



## 'ABD-AL-QĀDER JĪLĀNĪ

'**ABD-AL-QĀDER JĪLĀNĪ**, MOḤYĪ-AL-DĪN ABŪ MOḤAMMAD B. ABŪ ṢĀLEḤ JANGĪDŌST, noted Hanbalite preacher, Sufi shaikh and the eponymous founder of the Qāderī order. He was born in 470/1077-78 in the Persian province of Gilān (Jīlān), south of the Caspian Sea. Though his family lineage (*selsela*) has been traced by overzealous hagiographers to Ḥasan, the grandson of the Prophet, his father's nickname (Jangīdōst) suggests Persian descent. In his own lifetime, 'Abd-al-Qāder was called an '*ajāmī* (non-Arab) in Baghdad, but this may have been due to the fact that he spoke Persian as well as Arabic (see 'Abd-al-Ḥaqq, *Akbār*, p. 20). At the age of 18 (in 488/1095), he was sent to Baghdad, where he pursued the study of Hanbalite law under several teachers. Subsequently he went on the pilgrimage to Mecca and married, producing numerous offspring (forty-nine sons) in the course of a long lifetime. He is also said to have studied Sufism, though at first he avoided it due to his dislike of Aḥmad Ġazzālī, younger brother of Abū Ḥāmed Ġazzālī and his successor at the Neẓāmīya. Sometime around 1100, 'Abd-al-Qāder received the cloak (*kerqa*), emblematic of spiritual authority among Sufis, not from his mystical preceptor, Abu'l-Ḳayr Ḥammād Dabbās (d. 1131), but from the Hanbalite *qāẓī*, Abū Sa'd Mobārak Moḳarremī. He spent the next twenty-five years of his life wandering about the deserts of Iraq as a recluse ('Abd-al-Ḥaqq, *Akbār*, p. 11).

In 1127, at the relatively advanced age of 50, 'Abd-al-Qāder reappeared in Baghdad as a popular teacher. Troublesome dreams had led him to consult the renowned Shaikh Yūsuf Hamadānī (d. 1140), who interpreted the inner turmoil as a divine mandate to preach in public. His fame as an orator rapidly



grew; many people enrolled as his pupils, later to become major saints in their own right. A *madrasa* with attached hospice (*rebāṭ*) was built for him, his family, and his students in 528/1133-34. His sermons were said to have powerfully affected persons at all levels of 12th century Iraqi society. Not only Muslims but also Jews and Christians, not only caliphs and viziers but also farmers, merchants, and traders allegedly altered their lives in response to ‘Abd-al-Qāder’s perorations (‘Abd-al-Ḥaqq, *Akbār*, p. 13). His major extant works are collections of sermons, the most famous being *Fotūḥ al-ġayb* and *al-Ġonya le ṭālebi ṭarīq al-ḥaqq*, also known as *Ġonyat al-ṭālebīn*.

‘Abd-al-Qāder’s order claims numerous adherents from West Africa (especially Senegal) to India and Indonesia, though in certain parts of the Muslim world, such as Egypt, it has never been widely accepted. He is called *mohyī-al-dīn* (the reviver of religion), *ḡawṭ-e a’zam* (the greatest sustenance), and *pīr-e dastgīr* (the helping *pīr*). Throughout the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent, for instance, his name is especially invoked when cholera or any other epidemic is raging; at such times people take out his flag (which is dark green in color) and process with it, chanting plaintively to the saint for relief (W. Crooke, ed., *Herklots’ Islam in India*, repr. Delhi, 1972, p. 193).

Yet it is difficult to explain “the transition from the sober Hanbalite preacher ... to the prototype of saintliness venerated all over the Muslim world” (A. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, Chapel Hill, 1975, p. 248). Šaṭṭanawfī, in a biography of the saint written a century after his death (*Bahīat al-asrār*; see Storey, I, p. 933f.) suggested that ‘Abd-al-Qāder’s fame and legendary achievements were promoted by his sons; eleven of them reputedly followed in their father’s footsteps. Another early *taḍkera* writer, Vāseṭī, credits only two of ‘Abd-al-Qāder’s offspring with spiritual aspirations akin to those of their father: ‘Abd-al-‘Azīz (d. 602/1205-06) and ‘Abd-al-Razzāq (d. 603/1206-07). This discrepancy points to the central historical question of how to assess details concerning the life, teaching, and contemporaneous effect of ‘Abd-al-Qāder. Western scholars, from Margoliouth to Trimmingham, have preferred the “sober” accounts of Ḍahabī (*Ta’rīk al-eslām*) and Vāseṭī (*Teryāq al-moḥebbīn*), while followers of ‘Abd-al-Qāder have consistently opted for the elaborate and inflated biography of Šaṭṭanawfī. In the subcontinent, where the Qāderī order attracted its largest following in the late Mughal period, *Bahīat al-asrār* was translated into Persian by major scholars—Badr-al-dīn Serhendī, a disciple of Aḥmad Serhendī, Ḥabīballāh Akhbarābādī (d. 1747), and ‘Abd-al-Ḥaqq Dehlavī (d. 1642), who translated from his Arabic summary of the text (see Storey, I,



pp. 1002, 933-34 ). Prince Dārā Šokūh (d. 1659), too, is said to have ordered a Persian translation of the Arabic summary of *Bahīat al-asrār* prepared by ‘Abd-al-Ḥaqq; his lengthy biography of ‘Abd-al-Qāder in *Safīnat al-awlīā’* (no. 36) was obviously derived from an epitome of Šaṭṭanawfī’s work, in all probability the one prepared by ‘Abd-al-Ḥaqq (see K. A. Neẓāmī, *Ḥayāt-e ‘Abd-al-Ḥaqq*, Delhi, 1963, p. 205).

The extravagant miracle-mongering portrait of ‘Abd-al-Qāder in *Bahīat al-asrār*, to which Western scholars have objected and which even some 14th century Muslims found distasteful, is not limited to that book nor to the person of ‘Abd-al-Qāder. Other saints were said to have performed miracles merely by invoking the name of the shaikh. Hence, the notable Sohravardī *pīr* of the Panjab, Jalāl-al-dīn Boḳārī, also known as Maḳdūm-e Jahānīān Jahāngašt (d. 1384), is said to have put out a fire by standing at a great distance and throwing a handful of dust in its direction while chanting the all-powerful name of ‘Abd-al-Qāder (‘Abd-al-Ḥaqq, *Aḳbār*, p. 139). So revered is the name ‘Abd-al-Qāder that it is presumed to confer unique benefits on all who bear it. Among the countless Muslim boys who have been named ‘Abd-al-Qāder in the expectation that their lives would reflect the transforming power of the saint are two of the foremost figures in Indo-Persian literary history—‘Abd-al-Qāder Badā’ūnī (d. 1596), the author of *Montaḳab al-tawārīḳ* and Sanskrit to Persian translator under the Mughal emperor Akbar, and Mīrzā ‘Abd-al-Qāder Bīdel (d. 1721), the most distinctive exponent of the “Indian style” (*sabk-e hendī*) of Persian poetry.

‘Abd-al-Qāder Jīlānī died in 561/1166 and was buried in Baghdad. His tomb, partially destroyed during the Mongol holocaust of 1258 and subsequently rebuilt, remains as testimony to the acclaim he enjoys among mystically inclined Muslims. It is visited throughout the year by pilgrims from distant parts of the Islamic world; Indonesian, Pakistani, and Indian Muslims often combine a visit to the tomb of Ġawṭ-e A’ẓam with the pilgrimage to Mecca. His ‘ors, by tradition celebrated on 11 Rabī II, is the occasion for special festivities in Baghdad and elsewhere. According to Herklots (*Islam*, p. 193), the Indian celebration included a recital of the entire Qur’ān, together with the invocation of all ninety-nine names of the saint.



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