



ḲOJANDI, KAMĀL

KAMĀL ḲOJANDI, known also as Shaikh Kamāl, Persian poet and Sufi (b. Ḳojand, a town in Central Asia, ca. 720/1320; d. Tabriz, 803/1400-01). Nothing is known of Kamāl's family background or early life. Even his personal name is uncertain; Mas'ud is the consensus of most modern scholars (Şafā, III, p. 1131; Nafisi, I, p. 210; Rypka, p. 262), but early manuscripts of his *divān* give his name as Moḥammad, sometimes adding the patronymic (*konya*) Abu Aḥmad (Mollā Aḥmad, p. 315). Kamāl apparently established his reputation as both a poet and Sufi shaikh in Ḳojand and Transoxiana, though the biographical sources are silent concerning his literary and spiritual mentors. Sometime after the middle of the 9th/14th century, Kamāl left his hometown and headed west. According to Ḥāfeẓ Ḥosayn Karbalā'i Tabrizi (I, pp. 500-1), Kamāl was fleeing from an unwelcome and unconsummated arranged marriage, but Dawlatšāh Samarqandi (p. 245) attributes his departure to a pilgrimage to Mecca. Whatever his motives, Kamāl left Khojand never to return and eventually settled in Tabriz. A short poem addressed to Sultan Ḥosayn Jalāyer (*Divān*, ed. Šidfar, p. 1036, *qet'a* no. 1069) asks for the grant of a Sufi lodge away from the center of the city and places Kamāl in Tabriz between the years 775 and 784/1374-82. This lodge (*kānqāh*), built in the district of Waliānkuh (or Waliānkuy), became the base for Kamāl's literary and spiritual activities.

In the winter of 787/1385, Tabriz was conquered by Toqtameš Khan, the ruler of the [Golden Horde](#) Mongols. According to Dawlatšāh (p. 245), Kamāl was carried off to Sarāy, the capital city of the Golden Horde on the banks of the Volga, at the request of the khan's wife and lived there four years. A preface



attached to some early manuscripts of the poet's *divān* states that he resided in Sarāy for eleven years, a period correlating more closely to historical events. Timur invaded the Qipčaq (Qepčāq) Steppe in 797/1395 and drove Toqtameš from his capital, and Kamāl apparently returned to Tabriz shortly thereafter. He celebrated this event in the final verse of a ghazal (*Divān*, ed. Šidfar, p. 677) that is one of the few panegyric notes found in his poetry: “Kamāl, the moment you see your companion [*qarin*] amongst friends, say, ‘I experienced this good fortune due to the grace of the king of the auspicious conjunction [*šāḥeb-qerān*].’” *Qarin* might be translated “spouse” as well as “companion” and, aside from punning on Timur’s title, the word might also hint at Kamāl’s marital status. Though neither the poet nor his biographers make any overt reference to wives or children; it is worth noting that the 19th-century author and critic Reżāqoli Khan Hedāyat traced his family’s lineage back to Kamāl (*Hedāyat*, VI, p. 1209). During the final years of his life, Kamāl enjoyed the protection and patronage of Timur’s son, Mirānšāh, who ruled Tabriz from 1393 to 1404, and their friendship became the stuff of legend (Lewisohn, pp. 173-74). The dates given for Kamāl’s death in the biographical sources range from 792/1390 (*Dawlatšāh*, p. 248) to 807/1404 (*Gāzorgāhi*, p. 214). The year 803/1400-01 given by ‘Abd-al-Raḥmān Jāmi (*Nafaḥāt*, p. 612) and K̄vāndamir (III, p. 548), is confirmed by contemporary chronograms (Mollā Aḥmad, p. 319) and generally accepted by modern scholars. Kamāl was buried at his retreat in Waliānkuh in Tabriz, where his gravesite can still be visited today (*Divān*, ed. Golsorki, II, pp. 1235-40).

Kamāl’s poetry was collected by his disciples upon his return to Tabriz from Sarāy. This *divān*, originally entitled *Tarjomān al-ḥāl le-aṣḥāb al-Kamāl*, consists almost entirely of lyric poetry (*ghazal*), amounting to some 980 poems in the most recent editions. Most of these poems testify to Kamāl’s professed preference for *ghazals* of seven verses in length (see *Divān*, ed. Golsorki, II, pp. 992-93). Kamāl wrote less prolifically in other monorhymed forms. He composed a short ode (*qaṣida*) as an introductory dedication to the *divān*, and three other odes have been gleaned from later manuscripts. Kamāl’s works also include thirty or so quatrains (*robā’i*) and about a dozen *mo’ammā* or riddling logogriphs. More significant, however, are some one hundred short fragments (*qeṭ’ā*) of two to seven verses that Kamāl composed for various private and public occasions; about a dozen of these deal with literary themes and provide some insight into Kamāl’s attitude toward his own work and that of his contemporaries (see Mollā Aḥmad, pp. 304-12); a number of them were translated by Edward Browne (III, pp. 321-30).



According to Jāmi, Kamāl's poetry was only an adjunct to his life as a spiritual adept and Sufi leader; it served to assure that "the exoteric was not overwhelmed by the esoteric and he did not fail to observe the forms of ritual worship" (*Nafahāt*, p. 611). Whatever its psychological validity, this statement indicates that the principal forum for Kamāl's literary activities was the Sufi lodge, not the princely court, and overt panegyric dedications are almost entirely absent from his poetry. Given how closely Kamāl's poetic practice was tied to his prominence as a spiritual guide, it is remarkable how little is known about his Sufi lineage or affiliation. Ḥāfeẓ Ḥosayn concludes that Kamāl was an Owaysi who attained spiritual realization without the direct guidance of a recognized master (I, pp. 510-11). Though a few of Kamāl's ghazals expound the ideas of the unity of existence (*waḥdat-e wujud*), the immanence of God in the material world, explicit expositions of Sufi doctrine are not common in his poetry. It is overwhelmingly amatory in subject matter, theme, and tone, and, as is the case with his contemporary Ḥāfeẓ of Shiraz, the object of Kamāl's desire may be human, divine, or something of both. Both Jāmi (*Nafahāt*, p. 612) and Ḥāfeẓ Ḥosayn (I, pp. 502-3) relate anecdotes that place Kamāl in opposition to the more *šari'a*-minded Sufi shaikh, Zayn-al-Din Abu Bakr K̄vāfi (d. 838/1435); Ḥāfeẓ Ḥosayn attributes K̄vāfi's misgivings about Kamāl to his habit of gazing with affectionate adoration at beautiful young boys and takes his biography as the occasion for a digression on the love of physical beauty and its role in fostering spiritual aspiration and love of the divine. Like Ḥāfeẓ, Kamāl often celebrates the *rend's* unfettered pursuit of love, beauty, and ecstasy and disparages the public and self-righteous piety of the preacher and ascetic (for the text citation, see Bāri; Hādizāda).

In contrast to his uncertain spiritual lineage, Kamāl's literary affiliations are well documented by both medieval critics and his own poetry. According to Jāmi (*Bahārestān*, p. 148), Kamāl wrote numerous responses (*tatabbo'*) following the rhyme and meter of ghazals by Najm-al-Din Ḥasan Dehlavi (d. 737-38/1336-37; for him, see Ṣafā, III, pp. 817-31), a practice that led to the accusation that he was the "thief of Ḥasan" (*dozd-e Ḥasan*; Ṣafā, III, p. 1134). Defending Kamāl from this charge, Jāmi asserts that Kamāl's poetry exhibits an emphasis on subtle syntactic figures (*ma'āni-e laṭif*) not found in his predecessor's work; a recent comparative reading of several of Kamāl's responses to Ḥasan (ʿAli-Mardān, pp. 200-15) emphasizes that Kamāl's responses are characterized more by divergence from their models than by any resemblance to them. However, for Kamāl, as for Ḥasan, the great object of emulation is the lyric poetry of Sa'di of Shiraz. At the conclusion of one of



his many responses to Sa'di's ghazals, Kamāl introduces a paradoxical comparison of mutual superiority to convey both his rivalry with and admiration for his predecessor: *goftim jawāb-i na kam az gofta-ye Sa'di / Bal k'in do ġazal kubar az yakdegar oftād* (We composed a response not less than what Sa'di composed. / Rather, these two ghazals turned out better than one another; *Divān*, ed. Golsorki, I, p. 417).

This ghazal by Sa'di (p. 207) also called forth a response by Ḥāfeẓ of Shiraz (*Divān*, I, p. 228) and provides one small indication of Kamāl's complex relationship with his renowned contemporary. Kamāl's latest editor has listed over thirty-five ghazals written in the same meter and rhyme as ghazals by Ḥāfeẓ (*Divān*, I, pp. 116-54), and numerous other parallels have been identified by Bahā'-al-Din Korramšāhi (see index, s.v., "Kamāl"). In a couple of instances, Kamāl responds explicitly to an earlier ghazal by Ḥāfeẓ, and one such poem contains perhaps the earliest reference to Ḥāfeẓ: *Našod be-ṭarz-e ġazal ham-enān-e mā Ḥāfeẓ/ agar če dar šaf-e Solṭān Abu'l-Fawāres šod* (Ḥāfeẓ did not equal us in the style of the ghazal, / Although he entered the ranks of Shah Šojā' [the Mozaffarid]; *Divān*, ed. Šidfar, p. 451). In other cases, the parallel poems are similar thematically as well as formally, but without any clear indication of whether Kamāl was replying to Ḥāfeẓ, or vice versa. And frequently such pairs of poems have little more in common than their meter and rhyme scheme, like a single musical mode underpinning two different melodies. Whether or not we accept at face value Dawlatšāh's gracious account of the two poet's mutual, long-distance admiration (Dawlatšāh, p. 247), there is no doubt that Kamāl and Ḥāfeẓ knew one another's poetry and belonged to a common literary culture, despite never meeting face to face. Kamāl was probably personally acquainted with other contemporary poets to whom he refers in the course of his work, such as Salmān Sāvaji (d. 778/1376) and 'Aṣṣār Tabrizi (d. 782/1382; for various dates given in sources, see Šafā, III, p. 1025).

Kamāl's poetry inevitably pales in comparison to that of Ḥāfeẓ, but this is more due to Ḥāfeẓ's singular brilliance than to any shortcoming on the part of Kamāl. Jāmi praises Kamāl for "his grace of language and precise crafting of sentences" (*laṭāfat-e soḡan o deqqat-e ma'āni*), but objects that these features diminish the fluency and emotional verve of his poetry (*Bahārestān*, p. 148). While taking note of this criticism, Dawlatšāh maintains that Kamāl's poetry is "mystical and full of ecstasy" (*ārefāna wa por-ḡāl*, p. 247). According to Ḍabiḡ-Allāh Šafā, Kamāl's best poetry combines "grace and soundness" in perfect



measure and exhibits an engaging charm and elegance (Şafā, III, pp. 1133-34). Kamāl has especially attracted the attention and admiration of Tajik readers and scholars, who played a leading role at the international conference commemorating the poet held in Tabriz in November 1996. Badriddin Maq̄sudov's monograph on the poet provides a comprehensive summation of this scholarly tradition.

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(Paul Losensky)



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