



FARROKĪ SĪSTĀNĪ, ABU'L- ḤASAN 'ALĪ

FARROKĪ SĪSTĀNĪ, ABU'L-ḤASAN 'ALĪ b. Jūlūg, Persian court poet. According to the earliest notice on his life, contained in the second essay of Neẓāmī 'Arūzī's *Čahār maqāla* (ed. Qazvīnī, pp. 58–65), his father Jūlūg was a military slave (*golām*) of Amir Aḥmad Ḳalaf-e Bānū, the Saffarid ruler of Sīstān (r. 352-93/ 963–1003). As a youth, Farroḳī served a *dehqān* (q.v.), but—disappointed by the answer to his request for an increase in his salary—he left his homeland and found a new patron in Abu'l-Moẓaffar Faḳr-al-Dawla Aḥmad b. Moḥammad, the ruler of Čaġānīān (q.v.). Neẓāmī 'Arūzī's story contains a detailed report of Farroḳī's entry there, with the help of the Kadḳodāy Amīr As'ad, and the two *qašīdas* which won him a lasting fame. The first was the poem opening with *bā kārvān-e ḥolla beraftam ze Sīstān*, “With the caravan of striped cloth I left Sīstān” (no. 169), alluding fancifully to his poetry. The second contained a poetical description of the branding of the colts at Abu'l-Moẓaffar's *dāggāh* (no. 86).

According to a calculation made by Ahmed Ateş, Farroḳī's arrival in Čaġānīān would have taken place in the spring of 406/1016. In the autumn of the same year, he wrote a poem for Abu'l-Moẓaffar on the Mehragān festival. Perhaps not much later, he left the provincial court for Ġazna, where he entered the service of Sultan Maḥmūd before 408/1017.

Particulars of Farroḳī's life at the Ghaznavid court can only be gleaned from



his own works, because the later *taḍkera* sources are of no value as far as his biography is concerned. He stayed on in Ġazna till the end of his life. His death is often said to have occurred in 429/1037-38, but this dating, though not improbable, can only be traced to a 13th/19th century source, Reẓāqolī Khan Hedāyat's *Majma'-al-foṣaḥā'* (II, pp. 1054-55). Another date mentioned in some *taḍkeras* is 470/1077-78, but this is quite impossible. It is certain, anyway, that his life came to an end during the reign of Sultan Mas'ūd I (421-32/1030-41), the last royal patron named in his poems. A short elegy by Labībī states that Farroḳī died young, at a time when his fellow-poet 'Onṣorī was still alive (cf. Rādūyānī, p. 32).

Farroḳī was one of the most successful court poets in the history of Persian literature. During his long service to the Ghaznavids, he witnessed the heyday of that dynasty under Sultan Maḥmūd, for whom he wrote a great number of panegyrics. He attended formal occasions, like the celebration of the seasonal festivals Nowrūz, Mehragān, and Sada, and the Islamic *īd al-feṭr*, as well as banquets and drinking bouts. He commemorated events in the lives of his patrons, such as the birth of a child, the building of a palace or the creation of a pleasure garden, the nomination to an office and reception of a robe of honor. Besides attending to these domestic affairs, he also accompanied his royal patron on hunting trips and during his military expeditions against the Hindus. His description of the raid on the temple of Somnath (Sūmnāt) in Gujarat (no. 35), which took place in 417/1026, is the most celebrated of Farroḳī's poems on these wars, which are not without value for historians. Another famous poem related to a momentous event was the elegy he wrote for Maḥmūd in 421/1030 (no. 41), one of the greatest poems of this kind ever written in Persian.

Other members of the Ghaznavid house who patronized Farroḳī were Maḥmūd's brothers Yūsof and Naṣr, and his sons Moḥammad and Mas'ūd. From the great number of panegyrics he wrote for Moḥammad, it is clear that Farroḳī was particularly close to this prince, but he changed sides unscrupulously when Mas'ūd deposed his brother after a reign of only a few months. Farroḳī found other patrons among the high officials of the state such as the viziers Aḥmad b. Ḥasan Meymandī (nos. 75, 153, 157) and Ḥasanak (no. 93). He also wrote a poem (no. 78) for Maḥmūd's favorite slave Ayāz b. Ūymāq (q.v.), at a time when Ayāz had become a commander in the Ghaznavid army.

There are only a few indications pointing to a temporary disgrace of the poet (see, e.g., nos. 134 and 142). On the whole, Farroḳī must have been an



immensely popular man who participated with great zest in the convivial life of the court and whose art was lavishly rewarded. Like Rūdakī in the preceding century, he was not only a poet, but also a minstrel who had mastered the harp (*čang*), the lute (*barbat*) as well as the art of recitation. The introductions to his *qaṣīdas* show his superior skill in anacreontic verse and nature poetry. The evocation of idealized landscapes and gardens is often linked with love themes, for instance when he describes his emotions in terms of their reflection in the seasonal changes. His beloved is often specified as a Turkish youth, apparently a military slave; at least in one instance the beloved is said to have come from an army camp (*laškargāh*; no. 45). Farroḳī must have been a prolific writer of independent *ḡazals*. He often refers to such poems, but apart from the occasional quotation within a *qaṣīda* (no. 47/48) they have not been preserved.

'Awfī (*Lobāb*, ed. Nafīsī, II, p. 47) had already ascribed *sahl-e momtane'* ("inimitable simplicity") to his style, a phrase frequently repeated by later critics. However, the same writer remarked that in his early work Farroḳī exerted himself in the use of rhetorical devices. As a matter of fact, one finds among his *qaṣīdas* several examples of this, e.g., in a *qaṣīda-ye maṣnū'a* (no. 40) in which each distich begins and ends with the same word or a few poems in the form of a dialogue (nos. 136, 177), or in various kinds of repetitive devices such as the use of anaphora, parallelism, and alliteration. However, his style remains always fluent and easy to understand, free from difficult words or learned allusions.

The *Dīvān* of Farroḳī, as we know it now, consists of about nine thousand distichs. It is apparently a fairly complete collection of his output of panegyrics in the form of *qaṣīdas*. There are also three stanzaic poems, a number of fragmentary poems, and a collection of quatrains. If there has been any loss of material, this must have been restricted mainly to the independent *ḡazals*. Beginning with Asadī's dictionary *Lōḡat al-fors*, written about half a century after the poet's death, several medieval works, especially anthologies and treatises on poetics, have included citations from Farroḳī's poetry. This indirect tradition has been studied by Jan Rypka and Miloš Borecký. These fragments are of particular interest to the textual history of his poems because they provide some insight in the state of these texts during a period from which no manuscript of the *Dīvān* has survived. At the end of the 9th/15th century, Dawlatšāh observed that manuscripts of Farroḳī's collected poems were "enjoying a wide celebrity in Transoxiana, but lost or little known in



Khurasan” (Browne, *Lit. Hist. Persia* II, p. 124). It may be due to a temporary lack of interest in Farroḳī’s poetry (which may have appeared unsophisticated to the contemporaries of Ḥāfeẓ), that no medieval copies of the *Dīvān* are extant. The oldest dated source used in the most recent edition by Moḥammad Dabīrsīāqī is a volume entitled *Majma‘ al-qaṣā’ed*, compiled by Taqī-al-Dīn Moḥammad Ḥosaynī in 1067/1656-57, which was in the possession of the editor (cf. Dabīrsīāqī, *Sar-āḡāz*, p. *hefdah*; see also Storey/de Blois V/3, p. 606). It is further remarkable that the number of copies made from the *Dīvān* greatly increased during the Qajar period when, as a result of the *bāzgašt-e adabī* (q.v.), Farroḳī had become one of the most important models of neo-classical poetry. In a manuscript in the Bankipore Library, Farroḳī is named as the author of an epic poem, the *Šahrīār-nāma*, but this attribution, which is not very likely, is still to be verified.

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