



ḤAMD-ALLĀH MOSTAWFI

ḤAMD-ALLĀH MOSTAWFI, historian and geographer of the Ilkhanid period (b. Qazvin, ca. 680/1281, d. ca. 744/1344). There is some disagreement over whether his name was Ḥamd or Ḥamd-Allāh (Navā'i, intro. to *Tāriḳ-e gozida*, p. yā; Homāyun-Farroḳ refers to him as Ḥomad). His mausoleum still exists in Qazvin.

Life. Mostawfi was descended from a family of Arab origin that had produced several governors of Qazvin in the 3rd/9th and 4th/10th centuries, and *mostawfis* (high-ranking financial auditors) from the Ghaznavid period onwards (*Tāriḳ-e gozida*, ed. Navā'i, pp. 794-95). His great-grandfather, Amin-al-Din Naṣr, *mostawfi* of Iraq before retiring to religious seclusion, was killed by marauding Mongols some time after the sack of Qazvin in 617/1220, an event of which he left a much-quoted description (*Zafar-nāma*, f. 512ro; Browne, III, pp. 96-98). His descendants nevertheless served prominently under the Mongols; Ḥamd-Allāh's older cousin Ḳvāja Faḳr-al-Din Moḥammad, made briefly vizier, succumbed in 689/1290 to the factional intrigues among the *divān* (q.v.) officials that were characteristic of the period (Rašid-al-Din, p. 1178; Āqṣarā'i, pp. 156-62; *Tāriḳ-e gozida*, ed. Navā'i, p. 599; *Zafar-nāma*, ff. 659vo-60ro; Aubin, pp. 38-39, 41-42). Ḥamd-Allāh's brother Zayn-al-Din was a trusted clerk (*motaṣaddi*) under Rašid-al-Din before retiring from the *divān* (*Tāriḳ-e gozida*, ed. Navā'i, p. 812) and in 711/1311 Mostawfi was himself given the governorship (*ḥokumat*) of Qazvin, Abhar, Zanjān, and Ṭāromayn by the vizier (*ibid.*, p. 609; in *Zafar-nāma*, f. 718vo; Mostawfi boasts of the accounting procedures he devised for Qazvin that won Rašid-al-Din's approval and were



adopted throughout the empire). It was at this period when, participating in the learned assemblies held by Rašid-al-Din, Mostawfi developed an interest in history and decided to write a verse chronicle from the time of the Prophet to the present, as a continuation of Ferdowsi's *Šāh-nāma* (see below).

We have no information about Mostawfi's activities in the last decades of the Ilkhanate apart from his writing, though he evidently traveled between Tabriz and Baghdad, and elsewhere, in the course of his duties (*Nozhat al-qolub*, ed. Dabirsiāqi, intro. p. xxiv).

At the time of the failure of Ṭaḡay Temür's (Ṭaḡā [Ṭogā] Timur, see CENTRAL ASIA VI) second expedition to Iraq in late 739/summer 1339, Ḥamd-Allāh was in Sāva in the service of Ḥājjī Šams-al-Din Zakariā, son-in-law of Ġiāṭ-al-Din Rašidi and vizier of Shaikh Ḥasan(-e) Bozorg Jalāyeri, trying to organize the affairs of Iraq, Fārs, and Kermān for the *divān*. Shaikh Ḥasan(-e) Bozorg's withdrawal to Baghdad after this crisis brought Mostawfi's employment to an end and he was torn between returning home and following most of the other servants of the *divān* to the apparent security of Southern Persia. After much vacillation he was persuaded to seek preferment in Shiraz, but was bitterly disappointed by his reception at the court of the Inju'id Amir Mas'ud-Šāh. Ten months later he was still in Shiraz when internecine strife broke out between Mas'ud-Šāh and his brother Solṭān-baḡt, the latter supported by Pir Ḥosayn Čupāni (see CHOBANIDS), who, however, treacherously murdered him a fortnight after their triumph. In the rampage that followed, Mostawfi's goods and cattle were plundered. Pir Ḥosayn was then driven out and Mas'ud-Šāh returned to Shiraz to resume his tyranny (for these events see also Ebn-e Zarkub, p. 105). Mostawfi's remaining possessions, including fourteen thoroughbred horses, some camels and other beasts of burden, were all seized. Mostawfi recognized that prolonging his stay was pointless and having written to K̄vāja Qawām-al-Din Sāvaji for assistance, he returned north. He was well received in Isfahan, Kāšān, Qom, Āva and Sāva, and finally returned to Qazvin after an absence of a year and a half, towards the end of 1340. The upheavals in his life throughout this time were expressed in a number of poems. Sickness, or perhaps world-weariness, followed, and recovery came only after sympathetic inquiries from an anonymous benefactor (presumably Ḥasan(-e) Bozorg). He went to see him and was reinstalled in his former post (*Dayl-e Zafar-nāma*, pp. 451-59, Russian tr. pp. 111-21; Homāyun-Farroḡ, pp. 49-53). At this time, he must have completed his *Nozhat al-qolub* (see below).

No more biographical information is recorded; the last date mentioned in the



Dayl-e Zafar-nāma is ʿDuʿl-qaʿda 744/Spring 1344, soon after which the chronicle breaks off uncompleted. At this time Mostawfi was about 64, and may have died soon afterwards. The date usually given for his death, 750/1350, is speculative.

Ḥamd-Allāh is said to have been a “convinced Shiʿah” (*Nozhat al-qolub*, ed. Le Strange, preface, p. ix; cf. Spuler) and there is certainly abundant evidence of Shiʿite sympathies in his work (e.g. in detailing the lives of the Twelve Imams in the *Tāriḳ-e gozida*, and of the Shiʿite communities in the different towns of Persia in the *Nozhat al-qolub*). However, he has no time for Shiʿites such as Saʿd-al-Din Āvaji, whom he calls an extreme *rāfezi* who incited Öljeitü to Shiʿism, nor for the Shiʿite amir, Ḥājji Delqandi (*Tāriḳ-e gozida*, ed. Navāʿi, pp. 608, 614; in *Zafar-nāma*, f. 718ro, he deprecates the omission of the first three orthodox caliphs from the *koṭba*, which he says only continued to be read properly from beginning to end in the Qazvin region). It is probable that he was in fact a Shafiʿite, the dominant *madhab* in Qazvin in the Mongol period and that of his patron, Rašid-al-Din (as was a local judge from a Sayyed family, *Tāriḳ-e gozida*, ed. Navāʿi, p. 798).

Works. Mostawfi’s first completed work was his *Tāriḳ-e gozida* of 730/1330 (Storey, I/1, pp. 81-84, 1233). It is a world history, from the Creation to the date of composition, though essentially covering only the Prophets, the Pre-Islamic Persian kings and the Islamic world arranged by dynasty (see Contents, *Tāriḳ-e gozida*, ed. Navāʿi, pp. 9-14; Browne, III, pp. 90-94). This was dedicated to Rašid-al-Din’s son, the vizier Ġiāṭ-al-Din Moḥammad (q.v.), as a prose epitome of his major work, the *Zafar-nāma*, then still in progress (see below). As noted earlier, Mostawfi was inspired to write history by the learned discussions held by his patron Rašid-al-Din, though if, as he says elsewhere (*Zafar-nāma*, f. 735vo), he began to write when he was 40—possibly only a literary convention—this would have been after the vizier’s execution in 718/1318.

The author himself makes few claims for the *Tāriḳ-e gozida*, confessing to his own lack of technical accomplishment in the craft, and declaring his personal interest in the fate of those who have gone before, which he sees as important for understanding the experiences of past kingdoms and the calamities of the world. Like the *Zafar-nāma* on which it is based, it is a selective compilation derived from the works of earlier authorities, of which Mostawfi provides a detailed list (*Tāriḳ-e gozida*, ed. Navāʿi, pp. 6-7; Browne, *Lit. Hist. Persia* III, pp. 87-89; for a negative assessment of its value, see Blochet, p. 108). No study has been made of Mostawfi’s use of these sources which mainly deal with the



history of the Caliphate as far as the sack of Baghdad. For the Mongol period, he cites Jovayni's *Tāriḳ-e jahān-gošā* and Rašid-al-Din's *Jāme' al-tawārikò*. The brief analysis by Browne (*Tāriḳ-e gozida*, ed. Browne, preface, pp. xiii-xv) suggests that Mostawfi followed Rašid-al-Din closely, but this is true only in a structural sense, for the presentation is quite different. The real value of the *Tāriḳ-e gozida* is in its treatment of the quarter-century from the death of Ġāzān (703/1304) onwards, for which it is an independent first-hand source. The political narrative ends on an optimistic note with the elevation of Ġiāt-al-Din Rašidi to the vizierate and the return of the rule of justice. Except for such passages of panegyric, the work, as promised in the introduction, is couched in a simple and unaffected narrative style.

Mostawfi ends the *Tāriḳ-e gozida* with two valuable chapters, one containing biographies of prominent scholars and poets, the second an account of his hometown with a description of Qazvin's history and antiquities and leading families (including his own); this gives the work the quality of a local history as well as a universal chronicle.

Mostawfi's moralistic approach to history is more visible in his *Zafar-nāma*, a verse chronicle in about 75,000 *bayts*, completed after fifteen years' effort in 735/1334, when the author was 55 (ff. 735vo-736ro). The work exists in three manuscripts from the early 9th/15th century, of which the earliest is in the British Library (Or. 2833; see Rieu, *Persian Manuscripts*, Suppl., no. 263, pp. 172-74; for the two Istanbul mss., see Togan, p. 212; Ward, I, pp. 41-48, 58-75). A facsimile edition of the British Library manuscript Or. 2833, which dates from 807 A.H., has recently been published (eds. Nasrollah Pourjavadi and Nosratollah Rastegar, 2 vols., Vienna, 1999). A useful but unreliable translation of the final section, on Mongol history, was made by L. P. Ward in his unpublished thesis (Melville, pp. 4-5). Scholars have differed widely on the value of the *Zafar-nāma* as a historical document (Blochet, pp. 107-8; Jahn, p. 200; Boyle, p. 186). The work is conceived as a continuation of Ferdowsi's *Šāh-nāma* and is similarly written in the *baḥr-e motaqāreb* meter. The two earliest manuscripts contain Mostawfi's critical edition of the *Šāh-nāma* in the margins, a work which aimed to restore some 10,000 *bayts* believed to have been dropped from the text of the corrupt contemporary versions available at the time (f. 5ro). Ḥamd-Allāh's edition has not been sufficiently studied (cf. Rastegar), although one contemporary scholar has pointed out his significance as a pioneer in introducing the notion of a critical edition of the *Šāh-nāma* (Riāḥi, pp. 309-23). Soudavar believes that the production of this text was part



of a larger project to produce the foundation for a royal illustrated copy of the *Šāh-nāma* for Abu Sa'īd (q.v.), but the loss of the so-called *Abu Sa'īd-nāma* makes this difficult to substantiate (Soudavar, 1996a, pp. 752-54; 1996b, pp. 176-77).

The *Zafar-nāma* is of considerable importance as a source for the Mongol period. Though for the early reigns it relies heavily on the work of Rašid-al-Din (as claimed by Mostawfi himself, f. 707ro; cf. Ward, I, pp. 30-37), this is less apparent than in the *Tāriḳ-e gozida*. It also shares features with another contemporary verse chronicle, Šams-al-Din Kāšāni's *Šāh-nāma-ye Čengizi* (or *Tāriḳ-e Ġāzān Kān*, *Cat. Bibliothèque Nationale*, Ms. Suppl. Persan 1443). Both works claim that Hülegü's invasion of Persia took place at least partly in response to the entreaties of Muslim merchants desiring security and the rule of law (*Zafar-nāma*, ff. 583ro-vo, cf. Kāšāni, ff. 177vo-178ro), and both share a pronounced didactic tone. Blochet's suggestion (p. 107) that Mostawfi's versification of Rašid-al-Din's chronicle was in some sense a clandestine rival to Kāšāni's *official* version is rather improbable. Both are essentially works of *adab*; Mostawfi even inserts twelve chapters of advice (*pand*) that Rašid-al-Din is supposed to have addressed to Ġāzān Khan (ff. 684ro-692vo), and indulges in conventional literary moralizing at every twist of fate in the narrative. This approach is dictated by his use of Ferdowsi as a source of literary and intellectual inspiration. Nevertheless, for the reigns of the Ilkhans Öljeitü and Abu Sa'īd, the *Zafar-nāma* is an original first-hand account, based on the author's own observations and use of oral sources. Its value was recognized by the Timurid historian Ḥāfeẓ-e Abru (q.v.), who absorbed the latter portions of the *Zafar-nāma* almost wholesale into his *Dayl-e Jāme' al-tawāriḳ* (ed. K. Bayāni, Tehran, 1350 Š./1972), without acknowledgment (Soudavar, 1996, pp. 758-59; Melville, p. 2 ff.).

The work again ends on a positive note, with the suppression of a revolt against Abu Sa'īd and apparent tranquillity in the kingdom. Nevertheless, it is surprising there is no specific dedication to Ġiāṭ-al-Din, who is praised as before, and it is possible that Mostawfi's decision to bring the work to a close at this point was dictated by the rising political crisis rather than any sense that it was now complete.

This is further suggested by the fact that Mostawfi's final work was a prose continuation (*Dayl*) of the *Zafar-nāma*, covering the death of Abu Sa'īd and the subsequent anarchy in Persia. This was published in facsimile by V. Z. Piriev under the title *Dayl-e Tāriḳ-e gozida* (Baku, 1978; Russian and Azeri trans., M.



D. Kyazimov and V. Z. Piriev, Baku, 1986) as it is found in a few of the manuscripts of the *Tāriḳ-e gozida*, together with a further continuation by Ḥamd-Allāh's son, Zayn-al-Din (see Bāstāni Rād; Storey, I/1, p. 83; Melville, pp. 1 ff.). Mostawfi's gloom at the turn of events in Persia is clear from this work, which is punctuated by several long poems, though he does not believe that verse is appropriate to record such calamities (*Ḍayl*, p. 435, Russian tr., p. 90). There is also a long autobiographical passage on his disastrous visit to Shiraz (see above). The narrative continues to the murder of Shaikh Ḥasan(-e) Kuček Čupāni in 744/1343 and remains incomplete. This continuation (omitting the autobiographical material) and that of his son Zayn-al-Din, which starts with the events of 742/1342 (again erroneously called *Ḍayl-e Tāriḳ-e gozida*, ed. I. Afšār, Tehran, 1372 Š./1993), were also incorporated almost verbatim into Ḥāfez-e Abru's work mentioned above (Melville, *ibid*), and remain valuable primary sources of information on this troubled period.

Mostawfi's remaining, better-known work, *Nozhat al-qolub*, was completed before his *Ḍayl-e Zafar-nāma*, in the same interregnum after the death of Abu Sa'īd (complete text, lith. Bombay, 1311/1894. Various sections of it have been edited and translated separately: for the geographical section (*maqāla* 3), see *Nozhat al-qolub*, ed. Le Strange; and *Nozhat al-qolub*, ed. M. Dabirsiāqi, Tehran, 1336 Š./1958, which omits the *maklaṣ* on routes, physical geography and marvels; and for the zoological section (*maqāla* 1, pt. 3), see the translation by J. Stephenson, Oriental Translation Fund, London, 1928; Storey, II/1, pp. 129-31). The fiscal years 35 and 40 *kāni*/736 and 741 A.H. are mentioned, suggesting the work was under preparation between these dates, and the *terminus post quem* is Jomādā I 741/November 1340, the date of the siege of Avnik and sack of Ābeškur by the forces of Malek Ašraf Čupāni (*Nozhat al-qolub*, ed. Dabirsiāqi, p. 111; cf. *Ḍayl-e Zafar-nāma*, p. 462, Russian tr., p. 125).

As in the case of the *Tāriḳ-e gozida* and the *Zafar-nāma*, Mostawfi says he was encouraged to write by his friends, disclaiming any particular competence other than an interest in the subject and some experience of travel (e.g., to Shiraz). It was also thought that an accessible work in Persian would be valuable, as most of the sources of geographical information on Persia were in Arabic. As in the *Tāriḳ-e gozida*, Mostawfi enumerates his authorities (intro., ed. Dabirsiāqi, pp. xxiv, xxvi-xxviii; cf. Rieu, I, pp. 418-19), which are also occasionally cited in the text. Of considerable interest are the maps that Mostawfi prepared to accompany the *Nozhat*, which unfortunately neither Le Strange nor Dabirsiāqi considered worth reproducing. His map of Persia and



Turkestan is highly original and both this and his world map are among the earliest known to employ a grid system of longitude and latitude (Maqbul Ahmad, pp. 1081-82; Tibbett, p. 150), though a similar claim is made for Moḥammad b. Najib Makrān's *Jahān-nāma* (605/1208; ed. M. A. Riāḥi, Tehran, 1342 Š./1963, intro. pp. xx-xxiii, see Storey, II/1, 123); the latter is of particular interest, not only as one of the few Persian prototypes for such a work, but also as showing how greatly Mostawfi expanded on the information in one of his acknowledged authorities.

Mostawfi presents a view that is partly traditional and conventional of Persia as part of an Islamic world centered on the Hejaz rather than an element in the Mongol empire, and repeating some information derived directly from the Arab geographers of the 9th and 10th centuries. But he is also partly aware of new realities and altered circumstances, including changes in the names and prosperity of places, with his focus on *Irān-zamin* as an independent entity with defined borders controlled by the Ilkhanate and a new capital at Solṭāniya that was the hub of the route network. The *Nozhat al-qolub* might even be said deliberately to preserve a nostalgic image of an Ilkhanid empire that was already collapsing by the time he wrote, with his elaborate detail of the revenues due to the central treasury and his misleading impression of geopolitical unity. It is a work of extraordinary importance that once again has been extensively used but little studied.

The success of Mostawfi's works can partly be gauged by their circulation; the relative popularity of the *Tāriḳ-e gozida* and *Nozhat al-qolub* is shown by the number of extant manuscripts, around 60 and 70 respectively, of which about 20 of the *Tāriḳ-e gozida* date from the 15th century, but only a couple of the *Nozhat al-qolub*, which are mostly 17th century (rough estimate from data in Storey). His other two works, though almost entirely unknown both to his compatriots and to modern scholarship, enjoyed a second, if anonymous life in the work of Ḥāfeẓ-e Abru, who interestingly again does not refer to the *Nozhat* as a source for his own geographical work (and maps) (*Joḡrāfiā*, ed. S. Sajjādi, Tehran, 1375 Š./1997, preface, p. xxiii). Ḳonji-Eṣfahāni, writing in 1490, considered the merits of the *Gozida* to be great, though "one cannot depend too much on the narrative" (pp. 87-88, tr. p. 8). Thirty years later, Ḳvāndamir's assessment was more generous and, for the *Nozhat al-qolub* at least, nearer the mark: "Ḥamd-Allāh's learning and comprehensiveness can be clearly seen, and many strange and marvelous things can be learned from it" (*Ḥabib al-siar* (Tehran), III, p. 221).



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