



KANJAR BEG, MIRZĀ

KANJAR BEG, Mirzā (میرزا خنجر بیگ, d. after 1567), a poet and scholar of sixteenth-century Mughal India. He flourished in the reigning period of emperors Nāṣer-al-Din [Homāyun](#) (r. 937-47, 962-63/1530-40, 1555-56) and Jalāl-al-Din [Akbar I](#) (r. 963-1014/1556-1605).

He has attained a significant place in the history of Indo-Persian poetry due to his famous *maṭnawī*, *Naṣā'eḥ ba Pādšāh Akbar* and the introduction of a new, political, advisory tradition in Indo-Persian poetry. While the tradition of writing poetry praising Akbar prevailed at his court and all the poets were busy composing *qaṣidas* panegyricizing him, Kanjar Beg, as a well-wisher, gave some valuable advice to him on the management of state affairs and tried to make him conscious of the significance of a sovereign power and his responsibilities as a ruler (see below).

Kanjar Beg was one of the [Chaghatay](#) nobles and a relative of Tardī Beg Khan, a powerful Turāni noble and military commander. Most probably, Kanjar Beg came to India with the Mughal Emperor Homāyun, and he lived up to the early years of Akbar's reign. When Tardi Beg Khan was appointed the governor of Delhi Province, Kanjar Beg was also with him. He was one of those several persons who brought Homāyun's dead body to Sirhind after his accidental death at Delhi in 1556 ('Allāmi, II, p. 66, tr., p. 102). He was also the victim of Mughal court politics in the contest for power during Bayram (Bayrām) Khan's regency, and the personal rivalry of [Moḥammad Bayram Khan](#) and Tardi Beg.



When the Hindu commander Hemu attacked Delhi in October 1556, Tardi Beg fled from the battlefield and lost the battle. Later Bayram Khan put Tardi Beg to death due to his flight, at a time when Delhi, the center of the province he governed, was being attacked, without offering any substantial resistance. He also had Tardi Beg's adherents and companions, including Ḳanjar Beg, imprisoned for a while (ʿAllāmi, II, p. 32; tr., II, p. 52; Badāʿuni, II, p. 14; tr. Lowe, p. 7; Aḥmad, II, p. 131). Other information on his life and political activities is not discussed in the sources, except that, when the Mughal nobles Ali-qoli Ḳān-e Zamān and his brother, Bahādor Khan, revolted against Akbar in 1567, Ḳanjar Beg allied with them and fled into the eastern region. He was probably killed with Ḳān-e Zamān and Bahador Khan in the battle fought between the royal army led by Akbar himself and the army of rebels, on the banks of the Ganga River in 1567 (Badāʿuni, III, p. 227; tr., Haig, pp. 314-15; Šafiq, p. 91).

Ḳanjar Beg was more an intellectual scholar than a political activist. The contemporary sources describe him as a poet and musician with versatile talents. Badāʿuni praised him a great deal. In his view (III, p. 224; tr., Haig, p. 310), Ḳanjar Beg was “unequaled in the art of war, in calligraphy, in poetry, in the composition of enigmas, in general knowledge, in the use of the astrolabe, in astronomy, and in handling figures.” He was the author of several books, of which only his poetic collection is known. He also had excellent skill in composing music. Praising his musical skill, Badāʿuni says that he collected information from Persian and Hindu music and composed his own music. Unfortunately, no trace of his musical works has been left (Badāʿuni, III, p. 224; tr., Haig, pp. 310-11). It is surprising that historian Abuʿl-Faḏl ʿAllāmi (d. 1011/1602), who was Akbar's confidant and chief secretary, did not mention Ḳanjar Beg among poets. It is suggested in modern scholarship that Ḳanjar Beg's siding with persons of rebellious move was the reason for the neglect of Abuʿl-Faḏl (ʿAbd-al-Raḥmān, I, p. 434).

Ḳanjar Beg used the pen name Ḳanjar in his poetry, a collection of which, entitled *Diwān-e Ḳanjar*, has been preserved in the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford (Sachau and Ethé, I, col. 655a, no. 1032). It is a collection of lyrical poem in different modes of Persian poetry, including odes (*ḡazal*), fragments (*qeṭʿa*), stanzaic poems (*tarkib-band*, *tarji-band*), quatrains (*robāʿi*), and *maṭnawi* (poems in doublets). Edward Sachau and Hermann Ethé (ibid.) note a reference in the *Safina-ye Ḳwošgu* to the abovementioned *maṭnawi*, *Naṣāʿeh ba Pādšāh Akbar*. It was originally composed of one hundred fifty



couplets, but now only fifty-three couplets copied by Badā'uni have been preserved. The remaining ninety-seven couplets are out of the reach of historical documentation. It is a poetical text of advice and admonitions to Akbar on the art of government in general to make Akbar aware of what was happening behind his back with his subjects (e.g., Badā'uni, tr. Haig, pp. 311 ff.).

The exact date of the composition is not known. A thorough historical analysis, however, reveals that it was composed in the early years of Akbar's reign or during the period of Bayram Khan's regency (1556-60), particularly its second phase, after the second Battle of Panipat in November 1556, in which Hemu was mortally wounded. This phase starts with the arrival of royal ladies to India from Kabul (April 1557). The regent had complete control over state apparatus during this phase (Šafiq, p. 91; Khan, p. 22). A particularly noteworthy point concerning this poem is that it was read out before Akbar by the poet himself. According to Badā'uni, Akbar honored the poet with various gifts once the poem had been recited (Badā'uni, p. 226; tr. Haig, p. 314; Šafiq, p. 91; Raḥmān, I, p. 434).

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