



ḤOSAYN KARBALĀ'Ī

ḤOSAYN ḤĀFEẒ KARBALĀ'Ī TABRIZI BĀBĀ-FARAJI, popularly known as Ebn Karbalā'ī, a major Persian historian of Sufis and Sufism of 16th-century Persia and a poet (d. 997/1589). The appellation Bābā-Faraji, which he used in the foreword (*dibāčā*) of his *Rawżāt al-jenān* (I, p. 9), refers to his kinship affiliation with the Sufi saint Bābā Faraj Tabrizi (d. 568/1172-73), the custodianship of whose mausoleum in Tabriz was hereditary in his family. He also composed a *divān* of Persian poetry that is still unpublished (*Rawżāt* I, pp. 11-13). Some of his poetry is included in the *Rawżāt*.

He finished his major work, *Rawżāt al-jenānwa jannāt al-janān*, in 975/1567, according to the chronogram (*ziārāt-e qobur-e awliā'*) at the end of the book (II, p. 529). There is no mention of his date of birth; but, in the foreword of the book (I, p. 1), he refers to himself as being fifty years old. Considering that the book probably took at least five years to write, one may surmise that he was born some time around 916/1510, assuming that the foreword was written five years before the chronogram. Probably due to the political instability of Azarbaijan in general and Tabriz in particular following the rise of the ardently Shi'ite Safavids, Ebn Karbalā'ī spent most of his life in exile from Tabriz. Although his political opposition to the Safavids is expressed with reserve, it can sometimes be read in between the lines (cf. *Rawżāt* I, p. 491). In 988/1580 he set out on the *hajj* pilgrimage, going through Damascus to Mecca, then returning by the same route to Tabriz, where he remained for only a short time before going back to reside in Damascus; and soon later his family joined him there. He died in Damascus in 997/1589 (*Rawżāt* I, editor's introd.,



pp. 14, 21), leaving behind two sons, one daughter and numerous grandchildren.

Ebn Karbalā'ī's grandfather, Amir Badr-al-Din Aḥmad b. Moḥammad Ḥasani Ḥosayni Lāla (840-912/1436–1507), was the head of the Barzešābādi branch of the Kobrawi order (*Rawzāt* I, editor's introd., p. 23) in Tabriz and a direct disciple of 'Abd-Allāh Barzešābādi (usually regarded as the founder of the present-day Ḍahabi order; see Estakri, p. 330; Trimmingham, p. 57) in an initiatic chain which went back through Barzešābādi, 'Ali Hamadāni, and 'Alā'-al-Dawla Semnāni (d. 736/1336) to Najm-al-Din Kobrā (d. 618/1221). He had a large following in Azarbaijan (Amir Arjomand, p. 114). The entire seventh chapter (*rawza*) of the *Rawzāt* is devoted to extolling his virtues and recounting the marvels of his *baraka* (blessings). Ebn Karbalā'ī was a direct disciple of his own father, Amir Ṣafi-al-Din Šāh Mojtabā (the son of Sayyed Lāla), to whom he dedicated his book (*Rawzāt* I, author's foreword, p. 2).

Rawzāt al-jenān is a medieval pilgrim's guide to the graveyards of Tabriz (e.g., those of Waliān-kuy, Sorḳāb, and Čarandāb), providing detailed biographies of Sufi saints, scholars, poets, artists, and other notables who flourished in Tabriz and its outlying suburbs (and occasionally Azarbaijan in general). It also includes "extensive biographies of the lineal spiritual forebears of the author back to Najm-al-Din Kobrā" (DeWeese, p. 57). The book is divided into a foreword (*dibāčā*), an introduction (*moqaddama*), eight chapters (*rawza*), and a conclusion (*kātema*). The foreword outlines the contents and the reason for its composition; the introduction presents a broad range of Hadith, detailing the proper customs, manners, and conduct to be observed, as well as the benefits accrued by Muslims who visit the tombs (*Rawzāt* I, p. 13).

The eight chapters treat: (1) graves and holy places of the Prophet Moḥammad and his companions; (2) notable tombs of Sorḳāb, Tabriz; (3) notable tombs of Čarandāb, Tabriz; (4) the tombs of the mystics ('*orafā*') of Ganjil, Tabriz; (5) tombs within the city of Tabriz, from Waliān-kuy to Šanab Ġāzān; (6) tombs in the outlying suburbs of Tabriz; (7) the life and times of the author's grandfather Badr-al-Din Aḥmad Ḥosayni Lāla; (8) on the 'Abd-Allāhiya-'Alawiya-'Alā'-al-Dawlāwiya-Kobrawiyya order to which Lāla belonged. The conclusion concerns "the meaning of the prophet (*nabi*), messenger (*rasul*), and prophethood (*nobowwat*), as well as the saintly friend of God (*wali*), the Sufi master (*moršed*), and sainthood (*welāyat*), and whatever concerns these matters, with recourse to demonstrations from the Scripture and traditions of the Prophet" (*Rawzāt* I, pp. 3-4)



Rawżāt al-jenān is a fascinating and extraordinary work that is far too undervalued by scholars of Timurid and Safavid cultural history and historians of Persian Sufism. It contains dissertations on a wide range of esoteric subjects that are cited to buttress the author's analyses and discussions of Sufi saints. As a sample of some of the subjects covered, one may cite: his exposition of the mystical meaning of wine (*Rawżāt* I, pp. 31-34), exegesis of the meaning of *jenn* (I, pp. 111-13), discussion of disciplic devotion (*erādat*; I, pp. 164, 380), the praiseworthy qualities of dogs (I, pp. 413-14), sapiential taste (*dawq*; II, pp. 16 ff.), metaphysical time (*waqt*; II, pp. 19-20), his elaboration of the differences between the ascetic (*zāhed*) and the Sufi (I, p. 160), his discussion of the etiquette of musical audition (*samā*), the meaning of ecstasy (*wajd*; I, pp. 300-314, 338), and his superb presentation of the idea of worship of human beauty (*jamāl-parasti*) as a reflection of divine beauty (I, pp. 503-8). To expound these themes and illustrate the wide diversity of theosophical viewpoints held by mystics (*'orafā*), Ebn Karbalā'i displays a profound familiarity with both practical and speculative dimensions of Sufism (*taṣawwof*) by citing a broad range of philosophical and mystical authorities. The work is equally important for the insightful vignettes of the 16th-century Persian culture and society, as well as for his often unique accounts of both major and marginal figures in the history of Sufism.

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