



ANWĀR-E SOHAYLĪ

ANWĀR-E SOHAYLĪ, a collection of fables by the Timurid prose-stylist Ḥosayn Wāʿeẓ Kāšefī. Written under the patronage of Sultan Ḥosayn Mīrzā Bāyqarā, it was titled after his vizier and commander, Aḥmad Sohaylī, though there is also of course a pun on *Sohayl*, the brilliant star Canopus. Its precise date is uncertain, but it must be approximately contemporary with the author's other main work, *Aḳlāq-e Moḥsenī*, about the end of the 9th/15th century. In form, as Kāšefī recognizes in the introduction, it represents yet another stage in the evolution (one might also say debasement) of the ethical treatise; the argument is trivialized, the style inflated, and there are numerous, often wearisome, anecdotes. Historically it belongs to a different and more specific tradition: It is the most important Persian reworking of the Indian-Middle Eastern cycle of mirror-for-princes fables known at different periods and places and in various recensions as the *Pañcatantra*, *Kalīla wa Demna*, and the *Fables of Bidpay* (Pilpay). (For a good, concise account of their history, see C. Brockelmann, "Kalīla wa-Dimna," *EI*² II, pp. 503-06).

Kāšefī himself acknowledges his debt to the earlier recensions, particularly the Arabic of Ebn al-Moqaffaʿ (executed 140/757) and the Persian of Abu'l-Maʿālī Naṣrallāh (written ca. 539/1144). Explaining the purposes and principles of his reworking, he claims that he is not only beautifying and reorganizing the latter work in accordance with the tastes of his own day, but also rendering it more easily intelligible. As modern Persian critics (notably ʿA. Qarīb Garakānī, ed., *Kalīla wa Demna*, Tehran, 1311 Š./1932, and M. T. Bahār, *Sabkšenāsī* II, 1337 Š./1958, pp. 252-53) have pointed out, the original form and style of Abu'l-



Ma'ālī's text is lost, but what is reflected in later manuscripts, as well as general knowledge of literary history, would suggest that it was far more elegant, natural, and economical than the version of Kāšefī.

The work consists of fourteen chapters: (1) on avoiding calumniators, slanderers, and people with ulterior motives; (2) on the punishment of evildoers and their disgraceful end; (3) on the benefits of agreement between friends and the advantages of mutual aid; (4) on observing the doings of enemies and not being complacent about their machinations; (5) on the dangers of carelessness and failing of one's purpose; (6) on the dangers of haste in affairs; (7) on vigilance and prudent dispensation, and how, by stratagems, to escape harm from foes; (8) on guarding against the malevolent and not trusting in their hypocritical pretenses; (9) on the virtue of forgiveness, the finest quality in rulers and holders of power; (10) on rewarding actions by just requital; (11) on the danger of seeking too much and failing in one's purpose; (12) on the virtue in rulers of clemency, gravity, calm, and composure; (13) on how kings should avoid discourse with perfidious and treacherous people; (14) on not paying attention to the vicissitudes of time but rather basing one's actions on God's disposition. Distributed rather unevenly throughout the chapters are just over one hundred major stories, the exact number varying slightly from version to version.

The extremely complex history of the parent and cognate cycles (which belong largely outside Persian literature and often outside Islamic culture altogether) cannot be discussed here. But the present work itself has generated numerous adaptations and translations, particularly in India. Given the time and place of its appearance, and the style and approach these implied, it was inevitable that its principal popularity, over the last four centuries, should lie in the Indian rather than the strictly Iranian cultural milieu. In 996/1588 the emperor Akbar commissioned his vizier Abu'l-Faẓl to produce a less pretentious and more concise version of Kāšefī's work, one that restored earlier passages omitted by him as irrelevant. Entitled *Īār-e dāneš*, it has so far been published only in Urdu translation. Like other popular *aklāq* works, *Anwār-e sohaylī* was a standard examination text in the Indian Civil Service and the Indian Army during the days of British rule.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

In full or in part, the text has been hand-copied, lithographed, and printed innumerable times, particularly in India. None of the editions is of scholarly caliber, though several of the manuscripts are superbly illustrated. Notable editions are Hertford, England, 1851, ed.

J. W. J. Ouseley; Calcutta, 1916; Berlin, 1301 Š./1922 (repr. Tehran, 1341 Š./1962). All are difficult to find. Together with many of the other texts in the cycle, the present work has been translated several times into most Middle Eastern and western languages, particularly Urdu and English.

The best-known English versions are those of E. B. Eastwick, *Anvár-i Suhaili or The Lights of Canopus*, Hertford, 1854, and A. N. Wollaston, London, 1877 (both long since out of print; at the present day such literature is so unfashionable in both east and west that serious attention is most unlikely).

Several early French translations, often rendered into other western languages, are in fact based on Turkish versions rather than the original Persian.