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The maqāma*s of Ḥamīd al-Dīn Balḫī*

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Abstract

The article analyses the ways Ḥamīd al-Dīn Balḫī (d. 559/1164) adopted and adapted the technique of earlier Arabic authors, most notably al-Ḥarīrī (d. 516/1122), in his Persian *maqāmas*. It also emends the traditional dating of his *maqāma* collection.

Whereas in Arabic literature *maqāma* was an instant success and spread in a couple of decades from its country of origin, Iran, to far off Spain,[1] in Persian the genre never found such fertile soil. Abū Bakr ʿUmar Ḥamīd al-Dīn Balḫī (d. 559/1164), the Judge Supreme of Balḫ, stands out as almost the sole author of Persian *maqāmas*.[2] Even though they were rarely imitated, his *maqāmas* were an immediate success, as may be seen in his early canonization in Niẓāmī-yi ʿArūḍī's (d. after 552/1157) *Chahār maqāla* (p. 22 = Browne 1921: 25), where his

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1 Hämeen-Anttila, *Maqama*, pp. 206–210. Cf. also Hämeen-Anttila, "On the Early History".

2 For Balḫī's life and works, of which only the *maqāma*s have been preserved, see Ḥarīrī, *Maqāma-niwīsī*, pp. 106–122. Ṣafdar, *al-Maqāma*, relies heavily on Ḥarīrī. For a recent study on Ḥamīd al-Dīn, see also Behmardi, "Maḍīra". Balḫī, p. 213, refers to twenty-three *maqāma*s in his Epilogue, but with a variant twenty-four in some manuscripts (cf. Ḥarīrī, *Maqāma-niwīsī*, p. 123—in one manuscript twenty-one, see Ḥarīrī, p. 124). Ḥarīrī, pp. 123–134, rightfully doubts the authenticity of *maqāmat al-Ḫarīf*, which is found in some manuscripts, and it seems that twenty-three is the authentic number of *maqāma*s Balḫī wrote.

prose is mentioned as an important model for a scribe, *dabīr*, on a par with that of al-Hamaḏānī (d. 398/1008) and al-Ḥarīrī (d. 516/1122).[3]

There have been attempts at reading various other Persian texts as *maqāma*s, such as Saʿdī's (d. 691/1292) *Gulistān*, or a part of it, but these are rather farfetched and would stretch the boundaries of the genre to breaking point.[4] In his *Ǧawāmiʿ*, Muḥammad ʿAwfī (d. after 628/1230) gave a free translation of one Ḥarīrian *maqāma* (3/1: 136–139: no. 49 *al-Sāsāniyya*) and related two or three stories which could easily qualify as *maqāma*s, though they are not explicitly labelled as such (3/1: 139–148; 150–152; 153–155).[5] Yet it is only Ḥamīd al-Dīn Balḫī who wrote a fully-fledged collection of Persian *maqāma*s.[6]

There have been some attempts to compare Balḫī's text with his Arabic predecessors and it is quite clear that Balḫī was inspired in many of his *maqāma*s by al-Hamaḏānī and, even more so, by al-Ḥarīrī.[7] The present paper does not aim at a detailed comparison of the three authors. Instead it concentrates on the work of Balḫī though read against the backdrop of the conventions of the Arabic *maqāma* until Balḫī's time. First, I will address the question of language: how does Balḫī see his Persian *maqāma*s vis-à-vis their Arabic models? Second, I will approach the changes made by Balḫī to the *maqāma* conventions established before him, especially by the two famous Arabic authors: while Balḫī's texts are easily recognizable as being within the limits of the genre and he was well aware of his predecessors, he did not blindly emulate them, but felt free to make innovations in the conventions of the *maqāma* which were being established at the time. This is also a healthy caveat against relying too much on the interpretations of al-Hamaḏānī's and al-Ḥarīrī's *maqāma*s when reading those of Balḫī or other later authors. But before tackling the *maqāma*s themselves, let us start by considering the timeframe of the collection.

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3   Cf. also a poem on him by Anwarī, translated in Browne, *Literary History*, v. 2, p. 347. For the reception in Iran in general, see Ḥarīrī, *Maqāma-niwīsī*, pp. 135–145.

4   E.g. Ḥarīrī, *Maqāma-niwīsī*, pp. 401–446, Ṣafdar, *al-Maqāma*, pp. 97–106. Cf. also Franklin Lewis, "Golestān-e Saʿdī."

5   For a study of his *maqāma*s, see Hämeen-Anttila, "Muḥammad ʿAwfī". For a short biography of ʿAwfī, see Matīnī, "'Awfī." Marzolph, *Arabia Ridens* 1: 101–103, also briefly studies ʿAwfī but restricts himself exclusively to the anecdotes and only uses Niẓāmu'd-dín, *Introduction*.

6   The many works titled *Maqāmāt*, such as *Maqāmāt-e Ǧāmī*, are not *maqāma* collections, but Sufi works concerned with mystical stations (sg. *maqām*).

7   E.g. Ḥarīrī, *Maqāma-niwīsī*; Ṣafdar, *al-Maqāma*; Behmardi, "Maḏīra."

1   The Date of the Collection

In his Preface, p. 20, Balḫī informs us that "the swelling of this sea took place at the end of Ǧumādā II in 551" (August 1156), and, accordingly, Ḥāǧǧī Ḫalīfa, *Kashf*, p. 1786, says that the collection was finished in 551. On the other hand, in his Arabic and Persian versified lists of the Caliphs up to his own time in *maqāma* no. 23 (pp. 208, 210), Balḫī ends the story with al-Mustanǧid (r. 555–566/1160–1170), explicitly identified in the Persian version as the contemporary Caliph (*imrūz hast kār ba-Mustanǧid āmada*).

Ḥāǧǧī Ḫalīfa's note could well be a mere mistake based on a misunderstanding of Balḫī's Preface as "the swelling of this sea" is an equivocal expression. On the next page, p. 21, Balḫī relates how at this time while browsing books he came across the works of al-Hamaḏānī and al-Ḥarīrī, after which a (possibly fictitious) friend or patron asked him to write similar *maqāma*s in Persian. This strongly suggests that the date 551 should be taken as indicating the time Balḫī *began* his work.

Yet what is problematic is that Niẓāmī-ye ʿArūḍī is commonly thought to have written his *Chahār maqāla* no later than 552.[8] There seem to be three possible ways out of the problem. The references to al-Mustanǧid could, of course, be later additions, but they fit their context and there is nothing either in the manuscript tradition or in the style that would suggest that these passages were later additions, so this remains highly speculative. Equally hard would be to re-date *Chahār maqāla* by postponing it by some three years, as it was written late in Niẓāmī's life.

Most probably, Niẓāmī-yi ʿArūḍī had seen an earlier version of the *maqāma*s: it was a common practice to circulate *maqāma*s either separately or in an earlier, shorter collection before their final publication.[9] After the initial attempt, Balḫī would have continued working on his *maqāma*s, adding new ones to an earlier core, so that on the ascent of al-Mustanǧid in 555 he would still have been at work. The *maqāma* where the Caliph is mentioned is, moreover, the last in the collection, which supports this notion, assuming that the present order of the *maqāma*s reflects the order in which they were written: the very last *maqāma* may have been composed three or more years after Balḫī had already circulated (some of) the earlier *maqāma*s.

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8   Cf. Yūsofī, "Chahār maqāla." Cf. also Ṣafdar, *al-Maqāma*, pp. 72–73. In the 550s Niẓāmī probably lived in Ghūr, not too far from Balḫ, which he had visited earlier in his youth; at least, he dedicated his work to a prince of the dynasty which ruled Ghūr at that time. This partly explains why he was able to refer to Balḫī's *maqāma*s so early.

9   Or, put otherwise, it was common to continue working on an already published collection.

In the Epilogue, p. 213, Balḫī refers to hard times and calamities having taken away his inspiration and peace of mind after he had composed twenty-three *maqāma*s, so that he cannot continue his work. He also implies that the beginning of his work took place some time ago ("At the beginning of this composition, the garden of nature was fresh … but now all breaths of air have turned into scorching winds …"). Thus, he decided to lay down his pen, yet without giving any date for this.

Balḫī also says that if times turn better he may resume his work (*agar waqt-ī ġuramā-yi ḥawādiṯ ba-sūy-i muṣālaḥat-u musāmaḥat bāz āyand … āngah ba-sar-i īn afsāna-yi nā-ḫʷaš-u alfāẓ-i mušawwaš bāz gardīm-u āhan-i zingār khʷarda-rā narm kunīm …*), a clear indication that the collection was not definitely closed even at this time, which gives further reason to assume that an earlier collection may well have been circulating in Niẓāmī-yi ʿArūḍī's time, i.e. by 552.

Thus, it seems that Balḫī started his work in 551, circulated some *maqāma*s by 551–552, and stopped working on the collection sometime between 555 and 559, the year of his death.

2   Language Issues

In the Preface (p. 21), Balḫī explicitly refers to al-Hamaḏānī and al-Ḥarīrī, thus making it clear that he was aware of earlier models and wrote his *maqāma*s in conscious competition with the established masters of the Arabic *maqāma*. In his Epilogue (p. 214), Balḫī emphasises that he has followed the models of Arabic verse and prose, and throughout the text we can see how sensitive he is to the language issue.

At the time of Balḫī's *maqāma*s, Arabic was rapidly giving way to Persian as the language of literature in Iran. Until the mid-ninth century, Arabic had been the only written language used for belles-lettres in Iran by Muslim authors.[10] After that it had gradually given way to Persian: lyric poetry, epics, and histori-

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10   In the Zoroastrian community, literacy in the old Pahlavi script was limited and after the collapse of the Sasanian Empire we may assume that it was mainly the learned priests who upheld the tradition. They seem to have produced precious little non-religious literature. In the mid-tenth century some historical works were translated from Middle Persian into Classical Persian (earlier, Middle Persian texts, such as *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, had reached Classical Persian through Arabic translations). In oral literature Persian continued to be used without interruption between the pre-Islamic and Islamic periods, probably gradually changing from late Middle Persian into a form of language closer to Classical Persian. For oral epic literature, see Hämeen-Anttila, *Khwadāynāmag*, pp. 23–25 and 167–173.

cal works started being written in Persian, first in addition to, and later largely instead of, Arabic. In their prefaces, many authors writing in Persian discussed the question of choosing one's language and gave various reasons for their decision to use the local language, instead of the more universal Arabic.[11]

During al-Hamaḏānī's time the process had still been going on, and al-Ṯaʿālibī's (d. 429/1038) *Yatīmat al-dahr*, al-Bāḥarzī's (d. 467/1075) *Dumyat al-qaṣr*, which Balḫī quotes in his work, and even ʿImād al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī's (d. 597/1201) *Ḫarīdat al-qaṣr* are monuments to continuing literary activity in Arabic in Iran. In Balḫī's time Arabic still remained an important language for science, philosophy, and religion, but had already conceded the place of honour to Persian as the language of belles-lettres, though not completely ousting Arabic as yet.

Balḫī admits in his Preface (p. 21) that there is no way to surpass his two predecessors in Arabic, but adds that their *maqāma*s "are of no use to ordinary (*ʿawāmm*) Persians", as their works are in Arabic and in "Hijazi vessels", which leaves Persians without a share: people of Balḫ do not find sweet the fables of people of Karḫ, the Arabs that is, and in their evening conversations people of Rayy, *rāziyān*, will not be charmed by the expressions of the Arabs, *tāziyān* (pp. 21–22), which is why he writes his *maqāma*s in Persian.

Balḫī's *maqāma*s, though, contain many Arabic poems and speeches, not to mention occasional shorter segments of text. The author concludes his Preface (p. 22) by remarking that he has mixed Persian and Arabic in his work, so that his readers would know that "there is no lack in the instrument [Persian language] nor laxness in the moment", i.e. in his time. The first part of the sentence clearly shows that challenging the superiority of Arabic is one of Balḫī's motives for writing Persian *maqāma*s.[12]

In his Epilogue, p. 214, Balḫī defends his knowledge of Arabic against potential critics, remarking that a person still on an elementary level in Arabic (*hanūz dar takrār-i ḍaraba Zaydun ʿAmran bāšad*) may think that Balḫī is making mis-

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11   See, e.g. Maysarī, *Dānishnāma* (written in 367–370/978–980), in Lazard, *Les premiers poètes* v. 2, pp. 178–197, verses 80–85. The last three lines read: "Then I said (to myself): 'Our country is Iran / and most of its people know Persian (*pārsī*). // It would not be nice, if I composed it in Arabic (*tāzī*): / not everyone could (read) it. // I will compose it in *darī*, so that everyone may know [it] / and everyone can have it on his tongue.'" For Arabic literature in Iran, see Danner, "Arabic literature."

12   The anonymous peer reviewer of this article drew my attention to another possible interpretation of this sentence, taking "the instrument" metaphorically to refer to the writer's literary talents and "the moment" to his prolific state of writing. While this is quite possible, it remains clear that Balḫī both challenges the idea that Arabic would be superior to Persian and shows off his ability in the two languages.

takes in Arabic, but these are, in fact, common poetic freedoms, *ḍarūrāt*, also taken by the ancients and, thus, fully acceptable. He also reminds us that an excellent person is the one whose mistakes can be counted, using the well-known Arabic proverb.

Balḫī not only intersperses his Persian text with Arabic expressions, but also juxtaposes Arabic and Persian poems and orations in several *maqāma*s. He strikes the note in the first *maqāma*, where his anonymous Hero first gives a speech in Arabic for the Arabophone part of his audience (and at the same time Balḫī's audience as well) and then a Persian one for his non-Arabic-speaking audience, finally addressing both groups in Persian (pp. 26–28). Balḫī's real prime audience were Persians—an Arab without Persian would hardly have been reading the *maqāma*s only for their occasional Arabic parts, which lack context if one does not know Persian. On the other hand, the writer must also assume that his readers would be able to read and enjoy Arabic, as otherwise the *maqāma*s become rather unbalanced.

After the three speeches (Arabic—Persian—Persian), the anonymous Hero ends the show by composing a macaronic poem (pp. 28–29) with alternating lines in Arabic and Persian (APAPAPA), where each line continues the idea:

> *The Hour of Resurrection is nigh, oh sleepers:*
> *wake up from your sleep, refrain from the forbidden,*
> oh dear acquaintances, oh noble friends!
> How long this talk about wine, how long goblets and songs?
> *When the spear quivers and strikes the foe*
> *and the lion smiles when tearing its prey,*
> do not think about the wealth in your hands,
> do not think that things are going fine!
> *While the star is shining, it is already growing dark,*
> *while the moon is full, it is already grieved by darkness.*
> When your face turns pale as milk, put wine aside,
> since no one will mix wine with milk in a goblet.[13]
> *Old age shines in your hair, morning is nigh!*
> *Oh people, I have advised you, and now farewell![14]*

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13   Note also the partial pun between Persian *šīr* "milk" and Arabic *layṯ* "lion" = Persian *šēr*.

14   As Arabic and Persian verses tend to be syntactically independent of the neighbouring verses one can also read the Persian and Arabic verses as two separate poems, both making good sense without the other linguistic component.

Such macaronic poems are not particularly common, though one does occasionally come across them, either in a line-by-line form or, more often, with a less regular pattern.[15] Balḫī also changes the language within the verse on p. 107:

> Don't search for the portrait of generosity, for *the abode has been abandoned*!
> Don't ask after virtues, for *the camp has been obliterated*!

Balḫī returns to alternating Arabic and Persian throughout the *maqāma*s and often refers to Arabs and Persians as the two parts of his Hero's audience. On p. 58, there is a tour-de-force of one line that can be read (changing diacritics) either in Persian or in Arabic.[16] On pp. 122–125, the Hero gives answers in prose to a series of legal questions, duplicating them in Persian and Arabic verse.

In no. 21, pp. 192–193, Balḫī explicitly takes a sentence of al-Hamaḏānī, describing cold weather, as his starting point and elaborates it into a pair of verses first in Arabic[17] and then in Persian. In the same instance (p. 193), the Hero in a way challenges al-Hamaḏānī's verbal feats by saying that such word plays are easy in Arabic because "the tree of Arabic is full of branches and the world of Arabic has a wide field", implying that this is otherwise in Persian and, hence, it is a greater accomplishment to be able to match and, perhaps, surpass, such expressions in Persian. This should be interpreted as referring to the large vocabulary of Arabic and, perhaps, the by now long tradition of Arabic rhymed prose, whereas Persian rhymed prose was still in its infancy. The Hero follows this by putting a famous five-verse Arabic poem by the author of *Dumya*, al-Bāḫarzī, into Persian verse (pp. 193–194).[18]

In no. 23, Balḫī gives a short versified list of the Caliphs up to his own time, ending in (al-)Mustanǧid (pp. 208 and 210), first in Arabic (37 vv.) and then Persian (32 vv.). Neither of these versifications shows any special artistry, but if we accept the fictitious setting of the story, we may see the extemporisation of such poems as a remarkable deed and a sign of linguistic mastery of both languages, in addition to a good command of Islamic history.

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15   E.g. Qazwīnī, *Muʿǧam*, pp. 36–37, 37–38.

16   The Arabic way of reading the verse is not quite clear. See the editor's note 6 on p. 225.

17   One of the Arabic verses contains a fine bilingual trope: *ḥamadat fī l-šitāʾi maqlūbuh* "its reversed form died out in winter", playing with the Arabic word *šitāʾ* and the Persian word *ātaš* "fire".

18   See al-Tūnjī, *al-Bāḫarzī*, pp. 100–101.

The alternation between Arabic and Persian is, evidently, an innovation by Balḫī, lacking in the monolingual *maqāma*s of Arab authors, as well as later in ʿAwfī's *maqāma*s.[19] In a certain sense, this compensates for the less elaborate language used by Balḫī, whose *maqāma*s are far less complicated than those of al-Hamaḏānī and, much more so, al-Ḥarīrī, not to speak of some later authors, such as Ibn al-Ṣayqal (d. 701/1301).[20] The technique is far removed from the usual quotations in Arabic in Persian works, such as Saʿdī's *Gulistān*, where there is no clear contrast between the two languages and no attempt at systematic juxtaposition of the two. In his use of the two languages, Balḫī is almost unique in Persian literature.

3   Balḫī and His Arabic Models

Despite the strong awareness of Arabic models, Balḫī made deliberate innovations in his *maqāma*s when contrasted with those of his predecessors. There are at least four areas where Balḫī differs from the earlier Arabic tradition, viz.:

– the role of the Narrator
– the role of the Hero
– recognition scene and the end
– the use of comic plots

These will be studied in turn in the following.

3.1   *The Narrator*

In the Arabic tradition before Balḫī's time, the Narrator had usually been identified by a fictitious name.[21] Later, though, one also finds the author using his own name as that of the narrator and occasionally the narrator remains anonymous or bears a descriptive name, such as al-Rayyān (Luxuriant), transmitting from Abū l-Rayḥān (Father of Sweet Basil) from Abū l-Ward (Father of Rose) from Bulbul al-Aḡṣān (Nightingale of Branches) from Nāẓir al-Insān (Glance of the Pupil) from Kawkab al-Bustān (Star of the Garden) from Wābil al-Hattān (Downpour of Torrent) in al-Suyūṭī's (d. 911/1505) famous *Flower Maqāma*.[22]

Balḫī opted to keep the narrator anonymous, even though he has a much larger role to play in the stories than had hitherto been the case in Arabic *maqā-*

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19   For the latter, see Hämeen-Anttila, "Muḥammad ʿAwfī."
20   For the last mentioned, see Hämeen-Anttila, *Maqama*, pp. 331–335.
21   Ibn Buṭlān (d. 458/1066) forms an exception, using an anonymous narrator. See Hämeen-Anttila, *Maqama*, p. 128.
22   Cf. Hämeen-Anttila, *Maqama*, p. 343.

*ma*s. All the twenty-three *maqāma*s begin with the fixed expression "A friend told me who …" (*ḥikāyat kard ma-rā dust-ī ki*), followed by praise of the friend's loyal qualities. This friend is never named within the *maqāma*s. The friend relates his encounters with the Hero while he was travelling in his youth, except in no. 15, where he is already old. All the stories are told as incidents which have taken place in an unspecified past.

Whereas the Hero is the central figure in al-Hamaḏānī's and al-Ḥarīrī's *maqāma*s and usually comes on the fore rather soon,[23] the Narrator remains for a long time in focus in many of Balḫī's *maqāma*s, even though he does not usually take part in the action, except as part of the audience. He is longest on centre stage in no. 18, pp. 161–171, where we have to wait until p. 169 before the Hero appears on the scene, merely two pages before the *maqāma* ends. Until then, it is the Narrator's voice that dominates the story with *his* eloquence.

In no. 7, the Narrator takes part in the action on pp. 79–80 by asking the Hero to describe first a *dīnār* and then a *dirham*, and finally rewarding him with the contents of his purse.[24] In no. 13, there is no crowd to witness the Hero's eloquence, as there usually is, and the Narrator alone forms his audience.

3.2   *The Hero*

In contrast to earlier *maqāma*s, Balḫī's Hero remains anonymous in each *maqāma*, too. What is more, there is no indication that he remains the same person throughout the collection and the use of two Heroes in several *maqāma*s further underlines this. The *maqāma*s also lack a recognition scene, and the Hero's identity remains undisclosed in all *maqāma*s, even though in several he seems to be a locally known person (e.g., no. 15).

In the first *maqāma*, there is a passage that might be taken to imply that the Heroes in the different *maqāma*s are merely various roles taken on by a single person, as in the case of al-Ḥarīrī. On p. 26, when the Narrator approaches a group that has come to listen to the Hero, he asks one of the crowd what kind of a speaker they are expecting to hear. He responds:

> He is a stranger coming from Hijaz. Like Adam, he knows all names,[25] and like the world he is laden with different things. He speaks with a nimble tongue and sweet eloquence and says 'do and don't' to people according

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23   Obviously, the former has some *maqāma*s where the Narrator plays the role of the Hero. In Balḫī's, as well as in al-Ḥarīrī's, *maqāma*s, there is always a Hero.

24   Cf. al-Hamaḏānī's *al-Maqāma al-Dīnāriyya*.

25   Cf. Qurʾān 2:31.

to the Law. At times he sings the praises [of God] with the tongue of the
people of Ḥilla, at others he sings [them] in the language of the people of
Killa.[26] He is unique in his age and the wonder of the town!

One might be tempted to see here an allusion to many names and an ability
to emulate various manners of speech useful for a disguised Hero.[27] Neither of
these themes is, however, taken up in any of the *maqāma*s: the Hero always
speaks in the same learned fashion, not masking himself in any roles, as the
Heroes of al-Hamaḏānī and al-Ḥarīrī had done, nor does he use various jar-
gons that would legitimate this interpretation.[28] Instead, the linguistic focus
in the whole collection is on the two languages, Arabic and Persian, which
the Hero also uses with equal ease in this *maqāma*, without any attempt to
masquerade himself as what he is not. That Ḥilla and Killa are symbols for
Arabophones and Persophones is further shown in the last speech of the Hero
in this *maqāma* (pp. 28–29), where he addresses both of his audiences, the
Arabophones and the Persophones, in their own language and then produces
the macaronic poem that has been discussed above.

Likewise, the reference to knowing, like Adam, all names might tempt one to
think of a man of many names, i.e. identities, but however tempting that might
be, the text does not say that it is he who bears these names. Rather, the word
asmā(’) should be taken in the sense for which it stands in the Qurʾānic verse
alluded to: Adam, and like him our Hero, knows all the names of God's creation,
i.e. all the nouns referring to them (and, by extension, the other word classes,
too). So instead of alluding to a trickster disguising himself under a variety of
false identities, the passage refers to a man who is proficient as an orator and
has mastered both Arabic and Persian.

In almost all *maqāma*s the Hero is described as an Old Man (*pīr*). In three
*maqāma*s, nos. 3, 15, 21, though, he appears as a Young Man. In no. 15, he is a
Young Man in love, whereas the Narrator in this *maqāma* is an Old Man, thus

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26   The editor understands this to refer to Bedouins (*killa = chādur wa murād az ahl-i killa
      ʿarabhā-yi bādiya-nišīn-ast*). In an Arabic *maqāma* this would be quite possible, but when
      speaking of language, Balḫī only contrasts Arabic and Persian and often in very similar
      turns of phrase (juxtaposing Balḫ with Karḫ is his favourite and it is repeatedly used in the
      *maqāma*s). As Ḥilla would refer to the Arabs, Killa should refer to the Persians. *Burhān-i
      qāṭiʿ* v. 3, p. 1684, s.v., with some hesitation and with reference to this passage understands
      Killa to be a city.
27   The imitation, *ḥikāya*, of various manners of speech is a central feat in many Arabic *maqā-
      ma*s.
28   He does exhibit various fields of his learning, discussing, e.g. Sufism, astrology, and medi-
      cine in nos. 8 and 20, but he does not change the way he speaks in any remarkable fashion.

reversing their roles. There is nothing to imply that the Hero would be the same person as the Old Man of the other *maqāma*s.

In no. 2, the Narrator not only meets an Old Man, but a Young Man as well. At the end, some people in the crowd, who know the two, inform the narrator that despite the two being vehemently engaged in debate, the Young Man is actually the Old Man's son. This is a unique case and normally there is no reason to suggest that when both an Old and a Young Man are featured they should in any way be related to each other or should be anything other than who they say they are. The same, of course, goes for cases where the two Old Men are Heroes.

In this particular *maqāma*, the Young Man could be interpreted as his father's accomplice, but in several *maqāma*s there are two equally eloquent speakers, and there is no way of telling which of them would be the Hero. In fact, it is clear that in these *maqāma*s there are two Heroes.

In such *maqāma*s, the two Heroes take opposite stances, and the final outcome is not clear: the reader cannot say which of the two reaps the laurels in the story; rather, they are depicted as equals. These *maqāma*s come close to literary debates, *munāẓara*s, in that the two opponents speak in favour of opposite things.[29] In only one such debate *maqāma*, no. 9, the opponents are not equals. Both the content and the structure of this *maqāma* show that the *pīr-i sunnī* ("Sunni Old Man") is the real Hero, whereas his adversary, the *pīr-i mulḥid* ("heretic Old Man") is not a Hero: the former is claimed as the winner of the debate and it is he who disappears at the end of the *maqāma* in the usual fashion, whereas we are told nothing about the fate of his opponent, who just vanishes from the story with no exit lines (pp. 102–103), thus even structurally showing that the two are not on the same level. In the other three debate *maqāma*s (nos. 2, 16, 20),[30] no winner is pronounced and the two leave the scene together: in no. 20, they actually make up in the end and depart as friends.

In no. 16, where the two Heroes are an Old Man and a Young Man, the former advocates heterosexual, the latter homosexual relations. There is no indication that they would be father and son and the Young Man would be there to help the Old Man collect his gains. No gain is, in fact, indicated, and, again, one should not fall into the trap of reading Balḫī's *maqāma*s in the light of al-Ḥarīrī's when there is nothing in the text to support such a reading. Here, the Narrator listens to their various arguments, deliberates in his mind as to which of them is right, but decides to call it a draw and to adopt both ways, the love

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29   For the genre, see Hämeen-Anttila, "The Essay and Debate."

30   In nos. 2 and 16, the two interlocutors are an Old Man and a Young Man; in no. 20, as in no. 9, both are Old Men.

of boys and of girls.[31] Here, there is no final verdict to imply which of the two would be the winner (= the Hero) and, moreover, both speakers vanish while the Narrator is deep in thought and both are referred to in the final quatrain, so there is no structural hint as to which of them would be the Hero. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that this *maqāma* has two Heroes, which also has bearing on the identity of the Hero in the whole collection: in at least this *maqāma*, it is impossible to claim that there is one recurrent Hero throughout Balḫī's *maqāma*s.[32]

In some further *maqāma*s there is a young man in the audience who challenges the Hero, as in nos. 7 and 23, but does not have any particular role of his own to play, except to trigger an eloquent answer from the Old Man.

Similarly, in no. 17, modelled after a *maqāma* by al-Ḥarīrī,[33] there are two Heroes, husband and wife, both of whom are rewarded by a judge after having listened to their case. Al-Hamaḏānī and, especially, al-Ḥarīrī had already brought the Hero's wife on the scene, but in their cases, the wife acts the role of an accomplice only, the Hero being the same throughout the collection and remaining the centre of attention in all the *maqāma*s.[34] The difference is clear, as in Balḫī's case the Hero remains anonymous and changes from one *maqāma* to another. The two are here presented on an equal standing.

The idea of a single Hero was not there at the beginning of the Arabic genre. Al-Hamaḏānī had occasionally used his Narrator as the Hero, and in a number of *maqāma*s had the Hero and the Narrator travel together, although in these cases the Hero always takes the lead and the Narrator is merely his accomplice. Thus, Balḫī does not break loose of a rule already fixed for a long time, but contributes to an ongoing development, taking a step back from al-Ḥarīrī's *maqāma*s towards al-Hamaḏānī's.

3.3   *Recognition Scene and the End*
As the Hero does not remain the same throughout the collection, there is no possibility for a scene in which the Narrator would recognise his old friend who had taken on a new identity.[35] After the story ends, in Balḫī's *maqāma*s

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31   The same was advocated by Kay-Kāvus b. Qābūs b. Wushmgīr in his *Qābūsnāma*, pp. 86–87, adding a medical aspect to the discussion: one should prefer boys in summer, and girls in winter, to keep the humoral balance.

32   This has already been noted by Ḥarīrī, *Maqāma-niwīsī*, pp. 111–112.

33   Cf. Hämeen-Anttila, *Maqama*, p. 166.

34   Cf. Hämeen-Anttila, *Maqama*, pp. 155–156.

35   There is also no recognition scene in ʿAwfī's *maqāma*s; see Hämeen-Anttila, "Muḥammad ʿAwfī."

the Hero, or in some cases, the Heroes, simply vanish(es) from the scene, leaving the Narrator to wonder what happened to them later on, but without having any sudden revelation of their identity.

In a couple of *maqāma*s, there may be traces of the recognition scene, although no names and identities are revealed to the Narrator and the reader. In no. 2, the audience, the foreign Narrator excluded, seems to be familiar with the Hero and his younger opponent and they inform the Narrator that they are father and son. Likewise, in no. 15, when the Narrator first meets a lovesick, mad Young Man and later returns to ask after him, he is informed by the locals, who seem to know the Young Man quite well, that he has returned to his senses.

Thus, contrary to the *maqāma*s of al-Hamaḏānī and al-Ḥarīrī, where the anonymous crowd is usually the main victim of the disguised Hero's tricks and consequently unaware of his real identity, in at least some of Balḫī's *maqāma*s the audience seems to be quite familiar with the Hero and reveals some information about him, though not his full identity, to the Narrator at the end of the *maqāma*.

Al-Hamaḏānī had ended several but not all of his *maqāma*s in a few verses, usually spoken by the Hero after the recognition scene, descriptive of himself or his times, with a piece of advice to make use of people's gullibility.[36] Al-Ḥarīrī usually puts some final verses into the Hero's mouth, followed by a short prose ending.

Balḫī regularizes the form and content of the final poem. All twenty-three *maqāma*s end in a quatrain in *muḍāri'* (not the usual *rubāʿī* metre, though) and more or less the same content, which can be condensed into a few words: I do not know what became of him afterwards, or whether he went to X or Z. In two thirds (14+1 out of 23) of the cases the quatrain begins with *maʿlūm-i man našud ki*.[37] As an example, one may translate the final quatrain of no. 16, p. 154, in which there are two Heroes:

> I do not know how the deceitful fate
> played in secret with the Old Man and the Young.
> Whether the spheres favoured them or not,
> whether the world caused them to win or lose.

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36   In a few cases, such as no. 14, the verses are spoken by the narrator and in some, e.g. no. 15, the verses spoken by the Hero disclose his identity to the narrator without a separate recognition scene.

37   Nos. 2–4, 8–10, 12–14, 16, 18, 20–22. In addition, no. 7 reads *maʿlūm-i man nagasht ki*. The same phrase is used at the end of nos. 1 (p. 29) and 13 (p. 132) in prose.

As there is no reason to suppose that the Hero of the next *maqāma* would be the recurring Hero, this seems to be their final state: once the *maqāma* is over, the specific Hero of that *maqāma* vanishes, to be replaced by another in the next *maqāma*.

3.4   *The Plot*

The *maqāma* Heroes are usually, but partly wrongly, seen as tricksters, who are supposed either to benefit from their deeds or, as failed tricksters, who at least try to do so. As I have elsewhere pointed out, this is not always the case.[38] Thus, the Hero appears as a trickster in only some of al-Hamaḏānī's *maqāma*s and, moreover, in many of them he is not after any material gain, but merely enjoys his own tricks and laughs at his gullible victims. In al-Hamaḏānī's other *maqāma*s, the Hero does not seem to attempt to trick anyone, and to read such into all of his *maqāma*s is unwarranted and ignores what the texts themselves actually say.

Balḫī's Heroes are even less often to be seen as tricksters. In several *maqāma*s the Hero gains something, yet he does so without resorting to tricks: he speaks eloquently and people are impressed by this and willingly reward him for his words, but they act under no misconception. In these *maqāma*s, the Hero is not a trickster, but a performer, who openly does what he has to do: shows off his eloquence and produces what he promises. Only rarely can we suspect him of misleading his audience in any way.

Thus, in no. 3, the Hero, here a Young Man, incites (pp. 41–43) his audience to holy war, but there is nothing in the text to imply that he himself would be false or that he would benefit from his speeches in any way. In no. 4, the Hero first gives a delightful description of spring, then proceeds to some words of exhortation, and, finally, asks for provisions and receives them. He does not play any tricks on his audience, merely sells his wares, his eloquence, as any public speaker would have done.[39]

Likewise in no. 19, the Hero first receives some money for his eloquent speech against the city, and after collecting his gains he shows off his talent by turning the tables and giving the same audience another speech, this time

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38   Cf. Hämeen-Anttila, *Maqama*, pp. 106–117.

39   Incidentally, this particular *maqāma* with its descriptions comes close to al-Suyūṭī's flower *maqāma*s, where the various flowers become acting characters who speak in their own words to each other (cf. Hämeen-Anttila, *Maqama*, pp. 342–344). Balḫī does not take the final step to make the flowers his main characters but he still anticipates the later development in the Arabic *maqāma*, although we have no reason to assume that al-Suyūṭī knew Balḫī's *maqāma*s.

in favour of the same city, and receives another round of money. The audience is not tricked into rewarding him, but is delighted with the eloquence of the Hero and willing to pay him for just what he is openly doing: showing off his oratorical talent by demonstrating his ability to give eloquent speeches pro as well as con.

In the majority of Balḫī's *maqāma*s the Hero does not benefit from his performances, or even attempt to do so. In addition to nos. 3, 4, and 19, in six further *maqāma*s (nos. 5, 7, 10, 12, 14, 17) he receives a reward in a way that cannot be called tricking the audience as he only charms them with his words.

In a few *maqāma*s the Hero benefits from his performance in a way that calls for more attention.

The first *maqāma* is exceptional in implying that the Hero is, actually, tricking his audience. In it, the Hero tells of his impoverished situation and in his Arabic speech (pp. 26–27)[40] refers to his hungry children and finally gets his daily bread (*qūt al-yawm*) from the audience. Al-Hamaḏānī and al-Ḥarīrī had already used the theme of a formerly well-to-do, now impoverished character, who sometimes refers to his hungry children to provoke the sympathy of his audience, obviously under false assumptions.[41] The same is in all probability the case here.

Likewise, in no. 2, we may suspect a trick. The audience seems to reward the Old Man and the Young Man quite voluntarily at the end of their debate (p. 36), but as their identity as father and son is revealed to the Narrator and the reader only afterwards, one feels in a sense tricked, even though the two have been rewarded under no other false assumption. One should, however, note that the audience—possibly everybody except the Narrator—had known this in the first place, which would mean that for them there was no trick.

When reading no. 14 through the lenses of al-Hamaḏānī's and al-Ḥarīrī's *maqāma*s, one is again tempted to see a trick being played on the Narrator. In this *maqāma*, the Hero sells a love spell, *taʿwīḏ*, to the Narrator. The spell is, however, really shown to work and the Narrator gets his beloved. Moreover, there is no indication that the Hero would be the beloved's pimp in the disguise of a love potion seller. It seems that the Hero is again shown to be selling his wares in an honest way.

Thus, it would seem that only in one or two *maqāma*s does the Hero gain by tricking his audience, although in no. 2 at least a number of people among the audience know full well that the two debaters are father and son and are, thus,

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40   But not in the Persian one, pp. 27–28, though this is hardly significant.
41   See Hämeen-Anttila, *Maqama*, pp. 44, 155–156.

ready to reward them in full knowledge of their identity. In a further nine *maqā-ma*s, there is no trick but the Hero still gains something from his performances, and in the remaining twelve *maqāma*s no gain and no trick are indicated or implied.

Assuming that the *maqāma*s have been written in their present order, Balḫī may have started composing his texts as trickster *maqāma*s, first following his models more closely, but later growing more independent and deciding against making his Heroes tricksters throughout the collection.

4   Conclusion

Balḫī's *maqāma*s show the distinct influence of both al-Hamaḏānī and al-Ḥarīrī and the author himself refers to these authors in the Preface. However, this does not mean that we could or should read his *maqāma*s through the lenses of these two authors, or the Arabic *maqāma* in general. While drawing on many features from the earlier *maqāma*s, Balḫī has also developed the genre further.

As a Persian author, Balḫī added a strong linguistic aspect, making the juxta-position of Arabic and Persian one of the main themes of his *maqāma*s. He also discontinued the Ḥarīrian model of always using a single Hero in a *maqāma* and opted instead for two equal Heroes in several *maqāma*s, in which he does not seem to have been preceded by any Arabic author. He also used a variety of Heroes in his *maqāma*s instead of selecting just one Hero and using him throughout the collection. Instead of creating one fictitious Hero, Balḫī took the type of the eloquent orator as his Hero and the question of his identity, recurrent or not, is of less importance, as already indicated by his anonymity. Consequently, he does without a recognition scene, which would, by necessity, mean that there would be something to recognise: the Hero should be an old acquaintance of the Narrator in disguise. Balḫī also ends the *maqāma*s in a qua-train, which may be seen as a Persianising element.

Al-Hamaḏānī had written several types of *maqāma*s,[42] but al-Ḥarīrī had made the picaresque *maqāma* the norm. Again Balḫī refuses to follow al-Ḥarīrī and, instead, leaves tricks and picaresque stories almost completely aside. His *maqāma*s could well be called rhetorical, as the rhetorical talents of the Hero are in the focus, as well as those of the Narrator, who usually dominates the story longer than the Hero, the latter often only appearing towards the end,

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42   See Hämeen-Anttila, *Maqama,* pp. 55–61.

even though his role is highlighted by the structure of the *maqāma*, which points to the meeting of the Narrator with the Hero as the story's climax.

In several ways, on the other hand, Balḫī follows earlier *maqāma* conventions, his work thus being unquestionably categorisable as a *maqāma* collection, as the author himself also calls it. He uses the devices of a Narrator recounting in rhymed prose, interspersed with verses, his meetings with one or several Heroes around the Islamic world.[43] The Heroes are always eminently eloquent and there is usually a large crowd admiring their orations. Likewise, the Hero always leaves the scene and vanishes into thin air, and the Narrator meets another Hero in the next *maqāma*.

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43   For a convenient list of the scenes, see Ḥarīrī, *Maqāma-niwīsī*, p. 121.

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