



ABŪ ḤAFṢ SOĠDĪ

ABŪ ḤAFṢ SOĠDĪ, one of the so-called “first poets” in New Persian. The concept of “first poet,” however, is simplistic; since poetry, like any stage of a language, evolves continuously and is rooted in its immediate past. The idea of “first poet” may have evolved from the lack of distinction in *tadkeras* between the term earliest (*qadīmtarīn*) and first (*awwal*). Nor was Abū Ḥafs the first poet who used Arabic meter in his poetry. Others had already done so, and his extant one-line fragment does not strictly conform to the norms of Arabic prosody.

Little is known about Abū Ḥafs’s life; according to Fārābī (d. 329/940), quoted in *al-Moʿjam* (see bibliog.), Abū Ḥafs was a master musician who flourished in 300/912 and who developed a musical instrument called Šahrūd. This information is confirmed by K̄vārazmī (d. 626/1228), Ormavī (d. 693/1293), and Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā Heravī (d. 906/1500; see S. Nafīsī in bibliog.). The report of Hedāyat and others that Abū Ḥafs lived in the 1st/7th century must be dismissed.

Of his poetry, a one-line fragment has been preserved in *al-Moʿjam*; it is not isosyllabic in its original form; but later authors emended it to conform to Arabic prosody (particularly in the second hemistich). The simple lyrical tone of the verse suggests that the poem was probably a minstrel’s song. The fact that Abū Ḥafs was called a master musician tends to support this. The poem seems to describe the nostalgic feeling of a countryman finding himself in an unfriendly city environment.



A lexicon is attributed to Abū Ḥafs by some late lexicographers, who claim to have used it (see, e.g., introductions to *Farhang-e Jahāngīrī* and *Maǰmaʿ al-fors*). But their quotations from that work include verses from ʿOnṣorī and Nāṣer-e Ḳosrow, who post-date Abū Ḥafs by more than a century. It is possible that these verses are later additions (such as occur in, e.g., *Loġat-e fors*). No poetry of the 2nd-3rd century is quoted from this lost work, although some say it was extant as late as 11th/17th century. It can thus be assumed that this book, if it ever existed, was lost very soon, and centuries later some anonymous work was identified with it.

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