



ŠARIF KHAN, MOḤAMMAD

ŠARIF KHAN, Moḥammad (d. ca 1807), a physician at the court of the Mughal emperor, Shah 'Ālam II (r. 1760-1806), author, and the eponymous founder of the Šarifi family, distinguished as the leading physicians of the *yunāni* medicine in Colonial India. He descended from a family of theologians and physicians who traced back their origin to the mystic 'Obayd-Allāh Maḥmud Aḥrār (d. 1490), an influential Sufi Shaikh of the Naqšbandi order in Transoxiana. Šarif Khan studied at a *madrasa* in Delhi that was run by the sons of the Naqšbandi scholar, Shah Wali-Allāh (d. 1762), and with them he was one of the first Indian scholars to attempt to translate the Qur'ān into Urdu. His most famous work is *Ta'lif-e šarifi*, a Persian dictionary of the Indian *materia medica*. This book was translated into English by George Playfair, a superintending surgeon serving in Bengal. Playfair writes in the introduction that the drugs used by local physicians have beneficial effects for many diseases for which the Western pharmacopoeia has no adequate remedy (Rieu, II, p. 842; Monzawi, I, p. 486). Šarif Khan also wrote the *'Elāg al-amrāz*, a book in Persian on the treatment of diseases (Āgā Bozorg, fasc. 15, p. 310), and *Kawāṣṣ al-jawāher* on the medical and occult properties of precious stones. An abridged version of this book, the *Toḥfa-ye 'ālamšāhi*, was dedicated to Šāh 'Ālam (Rieu, II, p. 842). Among his other works are tracts on phlebotomy, China root (*čub-e čini*), sexology, logic, Sufism, translations and annotations of Avicenna's *al-Qānun fi'l-ṭebb* and of Nafis b. 'Eważ Kermāni's commentary of Najib-al-Din Samarqandi's *Ketāb al-asbāb wa 'alāmāt*. Šarif Khan died in 1222/1807 and was buried near the tomb of the Češti mystic Qoṭb-al-Din Baḳtiār Kāki (d. 1236).



BIBLIOGRAPHY

‘Abd-al-Ĥayy Ḥasani, *Nozhat al-ḵawāṭer wa bahjat al-masāme‘ wa'l-nawāzer ... tarājem olamā’ al-Hend wa a’yānehā men al-qarn al-awwal ela'l-qarn al-sābe‘*, 2nd ed., 8 vols., Hyderabad, 1962-81, VII, p. 216.

Āqā Bozorg Ṭehrāni, *al-Dari’a elā taṣānif al-Ši’a*, ed. Aḥmad Monzawi, 24 vols., Najaf and Tehran, 1936-78.

Ḥakim ‘Obayd-al-Raḥmān Eṣlāḥi, “Ḥakim Moḥammad Šarif Ḵān, Urdu kā pahlā motarjem-e Qor’ān,” in Alṭāf A’ẓmi, ed., *Ṭebb-e yunāni awr urdu zabān wa adab*, Delhi, 2004, pp. 129-134.

D. N. Marshall, *Mughals in India: A Bibliographical Survey*, Bombay etc., 1967, p. 341.

Aḥmad Monzawi, *Fehrest-e nosḵahā-ye ḵaṭṭi-e fārsi*, 5 vols. in 7, Tehran, 1969-74, I, p. 486.

Charles Rieu, *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum*, 3 vols., London, 1966.

Moḥammad Šarif Khan, *Elāj al-amrāz*, Delhi, 1848.

Idem, *Resāla-ye ḵawāṣṣ al-jawāher*, Delhi, 1863.

Idem, *Ta’lif-e šarifi*, Delhi, 1863; tr. George Playfair as *The Taleef Shereef or Indian Materia Medica*, Calcutta, 1833, repr. Dehra Dun, India, 1984.

Zillur Rahman (Zell-al-Raḥmān), *Dilli awr ṭebb-e yunāni*, Delhi, 1995, pp. 102-5.

(Fabrizio Speziale)

March 20, 2009