



## ĀZAR BĪGDELĪ

**ĀZAR (ĀDAR) BĪGDELĪ**, ḤĀJJ LOṬF-‘ALĪ BĪG B. ĀQĀ KHAN BĪGDELĪ ŠĀMLŪ (fl. 1134/1721-1195/1781), poet and author of a *taḏkera* (biographical anthology) of about 850 Persian poets, compiled in 1174/1760 and dedicated to Karīm Khan Zand (r. 1163/1750-1193/1779).

Āzar belonged to the Syrian (Šāmlū) branch of the Bīgdelī (Begdillū) tribe, which had moved to Iran in Tīmūr’s time. Some of his relatives were men of distinction: Three were sent on embassies to the Ottoman empire during his lifetime, and several held important offices. He was born in Isfahan, where his family had lived since the early Safavid period. His birth almost coincided with the Afghan invasion of Iran and the fall of Isfahan, which prompted his whole family to flee to Qom, where he stayed fourteen years. Later in about 1148/1736, his father was appointed governor of Lār and the coasts of Fārs by Nāder Shah. After his father’s death, Āzar made a pilgrimage to Mecca, visited the holy places in Iraq, and later on went to Mašhad, where his arrival coincided with Nāder’s return from India. He accompanied Nāder’s troops to Māzandarān, Azarbaijan, and ‘Erāq-e ‘Ajam, and finally settled at Isfahan. After the assassination of Nāder, he joined the services of the Afsharid ‘Ādel Shah (q.v.) and Ebrāhīm Shah and the Safavid Esmā‘il III and Solaymān III, and eventually retired to his small estate near Qom and turned his attention to poetry. He reportedly lost 7,000 verses of his poetry during the sack of Isfahan by ‘Alī-Mardān Khan Baḳtīārī, but a *divān* comprising *qaṣīdas*, *gāzals*, and *qeṭ‘as*, and a *maṭnawī*, *Yūsof o Zolaykā*, have reached us. He was much influenced by his paternal uncle Walī (Walīy) Moḥammad Khan Bīgdelī (killed



1177/1763) and Mīr Sayyed ‘Alī Moštāq Eṣfahānī (d. 1192/1778) who was his master in the art of poetry.

Āzar is known mainly because of his *taḍkera*, the *Ātaškada-ye Ādar* (Āzar’s fire temple). Using terms relevant to fire he divided it into two main chapters which he called *majmeras* (censers). The first *majmera* is further divided into a *šo’la* (flame) on the poetry of kings, princes, and amirs; three *aḳgars* (embers) on the poets of Iran, Tūrān (Central Asia), and India; and a *forūḡ* (light) on poetesses. The three *aḳgars* are further divided, in terms of geographical divisions, into five, three, and three *šarāras* (sparks) respectively, each one opening with a brief description of the region involved. The second *majmera* comprises two *partows* (beams); the first *partow* treats poets contemporary with the author and the second one contains the author’s biography and a selection of his poetry. Poets are represented under their pen-names, not their personal names, and the book is generally arranged in alphabetical order. The cited verses of each poet are ordered according to the rhyme.

Āzar’s prose in the *Ātaškada*, despite containing certain weaknesses common to Persian writings of the 12th/18th century, is generally simple and fluent. In the preface, he uses rhymed prose, into which he fits words having some connection with “fire;” his theme is the defense of poetry. The long introduction to the account of contemporary poets contains some fine passages of poetic prose. For contemporary poetry, his principle was to give first choice to verses which he had heard directly from the poets themselves, but he claims that, in his selection from earlier poets, he had carefully studied their *dīvāns* is discredited by careful examination of earlier *taḍkeras* available to him (see Goļčīn-e Ma’ānī, *Taḍkerahā* I, p. 4).

Āzar was one of the pioneers of the revulsion against the so-called *sabk-e hendī*, Indian style (see [BĀZGAŠT-E ADABĪ](#)), and as such is frankly censorious of the poetry of Ṣā’eb and his followers; but for those such as Moštāq, who rejected the Indian style and sought to revive the idiom of the early poets, he has nothing but praise. For some poets, he gives detailed biographies, but for most he finds two or three lines sufficient; he is equally sparing in the selections from their work.



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