The Caucasian Centre for Iranian Studies in Yerevan has recently received an approximately 18th century untitled manuscript on folk magic as a donation from Mr. Neematollah Imani, an Ahl-i haq Dervish living in Kermanshah. The manuscript (Archive N 441-22), according to Mr. Imani, was written in one of the rural centres of Kermanshah and had for long remained in the possession of a fortune-teller (jalbān). The donator is convinced that it may be dated to the end of the 18th century, as the story of the manuscript says; the text itself is without any date.

The manuscript consists of 376 folios; the size of each page is 10/15 cms. The text in black ink, with sporadic interpolations in red, is written by a skilled hand in cursive, with discernable letters, although not always easily readable. It has a very old worn leather cover-binding in the form of a purse supplied with a thin hanging sling.

The book, as it is obvious from the content and its outer attributes, seems to be a practical manual for a wandering fortune-teller - jalbān - or a Dervish. It represents mostly a collection of Suras and Ayas of the Qur'an supposed to be quoted in amulets or to be recited during magic procedures. The Arabic citations from the Holy Scripture are intermingled with recipes on various magic manipulations in Persian: preparation of talismans against evil eye and witchcraft, protecting measures, remedies for healing diseases (e.g. headache, impotence, sterility of women), preventive incantations for averting misfortunes, etc. The manuscript is a real encyclopaedia of folk magic; descriptions of various forms of magic and their accessories, samples of charms and amulets on different forms of apotropaic and love magic, recipes of folk medicine accompanied by magic actions, etc. considerably enhance our knowledge of Iranian folk magic after B.A. Donaldson's "The wild rue", H. Massé's "Croyance et coutumes persans" (both published in 1938) and minor publications on this aspect of the Iranian culture like Sadeq Hedayat's "Neyrangestan", for example.

Almost all pages of the manuscript have regular marginal notes in Arabic, again with Qur'ānic citations and magic prescriptions in Persian, and, in very rare cases - in Turkish.

The language of the Persian text is quite literary and even archaic, except for certain discrepancies in the sequence of tenses due to misuse of verbal forms. As an archaic lexical form we would mention, e.g., kayd (or ked) "witchcraft, magic action", cf.:

i.e.: All kinds of magic procedures, ruse and witchcraft, which have been practiced or being committed against the owner of this body, I have cancelled (p.236).

The word kayd is mainly attested as an Arabic form in old farhangs, as well as in
Early Classic New Persian literature (e.g. Rudaki, Naser-Khosrou), with the meaning “ruse, craft, guile, etc.”. However, it is a genuine Iranian form and has a good representation in the Old and Middle Iranian texts, cf. *kaecta* in Avesta, *câya* in Khotan Saka, *cytk* /čet/ in Sogdian, *kët* in Pahlavi, *kydtg* /kedig/ in Manichaean Parthian, etc. (see for full citations with etymology: H.W. Bailey. *Iranian ket “foreteller” and related words*. - Acta Iranica - XVI, pp. 5-9).

The “Manual” contains also a number of very interesting amulet samples and charms for various purposes with their interpretations. Certain elements of magic drawings for the talismans remind one sometimes of the characters of the Pahlavi script.

Some of these amulets are given below.

*He, who eats the roasted testicle of a black cat, can never be satisfied by intercourse, (and) who copies this talisman and binds it to his right hand, the enemies of him will be cast down (pp. 145-146).*

*He, who writes down this talisman and takes it with him, will acquire respect among the people, and if he copies this talisman and puts it into the gulâb (rose-water), adds sugar and gives to a married couple to eat, their love (towards each other) will increase (like that of) Joseph and Zuleikha, (and they) will not be separated until Doomsday, (and) if (anyone) puts (the talisman) into rose-water and sprinkles it in the four corners of the house, his bound fortune will be opened and he will flourish. And if one copies this talisman and puts into a vessel and rubs (with it) his eyes, he will remain respected and sweet (pp. 194-196).*