



## BORZŪYA

---

**BORZŪYA** (also transcribed Burzōē), a physician of the time of Ƙosrow I (r. 531-79) and responsible for a translation of the *Pañcatantra* from Sanskrit to Pahlavi, the Persian translation of which is known as the *Kalīla wa Demna*.

Eṣṭakrī (p. 262) gives his birthplace as Abaršahr, which is the ancient name of Nīšāpūr; however, the Persian edition of Eṣṭakrī's work (ed. Ī. Afšār, Tehran, 1347 Š./1968, p. 208) considers him to be from Marv. According to what Borzūya himself states in the introduction to the *Kalīla wa Demna*, his father was in the military, and his mother was from an important religious family; at seven he went to primary school and after completing his basic education he studied medicine. According to Borzūya, he treated patients without charge until serious doubts about religion and suspicions about the conduct of religious leaders gradually grew in him, and he withdrew from the world seeking inner contentment. He then traveled to India and on his return brought back the *Kalīla wa Demna* and several other works as souvenirs (F. de Blois, *Burzōy's Voyage to India and the Origin of the Book of Kalīlah wa Dimnah*, London, 1990).

Concerning the motive for this trip, an apocryphal tale found in the *Šāh-nāma* (Moscow, VIII, pp. 247-55) and in *Ġorāral-sīar* (pp. 629-33) states, "In Indian books, Borzūya read that on a mountain in that land there grows a plant which when sprinkled over the dead revives them. Borzūya asked Anōšīravān for permission to travel to India to obtain the plant. After a fruitless search, he was led to an ascetic who revealed the secret of the plant to him: The "plant" was word, the "mountain" learning, and the "dead" the ignorant. He told



Borzūya of a book, the remedy of ignorance, called the *Kalīla*, which was kept in a treasure chamber. The king of India gave Borzūya permission to read the *Kalīla*, provided that he did not make a copy of it. Borzūya accepted the condition but each day memorized a chapter of the book. When he returned to his room he would record what he had memorized that day, thus creating a copy of the book, which he sent to Iran. In Iran, Bozorgmehr translated the book into Pahlavi and, at Borzūya's request, named the first chapter after him.”

This tale, which was an independent story in Pahlavi literature, subsequently entered the *Ḳodāy-nāma* (*Xwadāy-nāmag*) and from there was translated by one of the translators of the *Ḳodāy-nāma* named Šādān Barzīn (Šādān-burzēn) into Persian. It thus entered the Abū Manšūr *Šāh-nāma* and from there the *Šāh-nāma* of Ferdowsī and the *Gorāral-sīar* of Ṭa'ālebī.

When the tale is compared to what Borzūya states in the introduction of the *Kalīla*, one concludes that Borzūya was a practitioner of Indian medicine and that his journey was related to this practice. In India he became a follower of Indian mysticism and familiar with Sanskrit literature. On his return to Iran he brought with him several samples of this literature, among them the story of *Kalīla* and *Demna* and translated them into Pahlavi. As mentioned above, according to Ferdowsī and Ṭa'ālebī, Borzūya was the only one to bring the story from India, and Bozorgmehr was its Pahlavi translator. In other sources of the Islamic period, the authorship of some parts of the *Kalīla* (*Fehrest*, p. 305) or of the introduction (*Mojmal*, p. 75) are attributed to Bozorgmehr. According to Gardīzī (ed. Ḥabībī, p. 33) Bozorgmehr is even credited with having brought the *Kalīla* from India. The attribution of the *Kalīla* to Bozorgmehr must be seen as a late Sasanian fabrication which grew up around the life of the learned and well-known vizier of the time of Ḳosrow I. At that time, many books were attributed to him, and he was even credited with the invention of backgammon, which is a complete fantasy.

There is no reason not to suspect that Borzūya himself, captivated by the story of the *Kalīa*, went to India, learned Sanskrit, and brought the book back to Iran, while entrusting the Pahlavi translation to another; for there is not the slightest evidence of his [Bozorgmehr's] knowing Sanskrit, and one cannot even presume such knowledge. In the *Kalīla* as well as its introduction, there is no mention of Bozorgmehr. Only in some late manuscripts of the work is the introduction attributed to Bozorgmehr. In fact, this introduction demonstrates that it was Borzūya who gave information about himself, not Bozorgmehr



about Borzūya. Arthur Christensen's view (*Acta Orientalia* 8, 1930, pp. 81-128) that Bozorgmehr and Borzūya are one and the same is baseless; however, "Borzūya" as Christensen and before him Justi (*Namenbuch*, p. 74) pointed out can be a shortened form of the name Borzmehr. This does not necessarily mean, though, that Borzūya and Borzmehr, the secretary of Kōsrow I, are the same individual, i.e., Bozorgmehr.

The translation of the *Kalīla* and its introduction are also attributed to the work's Arabic translator Ebn Moqaffa' (Th. Nöldeke, *Burzoos Einleitung*, Strasbourg, 1912, pp. 1-27). This is a very old view; even Abū Rayḥān Bīrūnī (b. 443/1051) held that Ebn Moqaffa' added the name of Borzūya to the book to attract those of little faith to religion and prepare the ground for Manichean proselytizing (Bīrūnī, *Fī taḥqīq mā le'l-Hend*, Hyderabad, 1958, I, p. 123; *Alberuni's India*, tr. E. C. Sachau, New York, 1971, p. 159). Bīrūnī's view, however, as his works make clear, arose from his comparison of the Arabic translation of Ebn Moqaffa' with the Sanskrit original; he may not have seen the Pahlavi translation of the work. In my view both the matter of lack of faith and the changes in the text which have been attributed to Ebn Moqaffa' must in the first instance be attributed to Borzūya himself. Whatever the case, there is nothing in the introduction which permits attribution to Ebn Moqaffa' while making attribution to Borzūya unlikely (see also F. Rosenthal, *Analecta Orientalia* 14, 1937, pp. 10-11), though Ebn Moqaffa' both from the point of view of religion and in his literary practice resembled Borzūya. In other words, both translators, Borzūya and Ebn Moqaffa', did not merely translate the work, they reworked it.

After being translated into Pahlavi, the *Kalīla* achieved great renown and was quickly translated from Pahlavi into Syriac and several times into Arabic, Persian, and other languages (see *Kalīla wa Demna*). Toward the end of the Sasanian period, every grandee who read the *Kalīla* would entertain notions of kingship; such was the case, it is said (*Šāh-nāma* IX, p. 16 vv. 94, 98, p. 218 v. 3495), with Bahrām Čōbīn, the commander of Hormoz IV (r. 579-90) and Šērūya during the time of Qobād II (628).



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

---

Given in the text.

*Search terms:*

□□□□□□ borzuye borzouyeh burzuyeh