



## ‘AYYŪQĪ

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‘AYYŪQĪ, a poet of the fifth/eleventh century who versified the romance of *Varqa o Golšāh*. In it he gives his name as ‘Ayyūqī (ed. Şafā, pp. 3, 122) and complains in the concluding section (p. 116) about ill-treatment by the people of his town. Apart from this, no reliable information about him has come down. In the preface (p. 3) he eulogizes the *gāz’ī* sultan Abu’l-Qāsem Maḥmūd, i.e., the Ghaznavid ruler Maḥmūd b. Sebūktigin (r. 389/999-421/1030). In view of the manifest influence of Ferdowsī’s style on many passages, *Varqa o Golšāh* is likely to have been composed after the *Šāh-nāma*; and the use of archaic words, pronunciation, and certain grammatical peculiarities point to the early fifth/eleventh century as the date of its composition. Lexical and grammatical inconsistencies found in the text may be due to clerical tampering with the text or the influence of the spoken language of the time. (‘Ayyūqī seems to have been a man of little education, without full mastery of the literary idiom of his time.)

Two verses by ‘Ayyūqī, not from *Varqa o Golšāh*, quoted on the margin of a single manuscript of *Loġat-e fors*, indicate that he also wrote *qaşīdas* (odes) and perhaps another narrative poem in the *ramal* meter (Şafā, *Adabīyāt* I, p. 603).

*Varqa o Golšāh* is a romance of love and adventure, running to approximately 2,250 verses in the *motaqāreb* meter. Many words are vocalized, which makes the work important for Persian philology. The work survives in a unique manuscript at Istanbul (Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi, Hazine 841), which is adorned with seventy-one illustrations in color; it bears no date but the handwriting



must be from not later than the seventh/thirteenth century. (A facsimile edition is to be produced at Graz, Austria.) A feature of the work is that ten *ġazals*, all in the *motaqāreb* meter, are interspersed in the narrative. This method had not hitherto been used in Persian poetry, but was subsequently imitated, e.g., in ‘Obayd Zākānī’s *‘Oššāq-nāma*, a narrative poem written in 751/1350. ‘Ayyūqī’s romance of Varqa and Golšāh is a mediocre work, lacking the thematic development and intensity of emotion that is found, for example, in the almost similar romance of *Laylī o Majnūn* by Neẓāmī.

‘Ayyūqī’s theme is the love between a youth named Varqa and a maiden named Golšāh. Their fathers are two Arab brothers named Homām and Helāl, who are the chiefs of a tribe, the Banū Šabīh. On the day fixed for Golšāh’s marriage to Varqa, she is abducted by enemies under the leadership of Rabī b. ‘Adnān. Numerous fights, in which Varqa’s father and Rabī and his two sons are killed, take place before Golšāh is rescued. Golšāh’s father, however, now withholds consent for her marriage to Varqa because Varqa is too poor. Varqa therefore goes to the court of his maternal uncle, Monḍer king of the Yemen, in the hope of making money. During his absence, the king of Syria induces Golšāh’s mother to give him her daughter in marriage. When Varqa comes home with much wealth, he is told that Golšāh is dead. He discovers this to be a lie, and goes to Syria in search of Golšāh, but receives so much hospitality and kindness from the Syrian king that he cannot honorably break the bond of gratitude and is therefore obliged to part from Golšāh. Soon afterward he dies of grief. When Golšāh learns of his death, she goes to his grave and, while lamenting there, also passes away. Their tomb becomes a place of pilgrimage to which both Jews and Muslims resort. One year after the tragedy, the Prophet Moḥammad passes by the place. After requiring the Jews to become Muslims, he resurrects Varqa and Golšāh, who then at last are united.

The story, as ‘Ayyūqī states (pp. 4-5, 122), was taken from Arabic sources. It is based on the adventures of ‘Orwa b. Ḥeẓām ‘Odrī, an Arab poet, and ‘Afrā, the daughter of his paternal uncle ‘Eqāl, whose romance was already famous before the 4th/10th century; a book of *‘Orwa wa ‘Afrā* is mentioned in Ebn al-Nadīm’s *Fehrest* (p. 306). ‘Ayyūqī claims to have produced the first Persian version of this romance. In later times, further renderings were brought out: at least one more in Persian (in the *hazaj* meter), one in Kurdish, and several in Turkish. A Turkish version, entitled *Varqā wa Golšāh* with the same meter as Neẓāmī’s *Laylī o Majnūn*, was written by a poet named Mosīḥī for the Safavid ruler Shah ‘Abbās I in the late 10th/16th or early 11th/17th century. In



Anatolia a version in western Turkish had been composed by a poet named Yūsof Maddāḥ in 770/1369. A translation by ‘Abdallāh b. Ḥājǰī b. Mīr Karīm from Persian into eastern Turkish, under the title *Ḥekāya-ī ‘ajība az aḥwāl-e Golšāh wa Varqa*, was printed at Tashkent in 1324/1906.

The story also entered into Spanish and French literature. Its elements, other than the resurrection of the lovers, form the substance of *Floire et Blancheflor*, a romance which was popular in the twelfth century.

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