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Jost Gippert, Frankfurt 2011

# Early New Persian as A Medium of Spreading Islam

JOST GIPPERT

It is a well established fact that the Persian language played an important role as a means of communication when Islam spread into the countries surrounding Iran, and results of this influence have been detected in most languages that are spoken west, north, or east of the Persian speaking area proper.<sup>1</sup> It is less known, however, that the same kind of influence can also be traced in regions south of Iran, in languages that are spoken around the Indian ocean. One of these languages is Divehi,<sup>2</sup> the vernacular of the Maldive Islands which are scattered about the sea south-west of the Indian subcontinent, extending over more than 1,000 km in north-south direction.

The Republic of Maldives is a purely Islamic country today and has been so, with only a short period of interruption, as a kingdom for about nine centuries. The exact date of Islamization, which in the case of the Maldives meant conversion from Buddhism to Islam, and its circumstances have not been established with certainty though. As a matter of fact, there are two controversial theories prevailing in Maldivian historiography as to the date of the adaptation of Islam by a 12<sup>th</sup> century king who was named Dharmavān or, after conversion, Muḥammad al-‘Ādil. The traditional view according to which the conversion took place in 1153 A.D. and was carried out by a certain “Yūsuf Šams ud-dīn at-Tabrīzī” has recently been argued against by the Maldivian historian Hassan Ahmad Maniku who stated that “the Maldivian king accepted Islam in 1147–48 AD instead of the hitherto accepted date” and who claimed that “it was Abul-Barakath from Barbarin in Sri Lanka (in other words from Beruwala) who was responsible for the conversion of the Maldivian King, Sultan Muhammad al-Adil,” instead.<sup>3</sup> In his argumentation, H. MANIKU had to deal with the main source available for Maldivian history, viz. the so-called “Tarikh” which was compiled in Arabic by a certain Hassan Tāj ud-dīn in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. Here, the person who converted *al-sultān muḥammad* is indeed

<sup>1</sup> Cf. B. FRAGNER’s recent treatise *Die “Persophonie”: Regionalität, Identität und Sprachkontakt in der Geschichte Asiens*. Berlin 1999.

<sup>2</sup> The name of the language is sometimes written *Dhivehi*, with *dh* denoting a dental, non-retroflex voiced stop, not an aspirate as one might suggest. The indological transcription with plain *d* is preferred here, retroflex sounds being marked with a dot below.

<sup>3</sup> H.A. MANIKU: “Conversion of Maldives to Islam.” In: *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Sri Lanka Branch*, N.S. 31, 1986/87, pp. 72-81 (here: p. 80).

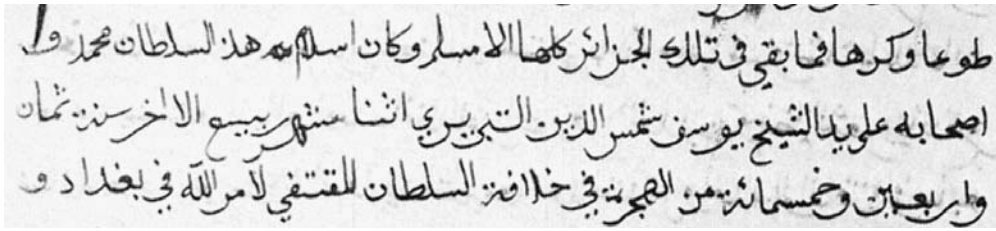


Fig. 1: Maldivian *Tārīḥ*, ms. A, p. 33 (excerpt)

named *šaiḥ yūsuf šams ul-dīn al-tabrīzī* (cp. Fig. 1 showing the lines in question as contained in p. 33 of ms. A of the “*Tarikh*”).<sup>4</sup> Arguing against the chronicler’s reliability, however, MANIKU stresses that “in referring to this name he mentions it in a mystic and an extraordinary reverentious manner”, and he concludes that “if Thajuddeen was putting forward the name of the famous Persian literary figure, then there are chronological differences which are hard to reconcile”.<sup>5</sup>

The sources MANIKU prefers are written in Arabic as well. They comprise an inscription on a teak board from the Friday mosque of the islands’ capital, Māle, datable between AD 1340 and 1348, which mentions the conversion in the context of the erection of a former mosque at the site, and the account of the famous Maghrebini traveller Ibn Baṭṭūta who sojourned in the Maldives during one of his travels in the Indian ocean area at quite the same time (ca. AD 1344) and who was officially invited by the Sultan to act as a *qāḍī* in Māle. Ibn Baṭṭūta, referring to an inscription which may be identical with the one described above, claimed that the conversion was undertaken by a certain *abū al-barakāt al-barbarī* who “knew the Qur’ān by heart” and who was a *maḡribī*.<sup>6</sup> In H. MANIKU’s view, this report is more reliable than the traditional one except for the fact that the epithet *al-barbarī* must not be understood as meaning “the Berber”, a misinterpretation which in the case of Ibn Baṭṭūta, a Maghrebini himself, is obvious, but as referring to Beruwala, a center of Islamic faith on the west coast of Sri Lanka.

In this way, we are confronted with two possible converters and three possible regions of provenance, North-West Iran, North-West Africa, and Sri Lanka. Considering the influence Persian exerted on many neighbouring languages in the course of Islamization, we should expect offhand to find traces of it in the Maldivian language if it was a man from Iran who carried out the conversion of the Maldivian king and his people. And it is just this what we find in the oldest

<sup>4</sup> The excerpt is taken from the facsimile edition of ms. A printed in: *The Islamic History of The Maldive Islands by Ḥasan Tāj al-Dīn, Muḥammad Muḥibb al-Dīn, Ibrāhīm Sirāj al-Dīn, Vol. 1: Arabic Text*, ed. H. YAJIMA, Tōkyō 1982 (*Studia Culturae Islamicae*, 16).

<sup>5</sup> H.A. MANIKU, op. cit. (n. 3), p. 76.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Voyages d’Ibn Baṭṭūta, texte arabe, accompagné d’une traduction* par C. DEFREMERY et B.R. SANGUINETTI, vol. 4, Paris 1979 (réimpr. de l’éd. 1854), p. 127, l. 3.

written documents of the Maldives, which have hardly ever been taken seriously as historical sources so far.

Although Arabic writing has been omnipresent in the Maldives for many centuries now, the oldest sources from the islands that are available to us are in Divehi, written in so-called *evēla akuru*, i.e., “script of yore”, a variety of a southern Brāhmī-type script which is very similar to the one used for medieval Sinhalese; a fact which is hardly surprising if we consider the close relationship of Divehi with the latter Indo-Aryan language.<sup>7</sup> The documents in question are, for the most part, copper-plate grants issued by the Maldivian sultans on behalf of the bestowal of land for the building of mosques; the Maldivian name for this type of *waqf* decrees is *lōmāfanu*, i.e., “great leaf of copper”. All in all, eight *lōmāfanus*, datable between AD 1186 and 1362, are known to have existed so far but only four of them, each consisting of more than seven plates, are still available for investigation today.<sup>8</sup>

Both by the script and by the language they are written in, the *lōmāfanu* plates are clearly distinguishable from the second layer of historical documents we find on the Maldives. Written in a later variant of the same Brāhmī script, the so-called *dives akuru* (“Islanders’ script”), these sources comprise sultans’ decrees, among them *waqf* bestowals, too, but now written on paper (*fatkoḷu*, i.e. “paper leaf documents”) or wooden boards, as well as inscriptions, mostly engraved on tomb stones; the oldest of them date back as far as the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, i.e. the time after the short period of Portuguese domination. The third layer of Maldivian literacy begins by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century when the inherited left-to-right Brāhmī script was

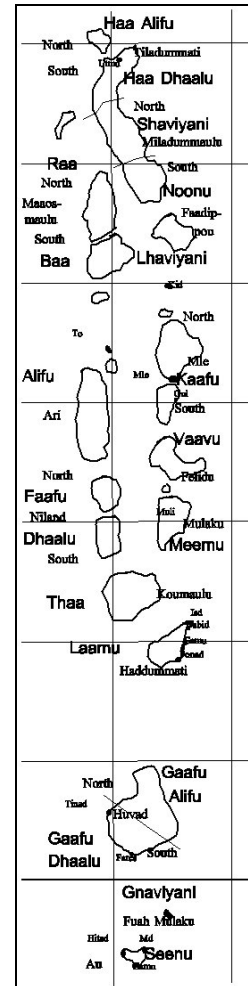


Fig. 2: Atolls

<sup>7</sup> For this relationship now cf. S. FRITZ: *The Dhivehi Language. A Descriptive and Historical Grammar of Maldivian and Its Dialects*. Heidelberg / Würzburg 2002 (Beiträge zur Südasiensforschung 191).

<sup>8</sup> For surveys and former treatises of *lōmāfanu* documents cf. H.C.P. BELL: *The Maldive Islands: Monograph on the History, Archaeology, and Epigraphy*, Colombo 1940 [repr. Māle 1985] and the same author's "Excerpta Maldiviana" 1-14, in: *Journal of the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. 29 / Nr. 75 to Vol. 33 / Nr. 88, 1922–1935. The two most voluminous *lōmāfanus* have been edited recently by scholars from the Maldives and Sri Lanka; cf. *Loamaafaanu: Transliteration, Translation and notes on Palaeography*, Vol. 1, Māle: National Centre for Linguistic and Historical Research 1982; and H.A. MANIKU/G.D. WIJAYAWARDHANA, *Isdhoo Loamaafaanu*, Colombo 1986. A complete edition of *lōmāfanu* documents will soon be published via the internet on the TITUS server of the University of Frankfurt (cf. <http://titus.uni-frankfurt.de>).

substituted by right-to-left *Tāna*, an ingenious amalgam of elements from both Arabic script and *dives akuru*.<sup>9</sup> *Tāna* has remained the official script of the Maldives until the present day.

Examining the *lōmāfanu* grants as the oldest coherent Maldivian sources we have access to, we will at once notice that they still show remarkable traits of Buddhist thoughts and traditions albeit they are decidedly Islamic both by their objective and by their contents. The Islamic attitude is, e.g., clearly indicated by the dating formulae contained in them. In the oldest *lōmāfanu* available, the topic of which is the foundation of a mosque on the island of Gamu in Haddummati atoll<sup>10</sup> (cf. Fig. 2), the dating is contained on the second plate. Although the document has been badly damaged,<sup>11</sup> the essential parts of it can be reestablished with confidence. They read (pl. 2 = “F1”, l. 1-3; cp. Fig. 3):

[śrī]mat gaḍanādītya māras[un ... vaḍa]na tinvana av[u]ro[d]un  
 “In the third year of the [reig]n of [His Maj]esty Gaḍanādītya, the Mahārāja, (and)”  
 śrī [ma]ham[m]jadu petāambarun svaṛḡga vaḍai gat pasuṣatt<sup>h</sup>a bayāsi [avurodun ...]  
 “in the 582<sup>th</sup> [year] after the Great Muḥammad the Prophet attained heaven [...]”  
 mraḡgasīra nakṣatra ...  
 “in the (time of the) lunar mansion (named) Mṛgaśira ...”<sup>12</sup>

There are at least two items that remain unclear in this dating. The one is the name of the Maldivian king, traditionally read as *Gaḍanādītya*, only the second part of which has a clear Indic, i.e. Sanskrit, basis; as a matter of fact, names containing the Skt. element *ādītya*- “sun” abound in Maldivian history,<sup>13</sup> and *ādītta* is the normal denotation of “Sunday” in modern Divehi still.<sup>12</sup> The other uncertain element is the dating itself. Taking it as it stands, it could mean either 582 (lunar) years after Muḥammad’s death (AD 632), yielding AD 1196 as a possible result; or 582 (lunar) years after the prophet’s *Mi rāḡ* (AD 621) resulting in AD 1185; and if we could take it as an unusual denotation of the *Hiḡra* (AD 622), we would arrive at (582 [lunar] years after it =) AD 1186.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. J. GIPPERT: *Ogam – eine frühe keltische Schrifterfindung*. Prag 1992 [1993], p. 31 f.

<sup>10</sup> The official name of Haddummati, lit. “surface of the seven islands” ≈ Skt. \**sapta-dvīpa-mastaka*-, is *Lāmu* today, the Maldivian atolls having been renamed according to the letters of the *Tāna* alphabet.

<sup>11</sup> This *lōmāfanu* has hitherto remained unedited. A first short description is given in H.C.P. BELL’s *Monograph* (cf. n. 8), p. 180 (“Haddummati Atol: Lomafanu, No. 1”). A “rough translation” prepared by the same author is preserved as no. 907 (86/82) in BELL’s bequest in the Government Archives, Colombo, Sri Lanka; my thanks are due to the Archive administration who made this material available to me in 1993. – In the following pages, quotations from Old Divehi texts are represented in a narrow transliteration.

<sup>12</sup> For the names of the lunar mansions and the days of the week now cf. S. FRITZ / J. GIPPERT: “Towards a Historical Phonology of Maldivian.” In: M. OFITSCH / Chr. ZINKO (eds.): *125 Jahre Indogermanistik in Graz*, Graz 2000, 139–52.

<sup>13</sup> Most probably, the name has to be read as *gag<sup>h</sup>anādītta* instead which could be the Maldivian rendering of a Sanskrit compound *gaganādītya*- with *gagana*- “sky” as its first member; cp. the Mahābhārata verse 13,110,76b where *gagana*- and *ādītya*- appear side by side. For the unexpected spelling with a (hitherto unknown) -*g<sup>h</sup>a*- akṣara cf. n. 17 below.



Fig. 3: “Gamu” *lōmāfanu*, pl. F 1

Leaving these problems aside for a moment, we may note a first linguistic element which is relevant to the question we started from, viz. the word *petāambarun* denoting the “prophet”. It is obvious that this word must be a borrowing of its Persian equivalent, *paygambar* < older *paygāambar*, although we would hardly expect a *-t-* in this case.

This cannot be regarded as a scribal error, however. Both the other *lōmāfanu* records and later Maldivian sources prove that the spelling *petāambar-un* represents the actual shape of the word in Maldivian, the *-t-* being “sprachwirklich”.<sup>14</sup> The same holds true for the unusual dating formula which reappears, e.g., in another *lōmāfanu* issued by the same king, *Gaḍanāditya*, viz. the so-called “Isdū” *lōmāfanu* which is the most voluminous and best preserved copper plate grant we possess today.<sup>15</sup> In this document, many more circumstances of the date in question are given (pl. 2, l. 3 – pl. 3, l. 4; cp. Fig. 4):<sup>16</sup>

*śrīmat gaḍanādītya mārasun tinvana avurodun*

“In the third year of His Majesty Gaḍanāditya, the Mahārāja, (at the time when,)”

*pūrb<sup>h</sup>e kāpuru rasun isud<sup>h</sup>uvu keruvī verumāna bide*

“after destroying the monastery erected by the former infidel kings on Isdū,”

*budu upurai*

“after uprooting the Buddha (statue),”

*budāi mi budu ve[r]e [ga]nna kulasagumāṇunāi mi emmen māle gen aisu*

“after taking the Buddha and the members of the congregation that was hosted in this Buddhist monastery all together to Māle,”

*b<sup>h</sup>ujāi veraṭa mudala din tak māpansod[ā]i rāja baṇḍāra aṭa balai gene*

“after conspecting and taking the Buddha (statue) and all the tributes that had been given as taxes to the monastery, to the royal government,”

*sād<sup>h</sup>at nu kī k<sup>h</sup>āpurun maram evie vidārai*

“after declaring: ‘I kill all infidels that do not proclaim confession’,”

<sup>14</sup> *-un* is a plural suffix, the word being treated as a *plurale tantum* in the sense of a *pluralis maiestatis* in Divehi; cf. S. FRITZ, op. cit. (n. 7), p. 106 for similar cases.

<sup>15</sup> This *lōmāfānu* was edited in 1986; cf. n. 8. – Isdū is another island in Haddummati (Lāmu) atoll.

<sup>16</sup> For the sake of clarity, the Old Divehi texts are hereafter arranged according to syntactical units (phrases) depending on finite or infinite verbal forms.



Fig. 4: “Isdū” *lōmāfānu*, pl. 2

*mahammadu petāambarunge daruṣaṇa-aṭa vadumā-vī tak kāpurun nu marai*  
 “(but) not killing all infidels that have declared ‘we enter into the faith of  
 Muḥammad the Prophet’,”  
*ṣādat kiyavai*  
 “causing (them) to proclaim confession”  
*sunnat koṭu vīdelai*  
 “(and) ordering (them) to obey Sunna,”  
*śrī mahammadu petāmubarun dunien svargga vaḍai gat pāsuṣatt<sup>h</sup>a bayāsi*  
*avurodu vī side*  
 “(when) the 582(th) year had begun after the Great Muḥammad the Prophet had  
 attained heaven from (this) world,”  
*śrī gaḍanādītya mārasu*  
 “(his) Excellence Gaḍanādītya the Mahārāja,  
*devatāinaṭa krana aḷukamak sintā koṭu ...*  
 thinking (about) a service to be done towards God ...”

Besides the Persian word meaning “prophet”, which appears in an allographic form, as *petāmubarun*, here, this account provides us with attestations of several other Islamic terms that must be regarded as loans. This is true for at least four words that might have been borrowed directly from Arabic, viz. *kāpuru*, pl. *k<sup>h</sup>āpurun*<sup>17</sup> “infidel” < Ar. *kāfir*, pl. *kāfirūn*; *ṣādat* and *sād<sup>h</sup>at*<sup>18</sup> “confession of faith” < Ar. *ṣahāda<sup>t</sup>*; *sunnat* “(religious) custom” < Ar. *sunna<sup>t</sup>*; and *dunie* “(this) world” < Ar. *dunyā*, as opposed to the Sanskritism *svargga* “heaven”.

Some more such terms are found in a third decree issued by king *Gaḍanādītya*, viz. the so-called *Daṁbidū-lōmāfānu*<sup>19</sup> which according to its dating must have been written a year later than the two preceding ones (pl. 2/1, l. 2 – pl. 2/2, l. 1; cp. XXX):

*śrīmat gaḍanādītya mārasun ekarādya vuṇa da setaruvana avurodun*  
 “In the fourth year of the time after (His) Majesty Gaḍanādītya, the Mahārāja, had  
 become Great King,”  
*d<sup>h</sup>abuduvu matye pūr<sup>bb</sup><sup>h</sup>e kāpuru rasun keruvī verumāna bide*  
 “after destroying the monastery erected by the former infidel kings on Daṁbidū,”

<sup>17</sup> There being no phonological distinction of aspirates and plain stops, *k<sup>h</sup>*- is a normal spelling variant of *k*- in Old Divehi. The same holds true for pairs such as *t<sup>h</sup>* vs. *t*, *d<sup>h</sup>* vs. *d*, etc.

<sup>18</sup> There being but one sibilant in Old Divehi, the letters *ṣ*, *ś*, and *s* vary freely in this language.

<sup>19</sup> Daṁbidū is another island of Haddummati-atoll; its name is the equivalent of Skt. *jambudvīpa*-, lit. “rose apple island”. – The “Daṁbidū” *lōmāfānu* was first edited in 1982 (cf. n. 8 above).

Fig. 5: “Daṃbidū” *lōmāfānu*, pl. 2/2

*буду упурай*

“after uprooting the Buddha (statue),”

*кāpurun šādat kiyavai*

“after causing the infidels to proclaim confession,”

*sunnat koṭu*

“by obeying Sunna,”

*petāambarunge šeriyā tibī alikun roda sipai*

“by keeping the fasts according to the regulations as present in the Prophet’s Šarī‘a,”

*namādu koṭu*

“by doing the prayer(s)”

*devatāinaṭa alikamu kranāṭa vīdelai*

“(and) by ordering to do a service to God,”

*šrī mahammadu petāambarun dunie vīdelai svaṛṅga vaḍai gat pāsusatt<sup>h</sup>a teāsi avuroduṃ ...*

“in the 583<sup>th</sup> year after The Great Muḥammad the Prophet departed (from) earth and attained heaven ...”

Besides *petāambarun*, *kāpuru* / pl. *kāpurun*, *šādat*, *sunnat*, and *dunie*, we here note one more Arabic word, *šeriyā* “(Islamic) law” < Ar. *šarī‘a* (?), but also two further Persian terms which are typically met with in those societies that received Islam from Iran, viz. *roda* “fasting” and *namādu* “prayer” which reflect Pers. *rōza* and *namāz*.<sup>20</sup> In both these cases, we have to presuppose that the Persian *-z-* was substituted by Old Divehi *-d-*. In this way, the two terms are opposed to another layer of loans where a substitution of *-z-* by its voiceless counterpart, *-s-*, seems to have been normal. A first example of this effect can possibly be found in the “Gamū” *lōmāfānu* again where a verbose account of the emergence of Islamic faith is told. Even if many items of this remain uncertain because of the bad state of the plates, its basic lines seem clear (pl. F2, l. 1 – pl. D2, l. 6):

”(After God had created)

*... ran risi [mānikkatu]n še[duṇu ra]ṭu [uti<sup>h</sup>ra svaṛṅga loka...*

*... the uppermost heavenly place which is a land made from gold, silver, jewels ...,”*

<sup>20</sup> Cf. B. FRAGNER, op. cit. (n. 1), 28: (Das Persische) “hat aber auch eine ganze Reihe von ‘islamischen’ Begriffen transformiert und in genuin persischer Form eingemeindet, denken wir an Wörter wie *namāz* (arab. *ṣalāt*), *rōza* (arab. *ṣaum*), oder die Benennungen für die Gebetszeiten: sie sind in Mittelasien bis heute nur unter ihren persischen Namen bekannt, im Tadschikischen wie auch auf Usbekisch.”



- erāk eviana raṭu*  
 “the country named Ērāq (?),”  
*bāb<sup>h</sup>il ev[i...*  
 ”[the country na]med Babylon,”  
*...riṣ eviyana] raṭu*  
 “the country named [Fā]rs (??),”  
*dad<sup>h</sup>irā [e]vi[ya]na raṭu*  
 “the country named Ġazīra (Mesopotamia? the Arabic peninsula?),”  
*sind eviyana] raṭu*  
 “the country named Sind,”  
*[dabuduv evi]yana raṭu*  
 “the country named Jambudvīpa (India)”  
*mitak ra[...*  
 “all these coun[tries ... (and)]”  
*prāna dī mīn [arā<sup>h</sup>a an]gain [sauā u]paduvai*  
 “after (God) had given (Adam) breath (and) created Ḥawwā from this one’s half body”  
*mi de ma[pi]rīn svar̥gga vaṣai ...*  
 “after (He) had lodged this human couple in heaven ...”  
*ādamu petāmburun suktra bīdāin sauā baḍun upan genīn dari ve*  
 “the children that were born from the noble loins (?) of Adam the Prophet by the womb of  
 Ḥawwā”  
*duni[e] mīsun ve vī*  
 “became men on earth.”  
 “(Of Muḥammad the Prophet who was born)”  
*mi ādamu petā[m]barun ādi koṭu paṭai*  
 “after, beginning with this Adam the Prophet as the first,”  
*eklakka sauvisu cāsra petāmburun upede*  
 “124,000 prophets had been created”  
*d<sup>h</sup>unien nivana gat pase*  
 “(and these prophets) had disappeared from (this) earth,”  
*upan mahammadu petāmuburun [sau]vi[s avu]rodun*  
 “in the 24th year (?) of (this) Muḥammad the Prophet,”  
*mi petāmburun kraṭa dabarīlu aisū*  
 “Ġabrīl having come near to this prophet,”  
*būne gosū*  
 “having spoken (to him) (and) having gone (away again),”  
*mi dabarailāi mīkailai mi de malāi[katun peṇe*  
 “this Ġabrīl as well as Mīkā’īl, these two angels having appeared (again),”  
*burak eviana] asu puṭe mahammadu petāmburun aruvai*  
 “having caused Muḥammad the Prophet to climb up the back of the horse named  
 Burāq”  
*bait alu magadeṣaṭa gene gosū*  
 “(and) having taken him away to Bait-al Maqdis (Jerusalem),”  
*de pia ran risi sarak puṭe petāmburun aruvai gene ...*  
 “having taken the prophet to climb up the rock covered (?) with gold and silver on both  
 wings,”

”(this prophet),”

*tak [malaika]tun deke*

“having seen all the angels (there)”

*şalāmu dī buṇe*

“(and) having talked (with them) by saying (lit. giving) Salām,”

*mi ettre ti[bi tak] ševu nu [sevu] deke*

“having seen all the happy and unhappy (people) in there (?)”,

*devatāinge vede in maṇḍala mi puṭe aneka [nava]ratnain seduṇu sat kaḍattrain ek kaḍattraak mātra tibai vede*

“having entered the sphere where God resides, which was above that rock, having the measure of one sphere of the seven spheres (?) made from another nine jewels (?)”

*d<sup>h</sup>evatāinge buṇī subaganda basu asai*

“having listened to the brilliantly smelling speech spoken by God (who said):”

“(Those who)”

*şādat kiyai*

“by proclaiming confession,”

*musilimān ve*

“by becoming Muslims,”

*ekmas roda sipai*

“by keeping the fast of one month”

*pasu namādu koṭu*

“(and) by committing the five prayers”

*vuṇu mahammadu petāmubarunge darivarun svaṛḡga vaşam*

“have become the children of Muḥammad the Prophet, them I lodge in heaven’,”

*evie svaṛḡga ḷoka mahammadu petāambarun dakavai*

“with these words (God) having shewn the heavenly abodes to Muḥammad the Prophet, and by saying:”

“(Those who)”

*şādat nu kkai*

“by not proclaiming confession,”

*musilimān nu ve*

“(and) not becoming Muslims”

*vuḷe kāprun*

“remain infidels (and those who)”

*budu paḷḷi naḡai*

“by building Buddhist temples,”

*budu şadai*

“by erecting Buddha (statues),”

*mi budu devatāina-ve sitai vede gene kūpurikamu koṭu*

“by committing infidelity by persisting in the opinion that this Buddha (statue) is a deity,”

*rāsikaru boi*

“(and) by drinking palm wine,”

*devatāi timan svāmīn bavu nu dene vuṇu upeduvī aḷun naraka vasam*

“do not acknowledge me, God, as a divine being, those servants created (by me) I lodge in hell’,”

*evie mi petāambarun naraka {va}su dakvai*  
 “with these words (God) having shewn this Prophet the creatures of hell,”  
*petāmbārun adamutulaṭ bāilī side*  
 “(and finally,) when the prophet had ... .. (?)”  
*mi mahammadu petāmubarun*  
 “this Muḥammad the Prophet,”  
*buṇī apūr`bb<sup>h</sup>a asai*  
 “having listened to the unparalleled (words) spoken (as aforesaid)”  
*mi petāambarun kiyaman gene*  
 “(and) this Prophet, by receiving resurrection”  
*ekadevatāin tedu bavu dene*  
 “(and) by acknowledging the One God as (being) the true divine being,”  
*musilimān vī*  
 ”became a Muslim.”  
*timange ummatnāi gene*  
 “Taking with him his own community as well (and)”  
*kāpurun makā misukitu ...*  
 “... the infidels ... the mosque in Makkā ...”

In this account, we not only realize in which way the prophet’s *mi`rāḡ*<sup>21</sup> was regarded as a primary event of Islamic history on the Maldives but we are also provided with quite a lot of further Islamic terms, both proper names and common nouns, that have to be considered as borrowings. For common nouns cp., e.g., *ṣalāmu* “greeting” < Ar. *salām* but also the plural forms *musilimān* “Muslim(s)” < Ar. *muslimūn* (via Pers. *muslimān*?), *malaikatun* “angels” < Ar. *malā`ika*<sup>t</sup>, and *ummatnāi* “with the community”, a comitative plural form with the suffix *-āi*, < Ar. *’umma*<sup>t</sup>. Among proper names, we may note *ṣauā* “Eve” < Ar. *Ḥawwā*,<sup>22</sup> *makā* “Mekka” < Ar. *Makkā*; *burak*, the name of Muḥammad’s fabulous steed < Ar. *Burāq*; *dabarīlu* / *dabarail-* “Gabriel” < Ar. *Ġibrīl*; *Mīkail-* “Michael” < Ar. *Mīkā`il*; and *bait alu magadeṣaṭa* “to Jerusalem”, a dative (directional) form with the ending *-aṭa*, < Ar. *Bait-al Maqdis*. The substitution of a foreign *-z-* by Old Divehi *-s-* which we were looking for might be presupposed for the fourth toponym mentioned in the passage if this means “Mesopotamia” or the Arabic peninsula and reflects Ar. *Ġazīra*; the reading with *-s-* is rather improbable though, *dad<sup>h</sup>ira* (with “usual” substitution of *-z-* by a *-d-*akṣara) remaining conceivable.

The latter name shows another interesting feature which has a bearing on the question we are dealing with. This is the substitution of Arabic *ḡ* by Old Divehi *d*.

<sup>21</sup> The present account obviously starts with an allusion to the prophet’s revelation (by Gabriel) on Mt. *Hira* which would explain the unexpected dating (“in the 40<sup>th</sup> year”). The story of the *Mi`rāḡ* proper then begins with both Gabriel and Michael taking Muḥammad to his fabulous ride. Cp. *Muḥammads wunderbare Reise durch Himmel und Hölle*, hrsg.v. M.-R. SÉGUY, München 1977, p. 34 for similar contents of the Uyghur *Mi`rāḡ-nāme*.

<sup>22</sup> The rendering of foreign *h*-sounds by letters denoting sibilants (*s*, *ś*, *ṣ*) is a usual feature of the oldest Divehi documents. It reflects the fact that in Old Divehi, there was a similar oscillation between *s* and *h* in the pronunciation of inherited *s* sounds (< Old Indic *s*, *ś*, *ṣ*, *c*, *c<sup>h</sup>*) as in (medieval and modern) Sinhalese. This oscillation led to *s* letters being pronounceable as *h*.

The same substitution is also met with in the name of the archangel, Gabriel, which appears two times here, written as *dabarīlu* and *dabarail-* (in a comitative form, *dabarailai*, lit. “with Gabriel”). In another word appearing in the text, Arabic -ḡ- seems to be treated quite differently though. This is the word *misukitu* which denotes the mosque as an equivalent of Arabic *masḡid*. While *misukitu* together with its allographic variant *miskitu* is the only representative of the term we meet in the “Gamū” *lōmāfanu*, the two other copper plate grants issued by king *Gaḏanāditya* use a different word which is phonetically much closer to its Arabic counterpart, viz. *masdidu*, also occurring in allographic spellings such as *masudidu*, *masudid<sup>h</sup>u*, and the like. Cf., e.g., the prescriptions for the building of the mosque contained in the “Isdū” *lōmāfanu* (pl. 3, l. 4 – pl. 4, l. 2):

*śrī isuduvu veruvatye .. masudid<sup>h</sup>u karuvai*  
 “by having a mosque built on Great Isdū,”  
*kāba gasai*  
 ”by constructing (its) Ka‘ba,”  
*mum[bar]u suṭvai*  
 “by erecting (its) pulpit,”  
*pan [g]esāi*  
 “by thatching (its) roof,”  
*nialu koṭu*  
 “by (thus) completing (it),”  
*dumāt evya namu di*  
 ”by giving it the name of Friday (Mosque),”  
*masudid<sup>h</sup>u eḷi tana pre tibi sui sime šataru mūṇu pavuru doruveṭi lāge*  
 “by constructing doorways (in) the walls of (all) four faces of the boundaries of the area through which to enter the mosque ...”

It must be stated, though, that the use of *masdidu* seems to have been confined to the two *lōmāfanus* named above; at least there is no further attestation available in the written documents we know of. Note, by the way, that there is one more Arabic word in the text passage quoted here which shows the “normal” substitution of ḡ by *d*, viz. the name of the mosque to be built, *dumāt*, reflecting Ar. *ḡum ‘a’* “Friday”; this word, too, seems to have become obsolete after king *Gaḏanāditya*’s reign, “Friday” being denoted by the inherited word *hukuru* instead.<sup>23</sup>

Considering the existence of doublets such as *miskitu* and *masdidu*, several solutions suggest themselves. One solution might consist in assuming two chronological layers of Arabic loans here, *miskitu* representing an older pronunciation of the same etymon, with -*g*- preserved as a velar stop instead of the affricate ḡ. This solution can hardly be approved, however, given that there is no evidence for a stop articulation of ḡ in the Arabic peninsula persisting into Islamic times. As against this, another explanation seems more probable, viz. the assumption that *masdidu* and *miskitu* reflect two different strata of linguistic interference, one Arabic and

<sup>23</sup> The word reflects Skt. *śukra-*, the name of Venus; cf. FRITZ/GIPPERT, op. cit. (n. 12), p. 140.

one Persian. As for the latter, a possible source of borrowing can be found in the word *mazgit* attested in Early New Persian (besides plain “Arabic” *masğid*) as well as late Middle Persian,<sup>24</sup> in a phonetic shape which comes closer to Syriac *masgid* than Arabic *masğid*.

A similar coexistence of synonymous Arabic and Persian terms in the Islamic terminology of Old Divehi can be seen in the words meaning “prophet”. In the *lōmāfanus*, it is not Arabic *rasūl*, however, what we find besides *petāambarun*; as a matter of fact, *rasūl* is not attested earlier than the 17<sup>th</sup> century *fatkolus*, where it is mostly written in Arabic letters. What we do find in the “Isdū” *lōmāfanu*, is Arabic *nabīy*, used alongside *petāambarun* as an epithet of Muḥammad. From the syntax of the passage in question, it is clear that *nabī* has to be considered as a part of the prophet’s proper name here, rather than a common noun denoting his function; cf. pl. 33, l. 5 – pl. 34, l. 1:

*nabī mahammadu petāambarunge seriātu l<sup>h</sup>ibī alikun roda sipai*  
 “by keeping the fast in the way described (lit. being) in the laws of *Nabī* Muḥammad  
 the Prophet ...”

And indeed, *nabī* does not re-occur in the Old Divehi sources we have access to before the 17<sup>th</sup> century either.

Thus, we can state a striking coincidence concerning the doublets *miskitu* – *masdidu* and *petāambarun* – *nabī*. In both pairs, it is the “Persian” member which prevails in Old Divehi, by early attestation as well as continuity. If we further consider the impact of Persian terms such as *namādu* “prayer” and *roda* “fasting”, the Arabic equivalents of which (*ṣalāt*, *ṣaum*) have never achieved a similar state in the Divehi language, the conclusion that loans from early New Persian represent the oldest stratum of Islamic terms in Maldivian seems well founded.<sup>25</sup>

There is one open question that has to be dealt with in the given context, viz. the unexpected shape of the word meaning “prophet”, *petāambar-un*, as opposed to Persian *payğāmbār*. There can be no doubt that its *-t-* is anything but a usual substitution of the velar fricative, *-ğ-*, we find in the Persian word; what we would expect is a velar stop, *-k-* or *-g-*, instead. The question then is whether we can assume a variant of the same Persian word that might have had a dental stop in the given position. Such a solution is immediately suggested by the spelling of the Middle Persian equivalent, <pgt’ m>, which was interpreted as *paitāambar* by H.S. NYBERG in accordance with its Pāzend counterpart, *pēdāqbar*.<sup>26</sup> Whether we can assume a similar pronunciation to have existed in a certain, maybe dialectal,

<sup>24</sup> For Middle Persian <mzgt>, cf. the plural form *mazgitihā* which appears in the prophetic text about the Coming of Šāh-Wahrām-ī Warzāwand in speaking about the *tāzīgān*, i.e. Arabs, to be expelled from Iran (p. 161, l. 5 in the edition by JAMASPJI DASTUR MINOCHERJI JAMASP-ASANA, *Pahlavi Texts*, [reedited with] Transcription [and] Translation [by] SAID ORIAN, Tehran 1992). For the text in question cf. *Grundriss der Iranischen Philologie*, ed. W. GEIGER / E. KUHN. 2. Bd. Strassburg 1896–1904, p. 114, § 83.

<sup>25</sup> To the latter stratum we may perhaps add *muslimān* appearing in the “Gamū” *lōmāfanu* if this represents, as a plural form, not Ar. *muslimūn* but its Persian adaptation *muslimān*.

stratum of early New Persian, must remain open, however, until some further evidence has been brought about.

In the light of these observations, we may now return to the question when and by whom the Maldives were converted to Islam. There is at least one account available in Maldivian tradition that has hitherto been neglected in the discussion, viz. the dating mentioned in the so-called “Gan” *filā fatkoḷu*, an inscription on a wooden board from the island of Gan, located in the southernmost atoll of the Maldives which is traditionally named *Aḍḍū* atoll.<sup>27</sup> The inscription, which is obviously the copy of a normal *fatkoḷu* grant, concerns the foundation of a mosque on the island and is dated 23<sup>rd</sup> Muḥarram 1062 A.H. (≈ 5<sup>th</sup> January AD 1652). In it, the conversion of the Maldives is clearly indicated as an event of the 548<sup>th</sup> year after Hiġra, i.e. AD 1153 (ll. 1–5; cp. Fig. 6):<sup>28</sup>

“(After our Lord,)”

*puramāt itur[ā] boḍu kaṭadāna kaukamun tima(n) svāmīnge kaukan **zāhir** kuravvai*  
“revealing his, the Lord’s, own power by (exerting his) utmost extreme great overt power,”

**[muḥammad] rasūl** nu hed<sup>h</sup>vvi nama

“when Muḥammad the Prophet was not yet created”

**ḥalqaku** nu hend<sup>h</sup>evumaṭu ihumve

“(and) before any people were created,”

**rasūlullāhuge** nūru haṅd<sup>h</sup>vai

“by creating light as God’s Prophet”

**qāimu** kuravvaigen

“(and) confirming it”

*ei pahu **ḥalqaku** had<sup>h</sup>vai*

“(and) by creating people thereafter”

*my urenaṭu timaṅ svāmīnge kaukan aṅgai*

“(and) by proclaiming to these people his, the Lord’s, power,”

*d<sup>h</sup>inaṭu uḷe magu uganṅai*

“by teaching them the way how to live according to religion”

*e magaṭa uḷuvvān **rasūlu** beikaluṅ poṅuvvai*

“(and) by sending out noble Prophets to live in this way,”

*e **rasūlu** beikalaku pilā nimuṅu d<sup>h</sup>vasutakakun anek **rasūlu** beikalaku poṅuvvai*“

by sending another noble Prophet in the days when the life time of that (former) noble Prophet had ended,”

*ihu [d<sup>h</sup>ina]ṭu kanu kurani kuravvai*

“by causing (him) to ignore (?) former religion(s),”

<sup>26</sup> H.S. NYBERG: *Manual of Pahlavi*. Vol. II, p. 150. My thanks are due to Bo UTAS who in a private communication about the problem of *petāmbaruṅ* in 1993 drew my attention to NYBERG’s interpretation.

<sup>27</sup> The official name today is *Sīnu* atoll. The board is at present preserved in the National Museum of Māle.

<sup>28</sup> Words written in Arabic script in the original text are printed in bold letters here.



Fig. 6: The “Gan” *filā fatkoḷu*

*emve d<sup>h</sup>īnaṭu vure pahu d<sup>h</sup>īn ituru kuravvai*

“(and) by making the later religion more magnificent than all religions”

*qiyāmatu vā d<sup>h</sup>ēn mi d<sup>h</sup>īnaṭu me uleni kuravvai*

“by causing him then to live upright (?) according to this religion,”

*sva kīriti kattiri māt **qur**’ānāi dī*

“and by bestowing (upon him) the heroic great Qur’ān, in its own splendour,”

*apureṅge kau **muḥammad** – **ṣallāllāhu** ‘**alaihi wa sallam** – evana **nabīy** kaloge*  
*emve taketya ituru kuravvai had<sup>h</sup>vavai*

“by creating His Lordship, the Prophet, named our lord Muḥammad – *s.a.w.s.* –  
making him more eminent than any other being,”

*eheṅ emve d<sup>h</sup>īnaṭu kanu kurani kuravvai*

“(and) by causing (him) to ignore (?) all other religions”

*poṅuvvi hid<sup>h</sup>u*

“had sent out (Muḥammad the Prophet),”

“(and after this Prophet,)”

*d<sup>h</sup> evatāiṅgoṭu biru huravatai*

“having grasped fearful respect towards God,”

*eheṅ etyakaṭu tihumeṅ nu lai*

“not leaving any substance to other things (??),”

***kufurukam** uvai*

“by destroying infidelity”

*islān kura[v]vai*

“(and) making (the infidels) Islamic,”

*bud<sup>h</sup>u paḷvi muguruvai*

“by destroying Buddhist temples”

***ka** ‘**batullāhuge imārātu** kuravvai*

“(and) erecting the building of Ka ‘bat-ullāh,”

*my a[li]tek sakkura bvana med<sup>h</sup>u red<sup>h</sup>ali kurin ahvahva kuravamun*  
 “by (thus) disturbing (?) those that were ruling within this unlightened earthly  
 dominion (?)”  
*pura utara makkāin hubahiryā madīnayaṭu vaḍai gat*  
 “had journeyed from eminent Makkā to sun-bright Madīna,”  
*pānsatta aṭusāḷisuvana averud<sup>h</sup>u*  
 “in the 548th year (after this, at the time when,)”  
*[mi d<sup>h</sup>ive]hi rād<sup>h</sup>[a]kamu ôt tan kufuru vege me*  
 “as the place where this Islanders’ kingdom is located was still infidel,”  
**šaiḥ ḡalāl yūsuf altabriz**[īge ???]  
 “(his) Lordship, Šaiḥ Ḡalāl Yūsuf Al-Tabrizī ...,”  
*[timan kale]ge karā māt paolu koṭu dakk<sup>h</sup>ai*  
 “by showing [his own] great power (?) by exerting great effects (??),”  
**šahādatu** kyavvai  
 “(and) by causing (these people) to proclaim confession,”  
*isulā(n) kurevvi hid<sup>h</sup>u*  
 “made (them) Islamic,”  
**al-sulṭān** d<sup>h</sup>arumaša kyunu darumavaṇta rasuge  
 “(then) king Dharmavān, named As-Sulṭān Dharmasāh,”  
*ihu isulān nu ve tibīn balai*  
 “by conspecting those who had not become Islam(ic people) before”  
*isulān kuravai*  
 “(and) by making (them) Islamic ...”

Unfortunately, the line in which the name of the converter is mentioned has been severely damaged on the board so that we cannot take the reading of *al-tabrizī* for granted as it stands. A comparison of a present day photograph with the reproduction published by H.C.P. BELL in the 1940s<sup>29</sup> makes it clear, however, that we have a mixed spelling here, *šaiḥ ḡalāl yūsuf al-tabrizī*- being written in Arabic, and



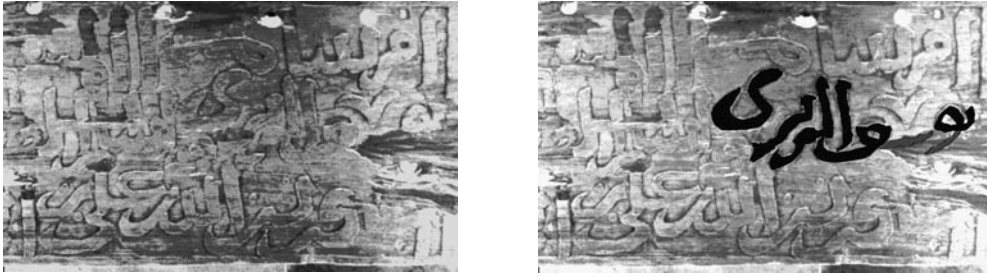
Fig. 7: The “Gan” *filā fatkoḷu*, l. 5, present state (photograph J.G.)



Fig. 8: The “Gan” *filā fatkoḷu*, l. 5, as reproduced in H.C.P. Bell, *Monograph*, pl. J

<sup>29</sup> *Monograph* (cf. n. 8), plates J and K. The photographic reproduction is not as reliable as it seems because the letters were obviously re-drawn with chalk or paint in order to support the reading when it was produced.





Figs. 9 and 10: Inscription of ca. AD 1340–1348 (excerpt)

the final syllable of the name, *-zī-*, together with the genitive ending, *-ge*, being added in *Dives akuru*.<sup>30</sup>

The decisive point in this reading is the akṣara *zī*, of course, for it alone can prove that we have no *barbarī* here, given that there are no punctuation marks visible in the Arabic part of the word. Reading the akṣara in question as *zī* presupposes, of course, that by the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Divehi had adapted itself to an integration of the foreign phoneme *-z-*, no longer substituting it by *-d-*, and that *Dives akuru* had developed a special character for denoting this. The character in question, which is obviously derived from a ligature containing *-s-*, possibly *-sy-* (thus reminding of Khotanese where *-ys-* was used to denote *-z-*), occurs but one more time on the “Gan” board, in a word *zauhara* which obviously reflects Arabic *ḡauhard* ‘jewel(ery)’ (l. 9); besides, we possibly find *syā-* written for *ziyā-* in a contemporary inscription,<sup>31</sup> in the word *syārad-* if this represents Arabic *ziyāra* ‘monument of reverence’.

What remains unclear in the given context is the word following the genitive form, *tabrīzī-ge*. This was read as *eá(fānun)* by BELL, which might mean something like “his excellence”. The photographic reproduction rather seems to indicate something like *do[n]* instead, a Portuguese title meaning “Sir” which might here be anachronistically used for a Persian man; and finally, *abū* would also be a possible reading.

We must admit, of course, that the “Gan” *filā fatkoḷu* cannot be regarded as an authentic source as far as the circumstances of the conversion are concerned. It can only be taken as a witness of the tradition about *al-tabrīzī* prevailing in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The main source of this tradition may well have been the Arabic inscription that was referred to by H.A. MANIKU and, possibly, Ibn Baṭṭūta himself.

<sup>30</sup> Another example of such a mixed spelling, which was quite common in the times of *dives akuru*, is the form *qur’ānāi*, lit. “with the Qur’ān”, in l. 3 where only *qur-* is written in Arabic letters.

<sup>31</sup> This is the donatory inscription engraved on four sides of a pillar in the central part of the Friday Mosque of Māle, the so-called *Medu Miskiy*. A reproduction of the inscription is printed in the book *Mālē Hukuru Miskit*, Divehi Bahāi Tārīḥas ḥidmat kurā qaumī markazu, Māle 1984, p. 173–80. The present passage is contained in l. 3 of the “South-Eastern” part.



Fig. 11: Arabic inscription of about AD 1656 (excerpt)

Given that in this inscription, there are no punctuation marks in the word in question either, *al-tabrīzī* and *al-barbarī* may well be two different interpretations of the same spelling; cf. Figs. 9 and 10 where the context the name appears in is reproduced (note that both *wāf* and *sīn* in *yūsuf* are damaged). And indeed, in another Arabic inscription of the Friday Mosque in Māle which is likely to date from the reconstruction of the mosque undertaken in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and which re-tells the story about the conversion, a reading *al-tabrīzī* is much more probable than *al-barbarī*; cf. Fig. 11 where the context in question is reproduced.

Considering our observations about the priority of Persian Islamic terms in Old Divehi, we may then wholeheartedly agree with H. YAJIMA who stated with regard to the teak board inscription:

“In Ibn Baṭṭūta’s stay in Male, he actually examined this board. However, he misread some personal names engraved in its illegible writing. The first saint who visited Male and preached Islam to the Maldives king Kalaminja should be read Abu’l Barakāt Yūsuf al-Tabrīzī, but not al-Barbarī (the Maghribian)”.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> H. YAJIMA, op. cit. (n. 4), p. 4. – For a good reproduction of the two Arabic inscriptions mentioned here, cf. *Male’ Hukuru Miskiy*, National Centre for Linguistic and Historical Research, Māle 1986, p. 22–23.