



'AWFĪ, SADĪD-AL-DĪN

'AWFĪ, SADĪD-AL-DĪN (NŪR-AL-DĪN, or JAMĀL-AL-DĪN) MOḤAMMAD B. MOḤAMMAD B. YAḤYĀ B. ṬĀHER B. 'OTMĀN BOḶĀRĪ ḤANAFĪ, an important Persian writer of the late 6th/12th and early 7th/13th centuries. The little that we know about 'Awfī's life comes mainly from his own writings. He appears to have been born around the middle of the second half of the 6th/12th century. His birthplace was Bukhara according to all the sources except Ferešta (I, p. 117), who gives Nīšāpūr. 'Awfī claimed direct descent from 'Abd-al-Raḥmān b. 'Awf, a companion of the Prophet Moḥammad, whom he mentions in his *Jawāme' al-ḥekāyāt* (*Lobāb* I, p. yḥ). 'Awfī's grandfather, Qāzī Šaraf-al-dīn Abū Ṭāher Yaḥyā b. Ṭāher was a leading scholar in Transoxiana, and his maternal uncle, Majd-al-dīn Moḥammad b. Zīā'-al-dīn 'Adnān Sorḳkatī, was the personal physician (hence his title Malek-al-aṭebbā') of the Qarakhanid (Ilek-khanid) ruler of Transoxiana, Sultan Qīlīč Ṭamḡāč Khan Ebrāhīm b. Ḥosayn; he also wrote poetry and was the author of two books, one of which was on the history of the Qarakhanids (*ibid.*, I, pp. 44, 178-181, 300-01, 337-38).

After finishing his preliminary studies at Bukhara, 'Awfī traveled extensively in Transoxiana, Khorasan, and India, visiting Samarkand, Āmū, K̄vārazm, Marv, Nīšāpūr, Herat, Asfezār, Esfarāyīn, Šahr-e Now (between Astarābād and K̄vārazm), Sajestan, Farāh, Ġaznīn, Lahore, Cambay (Kanbāyat), Nahrwāla, and Delhi, and received permission to transmit Hadith from a number of scholars that he met. He also preached sermons and conducted *dekr* sessions. The long list of his teachers and mentors include Imam Borhān-al-eslām Tāj-al-dīn 'Omar b. Mas'ūd b. Aḥmad (of the politically influential Borhān family, see [Āl-e](#)



Borhān), Imam Rokn-al-dīn Mas‘ūd b. Moḥammad Emāmzāda, and Shaikh Majd-al-dīn Šaraf b. Mo‘ayyad Baġdādī (a prominent mystic and a disciple of Shaikh Najm-al-dīn Kobrā), some of whose poems ‘Awfī has preserved, having heard them directly from him.

Apparently ‘Awfī first went to Samarkand and, through the help of his maternal uncle who was in the service of the sultan Qīlīč ʿAmgāč Khan, got an introduction to the latter’s son Solṭān-al-salāṭīn, Qīlīč Arslān Kāqān Noṣrat-al-dīn ‘Oṭmān b. Ebrāhīm, then heir apparent. Finding ‘Awfī to be learned, resourceful, and shrewd, this prince put him in charge of his correspondence office (*dīvān-e enšā*). ‘Awfī must have left Samarkand before 600/1204, because he was at Nesā in that year. In 603/1206 he was at Nīšāpūr, in 607/1210 at Asfezār, and during one of his journeys he lost all his belongings to highwaymen.

Some time after 607/1210, ‘Awfī decided, apparently after hearing the first rumors of an imminent Mongol invasion, to migrate to India. In 617/1220 he was at the court of Nāṣer-al-dīn Qabāja (a *mamlūk* of the Ghurid sultan Šehāb-al-dīn or Mo‘ezz-al-dīn Moḥammad), who was governor of Sind and Mūltān from 602/1205 to 625/1228. He stayed at Ucch, Qabāja’s capital, until 625/1228. During this period he compiled the *Lobāb al-albāb* and dedicated it to Nāṣer-al-dīn Qabāja’s vizier, ‘Ayn-al-molk Faḡr-al-dīn Ḥosayn b. Šaraf al-molk Rażī-al-dīn Abū Bakr Aš‘arī.

In 625/1258 Šams-al-dīn Iltutmiš (a *mamlūk* of the Ghurids and the architect of the slave sultanate of Delhi) put an end to Qabāja’s rule in Sind, annexing his territory to the Delhi Sultanate. ‘Awfī, who had already begun the compilation of the *Jawāme‘ al-ḥekāyāt* at the request of Nāṣer-al-dīn Qabāja, stayed with his master until the last day, but was quick to enter the service of the victorious Šams-al-dīn Iltutmiš. When he completed the work he dedicated it to the sultan Šams-al-dīn’s vizier, Neẓām-al-molk Qewām-al-dīn Moḥammad b. Abī Sa‘d Jonaydī (*Lobāb* I, pp. *yḥ-kā*). Nothing is known about ‘Awfī’s life after 625/1228 except that he must have been living in 628/1230-31, because in the *Jawāme‘ al-ḥekāyāt* he mentions an event of that year, namely the defeat of Malek Eḡtīār-al-dīn Dawlatšāh Bolkā b. Ḥosām-al-dīn (or Ġīāt-al-dīn) ‘Ewaẓ Kaḡjī, who had rebelled, and his execution by order of Iltutmiš. Moḥammad Qazvīnī maintained that ‘Awfī lived at least until 630/1232-33 (*ibid.*, p. *kb*).

‘Awfī’s surviving works are:



1. *Lobāb al-albāb*, the oldest *taḍkerat al-šo'arā'* (anthology with biographies of the poets) in the Persian language, consisting of 12 sections, apparently completed in 618/1221 (ed. E. G. Browne, 2 vols., London, 1903-06; ed. S. Nafīsī, Tehran, 1335 Š./1956). The work is important mainly for two reasons: (1) 'Awfī gives biographies and quotes verses of contemporary poets who had received him in various towns and are not mentioned in any other works; (2) he gives information, not found anywhere else, about certain poets of the Ghaznavid, Samanid, Saffarid, and Taherid periods. He is uncritical in his appraisals of the poets, being often loquacious and rhetorical. His selections are not well balanced and often show poor taste.

2. *Jawāme' al-ḥekāyāt wa lawāme' al-rewāyāt*, a collection of prose anecdotes in 4 sections, each made up of 25 chapters. In compiling this very large collection, 'Awfī took material from books on history, belles lettres, stories and reports, available data on poets and prose-writers, etc. Some of the sources which he used are lost. This compilation is not only valuable as a literary work but also has historical and other aspects of considerable importance (selections published by M. T. Bahār, Tehran, 1324 Š./1945; partial edition [sec. 1, chap. 1] by M. Nizamuddin, Hyderabad (Deccan), 1960; partial edition [sec. 3, chap. 1 and sec. 2, chap. 3] by B. Moṣaffā Karīmī, Tehran, 1352 Š./1973 and 1353 Š./1974).

'Awfī states in the *Jawāme' al-ḥekāyāt* that he completed two other works: a Persian translation of the Arabic book *al-Faraj ba'd al-šedda* by Qāzī Abū 'Alī Moḥsen b. 'Alī b. Moḥammad b. Dā'ūd Tanūkī (d. 384/994) (ref. to this tr. in sec. 4, chap. 7), and a panegyric entitled *Madā'eḥ al-soltān* in the meter and style of Sanā'ī's *Ḥadīqat al-ḥaqīqa* (ref. and quotation of two verses in sec. 1, chap. 12). Both works are lost.

'Awfī's prose style is not uniform. In the prefaces of his two surviving works and in the opening lines of the biography of each poet in the *Lobāb*, he uses the artificial, ornate style fashionable in his times, whereas in the text of the *Jawāme' al-ḥekāyāt* and some parts of the *Lobāb* he writes in a language much simpler than any normally found in works from the 6th/12th and 7th/13th centuries. 'Awfī composed other poems as well. He has inserted examples in the *Lobāb al-albāb* and the *Jawāme' al-ḥekāyāt*, and at the end of each chapter of the *Jawāme' al-ḥekāyāt* he has added a short or long verse piece by himself in praise of the vizier Neẓām-al-molk Jonaydī; these suffice to show that he lacked poetic talent.



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