

CARL W. ERNST

Abu Nasr Muhammad Khalidi (d. 1406/1985)
A Brief Memoir

[NOTE: Abū Naṣr Muḥammad Khālīdī was a leading Indian scholar from Hyderabad, and a specialist in the fields of Qur'ānic studies, Indo-Persian histories of the Deccan, and Dakanī Urdu literature. The following brief account of his life and works was composed in connection with the publication of his critical edition of an important Persian history of Indian and Persian dynasties, the *Tazkiratu 'l-Mulūk* of Rafī'ū 'd-Dīn Shīrāzī (forthcoming from the Islamic Research Foundation, Asitan-i Quds-i Rizavi, Mashhad, Iran), which I am seeing through the press. The details of this biographical sketch are drawn from a more extensive biographical notice in Urdu, by Mu'īnu 'd-Dīn 'Azīmī, in *Sham'-e Farōzān, Čand 'Ilmī aur Adabī Shakhṣiyatōñ kē Ḥālāt-e Zindagī aur Kārnāmē* (the shining candle, the lives and works of several scholarly and literary personalities), edited by 'Umar Khālīdī (Hyderabad: 'Azīmī and Sons, 1412/1992), pp. 137–86. Since this memoir will only be published in a Persian translation as an accompaniment to the edition of *Tazkiratu 'l-Mulūk*, it is offered here in English for the benefit of Urdu scholars.]

ABU NASR MUHAMMAD KHALIDI was born in Hyderabad in 1916, in a family that counted its descent from the soldiers who accompanied the famous 1400 saints brought from Delhi to the Deccan in the fourteenth century, when Sulṭān Muḥammad ibn Tughlaq commanded the removal of the élite of the capital to Daulatābād. During the rule of Navvāb Nāṣīru 'd-Daula (1829–1857), his great-grandfather 'Abdu 'l-Lāh Ḥaidar Khān was an officer in the army, but he left government service, and the family's fortunes subsequently declined. His son was named Ḥusain Khān, and the latter's son was Muḥammad 'Alī, better known as Kallan Khān or Kālē

Khān, a merchant by profession; upon his return from a pilgrimage to Mecca in 1870, however, he renounced the active life and followed a spiritual path. Kālē Shāh, as he was now known, had two sons, Muḥammad Ḥusain Khān and Aḥmad Khān; the former was Khālidi's father. To support his fourteen children, Muḥammad Ḥusain operated a small shop near the Char Minar area of Hyderabad, but a number of children died in infancy due to poverty and privation. Khālidi, one of four surviving brothers, was originally named Muḥammad Sharafu 'd-Dīn, after a famous local saint called Bābā Sharafu 'd-Dīn. He was adopted by Ghulām Rasūl Khān, the son of a Rajput Muslim archer whose marriage to a "vilāyatī Arab" woman (daughter of a Ḥaẓramautī Arab father and an Abyssinian mother) had proved childless, and the foster parents provided a nurturing environment for the boy.

Khālidi attended a local school to the seventh grade, and his progress in Urdu led him into the Persian course, with encouragement from a foster uncle. Returning to his biological family after his foster father's death, Khālidi unfortunately had to drop out of school, so he studied instead at the Chowk Mosque. In 1926, he met at the mosque a noted Urdu poet and auto-didact, Ṣafi Aurangābādī, with whom he studied Urdu and Persian classics. With this assistance, Khālidi enrolled in the Madrasa Dāru 'l-'Ulūm and obtained his matriculation in 1928. It was at this time that his ability and dedication led Ṣafi to give him the nickname "Abū Naṣr," alluding to the famous philosopher and polymath Fārābī, which name was also applied to Khālidi by appreciative colleagues in later life. His love of early Islamic history would cause another teacher to give him the epithet "Khālidi," in honor of the renowned Arab general Khālīd bin Valīd.

Khālidi obtained his bachelor's degree in 1934, and he then acted as a private tutor for a number of families. Although he was advised to seek a law career, his love for Islamic history eventually led him to study privately with Maulavī Jamīlu 'd-Dīn Aḥmad (d. 1956), a Hindu convert to Islam who had become an outstanding scholar of Persian and Arabic in addition to being a magistrate. Jamīlu 'd-Dīn Aḥmad, affectionately known as "Rājā Ḥaẓrat," encouraged Khālidi in the study of the Qur'ān and Sufism, and through his influence Khālidi became initiated into Sufism by Shaykh Muhammad Husayn (d. 1945), a successor of Machhli Wale Shah (d. 1351/1923). In the meantime Khālidi earned his M.A. in Islamic history in 1936, and having come under the guidance of a pious man named Saiyad Niẓāmu 'd-Dīn, he married the latter's daughter Khairu 'n-Nisā' Zubaida in 1938. The family of Saiyad Niẓāmu 'd-Dīn traced their lineage to Sayyid Shah Habib Allah (d. 1041/1631), a well-

known saint of Bijapur. It is an indication of the great respect in which Saiyad Niẓāmu 'd-Dīn held Khālidī, that he approved of his daughter's marriage to a non-saiyad.

In 1939 Khālidī suffered a personal loss when his father-in-law Saiyad Niẓāmu 'd-Dīn passed away. When the latter's funeral took place near the tomb of Saiyad Muḥammad Maḥmūd Makkī in Kishen Bagh, Khālidī in his grief astounded the crowd by momentarily lying down in the grave with his deceased father-in-law ('Azmi points out that this apparently odd action imitates the action of the Prophet Muḥammad when he attended the funeral of Khadija). About this same time Khālidī took a position at the Translation Bureau, an institution devoted to producing Urdu versions of classical works from Arabic and English. There he became acquainted with Saiyad Abu 'l-Khair Maudūdī, and through him he met the religious reformer Saiyad Abu 'l-'Alā Maudūd, with whom he later corresponded. When a position became available in the Department of History at Osmania University in 1942, Khālidī was appointed in the place of a former teacher, Maulvī Jamīlu 'r-Raḥmān, and he held this post until he retired as Reader of History in 1976. In 1946, Khālidī was offered the opportunity for advanced study in Egypt to perfect his Arabic, and he received his D.Litt. from King Fu'ad I University (now Cairo University) in 1949 with a thesis on the early Shī'ī leader Mukhtār. Now his interests encompassed history, languages, literature, and the Qur'ān.

Friends have described Khālidī as reticent and reserved, a quality that strangers sometimes mistook for aloofness. He was a regular and self-disciplined person, with a daily routine that included morning and evening walks and an afternoon siesta, and he was a connoisseur of fine tea. Nonetheless, he was a vivid conversationalist with intimates, and hospitable with guests. He used to arrange dinners to break the Ramazān fast at the Chowk Mosque, to renew acquaintance with old friends, though he was a moderate eater. Khālidī was a great believer in the efficacy of honey, which he took daily in emulation of the Prophet, and he was also fond of the celebrated sweets of Mēghā Rāj, a legendary Hyderabad confectioner. Notable figures of Osmania University regularly took part in discussions with Khālidī on all manner of subjects, and foreign scholars such as W. C. Smith enjoyed his conversation as well. Leading Indian scholars, including Maulānā 'Abdu 'l-Mājid Daryābādī and Maulānā Abu 'l-Ḥasan Nadvī, regarded Khālidī as a national treasure. He kept up an extensive correspondence, which he normally did not preserve (some letters from Maudūdī and others are, however, contained in 'Azmi's article). Khālidī always treasured the memories of his teachers, particularly Ṣafī. Khālidī

helped form a committee to publish a selection of Şafi's poems with critical essays and a biography. Khālidi's closest associates included noted scholars and translators such as Saiyad Quṭbu 'd-Dīn Maḥmūdī of the Translation Bureau (translator of Ibn Ḥishām's *Sīratu 'n-Nabī*), Saiyad 'Abdu 'l-Bāqī Shattārī (translator of Fakhru 'd-Dīn Rāzī's metaphysical disputations), and Saiyad 'Umar Quraishī. Scholars from Europe and America, such as Richard M. Eaton and Karen Leonard, studied Urdu with Khālidi, and among his students at Osmania University were many outstanding scholars.

In a testament to his children made in 1395/1975, Khālidi with characteristic humility remarked that his writings were all defective in some way or other, and he requested that one or more of them reprint his books with corrections and improvements. Quite a number of his writings remain in unpublished form (see Bibliography, below), and his notebooks contain drafts of other projects which were unfortunately never completed. Towards the end of his life, in 1979, Khālidi made the pilgrimage to Mecca visiting Damascus and Istanbul at the same time. After retiring from Osmania University, he founded a circle for the study of the Qur'ān, which he attended regularly; this study circle, which boasted many eminent members, is still functioning. Throughout his scholarly career, he was supported by his wife, whose material assistance and sacrifices made possible his sustained dedication to lengthy projects. He collected a remarkable library of rare volumes, which was divided among his six children, all of whom live in America. Remaining active to the end, he passed away on 19 Safar 1406/3 November 1985, coincidentally having been born in the very same lunar month of the Muslim calendar, and he was buried in the cemetery adjoining the tomb of Saiyad Muḥammad Maḥmūd Makkī at Ḥusainī Ṭēkrī (Ḥusainī hillock), in Kishen Bagh. Khālidi was one of the outstanding scholars of Hyderabad, and his contributions are a lasting legacy for Islamic culture. A list of his publications is included below, with translations of Urdu titles except those consisting of names.

Bibliography of the Writings of Abu Nasr Muhammad Khalidi

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7. "Qur'ān-e Majīd kī Rajā'iyat-angēz Āyatēn (the hope-inspiring verses of the Holy Qur'ān)." *Zindagi* 56 (September 1974), pp. 10–16.
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12. "Kuḥḥ Dakanī Kalām (some Dakani verses)." *Navā'-e Adab*, 15 (July-September 1964), pp. 27–42.
13. "Kalām-e Mu'azzam Bijāpūrī (the poetry of Mu'azzam Bijāpūrī)." *Urdū-e Qadīm* 1 (1965), pp. 222–82.
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