perso-indica

*An Analytical Survey of Persian Works
on Indian Learned Traditions*

OFFPRINT

PERSO-INDICA.
AN ANALYTICAL SURVEY OF PERSIAN WORKS ON INDIAN LEARNED TRADITIONS

Anwār-i Suhaylī

Composed around 905/1499-1500, *Anwār-i Suhaylī* (Lights of Canopus) is a Persian prosimetric second-generation rewriting of the Arabic *Kalīla wa Dimna* by Ibn al-al-Muqaffaʿ (d. 140/757). Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ presents his source as a translation into Pahlavi of a unique Indian text. This literary story is the cornerstone for the commonly accepted Sanskrit origin of the fables, but see below. (van Ruymbeke, 2016, pp. x-xi). *Anwār-i Suhaylī* is based on the bi-lingual Perso-Arabic prosimetric text by the twelfth-century Ghaznavid administrator Naṣr Allāh Munšī (ca. 539/1144, see *Kalīla wa Dimna*). This latter is itself a translation, reworking and compilation of several versions of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's Arabic prose text.

The author of *Anwār-i Suhaylī*, Mawlānā Kamāl al-Dīn Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī, was nicknamed Wāʾiẓ and Kāšifī ("the preacher, the unveiler"). He made his career as a judge and later as head of a Naqšbandī lodge. He was close to the Timurid Herat court of Sultan Ḥusayn Bayqara (r. 873-911/1469-1506) and especially to ʿAlī-Šīr Nawāʾī (d. 906/1501) and the mystic poet Jāmī (d. 897/1492). He was particularly renowned for his knowledge on astronomy. His bibliography is impressive with works that span a large amount of topics, containing titles related to fields such as theology, philosophy and occult sciences. Many of his works are unpublished and unstudied and not all of them are still extant. His fame rests primarily on three works: his ʿAlid martyrology, *Rawżāt al-šuhadāʾ*, a mirror for princes entitled *Aḫlāq-i Muḥsinī*, and *Anwār-i Suhaylī*, which he wrote at the end of his life, though its precise date is unknown. He died in Herat in 910/1504-5 (see Subtelny 2017). The patron and initiator of the *Anwār-i Suhaylī* was the Amīr Niẓām al-Dīn Šayḫ Aḥmad Suhaylī, a military commander close to the Timurid ruler Sultan Ḥusayn Bāyqarā. The expressed rationale behind the rewriting was the patron's desire to make the difficult text more accessible to a contemporary audience. The pun contained in the work's title mentions his name,

Perso-Indica. An Analytical Survey of Persian Works on Indian Learned Traditions

1

which is the synonym of the very bright star Canopus used as a beacon for navigation. This points him out as not only the patron and effective "owner" of the text, but also as the initiator and probable inspiration for the new enlightening rewriting.

Anwār-i Suhaylī consists in (i) an authorial preface (*dībāča*), followed by the body of the text itself. This latter is built as an outer frame (ii) consisting in a new, double introduction created by Kāšifī, containing: (ii.a) the story of Ḫujasta Rāy and (ii.b) the story of Bīdpāy (which has no resemblance to the story told in the Arabic version). This second frame encloses and introduces (iii) the core of the *Kalīla wa Dimna* text: the 14 chapters (*bāb*) which are taken over from Naṣr Allāh Munšī's Persian prosimetrum. The last chapter contains remarks which close each of the frames, with a final concluding comment by Kāšifī himself.

Kāšifī adopts the traditional structure of the *Kalīla wa Dimna* texts as a construction of 14 chapters, each made up of a main story containing variable numbers of embedded sub-stories. These latter are termed *hikāyāt* (exempla, tales, stories) and it is worth noting here that the traditional appellation of "animal fables" is incorrect: many stories feature human beings and most of the stories' structures are too complex to be considered "fables" (existing attempts at defining this literary genre are problematic, see Forster 2009). Kāšifī scraps the four introductory chapters containing the legendary story of the book, as these "do not provide a key to the origins of the book" (Kāšifī 1362/1983-4, p. 9). Across the 14 chapters, he adds 56 new embedded *hikāyāt* to the original 39 ones. Each of these additions serves to enlighten either the structure of the text or the comprehension of the work's themes. Kāšifī thus produces a more in-depth treatment of the text's multifarious topics. His additions go in the direction of simplifying the careful reader's understanding of the text, an aim that is laid out in the authorial preface.

In line with the patron's wishes, Kāšifī also systematically scraps the Munšī's verse inclusions, many of which were in Arabic, and introduces new ones in Persian. Apart from embellishing the text and showing off the author's literary culture, verse citations also impact on the readers' understanding. They constitute an important tool of authorial tyranny as they necessarily inform the readers' take on a passage by introducing an implicit commentary on the embedding narrative or dialogue. They are the main platform for the expression of the rewriters' differences with the predecessors' versions, without tampering with the textual core. In order to replace

Perso-Indica. An Analytical Survey of Persian Works on Indian Learned Traditions

2

Munšī's bi-lingual verse inclusions, Kāšifī makes copious references to the Persian classical poetical canon; he uses Arabic sparingly, mostly for Quranic citations. In contrast, he takes over many of Munšī's prose passages, which he expands. The older text was already ripe with metaphors and rhetorical embellishments; these are now further expanded, resulting in a baroque and decorated style. Reading *Anwār-i Suhaylī* becomes a pedagogy not only on a stylistic level – by the acquisition of refined vocabulary and a nimbleness in wielding decorated sentences, useful verse citations and rhetorical devices, all *sine qua non* aspects of a successful curriculum at court – but also and more importantly, on a cognitive level. The necessary decoding of the metaphors, of the poetical extracts and of the stories' purport are three levels in an exercise of mounting complexity, which is meant to provide the attentive student with the ability to decode in real life the opponent's intentions and to recognise attempts at manipulation. Again, these are indispensable tools for a successful political career. Sadly, this essential aspect of *Anwār*'s pedagogy, and references to it in the authorial preface, have been misunderstood in scholarly criticism (Ruymbeke 2016, pp. 208-260).

In his authorial preface, Kāšifī also explains that his text is not informed by morality, but deals with aspects of social relations. And indeed, *Kalīla wa Dimna* is recognised as a Mirror for Princes, but it is of universal scope, unrelated to specific rulers or specific times and political situations. As is the case for the *Kalīla wa Dimna* text across its numerous linguistic versions, the "lessons" which introduce or conclude the sub-stories are disingenuous and, although they follow the logic of the embedding dialogues, they are mostly unrelated, sometimes even opposed, to the understanding of the action within the embedded sub-stories. The function of *Kalīla wa Dimna*'s every sub-story is to expose responses to relational conundrums and to examine the problematic aspects of these responses, rather than proposing "lessons", "morals" or criticism of political actors. They operate as a collection of exemplary moves in a literary chess game, where every decision triggers responses from the opponent, who usually outwits the player. Behind the amusing episodes lies a grim text. It stresses the necessity for constant mistrust and promotes the use of the redoubtable tools of friendship and rhetoric as powerful means for manipulation. It creates the awareness that the world is peopled by predators, climbers and sharpers fencing against would-be sharpers. All of these are united in the process of destroying honest gullible characters.

Perso-Indica. An Analytical Survey of Persian Works on Indian Learned Traditions

3

Anwār-i Suhaylī has complex relations with Indian studies in its pre-history, its resonance and its afterlife. As far as its pre-history is concerned, Kāšifī challenges rather sensationally the legendary origin of the text, presented as the sixth-century AD literary theft of an anonymous and secret Sanskrit work, by Burzūya, an envoy-spy of the Sassanid emperor Khusraw I Anūshīrwān(r. 531-579 AD) (Blois 1990). He axes the introductory chapters related to this story and throughout his work highlights the Iranian origin of many *Kalīla wa Dimna* themes. This demonstrates conclusively how the vexing problem of the text's origin was still unsolved and continued to fascinate cognoscenti at the Herat court; it also indicates a probable literary research movement patronised by the Timurids. Investigations on the origin of the text continued at the Mughal court, as set out below. In order to accommodate both the tradition and the presence of Iranian themes, Kāšifī proposes an equally legendary Iranian origin for the 14 precepts that inform each of the chapters, and these are then translated into stories and sub-stories by a sage in Serendib, thus placing the credit for the storytelling technique at India's door.

The resonance of Kāšifī's version in the early-modern world is deep. It originally earned wide recognition and was translated into Ottoman Turkish (Çelebī, *Hūmāyūn-nāma*, ca. 1540) and in French (Gaulmin, *Le livre des lumières*, 1644), and abbreviated at Akbar's court. The work was also influential in the early Persian language textbooks which flourished especially in the English-speaking world. One of the sub-stories in *Anwār-i Suhaylī* was used by the pioneer-grammarian F. Meninski as a language exercise in his *Linguarum orientalum* (Meninski 1680, pp. 196-216). This practice was then taken over by William Jones in his *A Grammar of the Persian Language* (Jones 1771, pp. 109-119), who hails *Anwār-i Suhaylī* as the paragon of elegant Persian prose. From then on and for over a century, *Anwār-i Suhaylī* became a standard text used in the Indian Civil Service Persian textbooks and grammars. This use of *Anwār-i Suhaylī* to acquire fluency in elegant Persian ensured at first the success of the work, but was later the very reason for its disparagement. Its success, based on its style, soured into disfavour following shifts in literary fashions. The work fell into disregard as a result of criticism voiced mainly by the influential E.G. Browne (Browne 1906, pp. 352-353), although this rested on subjective and perilous expressions of dislike for its style. Still currently prevailing negative opinions are repetitious and mostly unsubstantiated (van Ruymbeke, 2016, pp. 312-316).

Perso-Indica. An Analytical Survey of Persian Works on Indian Learned Traditions

4

The work's pedagogy, its stylistic and conceptual structure, coupled to the humour and charm of the stories, have ensured its success in the Persianate world where numerous, sometimes sumptuous, copies were produced. Meanwhile, the movement at Akbar's court (r. 1556-1605), to study and confront Persian and Indian literary and philosophical traditions (Truschke 2012, p. 276), led to the rewriting of the text by Abū al-Fażl (d. 1011/1602). The title of this rewriting, *'Iyār* (better *'Aiyār*)-*i dānish* (usually translated as the *Touchstone of Knowledge*), probably puns on *'ayyār*, "a cheat, knave, impostor," with its derivative *'ayyārigī*, "artfulness, slyness, cunning, craftiness, imposture" (Steingass 1892, p. 874), thus responding to the understanding of the Sanskrit term *tantra* as "cases for craftiness" (Ruymbeke 2017). This new work is an abridged version of *Anwār-i Suhaylī*. It appears to answer to a double aim, the first of which is the production of a simple text, almost a crib. Its likely purpose was presumably to serve as a convenient tool for a comparison with the Indian *Pañcatantra* tradition. It is probable that the *Pančākiyāna*, the Persian translation of the Sanskrit *Pañcatantra* made by H̱āliqdād ʿAbbāsī during Akbar's period, can be considered as a mirror-response. Juxtaposing these two texts would have facilitated a comparative analysis by a bi-lingual Sanskrit-Persian group of scholars.

A second point achieved by Abū al-Fażl's epitome was to serve as a platform for the reintroduction of the legend of Burzūya's voyage to India and his material and literary theft of the mythical original Sanskrit version of the text, thus reverting to the traditional pre-Kāšifī state of the textual genealogy. The Indian origin of the text was, understandably, of capital interest and importance for the Mughal investigations into the Sanskrit literary past. This Mughal interest for the textual heredity of *Kalīla wa Dimna* has a long shadow as it also flared up amongst Western Orientalists in Sanskrit, Syriac, Arabic and Persian fields. Fascination for the hazy origin of the text fed into the then prevailing philological debates around the historical relations of anteriority between Indo-European and Semitic languages. It has informed throughout the 19th and 20th centuries a long and passionate research for the text's Ur-Version and hereditary lines across linguistic and cultural boundaries. The mystery of the textual origins remains provocative, as there are serious indications that Burzūya's story is a literary allegory crafted by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, seemingly adopted uncritically by the medieval Muslim tradition, despite doubts expressed by early authors such as Ibn al-Nadīm (10th century, see Ruymbeke 2016, pp. 321-342).

Perso-Indica. An Analytical Survey of Persian Works on Indian Learned Traditions

5

Editions: *Anwār-i Suhaylī*, Calcutta, 1804, 1816, 1824. *Anwār-i Suhaylī yā Kalīla wa Dimna-yi Kāšifī*, Amīr Kabīr, ed., Tehran, Mu'assisa-yi Intišārāt-i Amīr Kabīr, 1362/1983-1984, pp. 595, 3rd reprint. *Anwār-i suhaylī*, Muḥammad Rawšan, ed., Tehran, Ṣidā-yi Muʿāṣir, 2009.

Urdu translation: *Unwari Soheilee (Dukhnee)*, Mohummud Ibraheem, ed., Madras, College Press, 1824.

Urdu translation: *Muntaḫabāt-i Anwār i suhaylī*, Qamar al-Dīn Gulāb Ḫān, ed., Agra, 1853.

Urdu translation: *Būstān-i ḥikmat*, Faqīr Muḥammad Ḫān, ed., Lucknow, Munšī Nawal Kišor, 1917.

Pashto translation: *Dabīr-i dāniš, tarjuma-i Anwār-i suhaylī, Muḥammad Ḫān*, ed., Peshawar, Pashto Academy, 1993.

Pashto translation: *Anwār-i suhaylī*, Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Ġafūr Qāsimī - Fażl Rabbī Rāhī, Peshawar, Šuʿayb Sunz, 2007.

Turkish translation: Çelebī, ʿAlī, ca. 1540, *Humāyūn-nāma*, dedicated to Süleyman Qanuni (r. 1520-66), Ottoman Turkish.

French translation: *Livre des lumières ou La conduite des roys composé par le sage Pilpay indien. Traduit en françois par David Sahid d'Ispahan ville capitale de Perse*, Gaulmin, Gilbert, ed., Paris, Simeon Piget, 1644; reprint Paris, Florentin & Pierre Delaulne, 1698.

French translation: *Fables tirées de l'Anouâri Souhaili d'el Ouâʿidh el Kâchifî*, A. Raux, ed., Paris, E. Leroux, 1915.

English translation: *Persian Fables from the Anwari Sooheyly*, James Michael, ed., London, B. Watt, 1827.

English translation: *The Anvár-i Suhailí; or the lights of Canopus : being the Persian version of the Fables of Pilpay ; or, the book of "Kalílah and Damna"h rendered into Persian by Ḥusain váʿiz Uʾl-Káshifí / literally translated into prose and verse* […], Edward B. Eastwick, ed., Hertford, 1854; reprint Marston Gate, 2005.

English translation: *The Iqd-i gul, or, The Rose-necklace, being the selections from the Gulistān and the Anwār-i Suhailī translated into literal English with copious notes*, Adālut Ḵẖān, ed., Calcutta, Urdoo Guide Press, 1888.

English translation: *The Anwár-i-Suhailí, Or, Lights of Canopus, Commonly Known as Kalílah and Damnah*, Arthur N. Wollaston, ed., London, J. Murray, 1904.

German translation: *Morgenländische Studien,* H. Ethé, ed., Leipzig, Fues, 1870, pp. 147-166.

German translation: *Lichter des Kanopus, dreiunddreissig Fabeln aus dem Morgenland*, J. Vladislav - W. Forman - B. Forman, eds., Prague, 1959.

Secondary sources bibliography: Abū al-Fażl, 1988, *ʿIyār-i Dānesh*, Dushanbe. **Blois**, F. de, 1990, *Burzoy's Voyage to India and the Origin of the Book of Kalilah wa Dimnah*, London, Royal Asiatic Society. **Browne**, E. G., 1906, *A Literary History*

Perso-Indica. An Analytical Survey of Persian Works on Indian Learned Traditions

6

of Persia from Firdawsí to Saʿdí, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons. **Forster**, R., 2009, "Fabel und Exempel, Sprichwort und Gnome. Das Prozesskapitel von 'Kalīla wa-Dimna'", in: H. O. Bizzarri - M. Rohde, eds., *Tradition des Proverbes et des exempla dans l'Occident Medieval, Colloque Fribourgeois 2007*, Berlin - New York, pp. 191-218. **Jones**, Sir W., 1771, *A Grammar of the Persian Language by William Jones, Esquire, Fellow of University College Oxford*, London. **Khaleghi-Motlagh**, Djalal, 1989, "Borzūyā", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 4, fasc. 4, pp. 381-382. **H̱āliqdād ʿAbbasī**, 1973, *Pančākiyāna*, Tārā Cand - A. H. ʿĀbidī, eds., Aligarh, Aligarh Muslim University. **Meninski**, Franciszek a Mesgnien, 1680, *Linguarum Orientalum Turcicae, Arabicae, Persicae institutiones seu Grammatica Turcica*, Vienna. **Munšī**, Naṣr Allāh, 1343/1964, *Tarjuma-yi Kalīla wa Dimna*, M. Mīnawī, ed., Tehran, Intišārāt-i Dānišgāh-i Tihrān. **Ruymbeke**, C. van, 2016, *Kashefi's Anvar-e Sohayli. Rewriting Kalila wa-Dimna in Timurid Herat*, Leiden, Brill. **Ruymbeke**, C. van, 2017, "Authorship, Ownership and Rewriting. Vaʿiz Kashifi and Abu'l-Fazl b. Mobarak within the noble hereditary line of *Kalila wa-Dimna* rewriters", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 44, forthcoming. **Steingass**, Francis Joseph, 1892, *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary, including the Arabic Words and Phrases to be met with in Persian literature*, London, Routledge & K. Paul (reprint Beirut, 1975). **Subtelny**, M. E., 2003, "A late Medieval Persian Summa on Ethics: Kāshifī's *Akhlāq-i Muhsinī*", *Iranian Studies*, 36, 4, pp. 601-14. **Subtelny**, M. E., 2011, "Kāšefi", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 15, 6, pp. 658-661. **Subtelny**, M.E., 2017, "Husayn Wāʾiz Kāshifī", *Encyclopedia of Islam 3*, Kate Fleet *et al.*, eds., consulted online 7 March 2018. **Truschke**, Audrey, 2012, *Cosmopolitan Encounters: Sanskrit and Persian at the Mughal Court*, PhD, Columbia University.

Christine van Ruymbeke

Perso-Indica. An Analytical Survey of Persian Works on Indian Learned Traditions

7

Christine van Ruymbeke
Anwār-i Suhaylī

Perso-Indica. An Analytical Survey of Persian Works on Indian Learned Traditions

8