



BOHLŪL, ABŪ WOHAYB

BOHLŪL, ABŪ WOHAYB, b. ‘Amr b. Moğīra Majnūn Kūfī, variously cited in later Persian literature as *Bohlūl-e majnūn* (Bohlūl the fool) or *Bohlūl-e dānā* (Bohlūl the wise). Originally one of several individuals in early ‘Abbasid times known as ‘*oqalā’ al-majānīn* (wise fools) he later by way of a popular tradition relating him to the caliph Hārūn al-Rašīd (d. 193/809) emerged as the archetype of this genre; in late Shi‘ite literature he is even embroidered with traits of sanctity.

The only fact of his life known with relative certainty is that he lived mainly in Kūfa and Baṣra and that he died in about 190/805. He met Hārūn al-Rašīd several times, but there are no grounds for assuming the alleged personal relationship with the ‘Abbasid clan.

The earliest mention of Bohlūl is found in Jāḥeẓ (d. 255/868; II, pp. 230f.), who refers to his Shi‘ite tendencies (*kāna yatašayya*) and quotes four stories, representing him as a fool with a ready wit who had a liking for rough jokes. Bohlūl’s first biographer, Naysābūrī (d. 406/1015; pp. 139-60), drawing on an ever increasing popular tradition, collected fifty stories about Bohlūl, which depict him as a rather harsh and unconventional man, who warns against worldly temptations and is not afraid to address his provocative accusations even against the caliph. In these reports he clearly appears as the archetypal wise fool that he is considered throughout Arabic and Persian literature.

The Shi‘ite author Qāzī Nūr-Allāh Šūštārī (956-1019/1549-1610; fols. 124bf.) seems to be responsible for the further development and circulation of the



legend around Bohlūl. Confusing Bohlūl *al-majnūn* with a certain Bohlūl b. Moḥammad mentioned earlier by Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067; p. 160) as a disciple of the imam Jaʿfar al-Šādeq (d. 148/765), Šūštārī portrays Bohlūl as a faithful and fearless model Shiʿite, hereby laying the foundation for his later veneration as a Shiʿite saint. As a result his name was included in most works of later Shiʿite *rejāl* literature (see *Aʿyān al-šīʿa* XIV, pp. 146-63). On account of the tradition current since earlier times, Bohlūl is later found in popular categories of literature as well, such as Jabalrūdī's (d. 1054/1644) *Jāmeʿ al-tamṭīl* (chap. 12). In modern times Bohlūl has become a favorite in several Persian and Turkish popular tales.

By way of the Turkish *Laṭāʿef* (fol. 39a-b) of Lāmeʿī Čelebī (d. 939/1532) Bohlūl even found his way into Barthélemy d'Herbelot's *Bibliothèque orientale* (pp. 156f.), where he is listed under the distorted form of Bahalul. Referring to this source Western literature further depicts him as the court jester of Hārūn al-Rašīd (see, e.g. Flögel, pp. 172f.; Doran, pp. 68f.).

Evidence of Bohlūl's lasting popularity was given at the beginning of this century by two Persian journals bearing his name (see Solṭānī, I, pp. 31f., nos. 74f.), and more recently a five-volume compilation of stories about Bohlūl and other figures of devotion has been published (Şadr).

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See also Brockelmann, *GAL*, S. I, p. 350; *EI*¹ I, pp. 804f.; *EI*² I, pp. 1288f.; and Sezgin, *GAS* I, pp. 636f.

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