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FARGĀNĪ, SA 'ĪD-AL-DĪN MOHAMMAD

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b. Ahmad (d. 1300), Sufi author from the town of Kāsān in Farġān.

FARGĀNĪ, SA 'ĪD-AL-DĪN MOHAMMAD, b. Ahmad, Sufi author from the town of Kāsān in Farġāna (d. Du'l-ḥejja 699/August 1300; see Scattolin, 1993, p. 334). According to Farġānī's own account (1988, p. 184), he entered the Sufi path under Najīb-al-Dīn 'Alī b. Bozġoš of Shiraz (d. 678/1279), a disciple of Šehāb-al-Dīn 'Omar Sohravardī. He subsequently studied with Šadr-al-Dīn Qūnawī (d. 673/1274), the most influential disciple of Ebn al-'Arabī (q.v.), and then with one Moḥammad b. Sokrān Baġdādī and others (Farġānī, 1988, p. 184; Moḥammad b. Sokrān is also mentioned in Farġānī, 1876, I, p. 252). In the year 643/1245-46 (or perhaps 640/1242-43), Farġānī accompanied Qūnawī and several other scholars from Anatolia to Egypt (Farġānī, 1978, pp. 5-6, 77-78). On the way there and back, Qūnawī gave lessons on *al-Tā'īya al-kobrā*, a famous 750 verse Sufi poem by Ebn al-Fārez. Although several people took notes with the aim of composing books about it, only Farġānī succeeded.

Farġānī is known to be the author of three books, though other works have been wrongly ascribed to him, such as a commentary on the *Foṣūṣ al-ḥekam* by Ebn al-'Arabī (q.v.) and the anonymous 8th/14th-century compendium of Sufi technical terms, *Laṭā'ef al-e'lām fī ešārāt ahl al-elhām*. His shortest book is the Persian *Manāhej al-'ebādelā'l-mā'ād*, which outlines the five pillars of Islam according to the four Sunni *madhabs* along with basic Sufi *ādāb*. Qoṭb-al-Dīn Šīrāzī (d. 710/1311), also a student of Qūnawī, incorporated this book into his philosophical encyclopedia, *Dorrat al-tāj*, as its last and "most important" part (see Walbridge, pp. 326-27). According to Ḥājī Ḳalīfa (*Kašf al-ẓonūn*, ed. Yalṭkaya and Bilge, col. 1846), *Manāhej* was translated (presumably into Arabic) as *Madārej al-e'teqād* by Abu'l-Faẓl Moḥammad b. Edrīs Bedlīsī.

Farġānī's second and third works are his Persian and Arabic commentaries on *al-Tā'īya*. In the first, *Mašāreq al-darārī al-zohar fī kašf ḥaqā'eq naẓm al-dorar*, Farġānī was presumably following Qūnawī's lectures rather closely, since this version incorporates a letter of approval from Qūnawī. Although a good deal of the much expanded Arabic version, *Montahā al-madārek wa moštahā lobb koll kāmēl aw 'āref wa sālek*, follows the Persian rather closely, it would be more accurate to regard it as a thorough revision than a translation. Farġānī must have considered it much more his own work than that of his teacher. This may explain why it carries no letter of approval, though Qūnawī was certainly alive when it was completed since it was being read in Cairo as early as 670/1271 (Massignon, I, p. 44).

The most significant addition in the Arabic commentary is a relatively systematic introduction of some one hundred pages, representing about eighteen percent of the text (outlined in Scattolin, 1993), in which Farġānī clears the ground for an understanding of the technical discussions that he offers throughout the work. It is divided into four parts in keeping with the basic domains of reality—the divine essence and attributes, the spiritual world, the sensory world (including the imaginal world), and the human world. This last world

synthesizes the first three through perfect human beings (see ENSĀN-E KĀMEL). Jāmī, who was a master of philosophical Sufism along with his other accomplishments, wrote about this introduction that “no one has explained the problems of the science of reality as solidly and coherently” (*Nafahāt*, p. 559).

The Arabic and Persian commentaries are sophisticated expositions of classical Sufi teachings rendered in the complicated philosophical language whose first major spokesman was Ebn al-‘Arabī. Both works are significant as the earliest, most extensive, and most philosophically-minded of the several commentaries on Ebn al-Fāreḡ’s masterpiece. Both are excellent guides to the terminology that soon became established as the key expressions in philosophical Sufism, which played an important if not predominant role in Islamic intellectuality down to the nineteenth century. The edition of the *Mašāreq*, although not up to modern critical standards, has an exhaustive index of technical terminology that will also be useful for readers of the Arabic text.

Farġānī is often mentioned by those scholars, such as Ebn Taymīya and Ebn Kaldūn, who criticized Ebn al-‘Arabī and other philosophically inclined Sufis for entering into discussions not sanctioned by the Koran, the Sunna, and the pious forebears or for the even worse sin of believing in *waḥdat al-wojūd*. As for modern scholars, most have had no interest in the actual issues that Farġānī investigates and have considered him significant only as the first commentator on Ebn al-Fāreḡ’s *al-Tā’īya*. Inasmuch as they have looked at the theological, philosophical, and mystical subjects that Farġānī discusses, they have read him as introducing Ebn al-‘Arabī’s metaphysics where it does not belong, his works are far better guides to how *al-Tā’īya* was being understood in the contemporary Islamic intellectual milieu than any of the more recent attempts to translate it or explain its meaning. It is true that Ebn al-‘Arabī’s school of thought forms the basis for Farġānī’s reading of *al-Tā’īya* but it remains to be demonstrated how exactly this may have skewed his understanding of this famously obscure text. It needs to be kept in mind that those who have questioned Farġānī’s readings have done so on the basis of an uncritical acceptance of the received wisdom concerning the contents of Ebn al-‘Arabī’s works, so their judgments as to how he may or may not have influenced Farġānī have little textual basis (Scattolin, 1992, pp. 274-86; cf. Chittick, forthcoming)

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(William C. Chittick)

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