

Introduction

The Classical Persian Sufi didactic poem *Miṣbāḥ ul-arvāḥ*, “The Lantern of Spirits”, was long thought to be a work by the well-known Sufi sheikh Auhad ud-dīn Kirmānī, who died in Baghdad in 635/1238. The late Iranian specialist of Classical Sufi texts, Badī‘ uz-zamān Furūzānfar, prepared a critical edition of the text in 1328/1949 based on two comparatively late manuscripts (Tehran Malik 4852, probably of the 10th/16th cent., and a MS from the library of Afshār Shirāzī, with a microfilm in the Central Library of Tehran University¹). However, after he had already edited the poem, he found two older manuscripts among the micro-films kept at the Central Library of Tehran University, namely the Istanbul MSS Aya Sofya 4821 (foll. 152a–193b) dated Rabi’ I, 677 AH (= July, 1278 AD) and Üniversite FY 538 (foll. 493b–506b) dated 826 AH (= 1422–1423 AD). The former, which happened to be the oldest known manuscript of this work, made him realize the deficiencies of the text he had already prepared, and the second, ascribing the work to a certain Shams ud-dīn Muhammad b. İl-Tughān al-Bardasīrī al-Kirmānī, made him question the attribution to Auhad ud-dīn Kirmānī. Furūzānfar then embarked on revising his edition, adding lists of variants found in the manuscripts Aya Sofya 4821 and Aya Sofya 4792 (also available as a microfilm in the Central Library of Tehran University) and writing a detailed commentary which, among other things, pointed out the preferred variant readings in the manuscripts. Unfortunately, his commentary had only reached *bait* 387 (p. 21 of his edition) when he passed away in 1349/1970. In the same year İraj Afshār published the whole material as No. 1286 of the *Intishārāt-i Dānishgāh-i Tih-rān*.

Already in 1315 Badī‘ uz-zamān Furūzānfar had expressed doubts on the attribution of *Miṣbāḥ ul-arvāḥ* to Auhad ud-dīn Kirmānī in the “Additions” to his *Risālah dar taḥqīq-i aḥvāl va zindagī-yi Maulānā Jalāl ud-dīn*,² and in 1334 ‘Abbās Iqbāl Āshtiyānī, having discovered the Istanbul manuscript Üniversite FY 538, followed the internal attribution in the manuscript to Shams ud-dīn Muhammad b. İl-Tughān Bardasīrī rather than to Auhad ud-dīn Kirmānī.³ In the introduction to his edition of the *Manāqib-i Auhad ud-dīn Ḥāmid b. Abi’l-fakhr-i Kirmānī*,⁴ Furūzānfar summarizes his arguments for advocating the authorship of Shams ud-dīn Muhammad Bardasīrī in the following way:

(1) The *Manāqib* never mention or quote from the *Miṣbāḥ*; (2) no source before Jāmī (d. 898/1492) is known to have attributed the *Miṣbāḥ* to Auhad ud-dīn; (3) Daulatshāh Samarqandī (d. 900/1494–95) writes that Auhad ud-dīn only composed

1 Cf. M. T. Dānish-Pazhūh, *Fihrist-i mīkrūfilm-hāy-i Kitābkhānah-yi Markazī-yi Dānishgāh-i Tih-rān*, Tehran 1348, pp. 717–719 (no. F 2603).

2 Tehran 1315, p. 202.

3 *Majallah-yi Dānishkadāh-yi adabīyāt-i Tih-rān*, 2(1334):3, p. 8.

4 Tehran 1347/1969, pp. 50–53.

rubā'īyāt, while Auhad Marāghî was a learned man who wrote a *mathnavī* like *Jām-i Jam*; (4) the *pīr* of Auhad ud-dīn was Rukn ud-dīn Sijāsî, while the *mamdūh* and *pīr* repeatedly mentioned in the *Miṣbāh* is an otherwise unknown Mu'īn ud-dīn Saffār; (5) when the early manuscripts of the *Miṣbāh* disagree on the name of its author, all giving the *nisba* (al-)Kirmânî but being at variance with regard to the rest of the name: Auhad ud dīn Afzal (Aya Sofya 4821), Auhad ud-dīn Muhammad (Aya Sofya 4792) and Shams ud-dīn Muhammad b. ʿÎl-Tughân al-Bardasîrî (Üniversite FY 538), the last-mentioned should be considered correct, because a work of a well-known author is never re-attributed to a little known person while the opposite is far from uncommon.

Already the *Lubāb ul-albāb* of 'Aufî (written in 618/1221–22)⁵ has an entry on ash-Shaikh al-Imâm Shams ud-dīn Muhammad b. ʿÎl-Tughân al-Kirmânî, who is said to have composed Sufi books in Persian *mathnavī* verse. There he is spoken of as deceased, which means that he probably was a somewhat earlier contemporary of Auhad ud-dīn who died in 635/1238. According to the *Lubāb ul-albāb* this Shaikh Shams ud-dīn al-Kirmânî was active in the *khānaqāh-i sulṭān* of Herat called Shaikhi. 'Aufî also quotes a number of verses from Sufi ghazals ascribed to him, one beginning:

ای جان جان جانها جان را بلطف جان ده آنی که آن آنی دل را برحمت آن ده

And another:

ما ز خرابات عشق مست الست آمدم نام بلی چون بریم چون همه مست آمدم

All in all, he is presented as an important Sufi sheikh and poet.

In a commentary to the version of *Tārīkh-i Afḍal* put together by a certain Muhammad ibn Ibrāhīm, the Iranian historian Bâstānî-Pârîzî suggests that this Shams ud-dīn Muhammad was one of the Saljuq princes of Kirman, a son of Tughan-Shah, who had to flee from Bardasir, then a chief town of Kirman, after the invasion of the Ghuzz in the 570–580's (1170–80's).⁶ A clear reference to this may be seen in verses 731–738 of the present edition that interpret the invasion of Kirman by the Ghuzz and the eventual escape of the author allegorically but seem to be based on an actual historical event. However, it seems less likely that the author of *Miṣbāh ul-arvāh* is identical with the "Shaikh Shams ud-dīn Muhammad" who according to the *Tārīkh-i Afḍal* "had made penitence and adopted the Sufi dress (*khirqah*) [and then]

5 Ed. E.G. Browne, Leiden 1903, pp. 279–81.

6 Afzal ud-dīn Abū Hāmīd Kirmânî, *Saljūqiyān va ghuzz dar Kirmān, taḥrīr: Mīrzā Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Khabīšī*, ed. Bâstānî-Pârîzî, Tehran 1373, p. 156; cf. *Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 5, Cambridge 1968, pp. 173–175.

had crushed the flask of penitence and burnt the garment of the *khirqah* and become an Atabak again.”⁷

Amin Ahmad Râzî writes in his haft *Haft iqlīm* (from 1002/1593) that Auhad ud-dīn Kirmânî apart from *rubā‘iyāt* “has a *mathnavī* called *Miṣbāḥ ul-arvāḥ*”, but immediately after his entry on Auhad ud-dīn comes a notice on a certain Imâm Shams ud-dīn Muhammad, who was “a diver in the sea of *ṭarīqat* and the ocean of *ḥaqīqat* and has made a number of books in explanation of *ḥaqīqat* and *ṭarīqat* in verse and prose and also composed a Divan of *ghazals*.”⁸ This seems to refer to Shams ud-dīn Muhammad Bardasîrî, since Râzî also quotes some *bait*s from that Divan which are identical with those quoted in ‘Aufî’s *Lubāb ul-albāb* in his entry on that Shams ud-dīn.

As noted by Ziyâ’ ud-dīn Sajjâdî in an article entitled *Sih Miṣbāḥ ul-arvāḥ*⁹ there are two more old *mathnavī* poems referred to with the title *Miṣbāḥ ul-arvāḥ*. One is obviously a misnomer for the poem that is generally known as *Ṭarīq ut-tahqīq*, which is given the title *Miṣbāḥ ul-arvāḥ* in the Istanbul manuscript Üniversite FY 593 (dated 890 AH/1485 AD) but nowhere else apart from a notice in the *Kashf az-zunūn* of Hâjjî Khalîfa¹⁰ saying that a *Miṣbāḥ ul-arvāḥ va asrār ul-ashbāḥ* was written by Auhad ud-dīn Ahmad b. al-Hasan b. Muhammad an-Nakhjavânî al-Kirmânî who died in 534 (AH = 1139–40 AD). This is followed by a quotation of the first *bait* of that same *Ṭarīq ut-tahqīq*.¹¹ This is all very strange, but it is possible that the source of this notice is that very same manuscript or one close to it. However, the quite early death year, 534, remains difficult to explain (possibly mixed up with the death year of Hakîm Sanâ’î to whom this poem was later attributed).

On the other hand, an authentic poem on a different topic with the title *Miṣbāḥ ul-arvāḥ* was written by Jamâl ud-dīn Fazlu’llâh Ahmad Ardastânî in 868 AH (1463–64 AD). Jamâl ud-dīn, who is also known as Pîr-i Jamâlî, wrote this as the first part of a series of seven poems together called *Bayân al-ḥaqā’iq fî aḥvâl-i Sayyid al-mursalîn*, that is mystical interpretations of the deeds of the Prophet. This *Miṣbāḥ ul-arvāḥ* has also mistakenly been ascribed to the much later Indian sheikh Fazlu’llâh Jamâlî Dihlavî (d. 942/1535–36).¹²

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The *Miṣbāḥ ul-arvāḥ*, or “Lantern of Spirits”,¹³ of Shams ud-dīn Muhammad b. Îl-Tughân Bardasîrî is a Sufi *mathnavī* of some 1100 couplets (*bait*s) in length (1099 *bait*s in the edition presented here and 1125 in the edition of Furûzânfar). It is a

7 *Tārīkh-i Afḍal yâ Badāyi’ ul-azmân fî vaqāyi’-i Kirmân*, ed. M. Bayânî, Tehran 1326, p. 92.

8 Ed. Javâd Fâzel, Tehran 1340, I, pp. 265–67.

9 *Nashrīyah-yi Dānishkadāh-yi adabīyāt va ‘ulūm-i insānī*, Mashhad 1369, pp. 36–41.

10 Ed. Istanbul 1360–62/1941–43, II, col. 1705.

11 See my ed. of that poem, Lund 1973, pp. 11, 42, 45–46.

12 See Sajjâdî, op. cit., p. 39.

13 For the naming of the poem, compare *bait* 95 below!

typical Sufi composition of its time, written in quite fluent verse, using the various rhetorical figures and techniques of Classical Persian poetry in very efficient way. It is not written in the meter *khafīf*, so common in Sufi *mathnavīs* after the model of Hakīm Sanā'ī, but in the 10-syllable meter generally referred to as *hazaj-i musaddas-i akhrab-i maqbūd-i mahdūf* (- - v / v - v - / v - -), i.e. the meter used in Nizāmī's *Lailī u Majnūn*.

It is difficult to assess the originality of the poem, because the exceedingly rich genre of the Sufi didactic *mathnavī* has still not been thoroughly studied due to the fact that so many of its exponents are still lying neglected in the manuscript collections of East and West. One of the main forerunners is the *Sair ul-'ibād* of Sanā'ī, but, whereas that poem is not fully and unquestionably a Sufi poem,¹⁴ the Lantern of Spirits is completely integrated in a Sufi tradition that presupposes the existence of the *khānaqāh* and a *pīr* as the head of a *ṭarīqah* (a *shaikh at-tarbiyah* rather than a *shaikh at-ta'lim*).

Due to the probably early death date of Shams ud-dīn, thought to have died before 1221 AD, it is uncertain in how far he was influenced by Ibn al-'Arabī, who died in 1240. Ibn al-'Arabī's influential *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* was not written until 1229 and the *Futūḥāt al-makkīya* in 1231–38, but his central ideas about the Unity of Being (*vaḥdat al-vujūd*) and the Perfect Man (*al-insān al-kāmil*) may be seen mirrored in the *Miṣbāḥ*. An indication of this closeness is the fact that a dedicated follower of Ibn al-'Arabī, the Persian poet and sheikh Fakhr ud-dīn 'Irāqī (d. 1289) includes five verses that appear in some of the later manuscripts of the *Miṣbāḥ* in his *Lama'āt*.¹⁵ They are, however, quoted without reference to the author. In the translation of William C. Chittick and Peter Lamborn Wilson these verses run as follows:

[T]he painter's fascination
is with his own canvas.
There is no one else about
so . . . rejoice!

And:

Everywhere veiled
by Your own Face
You are hidden from the world
in Your very manifestation.
Look where I will
I see Your Face alone;
in all these idols
I see only You.

14 Cf. J. T. P. de Bruijn, *Of Piety and Poetry* (Leiden, 1983), 246–47.

15 See *Kullīyāt-i Shaikh Fakhr ud-dīn Ibrāhīm Hamadānī mutakhallīṣ bi-'Irāqī*, ed. Sa'īd Nafīsī, Tehran 1338, pp. 379, 394. These verses are found in a foot-note to *bait* 1097 of the present edition.

Jealous lest You be recognized
 at every instant
 You dress Your Beauty
 in a different cloak.¹⁶

These verses also appear in the *Nafahāt ul-uns* of ‘Abd ur-Rahmân Jâmî (d. 1492) at the end of a long section devoted to another follower of Ibn al-‘Arabi, namely Shaikh Auhad ud-dîn Hâmid al-Kirmânî. There Jâmî simply writes: “We owe some fine poems to Shaikh Auhad ud-dîn in *mathnavî* and other forms. In the end of the book *Miṣbāḥ ul-arvāḥ* he says...”, and then he quotes these same six verses but this time followed by the two obviously authentic final verses of the *Miṣbāḥ* (bb. 1098–99 of the present edition). This is followed by the remark that he has also composed *rubā‘iyāt*, four examples of which are quoted.¹⁷ After Jâmî historians and biographers like Khvândamîr and Rizâ-Qulî Khân Hidâyat all ascribe *Miṣbāḥ ul-arvāḥ* to Auhad ud-dîn Kirmânî.¹⁸

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The poem lacks the usual invocation to God and verses praising the first four caliphs but starts directly with a vivid description of how the narrator left (the whole poem is written in the past tense) the city in the first light of morning and joined a group of Sufis in a garden on a mountain slope. There he asked his *pîr*, Mu‘în (ud-dîn) Saffâr, who obviously was the actual sheikh of the poet, a stream of questions about the mystery of creation. The greater part of the poem (bb. 87–703) is taken by the didactic discourse of the *pîr* in reply to these questions, a veritable summary of the Sufi world-view and cosmology of the time.

The section that follows is called *mau‘idah-yi pîr* “exhortation of the *pîr*” (bb. 704–739), and forms a transition to the final part of the poem which describes a journey to the other world. The description of the various stages of this journey is arranged according to the usual Sufi systematization of the various kinds of *nafs* (“/carnal/ soul, self, Triebseele”), from the lowest, “the commanding soul” (*nafs-i ammārah*), to the highest, here called “the annihilated soul” (*nafs-i fāniyah*). Each stage is described as a new city or land (*shahr*) that is reached after perilous travels. The journey thus began in hell (*dūzakh*), with visits to the abodes of three different groups of people dominated by various aspects of the *nafs-i ammārah*, depicted as demons, beasts, monsters etc. From there the journey leads to the city of the *nafs-i lavvāmah*, “the blaming soul,” a place like “a verdant paradise” (*khuld-i khurram*) followed by the stage of the *nafs-i muṭma‘innah*, “the tranquil soul”. The next stage

16 Fakhrudîn ‘Iraqî, *Divine flashes*, translation and introduction by William Chittick and Peter Lamborn Wilson, London 1982, pp. 77, 97.

17 Ed. M. Tauhidî-Pûr, Tehran 1337, pp. 591–92.

18 Cf. Hamîd Farzâm, *Nuktah-hâ va naqdhâ dar panjâh va panj maqâlah*, Tehran 1380, pp. 593–599.

is not described as belonging to a special *nafs* but as the *ḥazīrah-yi quds*, “the Seat of the Holy,” and there the *pīr* declared that he had to stay behind.

The continued journey took the narrator to the beautiful city of the *nafs-i rādīyah*, “the [God-]satisfied soul,” situated outside of the four elements of material existence, followed by the stage of the *nafs-i marḍīyah*, “the [God-]pleasing soul,” a city beautiful and without fault. From there the journey went on to the stage of the *nafs-i ‘āshiqah*, “the loving soul,” declared to be the station of “the four Arabs who were... the helpers of the Prophet of Hijāz”. This stage is divided into four groups. The first is that of Muslims who have fled from the path of names (*ṭarīq-i asmā*). The second group consists of those who “had made Christianity (*tarsā’i*) their rule and regarded monasticism (*ruhbānī*) as their religion”. The third group is that of the Jews that have killed the golden cow in themselves. The fourth group of the *nafs-i ‘āshiqah* consists of Zoroastrians. Then followed the station of the *nafs-i faqīrah*, “the indigent soul, where the Prophet himself was found to reside. His words were found to be like those of the poet’s own *pīr*, Mu‘īn-i Saffār, who is declared to be forever present. Only his reason had been left behind at the previous station. His essence (*jauhar*) had stayed on and was united in love with that of the Prophet and finally also with the poet. Thus, they reached the final stage of the journey, the station of the *nafs-i fānīyah*, “the annihilated soul”.

This version of a journey to the Other World falls in with a long tradition in both Persian and Arabic speculation. In this connection attention has been given to, among others, the Persian *mathnavī Sair ul-‘ibād* of Hakīm Sanā’i and to the Arabic *Risālat al-Ghufrān* by Abu’l-‘Alā Ma‘arrī. In the long but still rather hesitant discussion of possible Islamic sources for the *Divina Commedia* of Dante *Miṣbāḥ ul-arvāḥ*, too, should be taken into account.¹⁹

19 Cf. my article “A journey to the other world according to the Lantern of Spirits”, *Bulletin of the Asia Institute*, N.S. 4 (1990; publ. 1992; = *Aspects of Iranian Culture*, in honor of Richard Nelson Frye), pp. 307–311; repr. in *Manuscript, Text and Literature*. Collected essays on Middle and New Persian Texts by Bo Utas, Wiesbaden 2008, pp. 123–130. See also R. A. Nicholson, *A Persian Forerunner of Dante* (Towyn-on-sea, 1944; also in *Transactions of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1943).