



## AḲLĀQ-E NĀŞERĪ

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**AḲLĀQ-E NĀŞERĪ**, by Ḳvāḡa Naşīr-al-dīn Ṭūsī, the principal treatise in Persian on ethics, economics, and politics, first published according to the author in 633/1235. It is based, particularly in its First Discourse, on the Arabic *Tahḏīb al-aḳlāq* of Ebn Meskawayh (d. 421/1030); but it transcends that work both in scope and in arrangement and treatment of individual topics. Since Ṭūsī was a serious thinker and scientist, his work—though designedly popular in character—bears no comparison with the adaptations made from it by later writers, largely for entertainment (see *Aḳlāq-e Jalālī* and *Aḳlāq-e Moḡsenī*). The edification he offers is more seriously based, and there is virtually nothing in the way of anecdote. There has been considerable discussion of the circumstances under which this work was composed and then possibly reworked. Ṭūsī alludes to his in some measure enforced service with the Isma‘ilis and his “rescue” from them by the Mongols; but this reference would seem to cover a revised preface and dedication rather than the substantive text itself. The question of his genuine allegiance to Isma‘ili doctrines, and the extent to which these show through at places in any version of the text, is still very much open to argument. The style is somewhat heavy and involved, with a marked Arabic component, but in no way mannered or artificial; not only is Ṭūsī in full control of his construction, but in the non-technical passages he can often be attractive and even lyrical. The work offers a well balanced overview of the main moral and intellectual positions of Islamic civilization at one of its peaks. It is a skilful blending of the Greek philosophical and scientific tradition with the Islamic view of man, society, and the universe; and the resulting synthesis represents a subtle transcending of both. As with virtually



all high-culture writing in traditional Islam, it is a work of theory, idealistic and normative in approach, and throwing light only indirectly (if at all) on actual circumstances at any point. The work is divided into a preamble, consisting of an exordium, an account of the circumstances of composition, prolegomena, and a scheme of argument; and three discourses:

First Discourse, on ethics, in two divisions: principles and ends. Principles: elementary principles; the human or rational soul; its faculties; man, the noblest being; the soul's perfection and deficiency; wherein its perfection lies; good, felicity, and perfection. Ends: limit, nature and alterability of disposition; correction of dispositions (*tahdīb-e aklāq*), the noblest discipline; classes of virtues and excellences of dispositions; species within these classes; types of vices; virtues and pseudo-virtues; justice, noblest of all; acquisition of virtues and degrees of felicity; preserving the health of the soul; treating its sickness.

Second Discourse, on economics: households in general; regulation of property and stores; regulation of wives; regulation of children; rights of parents; government of servants and slaves.

Third Discourse, on politics: need for civilization and nature of politics; on love, connector of societies (perhaps the most remarkable section in the whole work); the divisions of societies and the conditions of cities; government of retainers and manners of royal followers; friendship and friends; behavior towards the different classes of mankind; testaments attributed to Plato.

See also [Aklāq](#).

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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A critical edition by M. Mīnovī and 'A. R. Ḥaydarī (Tehran, 1356 Š./1978) appeared shortly before the revolution; none of the many previous editions in Iran and other areas within the Persian cultural sphere meets any scholarly criteria.

The treatise has been translated into Arabic and other Islamic languages.



The only complete translation into a Western language is G. M. Wickens, *The Nasirean Ethics*, London, 1964 (Persian Heritage Series).

This version has a full introduction, notes, and index, and could serve as the basis for a critical edition.

Further see J. Homā'ī, "Moqaddema-ye qadīm-e Aqlāq-e Nāṣerī," *MDAT* 3/3, 1335 Š./1956, pp. 17-25.

W. Ivanow, *Taṣawwūrāt*, Leiden, 1950, pp. xxiv-xxvi (for a discussion of Ṭūsī's position in respect of Isma'īlism).

M. Modarresī Zanjānī, *Sargodašt o 'aqā'ed-e K̄vāja Naṣīr-al-dīn Ṭūsī*, Entešārāt-e Dānešgāh-e Tehrān, no. 309, 1335 Š./1956, particularly pp. 125-30: consult also nos. 296, 298, 300, 302, 304-08, and 311 (as well as several articles in *MDAT*), published following the septcentenary year of Ṭūsī's death, i.e. 1372/1952-53 for Ṭūsī studies of varying relevance to the present work.