



## ‘AŞŞĀR TABRĪZĪ

‘AŞŞĀR TABRĪZĪ, Mawlānā ŠAMS-AL-DĪN ḤĀJJĪ MOḤAMMAD, poet, scholar, and mystic of the 8th/14th century. In addition to literary skills, he had some knowledge of mathematics, astronomy, and astrolabes. He studied astronomy with ‘Abd-al-Šamad Tabrīzī, and in Sufism he was a pupil and disciple of Shaikh Maǰd-al-dīn Sīsī (d. 760/1359), as were the poets Maǰrebī and Qāsem-e Anwār. He wrote some treatises on branches of rhetoric, including a short handbook of rhymes in Persian entitled *al-Wāfi fi te’dād al-qawāfi*.

‘Aşşār lived at the time of the collapse of the Il-khanid empire after the death of Sultan Abū Sa’īd Bahādor Khan in 736/1336 and the seizure of power in Azarbaijan by the Jalayerid amirs of Baghdad. He wrote some odes (*qaşīdas*) in praise of the Jalayerid Sultan Oways (r. 757/1356-776/1374) but, as he says in his *Mehr o Moştarī*, he did not like writing panegyrics and seldom recited the ones that he wrote.

The work for which ‘Aşşār won a measure of fame is a versified romance, entitled *‘Eşq-nāma*, better known as *Mehr o Moştarī*, which he completed in 778/1376. It tells of a relationship of pure and entirely spiritual love between Mehr, son of Šāpūr Shah of Eştaqr, and Moştarī, son of Šāpūr’s vizier, which began in their schooldays and endured throughout their lives. In the course of the story, various incidents separate Mehr from Moştarī and take him all the way to the Qefčāq (Qipchaq) steppe and K̄vārazm, where he meets his sweetheart, the princess Nāhīd, daughter of the K̄vārazmšāh. ‘Aşşār’s *Mehr o Moştarī* runs to 5,120 verses in the *hazaǰ mosaddas maqşūr* or *maḥḍūf* meter (see *‘arūż*). It must be classed among the versified romances written on the



model of Neẓāmī’s *Ķosrow o Šīrīn*, but its subject-matter is new and original. It was translated into Turkish by ‘Alī b. ‘Abd-al-‘Azīz known as Ebn Omm Walad (d. 908/1502). Another rendering, in Turkish verse, was commenced by Pīr Moḥammad ‘Azmī for the Ottoman sultan Salīm II and finished by ‘Azmī’s son, the poet Ḥālatī (d. 1039/1629).

‘Aşşār’s death is variously placed in 779/1377, 784/1382, or even 792/1389-90. The last date, given in the *Selselet al-awlā’* of Sayyed Moḥammad Nūrbakš, the founder of the Nūrbakšīya dervish order, is unlikely to be correct.

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