

A *SHĀHNĀMAH* OF 1612 C.E./1021 A.H. IN THE PERSIAN  
MANUSCRIPT-COLLECTION OF THE LIBRARY OF  
THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC  
THOUGHT AND CIVILIZATION (ISTAC),  
KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA\*

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*Wisdom is better than aught else which God has granted to you. Wisdom is the guide and is the heart's enlivener; wisdom is your helper in both worlds. From it comes happiness and all human welfare; from it you gain increase and without it you experience loss. Thou, Wisdom, art the creation of the Creator of the world and knowest all things patent or hidden. Do thou, O man, ever keep wisdom as your counsellor, whereby you may preserve your soul from all unworthiness. When you have acquired an insight into any branch of a matter, you will understand that science does not reach down to the root.*

Firdawsī, *Shāhnāmāh*<sup>1</sup>

The Persian language was, and still is, a major carrier of Islamic civilization, and is second only to Arabic. In the eastern Muslim

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<sup>1</sup> Abū al-Qāsim Manṣūr b. Ḥasan Firdawsī, *The Epic of the Kings. Shah-Nama, the National Epic of Persia by Ferdowsi*, transl. by Reuben Levy [selection] (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Limited, 1967, Persian Heritage Series, UNESCO Collection of Representative Works), 1.

lands, in Iran proper, on the Indian subcontinent, in Central Asia, and even in Southeast Asia<sup>2</sup>, Persian remained for centuries, the *lingua franca* of the educated classes, particularly in poetry and/or mysticism.

<sup>2</sup> For further bibliographical information on this matter, see my *Mirzā Rafi'ā's Dastūr al-Mulūk: A Manual of Later Šafavid Administration. Annotated English Translation, Commentary on the Offices and Services, and Facsimile of the Unique Persian Manuscript* (Ph.D. dissertation, ISTAC, 1998). (This work, which won the first Prize of the Iranian President's Award for the Best Study on Iranian Culture (International Category) for the year 1379/2000, is to be published by ISTAC in 2001); "Selected Features of a Unique Persian Manual on Islamic Administration from Late Šafavid Iran: Mirzā Rafi'ā's *Dastūr al-Mulūk*," *Al-Shajarah* 5, no. 1 (2000): 85; "Persian Religious and Cultural Influences in Thailand and Maritime Southeast Asia: A Plea for a Concerted Interdisciplinary Approach", *Journal of the Siam Society* (forthcoming 2001); "Persian Religious and Cultural Influences in Thailand and Maritime Southeast Asia in Historical Perspective: A Plea for a Concerted Interdisciplinary Approach", forthcoming in 2001 in: *Proceedings of the International Conference on the Southeast Asian Religious Mosaic in the Third Millennium (1<sup>st</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> February 2001)*, Mahidol University International College, Salaya Campus, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand (slightly different version of the previous entry); "A Reappraisal of Iranian-Thai and Iranian-Southeast Asian Cultural Ties in Historical Perspective", *Iranian Journal of International Affairs* (forthcoming in 2001); "Traces of Cultural Influences of the Persian Language in Southeast Asia: Preliminary Statement on an Interdisciplinary International Research-Project", forthcoming in 2002 in the *Proceedings of the Second International Conference on Languages, Literatures and Cultures (17<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> April 2001)*, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication; "Shaykh Aḥmad of Qumm (1543–1631) and the Iranians of Ayutthaya: Problems and Requirements for Further Research", forthcoming in 2002 in the *Proceedings of the Second Australian National Thai Studies Conference, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT), Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, (12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> July, 2001)*, sponsored by RMIT, Australian National University's Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies and the National Thai Studies Centre; "Selected Aspects of Iranian-Southeast Asian Cultural Contacts in Historical Perspective", forthcoming in 2002 in the *Proceedings of the 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA) in San Francisco, U.S.A. (17<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> November 2001)*.