



EMRĀNĪ

‘EMRĀNĪ, the name or most likely the penname (*taḳalloṣ*) of the Jewish-Persian poet of Isfahan and Kāšān. Together with his 7th-8th/13th-14th century predecessor Šāhīn, he is one of the two most prominent and beloved poets of Judeo-Persian literature. Since Wilhelm Bacher’s pioneering study on Šāhīn and ‘Emrānī in 1907 a large number of ‘Emrānī’s works have been uncovered and much new light has been shed on the poet’s life and times, and his literary output.

From the limited information available to him in two of ‘Emrānī’s works, Bacher reached inaccurate conclusions about the poet’s life and works, which were accepted and repeated by other scholars. According to his own account, ‘Emrānī was born in 858/1454 in Isfahan, whence he moved in his mid or late twenties to Kāšān (*Faṭḥ-nāma*, fol. 75b); there he lived until his death when he was over eighty years old (Hebrew University, MSS 1001, fol. 213a and 1429 fol. 150a). ‘Emrānī was a prolific poet. Thus far none of his ten full compositions has been published, except for some representative portions (Netzer, 1973, pp. 179-260; Mizrahi, pp. 77-93). As with other Judeo-Persian works, ‘Emrānī’s writings, mostly in verse, are composed in Persian in Hebrew letters. Except for three short compositions, they all deal with Jewish topics. The following is a breakdown by category:

Epic compositions. 1. *Faṭḥ-nāma*, consisting of approximately 10,000 verses and heavily influenced by the *Šāh-nāma* of Ferdowsī, it comments and expands on the biblical books of Joshua, Ruth and Samuel I-II (Ben-Zvi Institute, Jerusalem, MS 981). 2. *Ḥanūkā-nāma*, consisting of approximately 1,800 verses in epic and



heroic language, it depicts the struggle of the Maccabees against the Greeks (Hebrew University, MS 1183).

Jewish historic and Midrashic narratives. 1. *‘Asārā harūgey ha-malkūt* (Ten Martyrs of the Kingdom), in both verse and prose, relates the Midrashic story of the torture and death suffered by ten Jewish sages at the hand of the Roman emperor Hadrian (r. 117-38 C.E.; Jewish Theological Seminary, MS 88). 2. *Qeṣṣa-ye haft barādarān*, in verse and prose, treats the story of the pious woman Ḥannāh and her seven sons, who, during the Hasmonean revolt (168-162 B.C.E.), refused to bow down to the Greek idol and chose martyrdom instead (Hebrew University, MS 28° 1928). 3. *‘Aqedat Yiṣḥāq* (The Binding of Isaac), entirely in prose, is inspired by the biblical story of the sacrifice of Isaac (Genesis 22:1-18; Ben-Zvi Institute, MS 1011).

Didactic works. 1. *Wājebāt o arkān-e sīzdahgāna-ye īmān-e Esrā’īl*, consisting of approximately 780 verses, is an exposition of Maimonides’ treatise (Jewish Theological Seminary, MS 324). 2. *Entekāb-e naḳlestān*, consisting of approximately 600 verses, is a collection of religious, moral, and practical counsels addressed to the leaders and members of the Jewish community (Hebrew University, MS 1183). 3. *Ganj-nāma*, consisting of approximately 4,900 verses and apparently ‘Emrānī’s last major work, is a book of wisdom on the ethical tractate of the Mishnah known as Abot (i.e., *Tractate of the Fathers*; Hebrew University, MS 1001).

Lyric and non-Jewish compositions. 1. *Sāqī-nāma*, a mystical-lyrical poem of approximately 190 verses modeled on the *Sāqī-nāma* of Ḥāfeẓ and much influenced by Ḳayyām and Sa’dī (Ben-Zvi Institute, MS 934). 2. *Dar setāyeš-e taḥammol*, containing sixteen verses, extols the virtues of patience (Hebrew University, MS 8° 1484). Within this category also fall fragments of three short lyrical poems found in the collection of Jewish-Persian manuscripts at the Ben-Zvi Institute (Netzer, 1985, pp. 32, 189, 198). ‘Emrānī’s numerous manuscripts in various collections in Israel, Europe, and the United States attest to his popularity and prominence among Persian Jews.



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