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ḌAHABĪYA

ḌAHABĪYA, a Sufi order of Shiʿite allegiance, ultimately derived from the Kobrawīya order, founded in the mid-12th century by Najm-al-Dīn Kobrā (d. 617/1220). It is found today almost exclusively in Shiraz and Azarbaijan. Despite the relatively meager number of its adepts, it is significant as the sole surviving branch of the once great Kobrawī order, apart from still smaller groups in Kashmir and Bihar.

Exceptionally among Sufi orders, the Ḍahabīya does not owe its designation to an eponym, a circumstance that reflects the ambiguities of its history. Conventional explanations of the name refer it either to Arabic *ḏahaba* (he went) or to Arabic *ḏahab* (gold). It is said that, when the putative ancestor of the order, ʿAbd-Allāh Barzešābādī (d. ca. 856/1452), quit the circle of his master, Esḥāq Ḵottalānī (d. 826/1423), the latter exclaimed, "ʿAbd-Allāh has gone!" (*ḏahaba ʿAbd-Allāh*). This story must be dismissed as a naming legend comparable to that surrounding the origins of the Muʿtazilite movement. Attempts have been made to connect the name of the Ḍahabīya with gold in the following ways: The chain of initiation to the order resembles pure gold, in that it consists exclusively of Shiʿites (which is untrue); the masters of the order have often been alchemists; the order has been guided by a series of precepts of Imam ʿAlī al-Reżā that were written in gold; and the first links in the chain of initiation after the Prophet were the first eight of the twelve imams, a succession known as the "chain of gold" (*selselat al-ḏahab*; Ḵāvarī, pp. 92-106). The last explanation might have some merit if the inclusion of these eight imams in the chain of initiation were peculiar to the Ḍahabīs; it is, however, a feature

common to many orders, including even the strictly Sunnite Naqšbandīs. The matter is further complicated by the fact that the original Kobrawīya, as well as other branches of the order, including the Nūrbaḵšīya, have also been designated as Ḏahabīya (Maʿṣūm-ʿAlīšāh, II, p. 334). For the sake of clarity, as well as for polemical purposes, this particular offshoot of the Kobrawīya has therefore sometimes been called Ḏahabīya-ye eḡtešāšīya (the rebellious Ḏahabīya), an allusion to Barzešābādī's secession (Maʿṣūm-ʿAlīšāh II, p. 344). In view of this multiple confusion, it is not surprising that Zayn-al-ʿĀbedīn Šīrvānī (p. 322) assigned the beginnings of the exclusive use of the name Ḏahabīya by this branch of the Kobrawīya to the 18th century.

The origins of the Ḏahabīya, as a distinctly Shiʿite line of transmission, are often attributed to Barzešābādī, who broke with Ḵottalānī over the latter's endorsement of the claim advanced by another disciple, Sayyed Moḥammad Nūrbaḵš, to be the Mahdi (Šūštarī, II, p. 145). As a result the line of Ḵottalānī was divided into two branches, the Nūrbakšīya and the Ḏahabīya. The origins of the Ḏahabīya as a Shiʿite order, however, cannot be attributed to this split, for Barzešābādī's immediate successors also included Sunnites (DeWeese, p. 61); it is therefore safe to assume that Barzešābādī was himself a Sunnite. At that point, it was rather the rival Nūrbaḵšīs who, after a fashion, became Shiʿite.

The first Shiʿite link in the Ḏahabī *selsela* cannot be identified with any certainty. It may have been Ḡolām-ʿAlī Nīšāpūrī, a Central Asian disciple of Moḥammad Ḵabūšānī (d. 938/1531-32). Like Barzešābādī, Ḵabūšānī had a number of Central Asian Sunnite successors, and he was no doubt a Sunnite himself. The perpetuation in Khorasan of the line from Nīšāpūrī, at a time when Shiʿism was being energetically propagated there by the Safavids, suggests that this branch of the Kobrawīya had already made the transition to Shiʿism; otherwise, it would have had little chance of surviving under the Safavids. ʿAbd-al-Ḥosayn Zarrīnkūb (p. 265) speculates that the Ḏahabīs even aided in the diffusion of Shiʿism in Khorasan.

Another Persian branch of Barzešābādī's lineage was that established in Tabrīz by Badr-al-Dīn Aḥmad Lālaʾī (d. 912/1506), one of his direct disciples. Although one of Badr-al-Dīn's sons, Šehāb-al-dīn ʿAbd-Allāh Lālaʾī (d. 947/1540), briefly and reluctantly occupied the post of *ṣadr* (head of the religious institution) after Shah Esmāʿīl's conquest of Tabrīz in 907/1501 (Tabrīzī, II, p. 186), there is no evidence that the Lālaʾīs switched their loyalties to Shiʿism; the relative favor shown them by Shah Esmāʿīl may be explained rather in terms

of his respect for their status as *sayyed*s (descendants of the Prophet Moḥammad). The fact that the grandson of Aḥmad Lālaʾī thought it prudent to spend much of his life outside the Safavid domain, together with the failure of the Lālaʾī line to perpetuate itself under Safavid rule, suggests that the transition to Shiʿism was never made, at least with any degree of conviction. Devin DeWeese's assertion (p. 62) that the term Ḏahabīya is "a generic designation for the Iranian branches of Barzishābādī's lineage which at some unknown point became Shiʿite," including both the Lālaʾīs and the descendants of Nīšāpūrī, is therefore questionable.

The flourishing of the Nīšāpūrī line may be attributed not only to the switch to Shiʿism but also to the roots the order apparently struck among the merchants and artisans of Khorasan (note such designations as *pālāndūz* "packsaddlemaker" and *zargar* "goldsmith" borne by several Ḏahabī leaders in the early Safavid period). Important, too, no doubt, was their strict avoidance of antinomian tendencies, outwardly reflected in donning the garb of the *ʿolamāʾ* (Zarrīnkūb, p. 332). Illustrative of the same tendency was *Toḥfa-ye ʿabbāsī*, written by the master of the order Moḥammad-ʿAlī Moʾaḏḏen Ḵorāsānī (d. ca. 1078/ 1667) and dedicated to Shah ʿAbbās II (1052-77/1642-66); in it the precepts and practices of Ḏahabī Sufism were presented as a natural extension of the teachings of Shiʿism.

Nevertheless, the Ḏahabīya came increasingly under attack by the *ʿolamāʾ* of Mašhad, with the result that in the early 17th century Moḥammad-ʿAlī Moʾaḏḏen's successor, Najīb-al-Dīn Reżā Zargar (or Jawharī), transferred the center of the order to the generally more congenial atmosphere of Fārs. Even there the Ḏahabīya were not entirely free from molestation. The next master but one, Sayyed Qoṭb-al-Dīn Moḥammad Neyrīzī/Nīrīzī (d. 1173/1760), was a man of considerable accomplishment in the formal religious sciences; he had studied Hadith and other disciplines in the *madrasa*s of Shiraz before embarking on the Sufi path. His scholarly credentials were not enough, however, to ensure his security when the Ḏahabīs, together with other Sufis and religious nonconformists, came under renewed attack in the reign of Shah Solṭān-Ḥosayn (1105-35/1694-1722). Neyrīzī's letter to the ruler protesting the persecution of Sufis earned him an insulting and threatening reply, and he prudently left Persia for Najaf in Iraq (Zarrīnkūb, p, 333), where he established friendly relations with many of the *foqahāʾ*.

This episode was the last external crisis faced by the Ḏahabīya. Neyrīzī's successor and son-in-law, Āqā Moḥammad-Hāšem Šīrāzī (d. 1199/1785), led an

untroubled life in Shiraz, where he is said to have been on close terms with Karīm Khan Zand (1163-93/1750-79). The tranquility enjoyed by the Ḍahabīya in the second half of the 18th century was in strong contrast to the travails of the resurgent Neʿmat-Allahīs, whose flamboyance and proselytizing zeal inevitably brought them into conflict with the rising power of the Oṣūlī *mojtahed*s (theologians), in Shiraz and elsewhere.

The degree to which the Ḍahabīya had become integrated into the religious life of Shiraz became fully apparent when the next leader but one of the order, Mīrzā Abu'l-Qāsem Šarīfī Šīrāzī "Rāz-e Šīrāzī" (d. 1286/1869-70), was assigned the administration (*tawlīyat*) of Shah Čerāḡ, the principal shrine in the city; this post was to remain in his family for more than a century (Gramlich, p. 19). A prolific author, Rāz-e Šīrāzī attempted to propagate the order outside Shiraz, traveling to Tehran and Mašhad; he did indeed acquire a considerable following, including, it is said, Moẓaffar-al-Dīn Mīrzā, then heir to the throne (Zarrīnkūb, p. 348). He was succeeded by his son Jalāl-al-Dīn Moḥammad Šarīfī "Majd-al-Ašrāf" I (d. 1331/1913), whose leadership of the order was notable chiefly for the expansion and organization of its following in Azarbaijan. He also invented a logo for the order (supposedly on instructions received in a dream), a calligraphic device based on the name Aḥmad, which is commonly found over the entrances to Ḍahabī *ḵānaqāh*s and residences (for an illustration, see Modarresī-Čahārdehī, 1360 S./1981, p. 157).

Majd-al-Ašrāf I was also the last master to exercise undisputed authority over all Ḍahabīs. Two of the claimants to the succession enjoyed some measure of success. The first was a brother of Majd-al-Ašrāf, Moḥammad-Reżā Šarīfī "Majd-al-Ašrāf" II. As heir to the administration of Shah Čerāḡ, he was able to attract a fairly substantial following, the leadership of which passed first to his son Aḥmad Šarīfī (d. 1311 Š./1932), then to his grandson Moḥammad-Ḥosayn Šarīfī. The latter was succeeded by Šams-al-Dīn Parvīzī Tabrīzī.

It was, however, to Mīrzā Aḥmad Tabrīzī "Waḥīd-al-Awlīāʾ," indisputably the major figure in the modern history of the Ḍahabīya, that the majority of the Ḍahabīs gave their loyalty after the death of Majd-al-Ašrāf I. Born in Tabrīz in 1286/1869-70, he had been initiated into the Ḍahabīya while working in Ardabīl by the representative of Majd-al-Ašrāf I in Azarbaijan. He soon moved to Shiraz, where he became the master's most favored disciple; when the time came he had little difficulty in winning the allegiance of most Ḍahabīs. During his forty-year service as master of the order, he founded a publishing house, the Maṭbaʿe aḥmadī, which published many of the classics of Ḍahabī litera-

ture. He also gained a reputation for rigorous asceticism and sanctity, which persuaded some of his followers that he was the "proof" (*ḥojjat*) of the Hidden Imam (see the poem quoted by Modarresī Čahārdehī, 1361 Š./1982, p. 279).

Waḥīd-al-Awlīāʾ died in 1333 Š./1954, and most of the Ḏahabīs accepted as his successor Ḥājī Mīrzā Moḥammad-ʿAlī "Ḥobb-e Ḥaydar," who had been his spokesman in his declining years. Ḥobb-e Ḥaydar turned his master's residence in Shiraz into a *ḵānaqāh*, with Waḥīd-al-Awlīāʾs tomb in the center; the *ḵānaqāh* was subsequently enlarged through the purchase of much of the surrounding property. Ḥobb-e Ḥaydar died in 1342 Š./1963 and was succeeded by Dr. ʿAbd-al-Ḥamīd Ganjavīān "Ḥamīd-al-Awlīāʾ," a professor of medicine at the University of Tabrīz. The Shiraz *ḵānaqāh* continued to function as the center of the order, however.

Most contemporary adherents of the Ḏahabīya appear to be merchants and civil servants with little knowledge of the theoretical bases of Sufism. They meet on Thursday, Friday, and Sunday nights, either in a *ḵānaqāh* or in the home of a senior adept, to perform rites consisting principally of *ḏekr* (invocation of the divine name) and the recitation of such well-known Shiʿite prayers as *Zīārat-e jāmeʿa*. Ḏahabīs observe two special periods of fasting: one lasting from 11 Moḥarram to 21 Ṣafar, known as the *arbaʿīn-e ḥosaynī* (forty days and nights following the martyrdom of Imam Ḥosayn) and the other from 1 Ḏu'l-qaʿda to 10 Ḏu'l-ḥejja, known as *arbaʿīn-e mūsawī* (the forty days and nights observed by Moses; Modarresī Čahārdehī, 1361 Š./1982, p. 284; cf. Âčella ii). To dream of one of the twelve imams is considered an indispensable initiatory experience, and it is through dreams that each adept receives the special name by which he is known within the order, as well as the particular form of *ḏekr* that he is to practice individually (Modarresī Čahārdehī, 1361 Š./1982, p. 286). Most of these features of Ḏahabī practice are traditional, but the literature composed by recent Ḏahabī authors gives the impression that the order is engaged in a self-conscious, somewhat degenerate parody of Sufi tradition, rather than a vital continuation of it.

Apart from the reassignment of the administration of Shah Čerāḡ to a member of the powerful Dastḡayb clerical family, the advent of the Islamic Republic appears to have brought little change in the status of the Ḏahabīs.

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