



ASADĪ ṬŪSĪ

ASADĪ ṬŪSĪ, 'ALĪ B. AḤMAD, (b. ca. 390/999-1000, d. 465/1072-73), poet, linguist and copyist, from Ṭūs in Khorasan (see the colophon of *al-Abnīa*, in his own hand; Asadī was his *laqab* or *taḳalloṣ*, see *Garšāsp-nāma*, ed. Ḥ. Yaḡmā'ī, pp. 14, 477). His *konya* is given as Abū Naṣr in *Majāles al-mo'menīn and Maǰma' al-foṣahā'* (I, p. 283) and as Abū Maṣṣūr in the introduction to the *Loḡat-e fors* (ms. dated 1303/1885-86). Little is known about Asadī's life. He spent his first twenty years in Ṭūs; in the 410s, and 420s we find him serving as a poet at the court of the Daylamite Abū Naṣr Jastān, where in 447/1055-56 he copied the *Ketāb al-abnīa 'an ḥaqā'eq al-adwīa* of Abū Maṣṣūr Mowaffaq Heravī (q.v.). Later he went to Naḳjavān where in 458/1065-66 he finished the epic *Garšāsp-nāma*, which he dedicated to Abū Dolaf, Naḳjavān's ruler. He is last referred to at the court of the Shaddadid Manūčehr of Ānī. Qāzī Nūrallāh (*Majāles al-mo'menīn*, 12th *maǰles*) and *Maǰma' al-foṣahā'* (loc. cit.) give Asadī a Persian royal lineage and claim that Sultan Maḥmūd of Ġazna commissioned him to versify the *Šāh-nāma*, but because of advanced age, he encouraged "his pupil" Ferdowsī to undertake the task; then at the end of Ferdowsī's life, when four thousand *bayts* of the *Šāh-nāma* still remained to be completed, the teacher hastened to the aid of his student and, in a single twenty-four hour period, completed the work (Dawlatšāh, ed. Browne, pp. 35-36, cf. pp. 49-50). This unfounded story led H. Ethé and E. Browne to believe that there had been two Asadīs: One who was the author of the *Monāzarāt*, and another, his son, who was the author of the *Loḡat-e fors* and the *Garšāsp-nāma*, and the copier of the *Ketāb al-abnīa* (Şafā, *Adabīyāt* II, pp. 404-05).



Asadī's works are as follows: 1. *Monāzarāt* (Debates). Five of these are extant; they represent a form of *qaṣīda*, unprecedented in Arabic or New Persian (though not in Pahlavi, where a fragment of this type, "Draxt ī asūrīk," exists): "Arab o 'aġam, Moġ o mosalmān, Neyza o kamān, Šab o rūz, Āsmān o zamīn." The first *monāzara*, "Arab o 'aġam," deals with the superiority of the Iranians over the Arabs; the second, "Moġ o mosalmān," is about the superiority of the Muslims over the Zoroastrians and is a clear anti-Šo'ūbīya statement. The contradictory themes of these two *monāzaras* led some scholars to doubt the attribution of the first to Asadī (Forūzānfar, *Soġan wa soġanvarān*, p. 452 n. 1; Dehġodā, "Asadī," p. 2272 n. 3.). It may be that Asadī, like others, reasoned that an Iranian Muslim was superior to an Arab Muslim, but a Muslim, whatever his nationality, was superior to an Iranian Zoroastrian. (For the remaining three *monāzaras* see *Maġma' al-foṣahā'* I, pp. 288-96, and Forūzānfar, *op. cit.*, pp. 449-53.)

2. *Garšāsp-nāma*. Asadī began this work in about 455/1063 in Naġjavān at the request of Moġammad b. Esmā'īl Ḥeṣṣī (or Ḥesnī), the vizier of Abū Dolaf Šaybānī, and his brother Ebrāhīm. He finished it in 458/1065-66 and dedicated it to the amir. It is composed of approximately 9,000 *bayts* in the *motaqāreb* meter (*moᡡamman maqṣūr* or *maġdūf*). The oldest existing manuscript (BM Or. 2780) was copied in Šafar, 800/October-November, 1397, by Moġammad b. Sa'īd b. Sa'd Ḥāfez Qārī and contains about 7,000 *bayts*. The work relates the adventures of Garšāsp, Rostam's grandfather and descendent of Jamšīd who entered the service of Žaḡḡāk. The accounts in the *Tārik-e Sīstān* (pp. 1-7, 35-36) and the *Moġmal* (pp. 2-3) of a prose work entitled *Ketāb-e Garšāsp* or *Aġbār-e Garšāsp* by Abu'l-Mo'ayyad Balġī indicate that this was the source for the versified *Garšāsp-nāma*. It seems that Asadī tried, with little success, to portray Garšāsp as a hero greater than the Rostam of the *Šāh-nāma*. Asadī's main concern is versification, so individual lines take precedence over the story. He employs archaic Persian terms as well as Arabic phrases; Asadī the poet, the linguist, the philosopher, and the Arabist all appear, but the maturity, wisdom, patriotism, and *weltanschauung* of the *Šāh-nāma* are missing.

3. *Loġat-e fors*. This lexicon, composed to define the unfamiliar phrases found in Darī poetry for the people of Arrān and Azarbaijan, is the oldest extant Persian dictionary based on examples from poetry. We are indebted to it for preserving fragments of information concerning the names of some of the poets of the 4th/10th century. Several very different manuscripts exist in Iran and elsewhere. The oldest seems to be at the Malek Library in Tehran (dated



722/1322). The introduction to a manuscript dated 1302/1884-85 states that Asadī composed the book at the request of “his son,” Ardašīr b. Daylamsopār Najmī (q.v.), whom he refers to as the poet *ḥakīm-e jalīl-e awḥad*.

See also [Garšāsp-nāma](#), *Loḡat-e fors*.

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