



‘AYNI, KAMĀL

‘AYNI, KAMĀL (Kamol Aīnī in the Tajik orthography), Tajik literary critic (b. in Samarkand on 15 May 1928, d. in Dushanbe on 14 August 2010, Ṣadr-al-Din ‘Ayni, he was born with the birth name Kamāl-al-Din, and received his early education at home in burgeoning Soviet Russian schools (see [Education xxvii. in Tajikistan](#)). He saw early in his life the dreadful years of Stalinist purges, which affected his family, especially his maternal uncle, who was detained and sent to exile. This experience made Kamāl prudent and apprehensive for the rest of his social life. Unlike many Soviet Tajik literati who dropped the Russian suffixations at least from their pen names, Kamāl ‘Ayni often used the patronym Sadriddinovič after the Russian model, and even formulated, in retrospect, the middle name Saidmurodovič (“son of Sayyed Morād”) for his father. As a young member of the elite in the Soviet Union Kamāl ‘Ayni joined the Young Communist League (*Komsomol*), to be fully admitted to the Party in due course—at the age of 34 in his case.

After World War II, Kamāl ‘Ayni was sent to Leningrad State University to study at the Faculty of Oriental Studies, where some famed Soviet orientalists taught Persian language, literature, and history. Upon his graduation in 1949 he returned home. His family in those years were in the process of migrating from Samarkand, which now belonged to Soviet Uzbekistan, to Dushanbe, the rapidly flourishing capital city of Soviet Tajikistan. The ‘Ayni family undertook this move not only because they saw a future for themselves as litterateurs in a Persophonic milieu, but also because Ṣadr-al-Din ‘Ayni had been invited to head the [Tajikistan Academy of Sciences](#) upon its establishment in 1951.



Career. Belonging now to the first generation of ethnic Tajiks who received a higher education in Soviet Russia, Kamāl ‘Ayni began his long administrative carrier at the Tajik Academy of Sciences, serving at its various institutes and departments for decades to come. He was appointed in 1953 as the first head of Division of Manuscripts, which was then operated directly under the academy’s supreme presidium. However, this highly esteemed and influential position ended in 1955 following the death of Kamāl’s father. Subsequently he served as a senior worker at the Language and Literature Institute (1956-58) and then as the director of Textual Criticism division of the Department of Oriental Studies and Literary Works (1958-66). From 1966 to 1972, he was a senior scientific worker at the Oriental Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union, as well as the director of the Iran Division of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan. In 1980, after nearly three decades, ‘Ayni regained his original position as the head of the Manuscript Division, now a subsection of the Institute of Oriental Studies.

In the meantime ‘Ayni had joined the Union of Writers of Tajikistan in 1960 as well as the Union of Writers of the Soviet Union in the same year, and he later served on the board of directors of the former.

In Dushanbe some major works of Classical Persian were rendered into the Tajik script through teamwork. Kamāl ‘Ayni worked together with several other scholars in publication of [Abu’l-Qāsem Ferdowsi’s Šāh-nāma \(Šohnoma](#), 1st ed., 9 vols., 1964-66; 2nd ed., 9 vols., 1987-90) and ‘[Abd-al-Raḥmān Jāmi’s](#) selected works (*Muntaḳabi osori Jomī*, 8 vols., 1986-90). Moreover, in collaboration with Moḥammad ‘Āsemi, Kamāl ‘Ayni published the collective works (*kolliyāt*) of his father (*Kulliyoti Sadriddin Aīni*, 13 vols., 1958-77), as well as the trilingual illustrative volume *Kornomai Aīni/ Kār-nāma-ye ‘Ayni/ Kniga zhizni Sadriddina Aīni* (1978).

Works. As a textual and literary critic, Kamāl ‘Ayni centered his work on Persian works of the Timurid era and contiguous periods, mainly the 15th and 16th centuries. He thus published a number of essays and monographs, such as Badr-al-Din Helāli’s *Layli o Majnun* (1954), ‘Abd-al-Raḥmān Jāmi’s *Salāmān o Absāl* (1964), and Mokṭār Ġaznavi’s *Šahriār-nāma* (1964).

Until the last years of the Soviet Union, contact between Tajikistan and Iran was severely restricted under Moscow’s watch. The average Tajik academic had little if any access to the literary books and periodicals published in Tehran, and just a few Tajik scholars were mustered into Soviet scientific tours

to Iran. Privileged as he was, Kamāl ‘Ayni was an exception. He traveled frequently, almost every year, and stayed in Iran to collaborate with Persian scholars, especially with [Parviz Nātel Kānlari](#). It was in Tehran that the best-known works of Kamāl ‘Ayni’s were published, in Persian script and by the [Bonyād-e Farhang-e Irān](#). They include the critical editions of K̄āju Kermāni’s *Homāy o Homāyun* (1969) and *Gol o Nowruz* (1972, repr. 1991), [Faḵr-al-Din As’ad Gorgāni](#)’s *Vis o Rāmin* (in collaboration with Georgian scholars M. Todua and A. Gvakharia; 1970), and the 16th-century historian Zayn-al-Din Maḥmud Wāṣefi’s *Badāye’ al-waqā’e* (with Russian orientalist Aleksandr Nikolaevich Boldyrev; 1970). He also published articles in Persian periodicals such as *Soḵan* (see indices of various volumes of Iraj Afšār’s *Fehrest-e maqālāt-e fārsi dar zamina-ye taḥqiqāt-e Irāni* IV-V, Tehran, 1990-95).

In honor of his achievements in editing and publishing Persian manuscripts, Kamāl ‘Ayni was awarded in 1984 the prize of the Dr. Maḥmud Afšār Foundation given to distinguished foreign scholars.

Post-Soviet years. The fact that Kamāl ‘Ayni was not very popular among Soviet Tajik intellectuals is reflected in his exclusion from reference works, especially the Tajik encyclopedia (see [Ēntsiklopediyai sovetii tojik](#)), only to receive a short biographic entry in the encyclopedia’s supplement (vol. VIII, pp. 516 f.).

As the Soviet system slackened in its last years and came to an end in 1991, many Tajik intellectuals aspired a stance in the new political reality of independent Tajikistan. Kamāl ‘Ayni was now a staunch critic of the old regime, which he believed gave away much of the Persian-speaking lands of Transoxiana, especially his birthplace Samarkand, to the Turkic-speaking Uzbekistan, and that the Russian Soviet culture brought about deterioration of Persianate culture in Tajikistan. He made his ideas known abroad through his several trips to Europe and North America, where he would impress his Persian audience by his command of the Tajik Persian language. One such speech, delivered at Columbia University on 19 October 1992, exposed a vivid account of his early years not encountered in his writings (for a transcription of the speech, see Borjian, pp. 202-12).

Together with his friend [Moḥammad ‘Aṣemi](#), Kamāl ‘Ayni founded Payvand, a society that aimed at expanding the relationship between the newly independent Tajikistan and the rest of the Persian-speaking world. His responsibilities increased drastically after ‘Aṣemi’s assassination in 1996. Kamāl ‘Ayni was buried next to his father and Moḥammad ‘Aṣemi in Bāḡ-e



‘Ayni north of Dushanbe.

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(Habib Borjian)

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