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KAYKĀVUS B. ESKANDAR

KAYKĀVUS (also Kaykāʾus) **b. ESKANDAR** b. Qābus b. Vošmgir, Amir ʿOnṣor-al-Maʿāli, the author of a famous Mirror for Princes, best known as the *Qābus-nāma*, although other, more general titles such as *Naṣiḥat-nāma*, or *Pand-nāma*, also occur in the sources. He was born about 412/1021 as a prince of the Ziarid dynasty, which a century earlier had been founded by the Deylami chieftain Mardāvij b. Ziār in the Caspian coastland of Ṭabarestān. The independent rule of the Ziarids came to an end in the first half of the 5th/11th century. First they had to accept the suzerainty of Sultan Maḥmud of Ghazna, and in 433/1041 they were overrun by the Saljuq Toḡrel Beg. Kaykāvus and his son Gilānšāh were the last members of their house known to history, but it is unclear whether or not they still reigned over a reduced area in the Alborz mountains.

From the information the author provides in his own work we know that he spent many years away from his homeland traveling apparently as an exiled nobleman. He stayed for eight years at the court of Ghazna with Sultan Mawdud b. Maḥmud (r. 1041-50), where he married a daughter of Sultan Maḥmud (*Qābus-nāma*, ed. Yusofi, p. 234). Having performed the pilgrimage to Mecca, he went to Arrān and stayed for some time in Ganja at the court of the Shaddadid ruler Abu'l-Asvār Šāvor b. Faẓlun. He took part in campaigns on the frontiers of the Islamic world both on the Indian Subcontinent and in Trancaucasia (*Qābus-nāma*, ed. Yusofi, p. 41). In 475/1082, at the age of sixty-three, he completed the *Qābus-nāma*, with the aim to pass on to his son the experience of his own life (Op. cit., p. 263). His final years are obscure and so is

the dating of his death. The poet Masʿud-e Saʿd-e Salmān mentions an Amir Kaykāvus among the courtiers of Širzād b. Masʿud, the Ghaznavid viceroy of India at Lahore. If this refers to the author of the *Qābus-nāma*, he would have lived at least until the last decade of the 5th/11th century (Masʿud-e Saʿd-e Salmān, II, p. 796; cf. Ṣafā, p. 899).

According to the author's introduction, his work was written as a book of advice (*ketāb-e pandhā*) for his son, and perhaps his successor, Gilānšāh. He acknowledges that young people usually do not heed the advice of their elders, but adds that, even if his own son would not listen to his words, they might be useful to others. The royal descent of the family is stressed with a reference to a heroic pedigree going back to the Sasanian kings. Several of his ancestors were local rulers. The contents of the book would be of value to Gilānšāh, were he to become a ruler, but also if he would have to look around for another occupation. In forty-four chapters a wide spectrum of subjects is treated, which show how one should lead a good, noble and useful life in this world and prepare oneself for the hereafter, both in private circumstances and in the execution of various functions and trades. The *Qābus-nāma* offers a very complete picture of medieval Persian society seen from the point of view of an aristocrat, but with a keen understanding of matters pertaining to ordinary life.

In the introduction the author states his intentions and stresses the noblesse oblige incumbent upon the scion of a line of distinguished ancestors. The preface is concluded by a list of the forty-four chapters.

The first two chapters deal, in accordance to Islamic convention, with the uniqueness (*tawḥid*) of God, the creation of the world, and the prophethood as a divine institution maintaining a hierarchical social and political order (*tartib wa siāsat*) in the world. Chapters 3 and 4 treat of the pillars of religion, especially prayer, fasting and the pilgrimage, and their importance for life in this world as well as for the next. A few chapters follow about general moral principles such as the respect due to one's parents (chap. 5); the acquisition of merits and skills (*honarhā*), which is an obligation even to someone of noble birth (chap. 6); and a discussion of the necessity to acquire verbal skills, followed by a series of maxims said to have been written in Pahlavi on the walls of the tomb of the Sasanian king Ḵosrow I Anōširvān (pp. 531-79), the most famous ancestor of the Ziarid house (chap. 7-8). Then various aspects of personal life are reviewed, including the advantages of being young and the increasing disabilities of old age; the etiquette of social behavior (table

manners and how to limit the consequences of indulging in the sin of drinking wine); taking part in entertainments by playing chess and backgammon, gambling and making jokes; love and the enjoyment of sex with boys and women; having a hot bath, sleeping and taking one's rest (chaps. 9-17); the participation in sports, the chase, and the game of polo (chaps. 18-19). After a chapter on warfare (chap. 20), attention is given to economical life, in particular the accumulation of wealth, the running of a household, and the purchase of slaves and horses (chaps. 21-25). These personal advices are completed with discussions about marriage and the raising of children (chap. 26-27); how to make friends and how to deal with enemies (chaps. 28-29); and the dispensation of pardon and punishment (chap. 30). Then the most important walks of life are reviewed: religious offices, commerce, the practice of medicine, astrology and mathematics, the crafts of the court poet and the minstrel-musician (chaps. 31-36), the service of kings, the qualities of a courtier, a secretary, a minister, a military commander, and finally the ruler himself (chaps. 37-42). The survey is concluded, first, by a chapter on husbandry and artisanship (chap. 43) and then by an exposition of the fundamental ideals of chivalry (*javānmardi*) and the attitude of the ascetic beggar (*darviš*), showing Kaykāvus' affinity with Sufi ideas current in his times (chap. 44).

The book is a one of the masterpieces of early Persian prose, written in a lively, direct and intimate style just as one would expect to find in a father's memoir to his son. Its language is close to standard classical Persian, although it has kept a number of archaic traits. The use of Arabic words is moderate and the mode of expression is straightforward, without rhetorical embellishment or the use of parallel phrases. Although the author generally takes the attitude of an interested amateur, occasionally he introduces the technical terms current in the trade being described, such as listings of equine diseases (chap. 25) and of metrical and rhetorical terms (chap. 35). Remarkable is further his excursion on the qualities of slaves on the basis of their ethnic characteristics (chap. 23). The manuscripts which are still extant show traces of later textual changes, which limit the value of the book as a source for historical linguistic research (cf. Lazard, pp.100-3).

Most chapters contain anecdotes in which Greek philosophers (Plato, Socrates), Persian kings, Caliphs, and other personalities from Islamic history, such as the Buyid vizier Ṣāḥeb Esmāʿil b. ʿAbbād (d. 385/995), appear, but there are also anonymous tales about common people. Of special interest are the

stories that deal with the Ghaznavid and Shaddadid rulers with whom Kaykāvus had been in contact personally (the anecdotes in the *Qābus-nāma* are listed in Browne, II, pp. 279-80). The poetical inserts are in most cases quatrains composed by the author, which betray only modest poetical talents. One of these quatrains is in the Ṭabari dialect and is followed by a rendering into Dari Persian (pp. 98-99). Among the few other poets cited are Abu'l-Šakur of Balḵ, the author of the didactical *maṯnawi* *Āfarin-nāma* (comp. in 337/947), and Kaykāvus' contemporary Asjadi, but of the great poets of the early 11th century only Farroḵi Sistāni is present with no more than one half-verse (p. 150). No Arabic verse are quoted, but the author shows a great fondness for proverbs, both Arabic and Persian.

Edward Browne, who gave a summary of the *Qābus-nāma*, which is still worth reading (II, pp. 276-87), praised the wit and wisdom of this book and its "curious mixture of craft and simplicity, of skepticism and piety," which makes it look "wonderfully modern at times". The most detailed analysis of the *Qābus-nāma* to date was made by Charles-Henri de Fouchécour (pp. 179-223).

Manuscripts. The number of manuscripts of the *Qābus-nāma* that are presently known is rather limited. The earliest dated manuscript, written in 624/1227, belongs to the Fâteh-collection of the Süleymaniye Libary, Istanbul, and was discovered by Mojtabā Minovi. This copy was chosen by Ḡolām-Ḥoseyn Yusofi as the basis for his critical edition. Other ancient copies are kept in the Leiden University Library, the British Library in London, the Bibliothèque Nationale of Paris, and the Melli-e Malek Library of Tehran; the last mentioned formed the basis of Saʿid Nafisi's edition (see further Lazard, pp. 100-3; Yusofi, pp. 30-51, with facsimiles). About 1950 an illustrated manuscript of the *Qābus-nāma*, containing words seemingly close to Middle Persian, emerged, but this was soon unmasked as a modern forgery (cf. Yarshater, with further references).

Editions. The lithographical edition by Reżāqoli Khan Hedāyat (Tehran, 1285/1868), was qualified by Reuben Levy as a "bazaar" text (Kaykāvus b. Eskandar**, tr.** Levy, p. xxi), but according to Gilbert Lazard is still of some value (p. 100); it remained the basic printed text and was reprinted several times in Tehran and Bombay. Another lithograph was prepared by Moḥammad Ḵalil-al-Raḥmān (Bombay, 1334/1916). Saʿid Nafisi published the text anew from an early manuscript in 1943 and made a selection from the text for the use of students (*Montaḵabāt-e Qābus-nāma*, Tehran, 1941). The edition by Reuben Levy was criticized for its eclectic use of the variant

readings (cf. Yusofi, pp. 27-28). Yusofi's own edition is the best available at present.

Translations. The *Qābus-nāma* was translated several times into Turkish. The earliest one presently known is an undated version from the 14th century, which was edited in facsimile by Eleazar Birnbaum (Duxbury, Mass., 1981). In 835/1431, Merjemek b. Aḥmad b. Elyās made a new translation to the order of the Ottoman Sultan Morād II (ed. Kazan, 1298/1880-81; ed. Orhan Şaik Gökyay, Istanbul, 1944; 2nd ed. in 2 vols., Istanbul, 1974). A later translation was prepared by Naẓmizādā Moṣṭafā in 1117/1705. A version was made in Tatar Turkish by ʿAbd al-Qayyūm b. ʿAbd-al-Nāṣer (Kazan, 1300/1882), and in Uzbek Turkish by Muhammad Rizo Ogahi (Tashkent, 1994).

The first European translation was made in German by Heinrich Friedrich von Diez (1811), with an extensive introduction. It was based on the Ottoman Turkish translations (cf. Introd., pp. 179-80), and has become renowned because it was used by Johann Wolfgang Goethe as a source for his notes to his *West-östlicher Divan* (1819; *Werke,* pp. 516-21, see also the commentary, pp. 826-27). A. Querry made the first rendering into French (1886) from the Persian text as published by Reżāqoli Khan Hedāyat.

Other translations are, in English: by P. B. Vachha, (1916) and by Reuben Levy (1951), following the translator's own edition of the Persian text; in German: by Seifeddin Najmabadi and Wolfgang Knauth (1988); in Italian: by Riccardo Zipoli (1990); in Russian: by O. S. Lebedev (Kazan, 1886), after the Tatar Turkish translation and by Evagnĭ E. Berthels (Moscow, 1953, 1958); in Arabic: by Amin Abu'l-Majid Badawi (1958); and in Georgian: by Amiran Lomtadze (Tiflis, 1978).

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