



ḲODĀDĀD-NĀMA

ḲODĀDĀD-NĀMA, the only text of historical significance known thus far from the considerable number of [Judeo-Persian](#) texts originating from late-medieval/early modern [Bukhara](#) (q.v.), also known as *Bā yād-e Ḳuydodča* (To the memory of Little Ḳuydod).

Named after its hero, Ḳodādād (Pers. for the Heb. *Natan'el* 'God gave'), often abbreviated to "Ḳoydāt" in the text, the *Ḳodādād-nāma* is a short narrative poem in rhymed couplets (*maṭnawī*), consisting of 279 verses in the *hazaj* meter (see ['ARUŽ](#)) and in the spoken dialect of Bukhara.

According to [Carl Salemann](#) (q.v.), the first scholar to edit and study the text, the author of *Ḳodādād-nāma* is Ebrāhim b. Mollā Abu'l Ḳayr, about whom we lack any biographical information other than the fact that he also wrote several other poems known only by their titles. Based on scant information, scholars have surmised that *Ḳodādād-nāma* was probably written toward the end of the 18th century, possibly during the rule of the Bukharan ruler Amir Ma'ṣum (d. 1802).

The narrative of Ḳodādād centers on an incident involving a young cloth merchant (a seller of kerchiefs, a weaver, engaged in business with cloth dealers (v. 154; tr. Moreen, p. 241) by the same name. The reasons behind the incident are not entirely clear. According to the narrative (verses 15-30; tr. Moreen, pp. 239-40), the fearful youth went to the market to purchase some *maḥmil* (Pers. *maḳmal*, velvet, silk, or satin). Upon shaking the hand of a Muslim merchant, other merchants accused the latter of shaking the hand of



an impure infidel. When the youth defended himself, stating that he had already prayed and was ritually pure, they set upon him trying to force him to convert to Islam. They then carried Ḳodādād in fetters before the local governor (Qūšbēgi) claiming that he had converted when in fact he had not. However, later in the narrative (verses 154-63; tr. Moreen, p. 241), the youth explains that the merchants set upon him when he went to collect a debt long overdue from one of them. They then decided to claim that he had converted to Islam in revenge and, most likely, in order to renege on the debt. Taken first before local authorities, Ḳodādād resisted all blandishments and bribes as his enemies swore, falsely, that he had converted. Fearing for his life, he made moving farewell speeches to his mother, brothers, and children, entrusting the latter to the care of the former. Then, taken before a higher ruler (“shah”, verses 152ff; tr. Moreen, pp. 241-42), Ḳodādād proffered the real explanation for the merchants’ enmity. When the ruler continued and intensified the effort to convert him, Ḳodādād defended his faith eloquently claiming that it is a biblical injunction to die for it: “... I do not turn away from my religion. Whatever God has decreed, no person can [re]arrange. He made me a Jew from the first ... His decree cannot be changed! ... He created all of you Muslims; such was His decree for you” (verses 174-83; tr. Moreen, pp. 241-42). Enraged, the ruler ordered his execution which was promptly carried out. Ḳodādād’s martyrdom was crowned by his last words, “Let me be killed, and still I will not turn from my religion” (verse 200; tr. Moreen, p. 242). The poem ends with the poignant laments (*martīya* style) of his mother, brothers, and children.

This moving tale of martyrdom, whose historicity cannot be corroborated by other sources, resembles in content and ethos the *seliḥot* (Heb. penitential poems and prayers) written in the Middle Ages, primarily in Christian lands, to commemorate Jewish martyrs. It is probably built around a real event, even if this cannot be substantiated, and it acts as a reminder that Jews in the Persianate world suffered, occasionally, at Sunni hands as well.

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