



BORHĀN-E QĀṬE'

BORHĀN-E QĀṬE' (Conclusive proof), the title of a Persian dictionary compiled in India in the 11th/17th century by Moḥammad-Ḥosayn b. Kalaf Tabrīzī, who used the pen-name Borhān. He completed the work in 1062/1651 and dedicated it to 'Abd-Allāh Qoṭbšāh (r. 1036-83/1626-72), the seventh sultan of the Shi'ite dynasty of Golconda in the Deccan. Little is known about the compiler's career. The dates of his birth and death have not been recorded. He is said to have gone to India after finishing his studies at Tabrīz and to have joined the court of 'Abd-Allāh Qoṭbšāh. This is certainly credible, because emigration of Iranian scholars and artists to India was quite common in the 10-11th/16-17th centuries, when Indian courts were keen on having such men; but it may have been Borhān Tabrīzī's father or grandfather who went to India and he may have added the *nesba* Tabrīzī to his name in order to safeguard a privileged position by showing his Iranian origin. However that may be, he became the close friend of a learned man at Hyderabad, Shaikh Šams-al-Dīn Moḥammad b. 'Alī Kātūn 'Āmelī, who was a minister and author and had studied under Shaikh Bahā'-al-Dīn 'Āmelī (953-1031/1546-1622), the great scholar of Safavid Iran.

It is uncertain whether Borhān Tabrīzī, or Mollā Borhān as he is sometimes called, was also a poet. In addition to verses from his pen in the preface of the *Borhān-e qāṭe'*, a quatrain by him with a chronogram of the date of the capture of the fortress of Ūdgīr (1053/1643-44) in each hemistich is quoted in the *Ḥadā'eq al-salāṭīn-e qoṭbšāhī* of Neẓāmā, a contemporary litterateur. Evidently he had mastered the techniques of verse composition, but he did not leave a



dīvān. His close association with Ebn Kātūn 'Āmelī shows that he was a highly regarded scholar. Neẓāmā, who belonged to the same literary circle, not only mentions his *Borhān-e qāṭe'* and quotes one of his poems but also admires him as a polymath (*jāme' al-fonūn*).

Borhān Tabrīzī's fame, however, is due to the great popularity which his dictionary acquired. This can be attributed to the arrangement of entries in strict alphabetical order and the fact that Borhān combines the materials of other dictionaries in one volume, thus saving users the trouble of consulting several different books. It includes a large number of new words and compounds in various fields, particularly medical terms. Frequently reproduced in manuscript, it became the real basis of subsequent Persian dictionaries. The spread of printing further enhanced its popularity, and editions were repeatedly brought out in India and Iran. More than any other Persian dictionary, the *Borhān-e qāṭe'* was used by writers and linguists; at the same time it came under the scrutiny of scholars who exposed its many faults, including blatant errors (Ḥekmat, pp. XC-XCVI).

Borhān Tabrīzī states that his sources were the *Farhang-e jahāngīrī* of Mīr Jamāl-al-Dīn Ḥosayn b. Faḵr-al-Dīn Ḥasan Enjū Šīrāzī (completed in 1017/1608), *Majma'-al-fors* of Moḥammad-Qāsem Sorūrī Kāšānī, *Sorma-ye solaymānī* of Taqī Awḥādī, and *Šeḥāḥ al-adwīa* of Ḥosayn Anšārī (d. 806/1403; Ḥekmat, pp. LXXXI-LXXXVI), but he must have used other sources also. The entries in different printed editions of the *Borhān-e qāṭe'* number between 19,060 and 20,215 (see Mo'īn's notes *ibid.*, pp. LXXXVII-LXXXVIII). It contains a number of words from Iranian dialects, as well as Arabic, Turkish, Syriac, Greek, Latin, and Indian words. Borhān was not a linguist, and often labels words erroneously as Old Persian, Avestan, Pahlavi, and Dari (Mo'īn, pp. CIII-CV). He mentions the languages of K̄vārazm, Sogdiana, and other Iranian dialects (for details see *ibid.*, pp. CV-CX). Arabic words and Arabic-Persian and Persian-Arabic compounds are numerous (*ibid.*, pp. XCVIII-XCIX). Among the Indian words there are both Sanskrit words and words from vernacular Indian languages, especially Dakanī (*ibid.*, p. C).

Borhān Tabrīzī cites 274 Pahlavi heterograms (*hozvāreš*), labeling them as Zand and Pāzand (*be-loḡat-e zand o pāzand*) and treating them as Persian, even though they have never been used in Persian verse or prose (*ibid.*, pp. CI-CIII). Here he followed and went beyond the example of the *Farhang-e jahāngīrī*. For the first time in any dictionary the spurious *Dasātīr* (cf. *EIr.* III/2, p. 187) is extensively quoted. Different vocalizations are given for many words, but



without indicating which is correct. All traditional meanings of a word are listed, but without any critical evaluation of them. Corrupt and misspelled words are quoted uncritically. In the historical and geographical entries there are many mistakes, and fables are treated as fact (Ḥekmat, pp. XC-XCVI).

Being very popular, the *Borhān-e qāṭe'* became guilty of leading lexicographers astray and encouraged poets and scholars to fill their writings with spurious and erroneous words. Spurious personal and family names found in the dictionary were widely adopted.

A century after its composition, some of the errors in the *Borhān-e qāṭe'* were noted by Serāj-al-Dīn 'Alī Khan Ārzū (q.v.), who corrected many of them in his *Serāj al-loḡa*. The poet Mīrzā Asad-Allāh Ġāleb (1212-85/1797-1869) of Delhi wrote a critical treatise, entitled *Qāṭe'-e Borhān*, rejecting some of the words, which elicited protests from Sayyed Sa'ādat 'Alī Mīr Monšī (*Moḥreq-e Qāṭe'-e Borhān*), Mīrzā Raḥīm Bēg Mīrtahī (*Sāṭe'-e Borhān*), Āḡā Aḥmad 'Alī Šīrāzī Jahāngīrnagarī (*Mo'ayyed-e Borhān*), Amīn-al-Dīn Dehlavī (*Qāṭe' al-Qāṭe'*), and others. The *Moḥreq-e Qāṭe'-e Borhān* was in turn answered by Najaf-'Alī Jahjarī (*Dāfe'-e hadāyān*), an anonymous author who was probably Ġāleb himself (*Laṭā'ef-e ḡaybī*; Urdu), and by the *So'ālāt-e 'Abd-al-Karīm* (Urdu). One of Ġāleb's letters is a retort to the *Sāṭe'-e Borhān*, and one of his Persian *qeṭ'as* a retort to the *Mo'ayyed-e Borhān*. A collection of verses including Ġāleb's *qeṭ'a* and three other poems in support and refutation of Ġāleb's views came out under the title *Hangāma-ye delāšūb*. Ġāleb also wrote *Tīḡ-e tīz* (Urdu) in rebuttal of the *Mo'ayyed-e Borhān*. *Tīḡ-e tīz* is a collection of *qeṭ'as* and Ġāleb's replies to them and Āḡā Aḥmad-'Alī Šīrāzī Jahāngīrnagarī's *Šamšīr-e tīz* is rejoinder to Ġāleb's *Tīḡ-e tīz* (Mo'īn, pp. CX-CXV).

A supplement to the *Borhān-e qāṭe'* entitled *Molḥaqāt-e Borhān* was compiled by 'Abd-al-Majīd Qā'emmaqāmī and others and printed at Calcutta in 1250/1834 (repr. 1274/1858; *ibid.*, p. CXVI).

Rezāqolī Khan Hedāyat, Moḥammad Pādšāh, and Nāẓem-al-Aṭebbā' Nafīsī all made extensive use of the *Borhān-e qāṭe'* in compiling their dictionaries (*Farhang-e anjomanārā-ye nāšerī*, *Farhang-e Ānand Rāj*, and *Farnūdsār yā Farhang-e Nafīsī*). Moḥammad-Karīm b. Maḥdīqolī Tabrīzī produced an abridged dictionary of currently used words from the *Borhān-e qāṭe'* (see [borhān-e jāme'](#)).

The *Borhān-e qāṭe'* was also used by compilers of Persian dictionaries in other



languages, e.g., J. A. Vullers (Latin), F. Johnson (English), F. Steingass (English), and J. J. Desmaisons (French).

In the early 13th/late 18th century the Ottoman Turkish scholar Sayyed Aḥmad 'Aṣem 'Antābī translated the *Borhān-e qāṭe'* into Turkish, correcting certain entries and adding a number of words; this work, to which he gave the name *Tebyān-e nāfe'*, was printed in Constantinople in 1214/1799, in Cairo in 1215/1800, and reprinted in 1251/1835 (Mo'īn, pp. CXV-CXVI).

Printed editions of the *Borhān-e qāṭe'* were published in Calcutta in 1234/1818, 1238/1822, 1250/1834; in Bombay 1259/1843, 1274/1858; and in Tehran 1278/1862, 1300/1883, 1304-05/1887, 1317 Š./1938. A critical edition by Moḥammad Mo'īn was published in four volumes in Tehran in 1330 Š./1951 and reprinted in five volumes in 1342 Š./1963 with a number of introductory essays.

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