



KAMĀLI BOḶĀRĀ'Ī

KAMĀLI BOḶĀRĀ'Ī, 'Amid Kamāl-al-Din, a court poet, musician, and calligrapher at the court of Sultan Sanjar, the Saljuqid king, during his rule in Khorasan (r. 490-511/1097-1118). His exact dates and biography are not known, but we know that he was a well-known and respected poet during the early reign of Sanjar, and like his contemporary court poet Amir Mo'ezzi composed *qaṣidas* panegyricizing Sanjar and his viziers. His name is mentioned by Neẓāmi-'Aruẓi (p. 45) among the poets of the Saljuqid courts, and the poet [Awḥad-al-Din Anwari](#) has composed a poem in his praise (*Divān* II, pp. 672-73), and mildly criticized him for composing exaggerated panegyrics about Sanjar's vizier, Mojir-al-Dawla 'Ali (*Divān*, I, p. 72 l. 10). Rašid-al-Din Waṭwāṭ has also quoted some lines of Kamāli (pp. 32, 53, 82), one of them as an excellent example of a transitional verse in a *qaṣida* (*ḥoṣn-e taḵalloṣ*).

The first poetic anthology to have included Kamāli's poems is Sadid-al-Din Moḥammad 'Awfi's *Lobāb al-albāb* (I, pp. 86-91), which cites a *qaṣida* in praise of Sanjar, as well as the prelude (*nasib*) of another *qaṣida* that Kamāli had composed in praise of Sanjar's first vizier Mojir-al-Dawla (or Mojir al-Molk) Kiā Abu'l-Faṭḥ 'Ali b. Ḥosayn, in which the tress (*zolf*) of the beloved (*negār*) boasts of its beautiful qualities. Recently the present author found the rest of this *qaṣida* in a manuscript copy of an anthology entitled *Daqā'eḳ al-aš'ār* (Bodlian, Elliott Coll. 37). This part of the poem is a literary debate or contest between the pen and the hand (*kaf*) of the poet's patron. The hand claims to be superior to the pen, because it is the means by which generosity (*baḵšeš*) is accomplished during the time of festivity, while in time of war it holds the



harness of the horse, sometimes the bow, and sometimes the dagger or the sword. In its reply, the pen accepts the hand's superiority, but it claims to be more knowledgeable than the hand in the management of the state and in dispensing justice. The debate continues by another set of arguments from both contestants, and when the pen takes pride for being in the hand of the vizier, another contestant, namely the good fortune of the vizier (*eqbāl*), enters the debate and claims to be superior to both of them. Kamāli's debate, though reminds us of Amir Mo'ezzi's *qaṣida* in praise of Sanjar's father, Malekšāh (r. 465-85/1073/92), which starts with a debate between the sword and the pen, is longer than Amir Mo'ezzi's debate. Besides, the poet's choice of the hand (*kaf*) of the patron as one of the contestants is unique in Persian literature, as no other poet or writer has used this character in a debate.

Kamāli is said to have played the lute (*barbat*) very well. 'Awfi reports that one night during the festivity in the court, Sultan Sanjar ordered Kamāli to play his instrument, but Kamāli being too drunk to play, refused the king's command and said bluntly "I shall not play." His refusal upset the king, and he had the poet humiliated and thrown out of the court. Next morning, Kamāli sent a poem to the king and apologized for his behavior.

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