



RAF'AT (REF'AT)

RAF'AT (REF'AT), pen name (*taḳalloṣ*) of ĠOLĀM JILĀNI (d. 27 Du'l-ḥejja 1234/17 October 1819), scholar of Arabic and Persian literature, teacher at Rampur, and author of a versified Persian “battlelogue” (*jang-nāma*) titled *Dorr-e manẓum*.

Estimations of Ġolām Jilāni's date of birth range from ca. 1720 (Aḥmad-'Ali Šawq, p. 284) to ca. 1742 (Minā'i, p. 152). Qodrat-Allāh Šawq (p. 502), writing around 1774, describes him as a youth (*javān*) and novice (*naw-mašq*). This suggests that the latter date is more likely (Šekib, p. 150). Jilāni's ancestry is similarly ambiguous. He is variously described as the son of an immigrant from Jilān near Baghdad (Minā'i, p. 151), the grandson of an Afghan immigrant from Šāhjahānpur (Aḥmad-'Ali Šawq, p. 284; Qodrat-Allāh Šawq, p. 502), or perhaps both (Šekib, p. 149). Jilāni himself was from the city of Pilibhit in Rohilkhand, India, which was home to the Rohilla community (Afghan immigrants from Roh). Pilibhit became a major center of Rohilla authority in the middle of the 18th century, when Rohilla leader Ḥāfeẓ Raḥmat Khan (d. 1774) established his residence there (Wink; Bazmee Ansari).

Ġolām Jilāni moved from Pilibhit to Rampur shortly after 1774. In April of that year, war (called the First Rohilla War in British sources) between the Avadh Šojā'-al-Dawla (nawab of Avadh), who had British support, and the Rohillas led by Ḥāfeẓ Raḥmat Khan resulted in the annexation of Rohilkhand by Avadh and the dissolution of Rohilla networks of authority and patronage. As a result of the war, Rampur was established as a strategically located successor state to Rohilkhand and Fayẓ-Allāh Khan (d. 1794, former



Rohilla leader) was made its nawab. Like Jilāni, many members of the Rohilla community relocated to Rampur, which soon became a vibrant cultural center (Najmi, pp. 464-598; Davies).

Jilāni is said to have studied with two outstanding scholars affiliated with [Farangi Maḥall](#). The first, Mollā Ḥasan (d. 1794) taught at Shāhjahānpur (another center of Rohilla authority), Delhi, and Rampur, where Fayz-Allāh Khan eventually employed him in the administration of the state *madrassa*. He is remembered for his command of the rational sciences, his favoring innovative reason over deference to authority, and his extraordinary memory ('Enāyat-Allāh, pp. 94-97). The second, 'Abd-al-'Ali Baḥr-al-'Olum (d. 1810), also left Lucknow and taught at Shāhjahānpur and Rampur. He is remembered as an eminent scholar of the Islamic rational sciences, Arabic, and Persian. His Persian writings include a tract on Ṣufi ethics and an influential commentary on the *Maṭnawī* by Jalāl-al-Din Rumi ('Enāyat-Allāh, p. 207).

Jilāni also spent time as a student at Delhi, where he is said to have studied Persian with Iranians (Minā'i, p 151). At Delhi, he is also said to have studied, like many scholars of his generation, the religious sciences with the theologian 'Abd-al-'Aziz Dehlavi (1746-1824), the son of Šāh Wali-Allāh (d. 1762), both of whom wrote in Arabic and Persian. Biographical literature records that although 'Abd-al-'Aziz initially opposed to the rationalist methods of Jilāni's Farangi-Maḥall teachers, he eventually acknowledged their authority, particularly that of 'Abd-al-'Ali, to whom he is said to have given the title Baḥr-al-'Olum. This indicates that Jilāni trained in intellectual methods that emphasized innovative reason on the one hand and the command of authoritative traditions on the other.

Jilāni is also remembered as master of mystical traditions. Aḥmad-'Ali Šawq (p. 285) records that he was the disciple of an unlettered Sufi from Shāhjahānpur with knowledge of the Hadith tradition.

At Rampur, Jilāni lived for a time in an unfinished mosque on the grounds of a large property developed by a wealthy immigrant from Kabul. Jilāni eventually purchased the property and turned it into a private residence and academy. Here, he taught a range of subjects, including Arabic, mathematics, and Persian, to a large number of students. Among his most famous pupils were [Ġiāt-al-Din Rāmpuri](#) (d. 1852), the author of the Persian dictionary *Ġiāt-al-logāt*; the scholar of philosophy Ḥaydar-'Ali of Tonk (d. 1856-7), who married one of Jilāni's daughters; the theologian, mathematician, and



influential teacher Aḥmad-ʿAli ʿAbbāsi of Chiraiyakot (d. 1856); and the Persian scholar ʿAnbaršāh Khan ʿAnbar (d. 1833-4). Jilāni's intellectual reputation persisted into the late 19th century, when his erudition in the rational and revealed sciences had become proverbial (Minā'i, p. 151).

Jilāni wrote Persian and Urdu (*rēkta*) poetry under the pen name (*taḳalloṣ*) Ref'at. Early in life, he also wrote Urdu poetry under the *taḳalloṣ* Bēdam (Bidam), although he seems to have switched to Ref'at by 1774. His Persian and Urdu *divāns* were compiled in his lifetime. His Urdu *ḡazal* and *vāsōkt* poetry as well as his Persian *maṭnawi* and *ḡazal* poetry are recorded in anthologies of poets (*taḍkera*). These texts remember him as having an extraordinary memory for poetry. One anecdote records that he used to recall all the *ḡazal* poems that were recited in the course of a *mošā'ara* (gathering of poets) in their entirety. According to one of his students, Jilāni memorized all of his own *bayāz* (a private anthology of verse), which he had compiled from more than twenty thousand *diwāns* (Minā'i, p. 152).

As a poet, Jilāni is mostly remembered for his Persian *jang-nāma* in verse, *Dorr-e manẓum* (1798-9). Modeled on the *Šāh-nāma*, the poem details the events following the death of Nawab Fayẓ-Allāh Khan in 1794 and the ensuing conflict between his sons over the succession at Rampur, during which Ġolām-Moḥammad Khan deposed his brother Moḥammad-ʿAli and named himself nawab. Āṣaf-al-Dawla (nawab of Avadh) and the British soon thereafter deposed Ġolām-Moḥammad Khan in what British sources have called the Second Rohilla War. *Dorr-e Maṅzum* is written with Ġolām-Moḥammad Khan as its focus. According to Aḥmad-ʿAli Šawq (p. 284), Ġolām-Moḥammad Khan's great-grandson, Kalb-ʿAli Khan (nawab of Rampur) purchased a copy of *Dorr-e manẓum* from a descendent of Ġolām Jilāni for his private library in 1868, and this copy later came into the possession of the state library. The story of the battle between Ġolām-Moḥammad and Avadh-British forces has also been told in Urdu verse (Mo'azzam ʿAbbāsi).

Attributed to Jilani is *Hašt kold* (a selection of Persian poetry compiled for a patron of Persian literature at Rampur). However, according to Aḥmad-ʿAli Šawq (pp. 284-87), *Hašt kold* is in fact the work of multiple compilers. In addition to original Persian poetry, a *diwān* of which was compiled and circulated in his lifetime, Jilāni also wrote a commentary on Ḥāfeẓ, titled *Ġazāl-e ra'nā* (Aḥmad-ʿAli Šawq, p. 128). A manuscript of the work copied in 1831-2 survives (Siddiqi, p. 252). Examples of Jilāni's Persian poetry,



including excerpts from *Dorr-e manzum*, along with a selection of his Urdu verse, are copied in *Minā'i* (pp. 152-57). A large selection of Jilāni's early Urdu verse is given by Qodrat-Allāh Šawq (pp. 502-23), who knew him personally.

Jilāni died on 17 October 1819. His gravesite eventually became a center of devotion. According to Šekib (p. 152), Jilāni was originally buried near the Kosi River at Rampur. One night, he appeared in a dream to ask that his grave be saved. When he did so again on the following night, people went in search of his burial site and discovered that it was in danger of being eroded by flooding water. When they exhumed and transferred his body to a new grave in a local mosque, they discovered that his coffin and shroud had not decayed, and, considering this a miracle (*karāmat*), began to leave flowers and make supplications (*mennat*) there. A similar narrative is recorded by Aḥmad-ʿAli Šawq (p. 286).

Although few details of Jilāni's life are known, his poetry collections, the biographies of his students, and the few scattered anecdotes that do survive suggest that he played an important role in fostering the energetic literary and intellectual culture at Rampur in the late-18th and early-19th centuries.

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