



BARĀQ BĀBĀ

BARĀQ BĀBĀ (655-707/1257-58-1307-08), a crypto-shamanic Anatolian Turkman dervish close to two of the Mongol rulers of Iran. The name Barāq means “hairless dog” in Qipchaq Turkish, this being the title of honor given him by his master Sarī Saltūq when he eagerly swallowed a morsel his master had expectorated (Köprülü, 1929, p. 15). According to certain legends, Barāq Bābā was a son of ‘Ezz-al-Dīn Keykā’ūs II, a Saljuq who took refuge with the Byzantines; adopted by the patriarch of Byzantium, he grew up a Christian until restored to Islam by Sarī Saltūq (Witteck, 1952, pp. 658-59). In fact he was born in a village near Tokat (Ṭūqād) in central Anatolia where his father worked the land. Although Barāq Bābā has been listed as one of the principal successors of Ḥājī Bektāš (d. 669/1271?; see Gölpınarlı, ed., 1958, pp. 81, 90), this is chronologically impossible. He was rather a *morīd* of Sarī Saltūq, a semilegendary warrior saint who propagated Islam in the Crimea and the Dobruja.

At a date that cannot be determined, Barāq Bābā left Sarī Saltūq and traveled to the Il-khanid court, probably because of a reverse his master’s forces had suffered. When Barāq Bābā came into the presence of Ġāzān Khan in Tabrīz, a tiger (or, according to some accounts, a lion) was unleashed on him to test his occult powers; a cry from him was sufficient to halt it in its tracks. Thereafter he enjoyed the trust both of Ġāzān and of his successor, Moḥammad Ḳodābanda Oljāytū (Öljejtü), who appears to have used him on several diplomatic (or possibly espionage) missions.

In 706/1306 Barāq Bābā arrived in Damascus, carrying the Il-khanid banner



and a letter of appointment. His outlandish appearance aroused both disgust and amusement: He was naked except for a red loincloth (*fūṭa*) and extremely filthy, wearing a kind of felt turban to which cowhorns were attached on his head. His companions were similarly dressed and carried with them an assortment of bones and bells, to the accompaniment of which Barāq Bābā would dance, imitating the antics of monkeys and bears (‘Asqalanī, 1385/1966, I, p. 6). Afram, the governor of Damascus, tested Barāq Bābā by confronting him with a wild ostrich, which he is said to have instantly tamed. After an unsuccessful attempt to enter Egypt, Barāq Bābā and his party traveled back and forth between Damascus and Jerusalem before returning to Iran.

The following year, when the inhabitants of Gīlān revolted against Il-khanid rule, Barāq Bābā was sent to assist in restoring order. A party of Gīlānis intercepted him and a group of his followers near Lāhījān. Addressing him as “shaikh of the Mongols” (*šayk-e Moḡolān*), they upbraided him for serving “the enemies of the Muslims” and butchered him. Those of his followers who survived the attack gathered his bones and took them back for burial at Solṭānīya (Dorn, 1858, IV, pp. 148-51).

Barāq Bābā’s influence outlived him, both in Solṭānīya and in Anatolia. Oljāytū had a hospice constructed for his followers in Solṭānīya, to which he assigned a daily expenditure of fifty dinars; Barāq Bābā’s descendants presided over this hospice. In Anatolia, Geyiklī Bābā, who had ties with the Ottoman sultan Orkān, and Tapdūq Emre, the preceptor of the celebrated mystical poet Yūnos Emre, were both regarded as Barāq Bābā’s successors, and, more generally, a class of dervishes known as Barāqīyūn seems also to have existed (Gölpınarlı, 1961, p. 43).

Barāq Bābā left behind a brief *resāla* comprising laconic and enigmatic sayings in Qipchaq Turkish; about fifty years after his death, a learned commentary was written on it, in elegant Persian and with copious quotations from Persian Sufi poets, by a certain Qoṭb-al-‘Alawī (for a facsimile of the autograph text of the commentary, see Gölpınarlı, 1961, pp. 457-72). Noteworthy in the text of the *resāla* are the claim to have served “the sultan” (presumably Oljāytū) as a loyal soldier and the concluding prayer which calls for the Byzantine rulers of Constantinople and Trebizond to be defeated and thrown in the sea.

Qoṭb-al-‘Alawī’s interpretation of the ecstatic utterances contained in the *resāla* in conformity with the classical Sufism of Iran suggests that no clear



line of demarcation separated the crypto-shamanic Sufism of Barāq Bābā and his peers from its established and orthodox counterpart. Barāq Bābā is said, indeed, to have been one of those whom Ġāzān Khan consulted concerning the life and teachings of Mawlānā Jalāl-al-Dīn Rūmī; it is possible that Barāq Bābā may have met him early in life (Aflākī, 1953, II, p. 848). Olo ‘Āref Čelebi (d. 710/1320), head of the Mawlawī (Mevlevi) order, visited the Barāqī hospice at Solṭānīya, where he was hospitably received by Ḥayrān Amīrjī, a descendant of Barāq Bābā. Ḥayrān Amīrjī later paid a return visit to Konya (Aflākī, 1953, II, p. 860).

Barāq Bābā is said to have believed that ‘Alī was a divine incarnation and that he in turn had reappeared in the person of Moḥammad Ḳodā-banda (who did indeed come to profess Shi‘ism; see Sümer, 1976, p. 210). If this is true, it is possible to see in Barāq Bābā an early exponent of the potent mixture of Turkic shamanism, Sufism, and *ḡolāt*-Shi‘ism that some two centuries later brought the Safavids to power.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Šams-al-Dīn Aḥmad Aflākī, *Manāqeb al-‘ārefīn*, ed. T. Yazıcı, Ankara, 1953, II, pp. 848, 860.

Ebn Ḥajar ‘Asqalānī, *al-Dorar al-kāmena fī a’yān al-me’a al-tāmena*, ed. M. S. Jādd-al-Ḥaqq, Cairo, 1385/1966, II, pp. 5-6.

Claude Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey*, New York, 1968, pp. 354-55.

Haydar-Ali Diriöz, “Kutb-ul-Alevi’nin Barak Baba risalesi,” *Türkiyat mecmuası* 9, 1946-51, pp. 167-70.

Bernard Dorn, *Muhammedanische Quellen zur Geschichte der südlichen Küste des kaspischen Meeres*, St. Petersburg, 1859, IV, pp. 148-51.

Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, Princeton, 1972, pp. 402-03.



Ziyaeddin Fahri, "Barak Baba risalesi," *Hayat* 2/29, June 16, 1927, p. 55.

Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı, ed., *Vilâyet-Nâme: Manakib-i Hacı Bektaş-i Veli*, Istanbul, 1958, pp. 81, 90.

Idem, *Mevlânâ'dan sonra Mevlevilik*, new ed., Istanbul, 1983, pp. 11, 13, 70, 72, 83, 94.

Idem, *Yunus Emre ve tasavvuf*, Istanbul, 1961, pp. 17-26, 255-75, 457-72.

Fuad Köprülü, "Anadolu'da İslamiyet," *Darülfunun Edebiyat Fakültesi mecmuası* 2, 1338/1919-20, pp. 392-94.

Idem, *Influence du chamanisme turco-mongol sur les ordres mystiques musulmans*, Istanbul, 1929, pp. 14-19.

Idem, *Türk edebiyatında ilk Mutasavvıflar*, new ed., Ankara, 1966, pp. 179-80.

Bernard Lewis, "Barāq Bābā," in *EI²*. Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *Bektaşî Menakıbnamelerinde İslam öncesi inanç motifleri*, Istanbul, 1983, p. 108.

Faruk Sümer, *Safevi devletinin kuruluşu ve gelişmesinde Anadolu türklerinin rolü*, Ankara, 1976, p. 210.

Zeki Velidi Togan, *Umumi türk tarihine giriş*, 3rd ed., Istanbul, 1981, pp. 270-71, 334-35.

Osman Turan, "Selcuk Türkiyesi din tarihine dair bar kaynak," *Köprülü armağanı*, Istanbul, 1953, p. 548.

Idem, *Selcuklular zamanında Türkiye tarihi*, 2nd ed., Istanbul, 1984, pp. 425, 581, 596.

Paul Wittek, "Yazijioghlu 'Ali on the Christian Turks of the Dobruja," *BSOAS* 45, 1952, pp. 650, 658-59.

Hilmi Ziya (Ülken), "Anadolu tarihinde dini ruhiyat müşahedeleri," *Mihrab* 1/13, Haziran, 1340/June-July, 1924, pp. 438-44.

Search terms:

□□□□ □□□□ baragh baba baraq baba baraagh baabaa
baraaq baba

