



MAJD-AL-DIN K̲VĀFI

MAJD-AL-DIN K̲VĀFI, significant political figure (d. Du'l-qa'da 899/August 1494), active in the administration of the Timurid ruler Solṭān-Ḥosayn Bāyqarā (see [HOSAYN BĀYQARĀ](#); r. 873–911/1469–1506) in Herat.

His full name was K̲vāja Majd-al-Din Moḥammad K̲vāfi. [Zayn-al-Din Wāsefi](#) (q.v.; rev. ed. I, p. 403) also refers to him as (A)mir Kalān. He was the son of K̲vāja Ġiāt-al-Din Pir-Aḥmad K̲vāfi, who headed Šāhroḡ's financial administration from 820/1417 to 850/1447 and introduced professional bureaucratic practices in the Timurid *divān* (q.v.) such as the use of the special accountancy script called *siāq* and the keeping of *daftar* s (q.v.; financial ledgers) (K̲vāndamir, 1938, pp. 353–57; K̲vāndamir, 1984, III, pp. 600–601; 'Oqayli, pp. 342–43). These practices were summarized in an administrative manual entitled *Šams al-siāq* that Pir-Aḥmad commissioned in ca. 831/1428 from one of the functionaries of the *divān* (Subtelny, 2007, pp. 79–82).

Majd-al-Din followed in his father's footsteps, beginning his bureaucratic career as a scribe (*monši*) in the chancery of the Timurid Solṭān-Abu Sa'īd Mirzā (r. 1451–69) and later as *wazir*, or head of the financial administration, of the Timurid prince Moḥammad-Solṭān, known as Kičik Mirzā (d. 1484). After Solṭān-Ḥosayn Bāyqarā came to power in Herat in 873/1469, he brought Majd-al-Din into his own administration (K̲vāndamir, 1984, IV, p. 160; Esfezāri, I, pp. 218–19; Subtelny, 2007, p. 82).

Like his father, Majd-al-Din was a long-serving bureaucrat, who would remain



in Solṭān-Ḥosayn Bāyqarā's administration even after his dismissal in 895/1490, with the exception of a nine-year period from 883/1478 to 892/1487, when he had been forced out by his opponents in the *divān*. Between father and son, these two members of a Persian family from K̲v̲āf were in Timurid service in Khorasan for roughly three-quarters of a century and were instrumental in shaping its fiscal administration (for the biographical notice on him, see K̲v̲āndamir, 1938, pp. 400–18).

Having amassed a personal fortune and ready to cover the spending shortfalls that plagued the Timurid fisc, Majd-al-Din was catapulted to power by Solṭān-Ḥosayn Bāyqarā on the promise that he would reform the system of taxation and restore fiscal stability in Khorasan. In 1472, he was appointed *parvāna*, one of the highest offices in the Timurid chancery, and was also named *moqarrab*, or royal intimate, which gave him an entrée into the royal household establishment, an appointment that was contested by the Turkic military elite who believed that a “Tajik” should not be accorded such a favor (Subtelny, 2007, pp. 82–85).

One of Majd-al-Din's most influential early supporters was Mir 'Ali-Šir Navā'i (1441-1501), who felt that, as a professional, Majd-al-Din should be given a free hand to carry out his reform program. However, when it became clear after he was reinstated in 1487 that he intended to centralize the fiscal administration by conducting a purge of the *divan* on the one hand and curtailing the privileges enjoyed by the Turkic military class on the other, the Timurid amirs, headed by Mir 'Ali-Šir himself (who, as a consequence, was forced to leave Herat in 892/1487 for a post in Astarābād), turned against him (Bābor, fol. 177a; K̲v̲āndamir, 1938, pp. 401–5; Subtelny, 2007, pp. 84–89).

Majd-al-Din's most ambitious reforms targeted the system of land grants with tax immunity known as *soyurḡāl* that were held by members of the Timurid elite. By his actions, Majd-al-Din undermined the very foundations of the Timurid patrimonial state. The concerted efforts of the amirs and other privileged members of the Timurid administration finally forced Solṭān-Ḥosayn to dismiss him in 1490 from all posts except for that of *parvānači* (K̲v̲āndamir, 1938, pp. 406–9; K̲v̲āndamir, 1984, IV, p. 195). What followed was the extraordinary trial of a Tajik bureaucrat and member of the Timurid household establishment by the Turko-Mongolian court of investigation (*yarḡu*). Majd-al-Din was found guilty of embezzlement, his property was confiscated, and he was ordered to pay out a large sum of money, which he was unable to do (K̲v̲āndamir, 1938, pp. 412–16; K̲v̲āndamir,



1984, IV, pp. 196–97; Subtelny, 2007, pp. 95–99). While under house arrest, he managed to escape but was murdered in 899/1494, ostensibly on the way to perform the *hajj* (K̄vāndamir, 1938, p. 417; K̄vāndamir, 1984, IV, p. 198).

The failure of Majd-al-Din’s reforms illustrate the difficulty of effecting change in the fiscal basis of a polity dependent on a tribal military elite whose interests were diametrically opposed to centralized bureaucratic control (Subtelny, 2007, pp. 99–102).

Majd-al-Din was known as a well-connected patron of the arts. His entertainments, to which the leading literati, musicians, singers, and prominent members of Herat society were invited, were legendary (Wāṣeḫī, I, pp. 523–28; rev. ed., I, pp. 403–13; Subtelny, 1984, pp. 144–45), and he apparently personally presented the *Bahārestān* (q.v.) of the Naqṣbandi mystic and Persian poet, Jāmi (q.v.), who was one of his supporters, to Solṭān-Ḥosayn Bāyqarā at a court assembly in 1487, the year of his reinstatement (Roemer, pp. 129–30 and p. 198).

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