



ABU'L-LAYṬ SAMARQANDĪ

ABU'L-LAYṬ NAṢR B. MOḤAMMAD B. AḤMAD SAMARQANDĪ, productive Hanafite jurist, author of a Qur'ān commentary and of popular paraenetical works; d. Monday night, 10/11 Jomādā II 373/19 November 983, obviously at not very advanced age (Ebn Abi'l-Wafā', *al-Jawāher al-moẓī'a*, Hyderabad, 1332/1913-14, II, p. 196; the exact correspondence of day and date excludes the divergent dates given in later sources). He studied Hadith with his father, *feqh* with Abū Ja'far MoḤammad b. 'Abdallāh Hendovānī at Balk (d. Du'l-ḥejja, 362/September, 973, aged sixty-two; see Ebn Abi'l-Wafā', II, p. 68) and Abū Sa'īd Ḳalīl b. AḤmad Sejzī (called Ebn Jank), who, after traveling all over the Islamic world, had become *qāẓī* in Samarqand (d. Jomādā II, 368/January, 979; see Ebn Abi'l-Wafā', I, pp. 234f.; also Zereklī, *A'lām* II, p. 363; and Kaḥḥāla, IV, p. 113, with wrong date of death).

Abu'l-Layṭ never became a *qāẓī* himself, but he seems to have been appreciated because of his *fatwās* and his preaching. Like his teachers, he combined solid juridical knowledge with a predilection for propagating popular morality in terms of asceticism; in Transoxania a jurist almost inevitably had to deal with proselytizing among the Turkish tribes. It is therefore characteristic that his *Moqaddema fi'l-ṣalāt*, a short treatise on prayer, was translated into Turkish several times; a Kipchak version was offered in a splendid manuscript to Qānṣawh Ġawrī, the last Mamluk sultan in Egypt (ed. A. Zajackowski, *Le traité arabe Muḳaddima d'Abou-l-layṭ as-Samarqandī en version mamelouk-kiptchak*, Warsaw, 1962). His *Tafsīr*, the high acclaim of which is attested by the great number of manuscripts, was



translated three times into Ottoman Turkish in roughly the same period: by Aḥmad Dā'ī (d. 820/1417 or after 1421; see W. Björkman in *Philologiae Turcicae Fundamenta*, Wiesbaden, 1964, II, pp. 419f.); by Ebn 'Arabšāh (d. 854/1450; partial edition in F. Iz, *Eski Türk Edebiyatında Nesir*, Istanbul, 1964, pp. 13-26); and, on the basis of the latter version, by Abu'l-Faḥr Mūsā b. Ḥājjī Ḥosayn Eznīqī (d. 833/1429-30; H. Sohrweide, *Türkische Handschriften*, VOHD 13/3, Wiesbaden, 1974, pp. 1ff. with further bibliog.). Another text attributed to Abu'l-Layṭ in an Ottoman version, supposedly originally written in Persian, *Tadkerat al-awlā'*, is obviously spurious (ed. S. Olcay, Ankara, 1965 [Ankara Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Yayınları no. 162]).

The urban society in Samarqand spoke Persian; during Abu'l-Layṭ's lifetime the town was one of the intellectual centers of the Samanid empire. It is therefore not astonishing that, when he enumerates examples of formulations which imply unbelief, in the last chapter of his *Kezānat al-feqh*, he quotes them in Persian (ed. Ş. Nāhī, Baghdad, 1385/1965, p. 434f.). His famous *Tanbīh al-ḡāfelīn*, which comes close to the spirit of Iranian *andarz* literature with its quotations from the Qur'ān, Hadith, and popular *zohd*, also exists in a Persian translation (ms. Berlin, Pers. 265, etc.). In addition, there is *aljamiado* version of parts of the same text (Spanish in Arabic script; G. Vajda, *Bibliothèque Nationale, Catalogue des manuscrits arabes*, deuxième partie, II, Paris, 1978, no. 774, 4); the book was popular and simple enough to become one of the last symbols of religious identity in the dying Muslim society of Spain.

Abu'l-Layṭ was given the same honorific title as Mātorīdī (q.v.), who had lived in Samarqand two generations before him—Emam-al-hodā. But he did not entirely share his outlook. He seems to have avoided complicated *kalām* problems. The Hanafite simplicity of his catechism, *'Aqīdat al-oṣūl* (ed. A. W. Juynboll, in *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Landen Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch Indië*, Ser. IV, vol. 5, 1881, pp. 215ff., 267ff.) secured its high reputation in Indonesian and Malayan Islam, although Hanafite law, which deals only with the basic questions of Muslim belief, did not play an important role in this region. Brought to Java by Chinese merchants, it was afterwards pushed aside by the Šāfe'ī *madhhab* (J. Schacht in *Stud. Isl.* 1, 1953, p. 25). The Hanafite origin of the work is transparent in the “Morje'ī” treatment of faith: Faith is indivisible because of its character as a light in the heart and the intellect, in the spirit and body of man. As divine guidance it is uncreated; as an act of assent (*taṣdīq*) and as an oral confession (*eqrār*), it is created. Similar statements are found in the last chapters of Abu'l-Layṭ's *Bostān al-'ārefīn*, a



manual of basic religious knowledge; here again he avoids difficult theological problems, dialectics, and polemics. He may also have been the author of the *Šarḥ al-feqh al-akbar* ascribed to Mātorīdī (printed Hyderabad, 1321/1903 and 1367/1948), as was recently suggested by W. M. Watt (*The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, Edinburgh, 1973, p. 268) and W. Madelung (*Actes do IV Congresso de Estudos Arabes e Islamicos*, Leiden, 1971, p. 122, n. 3). He is mentioned in the text (p. 14.9) and on the title pages of some manuscripts of the work (cf. Brockelmann, *GAL* S. I, p. 285). The hypothesis should, however, be checked against the material collected in *GAS* I, p. 414.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

See also: Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt al-mofasserīn*, ed. ‘A. M. ‘Omar, Cairo, 1392/1972, II, p. 345, no. 658.

Zereklī, *A’lām*² VIII, pp. 348f.

Kaḥḥāla, p. 91 with further references. Sezgin, *GAS* I, pp. 445-50 with twenty-four titles of books (no. 5, *‘Oyūn al-masā’el*, may be supplemented by the new ed. by Ş. Nāhī, Baghdad, 1386/1967. No. 12, *Qorrat al-‘oyūn*, was edited again, Ṭantā, after 1960. No. 17, *al-Ma‘āref fī šarḥ al-šaḥā’ef*, seems to belong to a later Samarqandī, Šams-al-dīn Moḥammad b. Ašraf, who died after 688/1289, the year in which he finished the book; cf. van Ess in *Welt des Orients* 10, 1979, p. 59).

J. Hell, *Von Mohammed bis Ghazali*, Leipzig, 1915, pp. 63ff. (German tr. of the *Ketāb asrār al-waḥy*).

Schacht in *EI*² I, p. 137.