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A NOTE ON NAJM AL-DĪN AL-RĀZĪ
AND THE BAHR AL-HAQĀ'IQ

The lack of personal information is one of the major obstacles to any critical study of the great seventh and eighth century masters of 'Irfān. In the case of Najm al-Dīn al-Rāzī¹ this lacuna has been especially frustrating. Najm al-Dīn was widely traveled and well known in his own time. He was an author and teacher whose importance and influence have not diminished even into modern times². Consequently he has been the subject of often confusing hagiography³, and scholars studying his works have been forced to speculate about his education, travels, and spiritual pedigree. Now, on the basis of an apparently unstudied Arabic manuscript of the Bahr al-Haqā'iq in the Sulemaniye Library⁴, we can begin to sort out and to answer some of the questions concerning Najm al-Dīn's spiritual growth and the composition of his Qur'anic exegesis.

The manuscript's authority is specific and incontestable. The following inscription appears on the penultimate folio in the same hand as the rest of the text; "End of the commentary parts one and two of the book Bahr al-Haqā'iq wa al-ma'ānī fī tafsīr al-sab' al-mathanī. This copy was completed on Wednesday the Eleventh of Rabi' al-Awwal⁵ in the year 647 in the city of Tustar, by the weak, the servant, the needy of God's grace, begging His pardon, Abd al-Malik Muḥammad ibn Muzaffar Tiyyār (Tiyyāl)⁶ al-Tustarī". This is followed by a standard formal

end-note praising God, Muḥammad, his family, and his companions, concluding the text.

There follows another long passage in a different, or more hurried, hand, which becomes increasingly hard to read and finally indecipherable. It is a catalogue of the men present at the majālis where this text was read aloud and is introduced by the following; "The whole of this volume was listened to by its author, the Shaykh, the Imām of inspiration, the Sultān of the Shaykhs of Islām... Abu Bakr Abd Allāh Shāhāwār al-Asadī al-Rāzī". Moreover, there appears at the very end of the manuscript, in yet a third (oversized) handwriting, the following; "A correct (sound) hearing (listening to/audition) and transmission. Corrected by the faqīr Abu Bakr Abd Allāh Shāhāwār al-Asadī al-Rāzī on the Seventeenth of Muḥarram in the year 650".

It is clear from the context, the difference in handwriting, the differences in the manner of formal address, and the differences in how Najm al-Dīn is himself identified, that this latter witness is his own⁷. Najm al-Dīn corrected and signed as accurate this particular manuscript.

Among those catalogued attendants of the majālis, the majority are identified as "al-Tustarī". We have also seen that the manuscript was copied in Tustar (Shushtar) three years earlier. We must stress that the catalogue of names as well as the author's own signature clearly follow the formal completion of the text. Thus, we can confirm that Najm al-Dīn was in Tustar teaching from his ta'wīl only four years before his death in 654.

Having verified the importance of this manuscript, we shall review carefully the information we are most concerned with here - the extensive autobiographical entries. Folios 3-10 are primarily devoted to autobiographical accounts and there are several personal comments throughout the sixty folio introduction. No other manuscript of the Baḥr al-Ḥaqā'ig available in the Libraries of Tehran or Istanbul contained like material. These entries are as surprising as they are informative. That a shaykh of Najm al-Dīn's

stature should narrate such complete autobiographical passages is a valued rarity. That he should so systematically elaborate his relationships with three of the greatest shaykhs of Sufic Lore is a providential discovery and must, in the end, alter the framework within which we study his life and his Sufism.

Najm al-Dīn tells us that there were four great shaykhs to whom he variously attached himself. This in itself is not surprising. It was common, indeed almost necessary in any religious text, that the author identify the teacher from whom he learned specific works or interpretations. But Najm al-Dīn here enumerates a chronological list of the shaykhs he was associated with and the authorities he has from each. It was also not uncommon to have more than one shaykh. One shaykh might send a disciple to study with another, or a disciple might associate himself with a new shaykh upon the death of his original murshid.

We have long known that Najm al-Dīn had a close relationship (spiritually and personally) with Majd al-Dīn al-Baghdādī⁸ and to some extent with al-Baghdādī's master and the founder of what became the Kubrāwīya Tariqa, Najm al-Dīn al-Kubrā. Fortunately, we can now pinpoint with some accuracy the time sequence and the nature of these two affiliations. But the most remarkable information yielded by this manuscript (including the information about his short and unclear association with a relatively unknown shaykh in Hamadān) is the extensive and recurrent importance in the spiritual and temporal life of our shaykh played by Shihāb al-Dīn 'Umar al-Suhrawardī. He lists the shaykhs as follows⁹:

The first shaykh, referred to as "our shaykh, shaykh of the world... Abu Sa'id Sharaf ibn al-Muayyid Abi al-Faḥ al-Baghdādī, entitled (with the laqab) al-Majd. I served him for five years in Khwārazm". He tells us that from al-Baghdādī he took his "Tariqat al-sulūk wa'l-sayr ilā Allāh, his Khirqā of sanctity"¹⁰ and its ḥjāza, ḥjāza in Ḥadīth and Transmission¹¹... remaining in his service, honored by his companionship until he was mar-

tyred on Monday night (Sunday Night) the last of Jumadā 'l-ākhir at the end of 606".

As for the second shaykh; "The illuminated shaykh, my shaykh, and the shaykh of my shaykh, exemplar of the world in truth, proof of God to creation, Abu al-Jannab Aḥmad ibn 'Umar ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Khavūfī entitled al-Najm al-Kubrā... He was my shaykh in companionship (ṣuḥba) Transmission, and Auditions (sama'). He was martyred in Khwārazm in the Mongol attacks in 617 or 616.

The third he never refers to specifically as "my shaykh"; "the undelimited shaykh, leader through God, guide of men, Abu Muḥammad Maḥmūd ibn Khudādh ibn Abi Bakr al-'Irāqī entitled al-Tāj al-Ashmānī. I associated with him in Dehestān, Rayy, and Hamadān for a long period as a disciple. I benefited from him in Hamadān for numerous years and I have from him Auditions and Ijāza in his own hand. He died in Hamadān in 620.

"As for the fourth shaykh, and he was my shaykh also, shaykh of the shaykhs of his time... Abu Ḥafṣ 'Umar ibn Muḥammad al-Suhrawardī entitled al-Shihāb. I associated with him for a while in Baghdād. He was the first from whom I took Ṭarīqat al-sulūk and seclusions (khalwa) and fourty day retreats ('arba 'inat). I was dressed by him in the cloak of companionship. I have from him Ijāza as a shaykh (Ijāzat al-shaykhūkhīya), and the investing of others with the cloak (Ibās al-khirqa), and transmission. From the time of the beginning of my journey to (with) him, my occupation was with seclusions ('uzlāt) and retreats with him, and benefiting from him before I was commanded to travel from the unseen - three times consecutively. But I hated traveling from him before perfecting my share in being his companion. I informed him of the three visions and he ordered me to set off, after thinking over my situation carefully. And that was in the year 601".

"Then I was ennobled by serving him in Rayy after my return from Khwārazm and Khurāsān in the year 614, and he gave

me Ijāza in the transmission of dhikr and the placing of (disciples) in the khalwa".

"Then I was fortunate time after time in serving him in Irbīl, Mawsil, Rūm, and Baghdād. That was the last time that I was fortunate to be in his service. And I have delayed in mentioning him among these shaykhs, even though he was the first of them whose companion I became, because he was the last of them to die, in the year 632".

When we make a comparison between the various other autobiographical extracts in this text¹², this information, and the facts of al-Rāzī's life that have been proposed or substantiated by other researches, a relatively whole and coherent picture of the first part of his long life on the Path emerges.

He left his home in Rayy in the year 599, at the age of 27¹³ and we can establish that he was born in 572, that is, he was 88 (lunar) years old at the time of his death in 654. Most probably he was buried at Baghdād¹⁴, although we have shown that he could not have spent the last thirtyodd years of his life in retirement there - as has been submitted¹⁵ - since we have located him in Tustar in 650.

Leaving Rayy he travelled by way of Syria and Egypt to the Hijāz and visited Madīna. Although he does not specifically mention it, we can well assume that the effective purpose for this journey was pilgrimage, after which he spent about one year in Baghdād. It must have been during this period that he first encountered Suhrawardī, whose service he left, as we have seen, because of several visions in 601.

By way of 'Irāq and Khurāsān he proceeded to Khwārazm where he tells us he remained for some years. We have no way of knowing for certain how long it took him to reach Khwārazm, but by early 602 he had certainly made the acquaintance of and taken initiation from Majd al-Dīn al-Baghdādī. And we know from his own testimony that he stayed in the service of this murshid for a period of five years in Khwārazm until the latter was mar-

tyred in 606. Their association must have begun sometime at the close of 601.

We know also, that he considered himself to be a disciple of Najm al-Dīn al-Kubrā. Understanding al-Kubrā's position as his master's master, it is only natural that al-Rāzī should include and acknowledge this connection. Al-Rāzī must have considered that his own discipleship stemmed ultimately from al-Kubrā, and most undoubtedly attached himself to the majalis of al-Kubrā when al-Baghdādī was killed in 606. Indeed, it is likely that whatever initiation took place in Khwārazm was directed by al-Kubrā¹⁶.

While we are certain that there was some inner motive force that led al-Rāzī to the East, we cannot overlook the previous connection between his two famous murshids and it is quite possible that Suhrawardī sent the young al-Rāzī to Khwārazm and introduced him to the circle of Najm al-Dīn al-Kubrā. Although subsequently forced to flee, Rāzī certainly would have honored this formal affiliation at least until al-Kubrā's death in 618. Traditionally, al-Rāzī has been revered as a great Kubrāwīya shaykh¹⁷, but is not listed in that order's silsila¹⁸.

In any event, this period must have also included the interval of his return to 'Irāq in 614 which he discusses in regard to his relationship with Suhrawardī. The chronicle of his travels corroborates this¹⁹. Al-Rāzī recounts that after spending some years in Khwārazm, he returned to 'Irāq, visited Adhābayjān, and returned again to the East where he remained several more years.

The question we must pose at this juncture, and in many ways the most provocative problem here presented, is to consider this combination of Suhrawardīya and Kubrāwīya lore in the person of al-Rāzī. We know that Suhrawardī and al-Kubrā probably knew one another, both being near contemporary disciples of Suhrawardī's uncle²⁰. Any further investigation must deal with this connection between two major Sufi orders, and must accept the possibility that Abu Ḥafṣ sent, with deliberate intent, his disciple to Khwārazm and to Najm al-Dīn al-Kubrā.

The next period of his life is well documented and the work of previous research is confirmed in this account. He left Khwārazm in 616, made a short pilgrimage to the Hijāz, and we find repeated accounts of his refuge in 'Irāq and Hamadān during the tumultuous events of 616-616²¹. He remained in Hamadān until the end of 617 when he was again forced to flee from the Mongol advances. This must mark the end of his association²² with the shaykh Tāj al-Ashmānī who died in 620. For by 620 Rāzī was in Anatolia, and can be closely located in Arzinjān in 621²³.

Najm al-Dīn tells us that he was the disciple of the al-Ashmānī for a number of years in 'Irāq and Hamadān. There seems to be, according to his own chronology, no other opportunity. Although he unfortunately provides no dates in the notice devoted to this shaykh, other than death-date, between 601 and 616 he was clearly in service to another shaykh (living shaykh) by formal initiation. He may have shared company with al-Ashmānī before he left for the East, or even during any of the intervals we have seen in between when he was in 'Irāq for short periods, perhaps he even left Khwārazm earlier than 616, but it seems most likely that their productive relationship was during al-Rāzī's retreat. It also suggests that in this period of deep personal and political agitation²⁴, Najm al-Dīn sought the companionship and security of an acknowledged spiritual connection.

He left Hamadān in 618, travelled to Anatolia and met Suhrawardī for the third and final time. This meeting in Malatya, and the resultant introduction at court which led to the composition of the Mirṣād al-'Ibād, is quite famous and until now appeared a singular and fortuitous encounter²⁵. He lists Irbīl, Mawṣil, and Dīyārbakr separately and says that he "remained for a while in Rūm and Anatolia". This stay - well into 622 - also includes his residence at the court of Dawūd Shāh²⁶ for whom he composed the Marmūzāt. He must have left Anatolia sometime in 622, as Professor Landolt has shown²⁷, because he was a member of a political mission from Baghdād to Tabriz in 622-23.

Although this incident is not itself discussed in the manuscript, he comments that he "travelled frequently between places involved in strange affairs"²⁸.

The last account he provides is that he visited Tiflis after its conquest. That is, he had been to Georgia after 626²⁹. He then returned to the Iranian heartlands, Arrān, Adherbayjān, 'Irāq, Fārs, and Khūzestān. But between 626 in Georgia and 650 in Tustar, we cannot locate him. And 626 was ten years before he began the Bahr al-Ḥaqā'iq.

It is not our purpose here to detail the modern academic controversy surrounding the history of the Bahr al-Ḥaqā'iq³⁰. But it seems that an answer can now be approached on the authority of this unique text. Unfortunately the manuscript itself represents but a small fraction of the whole. Counting 523 folios, beginning with the Fātiḥa, it stops abruptly at Ṣurat al-Baqara, verse 252. The scribe tells us in his ending colophon that this volume comprises parts one and two of the whole, and there is no solution here as to how much of the commentary in the Bahr is original with Najm al-Dīn. All of the evidence to date supports the opinion that the only completed about one-third, the bulk of the text being the commentary of the later Kubrāwīya shaykh al-Semnānī. But that Najm al-Dīn claims this volume to be his own is beyond question. He devotes long passages to discussions of his travels in search of Ḥadīth and esoteric hermeneutics as a prelude to precisely this undertaking³¹. He even includes a section enumerating the differences between tafsīr and ta'wīl³², emphasizing that his is an esoteric ta'wīl drawing on the traditions and lessons of many shaykhs and masters who were also men of Ḥadīth.

Indeed when Rāzī includes an original interpretation it is explicitly attributed to himself with the phrase "thus said the Imām, the author". The majority of traditions, stories, and interpretations are similarly cited with the name of the man who made them famous or from whom Rāzī heard them. This is the key to the

composition. The whole work, with the notable exception of the Fātiḥa, whose authorship all have conceded to him, was then a collection, selection, and comparison of sufi exegeses.

While as one would expect, he includes much of the interpretations taught by Najm al-Dīn al-Kubrā, an attempt to show that al-Kubrā was the author and al-Rāzī the copiest seems not only a misdirected but a counterproductive approach. Rather, what is required is a systematic comparison of each important section with their originals—where available—whether they are taken from al-Kubrā, al-Qushairī, al-Makkī, or al-Ghazzālī.

As for the date of the Bahr, we can only fix its beginning, and we assume he worked on it until his death. He tells us that he began work in 635; "In 635, the thirtysixth year of my travels (when he was 63 years old) I undertook the composition of a commentary on the verities of the Qur'ān". In addition, he makes it quite clear that he intended to cover the entire text of the Qur'ān; "including every one of the surats and verses..."³³. Again, in a discussion immediately following a description of the four levels of Truth inherent in any revelatory sign³⁴, he reminds the reader that his work is an investigation into the Ḥaqā'iq, the deepest, most hidden realities of the Qur'ān, and that other kinds of Commentary can be left to jurists and lesser men.

In conclusion, this rare text, while answering several questions surrounding the life and adventures of Najm al-Dīn and confirming, in our opinion, his authorship of the Bahr al-Ḥaqā'iq, has presented a puzzle of more profound consequence. We face a perplexing situation. The historical place of a master whose works are popular and in use even today must be re-evaluated. This triangle of al-Baghdādī/al-Kubrā, Suhrawardī, and al-Rāzī provides a new overture for understanding Rāzī's later work as well as his formative spiritual development. It may prove, that the discipleship Najm al-Dīn completed, directed as it was by three unique forces contributed to and influenced his method in the Bahr al-Ḥaqā'iq.

NOTES

¹ Abu Bakr Shāhāwār al-Asadī al-Rāzī with the laqab Najm al-Dīn al-Dāya. Virtually nothing exists in English concerning al-Rāzī. The reader is directed to Prof. Landolt's introduction to the Marmūzāt-i Asadī dar Mazmūrāt-i Dawudī, Teheran 1973. Also chp. V in Corbin, The Man of Light in Iranian Sufism [trans. N. Pearson], Boulder 1978.

² Several active orders use Rāzī's Mirṣād al-'Ibād as a manual for practical Sufism, notably the Ni'matallāhiya and the Naqshabandiya. Recent academic interest is evidenced by several Persian Language editions in the last decade, a forthcoming translation of the Mirṣād al-'Ibād, and my own of the Risāla-i 'Ishq va 'Aql.

³ For example: a discussion has developed concerning Jāmī's account of the meeting between Najm al-Dīn, Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, and Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnyawī. Curiously no one questions Jāmī's assertion that Rāzī is buried in the Shuniziya in Baghdād. Najm al-Dīn was in the right place at the right time for such a meeting, and whether or not the story is literally true, it confirms his prestige among the Folk.

⁴ H. Hüsnü 37 Mukarrar. I am indebted to William Chittick, and Cornell Fleischer who unraveled difficulties in the text beyond my capacities.

⁵ For those who appreciate such events, I discovered and read this note on the Eleventh of Rabi al-Awwal 1399.

⁶ Mss. unclear.

⁷ Najm al-Dīn would never (nor I suspect would any true shaykh) assume to himself a title other than faqīr bi-Allāh, or its rough equivalent. And no disciple would presume to address his shaykh, in writing, by a series of honorifics less intricate than those we find here.

⁸ Meier, introduction to Die Fawā'ih al-jamāl wa fawātih al-jalāl des Najm al-Dīn al-Kubrā, Wiesbaden 1957.

⁹ Ff. 4b ff.

¹⁰ We should understand this as an indication of formal initiation into a Tarīqa.

¹¹ Mss. unclear.

¹² Ff. 3b-4a.

¹³ It seems that Rāzī had little contact with the Folk before 598-99. He comments that he was spurred to wander by a vi-

sion and the subsequent pain in his soul. This is a prototypical call to the Darvish Way. He also makes quite vivid the misgivings and protestations of his family, (f. 2b). See Kadkānī, Persian introduction to his edition of the Marmūzāt (op. cit.) for a comparison of other accounts.

¹⁴ Jāmī, Nafahāt al-'uns [ed. M. Tawhidi Pour], Tehran 1337, p. 435.

¹⁵ Landolt, op. cit., p. 8.

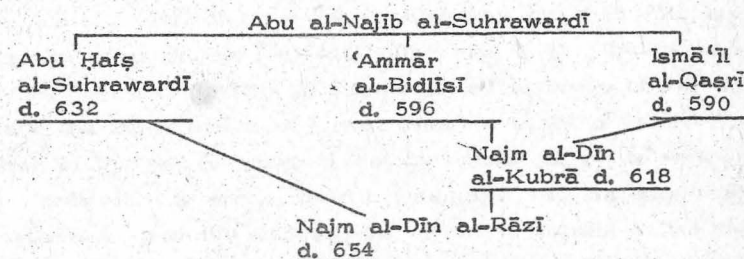
¹⁶ Or under his auspices.

¹⁷ Dehkhodā, Loghāt Nāmeḥ, vol. 21. Husayn-i Khwārazmī, Jawāhir al-Asrār [in:] Meier, Die Fawā'ih...

¹⁸ He is considered one of the twelve major discipleshaykhs of Najm al-Dīn al-Kubrā, but no line of transmission continues through him. For more, see Trimmingham, The Sufi Orders in Islam, Oxford 1971.

¹⁹ F. 5b.

²⁰ Abu al-Najīb al-Suhrawardī, d. 563. The picture looks like this:



²¹ Risāla-i 'Ishq va 'Aql, [ed. T. Tafazzolī], Tehran 1973. The Persian introduction to this work by M. Minovī covering the "Life and Works" is the best single account, combining primary and all relevant secondary material in one article.

²² Ṣuḥba as that special sort of murshid-murīd relationship although not necessarily formal initiation.

²³ Landolt, op. cit., p. 8.

²⁴ In the tenth chapter of the Marmūzāt he discusses the Mongol horror as a portent of the "End of Time".

²⁵ Landolt, op. cit., p. 9.

²⁶ Regnum 616-625.

²⁷ Cf. 25.

²⁸ F. 7b.

²⁹ For the conquest of Georgia and the stratagem involved in the capture of Tiflis see; Cambridge History of Iran, vol. IV, p. 328.

³⁰ Summarized in M. Minovī's introduction cited above. Or see Corbin, *La philosophie shī'ite*, Bib. Iranienne 16, Paris 1969. Also Meier, introduction to Die Fawā'id..., also cited above.

³¹ F. 6a.

³² F. 9b.

³³ F. 8b.

³⁴ Ibid.

Bogdan SKŁADANEK

ELEMENTS OF CHRONOLOGY
OF THE KHĀRIJITE INSURRECTION OF ḤAMZIYYA IN SĪSTĀN
(8-th — 9-th CENTURY). ITS OUTBREAK AND FALL

For many years, under the three 'Abbāsīd caliphs: Hārūn al-Rashīd and his two successors: al-Amīn and al-Ma'mūn, south-eastern Persia was the field of activity of insurgents belonging to the khārijite sect of ḥamziyya, called thus by later Moslem theologians after Ḥamza ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Khārījī¹, its founder, leader and ideologist. Though if considered in terms of the whole nation the insurrection of Ḥamza was an event of lesser importance in the period when almost the whole caliphate was shaken by anticaliphate and anti-Arab risings, it had an unquestionable influence upon the subsequent events in Persia in the 9-th century, especially on the establishing of the Ṣaffārids' state, being the first independent state in Moslem Persia. It left also an indelible imprint upon Persian literary and religious tradition².

Nowwithstanding the considerable importance the insurrection of Ḥamza had for the studies concerning the restoration of the sovereign state rule in Persia, lost by this country in the result of the Arab invasion, the topic had not been researched thoroughly yet. This particular situation results from incompleteness of the records, certain divergence of opinion on the subject in Persian and Arab sources, as well as from the fact that the insurrection took place not in the central territories but in the eastern borderland. The date of its outbreak is unknown and the time of its fall has not been determined even approximately.