



KĀŠĒFI, KAMĀL-AL-DIN ḤOSAYN WĀʻEZ

KĀŠĒFI, KAMĀL-AL-DIN ḤOSAYN WĀʻEZ, prolific prose-stylist of the Timurid era, religious scholar, Sufi figure, and influential preacher, known as Mawlānā Wāʻez Kāšefi or simply Mollā Ḥosayn (b. Sabzavār, ca. 840/1436-37; d. Herat, 910/1504-5; Jaʻfariān, p. 168). Kāšefi was his pen name (*taḳalloṣ*), and Wāʻez denoted his professional occupation as a preacher (Modarres, p. 29; Yousofi, p. 704).

i. Life

After working for a while in his hometown as a preacher, Kāšefi moved to Nishapur and then to Mashad. In 860/1456, he allegedly had a dream vision in which he was summoned to Herat by the spirit of the recently deceased Naqšbandi Sufi master [Saʻd-al-Din Kāšgari](#). In Herat he came under the influence of Kāšgari's successor, the great Persian poet-mystic ʻAbd-al-Raḥmān [Jāmi](#), and was initiated into the Naqšbandi order (q.v.). He returned to Sabzavār, where he was named chief judge (*qāziʻl-qoṣāt*) of the sub-province of Bayhaq by the new Timurid ruler of Khorasan, Solṭān-Abu Saʻid (863-73/1458-69; Herrmann, pp. 93-94, 98-99). After Solṭān-Ḥosayn Bāyqarā (see [ḤOSAYN BĀYQARĀ](#); r. 873-911/1469-1506) came to power, Kāšefi came to Herat in ca. 1470 (possibly at his invitation), where he remained until his death in 910/1504-5 (Alisher Navoi, p. 143; tr., pp. 93, 268; Herrmann, p. 90). He was buried in the ʻIdgāh of Herat, in the vicinity of the graves of Jāmi and



Kāşġari (Saljuġi, ed., p. 115; *taʿliqāt*, p. 48).

In Herat Kāşefi was patronized by Solţān-Ḥosayn and various members of the Timurid court, chiefly Mir ʿAli-Şir Navāʿi (d. 906/1501), the celebrated Timurid political and literary figure, to whom he dedicated a number of his works (Kvāndamir, 1994, p. 222). Solţān-Ḥosayn appointed him sheikh, or superior, of the *kānaqāh*, or Sufi lodge, which he apparently constructed expressly for him in the Čarsuġ, or central market of Herat, and which was called Dār al-sayāda (Herrmann, pp. 96-99; Kvāndamir, 1994, pp. 174, 192). Kāşefi regularly held sessions of sermonizing (*waʿẓ wa naşihat*) at various prestigious venues in Herat: at the above-mentioned Dār al-sayāda on Friday mornings; at the congregational mosque of ʿAli-Şir Navāʿi after the Friday prayer; at the royal *madrasa-kānaqāh* complex of Solţān-Ḥosayn on Tuesdays; and at the shrine of Abuʿl- Walid Aḥmad on Wednesdays. Towards the end of his life he also preached at the tomb of the Timurid prince Solţān- Aḥmad Mirzā on Thursdays. The title *wāʿeẓ* denoted a free preacher as distinct from the *kaṭib*, who delivered the standardized sermon in the mosque at the Friday prayer. Although undoubtedly employing some of the storytelling techniques of the *qoşşās*, or street preachers, the *wāʿeẓ* was a learned individual whose sermons were on a sophisticated theological level (Pedersen, pp. 226-51). Kāşefi’s preaching reportedly drew large, enthusiastic crowds on account of his beautiful voice, rhetorical skills, and ability to explain Qorʿānic verses and prophetic Traditions to his audience in a clear and accessible manner (Kvāndamir, 1984, IV, p. 345; idem, 1994, pp. 221-22). His son Faḡr-al-Din ʿAli Şafi (d. 939/1532-33), the author of the *Raşahāt-e ʿayn al-ḥayāt*, a hagiographical work devoted to the sheikhs of the Naqşbandi order, followed in his footsteps and preached at the congregational mosque of Herat on Friday mornings (Kvāndamir, 1984, IV, p. 346).

Kāşefi was a polymath and was recognized as such (*du fonun*) by his contemporaries (e.g., Alisher Navoi, p. 143). Kvāndamir singled out his expertise in astrology (*ʿilm-e nojum*) and epistolography (*enşā*) and added that, as a Qorʿān exegete (*mofasser*), he had no equal in Khorasan in his day (Kvāndamir, 1984, IV, p. 345; idem, 1994, p. 221). He was also a poet, writing under the pen name Kāşefi (“the Unveiler”; Alisher Navoi, p. 143, tr., pp. 93, 268). He composed roughly forty works, almost all in Persian, on subjects covering the entire spectrum of learning in medieval Iran in the second half of the 15th century. Often viewed as a mere compiler or popularizer, Kāşefi was in fact instrumental in codifying and transmitting the state of the art of



knowledge in a wide variety of fields ranging from the Islamic religious sciences to magic and the occult. He was a Renaissance-type figure in a culture that had no direct experience of the Renaissance. In this respect he may be regarded as the Iranian counterpart of the well-known Egyptian polymath al-Soyuṭī (d. 911/1505), who was of Persian descent but wrote his works in Arabic.

ii. Works

It appears that Kāšefī consciously tried to create the equivalent of an “Everyman’s Library” of his time (Subtelny, 2003a, p. 463). The list of his works attests to the breadth of his intellectual range. The following works were considered by K̄vāndamir (1984, IV, p. 345) and other contemporary authors to have been his most famous: *Aḳlāq-e moḥseni*, *Anwār-e sohayli*, *Jawāher al-tafsir*, *Maḳzan al-enšā’*, *Mawāheb-e ‘aliya*, *Rawzat al-šohadā’*, and *Sab’a-ye kāšefiyya* (for a list see also Yousofi, pp. 704-5; Modarres, V, pp. 29-32; Nafisi, pp. 246-47). Many of his works have not been edited and are available only in manuscript form or, at best, in old lithograph editions. The dates of many of his works have not been determined. Some forty works by Kāšefī are presented here in alphabetical order in two categories: (A) the edited and published works; and (B) works mentioned in various biographies and bibliographies.

A. Edited and Published Works

Aḳlāq-e moḥseni, a treatise on ethics and statecraft in forty chapters, completed in 907/1501-2 and dedicated to Solṭān-Ḥosayn, although written for the benefit of his son Abu’l-Moḥsen Mirzā (d. 913/1507), to whom reference is made in the title (ed. Ḥ. Rabbānī, Tehran, 1979, and many lith. eds.; partial tr. Henry George Keene as *The Morals of the Beneficent*, Hertford, 1850; for a discussion of the dating of the work, see Subtelny, 2003b, pp. 602-4; Golombek, pp. 615-16).

Anwār-e sohayli, a prose recension of Abu’l-Ma‘ālī’s popular animal fables, *Kalila wa Demna* in fourteen chapters, commissioned by and dedicated to the Timurid amir Neẓām-al-Din Sheikh Aḥmad Sohayli, whose name is alluded to in the title (repr. ed., Tehran, 1983-84; tr. Edward B. Eastwick as *Anvār-i Suhaili or The Lights of Canopus*, Hertford, 1854; van Ruymbek, pp. 571-78).

Asrār-e qāsemi, a treatise on letter magic and the occult sciences, composed in



907/1501-02 in honor of the Sufi master and poet Qāsem-e Anwār (d. 837/1433), hence the reference to his name in the title (Bombay lith., 1302/1885; Lory, pp. 531-41). His son wrote a commentary on it, called *Kašf-e asrār-e qāsemi* (Yousofi, p. 705).

Badāye' al-afkār fi šanāye' al-aš'ār, a treatise on Persian poetics and rhetorical devices, written for the Timurid amir Šojā'-al-Din Amir Sayyed Ḥosayn (ed. M. J. Kazzāzi, Tehran, 1990, p. 68; for the sources and contents of the work, see Simidchieva, pp. 509-30).

Fotowwat-nāma-ye solṭāni, a treatise on spiritual chivalry and its relationship to Sufism and medieval guild life in Iran (ed. M.-J. Maḥjub, Tehran, 1971; tr. J. R. Crook as *The Royal Book of Spiritual Chivalry (Futūwat nāmah-yi sulṭāni)*, Chicago, 2000; Ridgeon, 2010, pp. 99-108). The ascription of the work to Kašefi has sometimes been viewed as problematic (Loewen, p. 544, n. 6).

Jawāher al-tafsir le-toḥfat al-Amir, a lettrist Qor'ān commentary in twenty-two chapters written for the author's patron 'Ali-Šir Navā'i, only one volume of which was apparently completed in 890/1485, with volume two incomplete in 892/1487 (ed. J. 'Abbāsi, Tehran, 2000; Alisher Navoi, p. 143, tr., p. 93; Āqā Bozorg Tehrāni, V, pp. 265-66).

Lobb-e lobāb-e Maṭnawi (read: *ma'nawi*), an abridged anthology of selections from the *Maṭnawi* of Jalāl-al-Din Moḥammad Rumi, compiled in 875/1470-71 (ed. N. Taqawi, Tehran, 1965). *Lobāb-e ma'nawi fi entekāb-e Maṭnawi*, an anthology of selections from the *Maṭnawi* of Jalāl-al-Din Moḥammad Rumi (unpublished).

Maḳzan al-enšā', a treatise on Persian epistolography, completed in 907/1501-2 for 'Ali-Šir Navā'i and dedicated to Solṭān-Ḥosayn (Mitchell, pp. 488-94).

Maršad al-asnā fi estekrāj asmā' al-ḥosnā, a lettrist treatise on the divine Names (published lith. in India).

Mawāheb-e 'aliya, or *Tafsir-e ḥosayni*, a popular Qor'ān commentary composed in 897-99/1491-94 for 'Ali-Šir Navā'i, whose name is alluded to in the title (ed. M.-R. Jalāli Nā'ini, 4 vols., Tehran, 1938-50; Sands, pp. 469-83).

Rawzat al-šohadā', an 'Alid martyrology in ten chapters and a conclusion, which focuses largely on Imam Ḥosayn and the tragic events at Karbalā', composed in 908/1502-3 (ed. Ayatollah Ḥājj Sheikh A. Ša'rāni, repr. ed., Tehran,



2000-2001; Ja'fariān, pp. 183-201; Amanat, pp. 258-69; Āqā Bozorg Ṭehrāni, XI, pp. 294-95). It was dedicated to Sayyed 'Abd-Allāh Mirzā, known as Sayyed Mirzā, who appears to have been a sayyed and *naqib*, who married Solṭān-Ḥosayn's daughter Maryam Solṭān Biki (Kāšefi, *Rawzat al-šohadā'*, pp. 12-13, 419). (Some sources [e.g., Nafisi, Yousofi] refer to him as Mirzā Moršed-al-Din 'Abd-Allāh and as a nephew of Solṭān-Ḥosayn.) It was translated into Turkish as *Ḥadiqat al-šo'adā'* by **Moḥammad Foḏuli**.

al-Resāla al-'aliya fi'l-aḥādīṭ al-nabawiya, a commentary on forty prophetic Traditions in eight chapters, completed in 875/1470-71 and dedicated to the marshal (*naqib*) of sayyeds in Sabzavār, Šams-al-Din Abu'l- Ma'āli 'Ali, Moḳtār Nassāba 'Obaydi, whose name is alluded to in the title (ed. Sayyed J. Moḥaddet, Tehran, 1966, p. 2; Āqā Bozorg Ṭehrāni, XI, p. 211; for the patron, see K̄vāndamir, 1984, IV, p. 613).

Resāla-ye ḥātemiya, a treatise about the famous pre- Islamic figure Ḥātem al-Ṭā'i, completed 891/1486 and dedicated to Solṭān-Ḥosayn (ed. M.-R. Jalāli Nā'ini, Tehran, 1941; tr. Ridgeon, 2011, pp. 175-214).

Sab'a-ye kāšefiya, a treatise on astrology and astronomy comprising seven books: *Mawāheb Zoḥal*; *Mayāmen al-Moštari*; *Sawāṭe' al-Merriḳ*; *Lawāme' al-Šams*; *Mabāhej al-Zohra*; *Manāhej 'Oṭāred*; and *Lawāyeḥ al-Qamar*, or *Eḳtiārāt al-nojum*. In his list K̄vāndamir (1984, IV, p. 345) mentions only the *Eḳtiārāt*, which was composed in 878/1473-74 for the Timurid vizier Majd-al-Din Moḥammad K̄vāfi. In fact, it is the only book of Kāšefi's septet that appears to have survived (Tourkin and Vesel, pp. 591-97).

Saḥifa-ye šāhi, an abridged version of *Maḳzan al-enshā'*, dedicated to Solṭān-Ḥosayn (published lith. in India.).

Šarḥ Ketāb al-sorur fi 'elm al-šan'a, on alchemy (published lith. in India).

Šarḥ-e Maṭnawi, a commentary on the *Maṭnawi* of Jalālal- Din Moḥammad Rumi.

Zād al-mosāferin, a versified treatise in *maṭnawi* form (lith. published in India).

B. Works Mentioned in Various Biographies and Bibliographies

Āina-ye sekandari, or *Jām-e Jam*, a treatise on computation. *Divān-e Kāšefi*, anthology of Kāšefi's poems. *Fayḏ al-nawāl fi bayān al-zawāl*. *Faḏl al-šalāt*



ʿalaʿlnabi. Jāmeʿ al-settin, a commentary in Arabic on Sura Yusof. *Mā lā bodda fiʿl-maḍhab*, a catechism. *Maʿāref al-yaqin. Mafātiḥ al-konuz*, a treatise on alchemy. *Majāles al-waʿz*, a compilation of sermons attributed to Kāşefi. *Manāqeb al-awliāʿ*, a Sufi hagiography. *Mayāmen al-ektesāb fi qawāʿed al-eḥtesāb*, a treatise on the duties of the *moḥtaseb*. *Menhāj al-welāya. Merʿāt al-şafā fi şefāt al-Moştafā*, on the attributes of the prophet Moḥammad. *Moḳtaşar al-jawāher*, an abridgement of the Qorʿān commentary *Jawāher al-tafsir. al-Naqāwa fi adab al-telāwa*, on the modes of recitation of the Qorʿān. *Resāla dar ʿelm-e aʿdād*, a treatise on numerology. *Resāla dar awrād wa adʿeya*, a pharmacopoeia. *Resāla-ye ʿolwiya*, written for the Naqşbandi sheikh ʿObayd-Allāh Aḥrār. *Ṭabaqāt-e k̄vājagān-e Naqşbandiya*, a spiritual genealogy of the sheikhs of the Naqşbandi Sufi order. *al-Toḥfa al-ʿaliya fi ʿelm al-ḥoruf wa bayān asrārehā*, on letter theory. *Toḥfat al-şalāt*, a treatise in eight chapters on ritual prayer, composed 899/1493-94.

Kāşefi’s writings very much reflected the ideas and trends current in literate and elite circles in his time in Timurid Khorasan. Kāşefi was not a trendsetter but a brilliant recorder and preserver of his society’s defining features and ideological concerns. These may be characterized as a proclivity for esotericism (in Qorʿān interpretation, literary taste, and the interest in Sufism and the occult sciences); an emphasis on ethics and ethical conduct (in the realm of politics, religion, and society as a whole, especially as evidenced by the notion of *fotowwat*, or spiritual chivalry; see [JAVĀNMARDI](#)); and an acceptance of functional theories of the hierarchical structuring of society. All of Kāşefi’s works may be viewed as falling into one or more of these broad categories.

It is difficult to find in Kāşefi’s works, all of which were composed well before the advent of the Safavids to Khorasan, convincing evidence of anything more than pious devotion to the *ahl al-bayt*, a characteristic feature of pre-Safavid Sunni religiosity in the eastern Islamic world (see Jaʿfariān, p. 178). The fact that he composed his *Fotowwat-nāma-ye solṭāni* for the administrators of the shrine of the eighth Shiʿite Imam, ʿAli b. Musā al-Rezā (q.v.), at Mashad (*benām-e ḳoddām-e mazār-e . . . emām-e tamām . . . wa solṭān al-awliāʿ* . . . ʿAli b. Musā; *Fotowwatnāma*, p. 4) should be understood in this light, and not as an indication of his adherence to Shiʿism as such (Amanat’s suggestion [p. 252] that the work was dedicated to the Imam is at odds with information in the work itself). In fact, in the introduction to the work, Kāşefi enumerates the names of the four Orthodox caliphs, Abu Bakr, ʿOmar, ʿOṭmān, and ʿAli



(*Fotowwat-nāma*, p. 3). Moreover, Kāšefi was affiliated with the Naqšbandi Sufi order, which was known for its strictly Sunni orientation, particularly under the leadership of K̄vāja ‘Obayd-Allāh Aḥrār. Kāšefi even wrote a treatise on the spiritual genealogy of the K̄vājagān, or masters of the Naqšbandi order. He also belonged to the fraternity of *fotowwat*, or spiritual chivalry, in which his spiritual master (*šayk-e tariqat*), Nur-al-Din Aḥmad b. Moḥammad Qāyeni, appears to have been the son of the well-known Hanafite jurist, preacher, and traditionist of Timurid Herat, Jalāl-al-Din Qāyeni (d. 838/1434-35; Kāšefi, *Fotowwat-nāma*, p. 123; Subtelny and Khalidov, 1995, pp. 218 ff., 228). Given that he was appointed chief judge of the Šari‘a for the sub-province of Bayhaq by the Timurid authorities, and later named superior of a Sufi lodge built for him by the Timurid ruler Solṭān-Ḥosayn in Herat, it is highly unlikely that Kāšefi could have been a Shi‘ite. It is noteworthy that Ḥakim Šāh-Moḥammad Qazvini, one of the translators of ‘Ali-Šir Navā‘i’s *Majāles al-nafā‘es* and a near-contemporary of his, stated emphatically that, even though Kāšefi came from Sabzavār, he was not a Shi‘ite (Alisher Navoi, tr., p. 268).

Kāšefi’s religious orientation has always been brought into question, even in his own time (Ja‘fariān, pp. 175- 83; Kāšefi, *Jawāher al-tafsir*, introduction, pp. 83-93). Many scholars consider him to be a Shi‘ite, largely on account of his authorship of the ‘Alid martyrology, *Rawzat al-šohadā’*, the work for which he is best known, but also because he came from Sabzavār, historically a Shi‘ite center (Šuštari, I, pp. 113-14, 547-48; Amanat, pp. 250-54). Unfortunately, preoccupation with this question has eclipsed the important contribution Kāšefi made in researching older, chiefly Arabic, sources in writing *Rawzat al-šohadā’* in order to address a Persian-speaking audience.

In sum, it appears that Kāšefi was appropriated by the Safavids and presented as a Shi‘ite in order to justify their adoption of the *Rawzat al-šohadā’* as a quasi-canonical text that served as the standard script used in the performance of the Shi‘ite passion play (*ta‘zia*; Babayan, p. 178). In fact, the term *rawza-k̄vāni*, which is still used today to denote the recitation of the tragedy of Karbalā’, is taken from the title of his work.



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