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ʿORFI ŠIRAZI

ʿORFI ŠIRAZI, Persian poet of the latter half of the 16th century (b. Shiraz, 1555; d. Lahore, Aug. 1591). His name is given as Jamāl-al-Din Moḥammad Sidi (or Sayyedi) in the early sources. His father, Zeyn-al-Din ʿAli Balawi, was a prominent official of the provincial administration whose dealings with customary law (*ʿorf*) in the course of his professional duties led to his son's choice of ʿOrfi as his penname (*taḵalloṣ*). The young ʿOrfi soon established himself as a leading figure in the literary life of Shiraz. In *ʿArafāt al-ʿāšeqin*, the biographer Awḥadi of Balyān provides an eye-witness account of the poetic circle of Mir Maḥmud Ṭarḥi, where ʿOrfı and poets such as Qeydi of Shiraz (Golčin-e Maʿāni, 1995, pp. 441-53), and Ḡeyrati of Shiraz (*Kārvān-e Hend*, II, pp. 959-69) competed with each other in composing responses to the lyrics *(ḡazals)* of Amir Ḵosrow and Bābā Faḡāni among others. In spite of the flourishing and highly competitive literary world of sixteenth-century Persia, ʿOrfi made his mark quickly. His talents were recognized by Moḥtašam of Kashan, and he corresponded with Waḥši of Bāfq. Like many of his contemporaries, ʿOrfi was lured to India by the lavish patronage of the Mughal courts and sailed from the port of Jarun in 1584.

After arriving in the Deccan, ʿOrfi proved his talent in the literary salons of Aḥmadnagar, but his arrogance soon made him unwelcome, and he moved on to the imperial capital of Fatḥpur Sikri. There he was well received by Fayżi (q.v.), the leading poet at the court of Akbar, whom ʿOrfi accompanied on the campaign to the Punjab in 1585. Through Fayżi, ʿOrfi became acquainted with Masiḥ-al-Din Ḥakim Abu'l Fatḥ of Gilān (see *Kārvān-e Hend,* I, pp. 13-15) who,

until his death in 1589, was the poet's principal supporter and patron. ʿOrfi then joined the entourage of the Mughal statesman, general, and patron of letters, Mirzā ʿAbd-al-Raḥim Ḵān-e Ḵānān (q.v.). He held ʿOrfi in great esteem and introduced him into the service of Akbar, and his son Salim (later Jahāngir). ʿOrfi accompanied Akbar on his seasonal retreat to Kashmir in 1588, but did not enjoy his new status for long: he died of dysentery in Lahore in August 1591. Some three decades later, his remains were disinterred and reburied in Najaf.

Despite dying young, ʿOrfi had a great impact on his contemporaries through the force of both his personality and his poetry. Perhaps in part because he was disfigured by smallpox in his teens, ʿOrfi was hypersensitive, quick to take offense and respond to any taunt with a ready wit and a sharp tongue. In an oft-quoted anecdote (see Browne, *Lit. Hist. Persia*, IV, p. 245), ʿOrfi finds his sponsor, Fayżi, holding a puppy one day and asks the name of the "young master." When Fayżi answers, "ʿOrfi," ʿOrfi replies, "*Mobārak bāšad*," both offering his congratulations on the new pet and suggesting that Fayżi ought to name it after his father, Sheikh Mobārak. Even his most sympathetic biographer, ʿAbd-al-Bāqi of Nahāvand, remarks on ʿOrfi's open disregard for the standard protocol and etiquette of the Mughal court. His poetic braggadocio (*faḵr*) knew few limits, and he declared his poetry to be superior not only to that of his contemporaries, but also unrivalled by the greatest poets of the past, such as Ḵāqāni, Anvari, and Neẓāmi. Some *taḏkera*s (*Ṭabaqāt-e Akbari* and *Meyḵāna*) go so far as to suggest that this egotism was the cause of the poet's premature demise. Not surprisingly, ʿOrfi offended many of his fellow poets, and Naẓiri of Nishapur, his rival at the court of the Ḵān-e Ḵānān, includes a blistering condemnation of ʿOrfi's arrogance in one of his *qaṣida*s (*Divān*, p. 509).

However exaggerated ʿOrfi's lofty estimation of his own talents, his claims were not unfounded. His poetry enjoyed great popularity in his lifetime throughout the Persian-speaking world, and E. J. W. Gibb (I, p. 129; III, pp. 247-48) remarks on ʿOrfi's formative influence on Ottoman Turkish poetry as well. Both Awḥadi of Balyān and ʿAbd-al-Bāqi of Nahāvand identify ʿOrfi as the "inventor of the *ṭarz-e tāza*." Although no single poet can justly be given credit for the emergence of the "fresh" or "Indian" style (which would dominate Persian poetry for the next two centuries), ʿOrfi did play a crucial role in the move away from the colloquial diction and realist aesthetics of the *maktab-e woquʿ* and toward a new valuation of conceptual subtlety and imagistic

complexity. Among ʿOrfi's works, his qaṣidas have met with special critical acclaim. Though a few of these are addressed to ʿOrfi's early Safavid patrons (Shah Esmāʿil II and Pari-Ḵānom), most date from his career in India and are dedicated to Abu'l-Fatḥ of Gilān, ʿAbd-al-Raḥim Kā¨n-e Ḵānān, Prince Salim, and Akbar. ʿOrfi also wrote a number of devotional qaṣidas on the Prophet Moḥammad and Imam ʿAli, including his single longest work in this genre, entitled *Tarjomat al-šowq* (*Kolliyāt*, II, pp. 119-46). Anna Livia Beelaert analyzes this poem as an example of thematic genre of the *sowgand-nāma* (oath poem) and a creative imitation of an earlier panegyric by Kamāl-al-Din of Isfahan. ʿOrfi also wrote responses (*javāb*s) to other recognized masters of the genre such as Ḵāqāni and Anvari. Like these poets, ʿOrfi often makes learned allusions to such fields as logic and medicine, inspiring in India a series of commentaries on his qaṣidas (see *Kolliyāt*, I, pp. 93-95). His style in the qaṣida has been praised for its measured, yet fluent diction, continuity of theme over extended passages, the coinage of new metaphorical compounds, and innovative comparisons.

These last two features in particular are also evident in ʿOrfi's work in other genres. His mastery of the qaṣida has perhaps unjustly overshadowed his ḡazals, which at their best demonstrate a powerful command of language and subtlety of thought and imagery. As might be expected of a poet who grew up with the *maktab-e woquʿ*, his amatory lyrics are characterized by a discriminating insight into the psychology and negotiations of the love relationship (Šebli Noʿmāni, III, pp. 95-101). ʿOrfi's real strength, however, is in his handling of philosophical and gnostic themes, and Ḏakāwati Qarāgozlu has noted the attitude of critical doubt and antinomianism that often informs ʿOrfi's ḡazals. Here, he shows his debt to his compatriot from Shiraz, Ḥāfeẓ, one of the few earlier poets whom ʿOrfi praised without reservation and whose @gazals, along with those of another fellow poet from Shiraz, Bābā Faḡāni, were among his favorite models for response poems (see Tamimdāri, pp. 423-27 and Losensky, 1998, pp. 235-37 and appendix B). ʿOrfi's divānalso contains a few *tarkib*– and *tarjiʿband*s and several dozen *qeṭʿas*, mostly on courtly themes, as well as a couple of hundred *robāʿis.*

ʿOrfi began work on a *ḵamsa* on the model of Neẓāmi, but he died before bringing even one of the five projected *maṯnawis* to completion. He finished a little over 1,400 verses of *Majmaʿ al-abkār* (in the meter of *Maḵzan al-asrār*), which consists of ethical and didactic tales in a Sufi mode. Only four hundred verses of the introductory sections of his *Farhād o Širin* survive. Besides other

scattered rhymed couplets, ʿOrfi did complete a short *sāqi-nāma*, a genre much in vogue at the time. In terms of form, his most unusual work is a satire on contemporary poets, a hybrid between a maṯnawi and a *tarjiʿ-band* (*Kolliyāt*, III, pp. 258-65). ʿOrfi's interest in Sufism is again apparent in his short prose work entitled *Resāla-ye nafsiya*, 'Treatise on the Ego-Self.' Finally, samples of his personal correspondence and other prose jottings have been gleaned from manuscript miscellanies and some copies of his divān.

The contemporary historian ʿAbd-al-Qāder Badāʾuni) reports that "there is no street or bazaar where booksellers do not stand with copies of the divāns of ʿOrfi and Ḥoseyn Ṯanāʾi prominently on display," (*Kolliyāt*, I, pp. 122-23) and ʿOrfi's popularity is attested by the more than one hundred manuscripts of his works that are preserved today. However, he died before being able to oversee a final, definitive compilation of his divān. He did prepare a first collection of his own works in 1588, but also bemoaned the loss of a manuscript of some six thousand verses that he had lent to a friend. Shortly before his death, he turned his uncollected works and papers over to the library of ʿAbd-al-Raḥim Ḵān-e Ḵānān. These were eventually arranged and edited by the poet Serājā of Isfahan and published with an introduction by ʿAbd-al-Bāqi of Nahāvand in 1024/1615. Further complicating the situation, another compiler Moḥammad Ṣādeq Nāẓem of Tabriz dubiously claimed that he caught Serājā fleeing the Ḵān-e Ḵānān's court with the autograph copy of ʿOrfi's works, which Nāẓem recovered and used as the basis of his own recension of the divān. With justifiable skepticism, Mohammad Ali has questioned the authenticity of many of the ḡazals in these later versions of the divān; his judgment, however, is based on literary quality, not on philological grounds, and has been effectively rebutted by Golčin-e Maʿāni (*Meyḵāna*, p. 215, nt. 2) and Moḥammad al-Ḥaqq Anṣāri. Anṣāri has untangled the complicated transmission of ʿOrfi's works and has now published the results of a lifetime's research in a definitive scholarly edition of ʿOrfi's *kolliyāt* based on nearly forty sources and containing a full critical apparatus. Anṣāri's edition should provide the basis of future critical inquiry into the work of this controversial and talented poet, who played a crucial role in the later development of classical Persian poetry.

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