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IRAN IX. RELIGIONS IN IRAN (2) ISLAM IN IRAN (2.2) MONGOL AND TIMURID PERIODS

IRAN ix, continued

(2.2) The Mongol and Timurid Periods

The cataclysm of the Mongol invasion resulted not only in Persia coming under non-Muslim rule for the first time since the Arab conquest; it also caused vast devastation and demographic dislocation. Its consequences for the religious configuration of the Perso-Islamic world were less immediately apparent. Rule by sultans professing Islam was restored a mere thirty-seven years after the sacking of Baghdad, when in 694/1295 the Il-khanid ruler Maḥmud Ḡāzān Khan embraced Islam and required of all the Mongols in his realm that they do likewise or depart. Although traces of Mongol custom remained embedded in royal practice for several centuries, Islam had been restored to unchallenged supremacy in a fairly short time.

It is sometimes assumed that the general predominance of Sunnism in Persia was significantly weakened by the destruction of the ʿAbbasid caliphate by the Mongols in 1258, starting a drift toward Shiʿism that found its natural

conclusion in the changes wrought by the Safavids. There is little to recommend this theory; no new territory was won for Shiʿism in the period of Mongol domination, and the main center of Shiʿite learning was the city of Ḥella in Iraq. It is true that the Il-khanid ruler Öljeitü (r. 1304-17), repelled by an unseemly wrangle between Hanafites and Shafeʿites, was persuaded by Ebn Moṭahhar al-Ḥelli to embrace Imami Shiʿism and tried in 710/1310 to have at least some of his subjects follow him. However, his envoys were met with strong resistance in Shiraz and probably elsewhere as well, and Öljeitü himself appears to have reverted to Sunnism before his death (Ebn Baṭṭuṭa, pp. 204-7; Spuler, 1955, pp. 190-91).

As for Timur, he is definitely classifiable as a Sunnite, in the technical sense of the word. He associated with a number of dervishes, notably Šams-al-Din Kolāl, Sayyed Baraka, and Zayn-al-Din Ḵᵛāfi, eponym of the Zayni Sufi order. Moreover, he patronized Sunni scholars such as Šaʿd-al-Din Taftāzāni (d. 791/1389) and Šarif Jorjāni (d. 816/1413), bringing them, sometimes forcibly, to his capital of Samarqand. It was no doubt activities such as these that gained him a reputation for piety summed up in the highly questionable epitaph, *Timur mord wa imān babord* (Timur died, and he took faith with him; cited approvingly by Serhendi, p. 92). Sometimes, however, he subordinated his Sunnite allegiance to political expediency, as when he proclaimed himself protector of the Shiʿite community of Aleppo. Sunnite loyalties prevailed also among his successors based in Samarqand. Tendencies to Shiʿism can, however, be discerned in Sultan Ḥosayn Bayqarā, the Timurid ruler of Herat from 875/1470 to 912/1506; it was only the persuasions of his minister, ʿAli-Šir Navāʾi, that prevented him from openly embracing the creed (Szuppe, p. 122). Bayqarā's initial inclination to Shiʿism may have either reflected or encouraged a growing sense of confidence in the Shiʿite minority of the city and its environs.

The only movement in the Mongol and Timurid periods that recognizably subscribed—even partially—to normative Twelver Shiʿism was that of the Sarbadarids, which arose, not coincidentally, in an area where Shiʿism had long been implanted: Bayhaq in Khorasan. It originated with a certain Shaikh Ḵalifa, a renegade Kobrawi from Māzandarān, who, arriving in Sabzavār, the main urban center of Bayhaq, some time in the third decade of the 8th/14th century, began preaching doctrines of uncertain content that were welcomed by the Shiʿite population of the city but opposed by its Sunnite ulema. The result was a *fatwā* for his execution, implemented in 736/1335. Not long after,

a local notable by the name of ʿAbd-al-Razzāq killed a Mongol tax collector in the vicinity of Sabzavār and launched a rebellion that eventuated in the capture of Sabzavār in 738/1337 and ʿAbd-al-Razzāq's proclamation of himself as ruler. The violent factionalism that was to mar the whole history of the Sarbadarids soon showed itself for the first time when ʿAbd-al-Razzāq was stabbed to death by his brother, Wajih al-Din Masʿud (Roemer, p. 23). He not only came to terms with the Mongol governor of Khorasan but also enrolled himself in the following of Ḥasan Juri, successor to Shaikh Ḵalifa, who now in effect became co-ruler with Masʿud. This partnership was inherently unstable; the ambitions of Masʿud were of conventional, monarchical nature, while Shaikh Ḥasan Juri proclaimed the re-appearance of the Twelfth Imam to be imminent and sought to propagate Shiʿism coercively in the predominantly Sunnite areas of Khorasan that came progressively, albeit fleetingly, under Sarbadarid control: Nishapur, Jājarm, Dāmḡān, and Semnān. When Ḥasan Juri was killed in battle against the rulers of Herat in 743/1342, suspicions arose that Masʿud had had him killed under the cover of battle. Two years later, Masʿud himself was killed in renewed clashes with the Mongols (Roemer, p. 26). Complex vicissitudes that defy concise summary punctuated the remaining four decades of the Sarbadarids. Worthy of mention, however, is the last of their line, ʿAli Moʾayyad (d. 788/1386), for the ideological complexity of the movement found its clearest expression with him. He allied himself with a certain Darviš ʿAziz, who had established a shortlived state in Mashad in the name of the Twelfth Imam, but finding him too radical for his taste, he killed him and expelled his followers from Sabzavār. When they in turn regained control of the city, it was only with the assistance of Timur that he was able, in 783/1381, to reconquer it. ʿAli Moʾayyad was nonetheless devoted to the establishment of a stable Shiʿite principality, and to guide him in that task he solicited from Moḥammad b. Makki ʿĀmeli (d. 786/1384) the important handbook of Shiʿite *feqh* that became known as *al-Lomʿat al-demašqiya*. It is possible, then, to discern a division in Sarbadarid Khorasan between millennarian enthusiasts such as Ḥasan Juri and Darviš ʿAziz, and a current that was attuned to the learned traditions of Twelver Shiʿism and gradualist in its tactics.

It was dissatisfaction with what may be called the conservative wing of the Sarbadarid movement that caused an adherent of Ḥasan Juri, ʿEzz-al-Din, a member of a family of Marʿaši *sayyed*s, to quit Sabzavār and make for his homeland of Māzandarān. He died en route, but his son, Mir Qewām-al-Din, succeeded in 760/1359 in establishing a Shiʿite principality based on Āmol. In

795/1393, the city was sacked and its inhabitants massacred by Timur, who also deported the ruling *sayyed*s to Samarqand. They were able to return to Āmol during the reign of Šāhroḵ and continued to rule for some time. An offshoot of the Āmol principality was established in Gilān by one Amir Kiā; it survived until 1000/1592 (Roemer, p. 35).

The Horufi movement (see HORUFISM), which overlapped chronologically with that of the Sarbadarids, might better be described as a fantastic and decadent form of Sufism than as an expression of Shiʿism, even in its *ḡolāt* (q.v.) version that regarded ʿAli b. Abi Ṭāleb and the Twelve Imams as divine; it did, however, draw on the same expectation of apocalyptic change that informed one wing of the Sarbadarid enterprise. The name derives from the alphabetic obsessions of its founding figure, Fażl-Allāh Astarābādi. Born in 740/1339 to a family that claimed descent from Imam Musā Kāẓem, he was inclined from early life to ascetic devotion, and at the age of eighteen he abandoned the judgeship he had inherited from his father, donned the cloak of a shepherd, and set off on the hajj. On his return he stayed for a while in Chorasmia but then set off for Mecca once more, interrupting his journey with a period of retreat and contemplation in Mashad. Back again in Chorasmia, he experienced visions that imbued him with a sense of mission, and he began gathering a band of devotees (Ritter, pp. 12-14). The nascent community moved to Ṭoqči, a suburb of Isfahan, where it attracted attention for its ascetic mode of life and the skill of its leader in interpreting dreams. This talent earned Fażl-Allāh favor at the court of the Jalayerids in Tabriz, to which he moved in 775/1373, and it was there that he claimed to receive a comprehensive revelation of esoteric knowledge and an address from the world of the unseen proclaiming him “the Lord of the Age and the Sultan of the Prophets” (Ritter, p. 20). Central to his teachings, which defy reduction to a logically coherent system, was the belief that the thirty-two letters of the Perso-Arabic alphabet represent both a compendium of the cosmos and a means for knowledge about it. They were the letters that had been taught to Adam and had therefore been implicit in all humans, but the realization of them had been gradual until the time of Fażl-Allāh in a cyclical scheme that passed through prophethood (from Adam to Moḥammad) and sainthood (from Imam ʿAli to Ḥasan al-ʿAskari, eleventh of the Twelve Imams) to divinity (*oluhiyat*; Fażl-Allāh himself). The exaltation of the alphabet went together with a numerology that assigned particular significance to numbers, especially seven, that have analogues in man’s physical form, which in its totality bears the palpable imprint of the divine image; man’s body is none other than the

divine throne. All this and much else besides was expounded in the *Jāvdān-nāma*, which purported to be both an esoteric interpretation of the Qurʾan and a new revelation abrogating it (Bashir, pp. 45-84).

Fażl-Allāh was beheaded in Šarvān by Mirānšāh, a son of Timur, in 796/1394 (Ritter, p. 23). His deviance had already been condemned by ulema meeting at a variety of locations, including Samarqand—an indication that awareness of his activities had reached the Timurid capital and aroused a disquiet that was at once religious and political. The Ḥorufi movement nonetheless survived in Persia for another half century. Aḥmad-e Lor, a Ḥorufi who had come from Šarvān, attempted to assassinate Šāhroḵ the Timurid in Herat in 830/1427, and his failure led to a massacre of real or suspected adherents of the movement in the city. Similar events occurred in Isfahan in 835/1431 (Āžand, pp. 87-88). Tabriz, then ruled by the Qarā Qoyonlu dynasty, was initially more hospitable to the Ḥorufis, and the Turkish verse written by Jahānšāh contains explicitly Ḥorufi themes. When threatened with dethronement by the overwhelmingly Sunnite populace of Tabriz and their ulema, he nonetheless permitted the Ḥorufis of the city to be massacred in 845/1441 (Maškur, pp. 133-46). Although a subterranean residue of Horufism survived into the Safavid period, the killings in Tabriz appear to mark the end of organized Ḥorufi activity in Persia; it was in Anatolia and the Balkans that the movement had a much greater prolongation, primarily under the auspices of the Bektāši order of dervishes. Its significance in the religious history of Persia was to have manifested, among a small, scattered but supremely devoted following, some of the same doctrines that animated the Safavids during their rise to power in ther second half of the 9th/15th century.

A somewhat similar movement was the Mošaʿšaʿa of Khuzestan, launched by Moḥammad b. Falāḥ, a native of Wāseṭ in southern Iraq, who, like other aspirants to eminence in the same age, claimed descent from Imam Musā al-Kāẓem, seventh of the Twelve Imams. After studying with one of the major Twelver scholars of the time, Aḥmad b. Fahd of Ḥella, who was also his foster father, he declared himself to be the Mahdi in 840/1436, whereupon his teacher disowned and denounced him. It was, indeed, in an area and among a population remote from formal learning, the nomadic Arabs of the Iraqi marshlands, that he chose to begin his preaching, persuading them to trade their water buffaloes for weapons and form the nucleus of his army. After a number of setbacks, he captured the city of Ḥowayza in Khuzestan in 845/1458; this remained his capital, while his son, Mawlā ʿAli, went on briefly

to capture Najaf and Wāseṭ and to threaten the environs of Baghdad. He died in Ḥowayza in 870/1465, but the principality he had founded lived on, briefly expanding into Lorestān under the auspices of another son, Sayyed Moḥammad (Caskel, pp. 49-64).

The particulars of Moḥammad b. Falāḥ's doctrine, far more conformable to *ḡolāt* than to Twelver Shiʿism, can be gleaned from his *Kalām al-Mahdi*. There he asserts that ʿAli b. Abi Ṭāleb is an eternal mystery, traversing the heavens and the earth at all times, whereas the role of the Prophet is simply to act as a veil; as for the Imams after ʿAli, they are angels assuring communication between him and the Prophet. His own status as the Mahdi means that he possesses all the perfection of all the prophets and all the saints. Despite this exalted status, Moḥammad b. Falāḥ did not neglect to regulate the details of public hygiene and punish offenders with death (Caskel, p. 73). As for the designation Mošaʿšaʿa used by the sect, it comes from a root meaning "to glitter," especially wine in a glass, the sense presumably being that the adherents of Moḥammad b. Falāḥ "glittered" from the intoxication produced in them by their creed. The rise of the Safavids, less than half a century after the death of the sect's founder, brought an end to the independence of the principality, and normative Twelver Shiʿism gradually came to prevail throughout Khuzestan.

It is also in the 9th/15th century, the last of the pre-Safavid era, that the rise of the Ahl-e Ḥaqq, well described by Vladimir Minorsky as "a federation of associated movements," is to be located (see van Bruinessen, p. 118; a considerably earlier date is given, however, by Minorsky, basing himself on an early 20th-century Ahl-e Ḥaqq text; Minorsky, p. 313). This "federation" is sometimes designated by outsiders living in proximity to it as ʿAli-Allāhi, but although its adherents find room in their capacious pantheon for a divinized ʿAli and may well have been influenced by teachings of the *ḡolāt* Shiʿites, this particular belief plays only a minor role in their loosely built doctrinal system. Far more important are elements apparently derived from the pre-Islamic religions of Persia: Manicheism (a pearl functioning as the container from which the entirety of creation was brought forth), Zoroastrianism (a heptad of sacred beings [*haft-tan*] assisting the creator in the work of extraction), and Mithraism (the sacrifice of a bull on that primordial occasion). Belief in the cyclical manifestation of sacred entities in fleshly form is also an article of Ahl-e Ḥaqq belief (Minorsky, pp. 307-8). At various dates, a miscellany of Islamic details were successively grafted onto this scheme, not only Extremist Shiʿite

but also Sufi: use of the term *pir* in connection with the elders of the sect, rites of initiation, and invocation of a threefold scheme *šarīʿat-ṭariqat-ḥaqiqat* to describe the stages of religious insight and practice. The unanimously recognized founder of the Ahl-e Ḥaqq was a certain Solṭān Soḥāq (= Esḥāq), descended from a *sayyed* of Hamadan. He lived in the Gurān region of Kurdistan, which counts for the Ahl-e Ḥaqq as the sacred territory where all cosmologically significant events have taken place, and was buried in a mausoleum on the right bank of the Sirvān river. The shrine of his son and successor, Bābā Yādgār, an incarnation of one of the *haft-tan*, is situated in the mountains west of Kermanshah. Both shrines are on Persian territory. From Gurān, the sect spread first to Lorestān and other parts of Kurdistan; then, under the auspices of a certain Ātaš Beg, to Qarāja Dāḡ and Sahand in Azarbaijan; and thence to a scattering of other locations—some isolated villages near Qazvin and Rašt, and others in Māzandarān. Most of the texts deemed sacred by the Ahl-e Ḥaqq, and designated by them as *kalām*, are in Gurāni, but some are in Azarbaijani Turkish; they laud Shah Esmāʿil, referred to by his *nom de plume* as Ḵaṭāʾi, as a divine manifestation, and betray a number of similarities with Qezelbāš doctrine (Minorsky, p. 314). It should not be inferred from this, however, that the Ahl-e Ḥaqq played any part in the rise of the Safavids to power, or even that they in some sense foreshadowed it; apart from the seepage of their sect outside Kurdistan, they played no role in the religious destinies of Persia as a whole.

Rather than these geographically and doctrinally disparate movements, the religious life of Persia and Transoxania during the Mongol and Timurid periods was dominated by a number of Sufi orders, in conformity with a pattern generally observable at the time in much of the western Islamic world. They all arose in the Persian-speaking world, although their lineages ultimately found diffusion beyond it. Each represented the crystallization of an existing initiatic line under the impact of a personality deemed either to represent a partially new departure or, on the contrary, to provide an authoritative summation of the tradition.

The first and in many ways the most interesting of these orders was the Kobrawiya, named after Najm-al-Din of Chorasmia, whose distinctive epithet “Kobrā” was the abbreviation of *al-ṭāmmat al-kobrā* (the overwhelming event), a nickname bestowed on him because of his insuperable powers in debate (Meier, 1957, p. 8). Born in 540/1145, he showed a propensity to visionary experience early in life but long remained preoccupied with the study of

Hadith, and it was not until he was thirty-five years of age that he embarked on the search for a spiritual preceptor. The precise chronology of this search is uncertain; definite only is that Kobrā associated with three figures, each possessing a Sohravardi lineage. These were Ruzbehān Meṣri, ʿAmmār Yāser Bedlisi, and Esmāʿil Qaṣri, whose company he kept in Cairo, Tabriz, and Dezful respectively. Bedlisi may have been the most important of them, for it was he who bestowed on Kobrā his principal *ḵerqa* (initiatic cloak) and to him alone that Kobrā referred in his writings; on the other hand, it was Qaṣri who proclaimed his training complete and sent him back to Chorasmia in 580/1184. He devoted the rest of his life to training some sixty disciples and to writing a number of relatively brief works, for the most part in Arabic, that provide practical guidance for wayfarers on the Sufi path and both describe and interpret the visionary experiences of their author. He died in the slaughter wrought by the Mongols on Chorasmia in 618/1221, perhaps while fighting against them at the head of a band of his disciples (Meier, 1957, p. 53).

Kobrā was, in a sense, posthumously avenged by those of his initiatic descendants who facilitated the conversion to Islam and general acculturation of the Mongol rulers in Persia and Central Asia; their political involvements foreshadowed the better-known case of Naqšbandi engagement in the politics of the Timurid period. The Kobrawis were significant, too, for the production of a diverse and abundant literature in both Persian and Arabic which went beyond the distinctive concerns of Kobrā himself, and for disseminating what was originally a localized order, centered on Chorasmia, unevenly over a broad swath of territory extending from Azarbaijan to China. A leading member of the first generation of Kobrawis was Majd-al-Din Bašdādi, executed in 617/1220 by the ruling dynasty of Chorasmia before Kobrā's own death. He had, therefore, little opportunity to exercise preceptorial functions, but Kobrā did assign him the training of Najm-al-Din Dāya, a disciple who seems to have come to Chorasmia relatively late in Kobrā's life and prudently to have left not long before the Mongol cataclysm. Despite the implication of his apparently self-awarded sobriquet "Dāya" (wetnurse) that he succored numerous spiritual offspring, Najm-al-Din trained no disciples of note. He compensated for this deficiency by writing a number of influential works, above all *Merṣād al-ʿebād men al-mabdaʾ ela'l-maʿād*, an elegantly written compendium of Sufi doctrine and practice, which, translated into Arabic, Turkish, and Chinese, enjoyed a lasting popularity even among Sufis not affiliated to the Kobrawiya (Algar, 1979, p. 20).

More important for the perpetuation of Kobrā's initiatic line was Saʿd-al-Din Ḥamuya, the scion of a family in Baḥrābād near Jovayn in Khorasan that had for long been associated with Sufism. Like Dāya, he became a disciple of Kobrā relatively late in the life of the master, and again like him, he left Chorasmia shortly before the Mongol invasion. He spent the rest of his life traveling incessantly in Persia, Egypt, Syria, and the Hijaz, returning for the final years of his life to Baḥrābād, where he died in 649/1252. One of the more important way stations on his travels had been Damascus, where he made the acquaintance of Ebn al-ʿArabi (q.v.) and the two men conceived a profound respect for each other. Ḥamuya counts, in fact, as the first of those several Kobrawis who functioned as one of the main channels for the transmission of Ebn al-ʿArabi's concepts and terminology to the Persian world. He is notable also for his somewhat abstruse reflections on the quality of *welāyat* (sainthood) and its relationship to prophethood, and his assertion that the term *wali* might legitimately be applied only to the Twelve Imams from the Household of the Prophet. This has caused him—and by extension, the Kobrawiya as a whole—to be regarded as proto-Shiʿite, but there is nothing in his writings to suggest any inclination to confessional Shiʿism; if anything, he is engaged in an attempt to appropriate the Twelve Imams for a distinctively Sufi concept of sacred history (Ḥamuya, pp. 100-102).

After Ḥamuya, the direction of the Baḥrābād *ḵānaqāh* (Sufi residence and hospice) was inherited by his son Ṣadr-al-Din (d. 722/1322), notable principally for having presided over the conversion to Islam of the Mongol ruler Ḡāzān Khan in 694/1295, who was, significantly, draped for the occasion in a robe that had belonged to Saʿd-al-Din. A more important successor to Saʿd- al-Din was ʿAziz-al-Din Nasafi. Like his preceptor, he was an indefatigable traveler, but in none of the places where he alighted did he set himself up as a spiritual guide; he seems even to have distrusted this essential aspect of Sufism. His influence came rather from his books, which largely echo those of Ḥamuya in several respects and differ from them chiefly in being easily comprehensible. Their content is generally inspired by the concerns and terminology of Ebn al-ʿArabi; like his predecessor, he thus identifies the Twelfth Imam with the "Seal of the Saints" (*ḵātam al-awliāʾ*) of whom Ebn al-ʿArabi speaks. Attempts to identify Nasafi as a proto-Shiʿite are misguided; he observes, however, that a person's choice of Sunnite or Shiʿite affiliation is generally the result of mere imitation (*taqlid*), and if one is unable to investigate the matter oneself, he should do those things on which all schools agree (Nasafi, pp. 27-29).

Two of Kobrā's immediate heirs remained in Central Asia: Bābā Kamāl Jandi (d. 672/1273), who fled eastwards from Chorasmia into the eye of the Mongol storm, and whose descendants were active primarily among Turkic populations; and Sayf-al-Din Bāḵarzi (d. 659/1261), founder of a hereditary line in Bukhara with an offshoot in Kerman. No distinguishing doctrinal emphasis can be associated with Bāḵarzi, who is noteworthy primarily for fostering Islam among the Mongols; Berke Khan, ruler of the Golden Horde, visited him in Bukhara and was either converted by him to Islam or strengthened in the affirmation of the faith (Richard, pp. 173-78). The Bāḵarzi line survived in Bukhara until the 19th century and had a short-lived offshoot in Kerman.

The principal line of descent from Kobrā was, however, that originating with Rażi-al-Din ʿAli Lālā of Ghazna (d. 642/1244). Separated from him by one generation was Nur-al-Din Esfarāʾeni (d. 713/1317), active principally in Baghdad; like other shaikhs of the order, he sought with some success to influence members of the Il-khanid administration. Esfarāʾeni was in turn the preceptor of ʿAlāʾ-al-Dawla Semnāni (d. 776/1336), renowned for his critique of *waḥdat al-wojud*, as formulated by Ebn al-ʿArabi or by later members of his school; his elaboration of a sevenfold scheme of *laṭāʾef* (subtle organs of perception); and his completion of a *tafsir* (commentary) on which Najm-al-Din Rāzi had embarked, generally known as the *Baḥr al-ḥaqāʾeq wa'l-maʿāni*. Semnāni also trained a number of disciples, most notably Maḥmud Mazdaqāni (d. 766/1364), the preceptor of ʿAli Hamadāni (d. 786/1385). The most prolific author in the entire history of the Kobrawiya and possibly its most energetic propagator, Hamadāni left his native city in 734/1334, when he was approximately twenty years of age, to embark on a series of travels that lasted some two decades. He then returned to Hamadan, to depart anew in 774/1372, this time for Balkh and then Badaḵšān. Some years later, he moved on yet again, to Kashmir, where he participated vigorously in the propagation of Islam and the diffusion of his branch of the Kobrawiya. Finding himself at odds with the ruler of Kashmir, he left in 786/1385, dying not long after at Kunar on the upper Indus (Rafiqi, pp. 36-41).

The next generation in this Kobrawi line witnessed a major schism that resulted in the emergence of the Nurbaḵšiya and, somewhat later, the Ḏahabiya, both of them effectively separate orders. Each embraced Shiʿism (although Shiʿism initially of an aberrant kind, in the case of the former), a development that has caused the Kobrawiya erroneously to be interpreted as proto-Shiʿite in its entirety. The eponym of the Nurbaḵšiya, Sayyed Moḥammad

Nurbaḵš, was born at Qāʾen in Qohestān in 795/1392, and after studies in Herat, he joined the circle of Sayyed Esḥāq Ḵottalāni, Hamadāni's principal successor. According to some accounts, it was Ḵottalāni himself who, on the basis of a dream, declared Nurbaḵš to be the Mahdi and incited him to rise up accordingly against all worldly powers. Other accounts assert that Nurbaḵš originated the claim independently and then had it endorsed by Ḵottalāni, who was too senile and decrepit to stand in his way (Ḥāfeẓ Ḥosayn Karbalāʾi/Ebn Karbalāʾi, II, pp. 249-50). Whatever be the case, Ḵottalāni and his messiah disciple ensconced themselves at a nearby castle in 826/1423, only to be extracted soon thereafter by the Timurid governor of the area; Ḵottalāni was put to death and Nurbaḵš arrested for transportation to Herat. There followed periods of imprisonment in Shiraz and Behbahān before Nurbaḵš was released and able to wander in southwest Persia and Iraq, propagating his claim to Mahdihood. The positive reception he was accorded by some among the Baḵtiāris caused him to be imprisoned anew, this time in the bottom of a pit where he was encouraged to reflect soberly on his extravagant pretensions. He duly renounced them, hesitantly but publicly, at the Masjed-e Jāmeʿ in Herat, and was released on the condition that he restrict himself to teaching the conventional religious sciences. It seems that he did in fact reduce his public claims to spiritual eminence to those customary for a Sufi shaikh, ultimately dying in the village of Solfān near Rayy in 869/1464 (Bashir, 2003, pp. 71-72). His concept of the Mahdi had, in any event, deviated considerably from that standard in Twelver Shiʿism, for he rejected completely the occultation of the Twelfth Imam, asserting that his body had decomposed and his functions and attributes were now manifest in him, Nurbaḵš (Bashir, 2003, pp. 102-8). None of Nurbaḵš's descendants, active first in Herat and then in Rayy, attempted to sustain these theories, and they seem to have adopted normative Twelver Shiʿism.

The principal adversary of Nurbaḵš among the followers of Ḵottalāni had been ʿAbd-Allāh Barzešābādi (d. 872/1467), the native of a village near Mashad, who perpetuated the teachings of the Kobrawiya after the death of his master without significant doctrinal change. Most of his followers were also from the region of Mashad, as were his initiatic descendants for the next three generations. Separated from Barzešābādi by four links in the chain was Ḥāji Moḥammad of Ḵabušān (the present-day Qučān), indubitably a Sunnite, who attracted followers from Chorasmia and Transoxania. One of his pupils was, however, Ḡolām-ʿAli Nišāpuri (d. 938/1531), to whom a switch to Shiʿism and thereby the origination of the Ḏahabiya as a distinct order can be attributed.

The frequently encountered designation of the *sayyed*s of Lāla in Azarbaijan, another line of descent from Barzešābādi, as Ḏahabi is incorrect; they never made the switch to Shiʿism (Ḥāfeẓ Ḥosayn Karbalāʾi/Ebn Karbalāʾi, II, pp. 109-72). It was, in any event, only these three branches or offshoots of Kobrawi tradition that survived in Persia into the early Safavid period: the Nurbaḵšiya, the Ḏahabiya, and the *sayyed*s of Lāla. The others were confined to Central Asia, where they were destined to be eclipsed by the Naqšbandiya.

The Naqšbandi order first arose as the crystallization of the Ḵᵛājagān, a regional Sufi lineage that went back to Ḵᵛaja Yusof Hamadāni (d. near Marv in 535/1140). The eponym, Bahāʾ-al-Din Naqšband (q.v.), was born, in 718/1318, in a hamlet near Bukhara called Qaṣr-e Hendovān (later renamed out of deference to him as Qaṣr-e ʿĀrefān); his epithet, Naqšband, although variously interpreted, is commonly connected to the concept of fixing in the heart the impress (*naqš*) of the divine name by means of silent invocation (*ḏekr-e ḵafi*). Bahāʾ al-Din's choice of this method of *ḏekr* seems in fact to have determined the perception that he was the progenitor of a new order, not simply another link in the initiatic chain. Other characteristics of his practice were reminiscent of the Malāmatiya: the repudiation of music (*samāʿ*) and retreat (*ḵalwa*) as means of devotion; the deprecation of charismatic feats (*karāmāt*); and the shunning of a distinctive form of dress for his followers (Algar, 1998, pp. 27-36). Although he had some association with two masters of the Yasavi order, the leaders of which were known as the *mašayeḵ-e tork* (the Turkish shaikhs), Bahāʾ-al-Din Naqšband's immediate followers belonged almost exclusively to the Persian/Tajiki-speaking population of Bukhara and its environs. Even after the Naqšbandiya had expanded over vast areas of Muslim Asia, most of the authoritative literature of the order continued to be produced in Persian, even though its presence in Persia was destined to be marginal. This paradox is to be explained, on the one hand, by the status of Persian as the dominant *lingua franca* for purposes of literary composition in both Central and South Asia; and, on the other hand, by the firmly Sunnite orientation of the order, resting in part on an initiatic chain going back to Abu Bakr, and its consequent exclusion from Safavid Persia.

The succession to Bahāʾ-al-Din was first vested in Ḵᵛāja Moḥammad Pārsā (d. 822/1420), a leading scholar of Bukhara and the first to demonstrate the appeal held by the order exerted on the ulema by virtue of its sobriety and insistence on adherence to the *šariʿa*. None of Pārsā's five disciples, however, left behind any successors, although one of them, his son Abu Naṣr (d. 865/1460), counts as

the founder of a family tradition of scholarship in Balkh.

Of greater importance for the long-term dissemination of the order was ʿAlāʾ-al-Din ʿAṭṭār (d. 802/1400), of whom Bahāʾ-al-Din once remarked that he had lightened his burden by assuming the training of some of his disciples. ʿAṭṭār had once traveled at his master's behest to Chorasmia, a sure indication that interest in Bahāʾ-al-Din's teachings had reached that city, and soon after his death he retired to C&aḡāniān, a region to the southeast of Bukhara. Noteworthy among his ten disciples were Sayyed Šarif Jorjāni (d. 816/1413), the celebrated theologian; his own son, Ḥasan ʿAṭṭār (d. 826/1423); and Neẓām-al-Din Ḵāmuš (d. ca. 853/1459 in Tashkent), whose sobriquet derived from his silent absorption in a constant state of rapture (*jaḏba*).

Ḵāmuš was the preceptor of Saʿd-al-Din Kāšḡari (d. 860/1456), in whose person the Naqšbandiya reached Herat, thereby transcending the limits of its Central Asian homeland for the first time. He wrote a number of brief treatises on the Naqšbandi path but is chiefly remembered for numbering among his disciples the great poet and polymath, ʿAbd-al-Raḥmān Jāmi. In some of his verse, Jāmi skillfully blended the principal themes of Naqšbandi teaching with the concepts of Ebn al-ʿArabi; he devoted to those themes a brief treatise entitled *Resāla-ye sarešta-ye ṭariq-e ḵʷājagān*; and he was buried in symbolic closeness next to the tomb of Kāšḡari in the Ḵiābān district of Herat. He manifested little enthusiasm for the task of *eršād* (directorship), and when Kāšḡari died in 860/1456, he encouraged the Naqšbandis of Herat to gather around Moḥammad Šams-al-Din Ruji (d. 904/1499). According to contemporary sources, Jāmi's own disciples were essentially two in number: his son, Ziāʾ-al-Din Yusof and ʿAbd-al-Ḡaffār Lāri. The mention of the Jāmiya as a branch of the Naqšbandiya found in later sources is of dubious accuracy; it may be a question of scholarly rather than initiatic transmission and even then may be titular (Zabidi).

One member of Jāmi's circle in Herat was a certain Ṣonʿ-Allāh Kuzakonāni, who hailed from a village in the Orunāq district twelve *farsaḵ*s distant from Tabriz. He was drawn there in large part by the fame of Jāmi, who appointed him as his personal *emām* but referred him for his spiritual training to Mawlānā ʿAlāʾ-al-Din Ābezi Maktabdār, another disciple of Kāšḡari. Returning to Tabriz early in the reign of Yaʿqub Mirzā Aq Qoyunlu (883-96/1478-90), Kuzakonāni set about propagating the Naqš-bandi path with considerable success, but he found it advisable to flee the city and take refuge in Bitlis when Shah Esmāʿil took Tabriz in 907/1501. Nostalgia impelled him to return after a

number of years, and he lived on unmolested until 929/1523 (Algar, 2003, p. 14).

The third noteworthy successor of Bahāʾ-al-Din was Mawlānā Yaʿqub Čarḵi. Born near Ghazna, he studied in Herat and Cairo before coming to Bukhara in 782/1380, where, towards the end of his stay, he sought initiation from Bahāʾ-al-Din. Initially hesitant, he ultimately accepted him into his circle, with the proviso that he submit to ʿAlāʾ-al-Din ʿAṭṭār for his spiritual training. After the death of Bahāʾ-al-Din in 791/1389, Čarḵi accordingly joined ʿAṭṭār in Čāḡāniān, remaining with him until his death, whereupon he relocated to the region of Ḥeṣār-e Šādmān in what is now Tajikistan, dying there in 851/1447; his shrine, refurbished after the fall of communism, is still a place of pilgrimage. He wrote a number of works on Sufism, some pertaining directly to the Naqšbandi path, but his fame is due principally to having been the *moršed* (teacher and guide) of Ḵᵛāja ʿObayd-Allāh Aḥrār (Ṣafi, pp. 66-69).

Aḥrār was by far the most important figure to emerge in the Naqšbandi *selsela* after the eponym himself. The biographical details available for him are far more plentiful indeed than those for Bahāʾ-al-Din. It was under Aḥrār's auspices that the order became fully established as a major focus of power, worldly as well as spiritual; acquired or reinforced some of its main doctrinal emphases; came to dominate Central Asia, although not yet to eclipse all other orders active there; and put forth branches to the east, the west, and the south that, unlike the lines descended from Kāšḡari, were destined to survive for many centuries. Born in the village of Bāḡestān near Tashkent in 806/1404, he studied briefly in Samarqand before moving to Herat, where his interest in Sufism was awakened. His request for a Naqšbandi association was rebuffed by Ḵᵛāja Ḥasan ʿAṭṭār; perceiving little sign of spiritual talent in him, ʿAṭṭār advised him to take up the martial arts. Instead, Aḥrār joined Čarḵi at his retreat in Čaḡāniān, who proved more receptive, and he stayed with him until 835/1431, when he returned to Tashkent and soon established himself as the chief Sufi shaikh of the city (Algar, 1990, p. 13). His dominance was destined to extend far beyond Tashkent. In 855/1451, he recruited Uzbek auxiliaries under the command of Abu'l-Ḵayr Khan to aid the Timurid prince Abu Saʿid in his struggle with a rival for the rule of Samarqand. His power showed itself again in several other incidents: the organization of the defense of Samarqand in 858/1454; his success in 865/1460 in persuading Abu Saʿid to abolish the tax known as the *tamḡā* in Bukhara and Samarqand and to promise a general repeal of all non-*šarʿi* imposts throughout the realm; and his mediation

between warring princes on three separate occasions (Algar, 1990, p. 13). Aḥrār clearly regarded all this political involvement as a matter of religious duty. Early in life, he had dreamed of the Prophet standing at the foot of a hill near Tashkent and ordering him to carry him to the top of the hill, a burden he interpreted as the propagation of the *šariʿa* (Algar, 1990, p. 14). Related to his political involvement was his accumulation of landed property as *awqāf* (endowments) for the upkeep of Naqšbandi *ḵānaqāh*s. These aspects of his activity have attracted more scholarly attention than his admittedly sparse writings on Sufism; however, the several biographies of him written by contemporaries or near-contemporaries are replete with dicta on purely spiritual matters.

By the time Aḥrār died in 895/1490, he had trained numerous disciples, several of whom were important in the further transmission of the order in Central Asia. One line proceeded from Aḥrār through Mawlānā Moḥammad Qāżi to Ḵᵛājagi Aḥmad Kāsāni (d. at Dahbid near Samarqand in 949/1542), better known by the honorific Maḵdum-e Aʿẓam; he counts as the eponym of the Dahbidiya suborder. He deviated from established Naqšbandi practice by permitting vocal *ḏekr* and *samāʿ* and introducing into the order the principle of hereditary succession. One of his sons, Ḵᵛāja Esḥāq Dahbidi, became broadly influential in eastern Turkistan, establishing there the branch of the Dahbidiya known as the Black Mountain (Qarāṭāḡliq) Ḵᵛājas. A half-century later, a grandson of Maḵdum-e Aʿẓam, Moḥammad Amin, died in his attempt to dispute their supremacy in the region, but Moḥammad Amin's son, Ḵᵛāja Āfāq, enjoyed greater success; he not only founded a fully fledged competing lineage, that of the White Mountain (Āqṭāḡliq) Ḵᵛājas, but also wielded political power, albeit initially as a vassal of the Lamaist rulers of Dzungaria. Three associates of Aḥrār, Ḵᵛāja Moḥammad Amin Bolḡāri, Bābā Neʿmat-Allāh Naḵjavāni, and ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Hamadāni, were present in Tabriz during the last decades of the pre-Safavid era, but do not seem to have expended any effort for propagating the Naqšbandi path there. The only attempt at implanting an Aḥrāri line in Persia came in Qazvin, in the second decade of the 10th/16th century; it came to an end in two generations (Algar, 2003, pp. 21-23).

More lastingly influential in the religious life of Persia than any branch of the Naqšbandiya was another Sufi order, the Neʿmat-Allāhi. Its eponym, Shah Neʿmat-Allāh Nur al-Din b. ʿAbd-Allāh Wali, was born in Aleppo, in either 730/1329-30 or 731/1330-31, to a father claiming descent from Esmāʿil b. Jaʿfar; this circumstance may help to account for the association in later centuries

between several claimants to the Ismaʿili Imamate and the Neʿmat-Allāhi order. He seems to have grown up in a Persian-speaking environment, for his writings in Persian are stylistically superior to those in Arabic, and he is known to have studied in his early youth in Shiraz with celebrated theologians such as ʿAżod-al-Din Iji. At the age of twenty-four, Shah Neʿmat-Allāh was initiated into Sufism by ʿAbd-Allāh Yāfeʿi (d. 768/1194), a shaikh resident in Mecca, who had both Sohravardi and Šāḏeli lineages. He remained with him until his death, whereupon he embarked on a long series of travels that took him to Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Azarbaijan, and Transoxania (Pourjavady and Wilson, 1978, pp. 13-36). It seems to be in the last of these that he first presented himself as a *moršed* and the progenitor of a new order, the Neʿmat-Allāhiya, which, in view of Yāfeʿi's principal affiliation, may be regarded as an offshoot of the Sohravardiya. Conditions were in a sense propitious, for the Turkic nomads of the area, awaiting Islamization, offered a vast pool of potential recruits, on which other Sufi shaikhs were already drawing. Precisely the extent of his success in establishing a series of *ḵānaqāh*s and in recruiting a following of nomads in the area of Šahr-e Sabz roused the suspicion of Timur and led to Shah Neʿmat-Allāh's expulsion from Transoxania. Some accounts attribute this development to Amir Kolāl, but this is uncertain (Aubin, 1983, pp. 12-17). From Transoxania Shah Neʿmat-Allāh went first to Ṭus and then to Herat, arriving there in 774/1372. He married, engaged in agriculture—a pursuit he recommended to his followers as "the true alchemy—"and continued to train disciples. About a year later, he moved to Kerman, possibly because of continuing friction with the Timurids, and settled at first in Kuhbanān outside the city. Later he moved to the city itself and then to its suburb of Māhān. This was the most fruitful period of his life. Apart from his followers in the region of Kerman, he had numerous devotees, including the poet Shah Dāʿi in Shiraz, which he visited in 816/1413. It was also during the years in Māhān that he wrote numerous brief treatises dealing principally with themes of ʿEbn al-ʿArabi's teaching, and a *divān* in which later generations discerned apocalyptic predictions.

Shah Neʿmat-Allāh died in 834/1430 and was buried at Māhān. He was succeeded by his only son, Shah Ḵalil, then fifty-nine years of age, who before long was summoned by Šāhroḵ the Timurid to his court at Herat. Outwardly a sign of veneration, this summons may have been a sign of distrust, for Šāhroḵ refused to exempt the family lands from taxation. Some time between 836/1432 and 840/1436, Shah Ḵalil decided to leave Persia for the kingdom of Aḥmad Shah Bahmani in the Deccan. This ruler had already been in

communication with Shah Neʿmat-Allāh himself and received from him a long-distance initiation into the order (Pourjavdy and Wilson, 1978, pp. 27-28); the ground was therefore well prepared. The leadership of the order, now transferred to the Deccan, remained hereditary for eight generations before passing out of the family shortly before the reintroduction of the Neʿmat-Allāhiya to Persia in the 18th century.

The move to the Deccan went together with—or possibly was followed by—a change in the sectarian loyalties of the Neʿmatallāhiya from Sunnism to Shiʿism. There can be no doubt that Shah Neʿmat-Allāh had been a Sunnite. His master Yāfeʿi was a Shafeʿite, and he himself frequently cited Hadiths narrated by Abu Horayra, a traditionist unanimously excoriated by Shiʿites as unreliable or worse. It is true that, like some Kobrawi authors mentioned above, he accorded particular eminence to the Twelve Imams of the Household of the Prophet as the foremost possessors of *welāya* (religious authority), but this makes of him one more exponent of what has been felicitously called the "Twelver Sunnism" (Maḥjub, p. 414) that was widespread at the time, not a proto-Shiʿite. The Neʿmat-Allāhi switch to Shiʿism took place outside of Persia, reflecting the acquisition in the Deccan of a new constituency, and for that reason alone it cannot be cited as evidence of a general, countrywide trend in the same direction. It is nonetheless true that the change in sectarian affiliation made it possible for descendants of Shah Neʿmat-Allāh who had remained in Persia to assume various administrative posts under the Safavids after the order itself had migrated to the Deccan. It seems likely that a local cult of devotion to Shah Neʿmatallāh persisted at his shrine in Māhān, helping to make the Kerman region particularly receptive to the Neʿmat-Allāhiya when it was reintroduced to Persia.

Last among the orders to emerge before the transformations wrought in Persia by the Safavids was the Ḵalwatiya, which was closely related to them in terms of spiritual ancestry, as well as areas of origin and initial diffusion—Gilan, Azarbaijan, the southern Caucasus, and Anatolia. The eponym of the Ḵalwatiya, Serāj-al-Din ʿOmar Ḵalwati, was born and grew up at Lāhijān in Gilan before traveling to Chorasmia to join his uncle, Aḵi Karim-al-Din Moḥammad (d. 780/1378), who was separated by one link in the initiatic chain from Ebrāhim Zāhed Gilāni, the preceptor of Shaikh Ṣafi-al-Din. Insofar as Zāhed Gilāni was heir to a Sohravardi lineage, the Ḵalwatiya may count, like the Kobrawiya, as yet another derivative of the Sohravardiya. After the death of his uncle, ʿOmar Ḵalwati went first to Egypt for about seven years,

While there, he is said to have received an invitation from the ruler of Herat, which, according to some accounts, he rebuffed. The presence of at least two Heratis, Sayf-al-Din and Ẓahir-al-Din, among his principal disciples makes it likely, however, that he did indeed spend some time in their city, under whatever auspices. Ultimately he settled in Tabriz, where he died in 800/1397. Despite a predilection for repeated retreats of forty days each in the hollowed out trunk of a tree—hence his designation and that of the order, Ḵalwati—ʿOmar Ḵalwati acquired numerous disciples, and his order spread rapidly in both Anatolia and Azarbaijan (Kissling, pp. 233-89).

A turning point seems to have come with Yaḥyā Širvāni, separated from ʿOmar Ḵalwati by three links in the chain of transmission; in the literature of the order as it developed in Turkey, he is designated as *pir-e ṯāni* (the second elder), that is, he who consolidated the practices of the order and assured its further continuation. Born in Šamāḵi, he died in Baku in 868/1463. His disciples were active primarily in Anatolia, but one of them, Dede ʿOmar Rawšani, a native of Aydın (Turkish for "light;" hence his Persian sobriquet of Rawšani) near the Aegean, spent the most fruitful part of his career in Tabriz. Yaḥyā Šir-vāni had first deputed him to spread the order at various locations in Anatolia, but, anxious not to be separated from him by inordinate distance, Rawšani chose instead to move back and forth among Qarābāḡ, Ganja, and Baku. On his master's death, he took his place at the head of the Ḵalwati line in Baku, and it was from there that he dispatched his own leading disciple, Ebrāhim Golšani, to Tabriz soon after the Qarā Qoyunlu dynasty had made it their capital in 872/1467. He moved to Tabriz himself roughly a year later and took up residence in a *ḵānaqāh* established for him by Saljuq Ḵātun, the wife of the ruler. The royal respect this betokened continued throughout the reigns of Sultān Yaʿqub (883-896/1478-1490). His prominence and position of favor at the Aq Qoyunlu court were inherited upon his death in 892/1487 by Ebrāhim Golšani, from whose biography a rooted aversion to Shiʿism can be discerned. It is not therefore surprising that he quit Tabriz soon after the Safavid conquest in 907/1502, bringing to an end the Ḵalwati presence in Persia (Gülşenî, p. 248).

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