



ABŪ ḤAYYĀN TAWḤĪDĪ

ABŪ ḤAYYĀN TAWḤĪDĪ, 'ALĪ B. MOḤAMMAD B. AL-'ABBĀS, an outstanding man of letters and essayist of the Buyid period. He was born between 310/922 and 320/932, probably in Shiraz, though his birthplace is also given as Nīšāpūr, Wāseṭ, or even Baghdad. He is said to have received the name TawḤīdī because his father was a seller in Baghdad of a type of date known as *tawḥīd*; but it is possible (cf. Soyūṭī, *Lobb al-lobāb*) that TawḤīdī is derived from the name *ahl al-tawḥīd wa'l-'adl* adopted by the Mo'tazela and so would refer to his philosophical views. He spent his youth in Baghdad, where he studied law with the Shafe'ite scholar Abū Ḥāmed Marvarrūdī and Hadith with Abū Bakr Šāšī, Abū Sa'īd Sirāfī, and others. His studies must have included philology and literature, and at least a smattering of Sufism.

On the completion of his studies he made a living as a professional scribe and moved to various cities. He was in Mecca in 353/964 (*al-Emtā'*, Cairo, 1939-44, II, p. 79) and at Ray in 358/968 (Yāqūt, *Odabā'* II, p. 292). On the latter occasion he was scribe to **Šāḥeb b. 'Abbād**, vizier to the Buyid prince Mo'ayyed-al-dawla; but he also had connections with **Ebn al-'Amīd** (d. 360/970), vizier of Rokn-al-dawla, the father of Mo'ayyed-al-dawla. Abū Ḥayyān himself tells us (*Moqābasāt*, Cairo, 1929, p. 156) that in 361/971 he was in Baghdad listening to Yaḥyā b. 'Adī's lectures on philosophy. Before long, however, he was back in Ray in the employment of Ebn al-'Amīd's son and successor, Abu'l-Faḥ b. al-'Amīd, who fell into disfavor and was executed (shortly after the death of Rokn-al-dawla) in 366/976. Almost immediately Abū Ḥayyān returned to the post of secretary to Šāḥeb, and retained this post until the end of 370/980,



when he moved to Baghdad and was recommended by friends to the vizier Ebn Sa'dān. He continued to serve Ebn Sa'dān until the latter's dismissal and execution in 375/985. While working for Ebn Sa'dān, he was also a member of the distinguished literary and philosophical circle or salon of Abū Solaymān Manteqī Sejestānī (d. about 375/985). He was probably also in touch with Abū Solaymān during earlier periods of residence in Baghdad. It is chiefly through the writings of Abū Ḥayyān that we know about this circle. After the death of Ebn Sa'dān he seems to have had no regular appointment, though he wrote a book (*al-Moḥāẓarāt wa'l-monāẓarāt*) for Abu'l-Qāsem Modleji, vizier in Shiraz of Ṣamṣām-al-dawla. The poverty and lack of recognition from which he suffered for twenty years embittered him to such an extent that toward the end of his life he burnt his own books as a gesture of despair and defiance. He was certainly alive in 400/1009 and may have continued to live in Shiraz until 414/1023, by which time he would have been a centenarian.

Abū Ḥayyān aimed at playing a part in the literary life of his age comparable to that played by Jāḥeẓ two centuries earlier. The first main influence which carried him toward the fulfillment of his aim was the brilliant intellectual life surrounding the viziers Ebn al-'Amīd (Abu'l-Faẓl) and his pupil and protégé, Ṣāḥeb b. 'Abbād. Both viziers were themselves *litterateurs* of merit, and by their patronage attracted distinguished writers and thinkers. Abū Ḥayyān came to feel that the Ṣāḥeb was requiring him to perform tasks beneath his dignity, and his conduct led to dismissal. He took his revenge in a book called *Maṭāleb* (or *Ḍamm*) *al-wazīrayn*, "The vices of the two viziers" (ed. E. Kaylānī, Damascus, 1961). He had already made an anthology of *adab*, *al-Baṣā'ir wa'l-ḍakā'ir*, in ten volumes (ed. E. Kaylānī, Damascus, 1964-66). The second main influence on him was Abū Solaymān, who was himself in contact with Ṣāḥeb. However, where the latter had a leaning towards Mu'tazilite views, Abū Solaymān belonged to the Neoplatonic tradition of Fārābī and the Christian Yaḥyā b. 'Adī; and in philosophy Abū Ḥayyān followed Abū Solaymān closely. The charges of extreme heresy made against him by some medieval Muslim writers do not seem to be justified. Abū Solaymān's salon was literary, rather than strictly philosophical, and discussed all sorts of intellectual questions. On the premature death of 'Azod-al-dawla in 372/983, the circle decided that each member should make some appropriate statement; in this they were deliberately imitating certain Greek philosophers who expressed opinions on the death of Alexander the Great. Many of the discussions of Abū Solaymān's salon have been recorded by Abū Ḥayyān in his distinctive prose, firstly in *al-Moqābasāt* ("Adaptations") and secondly in *al-Emtā' wa'l-mo'ānasa* ("Pleasure



and conviviality”). Both books have survived and have been printed. Several other minor works have also survived.

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