



ḲĀKI ḲORĀSĀNI, EMĀMQOLI

ḲĀKI ḲORĀSĀNI, EMĀMQOLI, Isma‘ili poet and preacher of 17th-century Persia (b. Dizbād; d. Dizbād, after 1056/1646). He was born in Dizbād, a village in the hills half way between Mashhad and Nišāpur, which at the time was the largest dwelling place of the Isma‘ilis of northern Khorasan. Little is known about his life and education but, judging from his poems, he was a talented poet and well versed in Islamic religious sciences. It appears that a visit to Dizbād by the thirty-sixth Isma‘ili imam, Morād Mirzā (d. 981/1574), left a lasting impression on the youthful Ḳāki, prompting him to devote his entire life to the preaching of the Isma‘ili faith. Local narratives of his encounter with the Isma‘ili imam, which is reminiscent of the encounter of Jalāl-al-Din Moḥammad Rumi with Šams Tabrizi, soon turned into legend and caused the inauguration of a new milestone in the cultural history of his native place that has survived to this day. Though not as a religious ceremony, on the last Friday of the month of Mordād in the Persian calendar (middle of August), people of Dizbād of all religious persuasions gather together in the depth of a gorge called Now ḤOešār to pay homage to the place where Ḳāki was blessed and granted spiritual insight by the imam.

Ḳāki seems to have been born during the reign of the Safavid Shah Ṭahmāsb (r. 930-84/1524-76). He recounts in his poems the name of Shah ‘Abbās I (r. 1587-1629) and was a contemporary of Shah Šafi (d. 1052/1642), and ‘Abbās II (d. 1077/1666). He was also contemporary to three Isma‘ili imams, namely Morād Mirzā, Du‘l-faqār ‘Ali (d. 1043/1634), and Nur-al-Din, nicknamed Nur-al-Dahr (d. 1082/1671). His Isma‘ili preaching seems to have been successful



enough to attract the attention of the Safavid king, probably ‘Abbās I, which led to his arrest and torture, but unlike his predecessor, the poet Abu’l-Qāsem Moḥammad Amri Širāzi (d. 999/1590), he was not blinded and killed (Daftary, 1994, p. 456). About the year 1640, the relationship between Isma‘ili imams and Safavid kings improved to the extent that Nur-al-Din accompanied Shah ‘Abbās II on his visit to Mashad in 1642, when Ḳāki was probably released and returned to his home in Dizbād (Ebn Ya‘qubšāh).

Nothing in prose has remained from Ḳāki, but the corpus of his poetic compositions comprises over 5,000 couplets which constitute his collection of poetry (*divān*), and a lengthy (ca. 1,300 couplets) religious *matnawi* entitled *Ṭolu‘ al-šams*. Two shorter versified treatises, *Negārestān* and *Bahārestān* (two *qašidas* in 980 and 79 verses, respectively), have also survived (Poonawala, pp. 279-80; Daftary, 1994, p. 123). The poems that have survived to our time seem to have been compiled later in his life. The content of Ḳāki’s religious writings fully complies with the late and post-Alamut Isma‘ili theological texts and the writings of Naṣir-al-Din Ṭusi (d. 671/1274), Ḳayrḳ-vāh Herāti, and Abu Eshāq Qohestāni. Ḳāki is said to have lived a long life; the location of his grave, though without a gravestone, is known to the local residents of Dizbād.

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