicable of God's creatures and the frailest of His servants, burdened by unruliness and lacking in virtue, Muḥammad Bēg, son of Aḥmad Bēg Mīrzā, in need of the divine mercy of the Eternal, the eminent request to translate the *Sharafnāma* from Persian into Turkish, so that anyone might benefit from its consultation. Even though this was not the duty of this miserable one to do so, we have put our trust into God Almighty's grace and, asking for His backing, we have striven to accomplish the task at hand.”<sup>28</sup>

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this Turkish dialect was restricted to the urban elite, as in Evliyā Çelebi's narrative, most of the interactions with tribal soldiers of the *kehan* are conducted in Kurdish (see, for example, Evliyā (1990: 196-97 and 210-11); see also Scheref (1860-62: I, 441)). He further suggests that the peculiar linguistic situation in Bidlis had to do with the city's location on the road from Tabriz to Aleppo, writing that “no other Kurdish emirate maintained as much international relations as Bitlis, which made it necessary to know Turkish and Persian”. To this, we can add the fact that Sharaf Khān II, Abdāl Khān's grandfather, had mostly grown up in an Azeri Turkish-speaking environment. His mother was a Mawşillū and so was his maternal uncle, Muḥammad Bēg, governor of Hamadān, who was like a “second father” (خالوی پدر منزلت; Scheref (1860-62: I, 451)) to him and whose daughter he married. Furthermore, Turkish was certainly used to an important extent in the Safavid military circles in which Sharaf Khān II evolved for most of his career. Even though he was presumably born in Bidlis, Ziyā' al-Dīn Khān, son of Sharaf Khān II and father of Abdāl Khān, was in fact three quarter Mawşillū, and our “Rozhikî Turkish” dialect might possibly just be the language developed in Sharaf Khān's household. In that case, it would have only been spoken by members of the dynasty and their close affiliates, making the term “Diyādinid Turkish” more appropriate. This is, however, only mildly related to our subject, which is the written language of the Diyādinid court – even if Abdāl Khān occasionally composed poetry in “Diyādinid Turkish” (see his *takhmis* (pentastich) reproduced in Evliyā (1990: 84-89)), the complete absence of extant documents in the language, save for Evliyā's text, suggests that it essentially remained an oral phenomenon.

<sup>27</sup> Aḥmad Bēg was a (probably younger) brother of Abdāl Khān, and thus a paternal uncle of Sharaf Khān III.

<sup>28</sup> “Aşhāb-i kirāmūn zamīr-i münīr-i mihr-tenvīrlere ḥafī ve nihān buyurulmaya ki emirū'l-ūmerā'ū'l-kirām kebirū'l-küberā'ū'l-izzām 'avnū'z-zü'efā ve'l-mesākīn nāşirū'l-guzāt ve'l-cāhidīn el-mū'eyyed bi 'ināyet rabbi'l-'ālemīn celālū'd-devlet ve'd-dīn a'ni Şeref Ḥān ma'denū'l-cūd ve'l-iḥsān ibn-i Abdāl Ḥān cennet-mekān



Almost drowned in an ocean of praise to the new ruler Sharaf Khān III, Muḥammad Bēg's laconic comment that it was "not [his] duty" to do the translation is interesting. We would indeed expect such a work to be requested of a *munshi*, and not a member of the princely family, who presumably held a much higher position at court.<sup>29</sup> Sharaf Khān II, the work's author himself, does not seem to have written more than one specimen of his *Sharafnāma*, being content with supervising and occasionally correcting later versions reworked by one or several secretaries. Even by the end of the 11<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> century, there must still have been many people capable of reading and understanding advanced Persian prose in Bidlīs, a commercial centre comparatively close to the border with the Safavids. It thus remains a mystery why Sharaf Khan III specifically asked his cousin to undertake this task.

Whatever his reluctance to fulfil it, Muḥammad Bēg was very thorough. No part of the work is missing from the translation, which even includes the *khātima*, an annalistic history of the Ottomans and the Safavids, despite it having virtually no bearing on the history of Kurdish dynasties, including the Diyādīnids. As a result of this thoroughness, the translation is slightly longer than the original, varying between 350 and 400 folios in the different manuscripts, and it took two years to be completed, with Muḥammad Bēg finishing it on 25 Rabī' I 1080/23 August 1669.<sup>30</sup> His translation includes the panegyric mentioned earlier, in the same spot before the colophon, but Abdāl Khān's name has been replaced in it by that of the translation's patron, Sharaf

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hakḳ sübhānehü ve te'āla ḥazretleri devletün dā'im ve saltanatün kā'im kılın. Ve ebā ü ecdādına rahmet kılın. Bu aḥḳar-ı ḥalkū'l-lāh ve ez'af-ı 'ibādū'l-lāh keşirü'l-işyān ve kalilü'l-ihsān el-muhtāc ilā rahmeti'l-lāhi'l-maliki's-şamed Muḥammad Beg ibn-i Aḥmad Beg Mīrzā fī tāriḥ-i sene samāna ve seb'ine ve elf der işāret-i 'ālī buyuruldu ki Şerefnāme fārsī zebāndan türkiye terceme edün, tā kim muṭa'ālaya muvaffaq olā. Egerce bu za'ifuñ vazīfesi deḡil-idi ammā Allāh te'ālanuñ dergāhına şıgınuḡ andan isti'ānet ṭaleb eyleyüb ikdām eyledik."; see ms. Or. 1127, ff. 8r, l. 8 – 8v, l. 3; also the same passage in the other manuscripts of the translation: MC O.29, ff. 6v, l. 15 – 7r, l. 6; AE Tarih 364, p. 7, ll. 9-15 and Add. 7860, f. 6v, ll. 3-11.

<sup>29</sup> In this regard, the use of the expression *nihān ve ḥāfi buyurulmaya ki...*, generally found in the *telhis* produced by the Ottoman chancery (documents sent to the Sultan by the Grand Vizier), is an indication of Muḥammad Bēg's background and occupation: he probably held a high-ranking position in the court of Sharaf Khān III, maybe that of vizier, which explains why he thought this translation work should not have been asked of him. This also suggests that Muḥammad Bēg only devoted a fraction of his time to the task, hence why it took him as long as two years to complete it. On *telhis*, see Pál Fodor (2011).

<sup>30</sup> This date is found in the colophon of the AE Tarih 364 manuscript, which reproduces the autograph's colophon. This has led the writers of the manuscript's notice in the online catalogue of the Institute of Manuscripts of Turkey (Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu) to describe it as an autograph ("mütercim in el yazısı", see <http://www.yazmalar.gov.tr/eser/serefname-tercumesi-kurdistan-tarihi/191804>). However, in addition to the note already mentioned and bearing the date of 1296/1878-79, the modern hand and paper, as well as a map of Kurdistan drawn by the copyist on the manuscript's last page (pp. 698-99) and showing the borders between Russia, Iran and the Ottoman empire as they were after the signature of the Treaty of Turkmānchāy (24 Rajab 1243/10 February 1828) and the second Treaty of Erzurum (15 Jumādā II 1263/31 May 1847), make a clear case for the dating of this manuscript to the later part of the 13<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century. It might have been copied in Diyarbakir and acquired there by the renowned intellectual 'Alī Emīrī, native of that city, who later founded the Millet library by donating his collection of around 16 000 manuscripts and early printed documents. 'Alī Emīrī's seal is found on pages 1, 695 and 698 of the manuscript. On the treaty of Turkmānchāy, see Xavier de Planhol (1990), and on the second Treaty of Erzurum, see Sabri Ateş (2013: 129-38) and Keith McLachlan (2013).

Khān III.<sup>31</sup> Muḥammad Bēg thus carried out his translation from the same \*Abdāl Khān manuscript, which later served as a model for the two Persian copies of the work produced in 1083/1672.<sup>32</sup> Why the name of Abdāl Khān was not replaced by that of Sharaf Khān III in these copies remains a mystery, although this might have to do with the greater liberty that Muḥammad Bēg had as a translator and member of the princely family.

The two Persian manuscripts of the *Sharafnāma* sponsored by Sharaf Khān III were completed at an interval of two days, on Friday 4 Sha'bān/25 November and Sunday 6 Sha'bān/27 November of the year 1083/1672, probably by two different copyists, only one of which is identified.<sup>33</sup> Available evidence, based on our findings about their later circulation, suggests that these copies were destined to be circulated in Iranian Kurdish principalities, where knowledge of Persian of course remained current, whereas the book's Turkish translation was specifically produced with the intent of being distributed in the neighbouring principalities of Bidlīs.<sup>34</sup> This tells us that, although Sharaf Khān III's project contrasted with that of Abdāl Khān in their uses of the work,<sup>35</sup> he also clearly followed in the footsteps of his father and great-great-grandfather by using the *Sharafnāma* as a legitimizing tool for the power and standing of the Diyādīnids of Bidlīs in Ottoman Kurdistan. However, the translation's distribution seems to have been (voluntarily or not) restricted geographically, as the work apparently remained unknown outside of the Lake Van area. Amīr Yanşūr Bēg, Mirdāsīd prince of Pālū, to the north of Diyarbakir, was thus unaware of its existence when, eleven years later (1092/1681), he sponsored the

<sup>31</sup> See Or. 1127, ff. 372r, l. 8 – 372v, l. 2; also AE Tarih 364, p. 695, ll. 1-8 and Add. 7860, f. 332v, ll. 5-17 (this passage is missing from the manuscript MC O.29). Sharaf Khān III is called by his cousin Muḥammad Bēg “Sharaf Khān the Second” (شرف خان الثاني). Sharaf Khān I, who was one of the most powerful Kurdish princes of the early 10<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> century, had apparently been somewhat forgotten by the time of his descendant.

<sup>32</sup> Written here with an asterisk, as this is a reconstructed manuscript (see *supra*, note 18). This was probably the sole manuscript of the *Sharafnāma* remaining in Bidlīs, after most of Abdāl Khān's library had been auctioned off by the governor of Van, Melek Aḥmed Paşa, in 1065/1655, following the *khan's* defeat and flight from the city (he came back the next year, only a day after Melek Aḥmed Paşa's destitution was made known in Bidlīs). Evliyā Çelebi was put in charge of this auction, and he thus provides us with a detailed description of the contents of the *khan's* library. See Evliyā (1990: 280-301).

<sup>33</sup> On these two manuscripts, see *supra*, note 18.

<sup>34</sup> Thus, the manuscript Or. 1127 was copied only a few months after the autograph, in 24 Rajab 1080/18 December 1669, by a man named ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Muṣṭafa (see f. 372v, ll. 2-6), and it was later circulated in the principality of Ḥazzō, as demonstrated by several notes to the name of its ruler, Nūshīrvān Bēg b. Xīzr Bēg of Garzan, bearing the dates of 1129/1716-17 and 1147/1734-35 (see ff. 1r and 372v). The ‘Izīzānīd princes of Ḥazzō/Şaşūn were “cousins” of the Diyādīnids according to the dynasties' mythical origins, and related to them by strong matrimonial links. What is more interesting is that, in two of these notes, this copy of the Turkish translation of the *Sharafnāma* is called “Tārīkh-i Nūshīrvān”, or “History of Nūshīrvān”, showing how other dynasties also appropriated the work. On the common origins of the Diyādīnids of Bidlīs and the ‘Izīzānīds of Ḥazzō, see Scheref (1860-62: 191, 357-65), and for the mention of Nūshīrvān Bēg as ruler of Ḥazzō in Ottoman archives, see Orhan Kılıç (1997: 159-60).

<sup>35</sup> Abdāl Khān's copy had apparently been made for conservation purposes, as attested by the fact that it never left Bidlīs. Furthermore, the manuscript Elliott 332 also features informative notes and bookmarks dating from the reign of Abdāl Khān, suggesting it was also kept in Abdāl Khān's library for perusal.

production of another Turkish translation of the *Sharafnāma*, to which we will now turn our attention.

## 2. Reading, translating and updating the *Sharafnāma* in the *majlis*: The Turkish translation by Sham'ī, court secretary of the prince of Pālū (1092/1681)

Like other Kurdish rulers, the Mirdāsīd princes of Pālū and Agīl, two sister principalities located to the north of Diyarbakir, also demonstrated their interest in their own dynastic histories through the production of copies, translations and continuations of the *Sharafnāma*.<sup>36</sup> Their interest in Sharaf Khān's work is attested by the existence of a manuscript of the *Sharafnāma* copied in 1070/1660 by a man named Zū al-Nūn al-Pālūyī, or Zū al-Nūn of Pālū, kept with the call number Y-0561 in the library of the Turkish Historical Institute (Türk Tarih Kurumu) in Ankara, although this manuscript was not the model for Sham'ī's translation.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, extant manuscripts of two early modern *shajaras* (genealogical trees) of the dynasty of Agīl, including one dated to the early 12<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> century, roughly the same period as Sham'ī's translation, are indicative of a more general preoccupation with problematics of dynastic history and legitimacy.<sup>38</sup>

Sham'ī's translation was realised in 1092/1681 at the request of the prince of Pālū, Amīr Yanşūr Bēg, and it also includes a *zayl* on the history of the princes of Pālū up to the time of writing.<sup>39</sup> An anecdote related by Sham'ī in the *dibācha* (preface) of his translation sheds light on the way manuscripts of the

<sup>36</sup> The Mirdāsīds of Pālū, Agīl and Charmūg were thus called because the tribal confederation over which they ruled claimed descent from members of the Arabic tribe of the Banū Kīlāb that had fled after the killing of their chief Šāliḥ b. Mirdās (r. 416-20/1025-29), founder of the Mirdāsīd principality of Aleppo; see Scheref (1860-62: I, 178) and Thierry Bianquis (1993: 115-23). On their history, see notably Nusret Aydın (2003 and 2012), Feyzullah Demirtaş (2005) and Nilay Özok-Gündoğan (2014).

<sup>37</sup> Indeed, it includes the end of the chapter on the Ayyūbids, the chapter on the Ardalān and the beginning of the chapter on the Ḥakkārī of the *Sharafnāma*, which are missing in Sham'ī's translation. However, the translation also contains, in many places, variants associated with the Y-0561 manuscript, suggesting Sham'ī's model might have been copied from it (compare for example Y-0561, f. 4v, ll. 3-6 with R. 1469, f. 4r, ll. 11-15). I wish to thank here Yusuf Baluken, who kindly shared with me a copy of parts of the Y-0561 manuscript. Another *Sharafnāma* manuscript also exhibits signs of a connection with the Mirdāsīds. This is the manuscript Add. 23531 of the British Library (London), which includes a rubricated "bookmark" by the copyist, Ḥājī Shērwan, who wrote "About the history of the Mirdāsīds" (مطلب احوال مرداسی; f. 88r, ll. 15-17) in the margins of the chapter devoted to the Mirdāsīd dynasties of Agīl, Pālū and Charmūg (Book III, Part 1, Chapter 2). This suggests that the intended addressee of this manuscript, copied in 1079/1669, was a Mirdāsīd ruler.

<sup>38</sup> These two *shajaras* have been studied by Yunus Emre Gördük (2014). They establish a link between Pīr Manşūr, ancestor of the Mirdāsīd rulers, and 'Abbās, uncle of the Prophet, via the latter's grandson 'Alī b. 'Abdallāh. This genealogy is also given by Sharaf Khān, on the basis of "the genealogical tree still in the hands of his [Pīr Manşūr's] descendants" (بنوجب شجره که حالا در دست اولاد اوست; Scheref (1860-62: I, 176)). On *shajaras* in general, see Nebi Bozkurt (2010).

<sup>39</sup> The date of the translation is given in the text's colophon, as well as at the end of the *zayl* on the history of the princes of Pālū, which is concluded by wishes of prosperity and success for Amīr Yanşūr Bēg. There are also verses of poetry dedicated to that ruler in the *dibācha* and before the colophon. See Şem'ī, ed. A. Oktay (2017: 49-51 (*dibācha*), 156-66 (*zayl* on Pālū), 271-72 (colophon)); also manuscript R. 1469, ff. 2r, ll. 1-10, 39r, l. 4 – 42r, l. 17 and 87r, ll. 3-12.

*Sharafnāma* were used in the various Kurdish courts, while explaining the reason for his Turkish translation. He writes:

“Sham’ī, this despicable one, full of defects (...) happened to be honoured with the attendance of the noble *majlis* [“assembly”] of our ruler, His Excellency the enlightened prince [Yanşūr Bēg], when suddenly, in the course of conversation, mention was made of the government and lineage of his glorious ancestors and forefathers. To the best of their ability, some of those in attendance at the *majlis* told stories on this subject, but in the end, the *History of the Sharafnāma* was sought, for it had been clearly and extensively related in it. However, because it was in Persian, it was of little help. Afterwards, that mighty lord ordered this despicable one to translate this book in the Turkish language.”<sup>40</sup>

From this passage and his presence at the prince’s *majlis*, we can gather that Sham’ī was probably a *munshi* at Yanşūr Bēg’s court. Sham’ī’s translation, which he calls the *Terceme-i tevārīḫ-i Şeref Hān* or *Terceme-i tevārīḫ-i Şeref nāme*, is stylistically very different from the one made by Muḥammad Bēg in Bidlīs. Whereas Muḥammad Bēg’s translation, composed 12 years earlier, was written in an ornate and flowery language on par with the Persian text and the general standards of Ottoman Turkish historiography at the time, Sham’ī’s work exhibits a simpler prose, in terms of both structure and lexicon. Much of the Persian and Arabic learned vocabulary has thus been replaced by Turkish equivalents, in contradistinction with Muḥammad Bēg’s more literary writing style, associated with the formalised tenets of classical *inshā’* prevalent at the court in Istanbul. A quick comparison of a random passage in both texts, the beginning of the very first chapter on the Marwānid princes of Diyārbakr and Jazīra, will suffice to illustrate this difference:

<sup>40</sup> “[B]u ḥakīr-i pūr-takşīr, a’nī Şem’ī (...) ittifāken ḥakīmimiz olan (...) emīr-i rūşen-zamīr ḥazretlerinin meclis-i şerifleri ile şeref-yāb olup nā-gāh esnā-yı muşāḥabetde ābā ve ecdād-ı ‘izāmīnūn semt-i ḥükümet ve tertīb-i neseblerinin zıkr-i cemīlī vākı’ oldu. Hużzār-ı meclisden niçe kimseler ‘alā-ḥadri’l-ımkān nakl eylediler. ‘Āḳıbetü’l-emr, Şeref-nāme Tevārīḫine mürāca’at idüp anda ‘alā’t-tafşīl ‘ayān ü beyān olmuşdı. Ammā, Fārisī olduğu [ilçün ol deñli müfid olmadı. Ba’dehu, ol şāḥib-i devlet, bu kitābı, zebān-i Tūrkiye terceme eylemege bu ḥakīre emr eyledi.” (Şem’ī, 2017: 50-51; R. 1469, f. 2r, ll. 1-7.)

Sharaf Khān's text	Muḥammad Bēg's translation	Sham'ī's translation
<p>بر مرآت ضمائر مهر تنویر دانشمندان صافی ضمیر صورت اینمعنی عکس پذیر خواهد بود که اول کسی که از طایفه اکراد در دیاربکر و جزیره حکومت نموده احمد بن مروانست و در زمان قادر عباسی کار او عروج تمام یافته چنانچه قادر اورا ملقب بنصر الدوله گردانید<sup>41</sup></p>	<p>Mir'at-ı zāmīr-i münīr- tenvīre bu ma'nenüñ şûratı böyle 'akş-ı pezîr olur ki evvel şahş bu Ekrād t̤ā'ifesiñden Diyār Bekr ve Cezîre vilâyetinde da'vâ-yı saltanat idüb masnad-ı hükümetde mütemekkin olmuşdur, Aḥmed bin-i Mervândur ki Qādir-i 'Abbāsî zamânında anuñ kâr u bâr temâm-ı mertebe 'urûc idüb şöyle ki Qādir Naşru'd-Devle nâm ile anı mulakḳab eyledi.<sup>42</sup></p>	<p>Ma'lûm ola ki, Diyâr- bekr ve Cezîre Ekrād'ı t̤ā'ifesiñden evvel kimse ki, saltanat da'vâsın idüp hükümet tahtında oturan Aḥmed ibni Mervân idi ki, Qādir-i 'Abbāsî zamânında anuñ devleti ve şevketi şol mertebe 'urûc bulmuşdı ki, Qādir-i 'Abbāsî aña Naşru'd-devle deyü laḳab virdi.<sup>43</sup></p>
<p>In the mirror of the minds as bright as the sun of the clear-spirited scholars, the case of the matter shall be reflected that the first person from the Kurdish people who ruled in Diyārbakr and Jazīra was Aḥmad b. Marwān. During the time of Al- Qādir the Abbasid, his affairs ascended to the highest summits, so much so that Al-Qādir gave him the title of "Protector of the State".</p>	<p>In the mirror of those whose minds are as bright as the sun, the case of the matter shall thus be reflected that the first person from the Kurdish people who strived for independent power and settled on the throne of government in the provinces of Diyārbakr and Jazīra was Aḥmad b. Marwān. During the time of Al- Qādir the Abbasid, his affairs ascended to the highest summits, so much so that Al-Qādir gave him the name of "Protector of the State" as a title.</p>	<p>It shall be known that, from the Kurdish people of Diyārbakr and Jazīra, the first person who strived for independent power and sat on the throne of government was Aḥmad b. Marwān. During the time of Al- Qādir the Abbasid, his state and dignity had ascended to such heights that Al-Qādir the Abbasid gave him the title of "Protector of the State".</p>

In addition to the stylistic differences mentioned above, although Muḥammad Bēg did tend to write in an increasingly simpler prose as he went

<sup>41</sup> Scheref (1860-62: I, 19).

<sup>42</sup> Or. 1127, f. 14r, ll. 1-5.

<sup>43</sup> Şem'î (2017: 61); see also R. 1469, f. 5v, ll. 6-8.

along, it is also clear from this comparison that Muḥammad Bēg's translation was much more literal than Sham'ī's. These contrasting characteristics reflect the different uses that were intended for these two translations. As we have seen, the text sponsored by Sharaf Khān III was meant to be distributed to nearby principalities and, like the original *opus*, it was supposed to support the Diyādīnids' claim to political greatness among the other houses of Kurdistan. As such, it was expected from Muḥammad Bēg to produce a work both faithful to the original style and content that would meet the standards of Ottoman historical writing. The expectations were very different for Sham'ī's translation, only meant for the personal use of the prince of the smaller principality of Pālū, Yanşūr Bēg, and other members of his court. The objective was to produce a rendition of the text in readable and intelligible Turkish, rather to adhere to any predefined standard of historiographical or stylistic greatness.

As a result of this different approach, Sham'ī also omitted the *khātima* from his translation: this was obviously a part of the *Sharafnāma* in which Yanşūr Bēg had no interest. Furthermore, an accidental loss in the model manuscript forced him to skip a good bit of the chapters on the Ayyūbids and Ḥakkārī princes and the whole chapter on the Ardalān.<sup>44</sup> Associated with Sham'ī's simpler and more concise style, these voluntary or involuntary lacunae have contributed to the comparative brevity of the text, which is only 87 folios long, to be compared with the 372 folios of Muḥammad Bēg's translation in the Or. 1127 manuscript. Even though they both produced Turkish translations of the *Sharafnāma*, Muḥammad Bēg and Sham'ī were thus in reality doing different work, with distinct objectives. They both seem to have succeeded in achieving these objectives. The number of extant copies of Muḥammad Bēg's translation gives a measure of its favourable reception. Meanwhile, Yanşūr Bēg, as well as the larger Mirdāsīd circles, must also have been favourably impressed with Sham'ī's work, notably with the *zayl* included in the translation, for Muşṭafa Bēg, the Mirdāsīd prince of Agil, apparently had a second version of the text produced, presumably in 1095/1684.

This tentative dating is based on the latest date mentioned in that second version's sole extant manuscript, kept in the British Library with the call number Add. 18547/1. It is unknown if this is the original manuscript of the version produced in 1095/1684: it is now part of a *majmū'a* in which the translation is followed by the first part (*jūz'*) of Mas'ūdī's *Golden Prairies*.<sup>45</sup> The

<sup>44</sup> The translator explains this omission with the following note: "Here [the manuscript] does not follow the plan, because some folios were missing from [our] model" ("bunda tertīb'den düşmüşdür zirā ki nüş'a'dan evrāk zāyī' olmuşdī"; see ms. R. 1469, lower margin of folio 17v; also Şem'î (2017: 95-96)).

<sup>45</sup> The text of Sham'ī's translation runs on ff. 1v-132r, and that of the first part of Mas'ūdī's *Golden Prairies* on ff. 133v-183r. It is followed by a short text attributed to Shaykh Isma'īl Muqrī (Mokrī), written by the same copyist (ff. 183v-184v). If we are to believe its colophon (f. 183r, ll. 5-23), the manuscript of the *Golden Prairies* was written earlier than the composition of the *Sharafnāma* translation, in Zū al-Hijja 1062/November 1652 (f. 183r, ll. 17-23). The *majmū'a* also features an acquisition note dated 6 Rajab 1161/2 July 1748 (f. 133r). See also Şem'î (2017: 31-32).

absence of a colophon, presumably ripped away when the two texts were pieced together (see f. 132r), prevents us from reaching definite conclusions on the date of composition of this second version, as well as its authorship and patronage. The text is nearly exactly the same as that of the original version by Shamî, although the copyist also made a few corrections to Shamî's text.<sup>46</sup>

However, what makes this a different version of the translation, rather than a mere copy of it, is the existence of a short but important addition: in supplement of the *zayl* on the princes of Pālū, there is also in this manuscript a *zayl* on the Mirdāsīd princes of Agīl, ending with the rule of Muṣṭafa Bēg, in 1095/1684. The author of this *zayl* bestows wishes of prosperity upon Muṣṭafa Bēg, and he writes in a markedly more ornate style than that found in the rest of the work. On the other hand, this *zayl* is a lot shorter than the *zayl* on the history of the princes of Pālū.<sup>47</sup> The difference in style between both *zayls* suggests that Shamî was not the author of the *zayl* on the princes of Agīl included in this second version of his translation. Rather, it is more probably Muṣṭafa Bēg's own secretary who copied Shamî's work, supplementing it with a short *zayl* on the dynasty of his patron, although nothing can be asserted. Muṣṭafa Bēg's patronage of this work appears to have been directly inspired by Yanşūr Bēg's patronage of the original translation, demonstrating the *Sharafnāma*'s continued relevance as an instrument of dynastic legitimacy for Kurdish princes everywhere, and not only in Bidlīs.

Moreover, both Shamî's and Muḥammad Bēg's translations explicitly point to the fading of Persian literacy in Ottoman Kurdistan in the later part of the 11<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> century. Based on what we have seen so far, we would be inclined to believe that for all intents and purposes, Persian had then been replaced by Turkish as the dominant language in the region. In some respects, this was indeed the case, as the existence of these translations aptly demonstrates. However, the same period also corresponds to the rise of a written Kurdish literature, notably in the fields of poetry and didactic religious texts, in certain Kurdish principalities such as Jazīra and 'Amādiya.<sup>48</sup> Can this phenomenon also be linked to the decline of Persian? If so, how can we reconcile it with the

<sup>46</sup> See Adnan Oktay in Şemî (2017: 32-33).

<sup>47</sup> See the text of the *zayl* on the princes of Agīl in Şemî (2017: 150-52); Add. 18547, ff. 59r, l. 4 – 60v, l. 3. Both *zayls* were the object of an earlier publication by Anwar Soltanî (2005). However, he had only worked on the later Add. 18547 manuscript, which led him to describe Shamî as the secretary of Muṣṭafa Bēg, and attribute sponsorship of the whole project to the prince of Agīl.

<sup>48</sup> Already in the text of the *Sharafnāma*, 'Amādiya is hailed by Sharaf Khān II as Kurdistan's greatest centre of learning, albeit with no mention of Kurdish-language works; see Scheref (1860-62: I, 15). In Jazīra, the Medreseya Sor (Red Medrese) was also an important centre of scholarship; it is there that the renowned Kurdish author Melayê Cizirî taught. In Bidlīs, the scholar Muḥammad Barqalî apparently wrote in Kurdish, although no works of his in this language are extant. A great number of authors of Kurdish-language works also originated from the greater Lake Van area, for example Şêx Şemseddinê Qutbê Exlatî from Akhlāt, Feqiyê Teyran and Ehmedê Xanî from Hakkārî, Elî Teremaxî from Miks, etc. Nothing is known of literary production in the relatively minor Mirdāsīd principalities of Pālū and Agīl, and the existence of literature in Kurdish at this time should not be generalised to all Ottoman Kurdish principalities a priori.

apparent prevalence of Turkish as the administrative and historiographical language of the Ottoman Kurdish courts? These are some of the questions we will now address in the third and final section of this article.

### 3. Persianate culture, Ottoman bureaucracy and Kurdish scholarship: the sociolinguistic evolution of 11<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup>-century Ottoman Kurdistan

What was the attitude of 11<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup>-century Kurdish speakers towards their own language and the other languages of the region, notably Arabic, Persian and Turkish? This question might seem impossible to answer, as the subject is mostly ignored in the relevant sources. We have no single work dedicated to this issue in the Kurdish context, no equivalent to the Timurid *Muḥākamat al-Lughatayn* (“The Judgment of Two Languages”) by Mīr ‘Alī Shīr Navā’ī (d. 906/1501), in which the famous writer from Herat vowed to demonstrate the literary superiority of Chagatai Turkish over Persian.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, as for any linguistic group, Kurdish speakers did not constitute a uniform and cohesive group. However, the Turkish translation of the *Sharaḫnāma* produced in Pālū in 1092/1681 does provide us with information on how *one* Kurdish speaker perceived the several languages he was presumably fluent and literate in. This speaker is none other than Sham’ī himself, the translator of the work and a *munshi*’ at the court of Yanšūr Bēg. In the *dibācha* of his work, Sham’ī makes a passing remark on the different languages spoken in Kurdistan and elsewhere, the brevity of which is compensated by its unexpected candour. Using as a starting point the Quranic verse that says: “and of His signs is the creation of the Heavens and Earth and the variety of your tongues and hues”,<sup>50</sup> he then writes that:

“It shall be known that, here, the variety of tongues refers to the various languages spoken among the creatures, some of which are Arabic, Persian, Kurdish, Turkish and Greek, Hindi, Afghan and, in addition to these, many more strange tongues and wonderful languages that cannot be counted. However, the most eminent and elegant of these tongues is Arabic, in which the noble Qur’an was revealed, and after it, Persian, the sweetest of languages. Then, each people has considered their own language to be the highest, but Imām Muḥammad Barqal’ī, Mullā Muḥyi’ al-Dīn Jazīrī, and many more great scholars and noble *literatī*, have chosen the Kurdish language, making it the most agreeable. Furthermore, the bravest and most generous peoples of the aforementioned Islamic community are the Arabs, and then the Kurds.”<sup>51</sup>

<sup>49</sup> See the edition by Faruk Sema Barutçu Özönder (1996) and the English translation by Robert Devereux (1966). On the question of Turko-Persian diglossia in the Centrasianic context, also see the works by Marc Toutant (notably 2016), and Aftandil Erkinov (2004 and 2008).

<sup>50</sup> Qur’an, “The Greeks”, 30/22; see A. J. Arberry (1996: 107).

<sup>51</sup> “Ma’lūm ola ki, bu maḳāmda ihtilāf-ı elsineden murād maḥlūkāt mābeyninde olan elsin-i muḥtelefīdür ki, ba’zısı ‘Arabī ve ba’zısı Fārisī ve ba’zısı Kürdī ve ba’zısı Türkī ve Rūmī ve Hindī ve Avgānīdūr ve bunlardan mā-‘adā niçe niçe ğarā’ib diller ve ‘acā’ib luġatlar vardır kim, ‘add ü ihṣā olunmaz. Ammā, cümle dillerden a’lā



First, let us note that Shamî was most likely proficient in all the languages mentioned: as a translator of a Persian work into Turkish, he must have had extensive knowledge of both languages, and as a learned man of his time, he must also have known Arabic to some extent. As for Kurdish, his mention of works by Muḥammad Barqalî, and a man perhaps to be identified with Melayê Cizîrî, suggests that he could at least read the language and presumably speak it, though we do not know if he was capable of writing it. In any case, the opinion formulated is that of a multilingual and educated individual, presumably a Kurd, whether it can be said to accurately represent the approach of the *munshî* at other Ottoman Kurdish courts, or even educated Kurds in general, is of course debatable.

Shamî's description of Arabic, the language of the Qur'an, as the "most eminent" of languages is unsurprising, just like his view of Persian, the literary language *par excellence*, as second in the hierarchy of the world's tongues.<sup>52</sup> However, he then makes a bolder claim by asserting the superiority of Kurdish over the rest of the world's languages, including Turkish, basing his rationale on the "many (...) great scholars and noble *literate*" who chose to write in it. This linguistic prevalence of Kurdish is, in turn, linked by Shamî to a supposedly higher status of the Kurdish community, the "bravest and most generous" after the Arabs in the Islamic world.

At this point, Shamî ends his aside and gets back to the translation, leaving us with the following question: if Kurdish was so prestigious as a literary language, second only to Arabic and Persian, why did Shamî translate the *Sharafnâme* into Turkish, and not into Kurdish? He might not have had a choice, as his translation was done at the request of Yanşür Bêg, his patron; however, this does not fundamentally change the matter. Since Shamî did not hesitate to clearly express his opinions on languages in the *dibâcha* of the work, Yanşür Bêg

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ve efşah 'Arab dilidür kim, Qur'an-ı 'azîmü's-şân ol luğat ile nâzil olmışdur ve bundan sonra Fârisî dilidür kim emlaḥ-ı elsinedür ve bundan sonra her bir kavim kendü dillerin a'lâ tutmuşlar, ammâ İmâm Muḥammed Berkalî ve Mellâ Muḥyi'd-dîn Cizîrî ve niçe niçe 'ulemâ-i 'izâm ve fuzalâ-i kirâm, Kürd dilini ihtiyâr idüp maḳbûl tutmuşlar ve bu zıkr olan millet-i İslâmiyyenün ziyâde seçâ'atlısi ve şâhib-i şehâsi 'Arab kabilesidür, ve bunlardan sonra Kürd kabilesidür." (Sem'î (2017: 50); R. 1469, ff. 1v, l. 11 – 2r, l. 1; Add. 18547, ff. 1v, l. 16 – 2r, l. 6.) Mawlânâ Muḥammad Barqalî was a religious scholar native from Bidlîs; active during the reign of Sharaf Khân I (early 10<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> century), to whom he dedicated *ḥashîyas* (commentaries) on various books, he was also a resident at the court of the prince of Bokhtân, Badr Bêg b. Shâh 'Alî Bêg, as noted by Sharaf Khân II in the *Sharafnâme* (see Scheref (1860-62: 128, 341-42); also mention of an anti-Yezidi *fatwâ* by the same Muḥammad Barqalî in the manuscript Hunt. Don. 13, f. 6r, ll. 1-2). The only extant text by Muḥammad Barqalî is a commentary on another anti-Yezidi work by a Kurdish scholar, the *fatwâ* of Malâ Şâlih al-Kurdi al-Ḥakkârî. However, like Malâ Şâlih's *fatwâ*, Muḥammad Barqalî's commentary is written in Arabic, not Kurdish; see Mustafa Dehqan (2008 and 2015). It is unclear who is meant by the name Mullâ Muḥyi al-Dîn Jazîrî – perhaps it is the famous Kurdish poet Shaykh Aḥmad Jazîrî, (d. 1050/1640), better known as Melayê Cizîrî?

<sup>52</sup> The high status of Persian was, however, not only associated with its literary qualities, but also to its place as "the second sacred language of Islam"; see Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi (2006).

must have shared them to a degree. Why, then, would he have requested a Turkish, rather than a Kurdish translation?

To make this issue even more interesting, Shamî's *Terceme-i tevârih-i Şerefnâme* was not the only Turkish translation of a Persian-language historical chronicle composed in the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> century in Ottoman Kurdistan. We have already discussed Muḥammad Bēg's Turkish translation of the *Şharafnāma*, made in Bidlīs at the request of Sharaf Khān III in 1078-80/1667/8-69, as well as the Turkish translation of Ḥamdallāh Mustawfī Qazvīnī's *Nuẓhat al-Qulūb*, produced at the request of another ruler of Bidlīs, Sharaf Khān III's father Abdāl Khān. We can thus assert that in at least some of the Ottoman Kurdish courts, historical chronicles were preferably translated into Turkish, rather than Kurdish.

We might be tempted to explain this phenomenon by the existence of a well-grounded tradition of historical writing in Turkish by the end of the 11<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> century, including the production of numerous Turkish translations of Persian chronicles in the Ottoman Empire. However, such a tradition also existed for religious and literary texts; yet, from the turn of the 11<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> century, at least some of these texts were increasingly being written in Kurdish in Ottoman Kurdistan, in addition to Turkish-language classics also produced in the region, such as the *Ma'rifetnâme* by Ibrāhīm Ḥaqqī Erzurumī (d. 1194/1780).<sup>53</sup> What reason can we give for this dichotomy between historical texts on the one hand, and literary and religious works on the other? Before trying to answer this question, let us focus for a moment on those Kurdish-language religious and literary texts produced in the 10<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> century and their authors.

Much has been written on the beginnings of classical Kurdish literature in both poetry and prose in that period, with studies and editions of the works of such figures as Melayê Cizîrî (d. 1050/1641), Feqiyê Teyran (d. 1041/1632), Şemseddinê Exlatî (d. 1085/1674), Ismailê Bayezîdî (d. 1121/1709), Mela Bateyî (d. 1168/1755), Selîmiyê Hîzanî (fl. 1168/1754), and, of course, Ehmedê Xanî (d. 1119/1707), author of the celebrated *opus Mem û Zîn* ("Mem and Zin").<sup>54</sup> In many ways, this development paralleled the "classical age" of Ottoman Turkish *divan* literature.<sup>55</sup> However, this should not be understood as meaning the complete disappearance of Persianate culture in Kurdistan and the Ottoman Empire at large. In a recent work, Michiel Leezenberg (2016: 259) has

<sup>53</sup> A native of Paşin (Pasinler), to the east of Erzurum, Ibrāhīm Ḥaqqī travelled to Tillo, a village on the outskirts of Sêrt (Siirt), where he became a follower of the Kurdish Qadiri *shaykh* Isma'il Faqîrullāh. He completed his *Ma'rifetnâme* in 1170/1757; see the edition by Faruk Meyan (2014).

<sup>54</sup> See the classic but dated study by Qanatê Kurdo (1983), and, more recently, Mehmed Uzun (1992, 2003), Feqî Huseyn Sağnîç (2002), and Abdurrahman Adak (2013), among others. Most of the works of the classical authors have been published in more or less satisfactory editions; for a recent review of these publications, see Bolelli (2015).

<sup>55</sup> See İskender Pala (2007).

thus noted that even after Turkish “had largely replaced Persian as the language of the Ottoman bureaucracy and emerged as a language of refined courtly poetry in its own right (...), [it] never wholly sidelined Persian as a language of learned letters”, especially since “official and literary uses of Turkish were and remained replete with Persian (and, of course, Arabic) loan words and loan constructions.”

The same could be said of classical Kurdish literature, as its most celebrated products were indeed modelled on, or at least inspired by, the earlier works of classical Persian authors such as Nizāmī Ganjavī (d. 606/1209), Farīd al-Dīn ‘Attār (d. 618/1221), Ḥāfiẓ-i Shīrāzī (d. 792/1390) and others. This allowed for the survival of Persianate culture in a localised form, as the decreasing knowledge and literary use of Persian in the Ottoman lands, including Kurdistan, created the need for these Kurdish and Turkish books inspired by the Persian greats. Ehmedê Xanî’s *Mem û Zîn* is a masterly executed example of this, as it shows a skilful integration of elements of Kurdish oral literature and folklore, the core story of *Mem û Zîn* comes from the Kurdish oral epic *Memê Alan*,<sup>56</sup> with motifs common in classical Persian literature. A difference between Kurdish and Turkish is that, in the principalities of Ottoman Kurdistan, a distinction remained between the language of bureaucracy and official correspondence, Ottoman Turkish, and that of the *litrati* and court poets, some of whom chose to work in Kurdish. Such a distinction did not exist in the central lands of the Ottoman Empire, where there was a much longer tradition of using Turkish in the administration: there, Turkish was the language of both bureaucracy and literature.<sup>57</sup>

All the well-known Kurdish *litrati* of the period under scrutiny were also, without exception, religious scholars, having both studied and taught in some of Kurdistan’s numerous and prestigious *medreses*.<sup>58</sup> Thus, they also produced didactic works for use by the *medreses*’ pupils. Ehmedê Xanî, who had himself studied in many different *medreses*, including in Bidlīs,<sup>59</sup> is again the most well-known author of such books in this period. We can mention his *Nûbihara biçûkan* (“The Children’s Fruits of Spring”), a Kurdish-Arabic rhymed dictionary designed to help Kurdish pupils learn Arabic, and his *Eqîdeya îmanê* (“The Tenets of Faith”), a primary-level book on the core principles of the Islamic creed. It is around these didactic works in Kurdish that the *medrese* curriculum probably crystallised at the turn of the 12<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> century, as far as

<sup>56</sup> On *Memê Alan*, see Michael L. Chyet (1991).

<sup>57</sup> For an insightful discussion of this topic, see Christopher Markiewicz (2015: 140-45).

<sup>58</sup> See Zeynelabidin Zınar (1998: 1-4). This is an abridged English translation by Martin van Bruinessen of the author’s earlier *Xwendina medrese* (Stockholm: Pencinar, 1993), which I could unfortunately not consult.

<sup>59</sup> See Kadri Yıldırım (2011: 23).

we can gather from 20<sup>th</sup>-century accounts such as those of Zeynelabidin Zinar and Sadreddin Öztoprak.<sup>60</sup>

This standard curriculum, given with minor differences in both Zinar (1998: 12-17) and Öztoprak's (2003: 185-89) accounts, included Ehmedê Xanî's two books, as well as other Kurdish works such as Eli Teremaxî's *Serfa kurmancî*, a work on Kurdish, Persian and Arabic grammar, to which Leezenberg (2014) has devoted a detailed article. A quick glance at the list of books and the order in which they were studied allows us to understand quite well the role given to these Kurdish books in the educational system of the *medrese*.<sup>61</sup> For example, Zinar (1998: 11) writes that "the standard curriculum (*reze*) included around twenty books that the *feqî* [pupil] had to learn entirely by heart". In this curriculum, apart from the early tasks of learning the Arabic alphabet and memorizing the Qur'an, the first four books studied were in Kurdish. These were the *Mevlûd* ("Life of the Prophet") by Mela Bateyî, Xanî's *Nûbihara biçûkan*, the *Nebcû'l-Enam* ("The Path of the Creatures") by Mela Xelilê Sêrî (d. 1259/1843), described by Zinar (1998: 12-13) as "a brief text in Kurmanci verse on Muslim doctrine" and, on the same subject, Ehmedê Xanî's *Eqîde*.<sup>62</sup> Only upon completion of the study of these four books did the students start reading Arabic works on Shafî'i *fiqh*.

Next, the *feqî* moved to the study of the Arabic verb (*sarf*) and that of Arabic syntax (*nahw*). In both cases, pupils again started with Kurdish texts (Eli Teremaxî's *Serfa kurmancî*, called *Tesrîfa kurmancî* by Zinar, and two books by Mele ûnisê Erqetênî called *Zurîf* and *Terkîb*), before moving on to the classical Arabic works on the subject, but even these were explained in Kurdish by the teachers (Zinar, 1998: 4, 13-14). Thus, out of 23 books in Zinar's list, 7 are in Kurdish and 16 in Arabic.<sup>63</sup> Although we cannot project these accounts from

<sup>60</sup> Both Zeynelabidin Zinar and Sadreddin Öztoprak were former students of Kurdish *medreses*. Indeed, the traditional *medrese* system remained in use in Kurdistan well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, even after it was banned in Republican Turkey in 1924. See Zinar (1993 and 1998), and Öztoprak (2003). Extensive information on these two sources is also given in Leezenberg (2014). Even now, there are still *medreses* in Kurdistan, functioning as a supplement to the regular school system; see Davut Işıkdoğan (2012).

<sup>61</sup> The importance of books in the *medrese* educational system has been highlighted by Fahri Ünan (1999), who writes that "[t]he lessons were fundamentally linked with the books, and, with time, this link meant that the names of books and those of the lessons were mentioned in the same breath. Thus, most of the time, the books studied were also understood as the 'lesson's name'." In this system, books were the curriculum, and the completion of a book allowed the student to progress by moving on to the next one, regardless of the time it had taken them. This is best explained by one of the teachers interviewed by Işıkdoğan (2012: 48-49) in his article on contemporary Kurdish *medreses*: "We don't have the same programmatic approach that is found in formal education. You have a specific book to study, and you already know the next book you will study when you finish it. But the time and duration of study devoted to each book depends on the student. (...) There is no obligation to finish a certain number of books in a given amount of time. (...) In this way, *medrese* education shows similarities with student-centred approaches in modern education."

<sup>62</sup> Emedê Xanî's *Eqîde* is not included in Öztoprak's list, and the *Nûbihar* is incorrectly described in it as an "Arabic-Turkish" dictionary. However, it is accurately referred to as an Arabic-Kurdish dictionary in the body of the work (2003: 46). For Öztoprak's description of the general situation of Kurdistan's *medreses* and his own student years, see Öztoprak (2003: 42-51).

<sup>63</sup> The proportions are similar in Öztoprak's list. What is interesting here is the complete absence of books in both Persian and Turkish. Although books in Persian appear in the curriculum given by Zinar, they were

the 20<sup>th</sup>-century into the past, it seems that at least in the early stages of study, the curriculum of Kurdish *medreses* did not differ significantly from that of state-sponsored Ottoman *medreses*, save for the use of these Kurdish books.<sup>64</sup> When approaching a new topic, the educational method thus consisted in first studying Kurdish books on the subject, presumably as a means to acquire its core vocabulary and principles, and then advancing through Arabic texts of increasing difficulty.

From this short summary, we can clearly see that Kurdish authors of historical chronicles, or translations thereof, and the Kurdish *literati* who produced both literary works and didactic works for use in the *medreses*, belonged to two different classes of people. The former represented the traditional category of the *munshī*, or court secretaries, usually also the authors of most of the Ottoman and Persian chronicles,<sup>65</sup> whereas the latter were scholars and *literati* (*‘ulāma’ va fuṣṣalā*). While they were all men of letters, they did not practice the same work and were not associated with the same milieu. The *munshī*, as in the example of Sham‘ī, evolved in court circles and their day-to-day occupation mostly consisted in writing official correspondence in Ottoman Turkish, while the *‘ulāma* taught in Kurdish *medreses*, in Kurdish, to mostly Kurdish pupils. This differentiated use of languages in 11<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup>-century Ottoman Kurdistan explains why Muḥammad Bēg and Sham‘ī both translated the *Sharafnāma* into Turkish rather than Kurdish, which did not stop Sham‘ī from hailing the literary superiority of Kurdish, exemplified by the writings of the epoch’s great *literati* and scholars.

## Conclusion

In the closing decades of the 11<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> century, two Turkish translations of the *Sharafnāma* were produced in the Kurdish princely courts of Bidlīs and Pālū by Muḥammad Bēg b. Aḥmad Bēg, a great-great-grandson of the author of the work, and Sham‘ī, a *munshī* at the court of Amīr Yanṣūr Bēg. These works contrasted in some ways. Written in an ornate and flowery style in line with Ottoman chancery prose of the time, Muḥammad Bēg’s translation was meant to be circulated in neighbouring principalities as a token of the political prestige and power of the house of the Diyādīnids of Bidlīs. Meanwhile, Sham‘ī wrote

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only read by students advancing as far as “university-level” studies, who were presumably going to make a career in the religious sciences. Öztoprak’s book also shows ample evidence of the knowledge of Persian among *medrese* teachers and religious scholars in general, but it was very likely not the case for the bulk of the students who had left the *medrese* earlier to pursue other occupations.

<sup>64</sup> The Arabic books studied in Ottoman and Kurdish *medreses* were mostly the same; compare Cāhid Baltacı (1976: 35-43, notably p. 37), with the lists in Zinar (1998: 12-17) and Öztoprak (2003: 185-89). One major exception to this was of course the domain of *fiqh*, as in Kurdish *medreses*, Shafi‘ī *fiqh* was predominantly studied, while in state-sponsored *medreses*, the official Hanafi school of thought prevailed.

<sup>65</sup> Sharaf Khān II is, of course, one of a few exceptions to this general rule, to which we can also add, for example, the author of the *Aḥsān al-Tawārikh*, Ḥasan Bēg Rūmlū (fl. late 10<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> century).

in a simpler Turkish prose for the occasional perusal of the prince and other members of his *divan*.

Yet, the translations were also both written at the request of the princes themselves, and the use of history and genealogy as elements of dynastic legitimation is manifest in both cases. Furthermore, Muḥammad Bēg and Sham'ī both explicitly stated that these translations into Turkish were rendered necessary by the fact that the Persian-language original was not understood any more. The partial demise of Persian and increasing use of Turkish in Ottoman Kurdistan throughout the 11<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> century was following a larger trend in the whole of the empire. By this process, the “Persianate world” ceased to include the regions located west of the Safavid border and mostly became restricted to Iran proper and the lands further east. However, in the case of Ottoman Kurdistan, this linguistic shift brought about a differentiation in the language uses formerly covered by Persian: while the domain of the *munshi*, including the writing of historical chronicles, was heavily influenced by Ottoman chancery practices and thus developed in Turkish, the circles of scholars and *litterati* associated with the *medrese* environment started composing some of their literary and didactic texts in Kurdish.

This linguistic dichotomy between the court and the *medrese* might also have reflected a nascent political rivalry: while the Kurdish scholars, like the common people, were exhausted by the never-ending imperial wars for control of the border region, a fact most eloquently described by Ehmedê Xanî in his lament on the prejudice the wars brought about on the Kurds,<sup>66</sup> the ruling dynasts actually had much to gain by playing these power games in which they were major contestants. The fact that the *Sharafnāma*, a text which was more than anything the expression of the political aspirations of these Kurdish dynasts, almost completely ceased to be copied in the 12<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> century might be an indication of their decreasing influence in Kurdistan.

Furthermore, the vast network of the *medreses*, allowing the circulation of both teachers and students all over Kurdistan and beyond, was probably a far greater unifying factor than the constantly warring and mostly self-serving dynastic principalities. This political rivalry between princes and scholars would resolve in the 13<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century with the end of the autonomy of the Kurdish emirates, after which the political space was completely filled by religious

<sup>66</sup> “See, from the land of the Arabs to that of the Georgians, how the Kurds have become like fortresses! The Turks and the Iranians have built for themselves, on all sides, a Kurdish rampart, using the Kurds as targets for the arrow of destiny. As if they were the key to the frontiers, each of their clan stands as a solid dam, against which the roaring waves of the Turkish and Tajik sea splatter the Kurds with blood, splitting them in two like an isthmus.” (*Bîfikir ji ‘Ereb beta ve Gurcan / Kurmanc çî bîyîne şubbê burcan / Ev Rom û ‘Ecem bi wan ‘hesarin / Kurmanc hemî li çar kenarin / Herdû terejan qebîlê kurmanc / Bo tîrê qeşa kirîne armanc / Goya ku li ser’bedan kildîn / Her tayîfe seddekeî sedidîn / Ev qulçumê Rûm û be’hrê Tacîk / Gava ku dikin xurûc û te’hrîk / Kurmanc dibin bi xîn muletex / Wan jêk vedikin misalê bergex*.) See Ehmedê Xanî (2010: 214-17).

leaders, who would spearhead most of the important Kurdish nationalist revolts of the late Ottoman and early Republican era.

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