



KĀHI KĀBOLI

KĀHI KĀBOLI, SAYYED NAJM-AL-DIN ABU-'L-QĀSEM MOḤAMMAD MIĀNKĀLI (d. Agra, Rabi' II 988/May 1580), one of the notable poets at the Mughal court of Nāṣer-al-Din [Homāyun Pādešāh](#) (r. 937-62/1530-55) and Jalāl-al-Din [Akbar Pādešāh](#) (r. 963-1014/1556-1605). He was born to a Sayyed family in Miānkāl, a region between Bukhara and Samarqand, sometime between 868-78/1463-73, thus being also known as Miānkāli. His pen name was Kāhi and he has also been referred to in some biographical sources as Mawlāna or Mollā Qāsem Kāhi. Reżāqoli Khan Hedāyat (p. 212) and, probably following him, MoḤammad-Ṭāher Naṣrābādi (p. 469) mention the poet's name as "Gāhi," which must be a typographical mistake possibly due to the close similarity between the written symbols for "k" and "g" in Persian script.

According to Amin-Aḥmad Rāzi (p. 376), Kāhi went to Herat at the age 15, where, after paying a visit to the Sufi poet and scholar 'Abd-al-Raḥmān [Jāmi](#) (d. 888/1492), he apparently developed some interest in Sufi mysticism and became a staunch advocate of the Naqšbandi [K̄ājagān](#), an influential Sufi order in Transoxiana. He then traveled to Kabul and stayed there for a long time, which is why he came to be known as Kāboli (Nafisi, I, p. 415; [Şafā](#), V/2, pp. 755-56; Hedāyat, p. 212).

Despite his uncomplimentary remarks about India and referring to himself as "the nightingale adorning Kabul meadow, not a kite or raven to go to India," he made two long trips to India ([Şafā](#), V/2, p. 756). In his first visit, which lasted 21 years (935-56/1528-49), he composed panegyrics for a number of eminent figures and governors of [Gujarat](#). The second visit, which began in 961/1554



and lasted until his death in 988/1580, brought him to Agra and Delhi where he was ranked among the most respected poets at the courts of Homāyun and Akbar. He even, according to some report, was bestowed the position of poet-laureate (*malek-al-šo'arā*) at the latter's court (Nafisi, II, p. 819). He also spent some time at Jaunpur and Benares and wrote eulogies for Kānzamān 'Aliqoli and Bahādor Khan (Şafā, V/2, p. 756). Apart from panegyric *qaşidas* in praise of men of power in his time, he also eulogised the Shi'ite Imam 'Ali b. Abi Ṭāleb (e.g., see Amin Rāzi, III, pp. 378-81).

Kāhi seems to have been a learned man, being acquainted with various sciences of his time, especially interpretation (*tafsir*) of the Qor'an, scholastic philosophy (*kalām*), astronomy, history, and writing riddles (*mo'ammā*). Further, he had enough command of the science of music that he apparently composed some tunes (Nafisi, II, p. 415; Şafā, V/2, p. 757; Amin Rāzi, III, p. 378). Nevertheless, as 'Abd-al-Qāder Badā'uni (d. ca. 1024/1615) has pointed out, despite all these admirable merits, Kāhi "spent his life in infidelity and impiety" (I, p. 584). Careless about his outward appearance, he lived a *qalandar*-like (unconventional in behavior and dress) life, arousing formalist Muslims to level various accusations against him.

Kāhi's poetry, which followed the style of classical Persian poets, was admired by his contemporaries. In addition to odes (*qaşida*), his published *divān* (Calcutta, 1953) containing 1728 distiches, includes lyrics (*ġazals*), mathnawis (*matnawi*), quatrains (*robā'i*) and versified fragments (*qeṭ'a*). Some of his *ġazals* imply the poet's interest in the two outstanding Shirazi masters of the genre, Sa'di and Ḥāfeẓ. His mathnawi poem in *motaqāreb* meter, entitled *Golaşān* (literally, rose scattering), is a couplet-by-couplet imitation of Sa'di's *Bustān*. He has also composed a poem in the same metric pattern as Sanā'i's *Ḥadiqat al-ḥaqiqa*, on the subject of anagrams, for each kind of which he has given a versified example (Nafisi, I, p. 415; Şafā, V/2, p. 758).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Amin Aḥmad Rāzi, *Haft eqlim*, ed. Jawād Fāzel, 3 vols., Tehran, n. d., III, pp. 376-83.

‘Abd-al-Qāder Badā’uni, *Montakab al-tawāriq*, ed. Aḥmad-‘Ali Mawlawi and William N. Lees, 3 vols., Calcutta, 1864-69; tr. George S. A. Ranking, William H. Lowe, and Wolseley Haig as *Muntakhabu-t-tawāriq*, Bibliotheca Indica 97, 3 vols., Calcutta, 1898-1925, repr. Patna, 1973.

Rezāqoli Khan Hedāyat, *Riāz al-‘ārefīn*, ed. Mehdiqoli Hedāyat, Tehran, 1937.

Sa‘id Nafisi, *Tāriq-e nazm o naṭr dar Irān va dar zabān-e fārsi*, 2 vols., Tehran 1965, I, p. 415.

Mirzā Moḥammad-Ṭāher Naṣrābādi, *Taḍkera*, ed. Waḥid Dastgerdi, Tehran, 1982.

Ḍabiḥ-Allah Ṣafā, *Tāriq-e adabiyāt dar Irān*, 5 vols. in 8, Tehran, 1960-75, V/2, pp. 755-60.