



AḲBĀRĪ, MĪRZĀ MOḤAMMAD

AḲBĀRĪ, MĪRZĀ MOḤAMMAD (1178-1233/1765-1818), a leading exponent of the Aḳbārī school of feqh and a violent polemicist against its opponents. He was born in Akbarābād, India, but settled in the 'atabāt in 1198/1784, after performing the ḥajj. There he engaged in bitter and sometimes scurrilous controversy with the adherents of the Oṣūlī school, accusing his opponents of such offenses as Omayyad ancestry and pederastic proclivities. Chief among his enemies was Shaikh Ja'far Najafī, from whose wrath he was ultimately obliged to flee and seek refuge in Tehran. There he succeeded in gaining access to Fath-'Alī Shah. Fearing that Mīrzā Moḥammad might influence the monarch in favor of the Aḳbārī school, Shaikh Ja'far composed a work entitled *Kašf al-geṭā' 'an ma'ā'eb Mīrzā Moḥammad 'adūw al-'olamā'* and sent it to the court in Tehran; in it he denounced Mīrzā Moḥammad in terms similar to those he himself had employed. But Mīrzā Moḥammad did enjoy a brief period of prominence at Fath-'Alī Shah's court, based largely on his promise to secure, by supernatural means, the death of Tsitsianov, commander of the Russian forces at that time besieging Bākū. Retreating for a period of forty days to the shrine at Shah 'Abd-al-'Azīm, he began to engage in certain magical practices, such as beheading wax figures representing the general. It so happened that during his retreat, Tsitsianov was assassinated during negotiations at Bākū, and the severed head (or, according to some accounts, hand) of the Russian commander arrived in Tehran just before the forty days were up. In return for his apparent success, Mīrzā Moḥammad demanded of Fath-'Alī Shah that he give the Aḳbārī school state patronage and recognition. The monarch demurred and instead sent Mīrzā Moḥammad into exile in Arab Iraq. Settling



in Kāzemayn, he became involved in a contest for the governorship of Baghdad, offering magical assistance to As'ad Pāšā against his rival, Dā'ūd Pāšā. Afraid of sharing the fate of Tsitsianov, Dā'ūd Pāšā incited a mob to attack Mīrzā Moḥammad's house in Kāzemayn and kill him. It is entirely possible that the Oṣūlī 'olamā' of the 'atabāt, nursing their grievances against Mīrzā Moḥammad, should also have had a hand in the affair. Mīrzā Moḥammad was a prolific author, and wrote widely on *feqh* and *kalām* as well as the occult sciences; a partial list of his writings is given by Mīrzā Moḥammad-'Alī Modarres, *Rayḥānat al-adab*, new ed., Tabrīz, n.d., I, pp. 85-86.

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