



FERDOWSI, ABU'L-QĀSEM II. HAJW-NĀMA

FERDOWSI

ii. HAJW-NĀMA

Hajw-nāma is the title of a verse lampoon of Sultan Maḥmūd of Ġazna attributed to Ferdowsī. According to Neẓāmī 'Arūzī (*Čahār maqāla*, ed. Qazvīnī, text, pp. 75-81), after Ferdowsī presented his *Šāh-nāma*, the sultan, at the instigation of the poet's detractors, used the pretext of the poet's alleged Mu'tazilite and Shi'ite (*rāfeẓī*) orientation to give him only twenty thousand dirhams as the reward (*šela*) for the epic. Finding the amount humiliating, Ferdowsī distributed it among workers in the public bath and fled to Ṭabarestān, where he petitioned the Bawandid ruler Šahrīār for asylum and wrote his verse lampoon. Šahrīār, who was on good terms with Maḥmūd, paid the poet a thousand dirhams for each of his lampoon's one hundred verses and destroyed it. Neẓāmī 'Arūzī recorded the six lines that survived. No other credible source speaks of Ferdowsī's trip to Ġazna and his escape to Ṭabarestān; moreover, the Bavandid ruler Šahrīār b. Šarvīn, who has been identified with the ruler mentioned in the *Čahār maqāla* (e.g., comm. p. 244), could not have lived until 400/1009, which is considered the date Ferdowsī finished his composition (see ĀL-E BĀVAND). Thus one cannot rely on the veracity of many of the details of Neẓāmī's account. Introductions to



manuscripts of the *Šāh-nāma* reproduce that account and embellish it with many accretions. In some of them, the *Hajw-nāma* runs more than one hundred lines (the Mohl edition, Preface, pp. 88-92 contains 93 lines).

A great deal of textual evidence and scholarship has fed the controversy surrounding the *Hajw-nāma*. Maḥmūd Khan Šīrānī (pp. 37-110) established that many of the lines of the lampoon had either been taken from the *Šāh-nāma* itself or are too weak to be consistent with Ferdowsī's style. He thus concluded that either the *Hajw-nāma* was fabricated after Ferdowsī's time (p. 55) or that if Ferdowsī had indeed penned such a satire, it disappeared and the origin of what we have today is a mystery (p. 103). However, there is reason to suspect that Šīrānī may not have been entirely objective in his judgment, since his article was intended to be a defense of the Ghaznavid ruler rather than a critique of the *Hajw-nāma*. Jalāl-al-Dīn Homā'ī has suggested that Oṭmān Moḳtārī's mention at the end of his *Šahrīār-nāma* (written between 492-508/1098-115, predating *Čahār maqāla* by some fifty years) of his own reluctance to satirize his patron even if the latter would fail to reward him (*Dīvān*, pp. 788 n. 1, 832) might be an oblique reference to the *hajw-nāma* of Ferdowsī. Moreover, contrary to Šīrānī's view, not all of the verses of the *Hajw-nāma* are from the *Šāh-nāma*, nor are all of them weak. Some of the lines are firm, substantial, and original (see for example the introductions to MS Istanbul, Topkapı Saray Kütüphanesi, Hazine 1479, dated 731/1331, and MS Cairo Dār al-kotob, 6006 *sīn*, dated 741/1340). Šīrānī is not, however, alone in his doubts about the lampoon; Moḥammad-Taqī Bahār was also skeptical about the authenticity of the entire poem (pp. 30-31).

Some scholars like Theodore Nöldeke (pp. 29-31), Sayyed Ḥasan Taqīzāda (p. 80), Ḍabīḥ-Allāh Šafā (pp. 190-91), and Moḥammad-Amīn Rīāḥī (pp. 142-44) believed in the existence of the *Hajw-nāma* and the authenticity of some of its verses. Nöldeke (p. 29) felt that the use of the term "this book" in the *Hajw-nāma* showed that Ferdowsī appended it to the *Šāh-nāma*, thereby negating the various verses that praised Sultan Maḥmūd in the larger work. He suggested that, in accordance with Ferdowsī's wishes, all of the verses panegyricizing Sultan Maḥmūd should be removed and replaced with the *Hajw-nāma*.

The opening verses of the *Hajw-nāma*, which are found in all manuscripts of the *Šāh-nāma* as well as in *Čahār maqāla*, indicate that the dispute between Ferdowsī and Sultan Maḥmūd was sectarian in nature. This is the same argument that Ferdowsī makes in the introduction to the *Šāh-nāma* (ed.



Khaleghi, I, pp. 10-11), namely, his defense of the truth of Shī'ism to the exclusion of all other forms of Islam. Neẓāmī 'Arūzī also saw this as the reason for the sultan's displeasure with Ferdowsī, which led to the composition of his lampoon of Maḥmūd. A verse in the *Hajw-nāma* (ed. Mohl, preface, p. 89, v. 8), suggests that certain people demeaned Ferdowsī in the eyes of the sultan, which agrees in some respects with the contention of *Čahār maqāla* (p. 78) that courtiers opposed to the grand vizier Aḥmad b. Ḥasan Meymandī (but cf. above, p. 517) were responsible for the sultan's displeasure.

Ferdowsī's *Hajw-nāma* is a rarity among Persian lampoons for its lack of obscenities. The modesty of Ferdowsī's attack is entirely consistent with the decorum of the *Šāh-nāma*, which is another argument for its authenticity. Were it not for mild insults like "ignoble" (*bad-gowhar*) and "son of a servant" (*parastārzāda*) used in its more heated and some combative lines, the *Hajw-nāma* would lose its status as lampoon. The last verse (Mohl, ed., Preface, p. 92, v. 3), whether genuine or not, has proven prophetic: "The poet harmed in some disgraceful way/Will pen a dart that lasts till judgment day." In the history of Persia, all the reports of Maḥmūd's military conquests have not made him as famous as Ferdowsī's *Šāh-nāma*. By the same token, all the blood the sultan shed has not made him as infamous as the poet's putative *Hajw-nāma*.

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