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AL-NUKRA, a plain west of the Djabal Hawrān on the border of Trachonitis in Transjordan. The name *al-Nukra* ("the cavity") is quite modern. It is applied to an area which includes the two districts of al-Baḡhaniyya (with its chief town Adḡri'āt) and Hawrān (west of the hills of the same name), i.e. the whole northern half of modern Jordan. In the wider sense, *al-Nukra* includes all the country from al-Ladja³, Djaydūr and al-Balkā³ to the foot of the Djabal Hawrān, in the narrower sense only the southern part of this; in any case it stretches from al-Ṣanamayn to the Djabal al-Durūz (Hawrān). To *al-Nukra* belong Mū'atbīn or Mū'tabīn, Tubnā (now Tibne), al-Maḡadīdja, Oḡra³, 'Olmā, al-Musayfira and al-Faddayn already mentioned in Syriac texts of the pre-Muslim period.

Bibliography: Nöldeke, in *ZDMG*, xxix, 431, n. 1; F. Buhl, *Geographie des alten Palästina*, Freiburg i. B. and Leipzig 1896, 15, 43-4, 84; R. Dussaud, *Topographie de la Syrie*, Paris 1927, 323.

(E. HONIGMANN)

NUQTAT AL-KĀF, an early work on the Bābī [q.v.] movement.

In 1910, E.G. Browne published a work entitled *Kitāb-i Nuqtatu 'l-Kāf*, a Persian history of the early Bābī movement, based on a "unique" manuscript (Suppl. persan 1071) in the Bibliothèque Nationale. This manuscript had been bought by the library in 1884, in a sale of books belonging to the late Comte de Gobineau. Authorship of the history was ascribed by the Bābī leader Ṣubḡ-i Azal [q.v.] to Ḥāḡidjī Mīrzā Djānī, a Kāshānī merchant killed in 1852.

Browne's text soon became the centre of a controversy that still continues. The Bahā'ī leader, 'Abbās Effendi 'Abd al-Bahā³, maintained that the work was a forgery produced by the Azalī Bābīs. This thesis was developed by the Bahā'ī scholar Mīrzā Abu 'l-Faḍl Gulpāyḡānī and his nephew Sayyid Maḡdī in

their *Kaḡh al-ghīā³* and, more recently, by H.M. Balyuzi. While this conspiracy theory is clearly unfounded, internal evidence suggests that the history was not written by Mīrzā Djānī. Recent conjectures favour authorship by his son or nephew, possibly in collaboration with a brother, using notes prepared by him. Some version of the *Nuqtat al-kāf* served as the basis for the later Bahā'ī *Tāriḡh-i Djādīd* and its recensions. In spite of the controversy, there can be no doubt that the *Nuqtat al-kāf* remains one of the most important sources for the early history of Babism.

A full discussion of the problems of authorship, provenance, and dating may be found in MacEoin, together with a list of the twelve or so manuscripts now known to be in existence (Appendix 8).

Bibliography: H.M. Balyuzi, *Eduard Granville Browne and the Bahā'ī faith*, London 1970, ch. VII; E.G. Browne (ed.), *Kitāb-i Nuqtatu 'l-Kāf, being the earliest history of the Bābīs, compiled by Ḥāḡijī Mīrzā Jānī of Kāshān between the years A.D. 1850 and 1852*, Leyden and London 1910, Gibb Memorial Series, vol. XV; idem (ed. and tr.), *The New History (Tāriḡh-i Jadīd) of Mīrzā 'Alī Muḡammed, the Bāb*, Cambridge 1903, repr. Amsterdam 1975; Mīrzā Abu 'l-Faḍl Gulpāyḡānī and Sayyid Maḡdī Gulpāyḡānī, *Kaḡh al-ghīā³ 'an ḡiyāl al-a'dā³*. Tashkent n.d. [1919?]; D. MacEoin, *The sources for early Bābī doctrine and history: a survey*, Leiden 1992, chs. 6 and 7, Appendix 8; Muḡḡī Ṭabāḡabā'ī, *Kitābī bī nām bā nāmī tāza*, in *Gawhar*, Year 2, parts 11-12 (1353/1974), 952-61; idem, *Tāriḡh-i kaḡīm wa djādīd*, 2 parts, in *Gawhar*, Year 3, parts 5-6 (1354/1975), 343-8, 426-31. (D. MACEOIN)

NUQTAWIYYA, an offshoot of the Hurūfiyya sect [q.v.] that after an incubation lasting a century emerged as a significant movement of politico-religious opposition in Ṣafawid Persia and, in India, played some role in the origination of Akbar's *Dīn-i Ilāhī* [q.v.]. Given its similarities not only with Hurūfism but also with Nizārī Ismā'īlism, it may be regarded as one more link in the long chain of Persian heresies.

The designation *Nuqtawiyya* is said to be taken from the doctrine that earth is the starting point (*nuqta*) of all things, the remaining three elements being derived from it; the term may also refer, however, to the use of two, three, or four dots, variously arranged, as cryptic abbreviations in the writings of the sect. The designation *Maḡmūdiyya* is also encountered, this being derived from the name of the founder, Maḡmūd Paṣīkḡhānī. Born at the village of Paṣīkḡhān near Fūmān in Gīlān, Maḡmūd followed Faḡl Allāh Astarābādī (d. 796/1384), the founder of Hurūfism, until he was expelled from the movement for alleged arrogance (hence the epithets *Maḡmūd-i mardūd* "Maḡmūd the rejected" and *Maḡmūd-i maṣrūd* "Maḡmūd the banished"). He is said to have proclaimed himself the Maḡdī and the bringer of a new dispensation in 800/1397, i.e. at the beginning of the 9th Islamic century. Virtually nothing is known of his life other than that he was still residing in Astarābād in 818/1415 when he finished the writing of one of his books, *Djawāz al-sā'irīn*. He died in 831/1427-28, supposedly a suicide, having cast himself into the waters of the Aras, but this is dismissed as a calumny by the *Nuqtawīs* themselves.

Maḡmūd Paṣīkḡhānī is said to have written sixteen books and 1,001 treatises (*nushḡa*) in exposition of his doctrines; none of these has ever been published in full (for extracts from his principal work, *Mizān*, see, however, Raḡīm Riḡā-zāda Malik's notes to his edition of Kayḡhusraw Isfandiyār, *Dabistān-i madḡhīb*, ii,