



ABŪ 'ALĪ QALANDAR

ABŪ 'ALĪ QALANDAR, ŠARAF-AL-DĪN PĀNĪPATĪ (also known as SHAH BŪ 'ALĪ QALANDAR), Indian poet and saint, d. 725/1324. His mausoleum at Panipat remains a popular center for pilgrimage. Unfortunately no authentic records of his life or teachings are available. Since he was a *qalandar*, we should not expect to find such records; none of his disciples had the time or inclination to make a collection of his sayings, and later writers have attenuated his personality with myth and miracle (see, e.g., Ḥamīd-al-dīn, *Šaraf al-manāqeb*, Delhi, 1937).

His finely refined Persian *dīvān* includes a *matnawī* that has been repeatedly published alone and with interlinear Urdu translation. It begins with an explosive eulogy celebrating the birth of Moḥammad (quoted and tr. A. Schimmel in *Islamic Literature of India*, Wiesbaden, 1973, p.15, and *Mystical Dimensions*, p. 217) and includes a long pean extolling 'Alī b. Abī Ṭāleb. A small collection of letters (*maktūbāt*), addressed to Ektīār-al-dīn, throws light on his views about 'ešq (passionate love). They are both praised and quoted by Shaikh 'Abd-al-Ḥaqq, even though the shaikh questions the authenticity of a pamphlet, *Ḥokm-nāma* or *Ḥekmat-nāma*, attributed to Abū 'Alī by Abu'l-Faẓl and Ġawṭī Šaṭṭārī (*Akbār al-akyār*, pp. 125-26).

One of the earliest references to Abū 'Alī exemplifies the predictive power (*nafs-e gīra*) often associated with great saints. In Šams-e Serāḡ 'Afīf's *Tārīk-e Fīrūzšāhī* (Calcutta, 1891, p. 28), it is reported that Ġāzī Malek (the future Ġiāṭ-al-dīn Toḡloq), together with his son, Jawna Khan (the future Moḥammad b. Toḡloq), and his nephew, Raġab (the future Fīrūzšāh Toḡloq), once visited Abū



'Alī. The saint allegedly served them food and remarked: "Three kings eat from one dish."

The legendary account of his life in *Ā'in-e Akbarī* (tr., III, p. 410) mentions his meeting with Šams-al-dīn Tabrizī and Jalāl-al-dīn Rūmī, while other writers refer to some early Češtī saints, i.e., Qoṭb-al-dīn Bakṭiār Kākī and Neẓām-al-dīn Awlīā', as his spiritual mentors. 'Abd-al-Ḥaqq doubts these affiliations, at the same time that he relates an anecdote suggesting that Abū 'Alī, despite his *qalandar* life style, had great respect for the *šarī'a* or at least a sense of humor about its application to himself: Once his beard and moustaches had grown beyond the prescribed limits. Due to awe and fear of him, no one drew his attention to it. One day Mawlānā Zīā'-al-dīn Sonāmī, the chief enforcer of public censorship, came to him with scissors and trimmed the offensive hair. Thereafter the saint would kiss his beard, mumbling: "It has been taken prisoner in the path of the *šarī'a*" (*Akbār al-akyār*, p. 125).

Legends concerning the saint extended even to the manner of his death. He is said to have had a double grave, reminiscent of the 15th-century Hindi poet-saint, Kabīr. When he died in 725/1324, he was first buried in Karnal, then reinterred in Panipat (apparently because the inhabitants of both cities claimed the right to possess his body). But he miraculously appeared as a complete corpse in two coffins in both cities, with the result that his death celebration (*ors*) is simultaneously celebrated at Karnal and Panipat to the present day. His popularity is further indicated by the claim of some Rajput clans that he was instrumental in their conversion to Islam (T. W. Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam*, London, 1913, p. 285).

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A. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, Chapel Hill, 1975, pp. 350-51.

Accounts of Abū 'Alī are also found in *Golzār-e abrār* of Ġawṭī Šaṭṭārī (Storey, I, p. 984) and *Ma'ārej al-walāyat* of Ġolām Mo'in-al-dīn 'Abdallāh K̄vēšgī (Storey, I, p. 1011).