



ĀL-E BORHĀN

ĀL-E BORHĀN, the name of a family of spiritual and civic leaders in Bokhara during the 6th/12th and early 7th/13th centuries; stemming from Marv, they were so called because virtually all of them seem to have had the *laqab* (honorific) of Borhān-al-dīn or Borhān-al-mella wa'l-dīn.

The Islamic religious institution in the cities of Turkestan seems to have enjoyed a position of special importance and local power vis-à-vis the secular ruling powers, at least during the period of the Qarakhanids and their successors. The headship of the Hanafite *madhab*—by then largely dominant throughout Transoxiana—was known in Bokhara and in other cities of Transoxiana and Khorasan as the *ṣadāra* (“eminence”); its holders were accorded the title of *ṣadr* (pl. *ṣodūr*). In Bokhara we find the even more elevated titles of *ṣadr-e jahān* and *ṣadr-e šarīʿat*. The Āl-e Borhān itself seems to have succeeded to this power in Bokhara after lines of *ṣodūr* of the Esmāʿīlī and Šaffār families. Such houses seem to have been economically powerful, with rich estates, and able to exert an influence far beyond the purely religious sphere, behaving almost like independent city princes. Hence it is not surprising that many of their members clashed with the ruling Turkish temporal power. All but the founder of the Āl-e Borhān are accorded the title of *šahīd* (“martyr”) by later authors; and it is specifically recorded that various of them found martyrdom at the hands of the Qarakhanids, Qara Kitay, etc.

Although there are scattered mentions of the Āl-e Borhān in contemporary historical and literary sources, it is not easy to construct a firm, chronological history of the family; and even the filiations of the successive *ṣodūr* are not



completely clear. The following account follows the researches of O. Pritsak, who has corrected the earlier account of Barthold; both authors have drawn heavily on the *Ketāb-e Mollāzāda* or *Ketāb-e mazārāt-e Bokārā*, an account of the cemeteries of Bokhara and their occupants by the early 9th/15th (?) century author Aḥmad b. Moḥammad, called Moʿīn-al-foqarāʾ.

The Āl-e Borhān traced its ancestry back through Arab settlers in Marv to the caliph ʿOmar b. al-Ḳaṭṭāb. In 495/1102 the Saljuq sultan, Sanjar b. Malekšāh, who had come to Bokhara and Transoxiana to impose his suzerainty over the Qarakhanids, appointed ʿAbd-al-ʿAzīz b. Māza, famed for his learning as “the second Abū Ḥanīfa,” as *ṣadr* in Bokhara in place of a member of the Ṣaffār imams; he also gave him one of his sisters in marriage. Ebn Fondoq, the local historian of Bayhaq, records the *ṣadr* as a school fellow of his own father (*Tārīḳ-e Bayhaq*, ed. A. Bahmanyār, Tehran 1317 Š./1938, pp. 106-07). ʿAbd-al-ʿAzīz’s son, Ḥosām-al-dīn ʿOmar, succeeded to his father’s dignity. Famed as a legal expert (for his extant works, see Brockelmann, *GAL I*², pp. 461-62, Supp. I, pp. 639-40), he was killed by the pagan Qara Ḳitay after Sanjar’s great defeat at the battle of the Qaṭwān steppe in 536/1141. Subsequently, however, the Qara Ḳitay acknowledged the spiritual authority in Bokhara of the *ṣodūr* and used them as their own representatives in the city; the *ṣodūr* also accommodated themselves to the rule of the Ḳvārazmšāhs, when, for instance, Tekeš appeared at Bokhara in 578/1182. It was to the *ṣadr* ʿAbd-al-ʿAzīz II b. Moḥammad (d. 593/1196-97) that the epitomizer of Naršaḳī’s *Tārīḳ-e Bokārā*, Moḥammad b. Zofar, dedicated his work in 574/1178-79 (ed. Modarres Rażawī, Tehran, 1319 Š./1940, p. 2; tr. Frye, *The History of Bukhara*, Cambridge, Mass., 1954, p. 4). The authority of the Qarakhanids of Samarqand was for a while restored in Bokhara, but the Āl-e Borhān still retained great riches and power. Moḥammad II b. Aḥmad (d. 616/1219) acted as virtual ruler there, collecting the tribute for the Qara Ḳitay. When he made the pilgrimage his arrogance was such that people in Mecca changed his title *ṣadr-e jahān* to *ṣadr-e jahannam*; Nasavī says that he united the office of *ḳaṭīb* with that of *raʿīs* (mayor of the city) and maintained a retinue of 6,000 *faqīhs*.

The popular movement which broke out at Bokhara in 636/1238 under the shield-maker Maḥmūd Ṭārābī was unfavorable to the Borhānī *ṣodūr*; and the last of the family, Aḥmad II b. Moḥammad, was driven out to seek refuge with the Qara Ḳitay, who were, however, by now impotent to restore him (see Barthold, *Turkestan*³ pp. 469-71). To the *ṣadāra* in Bokhara there now succeeded a new line, that of the Hanafite *faqīh* Šams-al-dīn Moḥammad b.



Aḥmad Maḥbūbī, a supporter of Ṭārābī's movement; the Maḥbūbīs were still influential in Bokhara when Ebn Baṭṭūṭa was there in 733/1333 (Paris, III, p. 28; tr. Gibb, III, p. 554).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ketāb-e Mollāzāda, lith. Bokhara, 1322/1904.

Scattered references occur in Ebn al-Aṭīr, Ebn Fondoq, Neẓāmī 'Arūzī's *Čahār maqāla*, 'Awfī's *Lobāb* and *Jawāme' al-ḥekāyāt*, Nasavī, and Jovaynī.

Of secondary sources, the pioneer work was done by W. Barthold, who first published extracts from the *Ketāb-e Mollāzāda* in the *Texts* volume of the original Russian edition, I, pp. 166-72; see his *Turkestan*³, pp. 326-27, 353-55, 379, 430.

Idem, "Burhān," *EI*¹ I, pp. 797-98.

E. G. Browne's revised translation of the *Čahār maqāla*, London, 1921, contains notes on the Āl-e Borhān based on material gathered by Mīrzā Moḥammad Qazvīnī (pp. 110-12).

More information was brought to light and used by O. Pritsak in his article "Āl-i Burhān," *Der Islam* 30, 1952, pp. 81-96; included are a chronological list and a genealogical table of the family (pp. 88-91, 94).