



# JAMĀL-AL-DIN MOḤAMMAD EŞFAHĀNI

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**JAMĀL-AL-DIN MOḤAMMAD** b. ‘Abd-al-Razzāq **EŞFAHĀNI**, poet and painter of the second half of the 12th century. His exact name is given by his contemporary Moḥammad Rāvandi, who also called him Jamāl-al-Din Naqqāš (Rāvandi, pp. 33, 57, see the correction of Waḥid, p. *jim*). However, according to Ebn al-Fowaṭi (IV, p. 129), his name was ‘Abd-Allāh and his patronymic (*konya*) was Abu Moḥammad.

Almost all we know about Jamāl-al-Din is based on his *Divān*, but some elements of information can be found in the writings of Rāvandi and Kamāl-al-Din Esmā‘il (and to a lesser extent Zakariyā’ Qazvini, ‘Awfi, Dawlatšāh and Āḍar Bigdeli). He was born in Isfahan and spent most of his life there. He attended a local *madrasa* (Kamāl-al-Din Esmā‘il, p. 191, verse 3119). It was without doubt a Hanafite *madrasa* since he himself was a follower of that *madḥab* (*Divān*, p. 285). He affirms that he was once more familiar with religious law (*šar’*) than with poetry (*še’r*; *Divān*, p. 264). Despite his education, he worked as a painter (*naqšband*) and a goldsmith (*zargar*) in the Isfahan bazaar (*Divān*, p. 335), probably as did his father (Kamāl-al-Din Esmā‘il, verse 3119). Jamāl-al-Din’s skill was great and in 580/1184-85 he was commissioned by the Saljuq Sultan Toḡrel b. Arslān to illustrate a poetical anthology (Rāvandi, p. 57). In his poetry he makes frequent references to this activity and even boasts about it (“I am not a beggar, I am a poet without cupidity and I have a craft,” *Divān*, p. 247). Nonetheless, although this manual activity must



have provided him with a certain degree of financial independence, the extent of his wealth is still a matter for conjecture (Dāmādi, p. 32). In the second part of the 12th century, Isfahan was no longer the seat of royal court. We do not know whether Jamāl-al-Din was reluctant to leave his native town on account of his activity in the bazaar, or whether he failed to find a permanent position of court poet outside Isfahan; perhaps his stammering (*Divān*, pp. 21, 300) prevented him from occupying such a position. He did, however, make at least one trip to Ganja, the capital of the Atābegs of Azarbaijan, who ruled Isfahan at that time. He dedicated several *qaşidas* to the Bavandid Espahbad Ḥosām-al-Dawla Ardaşir (r. 567-602/1172-1206), who granted him the title (*laqab*) of Sayyed-al-Şoa‘rā’ (*Divān*, p. 34), but he might not have actually traveled to Māzandarān (Nafisi, 1921, p. 113). Likewise, he speaks on several occasions about his desire to live a more ascetic life, but there is no evidence that he actually took the plunge (Nafisi, 1921, p. 117). On the contrary, it seems that at the end of his life he was close to the last Saljuq sultan, Toğrel b. Arslān (d. 590/1194).

Jamāl-al-Din’s earliest datable *qaşida* is from spring 555/1160 and his last from 583/1187-88. Thus his poetical activity spans a period of at least twenty-eight years. He alludes to his old age in numerous verses and was alive at the age of fifty-five (*Divān*, p. 292). We know that he passed away before 599/1202-03, because at that date Rāvandi (p. 33) speaks of him as if he was dead. The date of death given as 588/1192-93 by Charles Rieu (II, 581, apud Taqi-al-Din Kāşāni, *Ḳolāşat al-afkār*) is plausible but not confirmed by other sources. Dowlatşāh’s assertion (p. 156) that Jamāl al-Din began to write “at the time of K̄vārazmşāh Jalāl-al-Dīn” (i.e., 617-28/1220-31) is obviously not correct. Jamāl al-Din’s tomb is supposed to be in the graveyard of Toğçi Gate (Jāberi Anşāri, p. 169). Of the four children he may have had (Glünz, p. 9), we know only of Kamāl-al-Din Maḥmud, who died before him, and Kamāl-al-Din Esmā‘il, whose fame as a poet overshadowed his.

Jamāl-al-Din is said to have composed more than twenty thousand verses (Hedayāt, 1937, p. 292), but Waḥid Dastgerdi recovered only half of them. The affirmation that he also wrote a *Divān* in Arabic (Nafisi, 1921, p. 112; Waḥid, p. *yah*) is very unlikely, since ‘Emād-al-Din Moḥammad Eşfahāni does not mention in the section on Isfahan of his *Ḳaridat al-qaşr*, an anthology of 6th-century poets who wrote in Arabic. Jamāl-al-Din’s *Divān* contains 175 lyrics (*ġazal*, q.v.) and 122 quatrains (*robā‘i*), but the bulk of his poetry is made of eulogies in the form of *qaşida* and strophe poems (*tarkib-band*, 143 in total).



These were dedicated to four kinds of *mamduḥs*: (1) The Prophet Moḥammad (see Dāmādi); (2) contemporary poets, such as Kāqāni and Mojir-al-Din Beylaqāni, with whom Jamāl-al-Din had turbulent relations (see de Khanikof, p. 177; Şafā, 1960, pp. 721-22); (3) rulers of Isfahan (Saljuq sultans, Atābeg of Azarbaijan Pahlavān b. Eldigüz) and their local representatives (Turkish amirs and Persian servants, such as Şehāb-al-Din Kāleş) and their allies (the Bavandid Espahbad Ardaşir, who was allied to Atābeg Pahlavān); (4) notables of Isfahan, especially the Şāʿed family, leaders of the local Hanafites (thirty *qaşidas* and *tarkib-bands* are explicitly dedicated to Rokn-al-Din Masʿud b. Qewām-al-Din Şāʿed). For a brief period, Jamāl-al-Din also praised Şadr-al-Din Kojandi, leader of the Shafeʿite camp, but he later admitted his mistakes when he came back at the court of the Şāʿeds (*Divān*, p. 288).

In his *Divān*, Jamāl-al-Din acknowledges his debt to Anwari (q.v.), Sayyed Hasan Ġaznavi, and Raşid-al-Din Waṭwāṭ; he was also clearly influenced by Sanāʿi. Although all these poets were from Khorasan, he affirms the preeminence of “Erāq,” that is, Erāq-e ʿAjami (Western Iran). His own *qaşidas* stand out for their simplicity of expression (especially when compared to those of his contemporary Kāqāni) and the visual strength of the poet’s descriptions (e.g., his description of the famine of Isfahan, in *Divān*, pp. 192-96). On the whole, his poetry reflects the troubled times in which he lived (see his *qaşidas* “şekāyat az ruzgār,” *Divān*, pp. 25, 56, 250, 347, 354). Modern scholars are agreed on the high quality of his *ġazals*, considered as a precursor of Saʿdi’s (Şafā, p. 733; Waḥid, p. *yad*; Rypka, 1968, p. 214; Mazāheri and Qānuni, pp. 233-34). There are, however, differing opinions on his eulogistic production. Saʿid Nafisi (1921, p. 120) considers him as “the greatest Iranian poet of the 6th/12th century” and “the most eloquent poet of Iran after ʿOnşori.” Waḥid Dastgerdi (p. *yā*) affirms that only Jamāl-al-Din could compete with Sanāʿi; on the other hand, Foruzānfar and Rypka judge him more harshly.

The first edition of Jamāl-al-Din’s *Divān*, based on a single manuscript, was compiled by Adib Nişāburi and printed between 1926 and 1929. In 1941, Waḥid Dastgerdi delivered a more complete edition (quoted as *Divān* in this article), but it is sometimes faulty and it omits substantial parts of Jamāl-al-Din’s poetry, such as fifty-seven quatrains (*robāʿi*) contained in Şarvāni’s *Nozhat al-majāles* and a little *maṭnawī* (Mazāheri and Qānuni, pp. 240-48). A critical edition is still awaited



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