



ABU'L-FARAJ RŪNĪ

ABU'L-FARAJ B. MAS'ŪD RŪNĪ, an early Persian poet. Nothing is known about his birth and early life, except that he was born in Rūna, the exact location of which is uncertain. According to 'Awfī, Rūnī's birthplace was Lahore (*Lobāb* II, p. 241). Reżā-qolī Hedāyat states that Abu'l-Faraġ was born in Rūna, a hamlet of Nīšāpūr, while Loṭf-'Alī Beg Āḍar places Rūna in the region of Dašt-e Kāvarān, Khorasan (*Majma' al-foṣaḥā'* I, p. 151; *Ātaškada*, p. 134). Mollā 'Abd-al-Rašīd Tattavī calls Rūn "a village in India, the birthplace of Abu'l-Faraġ" (*Farhang-e Rašīdī* II, p. 353). Badā'ūnī compounds the confusion by saying that Abu'l-Faraġ was born in the village of Rūīn near Lahore, and thus calls him Abu'l-Faraġ Rūīnī (tr., I, pp. 54-55). Yet all the *taḍkera* writers agree that Abu'l-Faraġ spent most of his life in Lahore at the Ghaznavid court, where he was the panegyrist for Sultan Ebrāhīm b. Mas'ūd (451-92/1059-99) and his son, Mas'ūd III (492-508/1099-115). A fragment (*qeṭ'a*) in the *dīvān* of Mas'ūd-e Sa'd-e Salmān (d. 515/1122), complaining that the conspiracy of one Abu'l-Faraġ resulted in his (Mas'ūd's) imprisonment, is most likely directed not against Rūnī but against Abu'l-Faraġ Naṣr b. Rostam. It is improbable that Rūnī would have played any part in the imprisonment of Mas'ūd, since relations between the two were very friendly, and Mas'ūd even regarded himself as the pupil of Rūnī.

Abu'l-Faraġ's claim to fame rests largely on his delicate panegyrics. He was praised and imitated by **Anwarī** (d. 585/1189-90), considered by many to have been the greatest master of the panegyric *qaṣīda*. The other notable Saljuq panegyrist, **Zahīr Fāryābī** (d. 598/1201-02), seems also to have been influenced



by Rūnī. According to 'Awfī, both Anwarī and Ṣahīr Fāryābī constantly perused Rūnī's *dīvān* and tried to imitate his style (*Lobāb* II, p. 341). Not only Anwarī and Ṣahīr but also 'Orfī Šīrāzī (d. 999/1590-91) and Fayzī (d. 1044/1595), the two great Indo-Persian poets at the court of the Mughal emperor Akbar (r. 963-1014/1556-1605), expressed their indebtedness to Rūnī. His surviving *dīvān* comprises 2,000 verses including, besides panegyric *qaṣīdas*, fifty-seven quatrains (*robā'iyāt*), eighteen fragments, and three incomplete *gāzals*.

Most of the *qaṣīdas* in the *dīvān* are dedicated to Sultan Ebrāhīm b. Mas'ūd and his son Mas'ūd III, but there are some dedicated to other nobles of the Ghaznavid court at Lahore. It seems probable that Rūnī did not enjoy court favor to the same extent as the younger Mas'ūd-e Sa'd did. Unlike those of the other noted panegyrists, Rūnī's *qaṣīdas* are rather short. Most are written in a fluent, uncluttered style, introducing new trends in Persian poetry which were further developed by the likes of Mas'ūd-e Sa'd and Anwarī. Certain elements found in the later Sabk-e Hendī (q.v.) can probably be traced back to the poetry of Abu'l-Faraj.

Many *qaṣīdas* in the *dīvān* do not begin with the traditional introductory (*tašbīb*, q.v.), substituting in its stead the eulogy (*madḥ*) of the patron. In the *qaṣīdas* with the traditional introduction Rūnī demonstrates his great mastery as a poet of this genre, and from a study of them it becomes evident why he was held in such high esteem by other masters of Persian poetry. The *robā'iyāt* of Rūnī are also notable; 'Omar Kayyām seems to have been influenced by them; the same Epicurean spirit pervades and characterizes the *robā'iyāt* of both of them.

The three incomplete *gāzals* contain motifs that were later to become normative in the Persian lyrical poetry of Iran and India: skillful plays on words without concealment of the meaning, complaints about the faithlessness of time and the beloved, and, above all, admiration for the beauty of the youthful beloved. In three *gāzals* the beloved already appears as a dancer, going out covered in a *čādor* but appearing in the assembly of lovers without the *čādor*, since it has been removed by the anxious lovers who wish to bask in the radiance of her beautiful face. The *gāzals* of Rūnī display a remarkable depth of perception, intensity of feeling and hint of sensuality, all of which are essential components of the classical Persian *gāzal*.



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