



## LAHUTI, ABU'L-QASEM

**LAHUTI, Abu'l-Qasem** (Abu'l-Qāsem Lāhuti, b. Kermānšāh, 12 October 1887; d. Moscow, 16 March 1957), Marxist poet, political activist, and an important contributor to the modern of poetry in Tajikistan.

His father was a cobbler who also wrote poetry under the pen name of Elhāmi (lit., 'inspired'). He composed religious poems in the style of Ferdowsi's *Šāhnāma*, and he was therefore also known as Ferdowsi-e Ḥosayni. In his autobiographical account, Lahuti recalls the financial hardships of his early childhood, his sensitivity to the sufferings of the poor and the weak, and his burgeoning class-consciousness as a child in the face of the arrogance of the rich (Lāhuti, p. 138).

Lahuti's education began at traditional elementary schools in Kermānšāh. His literary career started at early adolescence. Influenced by his father, and absorbed by religious and mystic poetry through the teachings of Mir Moḥammad Šāleḥ Dašti of the Ne'mat-Allāhi order, who was also known as Ḥayrān 'Ali Šāh (Baširi, *thirty-one*, Soltāni, I, pp. 32-34), he opted for the pseudonym *Lahuti* (lit., 'belonging to the world of the occult'). At his twenties, his poems were published in the prestigious journals of the period, such as *Ḥabl-al-matin*, *Tarbiat*, and *Irān-e now*, the daily organ of the Democrat Party (Ḥezb-e Demokrāt), published in Tehran during the second and third decades of the 20th century.

Through his father, Lahuti joined the local branch of the Masonic society, "Jāme'-e Ādamiyat" (Society of Humanity; see [FREEMASONRY](#)), founded by



‘Abbāsqli Khan Qazvini in 1904. With the support of the Society, he set out for Tehran to pursue his studies (Rā’in, I, p. 619), where he was enthralled by the ideals of the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-11, and the Russian Revolution of 1905. He was soon involved in the political struggles in Tehran and Rašt (Faḵrā’i, p. 146). In 1911, he joined the Gendarmerie, which had been established in 1910 with the help of Swedish officers to serve as a highway patrol and a rural police force (Aḵgar, pp. 55-56). He was soon promoted to the rank of major, and in 1911 was appointed as the commanding officer to the Gendarmerie Battalion of Qom. There he was involved, either intentionally or accidentally, in a number of military clashes in which a number of people were killed. As a result of this, he had to leave the Gendarmerie and, according to some accounts, a warrant was issued for his arrest (Baširi, p. 80; Bozorg Omid, pp. 249-51; Bayāt, pp. 11-31). He escaped across the Persian-Ottoman border and for several years shuttled back and forth between Ottoman Turkey and Kermānšāh.

In February 1916 a provisional government was formed in Kermānšāh, and Reżāqli Neẓām-al-Salṭana Māfi, a nationalist statesman reputed to be unsympathetic to the Allies, was elected to head the provisional cabinet (Bahār, II, pp. 17-23). During Neẓām-al-Salṭana’s term in office Lahuti lived in Kermānšāh, and was active in the publication of the anti-Allies periodical *Bistun* (Solṭani, I, pp. 135-39), and, in his own account “worked with the Bolsheviks agitating among the Russian soldiers, and made speeches at their meetings” (Lahuti, 1954, p. 141). While in Western Iran (1913-21), Lahuti also established close ties with Sanjābi Clan (Sanjābi, pp. 312-315, 540-42, 564-68).

With the withdrawal of Russian forces from Iran in 1918, Lahuti once again escaped to Ottoman Turkey and settled in Istanbul (Lahuti, p. 141), where he suffered extreme hardship, and survived among the homeless, to whom he later paid tribute in a poem entitled “Orphans of War” (Cronin, p. 124). He worked as a cook (Lahuti, p. 141; Ishaque, II, p. 397), as a bookseller (Bāybordi, p. 225) and as a teacher at the Aḥmadiya, a Persian School in Istanbul (*Divān, thirty-seven*). In 1921, during the last months of his stay in Istanbul, he and Ḥasan Moqaddam (also known as ‘Ali Nowruz) cooperated in the publication of the bilingual bi-monthly literary journal *Pārs*. Moqaddam was in charge of the French section of the journal, while Lāhuti took care of the Persian part (Sāsāni, pp. 209-11).

Throughout these years, Lahuti’s poetry moved further and further away from religion and mysticism, and was increasingly stamped by the advocacy of



political ideologies. He composed poems that displayed both a militant nationalism (see *Irān-nāma*, Istanbul, 1919), and a marked inclination towards leftist ideas:

*Az hič kasi komak nemikvāhim  
kāfist do dast-e kāregar mā rā*

(We seek help from no one  
Sufficient for us are the workers' hands) (*Divān*, p. 57).

In 1921, the government allowed Lahuti to return to Iran. He went to Tabriz where, with the help of Colonel Lundberg, a Swedish officer whom Lahuti had known before his exile, he joined the Gendarmerie with his former rank as a major. On 30 January 1922, Lahuti, assisted by a number of dissidents among the forces of the Gendarmerie, occupied Sufiān, marched to Tabriz the day after (Lahuti, p. 142), and detained the city's governor, Mokber-al-Saṭana Hedāyat (Hedāyat, pp. 331-34, Ra'di Ādarakši, pp. 36-45). "Although there was little Bolshevik content in the declared objectives of the uprising, the forms that the movement took, and Lahuti's description of himself as the leader of the soldier's committee, clearly derived its [sic] inspiration from the Russian revolutionary example" (Cronin, p. 142).

The movement, the last in a series of uprisings, that also included the separatist movements of Moḥammad Kīābāni in Tabriz, that of Mirzā Kučak Khan Jangali in Rašt, and that of Colonel Moḥammad-Taqi Khan Pesyān in Mašhad (Bayāt, p. 107), was quickly crushed by the forces of the central government on 10 February 1922. Lahuti, accompanied by a number of gendarmes and civilians left Iran, never to return, by crossing the Aras River to enter the newly established Socialist Republic of Azarbaijan (Ārianpur, II, p. 493).

He arrived in Moscow in 1923, where he worked as a "literary worker and compositor" (Lahuti, p. 142) in the Central Publishing House of the People of the USSR, and in 1924 was admitted to the ranks of the Communist Party. He eventually settled in Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan in 1924, where he soon rose to prominence as a talented literary figure. He wrote the lyrics for the Tajik national anthem, and for the Persian translation of the Soviet national anthem (Bečka, p. 564). He also served as Tajikistan's Minister of Education, as well as the first chairman of the Writers' Association of Tajikistan (Mosalmāniān Qobādiāni, p. 65). For a period of time, he even held



the vice-chairmanship of the Writers' Association of the Soviet Union, chaired by Maxim Gorky (1868-1936), the noted forerunner of the Russian social realism (Ṭabari, p.123).

He managed to sustain close ties with the two generations of Iranian communists who lived in exile in the Soviet Union (Ṭabari, p. 123; 'Alavi, pp. 163-64). Throughout these years, although occasionally dismayed at the turn of events in the Soviet Union (Kāma-i, pp. 546, 547), and falling out of favor with the Party authorities (Ādamiyat, pp. 237-39; Mosalmāniān Qobādiāni, p. 64), he composed poems in celebration of the radical economic and social transformation of Tajik and Soviet society:

*Nāzam be ān zamān ke be niru-ye potk o dās  
mellat nahad be garden-e zālem ṭanāb-e sorḳ*

(I praise the moment when, by the force of the hammer and the sickle people place a red noose round the oppressor's neck) (*Divān*, p. 83)

He mourned with "heartbroken workers" upon Lenin's death (*Divān*, p. 222), and in a ceremony held in the Kremlin Palace on December 4, 1935, dedicated a poem to Comrade Stalin, praising him as the "master of masters."

Lahuti, like many of his contemporaries, exhibited a strong sympathy for the emancipation of women and their integration into the social sphere. In a noted poem, entitled "To the daughters of Iran" ("Be doḳtarān-e Irān," *Divān*, pp. 272-75), Lahuti employed the poetic codes and the conventional imagery used in the description of female beauty in the classical literary tradition only to subvert the social order and mobilize women as a national resource capable of changing the life of a nation (Karimi-Ḥakkāk, pp. 188-202). He also urged people to denounce religion, rise against the landowners, and embrace communism (Sepānlu, pp. 496-97). He translated into Persian verse the works of a number of Russian writers and poets, such as Alexander Pushkin (1799-1837), Maxim Gorky, Vladimir Mayakovsky (1893-1930), among others (*Divān*, pp. 692-718; see also *Čand aṭar*, Moscow, 1947: *Čakāma* (Ode), Istanbul, 1918; and *Adabiyāt-e sorḳ* (Red literature), Tehran, 1941). The translations earned Lahuti a number of awards, along with the praise of Communist Party leaders (Ārianpur, II, pp. 493-94).

Lahuti's poems mirror his ideological development, exhibiting a transition from religious, with mystical overtones, to progressive nationalist, and on to



communist themes (Cronin, p. 141) However, in his more celebrated poems a nostalgic sense of longing for the homeland prevails:

*Bešnow āvāz-e marā az dur ey jānān-e man  
Ey gerāmitar ze češmān, kubar az jān-e man*

(Listen to my song from faraway, O my beloved [Iran] O more dear than my eyes, better than my life) (*Divān*, p. 407).

Well versed in classical literature, he adhered to rules of meter and rhyme of Persian poetry (see 'ARUZ), and employed the genre of ghazal (*ghazal*), traditionally used for depiction of love and affection, in some of his most celebrated lyrical poems:

*Našod yek laḥza az yādat jodā del  
Zahi del, āfarin del, marḥabā del*

(Not for a single moment did this heart forsake your memory  
Bless thee heart! Well-done heart! Praise upon thee heart) (*Divān*, pp. 59-60)

*Āšeḡam, āšeḡ be ruyat gar nemidāni bedān  
suḡtam dar ārezuyat gar nemidāni bedān*

(I am in love, in love, note it if you haven't yet  
I burnt in your desire, note it if you haven't yet) (*Divān*, p. 71-72)

He also made experiments with the classic forms of *qasida* (*qaṣida*), and *mostazād*, a variant of the ghazal or *qasida*, with an additional phrase repeating the same pattern as the main meter (*Divān*, pp. 266-67). Emulating "Aivān-e Madā'en," by Kāqāni, he composed one of his most noted *qasidas* in celebration of communism:

*Tā čand koni garya bar masnad-e nowšervān  
Dar qaṣr-e Kreml ey del, asrār-e nahān barkvān*

(For how long you mourn over the loss of Nowshervan's throne?  
Read the secrets hidden in the Palace of Kremlin) (*Divān*, pp. 275-80)

In *Tāj o bayraq* (The crown and the banner, 1935), an epic poem about socialist reconstruction of agriculture, he employs *Šāh-nāma*'s meter and style to depict the competition between work brigades on a kolkhoz. *Rubā'iyāt*, a collection of his quatrains was published in Moscow in 1924.



Living in the time of fundamental changes in Persian literature, he also made experiments with *čāhār-pāra*, a four lines stanza (*Divān*, pp. 203-204), and used meters that were not part of the classical tradition, such as syllabic verse, although without much success (Šafi'i Kadkani, 1995, p. 534-35):

*Man farzand-e yek dehqāni budam  
dar qešlāqhā-ye Tājikestān*

(I was a peasant's son  
in the winter pastures of Tajikistan) (*Divān*, pp. 585-87)

He was praised by Šadr-al-Din 'Ayni (1878-1954), the pioneer of modern prose in Tajikistan, as a poet, whose towering presence has silenced many others (Ārianpur, II, p. 495). Lahuti adhered to the simple language of spoken Persian in most of his poems (Kānlari, p. 312). His long years in exile, and the occasional use of expressions and words that are more common in Tajikistan than in Iran, such as *kāftan* (to seek), and *kam-baḡal* (empty-handed), as well as a number of Russian expressions, such as *komsomol* (young communist), and *kolkhoz* (collective farm), were not a barrier to the reception of his poems in Iran. He is also distinguished by his attempts to adapt classical genres to the requirements of social realism, and to introduce distinct communist tendencies in Persian poetry, both in Iran and Tajikistan (Rahman, p. 196; Hitchins, p. 463). During a significant part of the 20th century, however, some of his poems were banned in Iran, which in turn, limited the impact of his works on the course of modern literature in Iran.

While he was still in Iran, Lahuti married Nošrat Āqevli. The marriage was soon dissolved (Baširi, pp. 18-21). In the Soviet Union, he married Cecilia, a Crimean by birth, and a Kiev University graduate of Iranian Studies, who was known as Cecil or *Selsela bānu* to Persians and Persian speakers (Baširi, p. 21; Mosalmāniān Qobādiāni, p. 66). Cecilia translated many of Lahuti's poems into Russian (Navvābi, pp. 386-93) and urged by him, undertook the translation of Ferdowsi's *Šāh-nāma* into Russian (Ārianpur, II, p. 496). The translation, in rhymed couplets, was based on the Nafisi-Vullers edition (Tehran, 1934-36). Lahuti, who was in a sense the co-translator of the text (C. Lāhuti, p. 598), managed to edit only the first of the six volumes (from the beginning through the reign of Kay Kāvus), which appeared in 1957 on the very day of his death. Many noted Russian scholars participated in this long-term project, including Y. Berthels (chief editor of the first volume), A. Starikov, A. Azer, N. Osmanov, and Lahuti's daughter, Layly, who edited and annotated the last four volumes.



The work was completed in 1989.

Cecilia and Lahuti had two sons, Dalir and Giv, and a daughter, Layly. Cecilia's daughter from his previous marriage, 'Aṭiyya, was brought up with the other children (Ṭabari, p. 122). Lahuti died in a Moscow hospital and was buried in the famous cemetery of Novod Vichni (Mosalmāniān Qobādiāni, p.65). Although there have been several editions of Lāhuti's poems offering the entire corpus or selected poems, a scholarly critical edition of his work is yet to appear. Two collections of Lahuti's letters, published posthumously in Tajikistan: *Mokāteba-ye Ṣadr-al-Din Lāhuti va Abu'l-Qāsem Lāhuti* Dushanbe, 1978, and *Nāmahā-ye Ostād Lāhuti*, ed., Ḳoršid 'Atākānovā, Dushanbe, 2004. An English translation of Lahuti's autobiographical article, entitled "About Myself," appeared in *Soviet Literature*, vol. IV, Moscow, 1954, pp. 138-44.

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