The textual history of the correspondence between Şadr ad-dîn-i Ɔ wnâwî and Naṣîr ad-dîn-i Ţûṣî by Gudrun Schubert

Several years ago, when I began to study the exchange of letters and treatises between Şadr ad-dîn-i Ɔ wnâwî and Naṣîr ad-dîn-i Ţûṣî, 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 kulant and lit. The texts occur scattered or, sometimes, in isolation by accident or design. Five mukâtabât 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 the treatises and letters of the correspondence between Şadr ad-dîn-i Ɔ wnâwî and Naṣîr ad-dîn-i Ţûṣî can be listed as follows:

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

2. An Arabic treatise by Ɔ wnâwî which, so we learn from his letter, he had long before composed on 'the results of the conclusions of thought' (Hâşîl nâtâ'îd al-affkár). It bears the title Ar-risâla al-muJsiha'an muntahâ al-aJkar wa-sabab ifuíilAí al-umam, 'A treatise expressing the extreme limits of thought and the reason for the contradiction of religions'. The risâla 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 Ɔ wnâwî's first letter, arose out of discussions on this subject with friends. The risâla is divided into an exposition (the main ideas of which also occur in another of Ɔ wnâwî's works, the Tafsîr al-fâtiha), and the above-mentioned questions. Both sections are of about the same length.

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

4. An answer by Ţûṣî in Arabic, in which he gives his perspective on each of Ɔ wnâwî's questions.

5. Ɔ wnâwî's second Persian letter to Ţûṣî 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. Ɔ wnâwî apologizes for not having been able to eradicate these errors, as he has been ill and hurried. He expresses his astonishment that Ţûṣî should have obtained his other work, the Rashh al-bal, without his, Ɔ wnâwî's, knowledge, through the intermediary of a certain Tâdj ad-dîn-i Kashî.

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

7. A small Arabic work by Ɔ wnâwî, the Rashh al-bal, 'Secretion of the Heart' (also called: Naflhât al-masdûr wa-tuhfat ash-šakûr, 'Expectoration of the Breast-
constricted and Gift of the Thankful' or Naḥḥat al-
masdūr wa tuḥfat al-mashkūr, 'Expectoration of the
Breast-constricted and Gift of the Praised')\(^3\), 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
respondents 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
Kūnāwī, for example by Ṣafādī\(^6\) and Kātib Čelebi\(^7\).
I have thus far been able to locate only two manus-
scripts, one in Istanbul, dated 1091/1680\(^8\), the other in
Leiden\(^9\). 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 Kūnāwī's idżāra for this work to his student,
Muʿayyid ad-dīn-i Dāndī\(^10\), with the date 670/1272
(see figure 1). We find this work mentioned twice by
Kātib Čelebi: the first time with only Kūnāwī as the
author, and a second time, immediately afterwards,
together with the idżāra for Dāndī\(^11\). Another manu-
script is supposed to have been found in O. Rescher's
library\(^12\) and yet another is in the Vatican\(^13\).

**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 with-
out warning. Kūnāwī's first letter (No. 1 of our list),
with one exception, always appears together with
Tūsī's answer (No. 3). It occurs six times, but only
twice in manuscripts which contain only the corre-
respondence. In the manuscript Konya Mūze No. 1633,
which is dated 898/1492, we find both letters together
with the letters appended to An-nafaḥāt al-ilāhiyya,
another of Kūnāwī's works. The numerous other
copies of An-nafaḥāt al-ilāhiyya contain, with just one
exception, only Arabic letters of Kūnāwī in the appen-
dix. We find Tūsī's letter once more — so we have
seven copies altogether accompanied by Kūnāwī's
second letter (No. 5); the latter occurs four times, in
two instances without the other two letters. Three
manuscripts (MSS Suleymaniye Library, Aya Sofya
No. 2412 and No. 2349 and MS Tire, Necip Paşa No.
827, the 'Īsā Beg Defteri\(^1\)) 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-mufsīha (No. 2) can be
found sixteen times. It occurs once without the ques-
tions at the end, which are, however, cited in Tūsī's
answer. The introduction to Ar-risāla al-mufsīha (the
section preceding the formula ammā ba'du), is quoted
in exactly the same form in another risāla of Kūnāwī,
Ar-risāla al-murshidiyya. And in two cases a treatise
labelled Ar-risāla al-murshidiyya has turned out to be
Ar-risāla al-mufsīha. Kūnāwī's questions to Tūsī,
the second part of this Risāla, occur twenty-four times, as
we find them seven times without the introductory
exposition.

Most frequently encountered is Tūsī's 'Position
paper' (No. 4), which we find twenty-nine times in the
thirty manuscripts, which contain parts of the corre-
respondence, 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-hādiyya (No. 6) occurs nineteen times,
five times with the introductory section on the Rashh
al-bal, and fourteen times with only the refutation of
Tūsī's remarks\(^14\).

**THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE CORRESPONDENCE**

There is no manuscript in which we find an arrange-
ment 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 ex-
change between the mystic in Konya and the philosopher in
Marāqha (assuming that both our correspondents were
respectively in Konya and Marāqha 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...\(^15\).

On the other hand, these very letters give us infor-
mation on the sequence of the correspondence, and
about the manner in which the parts of the bundle may
have travelled from Konya to Marāqha and back. In
his second letter to Tūsī (above, No. 5) Kūnāwī names
Tādj ad-dīn-i Kāshi as the instigator of the opening of
the correspondence, who sent the first treatise and the
Rashh al-bal (= Naḥḥat al-masdūr) in response to the
request of a friend\(^16\). I have been unable to identify
this Kāshi with any certainty, since none of the known
contemporary Kāshīs bears the lakāb added to the
former's name\(^17\). The search for the identity of the
message must be left to further study, and to luck.
We do not know whether Kūnāwī's second letter to
Tūsī and Ar-risāla al-hādiyya ever reached their
addressee. To judge by their intent, they seem to have
been written to vindicate and recapitulate Kūnāwī's
ideas.

The correspondence receives scant notice in the
Fig. 1. MS Leiden, University Library, Or. 544, f. 2a, showing a copy of Kūnawī’s autograph idjāza for the Kitāb Naftah al-masdur wa-tubhat asg-šakir to his student, Mu’ayyid ad-dīn Mu’ayyid b. Maḥmūd-i Djiangdī, with the date 2 Ramadān 670/1272.
bibliographical sources. To the best of my knowledge, Džâmi (d. 892/1492) is the first author to refer to the exchange between Kûnâwî and Tûsî, though where he got his knowledge eludes me. In the Nafahât al-uns, in the article on Kûnâwî, we find right after an evaluation of Kûnâwî's scholarly abilities the remark: 'Between him and Kâhîja Naṣîr ad-dîn-i Tûsî there were questions and answers'. This quotation postdates the death of both authors by at least 200 years.

Later references found in the Tadhkira of Lâ'îfî (d.990/1582) 19 and the Manûdîb al-ulûm of Tâshköprüzâde (d. 1030/1621) 20 derive from Džâmi. The correspondence is cited as Mufâwada-R by Kâtîb Çelebi (d. 1068/1658) 21 who refers both to Ar-risâla al-hâdîya as an independent work and, as mentioned above, to the Nafahât al-masdûr. In the relatively late work, Rayhânat al-adab (beginning 14th/20th century) of Mu'mammad 'Alî-i Tabrizî, we find an entry stating that Kûnâwî had an active correspondence with Tûsî on questions of hikma 22, 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 Tûsî.

There are only a few scraps of evidence antedating Džâmi's Nafahât al-uns. One manuscript, Sûleymaniye 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-risâla al-hâdîya is also missing. If we can rely on the information of this note, the correspondence would have been collected already during Kûnâwî's lifetime.

Almost all manuscripts present unreliable evidence for the dating of the correspondence. For example, in the manuscript Sûleymaniye Library, Aya Sofya No. 2412, which indiscriminately presents all parts of the correspondence as 'letters', there is a letter by Tûsî of which it is claimed that it was written in 676/1277 — that is four years after Tûsî'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 23.

One manuscript written at the end of the 8th/14th century — if not earlier — contains only Tûsî's answer. Yet another manuscript which antedates Džâmi's citation belongs to a collection of Tâsî Beg, prince of Aydın (760-90/1360-90) 24 in Tire 25. Tâsî 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 26. We possess no manuscript from the early centuries, apart from Sûleymaniye Library, MS Esad Efendi No. 1413, which also contains Ar-risâla al-hâdîya.

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

Exchanges of letters between disciples and shafî'is are no rarity. Besides, there are a number of collections called As'ila wa-adiviha 28 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 Abû Sa'id b. Abî-l-Khayr (d. 430/1049) and Ibn Sinâ (d.428/1037) 29. 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 Tûsî and Kûnâwî 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 Marâghâ, especially as Marâgha was for some time the capital of the Ilkhânid rulers of Âzarbâyjân. We also know that individuals among Kûnâwî's students and the circle of his acquaintance were associated with Tûsî, the best known among them being Kutb ad-dîn-i Shirâzi (d. 710/1311) 30. They could easily have transmitted the teachings of their master.

An entry in Aksarâyî's Seldjuk history, the Musâmarât al-akhbâr, which was composed in 729/1328-29, neither generates nor eliminates doubt on the authenticity of the correspondence 31. Under the year 672/1273, the lives of Sadr ad-dîn-i Kûnâwî and Naṣîr ad-dîn-i Tûsî follow one another directly. In the entry on Tûsî, the author notes that Tûsî's death brought to an end a prolific correspondence, even with people in Anatolia, but no connection with Kûnâwî is mentioned.

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

The authenticity of at least a portion of the corres-
THE CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN KŪNAWĪ AND ŢŪSĪ

The correspondence 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 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.

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

NOTES

pp. 87-104; Mikâil Bayram, ‘Sadru’D-Din Kone ile Ahı Evren Şeyh Nasıur’D-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.

2 Lâ 8, p. 539f, s.v. Muhyi-d-Din Arabî.

3 EI IV, p. 1062 f; R. Strothmann, Die Zwölfer-Schia, Zwei Religionsgeschichtliche Charakterbilder aus der Mongolenzeit, Leipzig 1926.

4 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 Muhammad Mudarrisi, ‘Sar-gudhasht wa-’aqâ’id-i falsafî-i khvâ’ja Naistung ad-din-i Tûstî, in: Yâdâbî-i haftisadamîn sâîl-i khvâ’ja Naştîn-i Tûstî, Tehran 1335 sh., p. 229-232; the oldest manuscript mentioned by Mudarrisi (p. 230 of his article) is that of Haydar-i Ámuli (d.7877/1385).


8 Süleymaniye Library, MS Amcazade Hürsîyên Paşa No. 447.


13 GAL Suppl. I, p. 808.

14 The tract is also designated by the title Ar-risâla al-‘âdîyya in Kâtib Çelebi, Keşf el-zunun, p. 900.


16 In the letter he is called muharrir al-fa‘dîlî sayyid al-akhrân wa-l-afâ’dîl.

17 Şâms al-Dîn Ahmad al-Allâkî, Munâkıb al-‘Arîfiyân (yayinlayan Tahsin Yaza‘i) TTK, Ankara 1976. On pp. 278-79 we find a Hâdidî Kâshî in Kûnawî’s circle. Another contemporary is Afdal-i Kâshî, see EI II, p. 839, s.v. Bâbâ Afdal. Then we also know the famous ‘Abdurrazzâk al-Kâshî as an advocate of the thought of Ibn al-‘Arabi (d. 638/1240); but if his death-date of 730/1329 is correct, it is scarcely possible that he is to be identified with Tâdji ad-din, see EI I, p. 88 f; IA I, p. 105 f.

18 Nafahat al-uns, p. 555 f.

19 Kastamînulu Latîfî, Tâdhkîrâ-ye Latîfî, Istanbul 1314, p. 43.

20 Tâshkîrîzâde, Mawdî‘ât al-‘alûm, Istanbul 1313, p. 572.

21 Keşf el-zunun, p. 1708.


23 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.


26 ‘Tsà Beg’s linguistic preference is also suggested by the interlinear Persian translations that accompany all those sections of the volume that are in Arabic.

27 MS Konya Mûze No. 1633, fols. 111b-112b.


31 Kerimuddin Mahmud Aksarayî, MÜsîmeret ül-‘Ahhâr, ed. by Osman Turan, TTK, Ankara 1944, pp. 119-120.