



BĀB (TITLE)

BĀB, a title given to certain Sufi shaikhs of Central Asia. It appears to be a localized variant of *bābā* (father), a much more widely used appellation of Sufi elders, for *bāb* also is said to have the sense of father (see *Borhān-e qāṭeʿ*, ed. Moʿīn, I, p. 201). Hojvīrī (d. ca. 464/1071) writes of a certain Bāb ʿOmar, from the village of Salāmatak in the region of Farḡāna, and remarks that “all the dervishes and great shaikhs of that area are called *bāb*” (*Kašf al-maḥjūb*, Samarkand, 1330/1912, p. 287). Four centuries later we encounter mention of one Bāb-e Māčīn, not identified by personal name, who is said to “have come from Māčīn [south China or Indochina—perhaps Cham?] and settled in Tashkent” (Faḡr-al-Dīn ʿAlī Ṣafī, *Rašāḥāt ʿayn al-ḥayāt*, Tashkent, 1329/1911, p. 225). Supposedly four times a centenarian, Bāb-e Māčīn was credited with the ability of flying 24 farsangs a day. Made arrogant by his powers, Bāb-e Māčīn foolishly and baselessly charged the celebrated Aḥmad Yasavī (d. 562/1167) with bringing men and women together in his gatherings. By way of punishment, Yasavī had his disciples tie Bāb-e Māčīn to a pillar and give him 500 lashes, from the effect of which he was protected by the spirit-beings clustered on his back. Thereafter he became a faithful and even favored disciple of Yasavī. He was buried in the village of Farkat (Ahmed-i Yesevi, *Divan-i hikmetʿten seçmeler*, ed. K. Eraslan, Ankara, 1983, pp. 191, 365; Alī Ṣīr Nevāyī, *Nesāyimüʿl-mahabbe min şemāyimiʿl fütüvve*, ed. K. Eraslan, Istanbul, 1979, p. 389—here the name Bāb-e Māčīn has been misread as Bāb-e Ḥosayn).

The Borhān-al-Dīn Ābrīz described in *Rašāḥāt* (loc. cit.) as a *morīd* of Bāb-e Māčīn may be identical with the Borhān-al-Dīn Sāḡarčī mentioned elsewhere;



he too had links with China, and was buried there (see V. V. Bartol'd, *Sochineniya*, Moscow, 1964, II, 2, pp. 434-35). Mention may be made finally of Arslān Bāb (or Bāb Arslān), preceptor of Yasavī (d. 562/1167). Although numerous legends surround the name of Bāb Arslān, notably that he was a companion of the Prophet and lived for 400 or 700 years, it seems certain that he was a historical personality; he may, indeed, have been Yasavī's paternal uncle. Bāb Arslān was buried next to Yasavī in the city of Torkestān, and his son, Manṣūr Atā, was Yasavī's principal successor (see Fuad Köprülü, *Türk edebiyatında ilk mutasavvıflar*, new ed., Ankara, 1966, pp. 14, 22-24, 67, 73). Although Bāb 'Omar, Bāb-e Māčīn, and Bāb Arslān were all either Turks or the inhabitants of Turkish-influenced regions, their common appellation appears to be Iranian in origin.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Concerning Bāb 'Omar, see also K̄vāja 'Abd-Allāh Anṣārī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfīya*, ed. 'Abd-al-Ḥayy Ḥabībī, Kabul, 1341 Š./1962, pp. 176, 424, and Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt*, p. 282.