



## FĀRS-NĀMA-YE NĀŞERĪ

**FĀRS-NĀMA-YE NĀŞERĪ**, a history and geography of the province of Fārs, with maps and illustrations, by Mīrzā Ḥasan Fasā'ī (b. Fasā, 1237/1821; d. Shiraz, 12 Rajab 1316/26 November 1898; [Figure 1](#)).

i. *The author.*

ii. *The book.*

iii. *Notables of Shiraz.*

### i. THE AUTHOR

The *Fārs-nāma-ye nāşerī* is itself the main source for the biography of Ḥajj Mīrzā Ḥasan Ḥosaynī Fasā'ī and the history of his ancestors (ed. Rastgār, pp. 924-35, 1035-58). Fasā'ī belonged to the thirty-seventh generation of a family of *sayyeds* (claiming descent from the prophet Moḥammad). Members of the family, named Daštakī (q.v.) after the quarter of Shiraz (which later on became part of the quarter Sar-e Dezak) where they owned houses, were prominent scholars and civil servants, with branches in Persia (Shiraz and Fasā), Mecca, and Hyderabad (Deccan). His ancestor Gīāt-al-Dīn Maṣūūr Šīrāzī (q.v.; b. 866/1461, d. 949/1542) founded the Madrasa-ye Maṣūūrīya in Shiraz, which still exists. Gīāt-al-Dīn's grandson, Moḥammad-Ma 'şūm, went to Mecca and stayed there until his death in 1032/1623. The latter's son Aḥmad, born at Ṭā'ef (near Mecca) in 1027/1618, was invited to Hyderabad, where he gained a high position at the court of Sultan 'Abd-Allāh Qoṭbšāh (r. 1020-83/1611-72).



Aḥmad's son Sayyed 'Alī Khan, born in Medina in 1052/1642, followed his father to Hyderabad and returned to Persia in 1116/1704 at the invitation of Shah Solṭān Ḥosayn Şafawī. Eventually, he settled down at Shiraz, where he died in 1118/1707 (ed. Rastgār, pp. 924-30). Majd-al-Dīn Moḥammad, Sayyed 'Alī Khan's son, born in 1105/1693, moved from Shiraz to the family's estate in the district of Fasā (southern Fārs) when the Afghans occupied Shiraz. In the time of Nāder Shah, he purchased the whole district of Fasā which was owned by families from Isfahan, at a moderate price. He died at Rūnīz-e Fasā in 1181/1767. Mirzā Ḥasan, the latter's son, and father of the author of the *Fārs-nāma-ye nāşerī*, was born in 1180/1766. He spent the whole of his life in the district of Fasā, died in 1237/1821, and was buried at Rūnīz-e 'Olyā near Fasā.

Ḥasan Fasā'ī was born at Fasā three months after his father's death; his mother, who came from a family of rich Shirazi merchants, died a short time later. Ḥasan was raised first by his grandmother, then by an elder brother in Shiraz. He took up the study of theology, philosophy, jurisprudence (*feqh*), and mathematics, completing his education in Isfahan, where he stayed for some time. Back in Shiraz, he turned to the study of medicine with his cousin Mīrzā Sayyed 'Alī, better known as the poet Nīāz. Among the handbooks he used was Avicenna's *Ketāb al-qānūn fi'l-ṭebb*. After he had completed his studies he practiced and taught medicine in Shiraz. Beginning in 1275/1858 he traveled extensively in Fārs. He went to Tehran for a year in 1279/1862, returning via Maşhad and Yazd. In December 1866 he was appointed physician to Solṭān Oways Mīrzā Eḥteşām-al-Dawla (q.v.), governor of Kohgīlūya and Behbahān. At Behbahān he dedicated himself to the study of calligraphy with Mollā 'Alī-Aşgār. In 1286/1869 he visited the Shī'ite holy places in Iraq (see 'ATABĀT) and in the following year made the pilgrimage to Mecca.

Fasā'ī never visited Europe, and we may be sure that he did not know any European languages. However, he was much influenced by Mo'tamed-al-Dawla Farhād Mīrzā, the reform-minded son of 'Abbās Mīrzā (qq.v.) and governor of Fārs (1257/1841, 1293/1876). Farhād Mīrzā was much interested in mathematics and geography; he translated William Pinnock's *Comprehensive System of Modern Geography* into Persian under the title *Jām-e Jam* and composed a small English-Persian dictionary (Fasā'ī, ed. Rastgār, pp. 861-62). There can be no doubt that Fasā'ī profited from these works, as well as from other translations of works of European authors which were prepared in Persia in the second half of the 19th century. Accordingly, Fasā'ī's activities in the field of learning were determined by his traditional education as well as



by his eagerness to adopt modern methods, especially in land surveying, statistics, and related matters. He had a taste for poetry and composed poems himself, some of which, as well as numerous examples of the poetry of others, he included in the *Fārs-nāma-ye nāṣerī* (e.g., pp. 901, 1051-52, 1503-5, 1572, 1675).

Of Fasā'ī's writings, his *Tafsīr al-Qor'ān* follows the traditional lines of Muslim exegesis. He started composing it on 1 Ramaẓān 1283/7 January 1867, during his stay at Behbahān, where he studied calligraphy, as mentioned above. It was finished on 8 Rabī' II 1284/9 August 1867. The Arabic text of the Qur'ān is accompanied by a Persian interlinear translation. The commentary on the margin is a compilation based on four works: *Majma' al-bayān* by Faẓl b. Ḥasan Ṭabresī (d. 548/1153); the *Tafsīr* of 'Abd-Allāh b. 'Omar Bayẓāwī (d. ca. 685/1286); *al-Ṣāfiṭī tafsīr kalām Allāh al-wāfi* by Moḥammad b. Mortazā Kāšānī (d. 1091/1680); and *al-Wajīzī tafsīr al-Qor'ān*, by 'Abd-Allāh b. Moḥammad-Reẓā Šūbdar Ḥosaynī (d. 1242/1827). Fasā'ī's *Tafsīr* was printed in Tehran in 1312/1894; a copy of the first page, showing *Sūrat al-fatīḥa*, is reproduced in Manṣūr Rastgār's edition of the *Fārs-nāma-ye nāṣerī* (p. 49). Standing in line with established Muslim tradition is another of Fasā'ī's works, *Toḥfa-ye eḥtešāmī*, a rhymed collection of advice and admonitions (*andarz wa naṣaḥ*). It belongs to the well-known literary genre of mirror-for-princes literature (see [ANDARZ](#)). It is named for Eḥtešām-al-Dawla.

In contrast to these writings, Fasā'ī's activities in the field of geography and land-surveying are based on observation and the collection of empirical data, testifying to his ability to adopt modern scientific methods. In 1289/1872, on the order of Mas'ūd Mīrzā Z̄ell-al-Solṭān, governor of Fārs, he prepared a map of the province drawn from knowledge that he had gained during his travels. After Farhād Mīrzā's return to Fārs in 1293/1876, Fasā'ī drew up a larger map, 2 x 1 cubit (about 190 x 95 cm), showing all the towns, villages, settlements, coasts, islands, important springs, rivers, and mountains of the province; this map was printed separately (*Ḥodūd al-'ālam*, ed. Minorsky, comm. p. 376). Three years later, Farhād Mīrzā obtained authorization from Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah for Fasā'ī to compose a geography of Fārs, apparently as part of his own attempts to introduce administrative reforms. Fasā'ī decided to combine geography and history, the latter in a quite traditional manner, the result of which was the *Fārs-nāma-ye nāṣerī*.

*Fārs-nāma-ye nāṣerī* provides ample information on the properties of Fasā'ī and his family in Shiraz and in the province of Fārs: Fasā'ī was administrator



(*motawallī*) of the pious foundations (*waqf*) of the Madrasa-ye Manṣūrīya at Shiraz after the death of Āqā Mīrzā ‘Alī in 1289/1872; in addition, he owned (1) two houses in the Daštak quarter which he acquired in exchange for premises situated in the district of Meydān-e Šāh; (2) the village of ‘Alīābād near Fasā, which he founded in 1296/1879; (3) the village of Deh Modkūn in the district of Šimakān, acquired by purchase; (4) the village of Mo‘ezzābād near Shiraz, also acquired by purchase; (5) a share of an irrigation canal (*qanāt*) dug on the order of Farhād Mīrzā, which was partly distributed among noble families of Fārs and partly made *waqf* (Fasā’ī, ed. Rastgār, pp. 24-25). In his function as a *motawallī* of the pious foundations belonging to the Madrasa-ye Manṣūrīya, Fasā’ī was for many years engaged in recovering property belonging to the *waqf* which had been alienated. His struggle is one of the subjects treated in *Fārs-nāma-ye nāşerī*. In fact, there is strong evidence that this struggle was the main motive for its composition (see ii. below).

Fasā’ī died in Shiraz and was buried in the Madrasa-ye Manṣūrīya by the side of its founder, Ġīaṭ-al-Dīn Manṣūr.

*Bibliography:* See below, part ii.

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## ii. THE BOOK

The *Fārs-nāma-ye nāşerī* was written on the order of Nāşer-al-Dīn Shah obtained by Farhād Mīrzā Mo‘tamed-al-Dawla, governor of Fārs, and issued in Du‘l-Ḥejja, 1296/November-December, 1879. It was finished on 10 Ša‘bān 1304/4 May 1887. A lithographed edition, with two volumes in one but separately paginated, was published in Tehran in Šafar 1314/July 1896 (and reprinted twice, Tehran, n. d.; new ed. by M. Rastgār Fasā’ī, Tehran 1367 Š/1988, with introduction, notes, and indices, in two vols. with consecutive pagination).

Part one, on the history of Fārs, is in traditional annalistic form, covering the period from the Islamic conquest of Bahrain in the year 10/631 (which is considered the beginning of Islamic rule in Persia) to the author’s own time. The last year treated is 1300/1882-83, with some notes on later events added by the author before the book was published. Fasā’ī treated the history of Fārs within the framework of the national history of Persia up to the death of Faṭḥ-‘Alī Shah in 1250/1834, but for the subsequent period he focused increasingly



on the local history of the province. The description of the government of Farhād Mīrzā (q.v.; Fasā'ī, ed. Rastgār, pp. 857-63, *sub anno* 1298/1880-81) is in the form of a “mirror for princes,” a literary genre with which the author was well acquainted (see i. above). It is to be noted that the history of the earlier periods, down to the end of Safavid rule, receives a rather short treatment; the author focuses on the Qajars, but also the rule of the Zands as far as it was preparatory for the accession of the former (ed. Rastgār, pp. 634-866).

Part two begins with an introduction which covers the following subjects: A survey of the topics to be dealt with (ed. Rastgār, pp. 876-87); the climate of Fārs, its flora and fauna, and agricultural products (pp. 873-76); the elements of the science of geodesy, mainly based on Farhād Mīrzā's *Jām-e Jam* (pp. 876-87); a method of finding the *qebla* (pp. 887-89); geographical zones (*eqlīm*, q.v.), traditional and modern (pp. 889-92); the position of Fārs according to longitude and latitude; the problem of cartographic projection; and two maps, of the eastern and western parts of the province.

*Fārs-nāma-ye nāserī* is the best source for the study of southern Persia in the nineteenth century. The description proper of Fārs begins (p. 898) with a survey of the subdivision of the province into two districts, including their names in the pre-Islamic and Islamic periods (pp. 898-900), followed by some remarks on the history of Shiraz, which he says was founded in 74/693-94, replacing Eṣṭakr (q.v.), the pre-Islamic capital of Fārs, and its division into eleven quarters (*maḥallāt*; pp. 900-910); a detailed description of these quarters in alphabetical order, with a list of the distinguished families living in each, their genealogies, and their connections with other parts of the world inside and outside Persia (pp. 911-1135); the '*olamā*' (pp. 1136-53); poets (pp. 1154-82), viziers (pp. 1183-85), shrines (*beqā'*; pp. 1186-1204), mosques (pp. 1205-19); religious schools (*madrasas*; pp. 1220-24), caravansarais (pp. 1225-26), parks, and gardens of Shiraz (pp. 1227-37). The description of Shiraz is followed by that of Fārs as a whole: the districts (*bolūk*), including townships, villages, and settlements, alphabetically arranged with biographical information parallel to that given about Shiraz (pp. 1238-1572); the tribes of the province (pp. 1573-85); and islands (pp. 1586-90), springs (pp. 1591-99), lakes (1600-1601), rivers (pp. 1602-13), deserts (p. 1614-15), different tribal groups (pp. 1616-19), fortresses (pp. 1620-32), mountains (pp. 1633-36), and places where minerals are found (pp. 1637-39).

In part I, Fasā'ī made extensive use of earlier chronicles, including those of Ṭabarī, Ebn al-Aṭīr, and Waṣṣāf. For the history of the Qajars down to the year



1273/1857 his main source was Lesān-al-Molk Sepehr's *Nāseḵ al-tawārīḵ*; some information was taken from Sir John Malcolm's *The History of Persia* (2 vols., London, 1815; tr. Mīrzā Moḥammad-'Alī Kaškūl as *Tārīk-e Malkolm*, Bombay, 1290/1873). For the history of Shiraz Fasā'ī used a variety of sources including Ebn al-Balkī's *Fārs-nāma*, Mo'īn-al-Dīn Jonayd Šīrāzī's *Šadd al-edār*, and Aḥmad Zarkūb's *Šīrāz-nāma*. Much of his information was drawn from personal observation and questioning local inhabitants. The description of the ruins of Persepolis (ed. Rastgār, pp. 295-99), including the Persian translation of the Achaemenid and Arabic inscriptions, is based on Franz Stolze's *Persepolis* (2 vols., Berlin, 1882). Fasā'ī used a translation of this work prepared by Maḥdīqolī Khan and communicated to him by letter. A considerable number of drawings of Persian antiquities were included (Naqš-e Rostam, p. 1308; the *gonbad* and *čahār-ṭāq* at Sarvestān, p. 1361; the rock carvings at Fīrūzābād, p. 1417; and others).

One of Fasā'ī's motives, possibly the decisive one, for writing the *Fārs-nāma* was his struggle for the restitution of the *waqf* property of the Madrasa-ye Maṣṣūriya, namely the village Sahlābād in the district (*bolūk*) of Rāmjerd that had been expropriated by fraudulent officials and the village Qaṣr-e Karam near Fasā that Fasā'ī's predecessor in office had ceded to Abu'l-Ḥasan Khan Mošīr-al-Molk, son-in-law of Moḥammad Shah's brother Fereydūn Mīrzā Farmān-farmā (q.v.). Fasā'ī wrote a petition concerning Sahlābād on the margin of the map of Fārs which he submitted to Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah in 1293/1876. The response was positive, but the king's orders were not fully obeyed. When Fasā'ī was ordered to write *Fārs-nāma-ye nāṣerī* three years later, he related the matter in the introduction, turning to the subject again and again, whenever there was an occasion (ed. Rastgār, pp. 168-70, 934, 1041, 1054-55, 1071, 1220, 1344-45), and inserted *farmāns* issued by the Aq Qoyūnlū and Safavid rulers granting the Madrasa-ye Maṣṣūriya certain privileges and confirming its possessions (pp. 351-54, 481-82). Qaṣr-e Karam was restituted by a *farmān* of Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah in Rabī' II 1312/October 1894. The lawsuit concerning Sahlābād was settled shortly before Fasā'ī's death: facsimiles of the *farmān* and a decree of the Justice Bureau (Dīvān-ḵāna-ye 'adliya), dated Šafar 1314/July-August 1896 were appended to parts one and two respectively.

In sum, *Fārs-nāma-ye nāṣerī* is "one of the best examples" of works of history, geography, and autobiography that originated in Persia in the second half of the nineteenth century (*Camb. Hist. Iran VII*, p. 894).

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### iii. NOTABLES OF SHIRAZ

*Fārs-nāma-ye nāṣerī* is unmatched as a contemporary source of information for the social history of the province of Fārs and the city of Shiraz in the 19th century. Of several comparable urban histories for other Persian cities, written during the Qajar period, including monographs on Tabrīz, Kāšān, Isfahan, Kermān, and Nā'in (see Nāder Mīrzā, Kalāntar Żarrābī, Mīrzā Ḥosayn Khan, Wazīrī Kermānī, and Balāgī) none offers as comprehensive, thorough, and systematic a survey of its subject city and its individual quarters as does Fasā'ī's *Fārs-nāma-ye nāṣerī* for Shiraz. The author's detailed genealogies of the prominent families of Shiraz, their geographic and social origins, occupational status, and places of residence provide the type of information that is needed for a quantitative analysis of the social composition of the city's notables (*a'yān o ašrāf*), their spatial distribution within the various city quarters, and the extent and pattern of social mobility within and across the city's major social hierarchies in the last decades of the 19th century.

*Notable families of Shiraz.* In his detailed description of each of Shiraz's eleven urban quarters (in 110 lengthy pages) in part two of the *Fārs-nāma*, Fasā'ī presents background and biographical information on some 105 notable families that resided in the city during the 1880s. As was the case with the elite strata in other urban communities in Persia at the time, male members of extended families tended to enjoy similar social status in the community or to pursue similar occupational careers over multiple generations. Thus, of the 105 families described by Fasā'ī as the notable clans or extended families residing in the city in the 1880s, 93 may be characterized as being relatively homogeneous, with nearly all adult male members enjoying the same social



status or occupying the same or very similar occupational roles over two or more generations. The other 12 extended families were “heterogeneous,” in that some of their adult male members had, in the past, held or were, in Fasā’ī’s time, pursuing occupations that were different from the prototypical one of their extended family. However, the extent of this differentiation was relatively limited, with the typical case having members in only two types of occupational or status categories.

*The spatial distribution of the notables.* It is often believed that the segregation of social strata in Persian towns is a relatively recent phenomenon and that, before the 20th century, there was a relatively even distribution of notable families throughout the different quarters of a town or a city. Fasā’ī’s account of Shiraz in the late 19th century would tend to support this view only inasmuch as each city quarter, with the exception of the Jewish quarter, was home to at least several of the city’s notable families. However, a more systematic analysis of the information presented in *Fārs-nāma* shows that approximately three quarters of the notables of Shiraz resided in the four most affluent quarters of the city (Meydān-e Šāh, Sar-e Bāg, Eshāq Beyg, and Bāzār-e Morġ) and a small northern section of the Bālākaft quarter, known as Bāg-e Now, while the remaining one-fourth resided in the six, less affluent, quarters of Darb-e Šāhzāda, Sang-e Sīāh, Sar-e Dezak, Lab-e Āb, Darb-e Masjed, and the southern section of Bālākaft quarter. Furthermore, the proportion of notable persons to the number of households for the more affluent quarters was nearly seven times higher than for the less affluent ones. Thus, all of the princes and tribal khans, well over four-fifths of the merchants, over three-quarters of the ‘*olamā*’, well over one-half of the office-holders, over three-fifths of the physicians, poets, and other members of the “cultural elite,” and approximately three-fourths of the notables who lived off the income from their landed property and family assets resided in the more affluent quarters referred to above.

*Social composition of the urban notables.* Of close to 1,000 individuals who are mentioned in the family histories provided in *Fārs-nāma*, 411 were males alive in the 1880s. Most of these individuals occupied middle or high-ranking positions in the administrative, religious, commercial, and cultural spheres; some were princes, tribal khans, leading officeholders or important merchants in the *bāzār*; and a small number owed their privileged status in the community solely to their family background rather than any attainments of their own.



**Table 1** shows the distribution of the urban notables of Shiraz within five status or occupational categories based on Fasā'ī's biographical accounts. Over four-fifths of the city's living notables fell into the three major orders of "office-holders" (*'ommāl*; 41 percent), "clerics" (*'olamā*; 21 percent) and "merchants" (*tojjār*; 21 percent). The category of "princes and tribal chiefs" (7 percent) was made up of individuals of royal lineage (descendants of Ḥosayn-ʿAlī Mīrzā Farmānfarmā; q.v.) or those from Qašqā'ī tribal chieftains, whose family background, rather than occupational careers, gave them elite status in the city. The "landowners" (10 percent), as used in the present classification, refers to those members of the elite who relied mainly, or in some cases entirely, on revenues from their landholdings for their livelihood, hence leaving out many other persons of high social status within some of the other categories who had major landholdings as well. As was the case in other Persian cities in the 19th century, landownership in Shiraz of Fasā'ī's time was a concomitant and highly predictable reward of elite status.

*Patterns of social mobility.* Fasā'ī's detailed descriptions of the family background of Shirazi notables generally included information on the social or occupational status of male members for two or more generations. This makes it possible to construct indices of intergenerational mobility for the different categories of the city's notables, thus allowing a quantitative assessment of the degree of status inheritance or, its reverse, social mobility. Aside from the category of "princes and tribal chiefs" whose status was, by definition, wholly hereditary, the highest rate of occupational inheritance could be observed for the "office-holder" (90 percent), followed by the "merchants" (86 percent) and the "clerics" (81 percent). Even for the relatively ambiguous category of "landowners" (see above), nearly three-fifths of fathers who could be placed in that category had sons whose principal means of livelihood and basis for high social standing was landownership. In general, the data suggest that, in spite of any formal barriers to social mobility and indeed many examples of exceptional careers from humble origins to the highest positions of power and privilege, members of notable families in 19th century Shiraz tended to remain within the same status or occupational groupings as their fathers.

The quantitative analyses presented here are illustrative of the unique value of Fasā'ī's *Fārs-nāma* for students of Persian social history and class systems in the 19th century.

See also [CLASS SYSTEM v.](#); [FĀRS iv.](#)



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