



K̲VĀJU KERMĀNI

K̲VĀJU KERMĀNI, Abu'l-ʿAṭā Kamāl-al-Din Maḥmud b. ʿAli b. Maḥmud Moršedi, Persian poet and mystic (b. Kermān, 24 December 1290; d. Shiraz, 1349?). The nickname *K̲vāju*, which he used as his *taḳalloṣ* (poetic signature), is probably a diminutive of *k̲vāja* (Ṣafā, p. 888), and points to his descent from a family of high social status. The *nesba* Moršedi indicates his association with the Sufi order of **Shaikh Abu Eshāq Kāzaruni** (963-1035), the founder of the Moršediya order (Meier, p. 68). He was born in Kermān on 20 Dū'l-Ḥejja 689/24 December 1290, according to the poet's own statement at the end of his mathnawi (*matnawi*; narrative poem) *Gol o Nowruz* (line 4901ff.). Edward Granville Browne and Jan Rypka, reading *haftād* instead of *haštād* in the line with the dating, arrived at the year 1281. According to the *Mojmal-e Faṣiḥi* (written in 845/1441), the earliest biographical source available on K̲vāju, he died in 1349 at Shiraz, where his tomb is still in situ at the Qurʾān Gate near the Allāho-Akbar Pass (cf. *Divān*, ed. Soheyli-K̲vānsāri, pp. 79-82, with a drawing; for interesting observations on the grave and the modern re-constructions, see Bāstāni Pārizi, pp. 215-24). Other dates given for his death are 1352 (Browne, p. 223), and 1360; with the latter considered as the most plausible by Saʿid Nafisi (cf. Rypka, p. 260).

During his younger years he performed the pilgrimage to Mecca and visited Egypt, Syria, Jerusalem, and Iraq. The main purpose for his traveling must have been to complete his education by meeting with scholars in other countries. In 1331, while in Baghdad, he composed his best-known work, the mathnawi *Homāy o Homāyun*. Returning to Persian lands in 1335, he strove to



find a position as a court poet by dedicating poems to the rulers of his time, such as the Il-khans [Abu Sa'īd Bahādor Khan](#) and [Arpā Khan](#), the Moẓaffarid Mobārez-al-Din, and [Abu Eshāq](#) of the Inju dynasty. He solicited in particular the patronage of viziers and high officials of the state. After a brief sojourn at Isfahan and Kermān, he settled permanently in Shiraz.

Simultaneously with furthering his career at these courts, ḲvĀju cultivated his relationship with prominent religious scholars and Sufi sheikhs. In his poetry he eulogized both his secular and his spiritual patrons. He stayed for some time at the sufi hospice (*kānaqāh*) of 'Alā-al-Dowla Semnāni (d. 1336). His initiation into the Moršediya order was guided by Amin-al-Din of Balyān (d. 1344), whom he honored as his spiritual mentor (*pir*) in a panegyric ode (*qaṣida*) and in some of his mathnawis.

The later period of ḲvĀju's life in Shiraz coincided with the formative years of Hafez. The influence of the older poet, who was a prolific writer of ghazals, is quite evident in the latter's *Divān*. They concern both individual motifs and Hafez's "responses" (*javābs*) to entire poems of ḲvĀju. Many examples of the similarities between the ghazals of these two poets were cited by Browne (III, pp. 293-95), Aḥmad Soheyli-Ḳvānsāri (ed. *Divān-e ḲvĀju*, Introd. pp. 47-55), and Bahā'al-Din Ḳorramšāhi (I, pp. 68-73).

Works. The lyrical poetry of ḲvĀju was collected into two *divāns*. The first collection, entitled *Ṣanāye' al-kamāl* ("Products of perfection"), is preceded by an anonymous preface stating that the volume was assembled during the poet's lifetime to the order of his patron, the vizier Tāj-al-Din Aḥmad. It contains—besides *qasidas*, strophic poems, *qeṭ'as* (occasional verse), and quatrains—two sections with ghazals: one, the *safariyāt*, with poems written during journeys and the second, the *haẓariyāt*, with poems written in his own habitual abode.

The poems composed after the first collection was completed were assembled in another collection, under the title *Badāye' al-jamāl* ("Marvels of beauty"), containing the ghazals under the heading *Ṣowqiyāt* ("Poems of love").

ḲvĀju was one of the first poets to write a *Ḳamsa*, a set of five mathnawis, after the model of Neẓāmi of Ganja. Although there are obvious similarities with the latter's poems—in particular in the choice of the meters—the subjects treated by ḲvĀju are different.



Homāy o Homāyun, in 4,435 couplets, and dated by the chronogram *B-D-L* (= 1331), is written in the meter of Neẓāmi's *Eskandar-nāma* (the *motaqāreb* meter). It is dedicated to the Il-khanid Sultan Abu Sa'īd Bahādor and his vizier, Ġiāt-al-Din Moḥammad. The poem relates the adventures of the Persian prince Homāy, who falls in love with the Chinese princess, Homāyun. After a long fight with her father, the Faḡfur, he wins both his beloved and the empire of China. The story is situated in the times of the ancient Iranian king Hušang, and contains elements derived from popular tales.

Gol o Nowruz, written in 5,312 couplets and in the meter of Neẓāmi's *Kosrow o Širin* (*hazaj-e mosaddas-e maqṣur* meter), was completed in 1341. This poem is dedicated to the *dastur* (vizier) Tāj-al-Din 'Erāqi, but also includes eulogies of the renowned early mystics Bayāzid Bestāmi (see [BESTĀMI BĀYAZID](#)) and Abu Ešhāq of Kāzarun, and the poet's personal *pir*, Amin-al-Din of Balyān. The poem tells another love story, this time vaguely situated in the time shortly before the advent of Islam. Nowruz, the son of the king of Khorasan and a descendant of Sāsān, travels to the Byzantine Empire seeking the hand of the Greek princess Gol. The intricate plot involves meetings with magicians and sages, and other features of folklore and wisdom literature. In the end the lovers are married according to "the rite of Aḥmad" (i.e. according to marriage laws promulgated by the Prophet of Islam). Before his return to Marv (Merv) to succeed to the throne, Nowruz visits a monastery where he receives moral and religious instruction.

Rowzat-al-anwār, in 2,037 couplets, was completed in 1342 (in *sari'-e maṭvi-e maqṭu'* meter). The founder of the Moršediya and K̲vāju's personal shaikh are eulogized, but the poem is dedicated to a secular patron, the vizier and judge Šams-al-Din Maḥmud Šāyen. This is among the earliest imitations of Neẓāmi's didactical poem *Maḳzan al-asrār*, and closely follows the composition of its example, including also a number of illustrative anecdotes. In twenty *maqālāt* the poet deals with requirements for the mystical path and the ethics of kingship.

Kamāl-nāma, in 1,884 couplets and dated 1343, is written in the meter of Neẓāmi's *Haft peykar* (the *kaḫfif* meter), but the first part of this poem has more in common with Šanā'i's *Seyr al-'ebād ela'l-ma'ād*, and the second part with Neẓāmi's *Maḳzan al-asrār*. The former contains the account of an allegorical journey of the narrator at the instigation of Reason. The itinerary leads from a tavern through the cosmos to a realm circumscribed as being "without place or inhabitants." There he meets again with Reason who enters upon a



discourse on moral and religious topics interspersed with anecdotes about kings and mystics.

Gowhar-nāma, in 1,022 couplets and in the meter of *Ḳosrow o Širin*, is dated 1345. The poem is a panegyric in praise of Bahā'-al-Din Maḥmud, the vizier of the Moẓaffarids, and his ancestors up to the celebrated Saljuq vizier Neẓām-al-Molk of Ṭus (1018-92). The “essential virtue” (*gowhar*) of each of these forebears is set forth in a discussion between the poet and a fictional moral guide, called *pir-e dāneš-afruz*. A number of ghazals are inserted inside the mathnawi text, a feature characteristic of the epistolary genre of the *Dahnāmas* (insertion of an exchange of ten letters between the paired lovers in a narrative poem), which became very popular in subsequent centuries (cf. T. Ganjei).

A mathnawi entitled *Sām-nāma* is also attributed to ḲvĀju. This is an imitation of the *Šāh-nāma* (in the same *motaqāreb* meter), relating the gestic of Rostam's grandfather, Sām. It has been preserved in versions of varying lengths, but it is not dated. At the end of the poem the author calls himself “ḲvĀju,” which has been taken as proof of his authorship, notably by Dabiḥ-Allāh Ṣafā (*Ḥamāsasarā'i*, pp. 338-39). However, Hermann Ethé regarded it as a forgery based almost entirely on lines derived from ḲvĀju's *Homāy o Homāyun*, but with different protagonists (*Grundriss* II, pp. 234-35; *Cat. Library India Office*, No. 1235).

Other works ascribed to ḲvĀju are: *Mafātiḥ al-qolub* (1346), a selection from his poetry made by the poet himself; *Resālat al-bādiya* (1347), on his pilgrimage to Mecca; *Resālat Sab' al-maṭāni* (1347), on the rivalry between the Sword and the Pen; *Resālat monāẓara-ye šams o saḥāb*, on the strife between the Sun and the Clouds (cf. ed. *Ḳamsa*, *Introd.*, p. 28).

ḲvĀju was undoubtedly a versatile poet of great inventiveness and originality. Bridging the interval between Sa'di and Hafez, he occupies an interesting position in the development of Persian poetry, especially as a poet of the ghazal and as one of the first to complete a quintet of works (*Ḳamsa*) in the manner of Neẓāmi, adding several new features to the inherited scheme. Yet, there is no unanimity about his status as a truly great Persian poet. Browne, judging only by a small selection from his ghazals, found that “his verse, while graceful and pleasing, lacks any conspicuous distinction or excellence” (Browne, III, p. 226). The view of Soheylī-Ḳvānsāri, the 20th century editor of ḲvĀju's *Divān*, is more balanced. To his mind, ḲvĀju would have won a more



prominent place in literary history had he been more selective in compiling his ghazals. It cannot be denied that he was an important predecessor of Hafez, particularly as far as the blending of secular and mystical motifs in his works is concerned. Many Hafezian phrases, allusions, and metaphors are already in evidence in K̲v̲Āju's poetry. His style is often idiosyncratic and innovative. He often chooses uncommon rhymes and *radifs*, and uses the ghazal as a vehicle for panegyrics as well.

Among the manuscripts of K̲v̲Āju's works special mention should be made of a London manuscript (British Library, Add. 18,113), which was copied and illustrated at Baghdad in 1396 by two of the greatest medieval Persian artists: the calligrapher Mir 'Ali of Tabriz and the painter Jonayd (cf. Rieu, *Cat. British Museum* II, pp. 620-22; Fitzherbert; Bāstāni- Pārizi, pp. 223-34).

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July 20, 2009