



AKLĀQ-E MOḤSENĪ

AKLĀQ-E MOḤSENĪ (less commonly known as *Jawāher al-asrār*), an ostensibly serious treatise on ethics by the prolific prose-stylist Kamāl-al-dīn Ḥosayn Wāʿeẓ Kāšefī, completed in 900/1494-95 and titled after Abu'l-Moḥsen, the son of his patron Sultan Ḥosayn Mīrzā Bāyqarā. (The translation of the title as *Morals of the Beneficent* seems to be based on both a misunderstanding of the Persian and ignorance of the historical circumstances of composition). Reckoning from Naṣīr-al-dīn Ṭūsī's *Aklāq-e Nāṣerī*, this work is the third in the main line of succession of medieval Persian writing on ethical subjects; it represents a far more thoroughgoing popularization than does the second, the *Aklāq-e Jalālī*. Ṭūsī's original complex structure here dissolves into forty loosely strung chapters, with the virtually total loss of the important material on economics and politics. Moreover, the closeknit, learned discourse of the original is much lightened and abbreviated, and interspersed with some 120 major anecdotes and many minor ones. Indeed, there can be little doubt that the primary purpose of this work is merely general edification and entertainment in the tradition of, e.g., Sa'dī's *Golestān*, though it is not to be compared to the latter in skill of craftsmanship. In its turn, it gave rise to a whole line of imitative successors, particularly in India; and it was much used as an examination text in the Indian Civil Service and the Higher Education syllabus during the period of British rule. Typical chapter headings include: devotion, sincerity, gratitude, fortitude, contentment, trust in God, modesty, chastity, resolution, justice, forgiveness, pity and mercy, generosity and charity, keeping one's word, truthfulness, deliberation and good management, courage, jealousy, alertness and awareness, reading character, keeping



secrets, opportunism, keeping bad characters at bay, the training of servants.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The work has been hand-copied, lithographed, and printed innumerable times in Iran, India and elsewhere. None of the editions is really critical, and some are arbitrarily selective in their use of the material. A well-known one by H. G. Keene, bearing the mistitle referred to above, appeared in Hertford, England, in 1823 and 1850. A more modern one, now out of print, came out in Tehran 1328 Š./1949. The work has been translated, wholly or in part, into Urdu (an early 19th-century version was republished by the University of Delhi in 1966) and other Islamic languages. The best known English version was that by H. G. Keene, Hertford, 1851. It is somewhat abbreviated and bears the prevalent mistitle. Long since out of print, and with a rather obscure publishing history, sections of it have formed the basis for a number of more recent Indian renderings into English, none of them complete in itself, and all now also out of print. Despite its popularity, the *Aklāq-e Moḥsenī* has in fact never received really serious study. At the same time, since this sort of work is at present of limited appeal, both within the culture of its origin and to Western scholars of Islamic civilization, it seems unlikely that good editions or studies will emerge in the foreseeable future. Mošār, *Fehrest* I, cols. 137-38.