



## SIRĀFI, ABU SA'ID ḤASAN

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**SIRĀFI, ABU SA'ID ḤASAN** b. 'Abd-Allāh b. Marzobān (b. Sirāf on the coast of Fārs in 280/893-94; d. Baghdad 2 Rajab 368/3 February 979), 10th century polymath known best for his work as a grammarian. As his full name indicates, Sirāfi's family had been Zoroastrians until his father converted to Islam and changed his name from Behzād to 'Abd-Allāh. Abu Sa'id himself spent his life as a Mu'tazilite. He studied jurisprudence in 'Oman as a youth, theology at al-'Askar under Moḥammad b. 'Omar Ṣaymari, and, at Baghdad, grammar under Ebn al-Sarrāj and Mabramān, Koranic sciences under Abu Bakr b. Mojāhed, and lexicography under Ebn Dorayd.

He became a judge in Baghdād under the chief judge (*qāzi al-qoḏāt*), Abu Moḥammad b. Ma'rūf, and held this position for fifty years. He taught the Qur'ān, Hadith, jurisprudence, grammar, theology, logic, versification, prosody, division of inheritances, debating, arithmetic, geometry (Euclid) and astronomy (the *Almagest*), and was consulted by many leading scholars on a wide variety of subjects; for instance, he provided Ebn al-Nadim with much of the information on grammarians that the latter incorporated into his *Fehrest*. The most noteworthy public displays of his talents were the famous debates that he held before learned audiences with Abu Beṣr Mattā b. Yunos in 320/932, and with Abu Ḥasan 'Āmeri in 364/974-5. In the first of these, Sirāfi ably defended the thesis that grammar is superior to logic as an instrument for deciding between truth and falsehood; an account of the debate was given by Tawḥidi, which was quoted by Yāqut (III, pp.105-25; see Margoliouth, Mahdi, Abderrahmane, Elamrani-Jamal, Endress, and Versteegh). Despite his fame,



Sirāfi lived a simple life, earning his living by copying manuscripts.

His most significant writing was in grammar. His *Šarḥ Ketāb Sibawayh* (Commentary on the book of Sibawayh) was his most important contribution to this field (see Troupeau, for instance). The other surviving book that he devoted to grammar is the *Ketāb aḵbār al-naḥwīyin al-baṣriyin* (Book of Stories of the Grammarians of Baṣra). Attributed to him also are a *Ketāb modḵal elā Ketāb Sibawayh* (Introduction to the Book of Sibawayh), a *Ketāb al-eqnā' fī al-naḥw* (Book of Persuasion Concerning Grammar), which was completed by his son Abu Moḥammad Yusof, a *Ketāb alefāt al-waṣl wa'l-qaṭ'* (Book of the Alefs of Conjunction and Disjunction) on Koranic philology, a *Šarḥ Maqṣurat Ebn Dorayd* (Commentary on the *Maqṣura* [poem] by Ebn Dorayd), a *Šarḥ Jamhara fī al-loḡa* (Commentary on [Ebn Dorayd's] Collection on Language), a dictionary, a *Ketāb asmā' jebāl al-Tehāma wa makānehā* (Book of the Names and the Mountains of Tehāma and their Locations) on geography, a *Ketāb jazirat al-'arab* (Book of the Arabian Peninsula) also on geography, a *Ketāb al-waqf wa'l-ebtedā'* (Book of Stopping and Starting), and a *Ketāb ṣan'at al-še'r wa'l-balāḡa* (Book of the Art of Poetry and Rhetoric). Unfortunately, little is known about most of these works apart from their titles.

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