



ḤASAN-E ĠAZNAVI

ḤASAN-E ĠAZNAVI, SAYYED EMĀM AŠRAF ḤASAN B. MOḤAMMAD ḤOSAYNI, known also as Sayyed Ašraf or Sayyed Ḥasan, poet chiefly associated with the court of the Ghaznavid ruler Bahrāmšāh (q.v.). His date of birth is unknown; he died probably around 556/1161 (see Storey/de Blois, V/2, pp. 333-36). He traced his descent from the Prophet and his son-in-law ‘Ali; he boasts of his lineage frequently in his poems. He came to prominence at the beginning of Bahrāmšāh’s reign, and celebrated many of that reign’s events, among them Bahrāmšāh’s triumph over his brother Arsalānšāh (q.v.) and his campaigns against his rebellious governor of Lahore, Moḥammad b. ‘Ali Bā Ḥalim, in 512-13/1119 (see Khan, pp. 83-89), on the second of which Ḥasan accompanied Bahrāmšāh, and described the campaign as an eyewitness. Ḥasan’s poetry became so renowned that one of his verses was inscribed on Bahrāmšāh’s coinage (Khan, p. 217). During the Ghurid occupation of Ġazna in 543/1148 Ḥasan remained in the city; when Bahrām-šāh retook Ġazna the poet, accused of having sympathies for the Ghurids, found it prudent to leave for Saljuq-held Nishapur (see Bosworth, pp. 108, 113-15). The dates of the city’s occupation and retaking vary; Ḥasan dates the change in his circumstances to 545/1150 *Divān*, 1983, p. 123). From Nishapur Ḥasan sent a lengthy *qaṣida* to Bahrāmšāh praising his victory and protesting his own innocence (*Divān*, 1983, pp. 201-3); he sent other poems to Bahrāmšāh from both Nishapur and Baghdad, but failed to gain reinstatement at that ruler’s court. He then went on the pilgrimage; the writer Ebrāhim b. Moḥammad Bayhaqī (q.v.) met Ḥasan in Nishapur as he was preparing to depart (Storey/de Blois V/2, p. 334; *Divān*, 1983, pp. 357, 377).



In Baghdad, Ḥasan composed several panegyrics to the Saljuq agent (*šehna*), the amir Faḥr al-Din, one of which is clearly a suit for patronage (see the *Divān*, 1983, pp. 90-93). It may also have been at this time that he sent a panegyric to the Saljuq sultan Sanjar (d. 552/1157) seeking his patronage as well (*ibid.*, pp. 39-41). On his return from the pilgrimage Ḥasan spent some time in the Saljuq capital of Hamadan before proceeding to Sanjar's court in Marv, where he composed panegyrics for Sanjar, for his nephew and son-in-law the Qarāḳānid Maḥmud II b. Moḥammad, and for another nephew, Solaymānšāh. The chaotic situation in Khorasan following the Ġozz (q.v.) incursions sent him to K̄vārazm, where he eulogized the K̄vārazmšāh Atsīz (q.v.), and then back to Hamadan. The historian Rāvandi (pp. 57-58) records a visit to the Saljuq court at Hamadan, where Ḥasan conducted a search for aspiring poets of talent, but gives no date; perhaps this visit took place during Solaymānšāh's brief reign, whose accession in 555/1160 Ḥasan's last dateable poem celebrates. Ḥasan returned to K̄vārazm, where he died; the anonymous compiler of his *divān* states that the poet left his books to Maḥmud II (Boḡrākān), for whom the *divān* was compiled, refers to the poet as *šahid*, "martyr" (which suggests that the circumstances of his death may have been seen as suspicious), and extols him as a writer of both poetry and prose; of his prose, however, nothing remains (see *Divān*, 1983, pp. 1-4).

Ḥasan's poetry reflects the taste for lyricism which seems to have characterized Bahrāmšāh's court. Although many of his panegyric *qaṣidas* lack a *nasīb* (an erotic or descriptive introduction), their tone is nonetheless markedly lyrical, even when they describe Bahrām-šāh's campaigns, whether against his brother Arsalānšāh (who, with Sanjar's help, he successfully deposed) or in India. Much of this lyricism relates to the poet's choice of meters, to his use of internal rhyme (*tarṣi*), parallelism of components, and other rhetorical devices. For example: the *qaṣida* sent to Sanjar from Baghdad begins by expressing the poet's nostalgia for his homeland ("Each breeze which brings to me the scent of Khorasan/like Jesus' breath, brings life into my lifeless form"; 1983, p. 39); that sent to Bahrāmšāh from Nishapur (which begins "Twere proper Gabriel should mount upon this turquoise-hued *menbar*/and in the name of the faith-nourishing king address the horizons far") is marked by its use of internal rhyme, as in the line *be-qadr-aš čark-rā nesbat ze 'azm-aš mäh-rā sor'at/ze baḳt-aš molk-rā dawlat ze dāt-aš aṣl-rā mafkar* ("The sphere derives from him its power, the moon from him its speed,/ the realm its fortune from his luck; his essence the root's pride"; 1983, p. 82). This lyricism contrasts with the style of his older contemporaries,



Mas'ud-e Sa'd-e Sal-mān and Maktāri, each of whom had a markedly different style, and also with the homiletic persona adopted by his closer contemporary Sanā'i, who, in the last phase of his career, gained a position at Bahrāmšāh's court.

Ḥasan's most distinctive and original achievement is his development of the panegyric ghazal. This had been practiced by earlier poets (including Mo'ezzi, Mas'ud-e Sa'd-e Salmān, and, most notably, Sanā'i, who dedicated a large number of panegyric ghazals to Bahrāmšāh; see de Bruijn, pp. 80, 264, n. 3); but it seems to have been a particular specialty of Ḥasan's. Sometimes the poem is entirely encomiastic; more often it bears a superficial resemblance to the generic ghazal, beginning with an introductory passage on love or on the garden, including a transitional line in which the poet names himself (*takalloṣ*; an optional feature), and concluding by naming the ruler, followed by a line or two of praise. Here, again, the lyrical tone is primary: for Ḥasan, the ruler is the beloved, and these ghazals employ the erotic language typical of the *nasīb* of the *qaṣida* as a prelude to praise of the prince. Viewed in this context, many ghazals which seem to be only love poems may be interpreted either as panegyrics or as pleas for favor, which must be understood according to conventions established by Ḥasan and/or current at Bahrāmšāh's court. Unfortunately, since we lack other examples (except for Sanā'i's panegyric ghazals, which are in much the same mode), and since the poetry that followed the Ghurid sack of Ġazna and the destruction of the Ghaznavid dynasty in 582/1186 is largely a closed book, we can not speculate on Ḥasan's influence on later poets, although he may well have influenced Ḥāfeẓ (q.v.), who also used the ghazal extensively for panegyric. (See further Meisami, 1987, pp. 274-77.)

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