



HAMADĀNI, SAYYED 'ALI

HAMADĀNI, SAYYED 'ALI b. Sayyed Šehāb-al-Din (b. Hamadān, 12 Rajab 714/1314; d. Du'l-ḥejja 786/1384), Sufi author and preacher who undertook a celebrated mission to convert the people of Kashmir to Islam. He is referred to usually as “Mir Sayyed 'Ali,” but was also known by such honorifics as “Amir Kabir,” “'Ali-e Tāni” and “Šāh-e Hamadāni.” His title “Sayyed” implies that he was a descendent of the Prophet, and this was apparently from both sides of his family. His father was one of the notables of Hamadān, but Mir Sayyed 'Ali himself acknowledges that the greatest influence on his education and early spiritual development was his maternal uncle, Sayyed 'Alā'-al-Din (Karbalā'i, pp. 274-75). Later, Mir Sayyed 'Ali is known to have been a disciple of Shaikh Maḥmud Mazdaqāni (d. 761/1360), who was based in Hamadān, (Karbalā'i, p. 275) and to have studied under the Hadith expert Shaikh Najm-al-Din Adkāni (d. 778/1376), from whom he received a license to teach (*ejāza*; q.v.; *op. cit.*, pp. 253, 586).

As a Sufi, he repeatedly emphasizes the importance of respecting the basic requirements of Islam, so as not to contravene the law or theological dogma in one's mystical practice and thought. Moḥammad Eqbāl (d. 1938) discusses in detail this aspect of his belief in his *Jāvid-nāma* (Eqbāl, 1349 Š./1970, p. 419). Although some scholars have classified him as a Sunnite, his own writings express strong 'Alid sentiments, and later he is often associated with Sayyed Moḥammad Nurbaḳš (d. 869/1464) and Sayyed 'Abd-Allāh Barzašābādi (d. 872/1467), founders of the Shi'ite Nurbaḳšiya and Ḍahabiya Sufi orders, respectively (Nāyeb-al-Šadr, I, pp. 307, 339, 334; III, p. 485). Later Shi'ite



authors, including Qāzi Nur-Allāh and Shaikh Āqā Bozorg have counted Mir Sayyed 'Ali as belonging to the Shi'ite tradition on the basis of his own writings, such as the treatise *al-Mawadda fi'l-qorbā wa-ahl al-'abā'*, his letters to the various rulers in Kashmir and his poetry (Aḍkā'i, pp. 26-29). In his testament, he declares his own affiliation to Najm-al-Din Kobrā (d. 618/1221; Hamādani, 1353 Š./1974), the eponymous founder of the influential Central Asian Kobrawiya order of Sufis.

From the age of twenty, Mir Sayyed 'Ali traveled widely in the region, including throughout Persia from Azarbaijan to Khorasan, Transoxiana, eastern Iraq and even Europe and Sri Lanka (Karbalā'i, pp. 254-59, 268). He met many Sufis on his travels, including 'Alā'-al-Din Semnāni (d. 734/1334) and Qoṭb-al-Din Yaḥyā Nišāpuri (d. 738/1338; *ibid.*, pp. 251-52). In 772/1371, he decided to settle in Kottalān, present-day Kulāb in Tajikistan, and in 774/1372 and 781/1379 he made successive journeys from there to Kashmir. On his second visit he is said to have been accompanied by 700 fellow sayyeds and followers, on a mission to convert the population to Islam (Aḍkā'i, pp. 71-73). They were based in Srinagar, at a location which is currently the site of a Sufi hospice (*kānaqāh*) built in honor of Mir Sayyed 'Ali.

He died after having fallen ill while on his way from Srinagar to Mecca to perform the pilgrimage, and was buried in Kottalān, where his shrine still stands today. Among his disciples were Nur-al-Din Ja'far Badaḡši (d. 797/1395), the author of *Kolāṣat al-manāqeb*, a memorial devoted to Mir Sayyed 'Ali, and K'āja Eshāq 'Ali-Šāhi Kottalāni (d. 827/1424; Aḍkā'i, pp. 60, 62).

While Mir Sayyed 'Ali's shrine is a revered place of pilgrimage and he is also celebrated in his native Hamadān, his status as a saint is even higher in the Indian subcontinent, especially Kashmir, where "Šāh-e Hamdān" is a popular personal name and many religious institutions are also called "Šāh-e Hamdān" after him. Iqbal [Eqbāl] has also written many poems about "Sayyed" devoted to him, and even reports a dream in which he sees the spirit of "Ḥaẓrat-e Šāh-e Hamadāni" (Eqbāl, pp. 415-20). Dozens of works are attributed to Mir Sayyed 'Ali, of which about ten have been published so far.



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