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Semiotics of Power and Knowledge in Nasir Khusrow's Travelogue

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Abstract

Nasir Khosrow embarks upon a seven year journey in order to come to terms with his spiritual crisis. The quest is the inevitable outcome of the tensions and conflicts between Nasir and the institutionalized forms of power and knowledge. The tensions lead to the formation of a series of binary oppositions—verbal and nonverbal—within the text of his travelogue. The researchers have analyzed the text of Nasir's travelogue with a semiotic approach and have unearthed the binarized structure that underlies Nasir's report. The world around him is in contrast with the world he idealizes in his subjective mind, he draws a boundary line between the transient nature of his journey and the timeless journey he would undertake after death, the civilized cityscapes mark a sharp contrast with the savagery of the desert in which he has to reside temporarily. Another binary is formed when Nasir distinguishes his dietary habits from those of bedouins. The pictorial appeal of Nasir's painting comes to be contrasted with the authority of his words. These binary oppositions are directly related to Nasir's preoccupation with the concept of power (the kingdom and the court) and knowledge (institutionalized schooling and hypocritical erudition). He wishes to leave behind the present forms of power and knowledge in favor of an idealized version of the two. Separation from the familiar, adventure, and return form a circular structure. Power and knowledge are sometimes combined and sometimes function as separate motifs. On his return journey, Nasir, in order to survive, has to take refuge in the very institutions and the very bureaucratic system that he initially left behind.

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Introduction

Giving a definition for the genre of travel writing is not easy because the genre is indebted to such fictional and non-fictional writings as memoir, biography, novel, political and philosophical essays, history and sociology. Although the genre cannot be laid out in a neat grid pattern, Thompson notes, it covers a whole range of texts that give a report of the encounter between self and other and negotiate the interplay between the familiar and the unfamiliar. Such an encounter occurs within the contact zone and is the result of movement in space. The encounter is sometimes reported directly in the travel book and sometimes only implied in the influence it had left upon the viewer and the insight it had offered him/her. Travel books have two main characteristics, they narrate a world that lies beyond the limited local or national geography of the writer; they also reveal the values, social norms, preoccupations, prejudices of the writer and the cultural discourses that affect him/her (10-11). Nasir Khusraw's graphic descriptions throughout his travelogue reveal his ethnographic gaze which is defined by Brewer as the study of people "in naturally occurring settings or 'field' in order to capture the meanings, their social activities, involving a researcher participating directly in it, and also collection of data in a systematic manner but without meaning being imposed on them externally"(6). Based on this definition, personal feelings, thoughts, interpretative and judgmental comments are not allowed in ethnographic data gathering. Therefore, paying attention to the points where the seemingly objective approach of the reporter is supplanted by a judgmental tone would reveal to us the challenges that he undergoes when he encounters the other; when Nasir Khusraw describes the people living in the Falj desert, for example, his reserved tone gives way to a judgmental voice. The features leading to the tonal shift will be analyzed later on.

Searching for knowledge and for the love of wisdom is not exclusively a European enlightenment ideal. Many Qu'anic verses have highlighted the virtues and promises of travelling and many Muslims have undertaken journeys in search of divine or mundane knowledge. Euben maps the extensive varieties

of Muslim travel: "the *hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca, one of the pillars of Islam), *hijra* (emigration, modeled on the Prophetic journey), *rihla* (travel in pursuit of knowledge) and *ziyara* (visits to shrines, often associated with popular Islam)" (37). Nasir Khusraw's travel encompasses at least three of these categories: he makes three pilgrimages to Mecca(hajj), he is looking for true enlightening knowledge to rid himself from the oblivion that has plagued his decadent life(rihla), he makes visits to holy shrines during the course of his journey in general, and when mapping Jerusalem in particular(ziyara). It might not be a far-fetched interpretation to map his seven year journey unto the "hijra" model because his frustration with Saljuqs motivated him to embark on a journey to find a temporary shelter in the Ismaili territories where the Fatimid caliph imams were in power.

Nasir Khusraw's *Safarnama* is the account of his travels which began as a response to his internal tensions and the mental and philosophical challenges he has met. He is preoccupied with the institution of power (Saljuqi kingdom) and the institution of knowledge (erudition and verbal mastery).Throughout his travelogue, one can see his obsessive references to governmental systems, architecture of palaces and mosques, the relation between people and the state. He also indicates in his *Safarnama* the different effects of and reactions to his own verbal authority, and carefully observes and records different stances on myths and historical narratives. Verbal and non-verbal signs form an endless web of oppositions in the text of Nasir's travelogue. Sojoodi[1] notes that "a text is not necessarily made of verbal signs, and that any systematic gathering of signs (including words, images, sounds, gestures and etc) in a multi-layered message, formed according to social contracts and interpreted through sense perception, is called a text"(128). A signal can thus be transmitted through "auditory, visual, tactile, gustatory or olfactory media"(ibid 215); accordingly, Nasir Khusraw focuses on visual art, verbal mastery, food, clothes and architecture which are meaningful signs revealing the structural basis of his travelogue.

There are occasions where Nasir is baffled by his inability to nail down his binarized definitions, and the sharp boundary that he wishes to draw between self and other is thence blurred. Nevertheless, he often regards one side of the binary as ideal and the other side as base, and is reluctant to admit any blurring of lines. Ironically, the circular structure of his travel pushes him back to the

far-from-ideal side of the binary which he wished to evade. In this study the researchers try to find out how these oppositions are formed in Nasir Khusraw's *Safarnama* and how they are revealed in verbal and non-verbal signs within the text of the travelogue. The structural and semiotic approach to travel accounts will open new perspectives and will shed a new light on the texts that have been hitherto reduced to historical or geographical documents. Articles and books on Nasir Khusraw's travelogue, as will be reviewed in the following sections, have been mostly written with a geographical, historical, sociological and anthropological perspective. The textual and structural analysis of his travel account is the contribution of this research.

Theoretical Framework

> Travel implicitly calls the notion of "home" into question because that is typically the standard from which experiences are measured.... In journeys outward—away from home—other landscapes, countries, and cultures are often viewed in terms of how they compare to one's home. (Siegel 4)

Travel accounts are located in the domain of the literature of the contact zone. As a result, the confrontation between self and other, the comparison of home and abroad, the familiar and the exotic, resurface in the texts of travelogues. The polarized structure of definitions, descriptions and observations in a travel book calls for an analytic paradigm based on binary oppositions. Binary oppositions can hardly be considered natural and biological, rather, they are cultural strategies constructed to impose order on an otherwise borderless universe.

Leach, drawing from natural history and the concept of survival, tries to justify the use of binary oppositions in terms of man's need to draw a boundary between "own species and other, dominance and submission, sexual availability or lack of availability, what is edible and what is not" (39). Cobley considers the "binary logic" as the very foundation upon which "language, genetics and social organizations" are built; he refers to the systematic and structural presence of binary oppositions underneath "social models and codes controlling institutional and everyday life" (176). Saussure, in his theory of signs,

highlights the differences between signs rather than their similarities. Jacobson builds upon Saussure's theory of opposites and regards binary oppositions as significant structures that determine the meaning: "Every single constituent of any linguistic system is built on an opposition of two logical contradictories: the presence of an attribute … in contraposition to its absence …" (cited in Lechte 1994, 62). Martin Bronwen and Felizitaz Ringham define binary structures with regard to the quality of difference, that is, they categorize binaries into those based on contradiction and those based on contrariety:

> A binary structure refers to a relationship between two terms that are mutually exclusive: up versus down; hot versus cold; good versus evil; etc. There are two types of binary opposition: (a) that of contradiction: cold versus not cold; and (b) that of contrariety: cold versus hot. (31)

According to the above definition, in the course of defining the other, the distance between self and other can be either a matter of type or a matter of degree. When Nasir Khusraw idealizes the civilization of Cairo and implicitly compares it with his home civilization, the difference between home and abroad is determined by degree. However, having reached the Falj desert in which he thinks civilization is nonexistent, Nasir Khusraw makes an aborted effort to prove that the difference between him and the Arabs is of type, and not of degree.

Review of Literature

Peyvand Firouzeh has chosen a generic title for her article: "Narratives of Nasir Khusraw: On the History of the Built Environment in Early Medieval Cities on the Edge." At the beginning of her article, she promises to provide some clues to the "Islamic architectural history" with regard to Nasir Khusraw's travelogue. Be that as it may, her materials are reduced to descriptions rather than analyses. The article leaves much unsaid by failing to give an in-depth analysis of the cultural significance of the architecture in the borderlands. A contextual study of architecture would enrich the article and could fill the analytic gap that the reader finds in it.

Nasruddin Shah Paikar in " Nasir Khusraw’s Philosophical and Intellectual Tradition" offers the reader an introduction into the historical context out of

which Nasir Khusraw emerged, and provides us with a sketch of his life and thought. The writer of the article outlines the religious, philosophical, literary and scientific beliefs of Nasir Khusraw and gives a background on his written treatises, Diwan, and *Safarnama*. However, as is expected from an introductory article with a panoramic outlook, it does not maintain focus on the text of Nasir's *Safarnama.* A textual analysis of *Safarnama* with regard to its systematic structure can help us have a better grasp of its writer's obsessions and preoccupations.

Nasir Khusraw, the Ruby of Badakhshan: A Portrait of the Persian Poet, Traveler and Philosopher by Alice C. Hansberger offers a detailed account of the historical events, places and characters relevant to the Ismaili mission during the reign of Fatimid Caliphs. The book is divided into 12 chapters and chapters six, seven, eight, nine and ten are devoted to Nasir Khusraw's travelogue. These chapters give ample historical data elucidating the religious motivations behind Nasir Khusraw's travel. They also offer an overview of the places that he visited on the course of his journey. The distinguishing feature of the book is the great number of direct quotations from Nasir Khusraw's travelogue beautifully translated. The translations mirror the archaic prose style of Nasir Khusraw, however, there can hardly be found an explicatory analysis nor does the book entail a structural dissection of the travelogue.

Nasir Khusraw and Ismailism written in 1948 by W. Ivanow is an orientalist reading of Nasir Khusraw's literary and philosophical achievements. The writer's objective seems to be the demystification of the Persian traveler, poet and essayist. The writer suggests that Nasir Khusraw's fame in Persia was an "imported product"(3) owing to the interest of mid-nineteenth century Europeans in the "crude and rustic poetry"(ibid) that could reflect the "real wisdom of the east"(ibid). He expresses his frustration at the "deplorable scarcity" of verifiable information and rejects the myths surrounding Nasir Khusraw's name in favor of some historical truth. He locates Nasir in the Ismaili tradition and regards his travel as a propagandist project to praise the Imam of his time. There are a few references to the text of Nasir's *Safarnama*; however, they are overshadowed by the writer's effort to show the great pains he took to gather data and evidence about Ismailism. The text of *safarnama*

seems to be buried beneath the great volume of the historical background with which Ivanow has meticulously stuffed his book.

Mahallati in "Memoirs of Iranian Women Travelers to Mecca" gives a report of how women mostly from upper class or royal families recorded their travel to Mecca. She introduces the first woman to have written her travelogue in verse and goes on to talk about the motivations and the writing styles of women who ventured out to Mecca. The degree of feminine sensibility revealed in the texts of the travelogues differs. Some women do not show much of a feminine character and some concentrate on the hardships of traveling for women and some give useful accounts of the harems in which they were received. Mahallati's writing sounds more like a survey including long quotations from travelogues; she has incorporated the cover images of the travelogues into her article and the space she allots to her own commentary is far more limited than the space she devotes to reports, direct quotations and cover images.

The Link between Power and Knowledge

The recurring motif in many a travelogue is the contact between self and other. Nasir Khusraw's description of the contact zone is informed by his conception of power and knowledge, his frustrations at institutionalized power and knowledge, his praise of the ideal forms of power and knowledge and the different shapes that these two features assume. Nasir Khusraw's obsession is rooted in the different forms of interaction taking place between the two institutions. These two concepts were sometimes combined through tribal and familial bonds, and were put on the same level of importance. Ibn Khaldun[2] states that "Emir's scribe was one of the nobles of his tribe and one of his relatives[3]" (Ravandi[4] 393). Thus, it was only natural and taken for granted that some scribes, according to Muhammad ibn Hindūshah Nakhchivani[5], could themselves succeed to the throne: "one of the indications of the honor and the high rank of some scribes is that they have become kings, Caliphs and dignitaries in the past[6]"(75-6) . Sometimes, the two institutions existed separately within the jurisdiction of Sultan's sovereignty, in these cases, they served the state like the two sides of the same coin. Ravandi quotes different verse lines from Persian Classical literature to show the connection of the two; these lines from Farrokhi[7] are good examples:

The pen and the sword play the biggest roles in a kingdom
The fierce lion is afraid of the pen and the sword
The country's foundation is strengthened by the sword and the pen
These two allocate hazard and glory to the kingdom[8] (Farrokhi)

Ravandi proceeds to quote from Khawaja Nasīr al-Dīn Tūsī, [9] who says "kingdom is based on two things: the sword and the pen, the sword is in the warrior's hand and the pen is in the writer's hand[10]"(391). These two institutions accompany each other to such a great extent that they sometimes unite, and as a result, scribes wear armors. Jahshyari[11] says in the book *Ministers*[12] that "all the writers, during their residence, wore their ordinary clothes and whenever the king set upon a journey they wore the battledress[13]" (ibid 392) and get such a high rank that "when Persian kings entered the court, they didn't stand up[14][standing up is a mark of respect]" (Muhammad ibn Hindūshah 65). When scribes changed into men of power and found a place in formal classes, they defined principles and allocated to themselves a particular zone; Nizamī-i Arūzī [15] on the one hand attributes a spiritual aspect to this class and confers upon them elevated adjectives and holds that a scribe "is not busy with worldly trifles and their absurdities[16]" (1374:20), and on the other hand, he believes that the system of power must pay special attention to scribes: "the person who has a profession which is related to thought, must have peace of heart and comfort[17]"(ibid 27). To honor this class, Muhammad ibn Hindūshah says that: "pencil chip should be honored and should not be thrown on the way because treading on it would bring poverty and oblivion[18]" (1964: 83). Thus, he argues that disrespect to the "pencil chip[19]" leads to "poverty and oblivion," poverty being opposed to power and oblivion being in contrast with knowledge. The accompaniment of these two institutions in Nasir Khusraw's travelogue forms a circular structure and a coherent narrative.

Objectivity and Subjectivity

There is a fluctuation in Nasir Khusraw's text, especially in the initial sections, between life as it is and life as it should be. He describes the society in which he is living according to the rules and principles of the court. His account of the objective world with which he seems to be fed up is juxtaposed with his

references to the intuitive and dreamlike experiences that motivate him to leave the material world behind. The references to his material existence reveal his social position in the system of power. The language he uses to introduce himself is reminiscent of the court's grandiloquence: "Such says Abu Mo'in [Hamid] ad-Din Nasir Ibn Khusraw al-Qubadiani AlMervzi…" (1). The charismatic and reverberating title ironically exhibits the values of the material world that overshadows the narrator's account even now that he has come back from his seven year "spiritual" quest. The flashy title seems to contradict his claim at the beginning of his journey when he said "from things material, I took none[20]" (3); by paying attention to the way he addresses himself, one can see that he is carrying the full package of "things material." By introducing himself with such a long and wordy title, he locates himself, from the very outset, within this power structure and does not hesitate to show off the pride he takes in his social rank. A customary attitude used in old Persian in order to rank oneself as a man of distinction was to use the third person point of view to refer to oneself. His self-celebratory attitude comes more vividly into view when he uses the first person pronoun to quote himself and goes on to reveal how well-known he is. In the introductory note of his *Safarnama*, he reveals his dependence upon the power system and the institution of knowledge: "Such says Abu Mo'in [Hamid] ad-Din Nasir Ibn Khusraw al-Qubadiani AlMervzi, may God forgive him, that I was a man doing the job of a secretary and had a hand in the royal properties and deeds and was occupied with affairs of the court and having done the job for some time, had found fame among the circle of friends and acquaintances[21]"(1). Nasir Khusraw emphasizes his authority and underlines the combination of power and knowledge crystallized in his lifestyle. As the secretary of the court, he partook of enough information and knowledge to have the power of decision in court affairs; however, this knowledge is inseparable from the system of power to which he is often gravitated despite his efforts to transcend it. An example of institutionalized knowledge that frustrates Nasir Khusraw can be seen in his description of Toghrul Beg Muhammad: "the ruler of the time was Joghir Beg's brother, Toghrul Beg Muhammad, and he had ordered his men to found a school , the school was being made around Sarajaan Bazaar[22]; and Toghrol Beg himself was gone to Isfahan to expand his territory[23]" (2). Toghrul Beg's warlike and expansionist attitude on the one hand, and his decree for a school to be made on

the other hand impicitly reveal Nasir's criticism of the knowledge institutionalized within a power-obsessed system.

After the vision he sees in his dream, Nasir Khusraw does not find himself in harmony with the objective world in which materialism and thirst for power rule, and he wishes to seek a world that he has idealized in his own subjective mind. Just after describing Toghrul's enterprises, Nasir Khusraw proceeds to tell the reader about a person called the Reverend Ali Nesayee[24], who, Nasir believes, has hypocritically introduced himself as Avicenna's student without having any knowledge: "I asked about the coterie of scholars, they showed me a man whom they called the Reverend Ali Nesaayee …and a group of people gathered around him… in the middle of his speech, he said 'I learned and heard such and such from Avicenna, the blessings of God upon him' and he wanted me to notice that he had been Avicenna's pupil… I left the group and I wondered how he can teach people anything while he knows nothing[25]" (4). Having described the objective world around him along with its frustrating aspects, Nasir Khusraw goes on to reveal the subjective world in which he finds the motivating forces for his journey. He relates two experiences that cannot be justified in rational or logical terms. Letting himself be led by his sentimental and intuitive visions, he sets upon his quest. The two events are quoted below:

a) That day witnessed the conjunction of Jupiter and Draco, it has been said that all asked for from the Allah Almighty would be granted on such a day. I went to a corner and said two units of prayer and implored Allah Almighty to bestow upon me true wealth. When I went to friends and followers, one of them was reading a Persian verse that reminded me of a poem which I was going to ask him to read it; I wrote it on a piece of paper, but before I asked him to read that, he began reading exactly what I had written on the paper. I interpreted it as fortunate kismet and said to myself: Allah Almighty has granted my wish[26].(1)
b) One night I dreamed that a person told me 'up until when are you going to drink this wine'… I replied that sages could not make a better thing to relieve the worldly pain. He answered that there is no relief in being insensate and insensible... seek something that could sharpen your wits … and then pointed to kiblah.[27] (2)

These two intuitive experiences convince Nasir to leave the royal court and his secretarial position. They provide him a subjective ground in which he looks for two things that are in sharp contrast with the previous institutions. In the first event, "true wealth" is in contrast with the Sultan's power. Thus, the power of Sultan turns out to be untrue; and in the second incident, sharp wits and true awareness are in contrast with the knowledge begotten through his secretarial position. He says his farewell to the objective world: "then I went to Merv[28] and asked for exemption from my occupational responsibilities and explained that I intended to make a pilgrimage to kiblah. There was an account that I settled, and from material things I took none[29]"(3). His farewell to his worldly position is not unlike the preparations of a person who is going to depart this life. His purpose is to be reborn into a new world that he has idealized in his subjective mind.

Celebrating the Ideal

Nasir Khusraw, in search of true power and knowledge, leaves the court of Saljuqs and demands exemption from his secretarial responsibilities. Although he wishes to surpass the worldly power structures, they constantly resurge in his report. Descriptions of power, wealth, palaces and rulers' treatment of their people are repeated with a high frequency. The two features that underlie his travel account, namely power and knowledge, emerge sometimes in the form of an ideal combination like the case of Abul Ala Ma'arri, and sometimes in the form of institutionalized virtues combined artificially, like the case of Toghrol Beg Muhammad. Power and knowledge do not necessarily appear in a combination and function very often like separate motifs that are referred to in different parts of Nasir's Travelogue. The Reverened Ali Nesayee[30] is an example of a man of science whose claims to knowledge are derided by Nasir Khusraw, he is not in power, nor is he a court man, but he has many followers. Nasir Khusraw conceives of Ali Nesayee as a construct of a power system that breeds pretention and hypocrisy. Nasir Khusraw's account of social beliefs and political policies includes his description of the power of Caliphs and Emirs with or without references to the question of knowledge. In this section, the researchers bring two examples of what Nasir Khusraw considers to be ideal: The Fatimid Caliph- Imam of Egypt and the learned Abul Ala Ma'arri.

Idealized power Structure

Being alienated from his home society, Nasir Khusraw formulates different concepts about self and other depending on the circumstances. When in Egypt, he implicitly otherizes the governmental system he has forsaken in favor of the Fatimid caliph-Imam who rules Cairo. Since Persian civilization is never denied by Nasir Khusraw, the difference between self and other is not of type but of degree. The reality of the Saljuqs' rule is covertly criticized in the last sentence of the quotation below:

> I saw such rich and fortunate people there that if I relate or describe them people of Fars would not believe me. Their properties are beyond descriptions and the comfort that I saw there, nowhere else could I see. There I saw a wealthy Christian Egyptian whose ships and possessions and wealth were beyond measure as said so. One year, Nile's water declined and grains became expensive. The sultan's vizier called upon the wealthy Christian and said “we don’t have a good year ahead and Sultan is so concerned for his people. How much grain can you sell to or lend us?” The Christian said, “Delighted be the Sultan and his vizier, I have so much grain to feed Egypt for six years.” At that time Egypt was so populace that the people of Neishaboor could hardly form a fifth of them, and those familiar with these numbers know how rich a person should be to have such an amount of grains and how safe a people should feel to have such wealth without hiding it from the sultan and how just of the sultan not to tyrannize his people in such circumstances [31](96).

From the beginning of this description, one can see the comparison that he almost implicitly draws between people of Fars and people of Egypt. Although he tries to tone down his judgmental voice, his persistent emphasis on the justice of the Egyptian Ismaili Imam and his focus on the wealth and comfort of Egyptians bespeak the voids that he feels called upon to fill in his own country. The mutual understanding, the trust between the sultan and his people, and the sultan's justice are what he praises, celebrates and describes in length, his incessant exclamations are indicative of his awe and disbelief. The great space

he allots to the wordy description of the Ismaili Egypt, when compared with his silence concerning his three pilgrimages to Mecca, reveals to the reader the center toward which he aspires. He makes three pilgrimages to Mecca and describes only one, and even that with a delay: "on Monday we reached Arafat[32] peopled by dangerous Arabs. Returning from Arafat, I stayed two days in Mecca and went back to Jerusalem[33] along the road of Damascus[34]. On Fifth of Muharram, 439 (lunar year), we reached Jerusalem[35]. I do not describe Mecca and Hajj now; I will speak about them in detail when I get to my last pilgrimage to Mecca[36]" (61-2). We notice here Nasir Khusraw's conscious organization of his travel notes; thus, his deliberate silence about certain circumstances and his delay in giving the information about Mecca are very telling. Egypt with its Fatimid Caliph-Imam is of primary importance to Nasir Khusraw and he seems to be overtly excitable when he describes the details of his visit to Egypt. The power system of the Fatimid Egypt is described in terms of wealth and comfort, the very worldly features that he promised to leave behind at the beginning of his journey; however, when the brilliant aspects of the material world are held by the Fatimid Imam and when the noble classes and the commoners can, hierarchically of course, partake of the sultan's affluence, the material aspects are described with a tone of amazement and lest the readers should find it unbelievable, he swears that he is telling the truth[37]. Nasir Khusraw's Talab al-Ilm, therefore, seems to be more a matter of Ismaili mission and an advertisement of the Fatimid ideology than a purely religious awakening and an aspiration toward Mecca.

Idealized combination of Power and Knowledge

It is important to note that Nasir Khusraw, in the course of his travels, seldom mingles with people; human beings are rarely the object of his gaze. His documentary style of writing is usually focused upon places and architecture rather than on people. When he goes to places with a Quranic history, he pushes the contemporaneity to the margins and focuses instead on the religious history of the place. Giving priority to religious history and verification of religious and historic accounts rather than to his immediate experience of the moment is another testament to his renunciation of the objective world in favor of a subjective world he had conceived in his own mind. The information that he gathers from people is written in the passive form of verbs and the givers of the

information are left unknown. There are a few exceptions though; his most dramatic experience takes place in the Falj Desert which will be discussed in the following section. In this part one of the very few examples of character sketch found in *Safarnama* will be analyzed. Abul Ala al-Ma'arri, according to Nasir's account, is a crystallization of the ideal form of power combined with the ideal form of knowledge.

Nasir Khusraw in Maarat al- Numaan[38] meets a person who is an embodiment of the idealized form of power and knowledge the absence of which triggered him to go on a quest. The two constituents of his world, namely power and knowledge tainted with hypocrisy and wordplay, are transformed into an ideal model embedded in Abul Ala al-Ma'ari who is an upright man of nobility, liberated from worldly and material concerns; he is a poet-philosopher with no predilection for sophistry or hypocrisy:

> There was a man in that city whom they called Abul Ala al-Ma'arri, he was blind and the chieftain of the city. He was a man of affluence and had a lot of servants and agents, and the whole city served him while he was leading a life of asceticism, staying home, wearing modest clothes, merely living on rations of barely bread…having no worldly occupation[39].(ibid 18)

Not only does his treatment of power seem unprecedented to Nasir Khusraw, but also his knowledge sounds to him awe-inspiring in its depth and scope:

> This man has reached such a degree of adroitness in literature and poetry that all the scholars of Damascus, Morocco and Iraq admit that there is not and will not be any man who can rival him in this age. He has written a book called *Seasons and Reasons*[40] and has made ambiguous remarks and strange eloquent maxims that people can hardly understand[41]. (ibid 18-19)

Nasir Khusraw, in the course of his travels, meets Emirs, rulers, nobles, poets and orators but in his opinion, none parcels up the full package of ideal power and knowledge as perfectly as Abul Ala does. Abul Ala is a knowledgeable man of power but he has no lust for power and is not attached to things material. He has preferred to have no occupation lest he be contaminated by

worldly concerns. Regarding the fact that the documentary style of writing and the realistic recording of people and places as they come into view are, after all, acts of selection, Nasir's magnification of Abul Ala's lifestyle is not a matter of fact incident; it serves a purpose. Although judgmental passages are scarce in writings with an "architectonic vision," to borrow from Eubens, the choice of the subject matter, the recording of a particular scene and the deletion of others and most important of all, the act of translating the actual experience of travel into words impregnate the text of the travelogue with an implicit content of satire, praise and *judgment*. The modesty of Abul Ala, his simple lifestyle despite his affluence, and his readiness to share his property with others have stricken Nasir Khusraw with a sense of awe. In the previous example, the mutual trust between the ruler and the ruled, and also the Caliph's justice were highlighted, and in the case of Abul Ala, probably the pompous poses of authority figures at home and their pretentious life styles are criticized. The binary of home and abroad is there, though one side(home) is invisible and traceable only between the lines. He makes no direct reference to Saljuqs and makes no overt comparison between home and abroad. The undercurrent of protest against Saljuqs becomes clear when one takes into consideration the historical clues external to Nasir's travelogue: he was sent on exile and had to lead a life of secrecy in villages after he returned home. Nasir Khusraw's reserved tone changes and his commentaries become more explicit when his journey is coming to an end. In the following section we will notice how the concept of savagery, civilization, pictorial art and verbal art form complicated and flickering binaries.

In the Middle of Nowhere

After his last hajj, on his return journey, Nasir Khusraw comes across the Falj Desert which spells to him the end of the world. He gets stuck there for four months during which time he describes himself in terms reminiscent of the outset of his journey: "from things material I had naught except two baskets of books[42]"(144). This sentence reminds the reader of the initial lines of *Safarnama* where he admitted: "from things material I took none except the most needed[43]"(3). Nasir Khusraw's books and the few items that he needs seem to be the most unmarketable possessions in the Falj Desert. Falj is the exact opposite of the civilized world that he has left behind. Bored with the

indulgence and decadence of the affluent civilization of his homeland, he reaches a spot where tribalism has marginalized the rules of the Sultanate or the Emirate and where people are "hungry, naked and ignorant[44]"(145). The institution of power is wanting, and the institution of knowledge, represented by the books Nasir Khusraw carries, has to be transformed and put into material use at best or be left unmarketable at worst. Nasir's architectonic vision gets impaired at this point because buildings, palaces and urban constructions that he is very good at delineating, are totally absent. Urban constructions are the epitomes of the institutions and social systems that do not exist in Falj. Therefore, to Nasir, Falj is the place where absolute savagery reigns; it marks a sharp contrast with the world Nasir Khusraw fled from in ennui. Nevertheless, a sharp contrast does not prove to be what the traveler was looking for because when he enters Falj where urban civilization is missing, he feels bound and enchained. He describes the people of Falj with belittling adjectives: "petty people, robbers, seditious and ignorant[45]"(143-4). The narrator explains to the reader the pyrrhic victory of the Arab tribes who savagely fought for dates and suffered heavy casualties, in order to conclude that finding sustenance was their first priority and struggling for survival characterized their lifestyle. The civilized self that was hitherto reserved, self-possessed and almost invisible is now unveiled into a biased judge. The discourse of "them and us" becomes particularly outstanding in this part of *Safarnama*.

The characteristic feature of Nasir Khusraw's report of his stay in the Falj desert is that his language that was hitherto reserved and calm erupts into judgmental phrases and attributes. The eye of the camera turns out to be the eye of a man made of flesh and bone. The tonal change takes place when Nasir Khusraw fails to offer a sufficient definition of Falj people. The most perplexing and unsettling event happens when they are infatuated by the floral designs Nasir makes around a line of poetry that he has written on the wall. The people whose main priority was described to be struggle for survival become defenseless when they see a small piece of painting:"there was a mosque there, I had some vermilion red and azure blue which I made use of to write and illuminate a line of poetry on the mosque's wall[46]"(145). The Arab tribe that finds Nasir's books worthless, do not opt for the poem he has written on the wall but for the floral designs with which he had illuminated the poem. The

binary of savagery vs. culture is shaken here: the Arabs who fought and suffered heavy casualties for the sake of some dates, are now ready to offer a considerable amount of date provided that Nasir Khusraw illuminate their mosque; they simply honor color, design, beauty and art.

Vermilion red and azure blue are the remnants of the institution of power and knowledge which he fled from: as a secretary of the court, his job was closely related to the art of calligraphy. At home, he used these colors to record royal documents and impress the sultan and be thereby rewarded with wealth and fame. In a setting other than the court, writing, calligraphy and his verbal authority are supplanted by painting, illumination and pictorial suggestiveness. Verbal mastery and wordplay that seemed to be his means to survival are now useless; he has to change the function of his colors in order to survive: the scribe turns into a painter, words yield to pictures, and the central text is subordinated to the marginal floral designs. The binaries are turned upside down; hence the emergence of an unsettled Nasir Khusraw.

The Expressive Value of Color and Design

Scribes had to be calligraphers and their written documents were highly honored and kept in the court's safes. Due to the significance of words in the Quran and because of the iconoclastic origin of Islam, verbal arts were superior to pictorial arts, according to Welsh et al, "the art of calligraphy was second to none in Islam" (17). The illuminations and the decorative floral designs were added to the margins of calligraphic inscriptions later on, and were only peripheral to the significant calligraphic text inscribed right in the middle of the page. The Arabs of Falj, however, show no preference for Nasir Khusraw's calligraphic mastery but for his illuminations; the bedouins can hardly be reduced to a simple clear-cut definition. Instead of words, they esteem the picture: they shake the Islamic artistic hierarchy with their preference for the painting. They also make the reader suspect the validity of the judgmental comments Nasir Khusraw passes on the bedouins: the very people whom he calls "ignorant" respond to color and design. When they vote for the blue background rather than the red foreground, once more the stereotypical image of bedouins comes to be questioned.

Red is an aggressive color very common in savage and bedoiun cultures because it deals with wrath, spite, struggle and danger(Ostovar 12) and it is the

origin of the brownish color of soil, the ground, the earth and is a symbolic reference to mundane desires, earthly concerns, and the base feeling of wrath and vengeance(Ostovar 9). Blue, on the other hand, is the color of wisdom, recognition and intuition. It's the color of introversion and attributes an ethereal aura to the space it covers. In Persian culture, blue represents purity and spirituality, hence its dominance in Islamic architecture (Ostovar 13). In the Persian dictionary of Dehkhoda, vermilion red or "Shanjarfi[47]" is defined as a shade of red used for writing. "Shanjarf Pen[48]" refers to the pen the ink of which is red or shanjarfi. These explanations indicate the use of this color in writing in addition to painting. However, azure blue is mostly used in tile work, architecture and painting, no reference is made to the use of azure blue in scribing or writing. We can conclude that the line of verse Nasir Khusraw inscribes on the wall has been written in vermilion red which is a foreground color and the floral designs are done in azure blue which is customarily the background color. Regarding Ostovar's categorization of colors and considering the fact that bedouins could communicate more easily with red which is the color of wrath, earth and earthly desires, their preference for azure blue, which is the color of peace, wisdom, introversion and spirituality bespeaks a multidimensional identity. Nasir Khusraw takes pains to reduce these people into flat types and a few aggressive adjectives reminiscent of redness rather than blueness.

Another fact that unsettles Nasir Khusraw's conception of self and other is that art has the power to unify the so-called "seditious" Arab tribes. Although the bedouins live in a place where no centralized government can survive and where tribalism has led to blood feuds over some dates, they react unpredictably to the pictorial art of Nasir Khusraw. Mesmerized by the image of the oasis in the heart of the desert, they reach an agreement and accept to provide Nasir Khusraw with a fortune in return for some more painting. While in Islam, the iconic representation of human and animal faces and bodies could not be accepted as art, designs of trees and flowers found their way into calligraphy as representations of paradise which is a religious landscape. To Nasir Khusraw and also to the bedouins, the floral designs could represent the world not as it was, but as it could be; they could virtually transform the wasteland into a paradise. The painting therefore, depicts a utopia in which the

bedouins could seek refuge from the violence and the drought of the desert; it also represents an ideal world for Nasir Khusraw who has been through a spiritual wasteland. Thus, the pictorial art of Nasir Khusraw can not only unite the Arabs, but also help Nasir Khusraw and the bedoiuns reach a life-saving agreement.

Preoccupation with the Concept of Time

Time is Nasir Khusraw's obsession. His journey began with the concept of awakening and the passage of time: "I woke up from the night dream, and it is time to wake up from the forty year slumber[49]"(2). Time is the inseparable feature of the very material world that he wishes to leave behind. However, in the same way that he cannot do away with the concepts of institutionalized power and knowledge in the course of the journey, he can hardly overcome his fear of mortality, hence his obsessive references to time. Mortality and materialism are meticulously interwoven in Nasir Khusraw's narrative and he shows that despite his claim of liberation from things material, he is strictly bound by them. The objective existence of the material world haunts the timeless ideal world he creates in his subjective mind during the course of his quest: "On Thursday, the sixth of Jumada al-Akhira, 437, or the 15th of Dey, the Persian year, or 414, yazdegerdi calendar…[50]"(2). Not only the time, but also the spatial features such as distance and size are described with scrupulous attention to details. Such an exact recording of time and distance is not unlike the practice of the court secretary who must rigorously date and sign forms and documents. His style of recording and dating the report of his journey is determined by his secretarial habit rooted in the institution of power.

At the end of his journey, Nasir Khusraw, writes a poem in which the linear passage of time is contrasted with immortality: "we are travelling through that which can be passed, until there comes that journey which cannot be by-passed.[51]" In this line of verse, the concept of linearity (referred to by the verb "passing") is distinguished from the concept of circularity (referred to by the verb "by-passing"). Linearity represents transience and circularity represents timelessness. His fear of mortality and his predilection for the timeless can also be traced in the picture he paints on the mosque's wall. Painting has the element of space and writing and narrative have the element of time at their disposal, painting captures and immortalizes the spatial scale of one single moment. The

passage of time is usually absent from the picture plane. The floral designs that are motifs in Persian art of illumination are reminiscent of paradise, spring, the prime of life, and the peak of youth; the depiction of paradise is therefore the immortalization of the ideal period of life.

Food, Power and Identity

Food has been likened to language due to its communicational potentials:

> One main message of food, everywhere, is *solidarity*. Eating together means sharing and participating…. The other main message is *separation.* Food marks social class, ethnicity, and so on. Food transactions define families, networks, friendship groups, religions, and virtually every other socially institutionalized group. (Anderson 125)

Nasir Khusraw occasionally comments on the abundance of food and their prices in some places, but the point where the subject of food particularly attracts his attention is in Maarat al- Numaan. Abul Ala al-Ma'arri is the affluent noblemen of the city who shares whatever he has with his people; however he is often fasting, exempting himself from the world of ordinary people. He has an unchanging diet of barely bread and is leading a life of a dervish. With his generosity and avoidance of food, he is assuming at the same time the pose of solidarity *and* separation. He is a nurturer, thus, he has the upper hand, and he often goes on a fast and denounces what he offers to his own people. The reluctance to have a rich diet can be the rejection of the earthly and material aspects of existence. He epitomizes the values that Nasir Khusraw seeks after: from things material, Abul Ala al-Ma'arri takes the least possible!

When in Falj, Nasir Khusraw tries to use a vegetarian diet and adopts the pose of Abul Ala al-Ma'arri in an attempt to separate himself from the "base" world of the Arabs. He mentions the food of the bedouins with a tone of contempt: "those around us sought and killed and ate lizards… and I could eat neither lizards nor camel milk, whenever I found a tree with fruits, I got some seeds and I was content with it[52]" (143). Following the belief that you are what you eat, Nasir Khusraw manages to draw a sharp binary line between himself

and the Arabs. By preferring the vegetarian diet to what the Arabs eat, he is giving signals of separation and defines his social class and national identity against a "savage" background. He is passing judgments upon "the hungry, naked, and ignorant[53]" people of Falj. Abul Ala al-Ma'arri's elevated personality was depicted in terms of his abstention from worldly pleasures. Fasting and hunger are to be distinguished here: Abul Ala's deliberate avoidance of food proves him to be an exemplary human being in the eyes of Nasir Khusraw; on the other hand, by highlighting the Arabs' destitution and *unavoidable* hunger, Nasir Khusraw assigns them a position far below the salt.

The Completion of the Circular Structure

Nasir Khusraw's exit from Falj strikes one as Adam's Fall[54]. Falj is far from Eden of course; however, it perfectly epitomizes the dematerialized world that Nasir Khusraw was seemingly looking for. After four months, he finds a caravan, but he is so penniless and broke: "I had naught to offer as the fare[55]" (145). When he reached the desert, he had very few necessary items with him, but now that he wants to make his exit, he is a stripped-down version of his former self, a newborn baby. The caravan takes Nasir on tick provided that he pay a far larger amount than the real fare when they reach the destination. As soon as he finds a way out of Falj, calculations, coins and credits become his primary concern and the books that were of no use in the desert, once more change into instruments of power: he becomes the good old erudite man of letters and manages to get his purposes across through his secretarial talents and literary skills.

For Nasir Khusraw to be accepted in the civilized cityscape, all items of the material world are to be restored one by one. Having sold not his books but their empty bag, he and his brother go to the bathhouse, but they are not let in because "they were so naked and miserable[56]" that they looked insane; the bath keepers kick them out and children throw stones at them(155). As Virginia Woolf said in *Orlando*, "it is clothes that wear us and not we them"(117). Clothing and nudity form an important binary when Nasir Khusraw arrives in Basra. It is a matter of context to decide what counts as clothing and what counts as nudity; therefore, by nakedness, Nasir Khusraw does not probably mean that he was in a state of nature. Khal'at[57] or robe of honor represents social and political status and here, it is a testimony to sanity; the absence of

decent clothes is interpreted by the civilized people of Basra as insane and when Nasir Khusraw and his brother are provided with respectable clothing, they are highly esteemed by the very bath-keeper who pushed them out. The binary of clothing vs. nudity equals the binary of culture vs. nature, obedience vs. rebellion, the disciplined vs. the unruly and finally civilization vs. savagery. Barcan analyses the poles of clothing and nudity in terms of the universality of the latter and the diversity of the former: "the dialectic between nakedness and clothing is thus a potent cultural site for a tussle between sameness and difference, between the idea of the universality of our shared primal nakedness and the diversity of the forms our bodies take in culture"(12). Having come back from a desert in which the "virtues" of civilization were absent, Nasir Khusraw needs to recover all the cultural and material virtues he had deemed useless in Falj. In order to assert his difference from the savage badouins, he needs to appear in fine apparel. After writing a verbose letter to a man of power and getting his support, he manages to secure himself a decent place in the civilized world. Nasir Khusraw comes back home to find that his survival depends upon the degree of his involvement in the bureaucratic institution of court. The wheel of hypocrisy is inevitably set into motion and the world from which he had exempted himself overwhelms him at the end. He has to claw his way back into the institutions of power and knowledge:

A) Institution of Power (the court)

> under the circumstances, I had come to know a Persian man of virtue who conversed with the vizier…he recounted to the vizier how I was, when the vizier heard about me, he sent an envoy with a horse asking me to ride the horse and go to him without hesitation[58].(155)

B) Institution of Knowledge

> I was ashamed of my poor condition and nakedness, so I thought it would be inappropriate to go, I wrote him a letter, apologized and said I would attend his presence later; and I had two purposes: first, to show my poverty and *second to give him an idea of how great my erudition was*[59][my emphasis]. (155-6)

In order to be accepted in the material world he seeks help from a vizier and writes a letter to declare his fame and to impress the authority with his learning. Nasir Khusraw resorts to his pre-quest stage of life.

Back into the "things material," he manages to get money and decent clothes. Under the shadow of the court power and his shrewd exhibition of his learning, his material life improves. His return journey to the material world is peppered with the strategic letters he writes to authoritative figures in order to show off his erudition and thence to get their support. In the city of Mahrooban,[60] all the roads were insecure due to the skirmishes; thus, he gets stuck and cannot find a way out. He hears that there is a noble man of learning in Arghan[61]. He puts his pen at work on the spot and implores the nobleman to take him out into a safe place, "after three days, he sent thirty armed infantrymen…they took us to Arghan with consolation[62]" (164). At the beginning of *Safarnama,* Nasir wrote of Toghrul Beg who had founded a school and was gone to Isfahan to expand his territories. By describing Toghrul Beg's enterprises, he implicitly leveled criticism at institutionalized knowledge within the power system; and now that he has come back, the same combination of authority and knowledge attracts his attention. He consciously makes a circuit of his narrative by reminding the reader of the people he had met and criticized at the beginning. On his return, he meets a man from Neishaboor who is appointed to rule Isfahan, the very city Toghrul Beg had conquered. He is pictured by Nasir as "a good secretary with a beautiful handwriting, calm and handsome, he was called Khajeh Amid, a learned, conversible and generous man[63]"(166). The figure of Toghrul Beg who had founded a school and was gone to Isfahan to conquer some more land, is mirrored in the portrait of Khajeh Amid, the secretary with a delicate penmanship who is at the same time the magistrate of the conquered Isfahan. Toghrul Beg and Khajeh Amid, who appear respectively at the beginning and end of Nasir's narrative, are both exemplary characters that people the material world of power and knowledge, the world that Nasir Khusraw cannot bypass.

Conclusion

Facing a spiritual crisis and mourning the passage of time, Nasir Khusraw finds himself in tension with the institution of power and knowledge, and embarks upon a journey toward Kiblah. His motivating forces are rooted in his intuitive, and not logical, perception. He idealizes a version of power and knowledge that he finds crystallized in Abul Ala Ma'arri, the man who has abstained from the world despite his power and wealth. On a second level he reaches a place in

which he faces the absence of the two institutions. Instead of finding an audience for his word-based knowledge, much to his surprise, Nasir finds out that his pictorial art is far more marketable in the desert. Falj is the place where Nasir's definitions of self and other are unsettled and it is the only part of his narrative where he boldly expresses his negative judgmental views without his typical reserved tone. His commentary on the bedouins is not unlike the orientalist views of western people about the east. He makes his utmost effort to otherize the very bedouins who made a generous, but unexpected contract with him. He reiterates the old stereotypical image that the Iranians hold of the Arabs and describes them as eaters of lizard and drinkers of camel milk; he distinguishes himself from them by highlighting his own vegetarian diet.

The otherizing process can be witnessed in Nasir Khusraw's deletions and silences. After he gives a wordy and detailed report of the glory of Cairo, he mentions Mecca but keeps quite about it. When he is in Jerusalem, he reduces the contemporary setting and people to the margins of his account and focuses instead on the religious history of the place. In the urban settings, he does not see the people and hardly ever contacts them; instead he focuses on the architecture, fortifications and water supplies.

The spiritual crisis that motivates him to begin his quest is revealed in his preoccupation with the concept of time and distance, and also in his fear of death. At the beginning of his narrative, he announces that he intends to make sense of his life and wake up from a forty year dream. At the end of his *Safarnama*, he distinguishes the journey that he is passing at the moment from the journey that he would not be able to bypass. There seems to be a sense of doom at the end of Nasir's report. His inability to get round the institutions of power and knowledge comes into view when the reader takes a look at the circular structure of his narrative. The same frustrating examples of hypocritical power and knowledge portrayed at the beginning of his account reemerge at the end of his *Safarnama*.

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[۱] فرزان سجودی

[۲] ابن خلدون

[۳] کاتب امیر از خویشاوندان و بزرگان قبیله‌ای او به شمار می‌رفت

[۴] راوندی

[۵] محمد بن هندوشاه نخجوانی

[۶] از شرف و منزلت کتابت یکی آن است کی در زمان قدیم به خلافت و پادشاهی و دیگر مناصب عالی رسیده‌اند.

[۷] فرخی

[۸] ملوک را قلم و تیغ برترین سهمی است/ بترسد از قلم و تیغ شیر شرزهٔ نر/
بنای ملک به تیغ و قلم کنند قوی/ بدین دو چیز بود ملک را شکوه و خطر

[۹] خواجه نصیرالدین طوسی

[۱۰] بنیاد پادشاهی بر دو چیز است: یکی شمشیر و دیگر قلم، شمشیر در دست سپاهیان باشد و قلم در دست نویسندگان

[۱۱] محمد بن عبدوس جهشیاری

[۱۲] الوزرا

[۱۳] همه نویسندگان هنگام اقامت، لباس معمول خود را می‌پوشیدند و هر وقت که شاه مسافرت می‌کرد به لباس جنگجویان در می‌آمدند.

[۱۴] وقتی که ملوک عجم در دیوان آمدندی کتّــاب دیوان از بهر ایشان قیام نکردندی.

[۱۵] نظامی عروضی

[۱۶] به حطام دنیاوی و مزخرفات آن مشغول نباشد

[۱۷] هر صناعت (دبیری) که تعلق به تفکر دارد صاحب صناعت باید که فارغ دل و مرفه باشد

[۱۸] تراشهٔ قلم را عزیز باید داشت و بر ره‌گذار نباید انداخت کی اگر پای بر آن نهاده شود درویشی و فراموشی آرد

[۱۹] تراشهٔ قلم

[۲۰] "از دنیاوی آنچه بود ترک کردم"

[۲۱] چنین گوید ابومعین [حمید]الدین ناصر بن خسرو القبادیانی المروزی، تجاوز الله عنه که: من مردی دبیرپیشه بودم و از جمله متصرفان در اموال و اعمال سلطانی و به کارهای دیوانی مشغول بودم و مدتی در آن شغل مباشرت نموده در میان اقران شهرتی یافته بودم

[۲۲] بازار سراجان

[۲۳] حاکم زمان طغرل بیک محمد بود، برادر جغری بیک، و بنای مدرسه‌ای فرموده بود، به نزدیک بازار سراجان و آن را عمارت می‌کردند، و او خود به ولایت‌گیری به اصفهان رفته بود

[۲۴] استاد علی نسایی

[۲۵] طلب اهل علم کردم. مردی نشان دادند که او را استاد علی نسایی می‌گفتند... جمعی نزد وی حاضر... در اثنای سخن می‌گفت من بر استاد ابوعلی سینا رحمهٔ الله علیه چنین خواندم و از وی چنین شنیدم همانا غرض وی آن بود تا من بدانم که او شاگرد ابوعلی سیناست... عجب داشتم و بیرون آمدم و گفتم چون چیزی نداند چه به دیگری آموزد

[۲۶] در آن روز قران رأس و مشتری بود گویند که هر حاجت که در آن روز خواهند باری تعالی و تقدس روا کند به گوشه‌ای رفتم و دو رکعت نماز بکردم و حاجت خواستم تا خدای، تبارک و تعالی، مرا توانگری حقیقی دهد چون به نزدیک یاران و اصحاب آمدم یکی از ایشان شعری پارسی می‌خواند مرا شعری در خاطر آمد که از وی درخواهم تا روایت کند، بر کاغذی نوشتم تا به وی دهم که: این شعر برخوان، هنوز بدو نداده بودم که او همان شعر بعینه آغاز کرد آن حال به فال نیک گرفتم و با خود گفتم: خدای تبارک و تعالی حاجت مرا روا کرد

[۲۷] شبی در خواب دیدم که یکی مرا گفتی چند خواهی خوردن از این شراب...گفتم: حکما جز این چیزی نتوانستند ساخت که اندوه دنیا کم کند جواب داد در بیخودی و بیهوشی راحت نباشد...چیزی باید طلبید که خرد و هوش بیفزاید...پس سوی قبله اشاره کرد

[۲۸] مرو

[۲۹] پس به مرو رفتم و از آن شغل که به عهدهٔ من بود معاف خواستم و گفتم که مرا عزم سفر قبله است پس حسابی بود که جواب گفتم و از دنیاوی آنچه بود ترک کردم.

[۳۰] استاد ابوالحسن علی نسائی ملقب به حکیم مختص

[۳۱] آن جا مال ها دیدم از آن مردم که اگر گویم یا صفت کنم مردم عجم را آن قبول نیفتد و مال ایشان را حد و حصر نتوانستم کرد و آن آسایش و امن که آن جا دیدم هیچ جا ندیدم.

و آن جا شخصی ترسا دیدم که از متمولان مصر بود، چنان که گفتند کشتی ها و مال و ملک او را قیاس نتوان کرد . غرض آن که یک سال آب نیل وفا نکرد و غله گران شد . وزیر سلطان این ترسا را بخواند و گفت: " سال نیکو نیست و بر دل سلطان جهت رعایا بار است . تو چند غله توانی بدهی، خواه به بها، خواه به قرض؟" ترسا گفت: "به سعادت سلطان و وزیر، من چندان غله مهیا دارم که شش سال نان مصر بدهم"--و دراین وقت لامُحالَه چندان خلق در مصر بود که آنچه در نیشابور بودند خمس ایشان به جهد بود-- و هر که مقادیر داند معلوم او باشد که کسی را چند مال باید تا غلهٔ او این مقدار باشد. و چه ایمن رعیتی و عادل سلطانی بُوَد که در ایام ایشان چنین حال‌ها باشد و چندین مال‌ها که نه سلطان بر کس ظلم و جور کند و نه رعیت چیزی پنهان و پوشیده دارد. ۹۶

[۳۲] عرفات، کوهی نزدیک مکه

[۳۳] بیت المقدس

[۳۴] شام

[۳۵] قدس

[۳۶] روز دوشنبه به عرفات بودیم مردم پرخطر بودند از عرب . چون از عرفات بازگشتم دو روز به مکه بایستادم و به راه شام بازگشتم سوی بیت المقدس.

پنجم محرم سنه تسع و ثلاثین و اربعمائه هلالیّــه به قدس رسیدیم . شرح مکّه و حجّ این جا ذکر نکردم، تا به حج آخرین به شرح بگویم ۶۱-۶۲

[۳۷] مرا در این غرضی نبوده و ننوشتم الا آن چه دیدم و بعضی که شنیدم و نوشتم عهده آن بر من نیست۹۳

[۳۸] معره النعمان

[۳۹] در آن شهر مردی بود که وی را اَبُوالعلاءِ مَعَرّی می‌گفتند، نابینا بود، و رئیسِ شهر او بود، نعمتی بسیار داشت و بندگان و کارگزارانِ فراوان، و خود همه شهر او را چون بندگان بودند و خود طریق زُهد پیش گرفته بود، گلیمی پوشیده و در خانه نشسته، نیم من نان جوین خود را راتبه کرده،...و به هیچ شغل دنیا مشغول نشود.

[۴۰] *الفصول و الغایات*

[۴۱] و این مرد در شعر و ادب به درجه‌ای است که اَفاضل شام و مغرب و عراق مُقرّند که در این عصر کسی به پایهٔ او نبوده است و نیست. و کتابی ساخته آن را "الفصولُ و الغایات" نام نهاده، و سخنها آورده است مرموز و مَثَلها به الفاظ فصیح و عجیب، که مردم بر آن واقف نمی‌شوند مگر بر بعضی اندک

[۴۲] هیچ چیز از دنیاوی با من نبود الا دو سلّه کتاب

[۴۳] از دنیاوی آنچه بود ترک کردم مگر اندک ضروری

[۴۴] ایشان مردمی گرسنه و برهنه و جاهل بودند

[۴۵] "و مردُمکانی دزد و مفسد و جاهل"

[۴۶] مسجدی بود که ما در آنجا بودیم اندک رنگ شنجرف و لاجورد با من بود بر دیوار آن مسجد بیتی نوشتم و شاخ و برگی در میان آن بردم.

[۴۷] شنگرف یا معرب آن شنجرف

[۴۸] خامهٔ شنجرف

[۴۹] از خواب دوشین بیدار شدم، اکنون باید که از خواب چهل ساله نیز بیدار شوم

[۵۰] روز پنجشنبه ششم جمادی‌الآخره سنهٔ سبع و ثلاثین و ارعمائه—نیمهٔ دیماه پارسیان، سال بر چهارصد و [چهار]ده یزدجردی...

[۵۱] ما سفر برگذشتنی گذرانیم/ تا سفر ناگذشتنی به در آید

[۵۲] همراهان ما سوسماری می‌دیدند می‌کشتند و می‌خوردند و... من نه سوسمار توانستم خورد و نه شیر شتر، در هرجا درختکی بود که باری داشت مقداری که دانهٔ ماشی باشد از آن چند دانه حاصل می‌کردم و بدان قناعت می‌نمودم

[۵۳] ایشان مردمی گرسنه و برهنه و جاهل بودند

[۵۴] هبوط

[۵۵] با من هیچ نبود که به کرا دهم.

[۵۶] از برهنگی و عاجزی به دیوانگان مانند بودیم

[۵۷] خلعت

[۵۸] مرا در آن حال با مردی پارسی که هم از اهل فضل بود آشنایی افتاده بود و او را با وزیر صحبتی بودی... احوال مرا نزد وزیر باز گفت چون وزیر بشنید مردی را با اسبی نزدیک من فرستاد که چنان که هستی برنشین و نزدیک من آی

[۵۹] من از بدحالی و برهنگی شرم داشتم و رفتن مناسب ندیدم، رقعه‌ای نوشتم و عذری خواستم و گفتم که بعد از این به خدمت رسم و غرض من دو چیز بود: یکی بی‌نوایی، دویم: گفتم همانا او را تصور شود که مرا در فضل مرتبه‌ای است زیادت.

[۶۰] مهروبان

[۶۱] ارغان

[۶۲] چون رقعه بقرستادم روز سیوم، سی مرد پیاده دیدم همه با سلاح ... ما را به دلداری به ارغان بردند.

[۶۳] دبیری نیک با خط نیکو، مردی آهسته، نیکولقا و او را خواجه عمید می‌گفتند. فضل‌دوست بود و خوش‌سخن و کریم.

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