



AḲLĀQ-E JALĀLĪ

AḲLĀQ-E JALĀLĪ, also known as *Lawāme' al-ešrāq fi makārem al-aḳlāq*, an “ethical” treatise in Persian by Moḥammad b. As'ad Jalāl-al-dīn Davānī (Davvānī), dedicated to the Āq Qoyunlū Uzun Ḥasan and written for his son Sultan Ḳalīl. It was possibly ten years in the making (872-82/1467-77), though its character would not seem to justify so sustained an effort. It is the second major mark in the main line of succession after Naṣīr-al-dīn Ṭūsī's *Aḳlāq-e Nāṣerī* and shows a far closer adherence to the latter's general plan and line of argument than does the third, the *Aḳlāq-e Moḥsenī*. Indeed, it often copies significant statements verbatim from its predecessor. At the same time, it is not really a serious treatise, deriving from any sort of immediate background of philosophical and scientific activity, but rather a work of a character designedly elegant and mildly edifying. Its preoccupation with style, its arbitrary arrangement of material, its paraphrases, abbreviations, and omissions, and its additions of anecdotes, allusions, and instances—all these do such harm to the original scheme as to make the line of argument itself difficult to follow in places. Largely, no doubt, because of its popularity in India (where, like the *Aḳlāq-e Moḥsenī*, it became a standard text in the educational system right up to the end of British rule), it was the first major ethical treatise in Islam to come to Western notice. It was through the *Aḳlāq-e Jalālī* that most Western scholars knew and judged its great predecessor, the *Aḳlāq-e Nāṣerī*, rather than from direct contact with that work itself. In view of the general significance of Islamic ethical, social and political ideas, whether at the level of the purely practical or the largely abstract, this reliance on “tales retold for popular consumption” must clearly be condemned and rectified. At



least it is essential to recognize the *Aklāq-e Jalālī* for what it is and is not. A further obstacle to clarity of understanding in such matters is that the Western translation of this work in virtually exclusive use by all scholars (W. F. Thompson, *Practical Philosophy of the Muhammadan People*, Oriental Translation Fund, London, 1839) is itself an extraordinary tour de force of typical early 19th-century English quasi-learned writing. In an elaborate and archaic style, it reads like a work of amateur philosophizing by a rural parson. Its approach is eclectic, arbitrary and culture-bound; and it sets out to prove the essential universality of ethical thinking on the classical Greek model, while suppressing or rearranging whatever the translator judges unimportant or inappropriate to his purpose. Within the same threefold division as that adopted by Ṭūsī, though the latter’s “discourses” (*maqālāt*) significantly become “flashes” (*lawāmeʿ*, of illuminist inspiration? Cf. alternative title), the major discrepancies in overall arrangement are as follows: Flash One has ten subsections instead of seventeen; essentially what is omitted is the whole of Ṭūsī’s First Division, in which he lays the broad theoretical basis for his subsequent argument. In addition, at the end, are appended testamentary injunctions attributed to Aristotle. Moreover Thompson’s translation introduces further variations on Davānī’s structure, e.g., Flash One is reduced to eight subsections from ten, and part of the fifth subsection is transferred to the end. See also [Aklāq](#).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The work has often been copied in manuscript, lithographed, and printed, both in Iran and India; but no really scholarly edition has been published.

A commonly used edition for many years (now out of print) was that of M. K. Šīrāzī, made under the supervision of W. G. Grey, Calcutta, 1911.

Thompson’s translation was reprinted in Lahore, 1895, but is again long since out of print.

See also *EI*² II, p. 179.