



BAḲTĪĀR-NĀMA

BAḲTĪĀR-NĀMA, an example of early New Persian prose fiction in the form of a frame story and nine included tales, the earliest version of which seems to be by Šams-al-Dīn Moḥammad Daqāyeqī Marvazī, the late 6th/12th-early 7th/13th-century author. The frame story is briefly as follows: King Āzādbakṭ of Nīmruz (i.e., Sīstān) marries his general's daughter against her father's will. The angry general overthrows Āzādbakṭ, who flees with his pregnant wife. She bears a son whom they abandon in the desert.

The baby is found and brought up by a robber chief. One day while robbing a caravan he is captured and taken to the city. Āzādbakṭ, who has regained his kingdom, notices the youth and takes him into his service without recognizing him as his son. Renamed Baḳtīār, the youth rises quickly in the court. His rapid promotion arouses the jealousy of the king's ten viziers. One day Baḳtīār inadvertently angers the king and is imprisoned. The chief vizier forces the queen to accuse Baḳtīār falsely of making improper advances to her. The king condemns Baḳtīār to death, but he pleads innocence and tells a story which catches the king's interest. On each of the succeeding eight days Baḳtīār tells a tale that postpones his execution, while each day another vizier tries to persuade the king to execute him. On the tenth day Baḳtīār is ordered to the scaffold, but the robber chief who had brought him up steps forward from the crowd and identifies him. The king and queen recognize their son from a token they had given him. Reconciled with Baḳtīār, the king abdicates the throne and crowns his son.

Each of the nine (ten in some Arabic versions) tales told by Baḳtīār relates to



his situation, either from his own point of view by stressing the unfortunate results of actions which are ill-considered or based on malicious advice or from the viewpoint of the narrator by stressing the theme of the failure of a father and son to recognize each other. The queen and viziers tell no counter-tales, but merely call for Baḳtīār's death.

Clouston, Nöldeke, and Ethé have asserted that the *Baḳtīār-nāma* derives from or imitates the *Sendbād-nāma*, but there is no evidence for this claim other than their similar formal structures and the motif of a youth falsely accused by a disappointed woman. The fact that both are frame stories relates them generically, but the motif of the falsely accused youth is too widespread geographically and chronologically to be evidence of derivation or imitation. Furthermore, the two plots are quite different.

In the same content, some commentators claim that the *Baḳtīār-nāma* derives ultimately from an Indian text. This is unlikely in the light of Perry's argument that the *Sendbād-nāma* is of Iranian origin, and the fact that no convincing connection has been made between the *Baḳtīār-nāma* and an Indian prototype. Nor is there any evidence that the *Baḳtīār-nāma*, as we know it, derives from a Middle Persian original. *Tārīḳ-eSīstān* (pp. 8-9) mentions a *Baḳtīār* who was *jahān-pahlavān* (chief hero) during the reign of Ḳosrow II Parvēz, traces his lineage through Rostam back to Garšāsp, and says that his story can be read in the *Baḳtīār-nāma*. *Eḥyā' al-molūk* (pp. 47-48) repeats this account with some additions. The story appears nowhere else, and there is no reason to identify this *Baḳtīār* with the maligned prince of the *Baḳtīār-nāma*.

The earliest known example of *Baḳtīār-nāma* is an Arabic version entitled '*Ajā'eb al-baḳt fī qeṣṣat al-eḥḍay 'ašar wazīran mā jarā lahom ma' Ebn al-Molk Āzādbaḳt*, dated a.d. 1000 (published in Egypt, 1886; repr. by D. Ṣafā, Tehran, 1347 Š./1968). The earliest known Persian version is dated 663/1265 (Bib. Nat. ms. 2035; see *Cat. Bib. Nat.* IV, pp. 14-15). Almost identical with this is Leyden Codex 593 dated 695/1295-96, discussed by Nöldeke. A summary of *Baḳtīār-nāma* appears in an anonymous *Eskandar-nāma* of the 12th-14th century a.d. (ed. Ī. Afšār, Tehran, 1343 Š./1964, pp. 198-99). An Uighur version dated 838/1434-35 is described by Jaubert. Versions of the *Baḳtīār-nāma* appear in some manuscripts of *Alf layla wa layla* (see Chauvin for details).

Internal evidence, the prose style, and statements by 'Awfī (*Lobāb* I, p. 212) make it most likely that Bib. Nat. ms. 2035 is the work of Šams-al-Dīn Moḥammad Daqāyeqī Marvazī. Little is known of Daqāyeqī, a contemporary



of 'Awfī, who is said also to have written a *Sendbād-nāma* in prose. Daqāyeqī's *Bak̄tīār-nāma* was edited and published by Ծ. Şafā under the title *Rāḥat al-arwāḥ fī sorūr al-mefrāḥ* (Tehran, 1345 Š./1966). Together with 'Ajā'eb al-bak̄t, Şafā also published an edition of Bib. Nat. ms. 2036 (*Cat. Bib. Nat*, IV, pp. 15-16) dated 809/1406 under the title *Bak̄tīār-nāma*.

Search terms:

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