



# ŠĀH-NĀMA TRANSLATIONS XIII. INTO POLISH

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The first brief mention of Ferdowsi in Polish was made by Ignacy Krasicki (1735-1801) in his work on poets and poetry (Krasicki, 1803, III, p. 483). Besides, Krasicki included in his collection of Oriental tales two passages originating from the *Šāh-nāma*: “On Alexander and an Indian philosopher” and “Maxims and adages of Buzur” (that is, Bozorgmehr, see [BOZORGMEHR-E BOKTAGĀN](#)), although he did not mention their source (Krasicki, 1803, VI, pp. 60-62, 263-64). Wilhelm Münnich (1788-1867), in his lecture “De Poesi Persica” delivered in Latin at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow in 1824 (Münnich, 1825), furnished more details on the Persian national epos, presenting two short quotations from the *Šāh-nāma* in Latin (pp. 59 and 63-64).

Polish Romantic poets of the first half of the 19th century, being strongly influenced by Oriental poetry (cf. Reyman, 1957; Krasnowolska, 2003b), drew comparisons between Homer and Ferdowsi in their discussion on the meaning of the Oriental poetry for the Western culture (Münnich, 1825, pp. 39, 83-84; Mickiewicz, 1955, p. 184; Siemieński, 1855, p. IV) and looked for analogies between Persian and Polish patterns of patriotism (Chodźko, 1856, p. 87). In this context, the first samples of the *Šāh-nāma* were, as a rule, translated into Polish through a third language. For technical reasons, short and clearly delimited pieces of the epos were chosen. Since there existed no examples of medieval epic poetry in Polish, for stylistic inspiration the translators looked at the 19th-century Polish Romantic poetry which was



familiar to their readers.

In 1855 Lucjan Siemieński (1807-77), a historian and a poet, published his translation of the *Dāstān-e Biżan o Maniża* (Siemieński, 1855). His translation was based on an unidentified, possibly German, original. Siemieński was aware of his lack of competence as translator of Ferdowsi's text, and yet he felt obliged to present it to the Polish readers, while [Aleksander Chodźko](#) (1804-9), the only Polish poet of that time who knew Persian, did not undertake the task (Siemieński's introduction, p. III). Siemieński's verse is of ten syllables and arranged in large, rhymed strophes of irregular number of verses and in diversified rhyme combinations.

Another historian, Józef Szujski (1835-85) included some examples from the *Šāh-nāma* in his textbook of non-Christian literatures (Szujski, 1867), of which the Fifth Lecture (pp. 79-113) is devoted to Persian literature. The passages chosen by Szujski are rendered in 13-syllable verse with some parts summarized in prose; they come from the story of Rostam and Sohrāb (pp. 89-101) and from the lyrical introduction to the story of Biżan and Maniża (p. 91), omitted by Siemieński. Szujski based his work on Friedrich Rückert's (1788-1866) German translation (Rückert, 1838), but he also refers to translations by Jules (Julius) Mohl (1800-76; see Mohl, 1838-78) and [Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall](#) (1774-1856; see Hammer-Purgstall).

More excerpts from the *Šāh-nāma* found their way to literary anthologies of the early 20th century. Julian A. Święcicki (1848-1932) included several episodes from the epic, namely those of the death of Iraj (pp. 198-99), Zāl and Rudāba (pp. 200-5), Rostam and Sohrāb (pp. 209-12), and the death of Rostam (pp. 227-28), into a volume devoted to Persian literature which is part of his *General History of Literature* (Święcicki, 1902). These are his own renderings made after Adolf Friedrich von Schack's (1815-94) German translation (Schack, 1851). Święcicki also quotes some fragments of Siemieński's aforementioned work (Siemieński, 1855, pp. 213-23). As his poetical form, Święcicki chose a 10-syllable verse regularly rhymed in couplets, with some prose insertions.

In Antoni Lange's (1863-1929) *Oriental Divan* (Lange, 1921, pp. 237-41), the *Šāh-nāma* is represented by four short fragments translated in 11-syllable octaves and taken from its introduction: "How the Book Was Composed," "About the Poet Daqiqi," "Abu'l-Qāsem Ferdowsi Intends to Write the Book," and "In Praise of Abu Maṣur, Son of Maḥmud." Lange does not mention any intermediate source of his translation, although it probably existed. A longer



passage from Ferdowsi in Lange's free interpretation ("Feridun Puts His Sons to Test") appeared in the daily *Kurjer Warszawski* (Lange, 1929).

The first Polish translation of a piece of the *Šāh-nāma* immediately from Persian was that of the introduction to the story of Bižan and Maniža, made by [Aleksandr Freiman](#) (1879-1968) on the basis of Vullers' edition of the text (Freiman, 1901). Freiman did not aspire to a poetical effect of his translation and called it "strictly philological," trying to render the sense of the poem as accurately as possible. His verse is not rhymed, but divided into lines of eleven syllables each, being an attempt at metrical imitation of the original Persian *motaqāreb*.

The subsequent, more substantial works on the *Šāh-nāma* by philologists with good command in Persian appeared after World War II. Tadeusz Kowalski (1889-1948), primarily known as an Arabist and Turkologist (see Majkowska, 1999), is the author of a two-volume study of the *Šāh-nāma* (Kowalski, 1952-53). The first volume contains Kowalski's essays on various aspects of Ferdowsi's work, illustrated by extensive quotations of the text, which are translations from the original into a simple prose language. The second volume is a detailed summary of the whole epos, divided into chapters according to the kings' reigns. The quoted passages are numbered after Vullers' edition. The book, published after Kowalski's death, has no bibliography or references. However, this is the first so complex a work on the *Šāh-nāma* in Polish. A selection of aphorisms from the *Šāh-nāma* in Kowalski's translation (Kowalski, 1948), as well as his other articles on the subject (Kowalski, 1945; 1949; 1956), was published separately.

[Franciszek Machalski](#) (1904-79) was another scholar who translated selected *Šāh-nāma* passages from the Persian original. He rendered in verse the following parts of it: "In Praise of Wisdom," "The End of the Book," and a passage from "Zāl and Rudāba" (Machalski, 1944; 1945). Machalski's translations appeared in *Studia Irańskie*, a Polish journal which was published in Tehran in 1943-45. Later on, the complete text of "Zāl and Rudāba" in Machalski's commented prose translation came out as a book in the series published by the Polish National Library (Biblioteka Narodowa) in Wrocław (Machalski, 1961). Machalski also wrote a popularizing brochure on Ferdowsi's work and life (Machalski, 1970) and an article on the knowledge of the *Šāh-nāma* in Poland (Machalski, 1977), which served as a starting point for the present study.



The largest translation of the *Šāh-nāma* that has appeared in Polish so far is by Władysław Dulęba (1923-87), who was a translator of Persian classical poetry (see Soja-Blumhoff, 1996). Dulęba rendered the entire Ferdowsi's poem in Polish, in poetical prose, (some 2,000 typed pages), but only a selection of its first part (up to the story of Rostam and Šāgād) was published during his lifetime (Dulęba, 1981). Of the complete text the first volume only (brought to the end of "Hāmāvarān") appeared posthumously (Dulęba, 2004). This book contains an introduction by Anna Krasnowolska and includes indexes, genealogies, bibliography, and reproductions of seven color paintings from an early 17th-century *Šāh-nāma* manuscript from the Czartoryski collection (cf. Majda, 1967, pp. 96-97). Dulęba's translation is based on the Moscow edition of the *Šāh-nāma* (Bertel's et al.), but for the later publication of his work more recent editions of the epos were consulted as well (Khaleghi-Motlagh; Joveyni). Although Dulęba's translation covers the whole text of the *Šāh-nāma*, it was left by the translator as a working version that still needs some revision and supplementation, which was done in the edition of 2004. Dulęba translated the *Šāh-nāma* in rhythmical prose marked by archaistic style. His theoretical views on the *Šāh-nāma* were summarized in his doctoral thesis published as *The Cyrus Legend in the Šāhnāme* (Krakow, 1995) and in a number of his articles (Dulęba, 1974, 1983, 1987, 1989a, 1989b).

Research on the *Šāhnāma* done by Polish scholars was inspired by, and in some cases inseparable from, its translation. A number of works on *Šāh-nāma*'s mythology (Molé, 1948; Składankowa, 1970, 1981, 1988; Krasnowolska, 1987, 1988, 1983a, 1983b, 2001, 2006); metric (Kuryłowicz, 1976), style and composition (Krasnowolska, 1989, 2002, 2003a; Piecuch, 1992), and political background (Składanek, 1983) were written in the second half of the 20th and early 21st century. Ananiasz Zajączkowski (1903-70) published a manuscript of the Turkish translation of the *Šāh-nāma* produced in Mamluk Egypt (Topkapi Saray Library, MS Hazine 1519). The publication includes a facsimile of the original text and its transcription in Latin characters and is preceded by a large introduction (Zajączkowski, 1965b). Its two excerpts: "Haft k̄vān-e Esfandiār" and a passage on the mourning of Eskandar by philosophers were published separately (Zajączkowski, 1964, 1965b).

The knowledge of Ferdowsi's *Šāh-nāma* in Poland, just like that of classical Persian poetry in general, made its way from more or less amateurish literary interest, which was a part of Romantic intellectual program in the 19th century, to a more professional and scholarly approach promoted by the



development of Iranian studies which became an independent discipline in Polish universities only after World War II.

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(Anna Krasnowolska)

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