



## AZRAQĪ HERAVĪ

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**AZRAQĪ HERAVĪ**, the pen-name of Abū Bakr b. Esmā'īl Warrāq of Herat, a Persian poet of the 5th/11th century. His personal name is given as Abū Bakr by Neẓāmī 'Arūzī (*Čahār maqāla*, ed. M. Qazvīnī and M. Mo'īn, Tehran, 1333 Š./1954, p. 69), as Šaraf-al-zamān Abu'l-Maḥāsen by 'Awfī (*Lobāb al-albāb* [Tehran], p. 310). In some other *taḍkeras* the title Zayn-al-dīn is attributed to him. Neẓāmī 'Arūzī (op. cit., p. 80) states that Azraqī's father was a bookseller (*warrāq*) and that Ferdowsī, after fleeing from Maḥmūd Ġaznavī's court, hid in this bookseller's house for six months.

As a young man, Azraqī won the favor of the Saljuq prince Šams-al-dawla ʾToḡānšāh, who was governor of Khorasan, with headquarters at Herat, in the reign of his father, the sultan Alp Arslān (r. 455-65/1063-72); Azraqī became not only a poetic eulogist, but also a courtier and boon-companion of this prince. He was also in the good graces of Amīrānšāh, a son of the contemporary Saljuq ruler of Kermān, Qāvord b. Čaḡrī Beg (d. 466/1073); he has left a number of *qašīdas* in praise of Amīrānšāh.

The date of Azraqī's death is given as 526/1132 in Reżā-qolī Khan Hedāyat's *Majma' al-foṣaḥā'* and as 527/1133 in another *taḍkera*, Taqī-al-dīn Kāšī's *Ḳolāṣat al-aš'ār wa zobdat al-afkār*; Sa'īd Nafīsī (preface to Azraqī's *dīvān*, pp. vf.) considered these dates likely to be correct in view of certain passages in Azraqī's poems, but Moḥammad Qazvīnī (*Čahār maqāla*, notes, p. 218) found them unacceptable and reckoned that Azraqī must have died before 465/1073. The truth probably lies somewhere in between; Azraqī certainly lived until late in the 5th/11th century, but does not appear to have seen any events of the



6th/12th century.

The surviving poems of Azraqī are *qaṣīdas* and *robāʿīs*. In Nafīsī's edition (Tehran, 1336 Š./1957) they amount to 2,675 verses, but the attribution of some of them to Azraqī seems doubtful. In addition to the eulogies of ʿŤogānšāh, Amīrānšāh, and other grandees, he has left some *qaṣīdas* which express admiration for the renowned mystic of Herat, ʿAbdallāh Anṣārī (d. 481/1088). His poetic style is close to that of ʿOnṣorī but distinctly independent, being marked by a fondness for abstract words and cerebral similes which some later poets liked and imitated but others (e.g., Rašīd Vaṭvāṭ apud Qazvīnī, notes to *Čahār maqāla*, pp. 218-19) found objectionable.

Azraqī not only composed a *dīvān*; he also, according to ʿAwfī and later *taḍkera*-writers such as Dawlatšāh (ed. Browne, p. 72), Ḥājjī Kaḷīfa (*Kašf al-ẓonūn* [Leipzig] III, pp. 620-21), and Amīn Aḥmad Rāzī (*Haft eqlīm* II, pp. 139ff.), and on the evidence of some of his own poems (*Dīvān*, verses 191, 1872-78, 2275), composed Persian verse renderings of the *Sendabād-nāma* (story of the seven viziers) and the *Alfīya wa šalfīya* for ʿŤogānšāh and apparently intended (*Dīvān*, verses 1774-76) to versify another romance for Amīrānšāh. The text on which Azraqī based his rendering of the *Sendabād-nāma* is likely to have been the Persian prose translation from the Pahlavi made in 339/950 by Abu'l-Fawāres Qanārazī (on the correct spelling of this name, see *Čahār maqāla*, notes, p. 220 n. 3). Both Azraqī's and Qanārazī's versions are lost. The *Alfīya wa šalfīya* was an illustrated book on sexual matters based on Indian pornographic writings which had been translated into Pahlavi and therefrom into Arabic; Ebn al-Nadīm (*Fehrest*, p. 314) refers to part of this title in his mention of two Arabic books, the *Ketāb al-alfīya al-šaḡīr* and the *Ketāb al-alfīya al-kabīr*, as well as other such books of Pahlavi origin as *Ketāb Bonyāndokt*, *Ketāb Bahrāmdokt fi'l-bāh*, etc. It can be inferred from a remark in Bayhaqī's history (ed. Q. Ġanī and ʿA. A. Fayyāz, pp. 121-22) and a verse in Manūčehrī's *dīvān* (ed. M. Dabīrsīāqī, Tehran, 1338 Š./1959, v. 1265) that these books had a smutty notoriety in the 5th/11th century.

Bayhaqī (*ibid.*) reports that the Ghaznavid Sultan Mas'ūd had a pavilion in Herat (which was used for his afternoon nap) painted from top to bottom with erotic scenes from the *Alfīya wa šalfīya*.

Such books were quite popular in court circles (particularly during the Qajar period) and many more, versified and in prose, illustrated or not, were produced in subsequent centuries. Some are extant, including a manuscript in



prose of anonymous authorship preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (see R. Surien and M. Horstmann, *Die Liebe in der Kunst. Deutsche Bearbeitung*, Genf, 1978, fig. 114; Q. Ġanī, *Yāddāsthā-ye Doctor Qāsem Ġanī*, ed. S. Ġanī, London, 1982, p. 793).

Azraqī's verse rendering of the *Alfīya wa šalfīya* appears to be lost, though an illustrated manuscript with this title is said to have existed in the Royal Library at Tehran (*Čahār maqāla*, notes, p. 222 n. 3). The words *alfīya* and *šalfīya* may be onomatopoeic.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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See also Browne, *Lit. Hist. Persia* II, p. 323.

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Idem, *Majmū'a-ye maqālāt o aš'ār*, ed. 'E. Majīdī, pp. 17-19.

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