



ESKĀFI, ABŪ ḤANĪFA

ESKĀFI, ABŪ ḤANĪFA, Persian poet, mentioned among the court poets of Ġazna (*Čahār maqāla*, ed. Qazvīnī, text, p. 44). Contemporary information about his life is provided by Bayhaqī (q.v.), who met him for the first time in 451/1059 when the latter was still a young man. Abū Ḥanīfa, to whom Bayhaqī gives the titles *ostād* and *faqīh*, had already achieved a reputation as a religious scholar and a man of letters. Impressed by his talent as a panegyrist, the historian asked him to write *qaṣīdas* for his *Tārīḡ-e mas'ūdī*, four of which are contained in the extant parts of the chronicle. During the reign of Farroḡzād (444-51/1053-59) when the patronage of poetry was at a low ebb, Eskāfī's work did not draw the attention of the Ghaznavid court until Ebrāhīm succeeded to the throne. The new sultan ordered a few *qaṣīdas* and rewarded Eskāfī with the post of inspector (*mošref*) of a provincial district (*Čahār maqāla*, ed. Qazvīnī, comm., pp. 108-13). It is difficult to reconcile other sources mentioning a poet of the same name with Bayhaqī's first-hand report. In Sanā'ī's *Dīvān* (p. 639) a verse is quoted from a poem written by Bū Ḥanīfa for 'Onṣorī (died 431/1039-40), which suggests that his career could have started at least twenty years before his meeting with Bayhaqī. On the other hand, his name also occurs in manuscripts of Sanā'ī's *Kār-nāma-ye Balkī* as a poet of the early 6th/12th century (*Maṭnawīhā*, p. 163), but this reference is almost certainly a later insertion. 'Awfī (Lobāb, II, p. 175) mentions "Abū Ḥanīfa Eskāf" of Marv as a successful poet during the reign of Sanjar (490-552/1097-1157), "although he was [only] a shoemaker." Bosworth suggests (p. 174, n. 88) this poet may be Abū Ḥanīfa of Panjdeh, a village near Marv-al-rūd, and author of a few Arabic verses cited by Bāḡarzī (q.v.). The Arabic



nickname *eskāf*, shared by poets from Ġazna and Marv, means shoemaker. This fact is not sufficient, however, to harmonize conflicting data concerning their lives (cf. *Čahār maqāla*, ed. Qazvīnī, comm., pp. 111-13). The fragments of Eskāfi's poetry have been collected by Moḥammad Dabīrsīāqī.

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