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Ḥāfiẓ, (Ḳhwādj a) Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Shīrāzī

Persian lyric poet and panegyrist, commonly considered the pre-eminent master of the *ghazal* form.

He was born in Shīrāz, probably in 726/1325-6, though ḲāsimGḥanī argues for 717/1317 and others favour 720/1320. With a few marked absences, he seems to have spent the greater part of his life in Shīrāz, for long moving in or near the court-circle of the Muẓaffarid dynasty. He is believed to have died in Shīrāz, in 792/1390 (or 791/1389), and his tomb is perhaps that city's best known monument. Though credited with learned works¶ in prose, his fame rests entirely on his *Dīwān*. There are few aspects of the life and writing of Ḥāfiẓ that have not given rise, and especially from about 1930 to 1955, to vigorous scholarly dispute over matters of both interpretation and fact. The reverence in which he is held, not only in Persia but widely throughout East and West, as the undoubted composer of some of the world's most sublime and technically exquisite poetry, will doubtless ensure continued concern with these problems, however intractable and ultimately insignificant some of them may seem to be.

Apart from its general historical framework, the presumed facts of Ḥāfiẓ's life were long largely drawn from biographical prefaces, from the usual anecdotal *tadhkira* sources like Dawlatshāh, or from casual references by writers like Mīrkḥ^wānd and his grandson. Such material has of course frequently been viewed sceptically; but most of it is of its nature

difficult to disprove conclusively, and in one or two instances (as in an alleged encounter with Tīmūr, in 789/1387) research has only tended to strengthen, if not fully to confirm, the legend. Informative biographies of Persian poets are a notorious rarity, and it seems unlikely at this late date that any significant new material of an explicitly biographical nature will be discovered relating to Ḥāfiẓ. Though not a new technique, it has recently become fashionable to analyse the poems themselves for new biographical evidence or for some bearing on the material already to hand. The latest, and the most comprehensive and ingenious work of this kind, has been done by ḲāsimGḥanī and by R. Lescot; but the net result so far is somewhat disproportionate to the formidable effort involved. At best, it has now been convincingly demonstrated that the *Dīwān* bears a much more direct relationship to the milieu of its composition than was suspected in the traditional view. Such methods always have their dangers, particularly where the basic biographical material is itself so slight; in the case of Ḥāfiẓ, the problem is exacerbated by the continued lack of a reasonably authentic text. All this being so, it still seems proper to give here the main outlines of the life in more or less traditional form.

Ḥāfiẓ's father, Bahā' Dīn or Kamāl Dīn (some sources refer to his grandfather), is said to have migrated from Iṣfahān to Ṣhīrāz, where he died in the poet's infancy, leaving the family in poor circumstances. In a close-knit, flourishing centre of Islamic civilization such as Ṣhīrāz at that time was, humble beginnings were only a relative handicap; and it is plausibly suggested that Ḥāfiẓ received a thorough education on the usual classical lines. It was no doubt in youth that he earned the right to use the title *ḥāfiẓ* Ḳur'ān-memorizer), which became his pen-name; his verse bears ample evidence of familiarity with Arabic, with the Islamic sciences and with Persian literature generally. He is reputed to have been among

other things a baker's apprentice and a manuscript-copyist during these years of adolescence and early manhood; but, to judge in particular by the dedication of certain poems to Ḳiwām al-Dīn Ḥasan (d. 754/1353), sometime vizier to Shāh Abū Ishāḳ Īndjū, he was into his poetic stride as a panegyrist before the age of thirty. An oft-cited poem (Brockhaus, no. 579; Ḳazvīnī-Gḥanī, 363) mentions nostalgically other Shīrāz notables of this period, including the ruler himself. Already by his twenties, in the wake of the disintegration of the Il-Ḳhānid order, Ḥāfiẓ had lived through dynastic upheavals in and around Shīrāz.

A second phase in the poet's life begins in 754/1353 with the capture of Shīrāz, after a protracted struggle between the Īndjū and Muẓaffarid dynasties, by Mubārīz al-Dīn Muḥammad. The latter ruled for five years, before being deposed and blinded by his son Djalāl al-Dīn Shāh Shudjā'. These years were apparently a period of rigid Sunnī observance, hard on Ḥāfiẓ and his fellow-citizens alike; but the poet seems to have recommended himself with some success to Mubārīz al-Dīn's chief minister, Burhān Dīn Faṭḥ Allāh. The long reign of Shāh Shudjā' (759-86/1358-84), while at no time settled politically, and though far from being a period of continuous prosperity and success for Ḥāfiẓ, coincides with his phase of maturest composition. It was during these years that his fame spread throughout Persia, as well as westwards into Arabic-speaking lands and eastwards to India; it seems, nevertheless, that he declined invitations to remove to distant courts. The Muẓaffarid dynasty effectively came to an end at the hand of Tīmūr, in 789/1387, during the last few years of Ḥāfiẓ's life, though random representatives of it, like Shāh Shudjā' al-Dīn Maṣṣūr, seem to have shown the poet sporadic favour to the end.

It is generally believed that Ḥāfiẓ was more or less out of favour with ShāhShudjā' for a period of some ten years (758-78/1366-76), during which time he is said to have spent a year or two in Iṣfahān and Yazd. The reason for such a fall has never been fully explained, though it is traditionally related to the poet's allegedly libertine views and behaviour. Though thereafter he enjoyed favour, from time to time, from the throne and from ministers like Djalāl DīnTūrānshāh, he seems never fully to have regained his former standing. Yet it should be remembered that there is still no real certainty as to what such standing actually signified: certainly there is frequent reference to poverty throughout the poet's life (whether it be regarded as a complaint, a hint or a literary device), and there is no serious suggestion that he held a regular, highly rewarded office as "court poet". At one time he is said to have been a professor of Qur'ānic exegesis at a Shīrāzmadrasa, but there is doubt as to which of his patrons might have obtained him this preferment and no record of his period of tenure.

Legend credits Ḥāfiẓ with editing his *Dīwān* in 770/1368, *i.e.*, over twenty years before his death, but no manuscript of this version is known. Less speculative, perhaps, but still unattested by real evidence, is the edition (with a preface of doubtful biographical value) compiled after the poet's death by a disciple, a certain Muḥammad Gulandām. From this traditional version are assumed to spring the thousands of manuscripts now extant and over 100 printed editions: many of these versions differ widely in the order and number of poems, in the order and number of verses within a given poem, and in their detailed readings. The bibliography is very extensive, and only some of the principal editions or translations can be mentioned here. (In general, it may be said that serious interest in Ḥāfiẓ seems to have passed, after his death, to the Ottoman world and to India, whence it came by the late 18th

century to Europe, returning in strength to Persia only in the 20s and 30s of the present century). First, it should be mentioned that several manuscripts are known in Persia, in Europe and elsewhere, which date from about the second and third quarters of the 15th century, *i.e.*, from thirty to sixty years after the poet's death; the most reliable of these contain just under 500 poems, while later versions rise to 600 and beyond. (In 1958, P. N. K̄hānlarī published a manuscript dated around 813/1410, which contains 152 poems in good textual condition). Derivative manuscripts, sometimes with commentaries in Persian, Turkish or Urdū, continued to circulate throughout the next four centuries.

The earliest historic recension, for long accepted as authoritative, and as a source of Ḥāfiẓ's life, was that of the Ottoman Sūdī (d. 1000/1591); he was at one time charged with having suppressed one or two poems of Shī'a sympathy, but modern scholarship has justified him by failing to find these poems in early manuscripts, and by casting at least some doubt on Ḥāfiẓ's Shī'ism. This recension was taken as the basis for another long-dominant edition, the three volumes (692 poems) of H. Brockhaus, Leipzig 1854-61. The late 18th and early 19th centuries saw much fragmentary and dilettante preoccupation with Ḥāfiẓ among Europeans (chiefly British and French), but a landmark in printed texts was the Calcutta edition of 1791 (725 poems), associated with the name of Upjohn; this edition was still based on late manuscripts and largely on the Sūdī recension; its introduction provided much of the material for the traditional life. J. von Hammer-Purgstall produced in 1812-3 a massive German prose-translation of the *Dīwān*, which was known to Goethe at the time he was writing the *West-östlicher Diwan*. Between 1858 and 1864, *i.e.*, roughly at the same time as the Brockhaus edition mentioned above, and using substantially the same sources, V. von Rosenzweig-Schwannau brought out another three-volume edition of the text, accompanied

by a remarkably skilful verse-translation in German. The English renderings, partial or complete, of the late 19th century (those, for example, of H. Bicknell, H. Wilberforce Clarke, Gertrude Bell and W. Leaf) deserve only passing mention, despite interesting merits of their own. By 1900 a largely spurious, second-growth Ḥāfiẓ stood beside the several approximations to the real figure. The 20th century saw the rebirth of serious Ḥāfiẓ scholarship in Persia. Special mention has already been made of the fundamental research of ḲāsimGḥanī, but there are few eminent Persian scholars of the present day who have not contributed important articles in this field. In particular, three editions merit notice: that of ‘Abdal-Raḥīm Kḥalkḥālī, Tehrān 1927 (495 poems, based on a manuscript of 828/1424, but marred by errors); that of Ḥusayn Pizḥmān, Tehrān 1936 (994 poems, many marked as doubtful!); and that of Muḥammad Ḳazvīnī and ḲāsimGḥanī, Tehrān 1941 (576 poems; the most scientific and reliable edition so far, based on some very old manuscripts; contains a good introduction, but lacks a critical apparatus). A new edition, also based on very early manuscripts, is reportedly in preparation by H. Ritter.

It will be seen that the two basic tasks of all research on Persian poetry, the establishment of a significant biography and the edition of an authoritative text, have assumed added and special dimensions in the case of Ḥāfiẓ. In briefest sum, one may state the dilemma thus; no text of Ḥāfiẓ, however good in itself, can be fully intelligible at any level without a marked amplification in our knowledge of his life and times; yet much of such knowledge must come from an analysis of the text, and one can have little confidence in the results of analyses, however scrupulously conducted, that are based on texts of doubtful reliability. It may well prove that neither task is fully susceptible of solution, even within limited terms of reference: while solidification of the biography must largely wait on the text, such

expectation gives no ultimate certainty of a rich yield; any acceptable text will inevitably be based on virtually the sole criterion of seniority of manuscript, and the oldest Oriental manuscripts, particularly if falling outside the author's lifetime, are not necessarily the fullest or the most accurate in any absolute sense. This is especially true of poetry, and indications so far suggest that it is even more than normally true of the *Dīwān* of Ḥāfīz. There is, too, the fundamental question of the poet's own intent: should everything he ever wrote (or perhaps merely countersigned) be included, even if he might himself have chosen to omit certain items from the supposed canon of 770/1368? Did he have second (or later) thoughts about the inclusion, the order, or the actual text of whole poems or individual verses? If we cannot now hope to answer questions of this kind, we should be cautious in claiming to do more in effect than publishing early manuscripts and observing their differences from later ones. Certain generally useful conclusions may be drawn, but we may well never be sure what such differences signify in any particular case.

Failure hitherto to solve these basic problems has never quenched interest in several secondary problems related to them. Scholars living in an age of non-representational art and literature are perhaps less concerned than most of their forebears (E. G. Browne was in advance of his age here) to discover positively "whether Ḥāfīz meant what he said", whether he was a mystic or a libertine, a good Muslim or a sceptic, or all of these by turns. It is now generally claimed (without prejudice) merely that he spoke *through* the standard themes and terminology of hedonism, the lament for mortality, human and mystical love, and so on; that he was a superb linguistic and literary craftsman, who took these forms so far beyond the work of his predecessors that he practically cut off all succession; and that he revolutionized the *ghazal* and the panegyric both, by making the one the vehicle for the

other in place of the *kaṣīda*. Nevertheless, useful new work has been done (particularly by R. Lescot) in establishing the chronology of certain poems so as to suggest a development in Ḥāfiẓ's attitude, style and methods. The secondary problem most hotly debated in recent years concerns the "artistic unity" of the poems: even supposing that the present varying order of verses were reduced to an original uniformity, is there any genuine unity in these *ghazals*, and did not Ḥāfiẓ invite later confusion by his failure to develop any theme consistently? There are indications that the problem is neither new nor specifically Western, for *Shāhshudjā'* is supposed to have made some such criticism, according to an anecdote current no later than the time of *Kh̄wāndamīr*. Arguments have been put forward, by A. J. Arberry and by the writer, to suggest that the true unity of Ḥāfiẓ's poetry is not thematic or dramatic in the classical Western sense, but lies rather in a subtle weaving of imagery and allusion around one or more central concepts. These arguments have found some favour with J. Rypka and others, but have also been rejected, both explicitly and by implication, as either invalid or unnecessary.

(G.M. Wickens)

Bibliography

in addition to the references in the text, see: *ḲāsimGhanī, Baḥṭḥdarāṭhār wa afkār wa aḥwāl-i Ḥāfiẓ*, Tehrān 1321-2/1942-3¶ (2 vols. only appeared before the author's death)

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