



## ḲATM AL-ĠARĀ'EB

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**ḲATM AL-ĠARĀ'EB** (generally known under the title it has later been given, *Toḥfat al-'Erāqayn*; see below), the only maṭnawi written by the poet **Ḳāqāni Šervāni**, over three thousand verses long, in the meter *hazaj-e mosaddas-e akṛab-e maqbuḏ-e maḥḍuf*; its final version dates from 552/1157. This date is inferred from Ḳāqāni's mention of an unlucky conjunction—which we know from other sources was predicted for the year 1186 (see, for instance, s.v. **Anwari**)—as being thirty years away (p. 140, vv. 1-2). One of the poem's last verses (p. 250, v. 3) seems to contain a chronogram yielding the same date (Beelaert, 2000, p. 10, n. 49).

In the edition of Yaḥyā Qarib, the poem is divided into seven *maqālāt*; from the evidence in the manuscript tradition a division into six *maqālāt* (in which the third and fourth *maqāla* of the edition are joined into one) seems to be more likely the original one.

*Summary.* In some manuscripts (see below), as well as in the edition of Qarib (pp. 1-11), the poem is preceded by a prose foreword, in which Ḳāqāni offers his work to Jamāl-al-Din Mawṣeli, the vizier of the Zangids.

The poem opens with a twenty-three-verse long lament about the world and a visionary picture of its nearing apocalyptic end. This melancholy beginning sets the tone for the rest of the poem and is rooted both in Ḳāqāni's own plight and in the general belief at the time that the abovementioned conjunction would signal the end of the world. After this opening begins the first panegyric address to the sun, a sun which will be the addressee for nearly



two-thirds of the poem, until there is a sudden shift to Jamāl-al-Din Mawṣeli, the poem's ultimate dedicatee. The sun is cast in the role of a friend, to whom the poet can confide his sorrows, and, from *maqāla* three on, in the role of a messenger, whom he asks to perform the pilgrimage he claims to be unable to perform himself and whom he asks to deliver in Mecca and Medina, respectively, the panegyrics of the Ka'ba and the Prophet. Repeated lyrical addresses to the sun punctuate the maṭnawi.

In the first two *maqālāt* (ed. Qarib, pp. 13-77), which are highly allegorical and have the form of a *récit visionnaire* ("visionary recital"), Kāqāni recounts how he leaves Šervān (Shirvan) for a trip to a mountainous region (Qohestān), where he has a conversation with an unnamed *k̄vāja-ye bozorg* (a term sometimes used to denote a vizier), who does not allow him to speak to an unspecified *solṭān/šāh*, to whom Kāqāni would like to present himself as a panegyrist (*tanāgar*). This *k̄vāja-ye bozorg* lectures him for beggary (*kodya*), which should be interpreted as writing poetry for profit, in other words, for his Cupidity (*āz*), which will prove to be this maṭnawi's major theme. On Kāqāni's demand for a small present, the *k̄vāja-ye bozorg* gives him a ring, which he is in no circumstance to give away or sell and which appears to be an antidote against this vice of Cupidity. Kāqāni then presents himself back in Šervān, resisting the pressure exerted by the Šervānšāh to give or sell him this ring, and recounts in metaphorical terms his struggle with Cupidity, until one evening he goes to the regions of reflection (*tafakkor*), where the Intellect (*'aql*) guides and cures him, and a morning of insight dawns. At this point the prophet Keẓr appears, and a long conversation between them follows. Keẓr lectures the poet as the *k̄vāja-ye bozorg* did before; his exhortations are, first, directed to anybody with a position in this world, and then more specifically to the position of a court poet. Again, the moral dubiousness of using one's talents in this way is put forward, and the alternative offered is clear: the best *mamduḥ* (person to be eulogized) is the Prophet. Indeed the second *maqāla* ends with this poem's first long panegyric of Moḥammad— including a description of his *me'rāj*—in which Kāqāni takes an oath to praise no other person than him or, possibly, other persons who qualify because of their moral or religious stature.

In *maqāla* three (p. 77 ff.) Kāqāni describes himself as being "imprisoned" in his hometown, Šamāka, and unable to visit the Holy Places. He incites himself to go to the "Ka'ba of the heart" (*ka'ba-ye del*) and then sends the sun on a journey to the real Ka'ba. The rest of the poem is mostly taken up by the



description Kāqāni gives to the sun of the road it has to follow, the places and the people to visit, and the panegyrics of these persons. Eventually, after Hamadān, Baghdad, Kufa, Mecca, and Medina, the sun is asked to visit Mosul, to visit and praise Jamāl-al-Din Mawṣeli, and describe his journey to him. Then, abruptly, there is a shift of addressee from the sun to Jamāl-al-Din (p. 187, v. 6). The choice of this man of a high moral stature as a *mamduḥ* finally solves the poet's dilemma as to whether he should dedicate his poetry to worldly or religious causes. In this last section Kāqāni praises, among others, members of his own family and offers us some autobiographic information. The poem closes with a highly fanciful, twenty-eight-verse long epilogue (*kātema*), in which the sun reenters the stage. In the elaborate scene sketched there, the sun first offers to Kāqāni the pearls (i.e., the words) he had stolen from Jamāl-al-Din, and eventually returns them to the vizier in the form of a necklace strung by Kāqāni, that is, presents him the poem (Beelaert, 2000, pp. 11-13 and *passim*).

*Generic affiliation of the poem.* From this description one can see that, although in secondary literature the poem generally has been characterized as a “travelogue” in which Kāqāni describes his own first *hajj* (which he indeed performed around 1156), albeit in a “poetical form” (e.g., by Rypka, 1968, p. 205), actually, except from the *récit visionnaire* in the first two *maqālāt*, the poet presents himself as bound to his hometown. When one situates the poem in the context of poems preceding or contemporary with it, disregarding the poetic form in which they were written, and thus taking notice both of *maṭnawis* and of *qaṣidas*, it becomes clear to which genre it belongs: the *ṣakwā'īya* (“complaint poem”), and more precisely to a sub-genre thereof, the *ḥabsiya* (“prison poem”; see de Bruijn, s.v. *Ḥabsiyya* in *EI*<sup>2</sup>). Kāqāni himself wrote many *qaṣidas* belonging to both these genres. Moreover, the poem is connected with numerous other poems in which a “messenger” has a structural function. This personage is already commonly found in Arabic *qaṣidas* (see Renate Jacobi, *Studien zur Poetik der altarabischen Qaside*, Wiesbaden, 1971, pp. 81, 204, and others), and often it is a human figure or, more poetically, the wind. Sanā'i's *Kārnāma-ye Balk*, written half a century earlier, is a prior example of a *maṭnawi* in which a messenger, in this case the wind, is apostrophized throughout the poem, and is asked to travel to another town, in this case, Ghazna/*Gazni*, and visit a number of its inhabitants to deliver a message to them. Also the *ḥabsiya*, in which the poet's plight is specified as an “imprisonment,” sometimes features a messenger, being the only way open to him to communicate with the outside world. A wide range of



items was cast in this role of messenger; the sun, however, seems to be an innovation by Kāqāni (see Beelaert, 2000, pp. 36-48). Likewise, in the substantial corpus of Persian poems in which a poet voices a complaint, he often expresses the need of a “friend,” and a great many items are cast in this role; in this case as well, the sun is an uncommon choice (Beelaert, 2000, pp. 48-54).

*The role of the sun.* In this poem Kāqāni makes extensive use of the many connotations of the sun, and these illuminate his choice for the sun in the roles of both friend and messenger. Indeed, by metaphorical and metonymical links, Kāqāni ascribes to the sun characteristics which make it an analogue of this poem’s most important figures, namely himself, the Prophet Moḥammad, and Jamāl-al-Din Mawṣeli, as well as of his own cardinal vice, Cupidity—and of his *mamduḥ*’s cardinal virtues, Generosity (*sakā*) and “aspiration” (*hemmat*). Thus, he characterizes both himself and the sun as being “ill,” yellow, and grieving (Beelaert, 2000, pp. 61-65). Likewise, when in the autobiographical passage Kāqāni describes his own poetical activity in terms of the professions of his family members, to wit, weaver, cook, and physician, these same professions are also ascribed to the sun (*ibid.*, pp. 54-61). Moḥammad figures in the poem in the capacity of a physician too, and extensively so; the disease from which he has to cure Kāqāni is his Cupidity (*ibid.*, pp. 87-93). It is then the sun’s fieriness which makes it an analogue of the “fiery” vice of Cupidity itself (*ibid.*, pp. 65-69), a relation which is further strengthened by his extensive portrayal of the sun as a maker of gold (in conformity with medieval scientific theory), gold being both the object of Kāqāni’s own greed (*ibid.*, pp. 69-73) and, of course, of Jamāl-al-Din’s proverbial generosity (*ibid.*, pp. 93-101). Finally, the sun in being “high” is made an analogue of the virtue of *hemmat*, both that of Jamāl-al-Din, who expresses it in his Generosity, and that of Kāqāni himself, which in his case is his aspiration to get rid of his Cupidity (*ibid.*, pp. 101-9). Moreover, sending the sun, as emblem of *hemmat*, to perform the *hajj* instead of performing it himself can be taken to signify making the pilgrimage to the *ka’ba-ye del*, a necessary first stage to make the *hajj* a meaningful act (*ibid.*, pp. 109-11).

This maṭnawī is a truly dazzling example of “innovative display of figurative language” or *badi’*, and even more than that. *Badi’* here is far from being only decorative or superficial, but on the contrary it proves to be deeply motivated by the poem’s ethical content. It is one of the most eminent examples of sophisticated use of “ornament” in the whole of classical Persian literature.



*The circumstances of Kāqāni composing this maṭnawī.* Ḥosayn Āmuzgār (1954) was the first to note that in this maṭnawī Kāqāni portrays himself as being prevented from leaving Šervān; however, his conclusion that the poem antedates Kāqāni's *hajj* might be taking the "plot" of the poem too literally. Most probably Kāqāni did not compose his maṭnawī in one single period of his life; it looks as if he finished it a considerable time after having already composed parts of it. If the idea of giving his poem the form of a *ḥabsiya* might have been rooted in a possible initial difficulty of getting the permission of his patron, the Šervānšāh, to relinquish the court, by the time he finished the poem this had ceased to be relevant. The "imprisonment" in this final version is to be taken allegorically, as referring to his being "stuck" in the dilemma of finding the ideal *mamduḥ* for his poetry.

As it happens, Kāqāni offers important information about this maṭnawī, and its date, in one of his other poems, namely the qaṣida in praise of Isfahan (*Divān*, pp. 353- 58). In this qaṣida, the poet, wanting to show his love for the city, devotes eleven verses (vv. 37-47) to, according to him, the most glaring proof of his love, his poem *Ḳatm al-ḡarā'eb*. It had already been argued, on the clues given in the qaṣida itself, that this referred to no other poem than the well-known *Toḥfat al-'Erāqayn* (Beelaert, 1995). Definite proof was given when the oldest manuscript of the maṭnawī, dating from Kāqāni's own lifetime, appeared to bear this title (see below). In this "Isfahan qaṣida," Kāqāni refers to how, in the year 551 (*tā nun ālef*)/1156-57 in the city of Mosul, Jamāl-al-Din "took the present I brought from a journey, in praise of Isfahan" to the "little 'Ali" (which refers to 'Ali Küçük, the military commander of Mosul at the time), and the "big Atabeg" (which must be Mosul's ruler, the Atabeg Qoṭb-al-Din Mawdud) and praised him before "Solaymān Šāh," who was the pretender to the Saljuq throne and who was, as we know, held captive in Mosul in precisely 1156-57. Kāqāni also thanks Jamāl-al-Din for the "thousand stars, offspring of the sun," an unambiguous reference to the golden dinars he has received from him (more details in Beelaert, 1995 and 2007-08). The information offered in this qaṣida can be supplemented by that found in the maṭnawī's prose foreword, which can be considered as a kind of accompanying letter. Here Kāqāni urges himself to offer his poem to Jamāl-al-Din (whom he names "Syria's Ka'ba") and to proceed to "Arabia's Ka'ba," and asks for a reward of, indeed, a thousand dinars. Apparently, he did succeed in presenting it and in receiving his reward; we cannot know whether it was on the way there, as planned, or on the way back. There are good reasons to surmise, as Kandli has done (1969), that the poet put a finishing touch to his poem during a stay in



**Darband** after his return from the *hajj* (for more details, see Beelaert, 2000, p. 10, n. 48; p. 30, n. 6; and p. 101, n. 297). Jamāl-al-Din was a particularly appropriate *mamduḥ* for this poem which complains about the unattainable goal of seeing Mecca and Medina: although famous in his own lifetime for the fortune he spent to the embellishment of the Holy Places, he never had the opportunity to make the *hajj* himself (Beelaert, 2000, pp. 121-25).

*Manuscripts.* This maṭnawī is included in manuscripts of the *Kolliyāt* (see Monzawi, *Noskaha* III, pp. 1856-57) and is found either separately (see Monzawi, IV, pp. 2714-18) or together with texts by other authors, as is the case with the second oldest MS, dated Rabi' II 791/April 1389, Istanbul, Suleymaniye Library, MS pers. Aya Sofya 1762/2, together with Sanā'i's *Ḥadiqat al-ḥaqīqa* (s.v.) copied in the same year (Ateş, 1968, *Istanbul kütüphanelerinde*, no 83; Beelaert, 2000, pp. 23-25). The oldest MS of the text, recently discovered by Iraj Afšār in the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek (Vienna, Austrian National Library, MS pers. Cod. Mixt. 845), is dated 12 Jomāda I 593/2 April 1197 (facsimile ed. with long introduction by Afšār, 2006; detailed review Beelaert, 2007-08; on the spelling in the MS, Matini, 2007-08 and 2009, pp. 26-27). This is the only MS in which the poem bears the original title *Ḳatm al-ġarā'eb*. Instead of the title *Toḥfat al-'Erāqayn*, the title *Toḥfat al-ḵawāṭer wa zobdat al-żamā'er* is sometimes found as the closing sentence of the prose introduction. However, not all MSS include this introduction (e.g., the Vienna MS), and the Aya Sofya MS, for instance, does include the introduction but without this last sentence.

*Influence on some other maṭnawīs.* This maṭnawī may not be a “travelogue” itself, but poets who did write a versified account of their travels sometimes took Ḳāqāni's poem as an example. Among these are a number of Safavid poets: Malek Šāh Ḥosayn Sistāni (*Toḥfat al-ḥaramayn*), Šaraf-al-Din Šefā'i (*Maṭla' al-anwār*), Beheštī Haravī (*Nūr al-mašreqayn*, ed. Najīb Māyel Haravī, Mašhad, 1998), and the little-known Sā'i (*Mer'āt al-ṭariq*, MS Leiden University Library, Or. 1620) (Beelaert, 2000, p. 11, n. 53). Another example of a *nażira* (emulation) of Ḳāqāni's poem is the small philosophical maṭnawī *Ḳatm al-ġarā'eb*, a pseudo-epigraphic work which, because of its title, has been erroneously considered as a work by Ḳāqāni himself (ed. Ž. Sajjādi, 1965, reprinted in Afšār, 2006; see Beelaert, 1995 and 2007-08).



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