



JAWĀHER AL-'AJĀYEB

JAWĀHER AL-'AJĀYEB, a short, rare kind of *taḍkera* in Persian containing biographies of female poets and specimens of their verses (mostly in Persian, some in Chaghatay Turkish). It was compiled by Solṭān-Moḥammad b. Amir(i) Heravi (ca. 1562), known as Faḵri Heravi (q.v.; for variant names, see Rāšedi, p. 13), who had started his literary career in Safavid Herat before emigrating to the court of the Arḡuns in Sind (Storey, pp. 795-97; Rāšedi, pp. 11-74 ; Naqawi, pp. 91-94; Ḳayyāmpur, pp. *y*, *yhá*). The *Jawāher al-'ajāyeb* was most probably written in Ša'bān 962/June-July 1555 (Rāšedi, p. 66), or rather in 1556 after Jalāl-al-Din Moḥammad Akbar (q.v.) ascended the Mughal throne (Naqawi, p. 98; Ḳayyāmpur, pp. *y**b*; Rāšedi, pp. 69-70), and not in 1540-41 (Sprenger, p. 10), at the court of Moḥammad 'Isā Khan Tarḳān (r. 1554-67), and dedicated to a lady called Māh/Māhom Begom (*Jawāher al-'ajāyeb*, ed. Rāšedi, pp. 114-15). She could be identified either with the nurse of the Emperor Akbar, Māhom (Naqawi, p. 97; Ḳayyāmpur, p. *y**b*), or with Ḥājia Māh Begom, the daughter of Moḥammad Moqim Arḡun, wife first of Šāh-Ḥasan Arḡun and then of Moḥammad 'Isā Tarḳān (*Jawāher al-'ajāyeb*, ed. Rāšedi, pp. 114 n. 1, 115).

The *Jawāher al-'ajāyeb* starts with an introduction containing praises of the ruling kings, Shah Ṭahmāsp Šafawi in Iran and Akbar in India, of the author's last patron Moḥammad 'Isā Khan, and of Māhom Begom, the dedicatee (ed. Rāšedi, pp. 113-15); some copies end with a *qaṣida* dedicated to "Māhom" (ed. Rāšedi, pp. 141-42). Eight known manuscripts are described by Rāšedi (pp. 72-74), which completes the lists of Charles Storey and other catalogues.



Number of biographies varies between 20 and 31 according to the copy. They are arranged in a rough chronological order. Some manuscripts start with four entries devoted to legendary or saintly women famous throughout the Muslim world: Delārām, 'Āyeša, Fāṭema, and Zoleykā (see ed. Rāšedi, pp. 117-20). The following four items treat Persian language poetesses who lived prior to the Timurid period (ed. Rāšedi, pp. 120-24), namely Mahsati (at the court of the Seljuq Solṭān Sanjar, 12th cent.); Pādšāh Kātun bent Qoṭb-al-Din Moḥammad-Solṭān Qarā Ketāy who ruled in Kermān at the end of the 13th cent.; Jahān Kātun Širāzi and Bibi Ḥayāt, both wives of a vizier of the Injuid Shah Abu Ešhāq (d. 1357) and contemporaries of 'Obeyd Zakāni (d. 1371).

The majority of the entries are devoted to poetesses who lived mostly in Herat, Khorasan, and Transoxiana, and who were contemporaries or near-contemporaries of the author. They include "Mehri; Moḡul Kātun (wife of Moḥammad Khan Šeybāni); Āfāq Bega Jalāyer; Nehāni Kermāni; Bija Monajjema; Bibi 'Ešmati; Bideli; Nehāni Širāzi; a daughter of the *qāzi* of Samarqand; Faqr-al-Nesā'; Kānzāda Torbati; Partovi; Šāhmolk; a daughter of Ġazali Yazdi; Bibi Ārezu; Ža'efi; Ḥayāt Heravi; Bibi Ātun (wife of Mawlānā Baqā'i); Jamāli or Hejābi (daughter of Mawlānā Helāli); daughter of 'Effati Esfarāyeni; Fāṭeme Kātun Dusti; Tervi(?) Meymāni, and Nesā'i.

The *Jawāher al-'ajāyeb* became itself a source for several later Persian and Mughal authors, who included chapters on female poets (list in Rāšedi, pp. 11-12). The *Jawāher al-'ajāyeb* is a valuable complementary source for Timurid and Safavid social and cultural history by a contemporary author, but it is also rather unusual and unique in medieval Persian literature by the fact that it is exclusively devoted to women (see Szuppe). It sheds light on the cultural life of Herat elites close to the court circle and on the part played in it by women, both Persian and Turkic.

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