



ABŪ AḤMAD MONAJJEM

ABŪ AḤMAD YAḤYĀ B. 'ALĪ B. YAḤYĀ B. ABĪ MANṢŪR ABĀN AL-MONAJJEM (241/855-56 to 13 Rabī I 300/29 October 912), literary historian, music theorist, poet, and Mu'tazilite, boon companion to caliphs Mowaffaq, Mo'tazed, and Moktafī. He was one of the Banu'l-Monajjem, a family of Iranian descent associated with the 'Abbasid court for more than two centuries. His great-grandfather, Abān, while still a Zoroastrian, established himself as Manṣūr's astronomer (sc. astrologer). His grandfather, Yaḥyā b. Abī Manṣūr (d. 216/831), was the noted astronomer of Ma'mūn, who converted him to Islam. Abū Aḥmad's father, 'Alī b. Yaḥyā (d. 275/888), was an accomplished boon companion (*nadīm*), with a rare versatility in most of the arts and sciences of his day. His library (*kezānat al-ḥekma* "treasure-house of wisdom"), counted among the largest of his time. His learning was transmitted to his four sons, but especially to Abū Aḥmad Yaḥyā, who distinguished himself in the sciences of the Arabs and the non-Arabs (*'olūm al-'arab wa'l-'aġam*).

Abū Aḥmad is remembered mainly for his *Resāla fi'l-mūsīq ī* ("Treatise on music") written for Mo'tazed (279-89/892-902). It is the earliest extant monograph on the musical system of the old Arabian school and a principal source for explaining the technical musical terms used in Eṣfahānī's *Aġānī*. In the *Resāla* (ed. Z. Yūsof, p. 17) he alludes to a previous book he wrote on singing. Moreover, *Aġānī* mentions a *Ketāb al-naġam* ("Book on notes"). Yet the citation from *Ketāb al-naġam* (*Aġānī*³ VIII, p. 374) corroborates the contents of *Resāla fi'l-mūsīq ī* (ed. Yūsof, p. 24), thus supporting Farmer's thesis that the two books may be identical (H. G. Farmer, *History of Arabian Music*, London,



1929, p. 168).

Equally important was Abū Aḥmad's literary contribution in his *Ketāb al-bāher fī aḵbār šo'arā' moḳaẓramī al-dawlatayn* ("The Splendid book: stories of the poets who lived in both Omayyad and 'Abbasid times"), a compilation of biographies with some poetry. His son, Abu'l-Ḥasan Aḥmad (d. 327/938), added to the work (*Fehrest*, pp. 143-44). *Aḡānī* mentions two other books: *Aḵbār Eshāq b. Ebrāhīm al-mawṣelī* (*Aḡānī*³ V, p. 376), probably part of *al-Bāher*, and *al-Eḵtiār al-wāṭeqī* (*Aḡānī*³ III, pp. 18, 44), probably a reworking of the songs collected by Eshāq Mawṣelī for the caliph Wāṭeq (cf. Fleischhammer, "Reste," pp. 80-81). Some modern scholars (Brockelmann, *GAL* II, pp. 375, 439) ascribe to him a *Ketāb al-bāre' (or al-bāher) fī aḵbār al-šo'arā' al-mowalladīn*, although Ebn al-Nadīm (*Fehrest*, p. 144) and Ebn Ḳallekān (III, p. 38; IV, p. 182) clearly attribute a *Ketāb al-bāre' fī aḵbār al-šo'arā' al-mowalladīn* (or *al-moḥdaṭīn*) to his brother Hārūn. At any rate, Abū Aḥmad's writings were a major source for *Aḡānī* (273 citations; cf. Fleischhammer, "Reste," p. 78) and for Marzobānī's *Moḡam* and *Mowašṣaḥ* (indices).

Abū Aḥmad achieved prominence as poet and critic (he was highly praised by Marzobānī, *Moḡam*, p. 494). He had a sophisticated knowledge of Arabic (see his discussion with the famous grammarian al-Zajjāj in Yāqūt, *Odabā'* I, pp. 55-56). He was an active Mu'tazilite and headed, in the presence of Moktafī, a *majles* (assembly) of the most important scholars and theologians of Baghdad (Ebn al-Mortazā, *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 88). He is said to have written many books, the names of which have not been preserved, except perhaps a *Resāla elā Qoṣṭā b. Lūqā wa Ḥonayn b. Eshāq* (see Brockelmann, *GAL* S. I, pp. 225, 366).

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2. Rampur 3097 (25b-28a, 9th/15th cent.); ed. Z. Yūsof, Cairo, 1964.

3. *Rīāz* (in an omnibus vol., 1270/1853-54).



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