



ABŪ ESHĀQ KĀZARŪNĪ

ABŪ ESHĀQ EBRĀHĪM B. ŠAHRĪĀR **KĀZARŪNĪ**, Sufi and eponymous founder of the Kāzarūniya/Eshāqīya *selsela*. Abū Eshāq was born in 352/963 in Kāzarūn, the environs of which were still only thinly islamized as late as the mid-4th/10th century. Though the future shaikh's parents were converted to Islam, his paternal grandfather remained a Zoroastrian and was opposed to the young boy's tutelage in Koranic studies. Abū Eshāq persisted, becoming proficient in the traditional sciences and increasingly drawn toward the pursuit of *taṣavvof*. His father at first doubted that Abū Eshāq could maintain the rigorous discipline of the Sufis but was gradually persuaded to let him continue ('Aṭṭār, *Tadkerat al-awliā'*, Lahore, 1295/1878, p. 423). The exact moment of his entrance into the company of dervishes is debated; though both Ḥāreṭ Moḥāsebī and Abū 'Omar are said to have influenced Abū Eshāq, in all likelihood it was Abū 'Alī Ḥosayn b. Moḥammad Fīrūzābādī Akkār, a disciple of the famed 'Abdallāh b. Ḳafīf, who became his *moršed* (Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt* [Bombay], p. 141). One source suggests that Abū Eshāq was dramatically converted to the Sufi way of life by a single, overpowering glance from Abū 'Alī (Yamanī, *Laṭā'ef*, pp. 87-88).

Once initiated into Sufi meditation and asceticism, Abū Eshāq surpassed his mentors in the adulation and fame he received, not only during his lifetime but also after his death in 426/1033. His encounters with other saints and tersely phrased insights are repeatedly cited in medieval *tadkeras* (e.g., 'Aṭṭār, Yamanī, Jāmī, and Sarvar). Many of the anecdotes about him concern his proselytizing activity among the Zoroastrians and Jews of his native region:



‘Aṭṭār (p. 427) gives the total of his converts to Islam as 24,000, though one may doubt that the ranks of his disciples swelled to 100,000 as Sarvar has reported (p. 879). The *kānaqāh* at Kāzarūn was the center of Abū Eşĥāq’s activity; from there he directed his disciples to establish other *kānaqāhs*, perhaps totalling as many as sixty-five, throughout Fārs.

Legends about the saint are almost inseparable from the facts. Popularized accounts in secondary sources consist of extracts, often embellished, from the two principal biographies of Abū Eşĥāq, *Ferdaws al-morşedīya* by Maḥmūd b. ‘Oṭmān and *Marşad al-aḥrār* by Moḥammad Kāzarūnī. Both *taḍkeras* are late, being inflated 8th/14th century Persian translations of a no longer extant 5th/11th century Arabic original by Abū Bakr Kaṭīb (Arberry, pp. 163-64). In nearly all accounts the saint is portrayed as a fully orthodox, charismatically aggressive Muslim. He was both typical and atypical of the great shaikhs of his age. Like many Sufis, he eschewed the company of kings, upholding charity and indigence as twin virtues incumbent on true Sufis (Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt*, p. 141). On the other hand, he was a strict vegetarian, reportedly refusing to eat meat even in the company of fellow Muslims on the pilgrimage to Mecca (‘Aṭṭār, *Taḍkera al-awliā’*, p. 424).

It seems likely that from an early date magical properties were associated with the tomb of Abū Eşĥāq. ‘Aṭṭār suggests that during his lifetime the saint had augured the beneficial effect of visiting his tomb, and immediately after his death appeared in a dream to assure his devotees that all who came to pay their respects to him would obtain their wishes (pp. 427, 432-33). His *kānaqāh*, till its destruction during the Safavid period, remained a major exemplar of institutional Sufism. Ebn Baṭṭūṭa mentioned incidents of voyagers from as far away as India and China seeking *baraka* (blessing) from the saint’s tomb for safe passage and then paying sums of money to *kānaqāh* representatives at their journey’s conclusion (Ebn Baṭṭūṭa, tr. Gibb, p. 97). In time, even a handful of soil from Abū Eşĥāq’s grave was said to possess the same miraculous prophylactic power as a visit to the tomb complex at Kāzarūn.

In the islamization of Anatolia the Kāzarūnīya *selsela* undoubtedly played a significant role that can be charted with reference to its centers at Erzerum, Amasya, Konya, and Bursa (Meḥmed Fo’ād, *passim*; Algar, in *EI*² IV, p. 851). However, in south and southeast Asia the order never penetrated beyond the enclaves of mercantile Muslims residing in the coastal cities, though as late as the 10th/16th century it is included among the fourteen *selselas* which were alleged to have had distinctive Indian branches (Abu’l-Faẓl, *Ā’in-e Akbarī*, tr. II,



p. 204).

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