



FERDOWSI, ABU'L-QĀSEM III. MAUSOLEUM

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iii. MAUSOLEUM

The Ferdowsī mausoleum (Ārāmgāh-e Ferdowsī), a monumental tomb in Ṭūs, Khorasan, was built between 1928 and 1934 and remodeled in 1969. According to Neẓāmī 'Arūẓī, when Ferdowsī died in 411/1019-20, a religious leader of the town prevented his burial in the Muslim cemetery of Ṭūs, and the poet was interred in his own garden, located inside the town of Ṭābarān near the Razān gate (*Čahār maqāla*, ed. Qazvīnī, text, p. 83, comm., pp. 245-46; Minorsky, p. 980; see also Shahbazi, 1991, p. 103). According to a tradition reported in the introduction to an abridged manuscript of the *Šāh-nāma* preserved in Berlin, Abu'l-Ḥareṭ Arslān Jādeb, the Ghaznavid governor of Ṭūs, built a domed mausoleum over Ferdowsī's tomb (*bar marqad-e Ferdowsī qobba-ī sākt*; *apud* Taqīzāda, pp. 245-46). Neẓāmī 'Arūẓī visited the tomb in 510/1118 (*Čahār maqāla*, ed. Qazvīnī, text, p. 83), and in 892/1482 Dawlatšāh Samarqandī (q.v.) reported (ed. Browne, p. 54): "At the present time his noble tomb (*marqad-e šarīf-e ū*) is well known, and pilgrims visit it to seek boons."

Despite repeated destruction of Ṭūs by Turks, Mongols, Uzbeks, and Tīmūr, Ferdowsī's tomb remained a venerated site. In about 1000/1592, Qāẓī Nūr-Allāh Šūštārī wrote (II, p. 609): "His tomb is nowadays well-marked and



celebrated, people from all realms, particularly the Imami Shi'ites, make pilgrimage to it (*zīārat-e ū bejā mīāvarand*). The present writer also has had the honor and blessing of visiting it (*be šaraf-e zīārat-e ū mošarraf wa fā'ez šoda*).² In 1822 a small "dome ornamented with lacquered tiles" was still standing (Fraser, p. 519), but even this was gone by 1883 (Minorsky, p. 980; Curzon, *Persian Question* I, p. 174). In that year 'Abd al-Wahhāb Khan Āṣaf-al-Dawla Šīrāzī, governor of Khorasan, discovered the tomb and began to erect a brick structure over it but was unable to complete the project (Minorsky, p. 980; Šāhroḡ, p. 163).

The rise of nationalism in Persia early this century motivated scholars and dignitaries to urge the government to build a suitable mausoleum for the poet who had done so much to preserve Iranian identity and history. Moḥammad-Taḡī Bahār (q.v.) wrote several articles on the necessity of the project and urged Reżā Khan (later Reżā Shah) to prove his asserted nationalism by building a mausoleum. "Otherwise," he wrote, "we, the people of Khorasan, will do it ourselves" (p. 449). At the initiative of Arbāb Kayḡosrow Šāhroḡ, the nationalist representative of the Zoroastrians in the Majles, the newly established Anjoman-e ātār-e mellī (q.v.) put out a leaflet inviting the public to participate through financial contributions or a lottery in the construction of an appropriate mausoleum for Ferdowsī, "who has no superior among great Iranians" and who "constitutes a pillar of Iranian nationalism." Šāhroḡ was commissioned to visit Ṭūs and locate the site of Ferdowsī's tomb. He succeeded in finding the tomb by consulting literary sources, investigating the ruins of Ṭūs, and interviewing elderly locals who still remembered āṣaf-al-Dawla's structure (Šāhroḡ, pp. 161-64; Šadīq, II, pp. 202-3). Construction of the tomb started in 1928, under the supervision of Šāhroḡ, and was finished in 1934, in time for Ferdowsī's millenary celebration (q.v.). Karīm Ṭāherzāda Behzād provided an architectural plan, evidently following suggestions by the court minister 'Abd-al-Ḥosayn Teymūrtāš (Šadīq, II, p. 203; according to Šāhroḡ, p. 166, Teymūrtāš forced his views on the Anjoman). But this proved impractical, and work consequently proceeded according to a plan and gypsum miniature model submitted by André Goddard (q.v.). The pyramid roof envisioned in this design cracked and collapsed soon after construction and was replaced by a stepped-pyramidal roof planned by Behzād (Šāhroḡ, pp. 164-71).

The tomb was situated in a garden of fruit trees measuring 25,248 m² (endowed by its owner, Nā'eb al-Tawliya Qā'em-maqāmī, and later enlarged to some 30,000 m²). The structure was erected by Ḥosayn Ḥajjār-bāšī Zanjānī and



Ḥosayn āqā Lorzāda, and the masonry came from the Kallaj marble quarry near Mašhad (Šahroḡ, pp. 165-66, 171). The appearance of the monument was reminiscent of buildings at Persepolis and the tomb of Cyrus the Great (q.v.) at Pasargadae. It consisted of three parts: (1) An innermost section centered around a two-stepped marble platform on which lies the cenotaph, a marble slab (150 x 100 cm) some 50 cm high. (2) A square (16 x 16 m) chamber built of dressed marble and ornamented on the interior with faience work. Four tall columns with double-headed bull capitals rise on the corners of the chamber supporting the highly ornamented stepped-cornice. Each wall is further decorated with a pair of similar but shorter engaged columns which are joined by stepped-lintels to form pseudo-doorways. The Persepolis traits are further indicated by the image of a winged man (which in Achaemenid art represented the Royal Fortune but which is popularly known as the *Forūhar* symbol: Shahbazi, 1974, 1982) carved on the upper part of the south wall of the chamber. The cornice supports an entablature that is turned inward to form a square base for a wall 100 cm high, which itself tapers inwards to create a smaller square on which rests the uppermost wall, again 100 cm high, carrying the roof. Eight columns surrounding the aforementioned innermost-platform rise half way up to carry a roof and form two upper and lower corridors within the chamber. (3) An outer stepped-platform of dressed marble, on which stands the chamber.

Many inscriptions (engraved by Ḥasan Zarrīn-kaṭṭ) and sculpted scenes (carved by Ša'bān Pūrja'farī) adorn the monuments. Most texts are verses from the *Šāh-nāma* and carved on walls. The epitaph inscribed on the tomb-stone may be rendered in English as follows: "In the name of the Lord of life and wisdom [this is a distich which opens the *Šāh-nāma*]. This auspicious site is the resting place of the most eminent of Persian poets and the composer of the Iranian national saga, Ḥakīm Abu'l-Qāsem Ferdowsī of Ṭūs, whose words are the resurrector of the country of Iran and whose grave is eternally revered by the people of this land. Date of birth 323; date of death 411; date of construction of the mausoleum 1353."

Thirty years after the raising of this monument it became necessary to rescue it from dampness and provide it with sufficient space. Under the supervision of the architect Hūšang Seyhūn, the Ministry of Culture and Art (Wezārat-e Farhang wa honar) enlarged the mausoleum in the following manner. The solid floor of the original chamber was hollowed out and the area beneath expanded on all sides to form a hall measuring some 900 m², with an entrance



from the west and walls decorated with glazed tiles or plaques of inscriptions and sculpted scenes representing stories from the *Šāh-nāma*. At the same time the garden was expanded on all sides, covering an area of 56,753 m², and the site was provided with restaurants, hostels, and a library. A statue of the poet was also erected southeast of the monument, and the entire complex was officially “opened” in April 1968 in time for the first annual congress of *Ṭūs*, which was devoted to the study of Ferdowsī and the *Šāh-nāma*.

Ferdowsī's mausoleum has assumed the sanctity of a national shrine. One of the most photographed sites in Persia, it has also appeared as the designs on many handicrafts as well as on stamps and official currency. As recently as 1992-95 it served as the reverse design of the 10 rial coins minted by the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Plate I. Design on leaflet issued by the Anjoman-e āṭār-e mellī to raise funds to complete construction of the Ferdowsī mausoleum, 13 12 Š./1933. After *Honar o Mardom*, nos. 153-54, 1354 Š. /1975, p. 56.

Plate II. The Ferdowsī mausoleum as initially constructed. After 'Ī. Šadīq, ed., *Ketāb-e hezāra-ye Ferdowsī/Th e Millenium of Firdawsi, the Great National Poet of Iran*, Tehran, 1322 Š./1943, facing p. 173.

Plate III. Interior of the Ferdowsī mausoleum, showing the cenotaph over the grave. After *Honar o mardom*, nos. 153-54, 1354 Š./1975, p 161.

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