



## ĀQĀ BOZORG ṬEHRĀNĪ

**ĀQĀ** (or **ĀĠĀ**) **BOZORG ṬEHRĀNĪ**, SHAIKH MOḤAMMAD-MOḤSEN (1293-1389/1876-1970), Shi'ite scholar and bibliographer. He was born on 11 Rabī'a I 1293/6 April 1876, into a mercantile family of Tehran that had strong religious interests; his father, Ḥājj 'Alī, participated actively in the celebrated tobacco boycott of 1308/1891 and later wrote a book on the history of the movement. Āqā Bozorg received his initial education from private tutors in Tehran before proceeding to the *'atabāt* in 1315/1897 (1313/1895 in *Rāhnemā-ye ketāb*, p. 525), where he spent the rest of his life, with the exception of four brief return visits to Iran and two short journeys to Syria, Egypt, and the Ḥeǰāz. Among his teachers in Naǰaf were [Āḳūnd Mollā Moḥammad-Kāẓem Ḳorāsānī](#), Sayyed Moḥammad-Kāẓem Yazdī, Šayḳ-al-šarī'a Ešfahānī and Ḥāǰǰī Mīrzā Ḥosayn Nūrī. He was particularly close to the first of these, working as his amanuensis and assisting in the composition of his major work on *feqh*, *al-Kefāya*. On the death of Ḳorāsānī in 1329/1911, he left Naǰaf for Sāmarrā to join the circle of Mīrzā Moḥammad-Taǰī Šīrāzī. He stayed there until 1354/1935, returning then to Naǰaf which remained his home until his death.

While in Sāmarrā, he conceived, and began to execute, the plan of a comprehensive bibliographical survey of all classes of literature produced by Shi'ite authors. His original intention was to refute a statement by the Christian Arab litterateur, Jorǰī Zaydān, belittling the Shi'ite contribution to Arabic letters. However, the survey that Āqā Bozorg produced, *al-Darī'a elā tašānīf al-šī'a*, went far beyond this polemical purpose to become the main achievement of his career and a major contribution to Islamic scholarship. In



*al-Darī'a*, the titles of all books written by Shi'ite authors are listed alphabetically, together with a brief indication of authorship and content, as well as place and date of publication in the case of printed works, and location in the case of manuscripts. Āqā Bozorg returned to Najaf in 1354/1935 and established a press (Maṭba'at al-sa'āda) to print the first volume of *al-Darī'a*, but was soon obliged to sell it (see *Rāhnemā-ye ketāb*, p. 526). Other arrangements were then made for the printing in Najaf of the second and third volumes, but all subsequent volumes—with the exception of the thirteenth and fourteenth—were published in Tehran. Twenty-two volumes have appeared to date; seven more await publication (For full bibliographical details concerning *al-Darī'a*, see Ḥakīmī, pp. 543-45.)

Āqā Bozorg also compiled a biographical dictionary of Shi'ite scholars as a companion to *al-Darī'a*. The dictionary has the general title *Ṭabaqāt a'lām al-šī'a*, but each section, pertaining to the scholars of a given century, also has a separate title. Three sections have been published so far: *Nawābeg al-rowwāt fī rābe'at al-me'āt* (Beirut, 1390/1970), dealing with Shi'ite traditionists of the 4th Islamic century; *al-Kerām al-mobarrara fī'l-qarn al-tālet ba'd al-'ašara* (Najaf, 1374-77/1954-57), on scholars of the 13th century; and *Noqabā' al-bašar fī'l-qarn al-rābe' ašar* (Najaf, 1373-88/1953-68), on scholars of the 14th century (Ḥakīmī, pp. 549-51).

In addition to these multi-volume works, Āqā Bozorg wrote a number of less voluminous books, including a survey of some 600 biographers of Shi'ite traditionists, *Mošaffā 'l-maqāl fī mošannefī al-rejāl* (Tehran, 1337 Š./1958); a biography of Mīrzā Ḥasan Šīrāzī, *Hadīyat al-rāzī ela 'l-moʿjadded al-Šīrāzī* (Najaf, 1392/1972, Pers. tr., *Mīrzā-ye Šīrāzī*, Tehran, 1362/1983); a polemic against Sunni concept of *ejtehād*, *Tawzīḥ al-rašād fī ta'rīk ḥašr al-ejtehād* (unpublished); and a defense of the textual integrity of the Qur'ān, *al-Naqd al-laṭīf fī nafy al-taḥrīf 'an al-Qor'ān al-šarīf* (unpublished); and a brief biography of Shaikh Abū Ja'far Ṭūsī (*Zendagānī-e Šaykḥ Ṭūsī*, Tehran, 1360 Š./1981).

Āqā Bozorg Ṭehrānī's influence was not limited to the admiration elicited by his decades of industrious scholarship. He exchanged numerous *ejāzāt* (licenses of transmission) with the scholars of Hadith, both Sunni and Shi'ite, whom he met in the course of his travels, a practice he consciously sought to revive as vital to the cultivation of Islamic scholarship. He was also widely regarded for his piety and asceticism: He regularly led congregational prayer at several mosques in Najaf, and once a week would walk from Najaf to Kūfa to visit the site of the martyrdom of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭāleb.



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