

The Culture of Wine Drinking in pre-Mongol Iran

Wine, the Test of Man or the Soap that Washes away Worry (Nawrūz-nāma)

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In this paper I discuss the culture of wine drinking in pre-Mongol Islamic Iran. Despite being forbidden (*ḥarām*) by Islamic law, wine drinking was an accepted activity in all classes of society. Moreover, it was considered to be healthy, according to medical science. The educated class was well aware of that argument and used this to defend the drinking habit. It was also aware of the drawbacks of drinking, but believed that measured drinking was beneficial. The military class believed that binge drinking was taking the measure of a man. People's main worry was not the imperilment of their soul, but societal opprobrium due to improper social behavior. Most of the information available is, of course, about the drinking habits in courtly circles as most sources are only concerned with that milieu. Nevertheless, there are incidental remarks about the drinking habits of the lower classes or rather the non-court class.

INTRODUCTION

Iran became a country under Moslem administration after 651. However, judging by people's behavior, in this case by their drinking habits, you do not get the impression that Islam had made a major impact on that aspect of societal behavior. This is, of course, understandable, because prior to 1000, a major part, if not the majority of Iran's population was still non-Moslem. Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Judaism still held the allegiance of much of the population. Even when Islamization had progressed and the majority of the population was nominally Moslem often its behavior was anything but. Given that social habits die hard and that Islam still sat rather lightly on people's psyche it is understandable that people's behavior was often at odds with the tenets of Islam. This reality was reinforced by the fact that the military class, from which all rulers were drawn after 1000, was mostly composed of Turkic ethnic groups. The influx of these mostly animistic Turkic speakers into Iranian society was an ongoing movement and they generally

converted to Islam for form's sake while their leaders adopted courtly mores based on the Iranian model.¹

Wine drinking, and drinking of alcoholic beverages in general, was a universal phenomenon in Imperial Iran. After the Moslem conquest the conquered population saw no reason to change their habits in that respect. When the Abbasids took Isfahan in 748, al-Ṭabarī reported that they found wine bottles in all houses, still indicating that wine drinking was widespread and not limited to courtly circles.² The continued use of wine was, of course, also promoted by the fact that the religions other than Islam did not oppose the use of wine. In fact, wine was and still is used in Christian and Zoroastrian ceremonies.³

WINE PRODUCTION

As in earlier and later centuries, grapes were locally cultivated,⁴ which means that the continuation of the production of wine was relatively easy.⁵

¹ As to the skin-deep penetration of Islam among the Saljūqs, see A.C.S. Peacock, *Early Seljuq History. A new interpretation* (London: Routledge, 2010), chapter four. On the conversion process of the people of Iran in general, see Elton L. Daniel, "Conversion of Iranians to Islam," *Encyclopedia Iranica*.

² Bertold Spuler, *Iran in früh-islamischer Zeit* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1952), p. 513.

³ Anonymous, *Hudūd al-'Ālam. 'The Regions of the World.' A Persian geography 372 A.H.-982 A.D.* translated by V. Minorsky (London: Luzac, 1937), p. 136 (ca. 982); In Ṭabaristān they also drank wine: Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. Isfandiyār, *An abridged translation of the History of Tabaristan* by E.G. Browne (Leyden: E.J. Brill, 1905), p. 155 (ca. 835); Nizāmī, *Le Roman de Chosroes et Chirin*. Translated by Henri Corbin (Paris: G.-P. Maisonneuve & Larose, 1970), p. 18.

⁴ In many places throughout Iran vineyards thrived, according to al-Muqaddasī, see Paul Schwarz, *Iran im Mittelalter nach den Arabischen Geographen*. 10 parts (Leipzig: 1896–1936), pt. 3, p. 159 (Arrajān, Nūbandagān, Shāhpūr, Dawwān, Baydā, Shīrāz, Kharak), p. 272 (Shāmāt in Kirmān); Ibid., pt. 4, p. 351 (Shustar), 422 (Khuzistān); Ibid., pt. 7, p. 881. Qazvīn also had many vineyards. Ibid., pt. 6, pp. 716–17 (Istakhrī; Muqaddasī) as did Shahrizūr. Ibid., pt. 6, p. 700 (Yāqūt). According to Qazvīnī, Nāshiqīn and Abhar, near Qazvīn, had vineyards. Ibid., pt. 6, pp. 723, 728 as did Rayy. Ibid., pt. 6, pp. 775–76, 791 (Qazvīnī) and Marāgha. Ibid., pt. 8, p. 1105 (Ibn Ḥawqal). B. Isfandiyār, *History of Tabaristan*, p. 31 (Ṭabaristān ca. 800); Anonymous, *Hudūd al-'Ālam*, pp. 107, 109 (Khurāsān 982), 132 (Rey); Narshakhī, *The History of Bukhara*. Translated by Richard N. Frye. (Cambridge, Mass: The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1954), pp. 27, 64 (Bukhara); Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. Ḥasan Qumī, *Tārīkh-i Qum*. translated by Ḥasan b. 'Alī b. 'Abd al-Malik Qumī. Edited by Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn Tihrānī (Tehrān: Tus, 1361/1982), pp.

In poems reference is made to the various stages of the cultivation down to the processing of grapes. This was clearly a poetic tradition, certainly after Rūdakī (d. 941), one of the earliest poets in new Persian, who extolled it as follows:

The mother of wine must be sacrificed,
And her children seized and cast into prison.
But you won't be able to take her children from her
Unless you first trample her underfoot and drag her soul from her.
Nor is it lawful to separate babe
From its mother's breast,
Until it has nursed a full seven months,
From April until the end of October.⁶

He had many followers, most prominent among them Manūchihrī (d. 1040), who devoted various long poems to the subject.⁷

12, 120 (Qum ca. 985). According to Niẓāmī 'Arūzī, *Les Quatres Discours*. Translated by Isabelle de Gastines (Paris: G.-P. Maisonneuve & Larose, 1968), p. 73 (Aḥmad b. 'Umar b. 'Alī al-Niẓāmī al-'Arūzī al-Samarqandī, *Kitāb-i Chahār Maqāla* ed. Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Vahhāb Qazvīnī (Berlin: Iranschär, 1341/1927), pp. 36–37) there were in the Herāt area alone 120 different varieties of grapes, of which two, *parniyān* and *kalinjarī*, were unique to that region. In 'Umar b. Ibrāhīm Khayyām Nishābūrī, *Nawrūz-nāma* ed. 'Alī Ḥaṣūrī (Tehrān: Ṭahūrī, 1343/1964), pp. 86–91 the story is told how the vine and then wine came into the world, which all happened in Herāt! For a variant of the same story, see Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. Sulaymān al-Rāvandī, *Rāḥat al-Ṣudūr va Āyat al-Surūr*. ed. Muhammad Iqbal (London, 1921), pp. 423–24. Special wine grapes mentioned include *wafar bāj*, *mānī*, *māsabadhī*, *sūnājā*, *fārisī*, *zirijūn*, *asfīdhmisk*, *nāshiqīnī*, *bāzjank*, *kharjaj*, *mukhattam*, *mulāḥī*, and a *rāziqī* type grape, the last two in Rayy. Schwarz, *Iran im Mittelalter*, pt. 7, p. 881.

⁵ In Dawwān (Fārs) an excellent and famous wine was made. Schwarz, *Iran im Mittelalter*, pt. 1, p. 41 (Yāqūt), while another famous red wine, the *summāqī*, was made in Ahvāz. Ibid., pt. 4, p. 319 (Ibn al-Faqīh). Possibly, *qinān* was a wine made in Hamadān, but it could also be a honey-based beverage. Ibid., pt. 5, p. 524, n. 7 (Ibn al-Faqīh), while Rayy or nearby Bīl produced a famous wine. Ibid., pt. 6, p. 802; Manūchihrī, *Dīvān-i Ustād Manūchihrī-yi Damghāni*. Edited by Muḥammad Dabīr-Siyāqī (Tehrān: Dū Isfand, 1326/1947), p. 167 mentions Dargham, a town near Samarqand famous for its wine. According to Abū Dulaf. *Abū-Dulaf Mis'ar ibn Muḥalhil's Travels in Iran (circa A.D. 950)*. Arabic text with an English translation and commentary by V. Minorsky (Cairo: University Press, 1955), p. 58 the wine of Bistām was green.

⁶ Sa'īd Nafīsī, *Muḥīṭ-i zindigānī va ahvāl va ash'ār-i Rūdakī-yi Samarqandī*. 3 vols. in one (Tehrān: Ibn-i Sīnā, 1341/1962), p. 506. The translation is by Jerome W. Clinton, *The Divan of Manūchihrī Dāmghāni. A Critical Study* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1972), p. 112.

After the cultivation and the harvest of grapes followed their pressing; this time not by feet, as in the case of Rūdakī, but by a press.

I cry out in my sorrow and distress
Like wine grapes crushed beneath a heavy press.⁸

The next phase, the fermenting of grapes is also mentioned in other poems. The fermentation took place in vats for a prescribed period of time, which shows that poets like Manūchihri were very familiar with viticulture.

For three measured months he mentions not their names;
He knows he will not be blamed for their blood.
Then one day he rises up lightly, happy, laughing and gay;
He comes to the prison and removes the door's seal.
When he looks smiling in upon the prison and the imprisoned,
A hundred lamps and candles fall upon his teeth and lips.⁹

After fermentation, wine was stored in smaller vessels or in large basins, at least in the houses of the great and wealthy. Others had recourse to the market for their supply of wine.¹⁰ In one of his poems Manūchihri makes a reference to this kind of storage as well as to Jamshīd, the first king of mankind and the alleged discoverer of oenology.

I read in a book to-day
That Jamshid's daughter is yet alive!
This daughter has been kept walled up in room
For some seven or eight hundred years.¹¹

⁷ See for example, three long ones by Manūchihri, *Divān*, pp. 116–18 (*chunīn khvāndam imrūz dar daftarī*), 119–26 (*khizīd va khaz ārīd kih hangām-i khazān ast*), 127–32 (*āb-i angūr biyārid kih Ābān māh ast*), who further often refers to *tāk*, *rāz*, *rāzbān*, and *rāzistān*.

⁸ Fakhr al-Dīn As'ad Gurgānī, *Vis and Ramin*. Translated by Dick Davis (Washington DC: MAGE, 2008), p. 369 (*bār-i mul*). The grapes were usually pressed by people stamping on them with their feet in a vat called *charkhusht*, see Manūchihri, *Divān*, pp. 38, 79, 122, 131, 163–64; Mas'ūd-i Sa'd, *Divān-e ash'ār-e Mas'ūd-i Sa'd*. 2 vols. edited by Mihdi Nūriyān (Iṣfahān: Kamāl, 1360/1981), p. 989.

⁹ Manūchihri, *Divān*, p. 162. The translation is by Clinton, *The Divan*, p. 117. See also Gurgānī, *Vis and Ramin*, p. 29 (At times he seethed, like grapes plucked from a vine, Newly fermenting in a vat of wine.)

¹⁰ Qumī, *Tārīkh-i Qum*, pp. 112, 120 (*hawz-i dūsh-āb*); Farāmarz b. Khudādād b. 'Abdallāh al-Kātib al-Arrājānī, *Samak-e 'Ayyār*. 5 vols. Edited by Parvīz Khānlari (Tehrān: Bunyād-i Farhang-e Irān, 1348/1969), p. 194 (*hawz*).

¹¹ Manūchihri, *Divān*, pp. 116–18, the translation is by Clinton, *The Divan*, p. 120.

This suggests that wine was kept in sealed underground reservoirs as is clear from a line from an unknown Hamadāni poet:

The vine's daughter, who has completed her waiting period under tar and loam.¹²

When the wine was ready to be drunk it was time to thank and praise the grape as expressed in an aphorism of Niẓāmī-yi Ganjavī (1141–1209), which cleverly captures the purpose of the grape:

If the grape did not drop tears first
It would not smile happily in the end.¹³

WHAT IS WINE?

So far I have only employed the term 'wine,' which is somewhat misleading. True, many Persian texts also use a generic word to indicate the alcoholic beverage of choice, viz. *sharāb*. The use of this word, meaning 'drink, 'beverage', to denote an alcoholic drink is due to the fact that the Islamic doctors of law, when writing about which drinks were permitted and which were forbidden, used the generic Arabic term *sharāb*. The founder of the Hanbalite school, for example, wrote a book on the subjects entitled *Kitāb al-Ashriba* (the Book of Drinks).¹⁴ There were many drinks that could be turned into alcoholic ones through the addition of certain herbs, fruits, and/or grains and their fermentation. Hence, in addition to the general *sharāb*, the doctors of Islamic law also used specific terms to denote a particular known alcoholic beverage. The same holds true for 'wine,' because there was not one single kind of 'wine' or *sharāb*, in fact there were many. In addition, there were many Persian words to denote 'wine' such as *may*, *mul*, and *bādah* to mention but the ones most frequently used.¹⁵ Apart from regional varieties, there

¹² Schwarz, *Iran im Mittelalter*, pt. 7, p. 833, n. 11 (Ibn Faqīh).

¹³ Niẓāmī, *Hikmat va nasihatlar – Aphorisms* (Baku: Yazytsy, 1982).

¹⁴ L. Sadan, "Mashrūbāt," *Encyclopedia of Islam*².

¹⁵ In Persian there are scores of terms to denote wine, many of which were inherited from the Imperial period. For a discussion of some of these various terms, see Humā Nāfiq, *Hāfiẓ. Khunyāgarī, may va shādī* (Los Angeles: Irān Kitāb, 2004), pp. 185–261; for a long list of terms that mean 'wine', see Muḥammad Pādshāh Shād, *Farhang-i mutarādīfāt va iṣṭilāḥāt* (Tehrān: Khayyām, 1346/1967), p. 253. For some terms not mentioned there, see, e.g., Mas'ūd-i Sa'd, *Dīvān*, pp. 11 (*ṣahbā*), 52 (*mamzūj*; watered down wine), 52 (*'uqār*), 89, 388 (*'aṣīr*), 120 (*rāḥ*), 275 (*gawhar-i shādī*), 757 (*may-yi khām*), 876 (*raḥīq*, pure wine); Jabālī, *Dīvān*, pp. 19 (*ṣahbā*), 72 (*rāḥ*), (*rangīn 'aṣīr*); Abu'l-Majd Majdūd b.

were *sharābs* made of other fruits than grapes (*āb-e angūr*), while there were *sharābs* mixed with other liquids and/or fruits, or were processed.

In his *Manāfi‘ al-aghddhiya va daf‘ maḍarrihā* al-Rāzī (865?–925?) mentions no less than 23 kinds of *sharāb*.¹⁶ These were (mostly wine-based) alcoholic drinks tailored for medical use, but they were also drunk, if need be, by the not so discerning aspiring alcoholic. These wines include *sharāb-i binifshah* (to be given in case of bloodletting), *sharāb-i dīnārī* (wine made as a medical concoction by the eleventh century physician Ibn Dīnār), and *sharāb-i ‘ināb*, *sharāb-i nīlūfar*; *sharāb-i khashkhāsh* (to be given to a patient as part of treatment of consumption).¹⁷ Over time, *sharāb* lost its generic meaning of ‘drink’ or ‘beverage’ and became the common word for ‘wine’ in Iran.

Wine was not only made from grapes, but also from raisins (*mavīz*).¹⁸ It must have been a decent wine, because Manūchihri sang its praises:

These raisins, oh how strange, were withered grapes
When you make them wet they come alive, ain’t it strange?
They turn into wine that makes you drunk and unbent
What a raisin, what a grape, what a good friend!¹⁹

Other wine-like concoctions were made from a variety of fruits. A fermented drink like *nabīdh* was made of dates and/or raisins, or other local fruits.²⁰

Ādam Sanā’ī-yi Ghaznavī, *Dīvān*. Edited by Mudarris Raḡavī (Tehrān: Sanā’ī, 1380/2001), p. 25 (*rāḥ*), 73 (*āb-e ‘ināb*), 591 (*bakmāz*, which also means wine party).

¹⁶ Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Zakariyā al-Rāzī, *Manāfi‘ al-aghddhiya va daf‘ maḍarrihā* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ al-‘Ulūm, 1982); Maḥmūd Najmābādī, *Tārīkh-i Ṭibb pas az Islām* (Tehrān: Dānishgāh, 1353/1974), p. 433.

¹⁷ Najmābādī, *Tārīkh-i Ṭibb*, pp. 469, 474, 695; Shād, *Farhang*, p. 225 (*sharāb-i kuknār*). These various concoctions and their medical applications are discussed in Nāṭiq, *Ḥāfiẓ*, pp. 221–61.

¹⁸ ‘Iqd III, p. 296 in Fars; Muhammad Manazir Ahsan, *Social Life under the Abbasids 170–289 AH, 786–982 AD* (London/New York: Longman, 1979), p. 111. It was for this reason that in Egypt under the Fatimid caliph al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh (r. 996–1021) no raisins were made, “as a precaution against making intoxicating beverages.” Nāṣir-i Khusraw. *Naser-e Khosrow’s Book of Travels (Safarnāma)*. Translated by W.M. Thackston Jr. (New York: Bibliotheca Persica, 1986), p. 46.

¹⁹ Manūchihri, *Dīvān*, pp. 5–6.

²⁰ Rāvandī, *Rāḥat al-Ṣudūr*, p. 418; Muḥammad b. Maḥmūd Hamadānī, *‘Ajāyib-nāma* ed. Ja’far Mudarris Sādiqī (Tehrān: Markaz, 1375/1997) pp. 118, 257, 480; Schwarz, *Iran im Mittelalter*, vol. VIII, p. 1195; Anonymous, *Hudūd al-‘Ālam*, p. 107 (Ṭālaqān in Khurāsān

This was another kind of wine, about which Manūchihirī wrote a poem in its praise (*nūsham qadaḥ-i nabīd-i Nawshanjah*).²¹ Another option was to mix pressed juice of dates, raisins, and grapes.²² *Naqī* was a wine made from steeped grapes, raisins or dates. Also, there was a beverage made from dates and raisins, while one added some apples or quinces, or rose petals, because then it was not considered to be date wine anymore; reportedly, it was a good and lawful drink.²³ In Gurgānī's *Vis and Ramin* (ca. 1050) the mixture of wine and milk is often mentioned as a drink.²⁴ These varieties of *sharāb* were undoubtedly a function of personal taste, cost, local custom and natural endowment as well as of the manner in which a person wanted to respect Moslem law or not. It thus looks as if the Iranian consumer had a large menu of types of wine to choose from, leaving aside other alcoholic beverages such as beer, hydromel or mead, arak and *būza*.²⁵ But they all had the same effect, as described in the case of wine by Daqīqī (935 or 942–980) as follows:

A composite whose body is of light
But all its soul and spirit of fiery strain;
A star that hath its setting in the mouth,
But ever rises on the cheeks again.²⁶

produced much *nabīdh*), 109 (Simingān in Khurāsān produced good *nabīdh*), 115 (from Surūshana in Transoxania came much *nabīdh*), 132 (Rayy produced much *nabīdh*).

²¹ Manūchihirī, *Dīvān*, p. 181 (variant: *khūsha qadaḥ-i nabīdh-i Būshanjah*, refers to a town in Afghanistan). Another *nabīd* poem is in *Ibid.*, p. 180. Other poets, of course, also mention *nabīd* or *nabīdh*, e.g., 'Abd al-Vāsi' Jabalī, *Dīvān*. 2 vols. edited by Dhabīhallāh Ṣafā (Tehrān: Dānishgāh, 1339–41/1960–62), p. 552, as a morning draught (*sabūhi*).

²² Rāvandī, *Rāḥat al-Ṣudūr*, p. 419.

²³ Rāvandī, *Rāḥat al-Ṣudūr*, p. 421. See further the articles *khamr* and *mashrūbāt* in the *Encyclopedia of Islam*².

²⁴ According to Dick Davis, this drink "represents the union between two lovers" and "also existed in medieval and renaissance Europe; it was called a 'posset.' The great seventeenth-century English diarist Samuel Pepys was especially fond of it and often mentions it." Gurgānī, *Vis and Ramin*, p. 502.

²⁵ In Qarmāsīn and Rayy, barley beer was produced. Schwarz *Iran im Mittelalter*, pt. 7, p. 833 (al-Muqaddasī).

²⁶ Reynold Alleyne Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Poetry*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1969), p. 9.

WINE CELLAR

To drink wine you needed to have a stock laid up in a cellar in particular when you gave parties regularly; the alternative was to have recourse to a wine-seller or *khammār*, or *kassār*, in the case of date-wine (*kasar*)²⁷ As a result, rulers had a *sharāb-khāna* or wine cellar where their wine was stored. Likewise, in the houses of the elite in Abbasid Baghdad there was not only a cook, but also a cellar man or wine steward known as *sharābī* or *ṣāhib al-sharāb*, who was in charge of the wine, drinking vessels, fruit, and perfumes.²⁸ In Ṣaffārid Iran as well as in later periods, the person in charge of the wine cellar was called *sharābdār* or wine steward.²⁹ The wine was mostly stored in vessels that were sealed to prevent spoiling and adulteration.

The wine jar had been broached, its seal was torn
As were the vows of chastity they'd sworn.³⁰

In the wine cellar, other implements to enjoy wine were kept such as cups, goblets (*jām*, *piyāla*, *kāsaḥ*, *qadaḥ*), jugs (*tung*), long-necked flasks (*ṣūrākhī*) as well music instruments. These drinking vessels were made in various forms (e.g., of a duck [*baṭṭ*], a rooster [*khurūs*]), as rhytons (*takūk*) and even in the form of 'boats' (*rikāb-i may*). In case of the rich, these were mostly golden and silver cups and bowls. Sometimes the *sharāb-khāna* with

²⁷ Manūchihri, *Dīvān*, pp. 37 (*khum-e khammār*); Jabālī, *Dīvān*, pp. 183, 475 (*khammār*); Hamīd al-Dīn Abū Bakr 'Umar b. Maḥmūdī Balkhī, *Maqamāt-i Ḥamīdī*. Ed. Rizā Anzabī Nizhād (Tehrān: Markaz-i Nashr-i Dānishgāhī, 1372/1993), p. 180 (*khammār*); Hamadānī, *'Ajāyib-nāma*, pp. 211, 322 (*kassār*).

²⁸ Ahsan, *Social Life*, p. 156; Adam Mez, *Die Renaissance des Islam* (Hildesheim: George Olms, 1968), p. 376.

²⁹ Anonymous, *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*. Edited by Malik al-Shu'arā Bahār (Tehrān: Khāvar, 1366/1987), p. 324; Abū Faḍl Muḥammad b. Ḥusayn Bayhaqī, *Tārīkh-i Bayhaqī* eds. Ghanī and Fayāz (Tehrān, 1324/1945), pp. 149, 422, 507; Rāvandī, *Rāḥat al-Ṣudūr*, pp. 228, 261, 288–89, 300; al-Arrājānī, *Samak-i 'Ayyār*, pp. 4, 194 (*sharābdār*), 220 (*sharāb-khāna*), 238 (*sharābdār*); Faramarz fils de Khodadad, *Samak-e Ayyār*. Translated by Frederique Razavi (Paris: G.-P. Maisonneuve & Larose, 1972), pp. 152, 170, 182; Kai Kā'ūs Ibn Iskandar. *A Mirror for Princes. The Qabus Nama by Kai Ka'ūs Ibn Iskandar, Prince of Gurgan*. Translated by Reuben Levy (New York, 1951), p. 225. The term *sharābī* occurs in a poem by Manūchihri, in which he calls upon the wine steward to take his key and open the door of the wine cellar. Manūchihri, *Dīvān*, p. 158. The term is also used to denote the cupbearer.

³⁰ Gurgānī, *Vis and Ramin*, p. 222; al-Arrājānī, *Samak-i 'Ayyār*, vol. 1, p. 227; Manūchihri, *Dīvān*, p. 117.

cups was part of the booty after a conquest.³¹ The cups could also be glass ones,³² and those for the common people were cups made of clay, wood or of copper.³³ For traveling and outdoor use, wineskins (*mashk*) were used in general.³⁴

³¹ Rāvandī, *Rāḥat al-Ṣudūr*, pp. 228, 261, 288–89, 300; Gurgānī, *Vis and Ramin*, p. 451; Julie Scott Meisami, *The Sea of Virtues (Bahr al-Fava'id) A Medieval Islamic Mirror for Princes* (Salt Lake City: Utah UP, 1991), p. 143; al-Arrājānī, *Samak-e 'Ayyār*, vol. 1, pp. 39, 221; Farāmarz, *Samak-e Ayyar*, pp. 41, 170; Ahsan, *Social Life*, p. 30; Asadī Tūsī. *Lughat-i Furs*. Ed. Muḥammad Dabīr-Siyāqī (Tehrān: Ṭahūrī 1336/1957), p. 103 (*tabūk*). In general, see Nāṭiq, *Hāfiz*, pp. 341–427; A. S. Melikian-Chirvani, “*Rekab*, The polylobed Wine Boat from Sassanian to Seljuq Times,” in Rika Gyselen ed. *Res Orientales*, VII, *Mélanges offerts à Philippe Gignoux* (Bures-sur-Yvette : Groupe pour l'étude de la civilisation du Moyen-Orient, 1995). For a picture of a silver cup from Transoxania with an Arabic transcription circling its rim praising wine, while the base shows a bird-man holding a grapevine, see C.E. Bosworth and M.S. Asimov, *The History of Civilizations of Central Asia*. vol. 4/2 (Paris: UNESCO, 2002), pp. 424–25. Manūchihri, *Dīvān*, pp. 77, 123, 174, 177; Sanā'ī, *Dīvān*, p. 75 and Mas'ūd-i Sa'd, *Dīvān*, p. 235 mention a *sātkīn*, a large cup. Manūchihri, *Dīvān*, p. 75 further mentions a *sabzī*, a long-necked bottle; see also Mas'ūd-i Sa'd, *Dīvān*, pp. 665 (*qanīneh*), 776 (*chamāneh*); Sanā'ī, *Dīvān*, p. 1012 (*qanīneh*).

³² Gurgānī, *Vis and Ramin*, p. 403 (“Holding a crystal wineglass in his hand”); Manūchihri, *Dīvān*, p. 44 (*kasah-yi bulur*), 75 (*zujāji*); Sayf al-Dīn Muḥammad Farghānī. *Dīvān*. Edited by Dhabīhallāh Ṣafā, 2 vols. Tehrān: Dānishgāh, 1341/1962), vol. 1, p. 87 (*shīshahā*). There were also towns that were well-known for the goblets they produced such as the *jām-i āmul*, glass cups made in Āmul. Jabalī, *Dīvān*, p. 288. Jabalī's editor commented that this Āmul is a town situated on the Oxus. However, Balkhī, *Maqāmāt-i Ḥamīdī*, pp. 133–34, also refers to Āmulī glassware, but refers to Āmul and Sārī in Mazandaran. For Iranian glass, see C.J. Lamm, *Glass from Iran in the National Museum*, Stockholm-London: Kegan Paul, 1935); Städtisches Museum Braunschweig, *2000 Jahre persisches Glass* (Braunschweig: Weisenhaus, Henri Leonhardt, 1963); and Helen 'Alī Akbarzādeh Kordmahini, *Shīsha. Majmū'a-yi marz-i Bāzargān* (Tehrān: Muza-yi Milli-yi Irān, 1372/1993) (with many pictures). On the various types of wine vessels, see Nāṭiq, *Hāfiz*, pp. 341–424 and literature quoted.

³³ A. Ghouchani and C. Adle, “A Sphero-conical Vessel as *Fuqqā'a*, or a gourd for ‘beer’”, *Muqarnas*, IX (1992), pp. 72–92; C. Adle, “Archéologie et arts du Monde iranien, de l'Inde Musulmane et du Caucase d'après quelques recherches récentes de terrain, 1984–95”, *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-lettres, janvier-mars* (Paris/1996), pp. 315–376. Manūchihri, *Dīvān*, p. 167 mentions a small wooden cup (*qahf*).

³⁴ Sheikh Bighami, *Love and War. Adventures from the Firuz Shah Nama*. Translated by William L. Hanaway Jr. (Delmar, NY: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints Inc, 1974), p. 145; Manūchihri, *Dīvān*, p. 94.

WINE DRINKING WIDESPREAD

As stated above, it is striking that the drinking of *sharāb* was common. It was reported from all parts of the country and throughout the period that is the subject of this paper. In particular, this holds for the ruling class, and whether Arab, Iranian, or Turk, they all drank deep and to their heart's content with very few exceptions. The caliphs, the leaders of the Moslem community, set an excellent example by being often deep in their cups. This held both for the Umayyads and Abbasids. There was, of course, the occasional caliph, who wanted to reverse this trend and ban drinking altogether. This was the case of 'Umar II (r. 717–720) who in vain tried to do so.³⁵ Such a caliph stood out as the party pooper and his example was not followed by his successors or by the many among the population, and wine drinking remained an important aspect of Umayyad court life. Amongst the Umayyad Arab governors sent to Iran there were those who did not eschew *sharāb*.³⁶ Many Abbasid caliphs (e.g. al-Qāhir, al-Rāḍī, al-Mustakfī) continued the practice and wine drinking was universal. Even leading '*ulamā*' drank, such as the chief *qadi* of Baghdād al-Tanūkhī.³⁷ Ibn Khallikān describes one of the parties in which he participated with other judges and jurisconsults at the house of al-Muhallabī, the grand vizier, twice per week. When the men were sizzled, a golden cup weighing 1,000 *mithqāls* (4, 64 kg) filled with delicious liquor,

was placed in the hands of each; in these they dipped, or rather steeped their beards, till the contents were nearly all absorbed, and then they sprinkled each other by shaking off the drops. During this, they danced about in variegated dresses and in necklaces formed of white violets and the odoriferous seeds of the gum-acacia.³⁸

³⁵ Mez, *Die Renaissance*, p. 8.

³⁶ Spuler, *Iran in früh-islamischer Zeit*, p. 514; Anonymous, *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 125 (Qa'qa' governor of Sīstān drunk wine in 723), 146 (Ma'n b. Zayāda al-Shaybānī).

³⁷ Ahsan, *Social Life*, p. 156; Mez, *Die Renaissance*, p. 376; see also, Balkhī, *Maqāmāt-e Ḥamīdī*, p. 175. al-Qāhir banned wine drinking, but was never sober himself. A.G. Chejne, "The Boon-Companion in Early 'Abbasid Times," *JAOS* 65 (1965), pp. 327–35. In Shīrāz, al-Muqaddasī reported that religious scholars were seen in a drunken state. Schwarz *Iran im Mittelalter*, pt. 2, p. 46.

³⁸ Ibn Khallikān, *Biographical Dictionary*. Translated by Mac Guckin de Slane. 4 vols. (Paris-London: Oriental Translation Fund, 1834), vol. 2, pp. 305–06.

Ibn al-‘Amīd, who as Būyid overseer of public morals (*muḥtasib*) of Baghdād had to take steps against wine drinking was a regular companion in drinking parties,³⁹ which parties were referred to as *mayzād*.⁴⁰

Trying to emulate the Islamic model *par excellence*, the caliph, the local rulers in Iran who asserted themselves as of 800 also drank and how. This held for the Ṭāhirids, the Sāmānids,⁴¹ the Būyids,⁴² the Ṣaffārids,⁴³ the Ghaznavids,⁴⁴ the Saljūqs and their offshoots,⁴⁵ the Khwārizmshāhs,⁴⁶ the Ghūrīds,⁴⁷ and rulers of local dynasties like the Ispahbāds and Ziyārīds of

³⁹ J. Christoph Bürgel, *Die Hofkorrespondenz ‘Aḥud ad-Daulas und ihr Verhältnis zu anderen historischen Quellen der frühen Būyiden* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1965), pp. 74, 83; he had already begun to drink when a very young man, *Ibid.*, p. 75; see also, Balkhī, *Maqāmāt-e Ḥamīdī*, p. 175. On the function of *muḥtasib* in Iran, see Willem Floor, “The office of *muḥtasib* in Iran,” *Iranian Studies* XVIII (1985), pp. 53–74.

⁴⁰ Asadī Ṭūsī, *Lughat-i Furs*, p. 35.

⁴¹ Abū Sa‘īd ‘Abd al-Ḥayy b. al-Ḍahhāk b. Maḥmūd Gardīzī, *Zayn al-Akhbār*. ed. ‘Abd al-Ḥayy Habībī (Tehrān: Bunyād-i Farhang-i Irān, 1347/1968), pp. 138, 161.

⁴² Spuler, *Iran in früh-islamischer Zeit*, p. 514; Abū ‘Abdallāh Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ya‘qūb Miskawīh, *Kitāb tajārib al-umam wa ta‘āqib al-himam*, edited and translated by D.S. Margoliouth. 6 vols. (London, 1920–21), vol. 2, pp. 234, 294, 314; Bürgel, *Die Hofkorrespondenz*, pp. 27, 29.

⁴³ Anonymous, *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 275, 297, 300, 314–15, 328, 328, 340.

⁴⁴ Niẓām al-Mulk, *The Book of Government or Rules for Kings* translated into English by Herbert Darke (London, 1960), p. 47; Bayhaqī, *Tārīkh*, pp. 5, 71, 121, 133–34, 142–43, 152, 160–61, 226–27, 239–40, 252, 281–82, 341, 344, 388, 409, 453, 463, 469, 483, 497, 500; Rāvandī, *Rāḥat al-Ṣudūr*, p. 90.

⁴⁵ Rāvandī, *Rāḥat al-Ṣudūr*, pp. 236, 370; Muḥammad Ibn Ibrāhīm, *Saljūqiyān va Ghuzz dar Kirmān*. Ed. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Bāstānī Pārīzī (Tehrān: Dānishgāh, 1343/1964), pp. 22, 30, 32, 35, 39, 46, 48, 68, 74, 79, 189; Afzal al-Dīn Abū Ḥamīd Aḥmad b. Ḥamīd Kirmānī, *Kitāb ‘iqd al-‘ulā li’l-mawqif al-a’lā*. Edited by ‘Alī Muḥammad ‘Āmirī Nā‘īnī (Tehrān: Ruzbahān, 2536/1977), pp. 68–69, 71, 120, 125. In 1120, the governor of Azerbāijān, Ūzbīg b. al-Pahlāwān did not take any action against the invasion of the Tatars, because he was drunk day and night and never sober, according to al-Athīr. When the Tatars were at the gates of Tabriz, he sent them much money, fabrics as well as wine. Schwarz, *Iran im Mittelalter*, pt. 8, pp. 1065, 1070.

⁴⁶ Bayhaqī, *Tārīkh*, p. 667; Dawlatshāh Samarqandī, *The Tadhkiratu’sh-Shu‘arā (Memoirs of Poets)* ed. E.G. Browne (London: Luzac, 1901), p.137.

⁴⁷ ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ‘Aṭā Malik-i Juwaynī, *The Tārīkh-i-Jahān-gushā*. Edited by Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Vahhāb Qazvīnī. 3 vols. (Leyden-London: Brill – Luzac, 1912–1937), vol. 2, p. 62.

Ṭabaristān.⁴⁸ The drinking did not remain limited to secular persons, for the prophet al-Muqannaʿ and his wives were reported to drink wine every day.⁴⁹

Apart from the rulers and their courtiers, the upper and middle classes drank copiously.⁵⁰ Even ascetic persons such as Abū Naṣr-i Mushkān as well as his protégé Bayhaqī himself drank wine. The latter sometimes when drinking with friends was thinking that he had to get back work.⁵¹ Ostensibly to pay for their drinking habit Saljūq officials forcibly took payment from the subjects, which imposition was known as the wine-fee (*sharāb-bahā*).⁵² Upper class women and their companions also drank wine. They had their own parties and often drank until they were drunk, just like the men.⁵³

Another group of drinkers was that of the poets. The earliest example of a 'poetic' expression in New Persian is a popular wine-related ditty. Due to the maneuverings of Sumayya, the mother of Ibn Ziyād, the latter threw his enemy Ibn Mufragh in prison in Basra. He then wrote a letter to his nephew the caliph Yazīd (r. 680–683) asking for permission to kill Ibn Mufragh. Yazīd replied that he might punish him as he saw fit, but on no account should he kill him, because Ibn Mufragh had much support among the Yemeni tribes, many of whom served in the caliph's army. On receipt of the letter Ibn Ziyād gave orders to prepare a concoction of sweet *nabīdh* mixed with sea-lettuce and make him drink it. He was then led around into the streets of Basra, while being lashed to a cat, a pig, and a dog. The children in the street then cried the following ditty in Persian:

Water it is, *nabīdh* it is,
The dregs it is, raisins it is,

⁴⁸ B. Isfandiyār, *History of Ṭabaristān*, pp. 65, 155, 250; Kai Kā'ūs, *A Mirror*, p. 56.

⁴⁹ Narshakhī, *The History of Bukhara*, p. 74.

⁵⁰ Bayhaqī, *Tārīkh*, pp. 281–82. During an annual spring festival in Shīrāz, the ruler threw a big party during which people danced, frolicked and drank wine. Schwarz, *Iran im Mittelalter*, pt. 2, p. 50 (Yāqūt). In Isfahan, during an ancient ritual on the occasion of the slaughter of animals, when the lungs of the animals were preserved for later use, a drinking party was held. Schwarz, *Iran im Mittelalter*, pt. 5, p. 623 (Muqaddasī).

⁵¹ Bayhaqī, *Tārīkh*, pp. 165, 188, 591.

⁵² Rāvandī, *Rāḥat al-Ṣudūr*, p. 33.

⁵³ Sheikh Bighami, *Love and War*, pp. 39, 90; Niẓāmī, *Le Roman*, p. 31; al-Arrājānī, *Samak-i 'Ayyār*, vol. 1, pp. 50, 59, 113, 184; Faramarz *Samak-e Ayyar*, pp. 49, 56, 94, 145.

Sumayya, a harlot she is.⁵⁴

It was in this same Persian-Arab Basran milieu that Abū Nuwās (756–814) grew up. Later, in Baghdād at the caliph's court, he composed hedonistic poetry in Arabic stimulated by ample infusions of wine. He propagated Bacchic poetry or *khamriyyāt* and was an inspiration to many Iranian poets.⁵⁵ One of the earliest Iranian poets Rūdakī lauded the merits of wine in one of his poems:

Bring me yon wine which you might'st call a melted ruby in its cup,
Or like a scimitar unsheathed, in the sun's noontide light held up.
‘Tis the rose-water, though might'st say, yea thence distilled for purity;
Its sweetness falls, as somnolence's own balm steals over the vigil-wearied eye.
Thou might'st call the cup the cloud, the wine the raindrop from it cast,
Or say the joy that fills the heart whose prayer long looked-for comes at last.
Were there no wine all hearts would be a desert waste, forlorn and black,
But were our last life-breath extinct, the sight of wine would bring it back.
O if an eagle would but swoop, and bear the wine up to the sky,
For out of reach of all the base, who would not shout, ‘well done!’ as I”?⁵⁶

Not all of the poets drank wine, of course, but most did. Nāṣir-i Khusraw (1004–88) was a drunkard when he was a clerk in Saljūq employ in 1045, but after a dream he gave up drinking.⁵⁷ Manūchihri, Sultan Mas‘ūd's ode-

⁵⁴ Muḥammad Qazvīnī, *Maqālāt-i Qazvīnī*. 3 vols. edited by ‘Abd al-Karīm Jurbizihdār (Tehrān: Asāṭir, 1362/1983), vol. 1, pp. 113–14. Sumayya is the mother of Ibn Ziyād, who during the *jāhiliya* had been a prostitute in Mecca.

⁵⁵ Philip F. Kennedy, *The Wine Song in Classical Arabic Poetry: Abū Nuwās and the Literary Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

⁵⁶ A. V. Williams Jackson, *Early Persian Poetry. From the beginnings down to the time of Firdausi* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1920), p. 39 (the translation is by Edward Byles Cowell). Wine is also referred to in a surviving poem by another early Iranian poet named Fīrūz Mashriqī (d. 896). Gilbert Lazard, *Les premiers poètes persans (ix-x siècles)* (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1964), p. 60 as well as by Daqīqī (934 or 942–981) and Abū Shukūr Balkhī (b. 915), see Muḥammad ‘Awfī, *The Lubābu’l-al-bāb (first part)*. Edited by E.G. Browne and Mirza Muḥammad of Qazwin (Leide-London: Brill, Luzac, 1906), vol. 2, pp. 13, 21. Bashār b. Burd (714–84), a free-thinker, whose family originated from Iranian Tokharestan, described wine and partying, be it in Arabic. Bosworth *The History*, p. 370. Abū Nuwās, whose mother was Iranian, was probably the first to launch the genre of *khamriyyāt*.

⁵⁷ Nāṣir-i Khusraw ‘Alavī. *Safarnāma*. Berlin: Kaviani, 1340/1922, p. 3. Poetically, wine imbibers were referred to as *duriyān* by Sanā’ī, *Dīvān*, p. 133.

poet sang the merits of wine,⁵⁸ as did Khayyām and others, based on their own experience of imbibing.⁵⁹

Wine drinking was so normal that guests automatically were served wine shortly after their arrival.⁶⁰ Kai Kā'ūs (1021–98), therefore, did not even bother to tell his son to abstain from drinking because it was religiously unlawful. He felt that peer pressure would be so strong that it would be almost impossible not to drink. For “your friends will not let you go without drinking.”⁶¹ This was certainly true in the case of Mas'ūd, the son of Sultan Maḥmūd of Ghazna (r. 998–1030), who unbeknownst to his father started drinking at a young age.⁶²

Not only the elite drank wine, so did the soldiers⁶³ as well as the common people. In Bābak (Azerbaijan), not only the court drank, but wine consumption was general. According to Ṭabarī, in particular *nabīdh* was drunk, not made from dates, but with local fruits.⁶⁴ When in 1175 a drought occurred, the people of Kirmān were half drunk.⁶⁵ Ibn Funduq (1106–70) mentions that drunken young men were seated in the road and threw stones at an official who wanted them to make way for him.⁶⁶ There were many taverns in Abbasid Iraq, not necessarily only for lower class clientele, where the serv-

⁵⁸ Manūchihri, *Dīvān*, pp. 8, 78, 179–81. In general, see W.L. Hanaway “Blood and Wine. Sacrifice and Celebration in Manūchihri’s Wine Poetry,” *Iran* 26 (1980), pp. 69–80.

⁵⁹ See, e.g., Ehsan Yarshater. “The Theme of Wine-Drinking and the Concept of the Beloved in Early Persian Poetry,” *Studia Islamica* 13 (1960), pp. 43–53; Richard Foltz, “Love and Wine in Khayyam and Hafez,” in Mehdi Marashi, ed., *Persian Studies in North America: Studies in Honor of Mohammad Ali Jazayeri* (Bethesda: Iranbooks, 1994), pp. 417–421., pp. 417–21.

⁶⁰ Spuler, *Iran in früh-islamischer Zeit*, p. 513; Nizāmī, *Le Roman*, p. 50; al-Arrājānī, *Samak-i 'Ayyār*, vol. 1, pp. 39, 124; Faramarz, *Samak-e Ayyar*, pp. 41, 102.

⁶¹ Kai Kā'ūs, *A Mirror*, p. 58.

⁶² Bayhaqī, *Tārīkh*, p. 121.

⁶³ Sheikh Bighami, *Love and War*, p. 145; al-Arrājānī, *Samak-i 'Ayyār*, vol. 1, p. 207; Faramarz, *Samak-e Ayyar*, p. 161; Bürgel, *Die Hofkorrespondenz*, p. 99. Abū Dulaf, *Travels*, p. 52 reported that a Magian of Rayy was purveyor to the army, which he supplied with “extremely good wine.”

⁶⁴ Schwarz, *Iran im Mittelalter*, pt. 8, p. 1195.

⁶⁵ Kirmānī, *Kitāb 'iqd*, p. 154; al-Arrājānī, *Samak-i 'Ayyār*, vol. 1, p. 33; Faramarz, *Samak-e Ayyar*, p. 36.

⁶⁶ Abu'l-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Zayd Bayhaqī Ibn Funduq, *Tārīkh-i Bayhaq* (Tehrān: Kitābfurūshī-yi Furūghī, n.d.), p. 269.

ants (cupbearers or *sharābī* or *sāqī*) were mostly Christians, both male and female.⁶⁷ This also held for Iran, as is suggested by Gurgānī's lines:

But people never mention him unless
To comment on his rowdy drunkenness.
He pawns his clothes for wine, his friends are Jews
Demanding money for his tavern dues.⁶⁸

There were also special occasions at which much wine was drunk such as during the festival of *sang-andāz* or *kulūkh-andāz* (stone throwing), which was held at the end of the month of Shaʿbān, the eighth month of the Islamic calendar.⁶⁹ In winter in particular much wine appeared to have been drunk,⁷⁰ while the fact that al-Muqaddasī only praises the very pious town of Bījār, because there was no cultivation of wine, indicates that wine drinking was universal.⁷¹

Jews and Christians, unlike Moslems, were allowed to make and sell wine, be it only to their co-religionists. Therefore, they traditionally were the purveyors of alcohol, including operating taverns or wine-houses, generally referred to as *kharābāt*.⁷²

⁶⁷ Mez, *Die Renaissance*, p. 376. The servants in the wine houses were also known as *samākarah*. Sanāʿī, *Dīvān*, p. 87.

⁶⁸ Gurgānī, *Vis and Ramin*, p. 35.

⁶⁹ Sanāʿī, *Dīvān*, p. 592.

⁷⁰ Schwarz, *Iran im Mittelalter*, pt. 7, p. 833, n. 12–13 (Yāqūt; ibn al-Faqīh).

⁷¹ Schwarz, *Iran im Mittelalter*, pt. 7, p. 833, n. 14.

⁷² An abandoned cell of a dissolute monk near Hulwān in Khurāsān had become “a rendez-vous of the beaux of Huwan who come to drink in it,” and to engage in homoerotic activities. Abū Dulaf, *Travels*, p. 44. Sayf al-Dīn Muḥammad Farghānī, *Dīvān*. Edited by Dhabīhallāh Ṣafā, 2 vols. (Tehrān: Dānishgāh, 1341/1962), vol. 1, p. 73; Balkhī, *Maqāmāt-e Ḥamīdī*, pp. 178, 180. For other poetic references, see ʿAlī Akbar Dihkhudā, *Lughat-nāma*. 15 vols. (Tehrān: Dānishgāh, 1372/1993), q.v. *kharābāt*. Therefore, one synonym of wine is *āb-i kharābāt*. Shād, *Farhang*, p. 253. The taverns were also called *kalvar-khāna*, see Masʿūd-i Saʿd, *Dīvān*, p. 809, in addition to *may-khāna*, *may-kādah*, and *khāna-yi khammār*. Jabālī, *Dīvān*, pp. 259, 475, 531, 553–55, 561, 563, 589; Farghānī, *Dīvān*, vol. 1, p. 73. In the seventeenth century and most likely also in earlier periods (see, e.g., *kharābāt -i mughān*, Manūchīhrī, *Dīvān*, p. 9; *sharāb-i mughāna*, Jabālī *Dīvān*, p. 639), Zoroastrians performed the role of wine-seller in Yazd and Kirmān, where they still formed a sizable community. Muḥammad Mufīd Mustawfī-yi Bāfqī, *Jāmiʿ-ye Mufīdī*. 3 vols. ed. Iraj Afshār. Tehrān: Asadī, 1340/1961), vol. 2, pp. 344–45; Mīr Muḥammad Saʿīd Mushīzī-yi Bardsīrī, *Tadhkira-yi Ṣafaviya-yi Kirmān*. Edited by Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Bāstānī-Pārīzī (Tehrān: ʿIlm, 1369/1990), p. 448.

There were people who did not drink at all or very little. For example, an old *khwāja* was not used to drinking,⁷³ while the Ghaznavid general Ghāzī had never drunk wine, but when he started he really indulged.⁷⁴ The eleventh century chronicler Gardīzī made it a point to emphasize as an oddity that the Qarākhānids of Central Asia were teetotalers, i.e., non-drinkers of wine.⁷⁵ Not drinking was remarked upon as something noteworthy, for example, in the case of mourning.⁷⁶ Also, there were people who sometimes swore not to drink for a period of time, but sometimes allowed themselves to be convinced to drink again.⁷⁷

THE MANNER OF WINE DRINKING

Wine was not drunk while having dinner, but only afterwards or at least separately from formal meals, like in the imperial period.⁷⁸ While drinking, the participants consumed all kinds of snacks (*nuql-i may* or *navāla*), including fruit and nuts. At the Ghaznavid court, it was customary to eat bread or *harīsa* (a grain-meat stew) as a snack, while drinking wine at a party.⁷⁹ Not everybody was happy with the separation of wine from a good meal. Among them was Manūchihīrī who wrote:

When those who know what's what

⁷³ Ibn Funduq, *Tārīkh*, p. 121.

⁷⁴ Bayhaqī, *Tārīkh*, p. 222.

⁷⁵ Gardīzī, *Zayn al-Akhbār*, p. 188. They probably drank *qimīz* or *kumis*, fermented horse milk. The Turkic Islamicized nomads refused to abandon drinking *kumis*, which was forbidden (*ḥarām*) by Islamic law. Therefore, Central Asian Islamic jurists made a virtue of a necessity and allowed it by categorizing it as 'indifferent' (*mubāḥ*). Maria E. Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition. Turko-Persian Politics and Acculturation in Medieval Iran* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), p. 27, n. 66.

⁷⁶ Spuler, *Iran in früh-islamischer Zeit*, p. 513.

⁷⁷ Bayhaqī, *Tārīkh*, pp. 388, 535; Anonymous, *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 45.

⁷⁸ Mez, *Die Renaissance*, p. 375; Nizāmī, *Le Roman*, p. 51; al-Arrājānī, *Samak-i 'Ayyār*, vol. 1, pp. 44, 227; Faramarz *Samak-e Ayyar*, p. 44, 175; Bayhaqī, *Tārīkh*, p. 169. See also Nāṭīq, *Hāfiẓ*, pp. 304–07.

⁷⁹ Bayhaqī, *Tārīkh*, pp. 99, 147, 188, 281, 471; Manūchihīrī, *Dīvān*, pp. 73, 131, 173, 179; B. Isfandiyyār, *History of Tabaristan*, p. 155; Mas'ūd-i Sa'd, *Dīvān*, pp. 104, 1050 (*nuql*), 473 (*navāla*); Jabālī, *Dīvān*, p. 576. See also Nāṭīq, *Hāfiẓ*, pp. 308–13. 'Umar Khayyām's quatrain XI: "Here with a loaf bread beneath the bough – A flask of wine, a book of verse – and thou – beside me singing in the wilderness – And wilderness in paradise enow. (Fitzgerald's translation of the poem beginning: *gar dast dihad zi maghz-i gandum nānī*).

Get together to dine,
 We want three things, no more:
 Kebabs, music, and wine;
 But snacks? Or books of poems?
 Or backgammon? These we decline:
 Backgammon's strictly for taverns
 Books in schoolrooms are fine,
 And snacks belong in the bazaars,
 No, we find we confine
 Our requirements to three:
 Kebabs, and music, and wine.⁸⁰

Wine was poured by the proverbial *sāqī* or cupbearers,⁸¹ at court as well as in the wine-houses and taverns. The cupbearers initially could be either pubescent males or females. By the tenth century it had become popular to have beautiful young Turkish boys, who were also trained for military service, although by the twelfth century this was no longer the case.⁸² Surviving period depictions show the tasks of the cupbearer. For example, an eighth century depiction shows a prince reclining on a couch while holding a wine bowl in one hand and a flower stalk in the other hand. A small figure, the cupbearer, stands with crossed hands resting on his chest and his mouth is covered by a protective mask similar to that worn by Zoroastrian priests, probably to avoid polluting the cup with his breath or saliva. Next to the cupbearer is a ewer and a tripod supporting a sieve through which wine is filtered into a two-handled jug.⁸³ For under the guidance of the wine steward, who probably trained them, cupbearers had to perform several tasks during

⁸⁰ Manūchihīrī, *Dīvān*, p. 9. The translation of the poem is by Dick Davis (with one word changed by me), see Najmieh Batmanglij, *From Persia to Napa. Wine at the Persian Table* (Washington DC: MAGE, 2006), p. 30; for another translation, see Clinton, *The Divan*, p. 12.

⁸¹ It is unlikely, as Nāṭiq, *Ḥāfīz*, pp. 289, 393 submits, that *sāqī* is derived from the Iranian word *shākh* or *shākhkeh*. The Arabic word *sāqī* or cupbearer is related to the Hebrew *mashqeh* and Akkadian *rab shaqê* or chief cupbearer, which was borrowed into Hebrew as *rab shaqeh*. See P. Oktor Skjaervo, "Review of Edwin M. Yamauchi's *Persia and the Bible*," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 114/3 (1994), p. 502.

⁸² W. L. Hanaway, "Sāqī," *Encyclopedia of Islam*²; Manūchihīrī, *Dīvān*, p. 48 and Mas'ūd-i Sa'd, *Dīvān*, p. 457 use the word *rīdak* (from Parthian *redag* or *retag*, meaning page boy) as a synonym for *sāqī*. For other Persian terms that denote cupbearer, see Nāṭiq, *Ḥāfīz*, pp. 291–97 (*āb-dār*, *iḥvān-i bazm*, *bādak*, *bulbula-dār*, *chamānī*, *rikāb-dār*, *sarda*, *sharāb-dār*, *sharābī*, *ghulām*, *may-dih*, *may-gusār*).

⁸³ Priscilla P. Soucek, "Sāqī," *Encyclopedia of Islam*², with other examples.

the drinking party. A Safavid miniature of Sultān Muḥammad shows the cupbearer's work: on the ground floor, a young, beardless cupbearer takes up a full jar. He then attached it to a cord drawn by a colleague. On the second storey, another cupbearer filled the cups (after he had unsealed the jar and mixed the wine sometimes with water) and presented them to the party's participants.⁸⁴ One of the earliest poets in Persian, Abū Shukūr Balkhī (b. 915) makes mention of the cupbearer:

Pour, boy, the vintage out
That oft my grief consoled,
That gushes from the flask
In new moon's crescent mould,
But in the cup spears
The moon a fortnight old.⁸⁵

The cupbearer might be a distraction for the dedicated drinker, due to their natural beauty, attractive dress, gait, and hair style.⁸⁶ At the court of the Saljūq ruler Alp Arslān (r. 1063–1072) the cupbearers wore golden hats and served wine in silver cups.⁸⁷ The amorous role of the cupbearer is implied by the *Qābūs-nāma*, where advice is given to the king's boon companion:

When the cupbearer passes the goblet to you, do not gaze into his face but keep your head bent forward as you accept the wine. While you are drinking it and when you return the goblet to him you must not stare at him nor give your patron cause to conceive any suspicious fancies.⁸⁸

For the cupbearers were all beardless, beautiful boys of a type that men loved to love. And many among the members of the drinking party were lovers of handsome boys with their rose-faced (or moon-faced) beardless cheeks as is evidenced in so many Persian poems, such as the following by the eleven century poet Manūchihīrī.

⁸⁴ A. Arazī, "Sāqī," *Encyclopedia of Islam*²; S.C. Welch, *Wonders of the age. Masterpieces of early Safavid painting* (Cambridge, Mass, 1979), no. 44, pp. 128–29.

⁸⁵ The translation is by Nicholson, *Studies*, p. 9.

⁸⁶ Kai Kā'ūs, *A Mirror*, p. 119. The role of the cupbearer gave rise to a poetic genre referred to as *sāqī-nāma*, started by Manūchihīrī's poem: *sāqī biyā kih imshab sāqī bih kār bāshad*. On this subject, see Paul Losensky, "Sāqī-nāma," *Encyclopedia Iranica*.

⁸⁷ Khvāja-yi Imām Ṣāḥib al-Dīn Nīshābūrī, *Saljūq-nāma* (Tehran: Khavar, 1332/1953), p. 26.

⁸⁸ Kai Kā'ūs, *A Mirror*, p. 199, ch. xxxviii. This also reflected religious sentiments, which hold that "it is a sin to look at beardless boys." Meisami, *The Sea of Virtues*, p. 188.

The slave boy and the cup of wine I love
 It's no reason to reproach and reprove
 I know well that both shouldn't be done
 But that's why it is so much fun.⁸⁹

It is may be because of this reason that Ibn al-Jazarī's (1136–1206) automata for drinking parties never made it beyond the drawing board. His automata were designed that equal portions were served to everybody. For a binge party he designed an automaton that poured an equal amount of wine into a cup, but it randomly selected the person who had to drink the entire contents of the cup. While the selected person drank his cup whistled and the wine steward was not allowed to take away his cup until the whistling stopped, i.e. until it was empty.⁹⁰

According to Niẓām al-Mulk (ca. 1018–92), it also happened that people who had been invited to court brought their own *sāqī*, their own food and their own wine. He was very much upset about this novelty and diversion from established custom, and therefore advised: nobody should be allowed to bring his own flagon and cupbearer; it was not the custom before and is reprehensible; people should not bring it to court, but take from court they do this because royal cupbearer serves bad wine; he should be punished as he is given good wine.⁹¹ It also happened that one or more members of the drinking party served his friends. According to Gurgānī:

The king declared, "Ramin, you serve the wine,
 Friends serving wine is an auspicious sign."
 Ramin was happy to comply and went
 About the court dispensing merriment;
 He drank too as he served, and soon he felt
 The wine had made his inhibitions melt.⁹²

⁸⁹ Manūchihirī, *Dīvān*, p. 174. On the subject of homo-sexual love in Iran, see Willem Floor, *A Social History of Sexual Relations in Iran* (Washington DC: MAGE, 2008), chapter four.

⁹⁰ For a miniature depicting the automaton 'the basin of the peacock' from Ibn al-Jazarī's *Kitāb fi ma'rifat al-ḥiyāl al-handasiyyah*, see Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Science. An Illustrated Study* (London: World of Islam Festival Publishing Company, 1976), p. 146, fig. 91.

⁹¹ Niẓām al-Mulk, *The Book of Government*, pp. 122–23.

⁹² Gurgānī, *Vis and Ramin*, p. 183; for a similar sentiment see al-Arrājānī, *Samak-i 'Ayyār*, vol. 1, p. 33.

Usually wine was drunk in doors, whether in a building or in tents, or in secluded gardens, because it was felt that this not only served privacy, but also decorum and one's reputation.⁹³ The drinking was done in the company of a group of friends, professional colleagues, or at court, as a member of the ruler's boon companions. In the Ghaznavid period there were public sphere (*bīrūnī*) and private sphere (*[an]darūnī*) boon companions.⁹⁴ The state's magnates also had boon companions.⁹⁵ Nizām al-Mulk makes much of the need to select the right and proper people as boon companion for the private sphere parties (*majlis-i khāṣṣ*), and never to invite a Jew, a Zoroastrian or a Shi'ite.⁹⁶ Kai Kā'ūs likewise argued that the boon companions should be respectable, knowledgeable and witty persons, but he focused not so much on the selection process, but rather addressed the behavior and disposition of the person who was invited to become a boon companion. Like Nizām al-Mulk and others, he also listed the subjects in which the boon companion had to be knowledgeable.⁹⁷ He was right, when for the Saljūq ruler of Kirmān, Malik Irānshāh (r. 1096–1110), selected a low-lifer as a boon companion this had undesirable consequences.⁹⁸ Being a boon companion could also be financially advantageous. For example, after a wine-bout, Ispāhbad Rustam of Ṭabaristān was in the habit to allow his boon companions to take whatever they wanted from his treasury.⁹⁹

In addition to the regulars, guests were also invited. These could be visiting rulers or their agents as well as persons of interest such as promising poets. The purpose of the party was not only to drink and get drunk, but also to have a conversation or a recitation of poetry as well as to listen to music and songs. These poems and songs had to be witty and entertaining. A typical scene, on the occasion of the invitation of the then still unknown poet Farrukhī-yi Sīstānī (d. 1037), was described by Nizāmī-yi 'Arūzī (ca. 1110–61):

⁹³ Bayhaqī, *Tārīkh*, p. 483.

⁹⁴ Bayhaqī, *Tārīkh* 1324, p. 503.

⁹⁵ Bayhaqī, *Tārīkh*, pp. 5147, 504.

⁹⁶ Nizam al-Mulk, *The Book of Government*, p. 93.

⁹⁷ Kai Kā'ūs, *A Mirror*, pp. 196–200; Bayhaqī, *Tārīkh*, p. 226; Rāvandī, *Rāḥat al-Ṣudūr*, p. 405.

⁹⁸ Afzal al-Dīn Abū Ḥmīd Aḥmad b. Ḥamīd Kirmānī, *Tārīkh-i Afzal yā Badāyi' al-Zamān fi Vaqāyi' -yi Kirmān*. Edited by Mihdī Bayānī (Tehrān: Dānishgāh, 1362/1983), p. 20.

⁹⁹ B. Isfandiyyār, *History of Ṭabaristān*, p. 65.

The emir's camp was filled with tents, and from each tent came songs accompanied by lutes, and friends sat together, drinking wine and making merry. Emir Abu'l-Muẓaffar of Chaghāniyān, goblet in one hand and a lasso in the other, drank wine and gave away horses. Later in the party, the wine went around several times, and when the emir was full of wine Farrukhī, emboldened by his wine intake, recited his poem, for which he was well rewarded.¹⁰⁰ The recitation of poems, either by the host, by other members of the party, or by professional poets or artists was a regular occurrence.¹⁰¹

Depending on the situation people drank to celebrate a happy event or because they were feeling happy.¹⁰² One of such happy occasion was the festival of *Nawrūz* or New Year. Wine drinking had been part of this festival since its creation by the first king Jamshid in *illo tempore*.¹⁰³ An integral part of the drinking of wine at that happy occasion was the scattering of flowers (*gul afshān*, *gul bar afshāndan*). This custom is, as far as I know, mentioned for the first time by Bayhaqī, while it is also referred to in the poems by Hafez and Sa'adī.¹⁰⁴

There were certain customs that were followed when drinking. After the cupbearer had brought a large decanter from the cellar, he filled everybody's cup with it. He then would say: *Nūsh* (eternal life), to which all present would reply: *Nūshānūsh*, *bāsh*, *bāsh* (Drink of eternal life, may it be so, may it be so).¹⁰⁵ The cupbearer would then fill the cups two times more, each round having a special meaning, a custom referred to *dawr gardān*. During the period of Imperial Iran, when Zoroastrianism was the state religion, the first round represented 'good thoughts,' the second round, 'good words', and the third round, 'good deeds.' The Zoroastrians continued this custom in Islamic Iran.¹⁰⁶ The custom also survived among Moslems in Iran, although Iranian poets gave each round of drinking different meanings and, e.g., Khayyām had five rounds. Awḥādī (d. 1337) said it thus:

The first round makes you happy and lightens

¹⁰⁰ al-Nizāmī al-'Arūzī, *Kitāb-i Chahār Maqālā*, pp.41–46; Nizāmī 'Arūzī 1968, pp. 81–84.

¹⁰¹ Bürgel, *Die Hofkorrespondenz*, p. 83; al-Arrājānī, *Samak-i 'Ayyār*, vol. 1, pp. 52–53; Faramarz *Samak-e Ayyar*, p. 51 (poetry recitals)

¹⁰² al-Arrājānī, *Samak-i 'Ayyār*, vol. 1, p. 4; Faramarz, *Samak-e Ayyar*, p. 14; Nizāmī, *Le Roman*, p. 73; Jalabi, *Dīvān*, p. 585.

¹⁰³ Ferdowsi, *Shahnameh*, p. 7.

¹⁰⁴ Bayhaqī, *Tārīkh*, pp. 341, 344.

¹⁰⁵ Dihkhudā, *Lughatnāma*, q.v. *nūshānūsh*; Nāṭiq, *Hāfiz*, pp. 298–99.

¹⁰⁶ Nāṭiq, *Hāfiz*, pp. 263–65.

Up that what is far when you awaken;
 The second round makes you bold, and
 Makes you appreciate art;
 The third round when you drink
 Takes away your inhibitions.

Khayyām (1048–1131) the presumed author of the *Nawrūz-nāma* continued with two more rounds in this text, each of which brought out your inner self, good or bad. He therefore called wine, the touchstone of man and the soap that washes away your worries.¹⁰⁷

The Achaemenids practiced the libation custom,¹⁰⁸ and, therefore, it is no surprise that this ritual is referred to in poetry by Iranian poets of the early Islamic period. Moreover, the custom of the pouring of a libation for the dead (*jur‘a afshānī bar khāk*) is a practice that was continued by Zoroastrians until now.¹⁰⁹ This suggests that the custom must have been practiced in Sasanian Iran, for how else to explain that it existed in the early period of Islamic Iran, among both Moslems and Zoroastrians?

An alternative explanation has been suggested by Fīrūz Manṣūrī, to wit, that the custom probably was introduced by Turkic speaking groups that migrated into Iran. Although there is no denying that these Turkic groups as well as the Mongols practiced the libation custom, the earliest evidence adduced by Manṣūrī dates only from around the mid-thirteenth century.¹¹⁰ However, the practice is already referred to around the year 1000 CE in Persian sources, or 250 years earlier. For example, Bayhaqī (ca. 996–1077) mentions that when the son of ‘Amr-i Layth (r. 879–901) died, he organized a wake complete with wine and musicians. Similarly wine was poured on the soil after the vizier Ḥasanak was executed (in 1032), but this may have been in mockery, as the person to do so was his nemesis Bū Sahl-i Zawzānī.¹¹¹ Of

¹⁰⁷ ‘Umar b. Ibrāhīm Khayyām Nīshābūrī, *Nawrūz-nāma*. ed. ‘Alī Ḥasūrī (Tehrān: Ṭahūrī, 1343/1964), pp. 80–81; Nāṭiq, *Hāfiẓ*, pp. 266–70. On the authorship of the *Nawrūz-nāma*, see *Āyanda* 10/10–11 (1363/1984), pp. 772–74.

¹⁰⁸ Pierre Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander: A History of the Persian Empire* (Eisenbrauns, 2002), pp. 245, 548.

¹⁰⁹ E. G. Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1893), pp. 41–11; Nāṭiq, *Hāfiẓ*, pp. 270–72.

¹¹⁰ Firuz Mansuri, (i) *Bāda-y afshānī bar khāk kih farhang-i khujasta-yi Īrānī ānrā napad-hirufta ast.*” *Gawhar* 4/10 (Dih 2535/1976), pp. 861–84; (ii) 4/11–12, pp. 946–49; (iii) 5/1 (Farvardin 2536/1977), pp. 73–75; (iv) 5/4, pp. 323–25, (ii–iv).

¹¹¹ Bayhaqī, *Tārīkh*, p. 188. The libation practice was earlier referred to by the Arab poet Abū Tammām (d. 842). Schwarz, *Iran im Mittelalter*, pt. 5, p. 572.

course, Turkic groups had already entered Iranian territory from about 700 and thus, it is possible that this custom was adopted by Iranians. However, more data are needed to settle this question. Various other reports make it clear that to pour some wine on the ground for the souls of the dead was a well-known, and maybe even a widespread tradition among Moslems after that time.¹¹² The custom is referred to in poems by, for example, Manūchihri, Khāqānī, Athīr-i ‘Umānī, Nāṣir-i Khusraw, Mawlavī, and Hafez as well as by Khayyām. He wrote:

Friends, as we agreed to come together
We must much commemorate our friend
Because together we drink this libation
Lest, when it's our turn, we are put to shame.¹¹³

The custom referred to as *yād* or ‘commemoration’ is a more selfish variant of the libation custom, for all of the wine went into the drinker’s gullet, but his thoughts and wishes to the departed.¹¹⁴ This custom is already referred to by Firdawsī (935–1020), among many others, when he wrote:

Rostam laughed long and loud and said, ‘A fighting spirit won’t stay hidden long!’ He called for enough wine to sink a ship: filling a golden goblet, he toasted the memory of noble heroes, then handed another to Bahman and said, ‘Toast whoever you want to!’¹¹⁵

By drinking to somebody’s health (*shād khvār[i]*, or *shādī-yi kasī nūshīdan*) you put yourself at his disposal. Hafez in several poems refers to this custom, although the custom was already described in, for example, the twelfth-century *Samak-i ‘Ayyār*.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, there was the custom of the friendship bowl (*qadah-i dūstgānī*), which was a bowl passed from one to the other and from which all present drunk to toast one another’s health and con-

¹¹² Nāṭiq, *Hāfiz*, pp. 274–77 provides the references, also for the later period.

¹¹³ Parvīz Ahūr ed. *Farhang-i Jāmi’ va Dīvān-i Hāfiz*. 3 vols. (Tehrān: Asāṭīr, 1372/1993), vol. 3, pp. 693–94; see also Ardāshīr Bahmanī, “Jur’a fashānī,” *Armaghān* 59, dawreh-yi 46/3 (2536/1977), pp. 182–83; Manšūrī, “Bāda-yi afshānī (i-iv),” p. 863.

¹¹⁴ Nāṭiq, *Hāfiz*, pp. 284–86; Jamāl Khalīl Shīrvānī, *Nuzhat al-Majālis*. Ed. Muḥammad Amīn Riyāhī (Tehrān: Ilmī, 1375/1996) p. 485.

¹¹⁵ Ferdowsi. *Shahnameh*, translated by Dick Davis (Washington DC: MAGE, 2008), p. 438; see also Mas’ūd-i Sa’d, *Dīvān*, pp. 144, 173 (*bar kasī sharāb khurdan*); Jabalī, *Dīvān*, p. 437; E. Denison Ross, “Rudaki and Pseudo-Rudaki,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (October 1924), p. 641 (*bi yād-i u khurda*) citing a verse by pseudo-Rudaki.

¹¹⁶ Ahūr, *Farhang*, vol. 2, p. 1337; al-Arrajānī, *Samak-i ‘Ayyār*, vol. 1, pp. 198, 247, 309; vol. 2, pp. 146, 184, 368; Jabalī, *Dīvān*, pp. 46, 625; Nāṭiq, *Hāfiz*, pp. 282–84.

firm one's friendship, loyalty, and love as the case might be. There are many references to this custom for the Mongol period and the following centuries.¹¹⁷ For the pre-Mongol period the custom is referred to in literary sources, for example, in the tale of *Samak-i 'Ayyār*.¹¹⁸

In the evening, at night fall, *ghābūq* or the evening draught, while in the morning at dawn, after a night of carousing, *ṣabūḥ* or *ghārijī*, the morning draught was drunk.¹¹⁹ Indeed in the morning, because it was apparently believed, or learnt from experience, that to get rid of a hangover or of the misty and befuddled state of one's brain, you had to take one or more drinks. This is clear from *Vis and Ramin*, where after an evening of drinking and a night of love making, first wine was served on arising from bed.

The last night's wine still lingered in her head
And wine was served her as she left their bed.¹²⁰

And if the wine was not brought immediately then you made your wishes known instantly.

So these two passed the night, and as dawn broke
They called for wine as soon as they awoke.¹²¹

It was apparently quite a popular thing to do as Manūchihirī, who probably took some inspiration from the early Persian poet Junaydī, devotes quite a long poem to it, entitled 'concerning the morning draught' (*dar vaṣf-i ṣabūḥī*), of which I give here the translation of the first lines.

The cock's call is heard, the muezzin of the wine drinkers,
Early dawn turns her face to the onlookers;
The mountain sheds its heavy black cloak,
And the king of the planets shows his face in the east.
Bring the wine, the succor of the miserable

¹¹⁷ For a discussion see Nāṭiq, *Hāfiz*, pp. 286–89.

¹¹⁸ al-Arrājānī, *Samak-i 'Ayyār*, vol. 1, p. 119; vol. 3, p. 33; Mas'ūd-i Sa'd, *Dīvān*, pp. 176, 794 (*dustkāmi*); Jabalī, *Dīvān*, pp. 437–38 (*dūstgānī*); Sanā'ī, *Dīvān*, p. 86 (*dūstkānī*).

¹¹⁹ Kirmānī 1343, p. 68; Bayhaqī, *Tārīkh*, pp. 161, 341 (*ṣabūḥ*), 409; Manūchihirī, *Dīvān*, pp. 131, 174 (also n. 22, *ghārichi*), 177, 181; Jabalī, *Dīvān*, pp. 265, 552; Balkhī, *Maqāmāt-i Ḥamīdī*, p. 180; Niẓāmī, *Le Roman*, p. 73; Niẓām al-Mulk, *A Book of Government*, p. 47; Asadī Ṭūsī, *Lughat-i Furs*, p. 18 (*ghārijī*). In general see Nāṭiq, *Hāfiz*, pp. 319–23, and *Ibid.*, p. 224 (*bāda-yi shabgīr*). Physicians prescribed an evening draught (*shabāh*) under certain circumstances. *Ibid.*, pp. 225–26.

¹²⁰ Gurgānī, *Vis and Ramin*, p. 168.

¹²¹ Gurgānī, *Vis and Ramin*, p. 220.

Rise for the morning draught, yea sleepers.¹²²

Not everybody was that positive about drinking in the morning. Kai Kā'ūs, the author of the *Qābūs-nāma* advised his son the following:

Do not drink in the morning; it is ancient wisdom, and it allows you to get over your hangover, also you will not forget your morning prayer. Also, morning drinkers are quarrelsome and often commit regrettable acts. If from time to time, however, the occasion arises when wine is drunk early, it is lawful to do so; but a practice should not be made of it, for that is reprehensible.¹²³

Like the caliphs the successive rulers of Iran all followed the example set by the courts of Imperial Iran where binge drinking was quite normal. Their Islamic successors gladly followed their example and with quite an abandon.¹²⁴ In fact, one may argue that drinking to the point of drunkenness was the expected norm for courtly circles. As Dick Davis pointed out in his foreword to his exemplary translation of the *Vis and Ramin* epos, “almost every time we see the king go to bed, the fact that he is drunk is mentioned, and there is usually no implication that this is a reprehensible state for him to be in.”¹²⁵ This was not only true in poetry, but also in real life.¹²⁶ A chronicler like Kirmānī (ca. 1280) bluntly stated that “it is the rule that kings spend their days drinking,”¹²⁷ and reality bore him out.

The wine parties could last days. The Ṣaffārid ruler Bu'l-Ḥasan Ṭāhir Muḥammad 'Amr Layth (r. 901–908) as well as his successors drank day and night.¹²⁸ The Ghaznavid rulers were real drinking champions. Maḥmūd of Ghazna had invited Isrā'il b. Saljūq and they drank wine together for three days.¹²⁹ His sons Muḥammad and Mas'ūd also were binge drinkers, and their parties sometimes lasted three to four days. Sultan Mas'ūd was an alcoholic

¹²² Manūchihirī, *Dīvān*, pp. 145–48. He was, of course, not the only poet to write a hymn to the morning draught, so did 'Aṭṭār, for example. Kenneth Avery and Alī Alizādeh, *Fifty Poems of 'Aṭṭār* (Melbourne: re.press, 2007), poem nr. 21.

¹²³ Kai Kā'ūs, *A Mirror*, p. 60.

¹²⁴ Niẓāmī, *Le Roman*, p. 34 (“when he drinks he is a Key-Kobad”).

¹²⁵ Gurgānī, *Vis and Ramin*, pp. xvi–xvii. See also Niẓāmī, *Le Roman*, pp. 17, 54, 101, 213.

¹²⁶ Nīshābūrī, *Saljūq-nāma*, p. 27.

¹²⁷ Kirmānī, *Tārīkh-i Afzal*, p. 20; Bayhaqī, *Tārīkh*, p. 471; Niẓāmī, *Le Roman*, p. 58; al-Arrājānī, *Samak-i Ayyār*, vol. 1, pp. 67, 172, 180; Faramarz, *Samak-e Ayyar*, pp. 136, 142.

¹²⁸ Anonymous, *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 275, 297, 300, 314–15, 328 (Bū Ja'far), 328 (Ṭāhir Bū 'Alī), 340 (Amīr Ḥusayn).

¹²⁹ Rāvandī, *Rāḥat al-Ṣudūr*, p. 90; Nīshābūrī, *Saljūq-nāma*, p. 12.

who knew no limit in drinking wine. He drank huge quantities during consecutive days and nights and organized matches, where he would challenge his companions (singers, jesters, officers, and bureaucrats) whom he all drank under the table. Bayhaqī describes a party where Sultan Mas‘ūd allegedly drank 27 vessels of $\frac{1}{2}$ *man* each (1.5 liter) with wine, and then performed his prayer. During the Hansi campaign, when Mas‘ūd was ill and repented of his sins he did not drink, but some months later the wine flowed again like a river.¹³⁰ Various Saljūq rulers were also drunkards who loved partying for days at an end. Of Tughril Shāh b. Muḥammad (r. 1156–1169) it was even said that he made the wine cellar his *mihrāb*.¹³¹

Such drinking feats were also reflected in popular literature where, for example, the hero Samak-i ‘Ayyār allegedly could drink 10–20 pints in one go.¹³² During one of his heroic feats, Samak-i ‘Ayyār challenged the manhood of one of his opponents by alleging that he was unable to drink five *man* (15 liter) of wine.¹³³

The drinking parties could become quite boisterous. Sultan Maḥmūd of Ghazna in a drunken mood cut off the locks of his favorite Ayāz. The next day weighed down by his hangover he rued this deed, but the poet ‘Unṣurī (d. 1040) restored his spirits by reciting the following poem:

Though shame it be a fair one’s curls to shear
Why rise in wrath or sit in sorrow here?
Rather rejoice, make merry, call for wine;
When clipped the cypress doth most trim appear.

Sultan Maḥmūd was so happy that he rewarded ‘Unṣurī richly and filled his mouth with gold coins. He immediately threw another party and Sultan Maḥmūd and his companions drank deeply well into the next night.¹³⁴

¹³⁰ Bayhaqī, *Tārīkh*, pp. 533, 555–56.

¹³¹ Rāvandī, *Ruḥat al-Ṣudūr*, pp. 236 (Sultan Mas‘ūd b. Muḥammad b. Malikshāh), 370 (Sultan Tughril b. Arslān); Ibn Ibrāhīm 1343, pp. 22 (Sultānshāh), 30, 32 (Īrānshāh), 35 (Arslān Shāh), 39 (Muḥammad b. Arslān Shāh), 46 (Tughril Shāh b. Muḥammad), 48 (Malik Arslān b. Tughril Shāh), 74, 79, 189; Kirmānī, *Tārīkh-i Afzal*, pp. 68–69 (Arslān Shāh), 71 (Maḥmūd), 120, 125; Peacock *Early Seljuq History*, p. 126 (Alp Arslān drunken before Aleppo).

¹³² al-Arrājānī, *Samak-i ‘Ayyār*, vol. 1, pp. 116; 195; Faramarz, *Samak-i ‘Ayyar*, p. 153.

¹³³ al-Arrājānī, *Samak-i ‘Ayyār*, vol. 1, p. 197; Faramarz, *Samak-i ‘Ayyar*, p. 154.

¹³⁴ al-Nizāmī al-‘Arūzī, *Kitāb-i Chahār Maqāla*, pp. 39–41. The poem’s translation is by E.G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*. 4 vols. (Cambridge, CUP, 1959), vol. 2, p. 38.

It also happened that the drinking had serious, sometimes fatal consequences. When drinking by the rulers was chronic and clearly an addiction it could not but have negative consequences for the governance of the state. Both Sultan Maḥmūd and his son Sultan Masʿūd after a bout of binge drinking often did not show up the next day to be present in court.¹³⁵ Nevertheless, they mostly managed to spend sufficient time to manage their state affairs. However, the Ṭāhirid ruler Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir (r. 862–873) was so addicted to drinking and a hedonistic lifestyle that he neglected the affairs of state, and as a result, he lost his throne. The same held for the Ghūrid ruler Maḥmūd b. Ghiyāth al-Dīn (ca. 1210).¹³⁶ Bayhaqī and Gardīzī suggest that Amir Muḥammad, the brother and rival of Sultan Masʿūd, lost his throne and life, because he partied and drank too much.¹³⁷ Altuntāsh, the son of the Khvārizmshāh fell drunk from a roof and died.¹³⁸ The last Saljūq ruler of Kirmān Farrukhshāh (1196) died of drinking.¹³⁹ Drunkenness also led to capture or murder of opponents,¹⁴⁰ robbery,¹⁴¹ or betrayal of a conspiracy.¹⁴²

DRINKING WITH MUSIC AND AT GAMES

The Sasanian king Bahrām Gūr was occupied day and night with entertainments, hunting, and drinking.¹⁴³ Following this Imperial model, according to Sultan Maḥmūd of Ghazna, partying, drinking, polo and war was a nobleman's business in Islamic Iran;¹⁴⁴ and indeed, *razm va bazm* (fighting and feasting) remained the royal pastime *par excellence* until recent times. This sentiment is also nicely expressed in the dialogue between Isfandiyār and Rustam, where the former says:

¹³⁵ Bayhaqī, *Tārīkh*, p. 469.

¹³⁶ Gardīzī, *Zayn al-Akḥbār*, p. 138; Juwaynī, *The Tārīkh-i-Jahān-gushā*, vol. 2, p. 62.

¹³⁷ Bayhaqī, *Tārīkh*, pp. 5, 71; Gardīzī, *Zayn al-Akḥbār*, p. 195.

¹³⁸ Bayhaqī, *Tārīkh*, p. 410.

¹³⁹ Ibn Ibrāhīm, *Saljūqiyān va Ghuzz*, p. 189.

¹⁴⁰ Rāvandī, *Rāḥat al-Ṣudūr*, pp. 90, 363.

¹⁴¹ Anonymous, *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 315.

¹⁴² B. Isfandiyār, *History of Tabaristan*, p. 155 (during a party Afshīn was given strong wine or *sharāb-e girānī* to make him loose-lipped). Isfandiyār likewise tried to make Rustam loose-lipped when he said to a servant: "Serve him with uncooked wine, Let it affect him while we sit and dine, - And when the wine has made his tongue grow loose, We'll hear him chatter about King Kā'ūs." Ferdowsi, *Shahnameh*, p. 394.

¹⁴³ Niẓām al-Mulk, *The Book of Government*, p. 24.

¹⁴⁴ Bayhaqī, *Tārīkh*, p. 152.

Fighting or feasting I don't change; you'll see
That wine and war are all the same to me.¹⁴⁵

Whether during games such as polo or during and after the hunt, much drinking was going on at the same time.¹⁴⁶

Each dawn they went out hunting, at midday
They turned to wine to while their time away,
And so the prince's busy days were spent
In hunting and in tipsy merriment,
Now seeking lions with his spear and bow
Now sipping wine where pretty roses grow.¹⁴⁷

Wine drinking and music were two sides of the same coin and there is hardly a mention of wine drinking without referring to the entertainment by musicians, dancers, and minstrels. For where wine flowed, music was played and songs were sung until everybody went drunk to his bed.¹⁴⁸ According to Gurgānī,

The wine went round continually, which made
For wine-red faces as the minstrel played.¹⁴⁹

I have already mentioned poems, whether impromptu or prepared beforehand, that were declaimed during drinking parties, but songs were also sung, usually by professional singers.¹⁵⁰ It is therefore not surprising to conclude that the poems of, for example, Manūchihīrī are an important source of information on the music genres that prevailed in Ghaznavid times as well as the many musical instruments that were used by the various musicians and artists.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁵ Ferdowsi, *Shahnameh*, pp. 394–95.

¹⁴⁶ Bayhaqī, *Tārīkh*, pp. 344, 409; Gardīzī, *Zayn al-Akhhbār*, p. 161; Nīshābūrī, *Saljūq-nāma*, pp. 66–67, 74; Nīzāmī, *Le Roman*, pp. 17, 58, 74; al-Arrājānī, *Samak-i 'Ayyār*, vol. 1, pp. 10, 18; Faramarz, *Samak-e Ayyar*, pp. 19, 24.

¹⁴⁷ Gurgānī, *Vis and Ramin*, p. 290, see also *Ibid.*, p. 377.

¹⁴⁸ Nīshābūrī, *Saljūq-nāma*, p. 27; Nīzāmī, *Le Roman*, p. 51; al-Arrājānī, *Samak-i 'Ayyār*, vol. 1, p. 39; Faramarz, *Samak-e Ayyar*, p. 41; B. Isfandiyār, *History of Tabaristan*, p. 155; Bayhaqī, *Tārīkh*, pp. 54, 71; Jalabī, *Dīvān*, p. 411.

¹⁴⁹ Gurgānī, *Vis and Ramin*, p. 265.

¹⁵⁰ Nīzāmī, *Le Roman*, p. 101–02, 194; al-Arrājānī, *Samak-i 'Ayyār*, vol. 1, p. 66; Faramarz, *Samak-e Ayyar*, p. 62.

¹⁵¹ Ḥusayn 'Alī Mallāh, *Manūchihīrī Damghāni va Musiqi* (Tehrān: Hunar va Farhang, 1363/1984); see also *Ibid. Ḥāfiẓ va Musiqi*. (Tehran: Hunar va Farhang, 1363/1984); Nāṭiq, *Ḥāfiẓ*.

WINE AND LOVE

The drinking of wine cannot be discussed without at least mentioning that wine and love are inextricably associated, for they go together. Wine is usually drunk by both lovers, for wine like love is a kind of intoxication to which you have to surrender yourself.

Love is like wine, and neither will agree
To live with wisdom and sobriety.¹⁵²

Therefore, Vis and Ramin were constantly drunk, if not with one another, then at least because of the wine that both drank copiously. Making love and drinking wine are inseparable.

With wine the lovers rested from their ride,
Their days now passed in pleasure, and each night
Was filled with joy and mutual delight:
They drank their wine, then lay down face to face,
And drank wine in the midst of their embrace.¹⁵³

It does sound odd for lovers to become drunk and then to make love, but apparently many people believed that wine worked as a sexual stimulant, if we may believe Firdawsī. The latter relates in his *Shāh-nāma* that king Bah-rām had forbidden the drinking of wine. He had issued this ban after a village chief, who had drunk much wine at his court, on his return journey had passed out en route and while sleeping had his eyes pecked out by ravens. However, one year later a shoemaker's son, who was impotent, was given some wine that his mother had hidden, who told him:

Drink seven glasses of this wine, and when
You feel you're ready, go to her again:
You'll break her seal once you two are alone –
A pickaxe made of felt can't split a stone.

The boy drank the seven glasses of wine and indeed became potent and was able to perform just as his mother had foretold. He was very elated and drunk when he walked to his parents' house to tell them the happy news. He was so drunk that when he saw a roaring lion in the market he fearlessly sat

¹⁵² Gurgānī, *Vis and Ramin*, p. 81; see also Nizāmī, *Le Roman*, pp. 31, 68–69, 73, 79, 82, 90, 116, 160, 212; al-Arrājānī, *Samak-i 'Ayyār*, vol. 1, pp. ; 51–52; Faramarz, *Samak-e Ayyar*, p. 50; Farghānī, *Dīvān*, vol. 1, p. 87.

¹⁵³ Gurgānī, *Vis and Ramin*, p. 167; Nizāmī, *Le Roman*, pp. 75, 77; Jabalī, *Dīvān*, p. 531.

on its back as if it were a donkey. The lion keeper ran to court to tell king Bahrām about this strange event. The king instructed his advisers to find out who this boy was. The moment he had done so, the mother's boy came to court to tell the king what had happened.

She said to him, "May you live happily
As long as time endures, your majesty!
This boy of mine's just starting out on life –
He'd found himself a satisfactory wife.
But when the time came ... well, his implement
Was just too soft, and he was impotent.
So then I gave the boy (but privately
To make him father of a family)
Three glasses of good wine; at once his face
Shone with a splendid ruby's radiant grace,
The floppy felt stirred, lifted up its head
And turned into a strong, hard bone instead.
Three drafts of wine gave him the strength and glory
Who would have thought the king would hear the story?"

The king was so impressed by this story that he immediately ordered that henceforth wine drinking would be allowed again. He counseled, however, that

when wine leads you to pleasure, see to it
that it does not leave your body weak and incapable.¹⁵⁴

WHY DID THEY DRINK?

Apart from the fact that wine drinking was liked for its own sake, it was also a pre-existing condition, having been quite normal and natural in Imperial Iran. Islamic rule wanted to change this, but the people were not ready to give up that which brought pleasure in life. Changing one's religion and going through the motions of another ritual to gain the gates of paradise was one thing, but giving up wine that was as yet too much to ask. Moreover, medical science was all in favor of drinking wine and prescribed it as a remedy for certain diseases. Furthermore, Galenus argued that wine taken in moderation was beneficial to your health and who were you to argue with him?¹⁵⁵ A leading Christian physician of the tenth century, Yuḥannā Masīḥī

¹⁵⁴ Ferdowsi, *Shahnameh*, p. 224.

¹⁵⁵ Najmābādī *Tārīkh-e Tibb*, p. 23.

advised people to eat fresh food and drink old wine (*sharāb-i kuhna*), an advice that is not out of sync with modern views on the diet.¹⁵⁶ Besides, physicians advised people to drink wine in spacious locations and during cool periods of the year or at certain times of the day.¹⁵⁷ The *Nawrūz-nāma* told its readers that

Galenus, Socrates, Hippocrates, Avicenna and Razi said that there is nothing more beneficial for the body than wine, in particular wine made from bitter and pure grapes. Its special nature is that it takes away grief, makes the heart happy, and the body stout and neutralizes bad food, makes the face color red, the skin tone fresh and healthy looking. It stimulates understanding and memory, makes the miser open-handed, and the coward brave. The wine drinker is seldom sick and mostly vigorous.¹⁵⁸

Indeed physicians such as al-Rāzī in his *Manāfi' al-aghdhīya va maḍārrihā* and Jurjānī in his *Dhakhīra-yi Khvārizmshāhī* list and argue the benefits and drawbacks of wine.¹⁵⁹

These various notions argued by the physicians quickly found a willing ear among the Iranian literati, whether they were prose or poetry authors. Gurgānī, for example, refers to the restorative power of wine, both to body and spirit.

Wine is blood red and scours the rusty heart
Making its weariness and grief depart,
Returning to the pallid, careworn face
Its ruddy hue and customary grace.
Longing is pain, and wine will cure this pain,
Anguish is dust, and wine's its cleansing rain,
If sorrow's present, red wine will remove it,
If joy is present, red wine will improve it;
Wine burns away all suffering, while desire
And joy blaze up more brightly in its fire.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ Najmābādī *Tārīkh-e Ṭibb*, p. 232 (*sharāb-i kuhna*, also called *may-yi dū-sāla* or *may-yi kuhna*); Nāṭiq, *Hāfiz*, pp. 248–49. It is also mentioned by Manūchīhrī, *Dīvān*, p. 5.

¹⁵⁷ Zayn al-Dīn Abū Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Ismā'īl b. al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Ḥusaynī Jurjānī. *Dhakhīra-yi Khvārizmshāhī*. 3 vols. Edited by Muḥammad Ḥusayn I'timādī et al. (Tehrān: Anjuman-i Āthār-i Millī, 1344–52/1967–73), vol. 1, p. 169; see further Nāṭiq, *Hāfiz*, pp. 314–16.

¹⁵⁸ Nishābūrī, *Nawrūz-nāma*, p. 79.

¹⁵⁹ Al-Rāzī *Manāfi' al-aghdhīya*; Jurjānī, *Dhakhīra-yi Khvārizmshāhī*, vol. 1; Najmābādī, *Tārīkh-i Ṭibb*, pp. 433, 734.

¹⁶⁰ Gurgānī, *Vis and Ramin*, p. 220, see also *Ibid.*, p. 184. A similar point is made by Bal'amī, see Lazard, *Les premiers poètes*, p. 135 (when the wine illuminates your face).

Niẓāmī-yi Ganjavī picks up on the fact that people who have drunk wine become more jovial, accessible and frankly more open-handed.

There are many when drunk break open their coffers,
When sober they complain of robbers;
There are many when drunk say: 'take as much as you lief,'
When sober they cry 'thief.'¹⁶¹

It is a sentiment that is also echoed by Kai Kā'ūs, the author of the *Qābūs-nāma*, who counsels his son to ask favors from stingy persons only when they are drunk, for they then are in a more generous mood.¹⁶² The author of the *Samak-i 'Ayyār* observed that wine drinkers will do things that they under other circumstances would not do. He noted that under influence of wine prince, Khurshīd Shāh lost his reserve and started playing the lute.¹⁶³ Of course, as Niẓāmī-yi Ganjavī notes, wine makes a coward brave.¹⁶⁴

Rāvandī, the author of the *Rāḥat al-Ṣudūr* (ca. 1202) while not in disagreement with the above arguments, is more interested in the question why people chose to drink wine knowing that it was unlawful. He points out that medical science ascribes the occurrence of gaiety, fresh skin and good health to wine drinking. This is due to three faculties, of which he only mentions two: (i) desire, which makes man look for pleasure; its driving force is the liver, and (ii) spirit (*nafs*) or the faculty of speech, which makes that one seeks knowledge and wisdom, makes one act properly and makes man stay away from doing bad things. This is a faculty peculiar to man. Its mine is the brain and it is the most noble of all, and lust is the lowest one. Each force is the opposite of the other. Wise men looked for that which would give repose/quiet and would free one of this burden, and the only item among foods and drinks that did this is grape wine, where one of the forces makes one do good.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶¹ Niẓāmī, *Hikmat va nasihatlar*.

¹⁶² Kai Kā'ūs, *A Mirror*, p. 143.

¹⁶³ al-Arrājānī, *Samak-i 'Ayyār*, vol. 1, p. 47; Faramarz, *Samak-e Ayyar*, p. 47.

¹⁶⁴ Niẓāmī, *Le Roman*, p. 68.

¹⁶⁵ Rāvandī, *Rāḥat al-Ṣudūr*, pp. 426–28. This argumentation is taken from Galenic medicine and Rāvandī was not the first historian to popularize these ideas, because before him Bayhaqī, *Tārīkh*, p. 101f. had done so. He mentioned all three faculties (the first is, intellect and speech, located in the head and partnered with the heart; the second is anger and is located in the heart, and the third is desire that is located in the liver. Each faculty is the location of a spirit).

Rāvandī admits that wine has many benefits and countless advantages. He refers to a book called *al-Shurrāb* (the Drinkers) which contains 50 chapters listing the benefits as well as the drawbacks of wine.¹⁶⁶ In this respect he is somewhat like Khayyām, the reputed author of the *Nawrūz-nāma* who, also taking his cue from medical science, lists the benefits of wine, then the drawbacks, and finally the remedies to neutralize the drawbacks.¹⁶⁷ Whereas, Khayyām is positive about wine drinking, Rāvandī concludes that despite its advantages, drinking wine is unlawful and therefore bad, because you lose your chance at redemption.¹⁶⁸ He clearly took his cue from the ‘*ulamā*’, one of whom thundered:

What do physicians, astronomers, and poets know of roots and branches (of the Law), lawful and unlawful, compared to the *ulama*? They know nothing; for if one considers even one drop of wine to be lawful he becomes an unbeliever.”¹⁶⁹

WINE DRINKING IS UNLAWFUL

Orthodox Moslems were, of course, very upset by the drinking habits of their less pious religious brethren; they do not mention their sisters. The ‘*ulamā*’ had a very simple message, wine, in fact any fermented drink, was forbidden; it was a grievous and capital sin. Even when you were not caught by the authorities your drinking would not go unpunished, because by drinking your faith was taken from you, it made you an unbeliever! This held for those who defended the position that drinking wine was lawful. Also, care should be taken to keep wine away from children. This point was probably made, because physicians prescribed wine for children in many cases. There was, of course little chance that you would be caught by the authorities, who themselves were probably too busy drinking. However, at times the authorities would clamp down and if that happened and sinners were caught the prescribed punishment was flogging. If the sinning drinker repented, however, the punishment was not executed.¹⁷⁰ Gurgānī clearly was well aware of this theological point of view:

¹⁶⁶ Rāvandī, *Rāḥat al-Ṣudūr*, p. 422.

¹⁶⁷ Nīshābūrī, *Nawrūz-nāma*, pp. 80–81.

¹⁶⁸ Rāvandī, *Rāḥat al-Ṣudūr*, p. 422.

¹⁶⁹ Meisami, *The Sea of Virtues*, p. 142.

¹⁷⁰ Meisami, *The Sea of Virtues*, pp. 80, 100–01, 104–06, 125–27, 129. In general, concerning the question of what drinks are permitted and which are not, see A.J. Wensinck, “Khamr,” *Encyclopedia of Islam*². Wine was indeed prescribed as medicine to young

Drunks sin because wine makes them ignorant;
 They should be pardoned when they're penitent.
 As sleep will close a person's weary eyes
 Wine closes sense and makes a man unwise;
 As water washes clothes, sincere repentance
 Will mitigate the guilty sinner's sentence.¹⁷¹

However, Khayyām was not so easily taken in by theological arguments and fired back, accusing the orthodox believers of hypocrisy:

How can it be that this wine that everyone drinks is banned?
 One small group goes out of its way to make it all end;
 But those who made it unlawful for the aficionado
 Drink themselves a cup of it incognito.

The *'ulamā'* did not forbid drinking beverages made from grapes, raisins, dates and other fruits as long as it did not intoxicate or impair a person's wits. If it did, then even drinking a little of it was unlawful and a punishable act. Only in one case is it permitted to drink wine or any alcoholic beverage, viz. if they threaten to kill you if you do not drink wine. There was no unanimity among the *'ulamā'* concerning the medical use of wine, which, as discussed above, was quite a normal remedy prescribed by physicians. Abū Ḥanīfa permitted its medical use, but al-Shāfi'ī considered it unlawful.¹⁷² According to Abū Ḥanīfa:

Grape juice that is boiled until it is reduced to one-third, and raisins that are boiled a little, and that what is made of barley and millet, and of honey and sugar, if it is not boiled, is lawful as long as it does not intoxicate."¹⁷³

This point of view, which was already known to the ancient Greeks, was widely accepted and quoted by court chroniclers and others.¹⁷⁴ It was ridiculed by the Shi'ite Nāṣir-i Khusraw, who scoffed at the founders of the four

children (al-Arrājānī, *Samak-i 'Ayyār*, p. 194; Faramarz, *Samak-e Ayyar*, p. 152; Nishaburi, *Nawrūz-nāma*, p. 80), against which Meisami, *The Sea of Virtues*, p. 80 warned.

¹⁷¹ Gurgānī, *Vis and Ramin*, p. 196.

¹⁷² Meisami, *The Sea of Virtues*, pp. 129, 138, 142–43; Ahsan, *Social Life*, p. 111.

¹⁷³ Meisami, *The Sea of Virtues*, p. 142.

¹⁷⁴ Rāvandī, *Rāḥat al-Ṣudūr*, pp. 418–19, 421; see also Nāṭiq, *Hāfiẓ*, pp. 239–41. Yule in his note 4 to Marco Polo. *The Travels of Marco Polo. The Complete Yule-Cordier Edition*. 2 vols. (New York: Dover Publications, 1993), vol. 1, p. 87, wrote: "According to Athenaeus, Aristotle, in his *Treatise on Drinking* (a work lost, I imagine to posterity), says, 'If the wine be moderately boiled it is less apt to intoxicate.' "

Sunni theological schools for allowing the playing of chess, drinking of wine, consuming of opium, and sodomy, respectively.

Shafe'i said: 'Playing chess is not unlawful.
Do not cheat for the Imam has ordered you to be truthful.'
But Hanifeh has even a better idea on wine:
'If it's boiled, drink it, for it is not unlawful.'
The Hanbalites say: 'If stricken with grief
Take bhang and stroll gaily!
If you follow the fourth jurist, Malek,
He will prescribe for you cohabitation with a young boy!
Take bhang, drink wine, lie with fair ones and gamble,
Truly Islam has been perfected by these four Imams!¹⁷⁵

Despite Nāṣir-i Khusraw's partisan criticism, 'boiled wine' became the wine of choice of those adherents of Islam, who wanted to continue to drink wine without going against the letter of Islamic law. Many others, of course, continued to drink unadulterated wine, but there was a tendency to go for the 'politically correct' form of wine. This may be deduced from an observation made by Marco Polo about the situation in Iran in the 1270s.

Someone may object that the Saracens [i.e. the Iranians] do not drink wine; for their law forbids it. My answer is that they gloss the text of their law thus: if wine is boiled over a fire, so that it is partly consumed and turns sweet, they are free to drink it without breach of commandment or law; for they no longer call it wine, since the change of flavour carries with it a change of name.¹⁷⁶

DRAWBACKS

Although people considered themselves Moslems, at least nominally, they nevertheless ignored the ban on drinking wine. Manūchihirī has a poem describing that to celebrate the end of Ramaḍān, the month of fasting, a binge-drinking party was held.

The Fast of Ramadan is passed, and its going is not deplored;
The Feast of Ramadan is now upon us, praised be the Lord!¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵ The poem is from Nāṣir Khusraw's *Divan* and the translation is by Hasan Javadi, *Satire in Persian Literature* (Cranbury, 1988), pp. 70–71.

¹⁷⁶ Polo, *The Travels*, vol. 1, p. 84.

¹⁷⁷ Manūchihirī, *Dīvān*, pp. 77–78.

During the early period of Islamic rule ‘real men’ drank strong wine all day and/or night long and scoffed at the notion that the wine should be watered down. This is clear, for example, from what perhaps is the earliest ‘wine song’ in Persian, a poem composed by ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad al-Junaydī, which is about the culture of wine drinking.

At dawn quaff a draught from the flagon of wine,
By the crow of the cock and the lute’s plaintive whine.
When the sun lifts its head o’er the top of the hill,
He were best put to blush by the cup and the vine.
From the cup to the couch at the fall of night time,
From the couch to the cup at the dayspring’s first sign.
As *milk* is the food that for infants is best,
So let old men their diet to *grape-milk* confine.¹⁷⁸

People drank not because they were blind or ignorant to the drawbacks of drinking. Niẓāmī-yi Ganjavī, for example, in one of his aphorisms points out that there is a price to pay when you drink:

Though wine takes away the grief of the world
O master, don’t take that which takes away reason.

He therefore counseled the prospective and current drinkers to think twice before doing so, because:

Although wine is praised by many
Let reason keep you from taking any.¹⁷⁹

Accepting the reality of drinking, Kai Kā’ūs nevertheless wants to make his son understand that there are negative sides to drinking. Like the professor teaching Pharmacology 101, who tells his students that there are no poisons, only the dosage of any given substance makes it into a poison, Kai Kā’ūs writes: “Everything consumed, whether it be food or drink, becomes poison if taken in excess.” So it is also with wine. “You must know how to drink, for it is a poison if you do not know how it should be drunk, whereas it is a physic against poison if you do know.”

Your antidote for thirst is none the less

¹⁷⁸ Jackson, *Early Persian Poetry*, p. 29, who in a note comments that “there is a pun in the Persian *shir*, ‘milk,’ and *shirah*, ‘new wine’ (milk of the grape).” For the Persian text, see ‘Awfī, *The Lubābu’l-albāb*, vol. 2, p. 23.

¹⁷⁹ Niẓāmī, *Hikmat va nasihatlar*. According to Gurgānī, *Vis and Ramin*, p. 182, “Wine weakened wisdom in their monarch’s head.”

A poison when you use it in excess.¹⁸⁰

That this idea was shared by many is indicated by the fact that similar appreciation is voiced by Gurgānī:

When we're replete with drink, and crapulous,
Even the best wine can taste poisonous.¹⁸¹

Kai Kā'ūs to channel his sons drinking habits counsels him not to drink wine immediately after a meal, but to drink first water and beer. Only when after three hours he is really thirsty, only then he should drink wine, if he really had to. Kai Kā'ūs like his contemporaries wants to reinforce his argument by using the insights of science. He submits that given the physiology of the body that needs seven hours to digest wine and food, the best time to start drinking is after the recitation of the afternoon prayers. For by the time his son would be drunk it was night and nobody would notice that he was drunk. Kai Kā'ūs was much concerned with decorum and good name, therefore, he advises his son to drink only inside his own house, not in orchards or gardens, and never when traveling. Also, he counsels never to drink to excess; always know when to stop, when you still can have a glass or two before you become intoxicated. In that state you do not know what you are doing; moreover,

drunks are madmen and suffer from crapulence. Why drink such that you either fall ill or become mad?"¹⁸²

Despite the fact that wine drinking was an unlawful act and that there were urban officials (*muhtasib*, *shahna*) who were supposed to see to it that the ban was respected, wine drinking was seldom punished. Khayyām actually questioned the ethics of punishing wine drinking by posing the question, who did more harm?

O inspector of the city we are more awake than you
Despite being drunk we are smarter than you;
You drink people's blood, we that of the vines
Let us be honest, who is blood-thirstier?

¹⁸⁰ Kai Kā'ūs, *A Mirror*, p. 58. The same point is made by Abū Shukūr al-Balkhī (915–960s), see Lazard, *Les premiers poètes*, p. 123, line 377.

¹⁸¹ Gurgānī, *Vis and Ramin*, p. 371. A similar allusion is made by Ma'rūfī, one of the earliest poets using new Persian as his medium, see Lazard, *Les premiers poètes*, p. 131, line 23.

¹⁸² Kai Kā'ūs, *A Mirror*, pp. 58–59.

Nevertheless, there are cases when the authorities are reported to have clamped down on drinking. The *muḥtasib* of Ghazna allegedly gave 40 lashes to ‘Alī Nūshtegīn, one of Sultan Mas‘ūd’s top generals, who after a night of carousing left the palace to go home in a drunken state and was dragged off his horse in the bazaar.¹⁸³ Ḥasan-i Ṣabāḥ, the Ismaili ruler of Alamūt had banned drinking wine in his realm. When one of his sons was suspected of drinking wine he had him executed.¹⁸⁴ However, in the mid-twelfth century the drinking ban was lifted by his grandson. He allegedly was a libertine and justified his drinking by declaring that drinking wine would hasten the arrival of the Imam.¹⁸⁵ Ismā‘īl b. Imām Ja‘far was excluded from the succession because of the accusation that he drank wine.¹⁸⁶

CONCLUSION

Apart from the ‘*ulamā*’ and orthodox Moslems, wine drinking was not viewed as a negative activity by society in general prior to the Mongol invasion. In fact, people did not seem to see the contradiction between being a Moslem and wine drinking. For example, after stating that Sultan Maḥmūd of Ghazna was a pious and devout man, Niẓāmī then continues relating the story of his incessant drinking without seeing, or at least without making a problem of, the conflict between the two statements.¹⁸⁷ Likewise, Bayhaqī, a moderate drinker himself, is aware of the negative side of drinking to which he draws attention, but he never mentions that it is a religious unlawful activity! The same also held for inveterate drinkers such as Sultan Mas‘ūd, who saw no irony in the fact that he interrupted his drinking to pray.¹⁸⁸ He nevertheless, had the occasional moment that he repented his drinking. At one such moment, he ordered all wine to be dumped in the river Jalim and to break the music instruments.¹⁸⁹ However, such moments did not last long and soon thereafter the binge drinking started again, not without forgetting to pray, of course. A similar attitude is presented by ‘Umar Khayyām, the pre-

¹⁸³ Niẓām al-Mulk, *The Book of Government*, pp. 47–48, for another case involving a young man in Baghdad during the reign of al-Ma’mūn, see *Ibid.*, p. 138

¹⁸⁴ Juwaynī, *The Tārīkh-i-Jahān-gushā*, vol. 3, pp. 210; 225.

¹⁸⁵ Juwaynī, *The Tārīkh-i-Jahān-gushā*, vol. 3, pp. 225, 228.

¹⁸⁶ Juwaynī, *The Tārīkh-i-Jahān-gushā*, vol. 3, p. 145.

¹⁸⁷ Niẓāmī ‘Arūẓī *Les Quatres Discours*, pp. 77–79

¹⁸⁸ Bayhaqī, *Tārīkh*, pp. 503, 541.

¹⁸⁹ Bayhaqī, *Tārīkh*, pp. 429, 533.

sumed author of the *Nawrūz-nāma*. In the chapter entitled ‘Relation concerning the benefit of wine’ (*ḥikāyat andar manfa‘at-i sharāb*) there is no reference whatsoever to religious tenets. The author takes the scientific approach and observes that all leading physicians have argued that drinking wine is good for the body. Certainly, there are negative sides to drinking, but for each negative aspect case there is a remedy.¹⁹⁰

What was viewed negatively, however, was incapacitating alcoholism, in particular when this was shown in public.¹⁹¹ Indeed, this is the worry of Niẓāmī-yi Ganjavī¹⁹² and Niẓām al-Mulk. The latter advises his king, Malik-shāh, when sending an ambassador to another ruler to instruct him to establish whether when that

king [is] in his cups [is] jovial and good-natured or not.¹⁹³

For that behavior would signal something about the character of that king and how trustworthy he would be in his dealing with others. A similar worry about decorum is also strong in the thinking of Kai Kā’ūs. He does not mind that his son drinks, but he should be discreet. He should do it at home, and in the afternoon, so that the effects of alcohol are not very noticeable.

Also, do not drink on Thursday night, for Friday and Saturday are sacred days. If you do not drink on Fridays men will accept your drinking the rest of the week. Thus you will achieve reward in the next world and good report will be yours in this world.”¹⁹⁴

There was change in the air, however. Rāvandī following religious precepts points out that drinking wine is a sin and that means endangering your soul. He therefore wants to find a balance between religious requirements and the need of the ruler to drink by pointing out that Abū Ḥanīfa allowed drinking boiled wine that was reduced to one-third of the original quantity. In this way Rāvandī hoped to have found the golden middle path. It may well be, for that reason, that much of the wine that was drunk during this period was this boiled version of it. At the Sāmānid and other courts so-called *siyikī*, the Persian synonym of *muthallath*, was drunk, meaning a wine that had been

¹⁹⁰ Nīshābūrī, *Nawrūz-nāma*, p. 80.

¹⁹¹ Spuler, *Iran in früh-islamischer Zeit*, p. 514.

¹⁹² Niẓāmī, *Le Roman*, p. 18.

¹⁹³ Niẓām al-Mulk, *The Book of Government*, p. 99; see also *Ibid.*, p. 47 where a drunken general is advised to remain in the palace rather than go outside.

¹⁹⁴ Kai Kā’ūs, *A Mirror*, p. 60.

reduced by boiling to one-third of its volume.¹⁹⁵ However, in general it would seem that strong wine or *sharāb-e girānī* was still drunk, because among the elite the purpose of drinking was to get intoxicated. Moreover, in particular among the military and political elite, the commitment to Islam was as yet skin-deep and they were not ready to abandon their unlawful pleasures. In this they only followed Rustam's example when he was Isfandiyār's guest and was served strong wine to make him loose-lipped.

The boy refilled it with a royal vintage, and Rustam said to him quietly, "There's no need to dilute it with water, it takes the edge off an old wine. Why do you put water in it?"¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁵ Anonymous, *Tārīkh-i Sistan*, p. 316; al-Nizāmī al-'Arūzī 1341, p. 59; Manūchihrī, *Dīvān*, pp. 131, 145, 153; Rāvandī, *Rāḥat al-Ṣudūr*, p. 421; Mas'ūd-i Sa'd, *Dīvān*, pp. 794 (*sih yak āyad*), 898; Sanā'ī, *Dīvān*, p. 257. *Siyakī* or properly *sih-yakī* is written in the texts as سیکی.

¹⁹⁶ Ferdowsi, *Shahnameh*, p. 394.

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