



DEYLAMĪ, ŠAMS-AL-DĪN ABŪ ṬĀBET MOḤAMMAD

DEYLAMĪ, ŠAMS-AL-DĪN ABŪ ṬĀBET MOḤAMMAD b. ‘Abd-al-Malek ṬŪSĪ (d. ca. 593/1197), original though obscure Sufi author of the 12th century. Jāmī (*Nafahāt*, p. 355) cited him as a teacher of the 13th-century Sufi Maḥmūd Ošnohī (Landolt, p. 210) and “a great master and scholar whose teachings on the true reality of time, as set forth in his writings, are rarely found in the works of others.” Deylamī was the author of about two dozen works on a variety of philosophical, theological, and mystical topics. Except for one minor treatise that has appeared in print (*GŪāyat al-embkân fī derāyat al-makân*, wrongly attributed by Raḥīm Farmaneš to ‘Ayn-al-Qozāt Hamadānī, app. pp. 1-54), Deylamī’s works are extant in manuscript only; most important among them are two collections of his writings (Süleimaniye library, Istanbul, Şehid Ali Paşaa ms. no. 1346; Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi library, Ankara, İsmail Saib ms. no. 4120/2). Despite confusion in the sources (reflected in Brockelmann, *GAL* II, p. 207; cf. Arberry, p. 49; Böwering, p. 231), it is certain that Deylamī flourished in the second half of the 12th century and probably died in 593/1197.

Most of Deylamī’s works were written in Arabic, but a few were also written in Persian. It is difficult to establish an exact chronology of these writings because he appears to have systematically reworked many of them, including in his revisions frequent cross-references to his other treatises. It is therefore best to arrange them according to content, divided between major works and



minor treatises. The minor works are known under the following titles, listed in *Kašf al-ẓonūn* and *Kašf al-ẓonūn: Dayl: Mohemmāt al-wāšelīn*; *‘Ajā’eb al-ma’āref wa-badā’e al-ġarā’eb*; *al-Jam’ bayn al-tawḥīd wa’l-ta’zīm*; *Borhān al-maḥabba*; *Makāyed al-Šayṭān*; *Noṣrat al-mella*; *Oṣūl maḍāheb al-‘orafā*; *Ma’refat alfāz al-‘orafā*; *al-Tajrīd fī radd maqāšed al-falāsefa*; *Takjīl al-falāsefa*; *al-Azal wa’l-abad*; *al-Masā’el al-molamma*; *GŪāyat al-emkān fī derāyat al-makān*; *al-Qawl fī tafsīr al-‘elm ‘alā’l-‘aql*; *Meḥakk al-nofūs*; *al-Jāme’ le-dalā’el al-nobowwa*; *Sawāneh al-sawānehā*; and *Ketāb al-ma’ārej*.

Deylamī’s major works, all written in Arabic, include a commentary on the Qur’ān, a summary of glosses on Sufi sayings, a collection of Hadith, an epitome of Sufi ethics, a compendium of Sufi cosmology, and an abstract of Sufi theology. His Qur’ān commentary, the longest of his writings, is extant in at least eight manuscripts. One of the oldest, copied in 794/1392, bears the title *Fotūḥ al-Raḥmān fī ešārāt al-Qor’ān* (Beyazıt Umumi Kütüphanesi, Istanbul, Veliyeddin Efendi ms. no. 430). On the other copies the title is given as *Tašdīq al-ma’āref*, the title by which the author himself referred to the work in his other writings. In his introduction to the commentary Deylamī stressed the radical change in his intellectual outlook from a critical stance toward Sufism in his early writings to a favorable appreciation of Islamic mysticism at later stages of his life. The body of the work is a continuous yet eclectic commentary on selected koranic verses from all suras presented in sequence. It consists of two parallel levels of interpretive glosses on koranic phrases, specimens of Sufi sayings, and items of the author’s own explanation.

Šarḥ ketāb al-anfās, a summary of glosses on Sufi sayings, has erroneously been identified as a commentary on the teachings of Abu’l-Qāsem Jonayd (d. 298/910) and Ebn ‘Aṭā’ (d. 309 or 311/921-22 or 923-24) or as a gloss on the so-called *Ketāb al-serr fī anfās al-šūfiya*, wrongly attributed to Jonayd (cf. Sezgin, GAS, I, p. 648). In *Šarḥ ketāb al-anfās*; *‘Oyūn al-ma’āref*, his collection of Hadith; and *Ešlāḥ al-aklāq*, his epitome of Sufi ethics, Deylamī employed a similar method of quoting Sufi statements and lengthy expressions of his own views.

His compendium on Sufi cosmology, entitled *Mer’āt al-arwāḥwa šūrat al-wejāh*, is extant in two manuscripts that offer a glimpse of the scope of the revisions undertaken by the author, for one manuscript appears to represent the first and the other a revised version. The work is divided into two sections, each subdivided into chapters. It is preceded by a chart providing a sketch of Deylamī’s cosmology, depicting the universe from the highest heaven to its lowest point. The author explained this chart as the reflection of a mystical



vision in which he perceived the form and image of the invisible world as mirrors within mirrors, reflecting the nature and qualities of the spirits as if in a magnificent kaleidoscope. He defined the basic design and composition of the invisible world, explained its component parts, enumerated seven layers (*badan* “body,” *nafs* “soul,” *qalb* “heart,” *īmān* “faith,” *‘aql* “intellect,” *rūḥ* “spirit,” and *serr* “inmost being”), and described the two conduits through which spiritual energy passes from the highest spirit (*al-rūḥ al-a‘lā*) and the most hidden reality to the lower world.

In his abstract of Sufi theology entitled *Jawāher al-asrār* Deylamī tried to define the theological foundations on which he anchored the world of his visions. He declared that he changed the original title of the work, *Kašf al-ḥaqā’eq be-konh al-daqa’eq* upon divine inspiration. The work, which was completed at the beginning of September 1193, is divided into fourteen chapters composed in the scholastic style of Islamic dialectical theology, frequently proceeding by answers to rhetorical questions. Its main thrust is on the nature of the human intellect, the vision of God, the compatibility of time and space with the idea of God, and the interpretation of Islamic monotheism in mystical experience (cf. Böwering, pp. 233-35). The frequent cross-references to most of Deylamī’s other writings in Arabic and Persian seem to indicate that the work was revised by the author toward the end of his life. In his theological argumentation he relied on the *Maqālāt feraq ahl al-qebla*, a work of the Baghdad Mu‘tazilite Abu’l-Qāsem Ka‘bī Balkī, which, as Deylamī observed, the author had begun to compile in 279/892. Deylamī also included exegetical disquisitions on Qur’ān 42:11, 2:30, and 24:35, supported by quotations from the Old Testament in arabicized Hebrew.

Deylamī’s writings encompass much unpublished and original material. Although he did not equal the philosophical prominence of Yaḥyā Sohravardī (d. 587/1191), he bridged the gap in 12th-century Sufism between [‘Ayn-al-Qoḏāt Hamadānī](#) and Najm-al-Dīn Kobrā, foreshadowing ideas that emerged in the Kobrawī school and the Ḥorūfī sect. Deylamī’s arguments are frequently directed ad hominem and not free of inconsistencies. His thought is firmly based in theological reasoning and strongly permeated by visionary elements. In fact, the central purpose of his work may best be understood as providing a framework of thought for mystical vision. His writings mark a stage of transition in Sufi thought, breaking away from *karāmāt* (Sufi miracles) and legend and turning toward *wāqe‘āt* (Sufi visions) and dreams. The visionary world of the mystic is treated as totally real and fully identical with the



spiritual world of the invisible realm. The twinship and correspondence of the inner world of man and the upper world of the unseen provide the platform for Deylamī's thought on the bipolarity of divine nature, his notions of three-dimensional time and eternal space, and his stress on intuitive knowledge and direct vision of the divine.

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