



BORZŪ-NĀMA (ARTICLE 1)

BORZŪ-NĀMA, an epic poem of ca. 65,000 lines recounting the exploits and adventures of the legendary hero Borzū, son of Sohrāb. The poem is ascribed by Anquetil Duperron to one 'Aṭā'ī, who has been identified by Blochet as 'Amīd Abu'l-'Alā' 'Aṭā' b. Ya'qūb Kāteb Rāzī (q.v.), known variously as Nākūk, 'Amīd-e 'Aṭā', 'Aṭā'-e Ya'qūb, and 'Aṭā'-e Rāzī, a poet of the Ghaznavid court who died in either 471/1078-79 (Hedāyat, *Majma' al-foṣaḥā'* I, pt. 2, pp. 873-76) or 491/1097-98 ('Awfī, *Lobāb* I, pp. 72-75). Neither 'Awfī nor Hedāyat mentions the *Borzū-nāma* among 'Aṭā'ī's works. The language of the *Borzū-nāma* is characteristic of texts of the 5th/11th century. Written in the same meter and style as Ferdowsī's *Šāh-nāma*, the *Borzū-nāma* is the longest of the post-*Šāh-nāma* epic poems and includes much material from the Iranian national legend not used by Ferdowsī.

The story begins with Sohrāb on his way from Tūrān to fight Rostam. He marries a woman named Šahrū and leaves her a token to give to their unborn child. She names the child Borzū, and brings him up ignorant of the identity of his father. In his youth he is recruited into Afrāsīāb's army. Having forced his mother to reveal his father's name, he resolves to avenge the death of Sohrāb at the hands of Rostam. Afrāsīāb sends him with an army to Iran, but Borzū is soon captured by Farāmarz and taken to Sīstān. Šahrū learns of this and helps him escape, but he is recaptured by Rostam. Not recognizing each other, grandfather and grandson fight and Borzū's life is spared only at the last minute when Šahrū identifies him to Rostam. Borzū joins the Iranian forces, and when Afrāsīāb learns of this, he sends Sūsan-e Rāmešgar, a musician and



sorceress, to capture the Iranian heroes (see *suṽsan-nāma*). Afrāsīāb arrives with his army and a long series of battles and adventures begins involving most of the Iranian and Turanian heroes mentioned in the *Šāh-nāma*, plus many others as well as *dīvs*, *parīs*, and wizards. The tale ends with Borzū's death at the hands of a *dīv*.

The *Borzū-nāma* first became known in the West in 1816 when Kosegarten published, with a German translation, a section of 275 lines from a manuscript brought from India by Anquetil Duperron. A different selection was published as an appendix to Turner Macan's edition of the *Šāh-nāma* (4 vols., Calcutta, 1892, pp. 2160-96). The text as a whole remains unedited. Principal manuscripts are in the Bibliothèque Nationale (*Cat. Bibliothèque Nationale*, nos. 1189,1190), The Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan (A. Mirzoev and A. N. Boldyrev, eds., *Katalog vostochnykh rukopisei*, vols. I-, Stalinabad, 1960-, II, no. 324), the Vatican Library (Fondo Sbath, no. 652), the Academy of Cluj, Rumania (Piemontese, p. 456), and in the library of Columbia University, New York.

Friedrich von Suhtschek, in a discussion of the Iranian sources of the Grail legend, claimed, but did not prove, that the *Borzū-nāma* is the direct source of Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzifal*.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The earliest independent account of the story of Borzū appears in Malekšāh Ḥosayn Sīstānī's *Eḥyā' al-molūk*, ed. M. Sotūda, Tehran, 1344 Š./1965-66, pp. 30-34.

Discussions of the text and its place among the post-*Šāh-nāma* epics may be found in M. Molé, "L'épopée iranienne après Firdōsī," *La nouvelle Clio* 5, 1953, pp. 377-93, and D. Şafā, *Ḥamāsa-sarā'ī dar Īrān*, Tehran, 1333 Š./1954, pp. 303-10.

ʿAṭā'ī as author of *Borzū-nāma* is mentioned in *Zend-Avesta*, tr. Anquetil Duperron, I, pt. 1, Paris, 1771, p. DXXXVI. ʿAṭā'ī and his works are discussed by D. Şafā in his *Adabiyāt* II, pp. 477-83. See also *EI*² I, pp. 1072-73.



The first European publication is in H. G. L. Kosegarten, “Bruchstücke aus dem persischen Heldengedichte Barsunameh,” *Fundgruben des Orients* 5, 1816, pp. 309-25.

This selection was published again in J. A. Vullers, *Chrestomathia Schahnamiana*, Bonn, 1833.

For Italian prose translations of this and other passages, see V. Rugarli, *La gazzella di Berzu*, Bologna, 1889; *Rustem e Berzu*, Bologna, 1892; *Il primo canto del libro di Berzu (Berzū-nāmeḥ)*, Bologna, 1899.

The efforts of Kosegarten and Vullers were criticized by S. de Sacy in his review of Vullers’ *Chrestomathia* in *Journal des Savants*, 1834, pp. 207-18.

Differences between the versions in the Bibliothèque Nationale ms. and the Vatican ms. are discussed by A. Piemontese in “I manoscritti persiani del Fondo Sbath nella Biblioteca Vaticana e un nuovo “Barzūnāma”,” *Atti della Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei. Rendiconti della classe de scienze morali, storiche e filologiche*, ser. 8, 33, 1978, pp. 447-64.

For a discussion of von Suhtscheck’s theories, with references, see H. Closs, “Convergence des sources,” in *Lumière du Graal*, ed. R. Nelli, Paris, 1951, pp. 50-68, and L. Ringbom, *Graltempel und Paradies*, Stockholm, 1951, pp. 115, 471.