



TADKERA-YE NAŞRĀBĀDI

TADKERA-YE NAŞRĀBĀDI, a compilation of short biographical notices on some one thousand poets of the Safavid period, compiled by the poet and literary historian Mirza Moḥammad Ṭāḥer Naşrābādi (b. Mārbin of Naşrābād, in the vicinity of Isfahan, 1027/1618) and presented to the Safavid Shah Solaymān (r. 1666-1694). Naşrābādi embarked upon the project in 1083/1672 (*Tadkera*, p. 5) and completed it in 1091/1680. The exact date of his death is unknown.

Naşrābādi's ancestors, according to his autobiography, which appears with a selection of his poems at the last chapter of the book, served two Safavid kings, Shah 'Abbās I (r.1587-1629), and Shah 'Abbās II (r. 1642-1666; *Tadkera*, ed., Aḥmad Modaqqaq Yazdi, Yazd, 2000, p. 705). At 17 he lost his father and, as he admits in his brief autobiographic account, after some years of idleness in his youth went to live for many years in a coffeehouse frequented by scholars and poets who gathered to read their poems, and whose company left a profound impact on his personality and life. Shah 'Abbās himself is said to have been an occasional visitor to the coffee shop, and at times a participant in the poetry reading sessions. (*Tadkera*, pp. 706-07). Eventually, when the death of several friends robbed the coffeehouse of its charm, Naşrābādi adopted a pious life and settled down for seven years in the mosque of Lonbān, a village near Isfahan, where he penned his autobiography (*Tadkera*, pp. 704-17). Naşrābādi's fame as a poet was soon established. Although frank and to the point he was generally well tempered and reserved in his criticism (Zarrinkub, p. 265).



Tadkera starts with the customary brief passages in praise of God and the Prophet, a discourse on the virtues of poetry, the reasons for composing the work, and a florid eulogy of Shah Solaymān. It consists of a preface (*moqaddama*) devoted to the poetry of kings and princes, five chapters, titled *şaff* (lit. row), and an epilogue (*kātema*). The first *şaff* is on emirs, khans, and noted figures, and is divided into three sub-sections (*ferqa*): Persian rulers and notables; Indian Emirs and Khans; and viziers, court accountants, and secretaries. The second *şaff* is devoted to descendants of the Prophet Mohammad and other religious figures. The third *şaff*, on scholars and the learned men, comprises three *ferqa*; literati, calligraphers, and dervishes. The fourth row, with three *ferqa*, is on the poets of ‘Erāq and Kōrāsān; the poets of Transoxiana; and the poets of India. The fifth row is devoted to the life and poetry of Naşrābādi and members of his family. The *kātema*, which consists of two sections called *dafa* (time), each divided into three *harf* (letter), is a collection of chronograms (see [MĀDDA TĀRIK](#)), *loğaz* (enigma), a poem constructed as a series of questions; and *mo‘ammā* (riddle), which does not need to be in the form of a question. The first *dafa* consists of poems whose composers are known, and the second one is devoted to anonymous compositions.

Amounting to about 8,400 lines from one thousand poets, and listing 150 books, treatises and poetry collections in a condensed and simple language (Şarifi, p. 405), *Tadkera* is a pre-eminent source for Persian poetry in the Safavid period, offering a wealth of information on the customs, culture, architecture, political history, and social organization of Iran and India in the 16th and 17th centuries. It is also an invaluable source on schools, bookstores, the bookbinding industry (Afşār, 1977, pp. 33-36), diseases, poets, calligraphers, musicians, storytellers, painters, craftsmen, architects, dervishes, and finally, villages and cities of Iran, with particularly rich offerings on Isfahan (Hassani, p. 716; Ja‘fariān, pp. 55-59; Afşār, 1997, pp. 447-59). Many poems are transcribed in local dialects and accents. The work also abounds in words and phrases that appear obsolete and arcane now but were current at the time (Afşār, 1982, pp. 243-54).

According to Golčīn Ma‘āni (see [GOLČIN MA‘ĀNI, AĤMAD](#); 1916-2000), Naşrābādi has benefited in the preparation of his *Tadkera* from *Ḳolāşat al-aş‘ār* of Taqī al-Dīn Kāşī, composed in 1064 AH/1653-54) and Owḥadi Balyāni’s *‘Arafāt al-āşeḳīn*, composed in 1024 AH/1615, although neither is mentioned in the text (*Kārvān-e Hend*, II, p. 976).



As noted by Modaqqueq Yazdi, there are occasional errors in NaşrĀbĀdi's recording of names, dates, and places (Modaqqueq Yazdi, pp. 17-18). The absence of a systematic and coherent set of normative criteria applied consistently throughout the book has been noted by critics (Zarrinkub, p. 265). While some poets like Eşhāq Mirza (d. 1668) and Kālifā Solţān (d. 1653) are given extensive coverage, some others are either neglected or unfairly criticized and derided. NaşrĀbĀdi quotes 21 couplets by his son, Badi'-al-Zamān (d. 1711), a mediocre poet, and mentions only two lines of Bidel Dehlavi (BĪDEL, 'ABD-AL-QĀDER; 1644-1721) an eminent poet of the period. His selection from his own poetry, similar in style to that of KALIM KĀŞĀNI (ca.1581-1651), and ŞĀ'EB TABRIZI (ca.1592-1676; see Storey, I/2, pp. 819-20), include a *qaşida* in praise of Shah Solaymān, and chronograms for the building of the Haşt Beheşt Palace (See ISFAHAN x. MONUMENTS) in Isfahan (*Tadkera*, p. 743).

Editions. A selection of *Tadkera*'s entries, edited by Moḥammad Şafi' Lāhuri, was first published in Lahore in 1935. Vaḥid Dastgerdi published the book first as supplements to ARMAĠĀN, a monthly literary journal he founded in 1919 (*Armaġān*, 1937-38; see Storey, I/2, pp. 820-21), and then as a book in 1938. At the time when Vaḥid Dastgerdi was preparing his critical edition, only two manuscripts of the *Tadkera* were known; one held in the Malek Library in Tehran, and a second in the personal library of Moḥammad 'Ali Tarbiat (Golċin Ma'āni, 1968, pp.1908-1909; for a detailed description of the edition's inaccuracies and flaws, see Aḥmad Golċin Ma'āni, 1988, pp. 1958-65). Several more manuscripts have been discovered in recent decades, including one in the Central library of Tehran University (no. 3342; see Moḥammad Taqi Dāneşpażuh, *Fehrest-e noskahā-ye kaţti-e ketāb-kāna-ye markazi-e Dāneşgāh-e Tehrān*, 1961, II, pp. 2331-38), to which the biographies of 141 poets, as well as selections of their poetry, were appended by an anonymous writer in 1134/1722 (Golċin Ma'āni, 1969, pp. 399-400; Homā'i, I, p. 150). For the list of the appended biographies see Golċin Ma'āni, 1988, pp. 1965-73.

The Tadkera was later edited by Moḥsen Nāji NaşrĀbĀdi, and published with extensive annotations and a detailed introduction (Tehran, 1999). A third edition was published in the next year by Aḥmad Modaqqueq Yazdi in Yazd. This last edition is primarily based on the manuscript held in Vaziri Library of Yazd, which is signed and stamped with the seal of NaşrĀbĀdi himself in 1099/1684. It has a meticulously detailed preface by the editor (75 pages), and is generally regarded as the most reliable edition of the work (Fotoohi, 2000, p.



301).

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