

(55) [HEINRICH FRIEDRICH] VON DIEZ [1786-1817]

An important influence on my studies, which I thankfully acknowledge, is that of the prelate von Diez. At the time when I was carefully researching Oriental poetry, the Book of Kabus came into my hands. It seemed so important that I devoted much time to it and invited many friends to have a look at it. Through a traveler I transmitted my sincere thanks to that estimable man from whom I had learned so much. He kindly sent me in return a little book about tulips. I had a sheet of silky paper which I directed to be adorned with a splendid golden floral design. On that sheet I wrote the following poem:

*How to be prudent in our wanderings - Uphill, or down, departing from a throne — Dealing with people, horses, other things — All a king teaches to his son — you've shown. Through your fine gift, such knowledge now is ours. To that, you even add a tulip bloom! Were this gold frame not narrowing my powers, To sing your praise I would need endless room.*

And so developed a conversation in letters, which the worthy man continued, in an almost illegible hand, amid sufferings and pains, until the end of his life.

Since I have so far become acquainted with the customs and history of the Orient only in a general way, and with its languages not at all, such kindness was most important to me. Because I was working in a planned, methodical way, I needed accessible information that would have required time and energy to locate in books. So when in doubt I consulted him and always got an adequate, practical reply to any question. The content of these letters would make them worthy of printing; they would serve as a monument to his knowledge and benevolence. As I knew his strict and distinctive cast of mind, I was careful not to mention certain topics. But, quite in contrast to his usual mode of thought, when I wished to learn about the personality of Nasreddin Khodja, merry travel- and tent-companion of the global conqueror Timur, von Diez obligingly translated for me some of the anecdotes. These showed once again that many audacious fairytales, which Westerners have treated in their own way, have their origin in the Orient but in being transformed have lost their special coloring, their true, appropriate tone.

Because the manuscript of that book is now to be found in the royal library of Berlin, it would be highly desirable for a specialist to offer a translation. Perhaps it might be most properly undertaken in Latin so the scholar would be the first to know it fully. One might then make a decent translation of some excerpts available to the German public.

The present collection of essays may serve as proof that I have made good use of that friend's additional writings, such as the Memorabilia of the Orient etc. It is riskier to admit that his not always admirable quarrelsomeness also profited me a good deal. But let me recall how, during my years at the university, I would rush to the fencing room to watch masters or seniors try their force and dexterity against each other. This undeniably gave me a chance to mark strengths and weaknesses that would have eluded anyone who had not seen such a contest.

Doubly dear to me, the more I read him, is the author of the Book Kabus [Qabus Nama, or Mirror for Princes], namely Kai Ka'us [ibn Iskander, eleventh century], king of the Dilemites. He lived in the mountainous region of Ghilan, which hides the Euxine Bridge to the south. Carefully educated as

crown prince for the freest, most active life, he left the country to acquire further culture and practical training farther in the East.

Shortly after the death of Mahmud (whose glorious achievements I earlier had occasion to summarize), he came to Ghazna, where he was well received by the latter's son Mesud and, in the wake of many a service in war and peace, was married to one of Mesud's sisters. At the court where Firdusi had written the Shah Nameh just a few years before, where a great assembly of poets and talented men continued to flourish, and where the new mier, courageous and bellicose like his father, valued the society of the clever and gifted, Kai Ka'us could find the most precious opportunity for further instruction.

But I need to speak first of his education. To perfect his physical training, his father had entrusted him to an excellent teacher. From this man the boy acquired practice in all the chivalrous arts: shooting, riding, equestrian shooting, spear throwing, and hitting a ball adroitly with a polo mallet.

After all this had been superbly achieved and the king seemed to be satisfied, he praised the teacher but added: "*You have instructed my son in all the activities he needs implements for. Without a horse he cannot ride. He cannot shoot without a bow. What is his arm, if he has no javelin? Polo, without mallet and ball? You have not taught him the one activity where he needs only himself alone, the one most necessary and where no one can help him.*" Standing there ashamed, the teacher heard that the prince lacked the art of swimming. So the prince learned it, though with some reluctance, and it saved his life when, on a voyage to Mecca, his boat, filled with pilgrims, ran aground in the Euphrates. Only he and a few others survived.

That he was just as thoroughly educated in matters of intellect is proved by the good reception he found at the court of Ghazna. He was appointed companion to the prince, which at the time meant a good deal, because he had to be smart enough to give a reasonable and agreeable report of everything that went on.

The succession to the throne of Ghilan was made as insecure as the realm itself by powerful, warmongering neighbors. Finally, after the death of his royal father, who had been deposed and then restored to rule, Kai Ka'us ascended to the throne with great wisdom and with full awareness of its likely hazards. Foreseeing, in his old age, that his son Ghilan Shah would held a position even more precarious than his own, he writes this memorable book, in which he tells the youth "*that he wishes to educate him in the arts and sciences for a twofold reason: that through any art necessary he may gain a means of livelihood, should destiny place him in that position; or if not, that he may at any rate be well instructed in the reasons for things if he should remain in power.*"

If only in our time such a book had been available to noble emigrés who with admirable resignation often supported themselves by the work of their hands — how consoling it would have been for them!

That such an excellent, invaluable book has not become better known may be largely due to the fact that the author published it at his own expense and the Nicolai publishing firm has taken it only on commission, which in the book trade will bring such a work immediately to an initial standstill. But to let the country know what treasures the book holds, I will sum up the contents of the chapters and request that respected daily papers such as the Mogenblatt and Gesellschafter make known to the

general public the edifying, entertaining anecdotes and stories and the incomparable maxims the work contains.

Contents of the Book Kabus by chapters:

- 1) Knowledge of God.
- 2) Praise of the Prophet.
- 3) God is praised.
- 4) Fullness in godly service is necessary and useful.
- 5) Duties toward father and mother.
- 6) Lineage shall be elevated through virtue.
- 7) Rules governing speech.
- 8) The last teachings of Nushirwan.
- 9) Condition of old age, and that of youth.
- 10) Decency and rules at meals.
- 11) Behavior when drinking wine.
- 12) How guests are to be invited and treated.
- 13) How to have fun, to play at stones and chess.
- 14) Conduct of lovers.
- 15) Use and harm of cohabitation.
- 16) How to bathe and wash.
- 17) State of sleep and rest.
- 18) Organization of hunting.
- 19) How to practice playing hall.
- 20) How to confront the enemy.
- 21) Means of increasing one's property.
- 22) How to preserve and to give back goods one has been entrusted with.
- 23) Purchase of male and female slaves.
- 24) Where to buy possessions.
- 25) Purchase of horses and traits of the best.

- 26) How the man is to take a wife.
- 27) Rules for the education of children.
- 28) Advantages in making friends and choosing them.
- 29) Not to be careless about the plots and schemes of the enemy.
- 30) It is meritorious to forgive.
- 31) How to seek knowledge.
- 32) Business.
- 33) Rules of doctors, and how to live.
- 34) Rules of astronomers.
- 35) Attributes of poets and poetry.
- 36) Rules of musicians.
- 37) The way to serve emperors.
- 38) Conduct of confidants and companions of the emperor.
- 39) Rules of the chancelleries.
- 40) Organization of the office of vizier.
- 41) Rules for commanding an army.
- 42) Rules of emperors.
- 43) Rules of plowing and agriculture.
- 44) Benefits of virtue.

A book with such contents promises, beyond question, a broadened knowledge of Oriental circumstances, and we will doubtless find a wealth of analogies that can teach us about our European condition and how to evaluate it.

At the end a short chronological summary: King Kai Ka'us came to power approximately in Heg. 450 = 1058, was still ruling in Heg. 473 = 1080, and had married a daughter of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna. His son, Ghilan Shah, for whom he wrote the work, was robbed of his lands: we know little about his life, nothing of his death. See the translation by Diez, Berlin 1811.

I would ask the bookshop that has undertaken to publish Book Kabus or taken it on commission to include this information. A low price will facilitate wider sales.