

INTRODUCTION

'Alā' ad-dawla as-Simnānī (Dhu'l-Hijja 659/November 1261 to 22 Rajab 736/6 March 1336) lived at a time when the Mongol dynasty of the Ilkhanids ruled over Iran and Iraq from the middle of the thirteenth to the middle of the fourteenth century. This period of history represents the only occasion until the advent of colonial empires in the eighteenth century when the central Islamic lands fell under non-Muslim rule. In the process of overrunning Iran and Iraq, the Mongols had not only destroyed the religious and governmental infrastructure of the region, but also Baghdad, the seat of the Caliphate and the most important Islamic city of its day. Having dispatched the Caliph and his immediate retinue, the Mongols then placed a few aristocratic and decidedly secular Persian families in administrative positions, the most famous of these being the Juwaynīs. But the name of another Khurāsānī family frequently appears along with that of the Juwaynīs, this one being from the town of Simnān. It was into this powerful clan of bureaucrats that 'Alā' ad-dawla as-Simnānī was born.

Raised in luxury and trained as a courtier, Simnānī's eventual abandonment of courtly life for one of piety, asceticism and mysticism constitutes a notable story in the annals of Islamic history. Although unusual, this Buddha-like transformation is by no means unique, since it bears many parallels to the biography of the legendary Ibrāhīm b. Adham. However, unlike this earlier prince-turned-ascetic, Simnānī's life exists within the parameters of recorded history, and his substantial corpus of teachings survives to this day.

A respected theologian, jurist and poet, Simnānī is best remembered for his contributions to Islamic mystical thought. He was deeply influenced by the visionary experiences and meditational practices (*dhikr*) of Najm ad-dīn al-Kubrā (d. 618/1221) and other visionary mystics associated with the latter, in particular Majd ad-dīn al-Baghdādī (d. 616/1219) and Nūr ad-dīn al-Isfarā'inī (d. 717/1317). Simnānī systematized their ideas and his own in a complex color symbolism of subtle substances (*latā'if*). His methodology is charac-

terized by the construction of hierarchies and correspondences in the physical and spiritual realms, and by emphasis upon the polarity and complementarity between these two realms.

In an effort to balance the ideas of divine emanation and creation of the world, he developed the existing notion of *tajallī* (theophany) in terms of varying degrees of divine self-manifestation occurring through intermediaries, as opposed to the concept that all of creation shares in divinity. This facet of his thought placed him in opposition to the school of Ibn al-'Arabī (d. 638/1240) and its influential doctrine of the oneness of being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*), as is demonstrated by his correspondence with 'Abd ar-Razzāq al-Kāshānī (d. 736/1335), a disciple of Ibn al-'Arabī. Three centuries later, Aḥmad-i Sirhindī (d. 1033/1624) developed the doctrine of the oneness of witnessing (*waḥdat ash-shuhūd*) within the Naqshbandī Sufi order to check Ibn al-'Arabī's influence in India. Spreading from Sirhindī throughout the Mujaddidī phase of the Naqshbandiyya and beyond, this doctrine, derived from Simnānī's ontological theories, has become the major Sufi alternative to the concept of *waḥdat al-wujūd* for comprehending the relationship of God and the world.

'Alā' ad-dawla as-Simnānī was a prolific writer in both Arabic and Persian. One hundred and fifty-four titles are ascribed to him which refer to a total of one hundred and four works. Seventy-nine of these are known to be extant today (not counting his correspondence). These texts vary in length from substantial monographs to one or two-page treatises constituting works of spiritual counsel or brief explanations of particular terms and concepts, and include a highly crafted and frequently revised encyclopedic work on his mystical ideas, a commentary on the Qur'ān, a collection of poetry, a variety of short mystical treatises, and letters on controversial points of Sufism. Simnānī began his writing career well after meeting with Nūr ad-dīn al-Isfarā'inī, who formally introduced him to Kubrawī mysticism, and after having been authorized by Isfarā'inī to start instructing disciples of his own.

His writings cover a wide array of topics, although the emphasis is clearly upon the instruction of his disciples and of future generations of mystics. This instruction is both spiritual and practical in nature, covering theoretical aspects of mystical, theological, philosophical and legal thought as well as the finer points of everyday religious practice and social conduct. With this bipartite level of instruction in mind, Simnānī deals with mystical theories of the relationship of God to the universe, the form and function of the spiritual human body, the hierarchy of leadership in the mystical realm, and the nature and

manner of attainment of mystical states. In the course of his explanations of such points, he also discusses earlier Sufi, philosophical and theological views, illustrating the reasons for his agreement with or opposition to specific positions. Along with this spiritual instruction, Simnānī provides practical direction on the appropriate forms of *dhikr* performance, attitudes towards one's family and property, attitudes towards the state, the correct manner of religious ritual, and such apparent trivialities as the etiquette of eating and performing other bodily functions. By his own admission, Simnānī's autobiographical writings are intended to serve the didactic function of illustrating these points through his personal experience.

Of all the existing works written by Simnānī, his commentary on the Qur'ān entitled *Tafsīr najm al-qur'ān* provides the most perfect summary presentation of his thought. Within the space of a lengthy introduction, and commentary on the *Fātiḥa* and *sūras* 52–114 (roughly one-sixth of the Qur'ān in terms of length), he addresses virtually all the salient features of his thought. For this reason, Simnānī's *Najm al-qur'ān* (supported by references to his other works) is a text worthy of functioning as the primary representative of his teachings and intellectual positions.

Despite his importance to the Kubrawiyya and Islamic mystical thought in general, Simnānī has received scant attention in the works of traditional Islamic biography and the critical studies of modern scholars. The major reason for his relative obscurity may be that he lived between the Mongol invasion and the reign of Tīmūr, which is one of the most poorly understood periods of Islamic history. The disregard of traditional Islamic scholars may also be explained in part by his association with the Mongol court. There are some notable exceptions to the lack of modern critical writings on Simnānī, in the form of valuable studies on various aspects of Simnānī's thought by H. Corbin, H. Cordt, N.M. Hirawī, H. Landolt, M. Molé, 'Abd ar-Rafī' Ḥaḳīqat and S.M. Sadr. In addition, critical editions of a number of his works have appeared in the last decade. A comprehensive monograph on Simnānī is still lacking, however, and it is the purpose of this book to fill that gap. My principal goal has been to provide a systematic presentation of a seminal Islamic figure. In my desire to establish an accurate biography of Simnānī and to render his often opaque and fragmented ideas as lucidly and coherently as possible, I have minimized discussions assessing his life and teachings within their historical or social context. The major exception to this is the meaning of some concepts and terms which are central to his thought,

which have been discussed in the context of Islamic mystical and philosophical thought in the final chapter.

The eight chapters of this book naturally fall into two sections. The first consists of a study of Simnānī's life, while the second examines his ideas regarding Sufi thought and practice.

In the second and third chapters I have examined the accessible sources for information on his biography and teaching. Through a study of the works of Islamic historiography, biography and hagiography, as well as Simnānī's own writings and other miscellaneous religious texts, I have attempted to construct as accurate and critical a biography as is possible from the available sources.

The next four chapters deal with the content of Simnānī's works. Chapter 4 constitutes an analysis of his Sufi thought, emphasis being given to a coherent and ordered presentation of his key ideas, such as his teachings on God, creation, the human soul, while chapter 5 deals with the constitution of the mystical human body and the nature and importance of its highest state, referred to as the "subtle substance of I-ness" (*al-laṭīfa al-anā'iyya*). I have attempted to show how Simnānī organizes these ideas to provide a comprehensive theory justifying his belief that the highest human state is one of eternal servitude to God.

The next two chapters describe Simnānī's Sufi practice; in other words, the manner in which one attains the mystical knowledge described in chapters 4 and 5. After outlining the fundamental requirements of faith as understood by Simnānī in the sixth chapter, in the seventh I have examined his ways of meditation, retreat and prayer, as well as his methods of instruction and Sufi education.

In the absence of accurate critical editions of most of Simnānī's works, I have relied heavily upon sources in manuscript form. This is especially true in the case of the primary subject of this study, his *Tafsīr najm al-qur'ān*, for which I have referred to the most accurate (and relatively accessible) copy preserved in the Şehit Ali Paşa collection in the Süleymaniye Library, Istanbul. Appendix A lists Simnānī's writings and provides a brief critical description of each, inasmuch as is possible in chronological order. Emphasis has been given to a detailed external description of *Tafsīr najm al-qur'ān*, which has been discussed in terms of its manuscript tradition, its structure, and its place in the literature of Qur'anic commentary.

Primary Sources of the Simnānī Tradition

Scholars interested in studying the life of 'Alā' ad-dawla as-Simnānī are fortunate in having a number of independent sources

providing biographical details about him. This is due in the main to his status as a major religious figure and a member of a wealthy family which was involved in court politics in the Ilkhanid state. In addition, Simnānī wrote a large number of works, several of which provide autobiographical information.

Details on Simnānī's life are found in four distinct literary traditions: Arabic biographical works (*ṭabaqāt* literature), Persian political histories of the period, Sufi biographies and hagiographies, and Simnānī's autobiographical writings.

Simnānī was keenly aware of the narratibility of his own life, and provided information concerning himself in a number of his works, occasionally going into great detail concerning a specific topic. Most of Simnānī's treatises are written with the intention of guiding his disciples and future mystics. For this reason, the specific historical details of his autobiographical writings are unreliable since he clearly attempted to construct his biography not as an accurate chronology, but as an exemplary self-history providing a model of Sufi thought and practice for his disciples. Thus individual accounts are coherent within themselves, but inconsistent when compared to parallel ones written at other times. The conscious reorganization of his autobiography as a didactic medium is most obvious in his *al-'Urwa li-ahl al-khalwa wa'l-jalwa*, a work which he revised at least twice, but also in other treatises in which he explains how he came to adopt his system of belief. Despite their shortcomings, these treatises nevertheless provide a valuable picture of Simnānī's retrospective vision of his religious awakening, and of how he wished to present himself to posterity.

Some of the treatises written early in Simnānī's religious career cannot be precisely dated. Probably the earliest work to provide autobiographical information is *al-Wārid ash-shārid*, which was completed in 699/1299–1300.¹ The stated purpose for providing this information is the "unveiling of the correct path from among the [varied] paths and the demonstration of the path of salvation from among the [various] sects."² This treatise provides a brief description of Simnānī's mystical conversion and some additional biographical details. The emphasis is not on the precise course of events in his life, but on how he came to become a disciple of Nūr ad-dīn al-Isfarā'inī (d. 717/1317) and a mystical teacher in his own right, and upon the chain of religious

1. Simnānī states that at the time he was writing this work, he was forty years old (*al-Wārid ash-shārid*, MS. A1588 [Catalog no. 5226], Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi, Istanbul, 27a).

2. *Ibid.*, 26b.

authority which he derived from Isfarā'inī. Two other short works written before 28 Šafar 714/13 June 1314 have a similar emphasis: an undated treatise entitled *Hadiyyat al-muhtadī wa-hidāyat al-mubtadī'*, and the *Risāla faṭḥ al-mubīn*, written some time between Shawwāl 712/February 1313 and 19 Ramaḍān 713/7 January 1314.³ Both treatises mention his mystical conversion and emphasize the underlying importance of this experience in his decision to quit government service. Additional information on the names of his teachers and associates is found in an untitled treatise of three folios preserved in one of the earliest collections of Simnānī's work.⁴

A work entitled *Risāla fī-dhikr asāmī mashāyikhī* and datable to 712/1312–13 provides even more details on Simnānī's mystical affiliation and gives valuable information on the chain of transmission of various Sufi robes (*khirqā*) in the Kubrawī order.⁵ Similar information is also found in a short published work entitled *Tadhkirat al-mashāyikh*.⁶

Much of Simnānī's autobiographical information is repeated in these treatises with slight variations. It is also recorded in the '*Urwa*, Simnānī's major prose work, which he took pains to revise twice during his life time. The final version of the text was completed late in his life (probably in 728/1328) and is therefore removed in time from the information it purportedly conveys. Given the temporal distance between the events themselves and their description in the '*Urwa*, and the author's obvious intention of leaving an exemplary and crafted account of his life for later readers, it is not surprising that the autobiographical details found in this text seem the most artificial. Simnānī's personal history is streamlined, and actions and liaisons of his youth which were inconsistent with activities in his later life are omitted.

The *Chihil majlis* is even further removed in time and has the added problem of being a collection of Simnānī's sayings and actions

3. *Hadiyyat al-muhtadī*, MS. 353, Karaçelebizade, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Istanbul, 80b–86a; *Risāla faṭḥ al-mubīn*, MS. 1, Fiqh ḥanafī fārsī, Dār al-kutub, Cairo, 193b–211a.

4. MS. 11-mīm, Majāmi' fārsiyya, Dār al-kutub, Cairo, 145a–147a. The *majmū'a* is dated 3 Rabi' I, 887/22 April, 1482 (hereafter referred to as Dār al-kutub, untitled). See appendix A for details on this and other works by Simnānī.

5. MS. 11-mīm, Majāmi' fārsiyya, Dār al-kutub, Cairo, 72a–76b.

6. M.T. Dānishpazhūh, "Khirqā-yi hazār mīkhī," *Collected Papers on Islamic Philosophy and Mysticism*, ed. H. Landolt and M. Mohaghegh (Tehran: La branche de Téhéran de l'institut des études islamiques de l'Université McGill, 1971), 147–78.

compiled in "sessions" (*majālis*) by his student Iqbāl-i Sīstānī (Sijistānī) and authorized by Simnānī. The biographical information contained therein is anecdotal and somewhat hagiographical in nature as a result of Sīstānī's editorial judgement and feelings of extreme admiration and affection for Simnānī. Nevertheless, it is valuable as a record of Simnānī's interaction with his students and of his students' perception of his identity.

The earliest references to Simnānī's life in biographical works are found in the *Kitāb al-wāfi bi'l-wafayāt* and *A'yān al-'aṣr* of Ṣalāḥ ad-dīn aṣ-Ṣafadī (d. 764/1362).⁷ Ṣafadī's information on Simnānī is both accurate and detailed, and is obtained in part from Ṣafadī's teacher, Shams ad-dīn adh-Dhahabī (d. 748/1347).⁸

A second strand of biographical material on Simnānī is found in the *ṭabaqāt* works of the Shāfi'ī school. There is a brief entry in the *Ṭabaqāt ash-shāfi'iyya* of Asnawī (d. 772/1370–71) which does not draw any information from Ṣafadī's works.⁹ From Asnawī's short reference, Simnānī finds his way into other compilations of Shāfi'ī biographies, including that of Taqī ad-dīn Ibn Qaḍī Shuhba (d. 851/1447).¹⁰

A brief entry on Simnānī also exists in the *Tā'rikh 'ulamā' Baghdād* by Ibn Rāfi' (d. 774/1372–73).¹¹ This is neither closely based upon the work of Ṣafadī, nor on that of Asnawī. With Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī (d. 852/1448), the biography of Simnānī begins to take a formulaic shape. He provides more details about Simnānī than are found in the Shāfi'ī *ṭabaqāt*, but his information consists mainly of extracts culled from Ṣafadī's work and presented in summary form, compounding the mistakes found in manuscripts of Ṣafadī's work.¹² Biographical works after *ad-Durar al-kāmina* do not contribute any new material to the study of Simnānī, but simply repeat entries found

7. *Kitāb al-wāfi bi'l-wafayāt*, vol. 7, ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1969), 356; *A'yān al-'aṣr*, MS 1809, Atif Efendi, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Istanbul, 48b–49a.

8. Simnānī does not appear in any of Dhahabī's major works. Nevertheless, Ṣafadī mentions that he received some information on Simnānī from Dhahabī.

9. Jamāl ad-dīn al-Asnawī, *Ṭabaqāt ash-shāfi'iyya*, 2 vols., ed. K.Y. al-Ḥūt (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-'ilmiyya, 1987), 1:349, no. 664.

10. *Ṭabaqāt ash-shāfi'iyya*, 4 vols., ed. 'Abd al-'Alīm Khān (Beirut: 'Ālam al-kutub, 1987), 2:248–49, no. 530.

11. Ed. 'Abbās al-'Azzāwī (Baghdad: Maṭba'at al-ahālī, 1938), 162, no. 136.

12. *ad-Durar al-kāmina*, 5 vols., ed. M. Sayyid Jādd al-Ḥaqq (Cairo: Dār al-kutub al-ḥadītha, 1966), 1:266, no. 663.

in earlier texts, particularly in that of Asnawī. The references for Simnānī in both the *Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn* and the *Shadharāt adh-dhahab* are based upon this work.¹³

Political histories of the Ilkhanid and Timurid periods prove to be almost as rich a source for information regarding Simnānī's life as the biographical works described above. References to Simnānī's family are found in all historical works of the Ilkhanid era. Incidental references with some value for the study of 'Alā' ad-dawla as-Simnānī are found in the *Tā'rikh-i Uljāytū* (completed ca. 716/1316),¹⁴ *Tā'rikh-i Waṣṣāf* (ca. 728/1328),¹⁵ and the *Tā'rikh-i guzida* (ca. 730/1329–30).¹⁶ Similar anecdotal references are also found in the *Zafarnāma* of Yazdī (completed 828/1424–25).¹⁷

The *Mujmal-i faṣīḥī* of Faṣīḥ Aḥmad-i Khwāfī (d. 849/1445) is extremely valuable for establishing a chronology of the events in Simnānī's life.¹⁸ The *Tā'rikh-i ḥabīb as-siyar* (ca. 940/1533–34) of Khwānd Amīr is equally useful for its detailed treatment of Simnānī.¹⁹ It is the most important and well-regarded work of Persian history to provide a substantial biography of Simnānī.

In addition to political histories, references to Simnānī are also found in works of historical geography. The most important of these are the *Haft iqlīm* (1002/1593–94) and the *Riyāḍ as-siyāḥa* (1237/1821–22).²⁰

The above-mentioned historical and biographical works are crucial for establishing a critical biography of 'Alā' ad-dawla as-Simnānī because they are independent sources: they are neither

13. Shams ad-dīn ad-Dāwūdī (d. 945/1538), *Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn*, 2 vols., ed. 'Alī Muḥammad 'Umar (Ābidīn: Maktaba Wahba, 1972), 1:66, no. 61; 'Abd al-Ḥayy Ibn al-'Imād (d. 1089/1678), *Shadharāt adh-dhahab fi-akḥbār man dhahab*, 8 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qudsī, 1932), 6:125.

14. Abu'l-Qāsim 'Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad al-Qāshānī, *Tā'rikh-i Uljāytū*, ed. Mahin Hambly (Tehran: Bungāh-i tarjuma wa nashr-i kitāb, 1969).

15. Shihāb ad-dīn Shīrāzī Waṣṣāf, *Tā'rikh-i Waṣṣāf* (Tehran: 1967).

16. Ḥamd Allāh Mustawfī al-Qazwīnī, *Tā'rikh-i guzida*, ed. 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Nawā'ī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Amīr-i Kabīr, 1983).

17. Sharaf ad-dīn 'Alī Yazdī, *Zafarnāma*, 2 vols., ed. M. 'Abbāsī (Tehran: Amīr-i Kabīr, 1957).

18. Ed. Maḥmūd Farrukh (Mashhad: Kitābfurūshī-yi bāstān, 1960).

19. Chiyāth ad-dīn al-Ḥasanī (Khwānd Amīr), *Tā'rikh-i ḥabīb as-siyar*, 4 vols. (Tehran: Kitābkhāna-yi Khayyām, 1964).

20. Amīn Aḥmad Rāzī, *Haft iqlīm*, 2 vols., ed. Jawwād Faḍīl (Tehran: Kitābfurūshī-yi 'Alī Akbar 'Ilmī, n.d.); Zayn al-'ābidīn Shīrwanī, *Riyāḍ as-siyāḥa*, ed. Asghar Ḥamid Rabbānī (Tehran: Kitābfurūshī-yi Sa'dī, 1960).

dependent on information provided by Simnānī himself nor written within the Sufi tradition and thus potentially hagiographical in nature. The writings of Ṣafadī and the *ṭabaqāt* works of the Shāfi'i school shed light on Simnānī's involvement in non-mystical endeavors, and reflect his contacts with individuals who are overlooked in the writings of the Sufi historical tradition. This tradition emphasizes Simnānī's religious career only within the context of Kubrawī mystical circles along with his well-known contacts with 'Abd ar-Razzāq al-Kāshānī (d. 736/1335), the disciple of Muḥyī ad-dīn Ibn al-'Arabī (d. 638/1240).²¹

The first major reference to Simnānī in Sufi biographical literature is in the *Nafaḥāt al-uns* of 'Abd ar-Raḥmān-i Jāmī (d. 898/1492).²² Jāmī bases most of his information on Simnānī's autobiographical writings and the works of his disciples, in particular the *Chihil majlis* of Iqbāl-i Sīstānī.²³ Several anecdotes concerning his life and thought are recorded, although Jāmī fails to show the critical judgement displayed by Ṣafadī.

The information about Simnānī's life and thought found in the *Rawḍāt al-jinān* of Ibn al-Karbalā'ī (completed 975/1567) is also extremely important.²⁴ Although he relies on the *Nafaḥāt*, Ibn al-Karbalā'ī also consults Simnānī's own writings and is a better source than Jāmī for Simnānī's disciples as well as his thought and place in the Sufi tradition.

Later Sufi biographical works rely upon Jāmī and do not make any significant contribution to one's knowledge of Simnānī's life. Significant among them are the *Safīnat al-awliyā'* of Dārā Shikūh (d. 1069/1658–59), completed in 1049/1639, and the *Khazīnat al-aṣfiyā'* of Ghulām Sarwar Lāhūrī, dated 1281/1864–65.²⁵ Both these works

21. See below, p. 44–55, 199.

22. Ed. Mahdī Tawḥīdīpūr (Tehran: Kitāb furūshī-yi Sa'dī, 1958), 439–43. The *Nafaḥāt*, completed in 881/1476, is also a valuable source of information on several of Simnānī's most important teachers and disciples.

23. For further information see below, pp. 176–78. Cf. Ivanow, "More on the Sources of Jāmī's Nafahat," *Asiatic Society of Bengal*, new series, 19 (1923), 299–303. Very little is known about Sīstānī's life, and the dates of his birth and death are not recorded in any known work. For whatever information can be found on him, see H. Cordt, *Die Sitzungen des 'Alā' ad-Dawla as-Simnānī*, (Zurich: Juris, 1977).

24. Ḥusayn Ibn al-Karbalā'ī-yi Tabrīzī, *Rawḍāt al-jinān wa jannāt al-janān*, ed. Ja'far al-Qurrā'ī (Tehran: Bungāh-i tarjuma wa nashr-i kitāb, 1970).

25. *Safīnat al-awliyā'* (Cawnpore: 1906), 107; *Khazīnat al-aṣfiyā'*, tr. Iqbāl Aḥmad Fārūqī (Lahore: Maktaba-yi nabawiyya, 1983), 264–65.

provide summary extracts from the *Nafaḥāt* and are inaccurate in their details. As such, they constitute hagiographies rather than historical references.

A more recent Sufi biographical work containing valuable information is the *Ṭarā'iq al-ḥaqā'iq* (dated 1333/1915) of Ma'sūm 'Alī Shāh.²⁶ This source combines information found in earlier biographies like the *Nafaḥāt* with primary writings, particularly better known Simnānī texts such as *al-'Urwa li-ahl al-khalwa wa'l-jalwa* and the *Chihil majlis*.²⁷

Simnānī's substantial poetical writings have caused him to be included in works devoted to the biographies of poets, in particular the *Tadhkirat ash-shu'arā* (892/1487) of Dawlatshāh Samarqandī and the *Riyāḍ al-'arīfīn* (1260/1844) and *Majma' al-fuṣaḥā'* (1288/1871), both by Riḍā Qūlī Khān (d. 1288/1871).²⁸ Dawlatshāh's work is based upon Simnānī's own writings and is of some value, while the latter two provide brief extracts from the *Nafaḥāt*.

As a result of Simnānī's possible connections with the Sarbadār movement²⁹ and his affiliation with the Kubrawī order (which had an ambiguous relationship with Shī'ism),³⁰ he has been included in Shī'ī biographical works as well. The substantial entry in the *Majālis al-mu'minīn* of Nūr Allāh Shushtarī (d. 1019/1610) is primarily based upon the *Nafaḥāt*. However, Shushtarī greatly exaggerates Simnānī's devotion to the *Imāms*.³¹ Not only was his hatred for the Umayyads not as visceral as is described in the *Majālis al-mu'minīn*, but Simnānī also criticized the Shī'īs for their lack of respect for the first three caliphs and for 'Ā'isha, the wife of Muḥammad. From the *Majālis al-mu'minīn*, Simnānī enters larger Shī'ī biographical works, most significantly the *A'yān ash-shī'a* of Muḥsin al-Amīn.³²

26. 3 vols., ed. M. Ja'far Maḥjūb (Tehran: Kitābkhāna-yi Bārānī, 1921).

27. See appendix A for a discussion of these and other works by Simnānī.

28. *Tadhkiratu'sh-Shu'arā*, ed. E.G. Browne, Persian Historical Texts, no. 1 (London: Luzac and Co., 1901), 250–52; *Tadhkira-yi riyāḍ al-'arīfīn*, ed. S. Aḥmad-i Muḥadhdhab (Tehran: Kitābkhāna-yi mahdiyya, 1937), 178; *Majma' al-fuṣaḥā'*, 6 vols., ed. Maḥāhir Muṣaffā (Tehran: Chāp-i Mūsawī, 1960), 2:869.

29. See below, p. 51.

30. For further information, see Marijan Molé, "Les Kubrawiyya entre sunnisme et shiisme aux huitième et neuvième siècles de l'hégire," *Revue des études islamiques* 29 (1961), 61–142.

31. Shushtarī, *Majālis al-mu'minīn*, 2 vols. (Tehran: Kitābfurūshī-yi islāmiyya, 1956), 2:134.

32. 3rd ed. (Beirut: Maṭba'at al-inṣāf, 1961), 9:213–15, no. 1566.

The Simnānī Tradition in Modern Scholarship

Scant attention has been paid to the study of Simnānī throughout this century. This is surprising in light of his stature as one of the most important intellectual figures of Ilkhanid Iran, and the state's foremost religious authority during the reign of Abū Sa'īd. However, the last decade has witnessed an increase in the scholarly attention paid to Simnānī in the form of editions of his works and the compilation of preliminary biographies. A thorough analytical study of his life and thought is still lacking.

The first modern piece of scholarship is an article in Persian by Sa'īd Nafīsī.³³ This was followed by a brief but valuable monograph by Sayyed Mozaffer Sadr entitled *Sharḥ-i aḥwāl-u afkār-u āthār-i shaykh 'Alā' ad-dawla as-Simnānī*.³⁴ Both these preliminary studies are valuable for their attempts to place Simnānī within the Kubrawī tradition, but an over-reliance on Sufi hagiographical literature detracts from their scholarly accuracy.

Simnānī's life was discussed by Molé in light of his relationship with Shī'ism,³⁵ and shortly after this Nazif Şahinoğlu attempted a study of his biography in his dissertation on Simnānī.³⁶ Further study of Simnānī's life in the context of his mystical thought has been conducted by Henry Corbin in his monumental work entitled *En Islam iranien*.³⁷ Important advances were also made by Hermann Landolt in the critical study of Simnānī and his relationship with his mystical guide, Nūr ad-dīn al-Isfarā'īnī.³⁸

33. "'Alā' ad-dawla-yi Simnānī," *Yaghmā* 7 (1954), 358–62. Cf. the brief extracts from Simnānī's commentary on the Qur'ān and the *Chihil majlis* of Iqbāl-i Sīstānī found in L. Massignon, *Recueil de textes inédits concernant l'histoire de la mystique en pays d'Islam* (Paris: Librairie orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1929), 143–45.

34. [A Study of the Life, Thought and Works of Shaykh 'Alā' ad-dawla as-Simnānī], Tehran: Dānish, 1955.

35. Molé, "Les Kubrawiyya"

36. *"Alā al-Dawla al-Simnānī: Hayatı, Eserleri, Kelâm Telâkkisi, Tasavvuf Alanındaki Görüşleri ile Beyân al-Ihsân li ahl al-İkân*, (Istanbul: Şarkiyat Araştırma Merkezi Kitapları, no. 6, 1966). Cf. Şahinoğlu's article in the new *İslam Ansiklopedisi* which is extracted from this monograph ("Alâuddevle-i Simnānî." *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 2, ed. Kemal Güren et al. (Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1989), 345a–47b).

37. (Paris: Gallimard, 1972), 3:275ff.

38. *Correspondence spirituelle échangée entre Nuroddin Esfarayeni et son disciple 'Alaoddawleh Semnani* (Tehran: L'institut franco-iranien de recherche, 1972). Cf. also Landolt's *Le révélateur des mystères* (Lagrasse: Verdier, 1986), which provides additional information.

More recently, Hartwig Cordt has included a brief biography of Simnānī in his analytical examination of the *Chihil majlis*. In addition, a renewed interest in the study of 'Alā' ad-dawla as-Simnānī in Iran has yielded one useful biographical essay by 'Abd ar-Rafi' Ḥaḳīqat in his *Khumkhāna-yi waḥdat*, a work which supplants Sadr's book as the most comprehensive monographical essay on Simnānī.³⁹ Less valuable biographical essays have also been written by Najīb Māyil-i Hirawī, who has edited a number of Simnānī's works.

In addition to the biographical accounts mentioned above, preliminary studies on Simnānī are found in the accurate and informative encyclopedia articles by Fritz Meier and Josef Van Ess.⁴⁰

39. *Khumkhāna-yi waḥdat* (Tehran: Shirkat-i mu'allifān-u mutarjimān-i Īrān, 1983).

40. F. Meier, "'Alā' al-Dawla al-Simnānī," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new edition, vol. 1 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1960), 346b–47b; J. Van Ess, "'Alā' al-dawla Semnānī," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 1, ed. Ehsan Yarshater (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), 774b–77a. Brief accounts of Simnānī's life are contained in a number of other works, most significantly: F. Meier, *Die Fawā'id al-Ġamāl wa Fawā'id al-Ġalāl des Naḡm ad-Dīn al-Kubra* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1957); *Abū Sa'id-i Abū l-Ḥayr* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976); 'Alī Akbar Dihkhudā, *Lughatnāma* (Tehran: Dānishkada-yi adabiyāt wa 'ulūm-i insānī, 1958); M.H. adh-Dhahabī, *at-Tafsīr wa'l-mufasssīrūn*, 2 vols., 2nd ed. (Cairo: Dār al-kutub al-ḥadītha, 1976); J.S. Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971); S. Ateş, *İşârî Tefsīr Okulu* (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi, 1974); 'Isā b. Junayd Shirāzī, *Tadhkira-yi hazār mazār*, ed. Nūrānī Wişāl (Shiraz: Kitābkhāna-yi Aḥmadi, 1985).