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Ḵᵛāja Šams-al-Din Moḥammad Širāzi (b. Shiraz ca. 715/1315; d. Shiraz ca. 792/1390) is one of the greatest poets of Persia with perhaps a more profound effect on Persian life and culture in general than any other, not excepting such great figures as Ferdowsi, Saʿdi, and Rumi. But in spite of this enormous popularity and influence on Persian culture, details of his life are extremely sketchy, and the brief references in *taḏkera*s (anthologies with biographical sketches of the poets cited) are often unreliable or even purely fictitious (Browne, *Lit. Hist. Persia* III, pp. 271-73). This dearth of information has induced some later scholars to use Hafez's own poetry as a quarry for factual details about his own life and times, sometimes to an unwarranted degree, as will be discussed later. The earliest document to have survived is a pref-ace to his *Divān* written by a contemporary of his, who may have been called Moḥammad Golandām (text in *Divān-e Ḵᵛāja Šams-al-Din Moḥammad Ḥāfeẓ Širāzi*, ed. Moḥammad Qazvini and Qāsem Ḡani, henceforth abbreviated to Q and Ḡ, pp. *ṣab–qiā;* for these and other abbreviations, see bibliography below*)*. But even here, scholars differ on the identity of the author and the veracity of

the text (Moʿin, I, pp. 283-86; *Divan-e Ḥāfeẓ*, ed. Parviz Nātel-Ḵānlari, II, pp. 1145-47, 2nd. ed., Tehran, 1362 Š./1983, henceforth abbreviated to Ḵ.)

The sources are, however, unanimous on his name, Šams-al-Din Moḥammad, and his pen-name, "Hafez," is generally taken to refer to his knowing the Qurʾān by heart, an intimate familiarity reflected in the frequent echoes and reverberations of Koranic phrases and allusions in his poems. In his poetry he refers to some of the notables whom he addresses or praises as *kᵛāja*, and in one *bayt* he himself is referred to by the same title (Ḵ, I, *Ḡ*. 70/7). Among other titles given to him later, the most frequent is *lesān-al-ḡayb* (the Tongue of the Unseen), although in some early references, this epithet is used to describe the *divān* rather than the poet himself. Abu Bakr Ṭehrāni, for example, in his *Ketāb-e Diārbakriya*, written between 875/1469 and 883/1478 (ed. Necatí Lugal and Faruk Sümer, 2nd ed., Tehran, 1356 Š./1977, preface, pp. 5-6, text, p. 363) mentions that those Sufis blessed with wit and discrimination ("*darvišān-e bā ḏawq*") call the *divān* "*lesān-al-ḡayb*." Other writers use the epithet for both the poet and his work. Jāmi in his *Nafaḥāt al-ons* (written 881-83/1476-78) refers to the poet as both *lesān-al-ḡayb* and *tarjomān al-asrār* (Interpreter of Mysteries), another frequently used epithet (Jāmi, *Nafaḥāt*, ed. ʿĀbedi, p. 611). However, as the variations in some manuscripts of *Nafaḥāt al-ons* indicate, soon after the death of Hafez, the poet and his *Divān* assumed an almost metonymical relationship, and were used interchangeably in descriptions and arguments. This symbiosis was further consolidated by the general traditional approach to literary history and biography which has survived to the present and which ignores the distinction between the historical identity of a poet and the image of the poet as depicted and projected by himself in his poetry, the so-called "I" or persona of the poet in modern literary terms. This point, as we shall see, is of constant relevance in any study of the biography of a medieval poet.

Opinions differ on his date of birth and details of his immediate family and predecessors. Among modern scholars, Qāsem Ḡani has argued for 717/1317 as the probable date of birth (Ḡani, I, p. 354) while Moḥammad Moʿin prefers a slightly earlier date, 715/1315 (Moʿin I, pp. 110-12). Some sources, including *Āṯār-e ʿAjam* (For-ṣat Širāzi, II, p. 788) and *Taḏkera-ye meyḵāna* (*Mey-ḵāna*, ed. Golčin-e Maʿāni, p. 90) mention 791/1389 as the date of his death, but most modern scholars, including Moḥammad Qazvini (Moʿin, II, pp. 632-34) follow such earlier sources as Jāmi (*Nafaḥāt al-ons*, ed. ʿĀbedi, p. 612) and Ḵᵛāfi (*Mojmal-e faṣiḥi* III, p. 132) in preferring 792/1390.

Information about his immediate family comes either from late and unreliable

sources or is based on conjectures derived from an often overly literal reading of his poetry. Some sources refer to his father as a certain Bahāʾ-al-Din from Isfahan while others maintain that he was called Kamāl-al-Din and came from Tuyserkān (Moʿin, I, pp. 107-9). Perhaps the elegiac verses grieving the loss of a child provide the clearest allusions to his having had children. These include the famous ghazalremembering the loss of the"light of his eyes" (*qorrat-al-ʿayn*; K̲. I, *Ḡ*. 130; tr. Bell, 1995 reissue, pp. 88-89) and the short *qeṭʿa* lamenting the passing away of an offspring and referring to the gravestone (K̲, II, *Qeṭ.* 28; Browne, *Lit. Hist. Persia* III, p. 288). The latter example is perhaps more significant since the contents of a *qeṭʿa*, the usual form for topical or occasional verse, could be considered more of a versified reportage of a real event than the more opaque and timeless allusions made in a ghazal.

Hafez was born in Shiraz and died there. His proverbial attachment to his beloved city is a recurrent theme in his poetry and he refers to the town and its cherished sites and promenades like Golgašt-e Moṣalla and Āb-e Rokn-ābādin many of his poems, including the famous ghazals beginning with *Agar ān tork-e širāzi be-dast ārad del-e mā-rā* and *K̲ošā širāz o waż̤ʿ-e bi-meṭāl-aš* (K̲. I, *Ḡ.* 3; K̲, I, *Ḡ.* 274; Browne, *Lit. Hist. Persia* III, p. 291). Of his early life and schooling there, a few facts and names emerge from the account given in the Golandām preface as well as from the occasional references to names and books in the *Divān* itself. He studied the traditional curriculum of the time, Koranic sciences and Arabic (Golandām's preface in Q and Ḡ, p. *qu*; tr. Browne, *Lit. Hist. Persia* III, p. 272; Zarrinkub, pp. 20- 23) perhaps under the influence, if not the direct teaching, of such masters as Qewām-al-Din ʿAbd-Allāh Širāzi (Golandām's preface, ibid, p. *qaz*), Mir Sayyed Šarif Jorjāni, and Qāżi ʿAżod-al-Din Iji (d. 756/1355). In a famous *qeṭʿa* beginning with *be ʿahd-e salṭanat-e Šāh Šayḵ Abu Esḥāq* / *be panj šāḵs ʿajab molk-e Fārs bud ābād* (K̲. II, *Qeṭ.* 9, tr. Browne, *Lit. Hist. Persia* III, p. 276), praising five notables whose achievements brought prosperity to the land of Fārs, the poet refers to Qāżi ʿAżod-al-Din Iji and his famous manual of theology, *Ketāb al-mawāqef fi ʿelm al-kalām* (Van Ess, p. 1022; Schimmel, pp. 929-30).

HAFEZ'S CONTEMPORARIES AND PATRONS

Hafez lived in the turbulent *intermezzo* between Chingiz Khan and Tamerlane. The sack of Baghdad by the Mongols in 1258, a great milestone in Islamic history, had occurred just over half a century before his birth. The whole period was one of perennial instability with the rise and fall of petty dynasties creating social havoc and political uncertainty. But it was, at the same time, an

era of great cultural and literary achievements, producing masterpieces in different disciplines, exemplified not only in the magnificence of Hafez's poetry but also in the historical discernment of his contemporary, Ebn Ḵaldun (q.v.; 1332-1406) and his *Moqaddema* (Yarshater, p. 968).

The panegyric lines in the *Divān* reflect the political instability of the time and chart the ascendancy and decline of such local dynasties as the Inju (*Enju*; 703-58/1304-57) in Fārs, the Muzaffarids (713-95/1314-93) in Fārs, Kerman and Yazd, and the Jalayerids (736-835/1336-1432) in Iraq, Kurdistan, and Azarbaijan.

The Inju dynasty. Amir Jalāl-al-Din Masʿudšāh (d. 743/1343), one of the four sons of the founder of the Inju dynasty, Šaraf-al-Din Maḥmud (Ḡani I, pp. 5-7; Roemer, pp. 11-13) is, according to Qāsem Ḡani, the addressee in a very early and playful *qeṭʿa* by Hafez (*Ḵosrowā dād-garā baḥr-kafā šir-delā / ay jalāl-e to be anwāʿ-e honar arzāni*; Ḵ. II, *Qaṭá*. 38), in which the poet describes a dream visitation to the royal stables, where he finds his own mule, but then he teasingly confers the task of interpretation on the matchless wisdom of the patron (Ḡani, I, pp. 49-50).

It was, however, Masʿud's brother, Abu Esḥāq Inju (q.v.; 721-58/1321-57) who proved himself, in spite of his administrative ineptitude and military rashness, a great patron of learning, literature, arts, and architecture (Moʿin, I, p. 182). He was eulogized by the poet Ḵᵛāju, among others, and his execution in 757/1357 or 758/1357 by the Muzaffarid Amir Mobārez-al-Din Moḥammad (d. 765/1363) was the subject of an elegy by ʿObayd Zākāni, who had spent part of his life at his court (*Maṭlaʿ-e saʿdayn*, ed. Navāʾi, pp. 287-88). There are two chronograms of his death attributed to Ḥāfeẓ; the more likely is (*Bolbol o sarv o saman yāsaman o lāla o gol/ hast tāriḵ-e wafāt-e šah-e meškin kākol*; Ḵ, II, *Qaṭ*. 24; Ḡani, I, pp. 119-21). The other chronogram is cited in *Maṭla-e saʿdayn* (ibid).

The number of poems that Hafez allegedly devoted to Abu Esḥāq and his reign is exceeded only by those he wrote for or about Šāh Šojāʿ (Ḡani, I, pp. 96-99, 132-37). But while citing all the poems composed by Ḥāfeẓ with, supposedly, Abu Eṣḥāq in mind, Ḡani himself introduces a note of caution (ibid, p. 137, 235) and makes a distinction between those poems in which the name of the patron is specifically mentioned or strongly hinted at and those in which some general sentiment conveys some association with the life and times of a particular monarch. Two poems fall firmly in the first category, and in both Ḥāfeẓ's attitude to Abu Esḥāq can perhaps be summed up as an affectionately

melancholic celebration of human failure. Even the fresh dawn depicted at the beginning of his famous *qaṣida* in praise of Abu Esḥāq, *Sapida-dam ke ṣabā bu-ye loṭf-e jān girad* (Ḵ, II, *Qaṣ*., pp. 1034-39) soon darkens into a false dawn, and in place of uncritical praise, it is with references to the sobering effects of adversity and the merits of fortitude as opposed to impulsive recklessness with which the panegyric ends. The same sentiments occur in one of the finest of Hafez's elegiac ghazals, *Yād bād ān-ke sar-e ku-ye to-am manzel bud* (Ḵ. I, *Ḡ*. 203), usually regarded as a lament for the passing away of Abu Eṣḥāq's sparkling if transient rule (*ḵoš derāḵšid wali dawlat-e mostaʿjel bud*; *Ḡ*. 203/l.7). The outburst of laughter by the partridge, a symbol of self-delusion, merely hastens the arrival of the falcon of fate (*šāhin-e qażā*; l.8). The ghazal confirms the worst fears of the *qaṣida*, but at the same time pays homage to the memory of a happier era, a memory shared apparently by the people of Fārs as a whole (Dawlatšāh, ed. Ramażāni, p. 221).

The Muzaffarid dynasty. If Hafez's relations with the Inju brothers appear as one of unalloyed affection and concern, his references to their rivals the Muzaffarid father and son, Amir Mobārez-al-Din Moḥammad (718-765/1318-63) and Jalāl-al-Din Abu'l Fawāres Shah Šojāʿ (760-86/1359-84), are both more numerous and sub-ject to a variety of interpretations. Most sources depict Amir Mobārez-al-Din as a coarse, cruel, irascible ruler capable of "obscene curses that would make a muleteer blush." He saw no inherent contradictions between extreme piety and cruelty, pausing briefly to execute an offender before resuming his reading of the Qurʾān (Ḡani, I, pp. 186-87, for the above historical anecdotes). As already referred to, he ordered the execution of Hafez's patron, Abu Eṣḥāq, and was himself deposed and blinded by his own son and Hafez's other great patron, Shah Šojāʿ, in 759/1358. Ḥāfeẓ's lines referring to his blinding (Ḵ. II, *Qaṭ*., 18; Eqbāl, *Tāriḵ-e Moḡol*, p. 424, footnote 1, for this as well as lines by other poets) stress both the fickleness of fate and the cruelty of the victim himself. It seems that his reputation for puritanical severity had earned him the sobriquet of *moḥtaseb* (the official enforcer of public morality) from his own son, Shah Šojāʿ, who in a *robāʿi* attributed to him (Moʿin, I, p. 211) refers to his father as the town's moral policeman (*moḥtaseb-e šahr*). The same pejorative reference is apparently taken up by Hafez to refer to the hardship and hypocrisy experienced in the reign of Amir Mobārez-al-Din in contrast to the freedom and serenity of the reign of his son and the poet's patron, as in the cautionary ghazal warning against the cruelty of fate and the sharp ears of the law enforcer, which is usually taken as a comment on the stifling religiosity of his reign (*Agar če bāda*

faraḥbaḵš o bād golbiz ast/ba bāng-e čang maḵor mey ke moḥtaseb tiz ast; Ḵ. I, *Ḡ.* 42; tr. Browne, *Lit. Hist. Persia* III, p. 277). The same plea for secrecy against self-righteous bigotry is heard in another famous ghazal(*Dāni ke čang o ʿud če taqrir mikonand/panhān ḵorid bāda ke takfir mikonand*, Ḵ. I, *Ḡ.* 195), where the *moḥtaseb* joins Hafez, along with the mufti, and the shaikh in the gallery of rogues and hypocrites. Part of this uniform tenor of later historical anecdotes and the sentiments expressed in the ghazals may perhaps be the outcome of a deliberate propaganda exercise by the son to justify his cruel treatment of the father, but even the bare narrative of events shows a kernel of truth in these derogatory anecdotes and bitter memories.

The image of Shah Šojāʿ as depicted by contemporary and later historians is, in contrast, that of an urbane though at times cruel renaissance prince, learned in literary and religious sciences, a poet and man of letters himself, as well as a generous patron of learning and poetry (Kotobi, pp. 81-82; Qazvini, 1968, pp. 1-14). He is shown as an active participant in literary debates, with his own opinions on technical and rhetorical points. Thus, according to a literary anecdote in *Ḥabib al-siar*, he was the first critic to pose the question of unity in the ghazals of Ḥāfeẓ, accusing him of digressing from one theme to another, from wine to Sufism to the characteristics of the beloved, all in a single ghazal (*Ḥabib al-siar* III, p. 315; Lescot, pp. 60-61; Hillmann, p. 8). There are also instances of mutual homage through borrowings (*esteqbāl*) when Ḥāfeẓ has echoed the words and poetic conceits of the openings of Shah Šojāʿ's poems in the beginning of his own ghazals, although in one case it is not clear who wrote the original and who paid the homage (Ḵorram-šāhi, p. 11).

As Ḡani points out, most of Hafez's life as a poet was spent in the era of Shah Šojāʿ and, according to his calculations, thirty-nine out of a total of seventy allusions to contemporary rulers in Hafez are about this particular ruler (Ḡani, I, p. 355). Many of the earlier references are variations on the theme of joy or salvation after repression and hardship, contrasting the former bleak times under the father, Mobārez-al-Din, with the happy advent of the son's reign, and the removal of any need for secrecy and subterfuge (*Saḥar ze hātef-e ḡayb-am rasid možda ba guš/ke dawr-e Shah Šojāʿ ast, mey delir benuš*; Ḵ, I, *Ḡ.* 278; tr. Browne, *Lit. Hist. Persia* III, p. 279). Other ghazals mark significant moments in the patron's turbulent reign, including his triumphant return to Shiraz in 767/1366 (Ḡani, I, pp. 242-45). The long formal *qa-ṣida* in his praise (Ḵ, II, pp. 1027-30) has all the solemn grandeur and opulent imagery of a well-wrought Ghaznavid panegyric but without the note of personal affection and anxiety

detectable in the previously mentioned *qaṣida* for Abu Esḥāq Inju. Significantly, the persona of the poet only surfaces in the ultimate line of the poem.

Other rulers as well as ministers of the Muzaffarids were also referred to and praised by Hafez in his po-etry. They include the two nephews of Shah Šojāʿ: The brothers Shah Yaḥyā (789-95/1387-93; Ḡani, I, pp. 371-75) and Shah Manṣur (790-95/1388-93). The latter, according to Ḡani, held a special place in Hafez's affections (Ḡani, I, pp. 400-411). He referred to him in several ghazals and dedicated a famous *qaṣida* to him, which in some editions is classified as a ghazal (*Jawzā saḥar nehād ḥamāyel barābar-am*,Ḵ. II, *Qas*á., pp. 1039-41; Ḡani, I, pp. 403-4). Here again, in sharp contrast to the *qaṣida* for Shah Šojāʾ, the whole panegyric is in the form of a dialogue with the beloved and the end rhyme terminates in the first person singular. There are also occasional references, and panegyrics, to other rulers of local dynasties of the time, most notably the Jalayerids (Qazvini, 1944, pp. 9-10; Moʿin, I, pp. 235-74).

A number of notables and viziers of the aforementioned dynasties were also subjects of panegyrics by Hafez. One of his earliest patrons was Qewām-al-Din Ḥasan (d. 754/1353), known as Ḥāji Qewām, a vizier of Shah Abu Ḥasan Inju (Ḡani I, pp. 144-51). Hafez praises him in three early ghazals (Ḵ. I, *Ḡ.* 11; 303; 322). The ending of the last ghazal (*Če ḡam dāram ke dar ʿālam Qewām-al-Din Ḥasan dāram*, *Ḡ*. 322) is reminiscent of an elaborate anecdote recounted in *Rawżat al-ṣafā* (Mir-ḵᵛānd [Tehran] IV, p. 488), according to which Qewām-al-Din Ḥasan, shortly before his death at the siege of Shiraz, is reported to have attempted to comfort Shah Abu Ḥasan by saying that as long as he was alive all would be well with his kingdom. Hafez's half line might have been the inspiration for the anecdote, unless one adopts the less likely interpretation that it was the anecdote that inspired the ghazaland the poem is radically reinterpreted as an ironic evocation of the last days of the siege of Shiraz, with the most bitter irony reserved for the line written after the death of Qewām-al-Din Ḥasan. His death is also recorded in a chronogram by Hafez (Ḵ, II, *Qeṭ.* 27).

Ḵᵛāja Qewām-al-Din Moḥammad Ṣāḥeb-ʿayār (d. 764/1363), Shah Šojāʿ's first vizier, who was later savagely executed by him, is another notable to whom Hafez dedicated several poems (Ḡani, I, pp. 200-202), including a long *qaṣida* (Ḵ, II, *Qas*á., pp. 1031-34) and a chronogram registering his death (Ḵ, II, *Qeṭ.* 16). And finally, the last and one of the longest serving viziers and counselors of Shah Šojāʿ, Ḵᵛāja Jalāl-al-Din Turānšāh, was a favorite patron of Hafez (Ḡani, I, pp. 218, 268-77). According to Ḡani (p. 273), the poems dedicated to him are

marked by their mystical overtones, suggesting an interest in Sufism by the patron.

The lack of any substantial contemporary account of Hafez has forced his biographers to devote an inordinately large part of their research to the relationship between the poet and his patrons, with both beneficial and detrimental results. Thanks to the lingering legacy of romanticism, and its image of the ideal poet as a revolutionary free spirit in constant clash with the reactionary elements around him, there has been much anachronistic debate on whether Hafez was a time-server or a sharp-witted saboteur who used his remarkable powers of irony to dupe his gullible medieval patrons and charm the modern intelligent reader. The shortcomings of this ultimately hagiographic approach, which first creates an ideal of a poet and then attempts to find lines of poetry or apocryphal anecdotes to buttress the idealized image, need little elaboration.

On the beneficial side, the study of the possible historical references in the *Divān* has helped toward a better chronological understanding of how and when the poems were composed. Here again, as we have seen, extreme caution is needed to avoid reading too much into a text. Hafez's masterly juxtaposition of images and exempla from the mythological and ancient past with those taken from near contemporary incidents and allusions would suggest that a passing reference to a prince or a vizier need not always imply that the whole poem is a panegyric dedicated to that patron, thus establishing unwarranted grounds for the dating of the poem. Moreover, the historical evidence available from later sources such as *Ḥabib al-siar*, *Rawżat al-ṣafā*, or Dawlatšāh's *Taḏkerat al-šoʿarāʾ* are, as we have seen, often couched in terms of apocryphal anecdotes indicative of the general perception of the poet and his work in a later era and cannot be used as attested historical facts furnishing the necessary material for a modern biography of the poet (Browne, *Lit. Hist. Persia* III, p. 272). The attempt to write a conventional modern biography of a medieval poet like Hafez or Ferdowsi, in the form of a *bildungsroman* constructed out of ascertainable facts, is itself an anachronistic venture. Modern biographies of modern poets, based on myriads of external sources and first hand accounts, or even their own diaries and letters, may deepen our understanding of their poems. But to reverse the process and attempt to conjure up biographical details by over-literal interpretations of highly polished and traditional medieval poems is to pursue a chimera. What we have is a collection of poems which, in spite of variations and later reshaping,

have exerted such power and universal appeal on a whole culture that each generation has had to adjust itself to them and read them afresh. It is in the rich, long, and varied history of these succeeding responses to this timeless masterpiece that the true biography of the *Divān*,if not of its maker, may be found.

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