

# The textual history of the correspondence between Şadr ad-dīn-i Kūnawī and Naşīr ad-dīn-i Tūsī<sup>1</sup>

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Several years ago, when I began to study the exchange of letters and treatises between Şadr ad-dīn-i Kūnawī<sup>2</sup> and Naşīr ad-dīn-i Tūsī<sup>3</sup>, who both died in the course of the years 672-73/1273-74, the first manuscript which came to hand was the one preserved in Leiden. Since then, the picture of a balanced and closed correspondence which that manuscript presented to me has changed. First of all, the examination, thus far, of thirty-five manuscripts has demonstrated that the correspondence comprises more sections than those represented in the Leiden manuscript. The treatises and letters are, further, largely to be found in collections together with other works on *kalām* and *hikma*. The texts occur scattered or, sometimes, in isolation — by accident or design. Five *mukātabāt* manuscripts contain only the exchange of letters between the two scholars. They date from the 11th/17th to the 13th/19th centuries and are, therefore, all late compilations. Moreover, none of them is complete as far as the various parts of the correspondence are concerned.

## THE INDIVIDUAL SECTIONS OF THE CORRESPONDENCE

On the basis of the manuscripts from Turkey, Berlin and Leiden which I have examined<sup>4</sup> the treatises and letters of the correspondence between Şadr ad-dīn-i Kūnawī and Naşīr ad-dīn-i Tūsī can be listed as follows:

1. A Persian letter by Kūnawī, who seeks to open a correspondence with Tūsī since — as Kūnawī writes — the much desired meeting between himself and Tūsī has never come about. He asks Tūsī to consider his questions and formulate his response to them.

2. An Arabic treatise by Kūnawī which, so we learn from his letter, he had long before composed on ‘the results of the conclusions of thought’ (*Hāşil natā’idj al-afkār*). It bears the title *Ar-risāla al-muḫşīha ‘an muntaḫā al-afkār wa-sabab ikhtilāf al-umam*, ‘A treatise expressing the extreme limits of thought and the reason for the contradiction of religions’. The *risāla* deals with the search for the knowledge of God and the proof of His existence, and with the essence of the human soul and its capacity to comprehend God. A number of questions are added which, as we learn from Kūnawī’s first letter, arose out of discussions on this subject with

friends. The *risāla* is divided into an exposition (the main ideas of which also occur in another of Kūnawī’s works, the *Tafsīr al-fātiḥa*), and the above-mentioned questions. Both sections are of about the same length.

3. A Persian letter from Tūsī to Kūnawī, in which he praises Kūnawī lavishly and thanks him for having opened the correspondence. He too has long wished to meet Kūnawī and in fact had intended to write to him; but in this, as in other fields, Kūnawī has demonstrated his superiority over others. He gives thanks for the treatise, apologizes for the inadequacy of his response, and mentions another work of Kūnawī that he had obtained, the *Rashḥ al-bāl*. ‘Secretion of the Heart’ (see below. No. 7). This work, he says, shows Kūnawī’s profound knowledge of *taşawwuf* but, having been written apparently for beginners, it does not display Kūnawī’s own spiritual attitude, as he stands on too high a level to busy himself with supplication and prayer.

4. An answer by Tūsī in Arabic, in which he gives his perspective on each of Kūnawī’s questions.

5. Kūnawī’s second Persian letter to Tūsī thanking him for his answer. He realized from this answer that errors, caused by the copyist and by haste, had crept into his treatise, and distorted its meaning. Kūnawī apologizes for not having been able to eradicate these errors, as he has been ill and hurried. He expresses his astonishment that Tūsī should have obtained his other work, the *Rashḥ al-bāl*, without his, Kūnawī’s, knowledge, through the intermediary of a certain Tādġ ad-dīn-i Kashī.

6. An Arabic treatise written by Kūnawī in response to Tūsī’s answer, entitled *Ar-risāla al-hādiya*, ‘The Rightly Guiding Treatise’. This work also consists of two parts. In the first he explains the motives that led him to compose the *Rashḥ al-bāl*, and in the second he continues with general thoughts on technical terminology and an attempt to refute the criticisms expressed by Tūsī in his answer. At the end of the *risāla*, Kūnawī apologizes for contradicting some of Tūsī’s answers, stating that, if he had remained silent, some people might have assumed that he was too ignorant to respond to Tūsī’s remarks.

7. A small Arabic work by Kūnawī, the *Rashḥ al-bāl*, ‘Secretion of the Heart’ (also called: *Nafḥat al-maşdūr wa-tuḥfat aṣḥ-shakūr*, ‘Expectoration of the Breast-

constricted and Gift of the Thankful' or *Naf̄hat al-maṣḍūr wa tuḥfat al-maṣḥkūr*, 'Expectoration of the Breast-constricted and Gift of the Praised')<sup>5</sup>, which consists of a long prayer. As we have seen already, it does not belong directly to the correspondence, but it must be mentioned in this context since both our correspondents refer to it. This work is not to be found in any of the collections or in those manuscripts that contain only the correspondence, though the essay is cited in biographical works among the writings of Ḳūnawī, for example by Ṣafadī<sup>6</sup> and Kātib Ḥelebi<sup>7</sup>. I have thus far been able to locate only two manuscripts, one in Istanbul, dated 1091/1680<sup>8</sup>, the other in Leiden<sup>9</sup>. The latter, copied in 1067/1656, is a very fine manuscript, which is exceptionally valuable because it is a direct copy of the autograph. The second page contains Ḳūnawī's *idjāza* for this work to his student, Mu'ayyid ad-dīn-i Djandī<sup>10</sup>, with the date 670/1272 (see figure 1). We find this work mentioned twice by Kātib Ḥelebi: the first time with only Ḳūnawī as the author, and a second time, immediately afterwards, together with the *idjāza* for Djandī<sup>11</sup>. Another manuscript is supposed to have been found in O. Rescher's library<sup>12</sup> and yet another is in the Vatican<sup>13</sup>.

#### THE FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE OF THE VARIOUS SECTIONS

A few words should be said on the frequency of occurrence of the various parts of this correspondence. Most seldom are the Persian letters, usually couched in an inelegant Persian, pervaded by many Arabic substantive compounds and sliding into Arabic without warning. Ḳūnawī's first letter (No. 1 of our list), with one exception, always appears together with Ṭūsī's answer (No. 3). It occurs six times, but only twice in manuscripts which contain only the correspondence. In the manuscript Konya Müze No. 1633, which is dated 898/1492, we find both letters together with the letters appended to *An-naḫaḫāt al-ilāhiyya*, another of Ḳūnawī's works. The numerous other copies of *An-naḫaḫāt al-ilāhiyya* contain, with just one exception, only Arabic letters of Ḳūnawī in the appendix. We find Ṭūsī's letter once more — so we have seven copies altogether accompanied by Ḳūnawī's second letter (No. 5); the latter occurs four times, in two instances without the two other letters. Three manuscripts (MSS Süleymaniye Library, Aya Sofya No. 2412 and No. 2349 and MS Tire, Necip Paşa No. 827, the *'İsā Beg Defteri*) display all three Persian letters, but only the MS Necip Paşa No. 827 gives them in their proper sequence, whereas in the two Aya Sofya manuscripts they are scattered.

The complete *Ar-risāla al-muḫṣiḫa* (No. 2) can be found sixteen times. It occurs once without the questions at the end, which are, however, cited in Ṭūsī's answer. The introduction to *Ar-risāla al-muḫṣiḫa* (the

section preceding the formula *ammā ba'du*), is quoted in exactly the same form in another *risāla* of Ḳūnawī, *Ar-risāla al-murshidiyya*. And in two cases a treatise labelled *Ar-risāla al-murshidiyya* has turned out to be *Ar-risāla al-muḫṣiḫa*. Ḳūnawī's questions to Ṭūsī, the second part of this *Risāla*, occur twenty-four times, as we find them seven times without the introductory exposition.

Most frequently encountered is Ṭūsī's 'Position paper' (No. 4), which we find twenty-nine times in the thirty manuscripts, which contain parts of the correspondence, and in three of which it occurs alone, without any other portion of the correspondence. In a single manuscript, Süleymaniye Library, MS Hamidiye No. 188, which is a collection from the 11th/17th century, the answer is missing.

*Ar-risāla al-hādiya* (No. 6) occurs nineteen times, five times with the introductory section on the *Raḫḫ al-bāl*, and fourteen times with only the refutation of Ṭūsī's remarks<sup>14</sup>.

#### THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE CORRESPONDENCE

There is no manuscript in which we find an arrangement of the treatises and letters which corresponds entirely to our list. The copyists and their patrons were apparently interested in the contents of the epistles and not in the question whether there was really an exchange between the mystic in Konya and the philosopher in Marāgha (assuming that both our correspondents were respectively in Konya and Marāgha at the time of the exchange) and if so, how it actually took place. The authenticity of the letters was taken at face value. The letters, as we have seen from their relatively infrequent occurrence, were most often left aside or, as in the Leiden manuscript, dismissed in a few words: 'After blessings, praise, salutation and respects in Persian, he says...'<sup>15</sup>.

On the other hand, these very letters give us information on the sequence of the correspondence, and about the manner in which the parts of the bundle may have travelled from Konya to Marāgha and back. In his second letter to Ṭūsī (above, No. 5) Ḳūnawī names Tād̄j ad-dīn-i Kāshī as the instigator of the opening of the correspondence, who sent the first treatise and the *Raḫḫ al-bāl* (= *Naf̄hat al-maṣḍūr*) in response to the request of a friend<sup>16</sup>. I have been unable to identify this Kāshī with any certainty, since none of the known contemporary Kāshīs bears the *laḫab* added to the former's name<sup>17</sup>. The search for the identity of the messenger must be left to further study, and to luck. We do not know whether Ḳūnawī's second letter to Ṭūsī and *Ar-risāla al-hādiya* ever reached their addressee. To judge by their intent, they seem to have been written to vindicate and recapitulate Ḳūnawī's ideas.

The correspondence receives scant notice in the



bibliographical sources. To the best of my knowledge, *Djāmī* (d. 892/1492) is the first author to refer to the exchange between *Ḳūnawī* and *Ṭūsī*, though where he got his knowledge eludes me. In the *Nafahāt al-uns*, in the article on *Ḳūnawī*, we find right after an evaluation of *Ḳūnawī*'s scholarly abilities the remark: 'Between him and *Khādja Naṣīr ad-dīn-i Ṭūsī* there were questions and answers<sup>18</sup>'. This quotation postdates the death of both authors by at least 200 years.

Later references found in the *Tadhkira* of *Laṭīfī* (d.990/1582)<sup>19</sup> and the *Mawḍū'āt al-'ulūm* of *Ṭāshkō-prüzāde* (d. 1030/1621)<sup>20</sup> derive from *Djāmī*. The correspondence is cited as *Mufāwadāt* by *Kātib Çelebi* (d. 1068/1658)<sup>21</sup> who refers both to *Ar-risāla al-hādiya* as an independent work and, as mentioned above, to the *Nafīhat al-maṣdūr*. In the relatively late work, *Rayḥānat al-adab* (beginning 14th/20th century) of *Muḥammad 'Alī-i Tabrīzī*, we find an entry stating that *Ḳūnawī* had an active correspondence with *Ṭūsī* on questions of *ḥikma*<sup>22</sup>, an entry which can be explained by the steady increase in the number of manuscripts in the 11th/17th and 12th/18th centuries. I have thus far been unable to locate any reference to the correspondence in any pre-twentieth-century work under an article devoted to *Ṭūsī*.

There are only a few scraps of evidence antedating *Djāmī*'s *Nafahāt al-uns*. One manuscript, Süleymaniye Library, Esad Efendi No. 1413, has a note which would seem to indicate that the text was shown to the author (see figure 2). In this manuscript we find only the three treatises (Nos. 2, 4 and 6 of our list) without the letters, and the first part of *Ar-risāla al-hādiya* is also missing. If we can rely on the information of this note, the correspondence would have been collected already during *Ḳūnawī*'s lifetime.

Almost all manuscripts present unreliable evidence for the dating of the correspondence. For example, in the manuscript Süleymaniye Library, Aya Sofya No. 2412, which indiscriminately presents all parts of the correspondence as 'letters', there is a letter by *Ṭūsī* of which it is claimed that it was written in 676/1277 — that is four years after *Ṭūsī*'s death. In the course of my work on these manuscripts I have attempted several times to construct a chronology of the correspondence only to see it collapse like a house of cards because of the conflicting evidence of other manuscripts<sup>23</sup>.

One manuscript written at the end of the 8th/14th century — if not earlier — contains only *Ṭūsī*'s answer. Yet another manuscript which antedates *Djāmī*'s citation belongs to a collection of 'Īsā Beg, prince of Aydın (760-90/1360-90)<sup>24</sup> in Tire<sup>25</sup>. 'Īsā Beg may have had a preference for Persian over Arabic, for this manuscript comprises the three Persian letters of the correspondence in the proper sequence, but includes none of the Arabic treatises<sup>26</sup>. We possess no manuscript from the early centuries, apart from Süleymaniye Library, MS Esad Efendi No. 1413, which also contains *Ar-risāla al-hādiya*.

The manuscript Konya Müze No. 1633 is dated 898/1492, the year of *Djāmī*'s death. This copy contains, in addition to *Ḳūnawī*'s *An-nafahāt al-ilāhiyya*, letters to and from *Ḳūnawī*, among them a considerable number of Persian letters that I have been unable to locate in any other manuscript. They include *Ḳūnawī*'s first letter to *Ṭūsī* and the latter's reply<sup>27</sup>, but not *Ḳūnawī*'s second letter. This appendix also contains letters from and to a certain *Shaykh Naṣīr ad-dīn* and a *Nāṣir ad-dīn*. To complicate matters, the name of *Ṭūsī* occurs explicitly only in the text of *Ṭūsī*'s reply while all other letters refer to *Naṣīr ad-dīn*. So, the question arises, whether we are dealing with one *Naṣīr ad-dīn* or with two different ones. In the later manuscripts we learn that *Naṣīr ad-dīn-i Ṭūsī* is the author in question only from the headings, which are later additions.

Exchanges of letters between disciples and *shaykhs* are no rarity. Besides, there are a number of collections called *As'ila wa-adjwiba*<sup>28</sup> dating from the 7th/13th century. We know of one correspondence of a quite early date between a mystic and a philosopher, the authenticity of which has not yet been decisively proven. It is the correspondence between *Abū Sa'īd b. Abī'l-Khayr* (d. 430/1049) and *Ibn Sīnā* (d.428/1037)<sup>29</sup>. The question-and-answer genre is, as we see, quite common, but in spite of the great number of manuscripts we have no unequivocal evidence as far as the genuineness of the correspondence between *Ṭūsī* and *Ḳūnawī* is concerned.

Nevertheless, the correspondence may claim a certain historical probability. Despite the unsettled conditions and the confusion of the 7th/13th century, couriers certainly hurried back and forth between Konya and *Marāgha*, especially as *Marāgha* was for some time the capital of the *Ilkhānid* rulers of *Āzarbāydjān*. We also know that individuals among *Ḳūnawī*'s students and the circle of his acquaintance were associated with *Ṭūsī*, the best known among them being *Ḳuṭb ad-dīn-i Shīrāzī* (d. 710/1311)<sup>30</sup>. They could easily have transmitted the teachings of their master.

An entry in *Aḳsarāyī*'s Seldjuk history, the *Musāmarāt al-akhbār*, which was composed in 729/1328-29, neither generates nor eliminates doubt on the authenticity of the correspondence<sup>31</sup>. Under the year 672/1273, the lives of *Ṣadr ad-dīn-i Ḳūnawī* and *Naṣīr ad-dīn-i Ṭūsī* follow one another directly. In the entry on *Ṭūsī*, the author notes that *Ṭūsī*'s death brought to an end a prolific correspondence, even with people in Anatolia, but no connection with *Ḳūnawī* is mentioned.

Another unclear point concerns *Ṭūsī*'s letter to *Ḳūnawī*, which is composed in the most humble terms: he not only equates *Ḳūnawī*'s writings with the *Kur'ān*, but also exalts him in the highest fashion. The letter seems to have come from the pen of a student and admirer of *Ḳūnawī*, rather than from that of the great statesman and philosopher *Ṭūsī*, one of the most powerful men of his time.

The authenticity of at least a portion of the corres-

الرسالة المفصحة عن مشيها الأفكار وسبب اختلاف الأمم  
 والموضحة سر الاستدعاء إلى الطربوا الأشرف الأمم  
 مما استناه سيدنا وقدوتنا إلى الله الشيخ العلامة الكامل المكنى  
 الأوسع يدرة أكابر المحققين إمام الأئمة العالمين بالله في العالمين  
 وأوت كل الأنبياء والمرسلين صدر الحق والبر الوالحالي محمد بن اسحق  
 بن يوسف بر علمه مدانه في الحائتر طلال جلاله وحاله وضرب لنا بسهم  
 من مقامه وعلمه وحاله ولا حرمنا من كماله  
 هذه السورة كتبت في حياة المؤلف  
 والى هذا قد تدارك  
 من القدر

Fig. 2. MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye Library, Esad Efendi No. 1413. Title-page of *Ar-risāla al-mufṣiḥa* by Kūnawī. At the bottom is written that the MS was copied in the author's lifetime.

pondence remains open to doubt. The question should be raised whether Kūnawī's second letter and *Ar-risāla al-hādiya* were perhaps written in order to clear the *shaykh's* reputation from blemish, or to demonstrate the theological and philosophical competence of Kūnawī. Considering the prominence of both parties to the correspondence as well as the content of these treatises, an edition of all parts of the exchange, whether genuine or not, is desirable. This set of texts has continuously captured and exercised the minds of readers. In the course of time, it has undergone considerable changes so that a great number of variants

needs to be sorted out. The question of their inherent importance and the extent to which they reflect the spirit of their times, remains to be studied.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Brockelmann, *GAL* I, p. 586, Suppl. I, p. 808. For further information see: W.C. Chittick, 'Mysticism versus Philosophy in Earlier Islamic History: The al-Ṭūsī, al-Qūnawī Correspondence' in: *Religious Studies* 17 (1981),

pp.87-104; Mikâil Bayram, 'Sadru'D-Din Konevi ile Ahi Evren Şeyh Nasiru'Din Mahmud'un Mektuplaşması' in *Selçuk Üniversitesi Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 1983, sayı 2, Konya, pp. 51-75; the latter article is not reliable in all details.

<sup>2</sup> *İA* 8, p. 539f, s.v. Muhyi-d-Din Arabî.

<sup>3</sup> *EI*<sup>1</sup> IV, p. 1062 f; R. Strothmann, *Die Zwölfer-Schia, Zwei Religionsgeschichtliche Charakterbilder aus der Mongolenzeit*, Leipzig 1926.

<sup>4</sup> I have not yet been able to examine a few more manuscripts, such as that of Vienna, the one from the Vatican Library, one in Kütahya and one in Bursa, nor those in the Iranian libraries. On the copies in Iran, see Muḥammad Mudarrisi, 'Sar-gudḥaṣṣt wa-'aqa'id-i falsafi-i khwādjā Naṣir ad-dīn-i Tūsī', in: *Yādbūd-i haftšadamūn sāl-i khwādjā Naṣir-i Tūsī*, Tehran 1335 *sh.*, pp. 229-232; the oldest manuscript mentioned by Mudarrisi (p. 230 of his article) is that of Ḥaydar-i Āmulī (d.787/1385).

<sup>5</sup> *GAL* I, p. 586, Suppl. I, p. 808.

<sup>6</sup> Şalāḥaddīn Ḥalīl ibn Aibak aṣ-Şafadī, *Al-wāfi bi'l-wafayāt* vol. 2, ed. S. Dederling, Istanbul 1949, p. 200, No. 572.

<sup>7</sup> Kātib Çelebi, *Keşf el-zunun*, Istanbul 1972, p. 1967.

<sup>8</sup> Süleymaniye Library, MS Amcazade Hüseyin Paşa No. 447.

<sup>9</sup> Leiden University Library Cod. Or. 544, cf. P. Voorhoeve, *Handlist* (2nd edition, The Hague 1980), p. 246.

<sup>10</sup> 'Abdurrahmān b. Aḥmad-i Djamī, *Nafahāt al-uns min ḥadārāt al-quds*, Teheran 1336 *sh.*, p. 558.

<sup>11</sup> *Keşf el-zunun*, p. 1967.

<sup>12</sup> Osman Ergin, 'Şadraddīn al-Qunawi ve Eserleri', in: *Şarkiyat Mecmuası* II, İstanbul 1958, p. 87.

<sup>13</sup> *GAL* Suppl. I, p. 808.

<sup>14</sup> The tract is also designated by the title *Ar-risāla al-hādiya* in Kātib Çelebi, *Keşf el-zunun*, p. 900.

<sup>15</sup> Leiden University Library, Cod. Or. 1133, fol. 38b, cf. P. Voorhoeve, *Handlist* (2nd edition, The Hague 1980), p. 439.

<sup>16</sup> In the letter he is called *muḥarrir al-fadā'il sayyid al-akrān wa'l-afādil*.

<sup>17</sup> Şams al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Aflākī, *Manākib al-'Ārifin* (yayınlayan Tahsin Yazıcı) TTK, Ankara 1976. On pp. 278-79 we find a Ḥādjidjī Kāshī in Kūnawī's circle. Another contemporary is Afḍal-i Kāshānī, see *EI*<sup>2</sup> I, p. 839, s.v.

Bābā Afḍal. Then we also know the famous 'Abdurrazzāk al-Kāshī as an advocate of the thought of Ibn al-'Arabī (d. 638/1240); but if his death-date of 730/1329 is correct, it is scarcely possible that he is to be identified with Tādij ad-dīn, see *EI*<sup>2</sup> I, p. 88 f; *İA* 1, p. 105 f.

<sup>18</sup> *Nafahāt al-uns*, p. 555 f.

<sup>19</sup> Kaşamūnulu Laṭīfī, *Tadhkira-ye Laṭīfī*, İstanbul 1314, p.43.

<sup>20</sup> Tāshköprüzāde, *Mawḍū'āt al-'ulūm*, İstanbul 1313, p. 572.

<sup>21</sup> *Keşf el-zunun*, p. 1708.

<sup>22</sup> Muḥammad 'Alī-i Tabrizī, *Rayḥānat al-adab*, vol 2, Teheran 1335 *sh.*, p. 468 f.

<sup>23</sup> Sometimes it appeared that the correspondence must have taken place in 670-72/1271-73, the very last years of the lives of both correspondents.

<sup>24</sup> *EI*<sup>2</sup> I, p. 783, s.v. Aydın-oghlu; T. Korkantamer, *Leben und Weltbild des osmanischen Dichters Ahmedī unter besonderer Berücksichtigung seines Diwans* (Islamkundliche Untersuchungen 22) 1973, p. 105 f.; Hikmet Akin, *Aydinoğulları Tarihi hakkında Bir Araştırma*, Ankara Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Yayınları No 60, Tarih Enstitüsü No.6, Ankara 1968, ikinci baskı; Barbara Flemming (ed.), *Fahrīs Husrev u Şīrīn, Eine türkische Dichtung von 1367*, Wiesbaden 1974, passim

<sup>25</sup> Tire, MS Necip Paşa No. 827, fols. 89b-96a. See also A. Süheyl Ünver, 'İlimler Tarihimizde Aydınoğlu İsa Beyle Şahsına Ait Mecmuanın Ehemmiyeti Hakkında', in: *Belleten* 24 (1960), pp. 447-455.

<sup>26</sup> 'İsā Beg's linguistic preference is also suggested by the interlinear Persian translations that accompany all those sections of the volume that are in Arabic.

<sup>27</sup> MS Konya Müze No. 1633, fols. 111b-112b.

<sup>28</sup> Josef van Ess, *Der Wesir und seine Gelehrten* (Abhandl. für die Kunde des Morgenlandes, Band XLV/4) Wiesbaden 1981, 43-54.

<sup>29</sup> Fritz Meier, *Abū Sa'īd-i Abū l-Ḥayr, Wirklichkeit und Legende*, Leiden/Tehran 1976, p.28.

<sup>30</sup> Hermann Landolt, 'Der Briefwechsel zwischen Kāshānī und Simnānī über Waḥdat al-Wuḡūd', in: *Der Islam* 50 (1973), pp.29-81.

<sup>31</sup> Kerimuddīn Mahmud Aksarayī, *Mūsāmeret ül-Aḥbār*, ed. by Osman Turan, TTK, Ankara 1944, pp. 119-120.