

al-Marzūqī, Abū 'Alī

Abū 'Alī Ahmad b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan **al-Marzūqī** (d. 421/1030) was an Arabic literary critic, grammarian, and lexicographer of Iranian origin, who codified the concept of the “essentials of poetry” (*amūd al-shi'r*). He was born in Isfahan, but his birthdate is unknown. According to the biographers Yāqūt (d. 626/1229) and al-Suyūfī (d. 911/1505), he studied the seminal grammatical treatise *al-Kitāb* by Sībawayh (d. c.177/793) with the renowned grammarian Abū 'Alī al-Fārisī (d. 377/987). Ibn Khallikān's (d. 681/1282) biography of al-Fārisī, which refers to his stay in Shiraz and more vaguely in Iran during the reign of the Būyid ruler 'Aḍud al-Dawla (r. 367–72/978–83; Ibn Khallikān, 2:80), leaves room for the hypothesis that al-Marzūqī studied with al-Fārisī in Shiraz or perhaps in Isfahan. Among al-Marzūqī's pupils was the *hadīth* transmitter Sa'īd al-Baqqāl (d. 506/1112; Yāqūt, 2:506). The statesman and man of letters al-Şāhib Ibn 'Abbād (d. 385/995), who served as a *wazīr* under the Būyid ruler Rukn al-Dawla (r. 335–66/947–77) and his successors, held al-Marzūqī in great esteem, despite his humble origins as a weaver, and even went personally to visit him in Isfahan. Reportedly al-Marzūqī was insufficiently respectful toward al-Şāhib, who therefore, when he was appointed *wazīr* in 360/970, treated him coarsely (Yāqūt, 2:506). However, this incident did not prevent al-Marzūqī from serving at the Būyid court in Isfahan, where he was employed as a tutor for the ruler's children.

Al-Marzūqī devoted three books to the 'Abbāsīd poet and literary critic Abū Tammām (d. 231/845): *Sharḥ*

mushkil al-abyāt al-mufrada (“Commentary on the difficulty of single verses by Abū Tammām”; ed. Khalaf Rashīd Nu'mān, Beirut 1407/1987); the now fragmentary *Kitāb al-intiṣār min zalamat Abī Tammām* (“Getting even with those who have wronged Abū Tammām”; ed. 'Abdallāh Ḥamad Muḥārib, Kuwait City 1430/2009); and *Sharḥ Dīwān al-ḥamāsa* (ed. Ahmad Amīn and 'Abd al-Salām Hārūn, Cairo 1387/1967), a commentary on Abū Tammām's poetry collection *al-Ḥamāsa*, in the introduction to which al-Marzūqī presents his own literary-critical views. Even though he asserts that prose is superior to poetry (*Sharḥ Dīwān al-ḥamāsa*, 1:17), on the grounds that the Qur'ān is expressed in the former rather than the latter, al-Marzūqī embarks upon a definition of the essentials of poetry (*amūd al-shi'r*), which he defines as founded on seven principles (*abwāb*, sing. *bāb*; *Sharḥ Dīwān al-ḥamāsa*, 1:9). According to Mansour Ajami (43–4), al-Marzūqī takes the first four of these principles directly from the critic 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Jurjānī (d. 392/1001), namely, (1) sublimity and correctness of content (*sharaf al-ma'nā wa-ṣiḥḥatuh*); (2) eloquence and soundness of expression (*jazālat al-lafz wa-stiqāmatuh*); (3) accuracy of description (*al-iṣāba fī l-waṣf*); and (4) balanced use of similes (*al-muqāraba fī l-tashbīh*). The remaining three of these principles, however, are original to him: (5) conjunction and congruity of the parts of poetic composition with the choice of pleasant metre (*iltihām ajzā' al-naẓm wa-lti'āmuhā 'alā l-takhayyur min ladhūdh al-waẓn*); (6) correspondence between the compared and the compared to (*munāsabat al-musta'ār minhu lil-musta'ār lahu*); and (7) harmony between expression and content (*mushākalat al-lafz lil-ma'nā*).