



BĀṬEN

BĀṬEN (inner, hidden), the opposite of *zāher* (outer, visible). Both can be predicated of living beings; in the Qur'ān (57:3) God is *al-zāher wa'l-bāṭen*. Most frequently, however, *bāṭen* or *zāher* is associated with the concept *'elm* (knowledge). There are two ways in which knowledge can be hidden: (1) If it is not within everybody's reach and (2) if it relates to aspects of things beyond the reach of the senses. This distinction was explained by Ebn Taymiya (d. 728/1328) in his *Resāla fī 'elm al-bāṭen wa'l-zāher* (p. 230.13-15) as follows: "*'Elm al-bāṭen* can sometimes be knowledge of inner things, such as knowledge of intuitions and moods existing in the heart, and it can also be knowledge of extrasensory things of which prophets were apprised. On the other hand, *'elm al-bāṭen* can mean knowledge which is hidden from most people's understanding (*yabṭon 'an fahm akṭar at-nās*)." Both senses of the concepts *bāṭen* and *'elm al-bāṭen* gained currency, mainly in Shi'ite and Sufi circles.

Shi'ite ideas. The belief that things have an imperceptible inner nature (*bāṭen*) and that knowledge of this (*'elm al-bāṭen*) is a higher form of knowledge first arose among the Shi'ite radicals (*ḡolāt*, sing. *ḡālī*) at Kūfa in the 2nd/8th century. The Kaysānīya and Ḥarbīya sects held that God's *bāṭen* (or *ma'nā* "meaning") is eternal and that his *zāher* has been manifested in 'Alī, Moḥammad, and their descendants. Others, citing Qur'ān 57:3, described God's *zāher* as the human body in which the *bāṭen*, i.e., the holy spirit (*rūḥ al-qodos*), is incarnated. *Bāṭen* and *zāher* were predicated not only of God but also of humans and the creation around them. Some of the *ḡolāt* distinguished between the *zāher* in humans, which is terrestrial, and the *bāṭen* in humans,



which is eternal (*azalī*). The eternal part of a human was often called *al-joz' al-elāhī*, which may perhaps be rendered as “the divine spark.”

Among the various beliefs of the *gōlāt*, the one which acquired most notoriety and longest-lasting influence was their doctrine of the inner and outer meaning of the Qur'ān and the Islamic law (*Šarī'a*). The appellation Bāṭenīya given to later offshoots of the *gōlāt* such as the Isma'īlis referred to this doctrine. As metaphors for the *zāher* and *bāṭen* of the Qur'ān and the *Šarī'a*, the words *qešr* (shell) and *lobb* (kernel) were used. According to the doctrine, humans can have knowledge of the inner as well as the outer meaning of God's book and law. Shi'ites of the various schools which arose (*gōlāt*, Qarmatians, Isma'īlis, the Eḵwān-al-Šafā) all believed the imam to be endowed, through divine afflatus (*elhām*), with knowledge of the *bāṭen* and consequent ability to explain the inner, true meaning of the Qur'ān and the law through allegorical interpretation (*ta'wīl*). One of the first to treat Koranic themes as allegories was the Kufan *gālī* Moḡīra b. Sa'īd (put to death 119/737). Furthermore, the imam was believed to possess extrasensory knowledge of inner natures and future events (*ḡayb*). Believers loyal to the imam would gain salvation through the *'elm al-bāṭen* which he would impart to them, and possession of this knowledge of the inner truth would confer exemption from duty to obey the law and cause the soul to rise to the level of the angels. These beliefs were voiced mainly by *gōlāt* and are likely to have been influenced by gnostic legacies from late antiquity.

Among the critics of the Shi'ite doctrine of *al-bāṭen* and *'elm al-bāṭen*, Ebn Ḥazm, Ġazālī, the Zaydite Moḡammad Daylamī, and the Hanbalites Ebn al-Jawzī and Ebn Taymīya deserve mention. Ebn Ḥazm viewed *ta'wīl* as a dangerous threat to the understanding of clear texts. For Ġazālī the greatest danger in the doctrine of knowledge not accessible to all was the resulting blind acceptance (*taqlīd*) of the authority of the imam. For Ebn al-Jawzī and Ebn Taymīya *'elm al-bāṭen* was an inadmissible innovation; like all Hanbalites, they believed that God has given his last word to humans by transmitting through the Qur'ān and the Sunna all that He wished them to learn, and that this final revelation is intelligible to anybody without special knowledge.

Sufī ideas. While the ideas of the *gōlāt* and other Shi'ites first emerged at Kūfa, the source of Sufi thinking about *al-bāṭen* and *'elm al-bāṭen* can be traced to Basra. The *bāṭen*, as understood by the early Basran mystics, is man's inner self, the complex of emotions which stir his soul (cf. Ebn Taymīya's definitions). Study of the human soul and inner self was pursued in Ḥasan



Baṣrī's circle, particularly by his mystic pupils. A major role in this development appears to have been played by his pupil 'Abd-al-Wāḥed b. Zayd. The basis for *'elm al-bāṭen*, as thus defined, was found in a *ḥadīṭ qodsī* (saying of God Himself). This *ḥadīṭ* was said to have been transmitted by 'Abd-al-Wāḥed b. Zayd to his pupils Aḥmad Hojaymī and Aḥmad b. Ġassān and to have been made known to him by Ḥasan Baṣrī, who had heard it from Ḥodayfa b. al-Yamān (one of the Prophet's companions), who had heard it from Moḥammad, who had heard it from God. Basran *'elm al-bāṭen* consists of knowledge of ways to train the soul and is a psychic discipline attainable by anybody through his own mental effort—not, like Kufan *'elm al-bāṭen*, a body of knowledge conferred by afflatus on a chosen individual. The mystic *'elm al-bāṭen* is expounded in fully developed form in the writings of Ḥāret Moḥāsebī (3rd/9th century). In the east, Ḥakīm Termeḍī (d. ca. 300/910) built this concept of *'elm al-bāṭen* into his theosophical system. Heresiographers such as Ka'bī branded the Sufis of the 3rd/9th century simply as *aṣḥāb al-bāṭen*. In the Sufi manuals written in the 4th/10th century by Kalābādī, Sarrāj, and Abū Ṭāleb Makkī, *'elm al-bāṭen* is an essential component of the orthodox Sufism which these authors propound. In addition to the concept of *'elm al-bāṭen* as knowledge of means to train the soul, a second concept now entered Sufi thinking, namely the interpretability of the Qur'ān and the Sunna from within. It was held that understanding of the inner self enables the mystic to understand the inner meaning of God's book and law. This method of interpretation from within was often described as *estenbāṭ* (inference). The biggest collection of such exegesis from the early medieval period is the *Ḥaqā'eq al-tafsīr* of Solamī (d. 412/1021).

From the 4th/10th century onward, a different tendency, already discernible among some of the earlier Sufis, becomes more and more prominent. *'Elm al-bāṭen* is no longer held to be attainable through human effort but is assumed (as by the Shi'ites) to be God-given knowledge. For example, the unknown author of *Adab al-molūk* (late 4th/10th century) describes *'elm al-bāṭen* as knowledge conferred on Sufis through divine afflatus. Ġazālī in his *Ehyā' olūm al-dīn* distinguishes two categories of *'elm al-bāṭen*: *'elm taṣqīl al-qalb* (knowledge of ways to polish the heart), which is a pedagogic discipline, and *'elm al-mokāšafa*, which is God-given illumination of the heart. Ebn al-'Arabī draws a similar distinction. The two meanings were not always clearly differentiated, with the result that misunderstandings and misrepresentations could arise, mainly in works by writers unsympathetic to Sufism.



The most serious criticism, voiced above all by the Hanbalites Ebn al-Jawzī and Ebn Taymīya, concerned the claim of many Sufis to possession of an *‘elm al-bāṭen* of the second category, which in the view of the critics meant possession of a “private revelation.”

See also *bāṭenya*; *isma‘ilism*; *mazdakism*; *zāher*; *zand*; and *zendj*.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Shi‘ites, sources: Aš‘arī, *Maqālāt*, ed. Ritter, pp. 6-9.

M. Daylamī, *Bayān maḍhab al-bāṭenīya wa-boṭlāneh manqūl men ketāb Qawā‘ed ‘aqā‘ed āl Moḥammad*, ed. R. Strothmann, Istanbul, 1939, pp. 4, 7-10, 16, 21, 30, 36f., 39, 44, 48f., 61-63, 80.

Ebn Ḥazm, *Feṣal*, tr. I. Friedlander, “The Heterodoxies of the Shiites in the Presentation of Ibn Ḥazm,” *JAOS* 28-29, 1907-08, see index s.v. *Bāṭinijja*.

‘Abd-al-Raḥmān Ebn al-Jawzī, *Talbīs Eblīs*, Cairo, 1928, pp. 102ff.

A. Ebn Taymīya, *Resāla fī ‘elm al-bāṭen wa’l-zāher*, in *Majmū‘at al-rasā‘el al-monīriya* I, Beirut, 1970, pp. 229-52.

Eḳwān al-Ṣafā’, *Rasā‘el*, 4 vols., Beirut, 1957, III, pp. 486, 488, 511.

Feraq al-šī‘a, ed. Ritter, pp. 63, 82.

M. Ġazālī, *al-Monqed men al-żalāl*, ed. F. Jabre, Beirut, 1969, pp. 28ff.

Idem, *Fazā‘eh al-bāṭenīya*, ed. ‘A. Badawī, Cairo, 1964, pp. 11ff.

Abu’l-Ḥosayn ‘Abd-al-Raḥīm Kayyāt, *Ketāb al-enteṣār*, ed. H. S. Nyberg, Cairo, 1927, p. 136.

Ketāb al-ḥaft wa’l-ażella, ed. A. Tamer and I. A. Khalifé, Beirut, 1970, pp. 29, 31, 61f., 87-89, 94f., 98, 100f., 107, 135, 191f., 194.



- M. Mofid, *Awā'el al-maqālāt*, Tabrīz, 1371/1951-52, pp. 37-41.
- Ja'far b. Ḥarb Nāše', *Oṣūl al-neḥal*, ed. J. van Ess, *Frühe mu'tazilitische Häresiographie. Zwei Werke des Nāši' al-Akbar (gest. 293 H.)*, Beirut, 1971, p. 41.
- Omm al-kitāb*, ed. W. Ivanow, "Ummu'l-kitāb," *Der Islam* 23, 1936, pp. 1-132, par. 106.
- S. Qomī, *Ketāb al-maqālāt wa'l-feraq*, ed. J. Maškūr, Tehran, 1963, pp. 55f., 60, 62f.
- M. Šahrestānī, *Melal*, 2 vols., Beirut, 1975, I, pp. 147, 149-51, 189, 192.
- R. Strothmann, *Esoterische Sonderthemen bei den Nusairi*, Berlin, 1958, pars. 198, 248, 260, 263-64, 266, 269, 299-301.
- Shi'ites, literature: R. Arnaldez, *Grammaire et théologie chez Ibn Ḥazm de Cordoue*, Paris, 1981, pp. 65f.
- J. van Ess, *Die Erkenntnislehre des 'Aḏudaddīn al-Īcī*, Wiesbaden, 1966, pp. 278ff.
- R. Freitag, *Seelenwanderung in der islamischen Häresie*, Berlin, 1985, see index of terms s.v. *bāṭin*. I. Goldziher, *Streitschrift des Gazālī gegen die Bāṭiniyya-Sekte*, Leiden, 1916.
- Idem, *Die Zāhiriten*, Hildesheim, 1967.
- H. Hahn, "Das "Buch der Schatten." Die Mufaḍḍal Tradition der Ġulāt und die Ursprünge des Nuṣairiertums," *Der Islam* 55, 1978, pp. 219-66.
- Idem, *Die islamische Gnosis. Die extreme Schia und die 'Alawiten*, Zurich and Munich, 1982, see index of terms s. vv. *bāṭin*, *geheim*.
- Idem, *Kosmologie und Heilslehre der frühen Ismā'īliyya*, Wiesbaden, 1978, see index of terms s.vv. *bāṭin*, *'ilm al-bāṭin*.
- Sufism, sources: *Adab al-molūk*, ed. B. Radtke, Beirut, 1988, pp. 34-36.
- Ebn al-Jawzī, *Talbīs Eblīs*, pp. 321ff. Ebn Taymīya, *Resāla*, pp. 229-52.
- M. Ġazālī, *Eḥyā' 'olūm al-dīn* I, *bāb* 2. M. Kalābādī, *al-Ta'arraf le-maḍhab ahl al-taṣawwuf*, Cairo, 1969, pp. 105f.



Abū Ṭāleb Makkī, *Qūt al-qolūb*, 4 vols., Cairo, 1932, II, pp. 22-24, 40.

Ḥ. Moḥāsebī, *al-Re'āya le-ḥoqūq Allāh*, ed. M. Smith, GMS, N.S. 15, London, 1940.

Abū Naṣr Sarrāj, *al-Loma' fi'l-taṣawwof*, ed. R. A. Nicholson, GMS 22, Leiden and London, 1914, pp. 23f.

Abū Ḥafṣ 'Omar Sohravardī, *'Awāref al-ma'āref*, tr. R. Gramlich, *Die Gaben der Erkenntnisse des 'Umar as-Suhrawardi. 'Awārif al-ma'ārif*, Freiburger Islamstudien 6, Wiesbaden, 1978, pp. 26ff.

M. Solamī, *Ḥaqā'eq al-tafsīr*, see Sezgin, *GAS I*, pp. 671-72.

Ḥakīm Termedī, *Daqā'eq al-'olūm*, ms. Ismail Saib I, Ankara, no. 1571, fols. 10bff.

Sufism, literature: A. Affifi, *The Mystical Philosophy of Muhyid Din-Ibnul Arabi*, Cambridge, 1937, pp. 105ff.

J. van Ess, *Die Gedankenwelt des Ḥārīt al-Muḥāsibī*, Bonn, 1961.

F. Meier, "Ein wichtiger Handschriftenfund zur Sufik," *Oriens* 20, 1967, pp. 60-106.

B. Radtke, *Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidī*, Freiburg, 1980, see index s.v. *'ilm al-bāṭin*.

Idem, "Theologen und Mystiker in Ḥurāsān und Transoxanien," *ZDMG* 136, 1986, pp. 536-69 (esp. pp. 551ff.).

H. Ritter, "Studien zur Geschichte der islamischen Frömmigkeit I. Ḥasan al-Baṣrī," *Der Islam* 21, 1933, pp. 1-83.

K. M. al-Šaybī, *al-Šela bayn al-taṣawwof wa'l-tašayyo'*, Cairo, 1969 (only to be used as a collection of material).

Search terms:

□□□□ baten baaten