



'ASKARĪ, ABŪ HELĀL

'ASKARĪ, ABŪ HELĀL ḤASAN B. 'ABDALLĀH B. SAHL, philologist and poet born about the middle of the 4th/10th century at 'Askar Mokram in Kūzestān (hence his *nesba* 'Askarī), where he seems to have spent much or most of his life. He studied philology under Abū Aḥmad 'Askarī (293-382/906-93), who is said to have been his maternal uncle; but the relationship has been doubted on the grounds that Abū Helāl, though frequently referring to Abū Aḥmad, never calls him *kālī*. There has been much confusion between master and pupil, since both are Ḥasan b. 'Abdallāh, and since much of the great learning of the master has become generally known, not through his own works, but through those of his pupil. Abū Helāl wrote a number of books of which about a score are still extant. The most important are: 1. *Ketāb al-ṣenā'atayn al-keṭāba wa'l-še'r* (Istanbul 1320/1902, Cairo, 1952), in which he gives a systematic exposition of rhetoric as applied in prose-writing and poetry. 2. *Dīvān al-ma'ānī* (Cairo, 1352/1933), a collection of passages of prose and poetry illustrating specially beautiful or unusual ways of expressing ideas. 3. *Al-Forūq al-logāwīya* (Cairo, 1953/1934), in which words of similar meanings are distinguished. 4. *Al-Mo'jam fi baqīyat al-ašyā'* (Cairo, 1353/1934), in which he lists and distinguishes words meaning "remainder" or "what is left of things." 5. *Jamharat al-amṭāl* (Bombay, 1306-07/1888, on the margin of Maydānī, *Majma' al-amṭāl*, Cairo, 1310/1982). 6. *Maḥāsen al-ma'ānī* or *Tafsīr al-Qor'ān*, said to be in five volumes, but not yet published, and presumably emphasizing the beauties of the Qur'ān from the standpoint of a philologist.

Although all his books are in Arabic, there are some small indications



(Brockelmann, *GAL* S. I, p. 194 n.) that he also had a good knowledge of Persian. The names of one or two of his pupils are recorded, but none seems to have become important. At the end of his *Ketāb al-awā’el*, dealing with men who were the first to do something, he remarks that he completed the dictation in Ša’bān, 395/May, 1005; and this is the only certain date for any event in his life. He is said to have died after 400/1010.

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