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BISHR B. AL-**WALĪD** B. ʿABD AL-MALIK, Umayyad prince, one of the numerous sons of the Caliph al-Walīd and brother of the Caliphs Yazīd III and Ibrāhīm. His learning earned him the title of scholar (*ʿālim*) of the Banū Marwān. He led many military expeditions (certainly in 92/710-11: al-Yaʿḳūbī, ii, 350, and in 96/714-15 against the Byzantines: al-Ṭabarī, ii, 1269 etc.). He was nominated *amīr* of the pilgrimage by his father in 95/714. His name does not appear in the sources until the conspiracy against his cousin al-Walīd II in 126/743-44. Despite the prohibition of his brother al-ʿAbbās, the famous general, he joined the opposition to the Caliph which supported Yazīd b. al-Walīd (the future Yazīd III). He was not, however, the only member of the family to do so, since Yazīd was supported by thirteen brothers.

He was governor of Ḳinnasrīn when Marwān b. Muḥammad, the governor of Armenia and Mesopotamia, took the field against Yazīd's successor Ibrāhīm in 127/744-45. Marwān, having succeeded in winning over the garrison of the town, largely composed of Ḳaysites, persuaded their leader to hand over to him Bishr and his brother Masrūr, and threw them both into prison. The date of Bishr's death is not known, but as Marwān in the course of his march after the battle of ʿAyn al-Djarr took over the caliphate, it is presumed that the two captives never recovered their liberty and died in prison.

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BISHR AL-ḤĀFĪ, full name: ABŪ NAṢR BISHR B. AL-ḤĀRITH B. ʿABD AL-RAḤMĀN B. ʿAṬĀʾ B. HILĀL B. MĀHĀN B. ʿABD ALLĀH (originally Baʿbūr) AL-ḤĀFĪ. He was a Ṣūfī, born in Bakird or in Mābarsām, a village near Marw (al-Shāhidjān) in 150/767 (or 152/769), and died in Baghdād (some sources say that he died in Marw, but this seems unlikely) in 226/840 or 227/841-42. Little is known about his early age. He is said to have belonged to some young men's association, or a gang of robbers, whilst still in Marw. He has also been described as a great friend of wine. Another tradition has it that he earned his living by making spindles. We do not know how this fits in, or to which period of his life it belongs. It is a known fact, however, that like his maternal uncle ʿAlī b. Khashram (165/781-258/872) he was a traditionist. With the exception of ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Mubārak (who came from Marw but travelled a great deal), his teachers lived in the Arabic-speaking regions; so Bishr is certain to have continued his *ḥadīth* studies after he left his home, and it may be these very studies that induced him to go away. He had already made a name for himself when he reached Baghdād from ʿAbbādān for the first time, for a Baghdād traditionist was anxious to meet him. Bishr is also said to have studied under Mālik b. Anas (who died in 179/795) and to have gone with him on a pilgrimage to Mecca. For chronological reasons Abū Ḥanīfa cannot possibly have been one of his teachers, as Hudjwīrī and ʿAṭṭār assert.

It is also not clear how and when he became a Ṣūfī. There is no mention anywhere of a novitiate, and two completely different events are mentioned as the reasons for his conversion. According to one version a certain Isḥāḳ al-Maghāzilī (who is, unfortunately, otherwise unknown to us) wrote a letter to him in which he asked him how he meant to earn his living if he lost his sight and his hearing and was no longer able to make spindles. According to the other version he picked up a piece of paper in the street (one report of this even says that he was drunk at the time) with the name of God on it; he perfumed it and kept it reverently, with the result that either Bishr himself, or someone else, had a dream promising the exaltation of Bishr's name. In each case, the result mentioned is Bishr's conversion to a pious way of life. Quite apart from these contradictions, we do not know what form this piety took—*e.g.*, whether it included *ḥadīth*—and we have no proof that these events actually were the beginning of his life as a Ṣūfī. From Bishr's sayings which have survived we merely see that at some point, at the latest in Baghdād, he did turn away from traditionist studies, he buried his *ḥadīth* writings and concentrated on Ṣūfī devotions. Traditionist studies, he says, do not equip one for death, they are merely a means to gain wordly pleasure, and they impair piety. He asked his former colleagues to impose a "poor-rate" on the *ḥadīth*, that is to say, to follow truly $2^1/_2$% of the pious verses which they had learnt and which they declaimed with such professorial self-complacency. He refrained from teaching *ḥadīth*s for the very reason that he so greatly wished to teach them, and promised to return to them as soon as he had overcome his longing to teach them: "Beware of the *ḥaddathanā*, for in the *ḥaddathanā* there is embedded a particular sweetness". He admitted the science of *ḥadīth* only in so far as it was pursued "for the sake of God", and quoted *ḥadīth*s only in conversation, where this would fit into the general framework of a training for a pious way of life. Still, as we do not know whether his earlier traditionism might not have been practised with this same idea in mind all along, we ought perhaps not to speak of an actual breach with his past.

Bishr's Ṣūfī piety is based upon the acceptance of the laws of Islam and the Sunnī Caliphs, but he is also said to have held the family of the Prophet in loving veneration. He was greatly respected not only by Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, but also by Maʾmūn (Muʿtazila, Shīʿa). The statement that he took Faith to mean a positive confession, a belief in its truth and man's acting according to it, as Hudjwīrī puts it, is, when formulated in this way, hardly true, although it is justifiable with regard to his practice. The decisive factor for Bishr was the deed itself. As an absolute minimum in this respect, he demanded that man should at least not sin, and to accomplish this he advised contemplation of God's greatness—before which he himself trembled, despite his own ascetic life, up to the very point of death. Before

the choice between God or the world, he made his choice unreservedly in favour of God, and he despised all forms of worldly ambition and selfishness. He preached poverty, which was to be borne with patience and charity, and it is said of him that when one day he met a man suffering from cold, and could not help him in any other way, he unclothed himself to show his sympathy and to give an example; he died in a borrowed shirt because he had given his own away to a poor man. He spoke against the avaricious, the very sight of whom "hardens the heart"; and he advised a man about to start off on a pilgrimage to Mecca, to give his money instead to an orphan or to a poor man, for the joy caused thereby was worth a hundred times more than a pilgrimage. By saying this he hardly meant that the one pilgrimage to Mecca, which the law prescribes, could be replaced by some social act, as some other Ṣūfīs have taught, but must have referred to some additional pilgrimage. Ṭāwūs b. Kaysān already (who died in 105/724) is said to have refrained from going on a pilgrimage because he chose to stay with a sick friend instead (*Ḥilyat al-Awliyāʾ*, 4, 10; cf. Meier, *Zwei islamische Lehrerzählungen bei Tolstoj?* in *Asiatische Studien*, 1958). And Bishr called pilgrimages the holy war of women, but, unlike for instance Djaʿfar al-Ṣādiḳ (al-Ḳāḍī al-Nuʿmān: *Daʿāʾim al-Islām*, i, 346-47), he put the giving of alms above both pilgrimage and the holy war—because alms could be given in secret, without other people getting to know of it. The very wish to have one's good deeds known by other people is, for Bishr, an example of worldly mindedness, and in this he sees an element capable of destroying even the good deeds of man. He condemned the wish to be well thought of by one's fellow men to the extent of advising one against mixing with them at all—even if only to give testimony and lead the prayers. Here his teachings come close to the Malāmatiyya: "Do not give anything merely in order to avoid the censure of others!"; "Hide your good deeds as well as your evil ones". He confesses that he himself still attaches a certain importance to the effect he makes on others, and to his appearance as a pious man, but he wages an unrelenting war against all this "pretentiousness" (*taṣannuʿ*)—in himself as well as in others. He only recognises those who wear patched cloaks (*muraḳḳaʿāt*) as sharers of his views, when one of them has told him of his resolution to live up to this symbol of dedication to God's service by au active furtherance of religion. He himself refrained, on one occasion, from accepting dates in the dark at the back of a shop, in order not to be different in secret from what he was generally considered to be. His abstemiousness (*waraʿ*) went beyond mere abstention from dubious things by putting a limit to the unrestrained enjoyment of what was permitted: "what is permitted", he says, "does not tolerate immoderation (*isrāf*)". Of everything he ate a little less than his conscience would have permitted, thereby creating the 'Tabu-zone' which had already been recommended in the Jewish *Pirḳē Āboth*, and which was also observed by numerous other Islamic ascetics. Destitute, he often lived on bread alone, and sometimes he was starving. Where the question of faith in God's providence (*tawakkul*) arose, he distinguished three types of the poor: (1) those who neither beg nor accept anything, yet receive everything they ask for of God; (2) those who do not beg but accept what they are given; (3) those who hold out for as long as they can, but do then beg (Sulamī: *Ṭabaḳāt*, 47; ʿAṭṭār: *Taḏkira*, i, 110), describing those who belong to the middle group as people trusting in the providence of God, however, another place (*Taḏkira*, i, 110, 24-25). In he characterises this confidence as being the resolution not to accept anything from any man; whilst in a third place *tawakkul* appears to be compatible with manual work provided the deed be done under the will of God (*Ḥilya*, 8, 351) —but the explanation of that oracular definition *iḍṭirāb bilā sukūn wa sukān bilā iḍṭirāb* does not seem to me to be beyond all doubt. Admittedly, Bishr is said to have begged only from Sarī al-Saḳaṭī, knowing that this man would rejoice in the loss of any worldly possessions; but some stories suggest that he lived largely on the earnings of his sister Mukhkha, who looked after him and lived by spinning. (Bishr had three sisters who are all said to have lived in Baghdād). The question of begging links up with the one concerning "giving and taking', which played a great part in Ṣūfism, especially later on (cf. Meier, *Die Vita des Scheich Abū Isḥāq al-Kāzarūnī*, in *Bibliotheca Islamica*, 14, 1948, Introduction 57-61). In spite of taking a great interest in the lot of the poor, Bishr did not—unlike Kāzarūnī for example—function as their spokesman and mediator, but rather withdrew into himself. He refrains from admonishing princes, he does not even drink of the water for which a prince has dug the channel. As a consolation when the cost of living is high he advises contemplating death. He knows that there is no way of satisfying mankind, and regards his own time (on a well-known pattern) as particularly far removed from the ideal of contentment: "Even though a cap should fall from heaven on to somebody's head, that man would not want it"; nor, like Muḥāsibī, does he have much to say in his days in favour of the readers of the Ḳurʾān: "Rather a noble robber than a base-minded reader of the Ḳurʾān". He finds true piety restricted to the very few: "In these days, there are more dead within than without the walls". A Ṣūfī is one who stands before his God with a pure (*ṣāfī*) heart, and perfect is only he whom even his enemies no longer fear; but in Bishr's own days not even friends, he says, could trust each other. The opposition which a pious man has to overcome lies in his inclinations (*shahawāt*): only those who have erected an iron wall against these inclinations, says Bishr, can feel the sweetness of the service of God. He advises silence to those who derive pleasure from speaking, speech to those who enjoy being silent. He declines teaching *ḥadīths*, because he does not wish to give in to a desire to do so; he eats no aubergines in order to fight his craving for them, and no fruit in order not to satisfy the fruit's own longing. He does not, however, advocate the repression of sexual desire, and does not even object to a harem of 4 women—though he himself remained unmarried.

In spite of the fact that Bishr puts the deed before knowledge, he is considered both knowledgeable and intelligent. This does not refer to his theological knowledge, but also to his ability to experience and expound religious feelings and to his pious way of life: "A wise man is not one who merely knows good and evil, but he who both does the former and refrains from doing the latter"; "First to know, then to act, then really to know". Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal is said to have claimed for himself greater theological knowledge, but to have referred to Bishr for knowledge concerning the reality of things, the higher facts (*ḥaḳāʾiḳ*). Without question, though only a few dicta and some verses in the style of the *zuhdiyyāt*

have survived, Bishr played his part through his word in expanding the teaching of the mystical shaping of man in Islam. Some sayings of his, however, belong to an earlier tradition which he simply passes on—one of his frequently quoted Ṣūfī teachers is Fuḍayl b. ʿIyāḍ. The men who learnt from him are recognisable from the *isnāds* of his dicta.

With regard to the origin of Bishr's cognomen "the barefooted" (*ḥāfī*), Ibn Khallikān tells the following story: Bishr once asked a cobbler for a new strap for one of his sandals, but the cobbler called this a nuisance, whereupon Bishr threw down both his sandals and henceforth walked barefoot. Much speaks in favour of this report, even if the explanation is not clear in every detail. Did Bishr fly into a rage at the cobbler's answer, and then, being a pious man, did he draw the consequences? Or did he, blaming only himself, soberly come to the decision never to inconvenience a cobbler again? Later referring to Sura LXXI, 19 "And God made the earth your carpet", he said that one did not step onto a king's carpet wearing shoes. As a further reminder he also says that at the "time when the pact was made" they too were barefoot. This probably refers to the pact of obedience which human beings are said to have made with God before their appearance on God's earth (Sura VII, 172: *a-lastu bi-rabbikum*). Such justifications belong to the symbolic associations which Ṣūfīs later attached to the various parts and colours of their clothes (cf. Meier, *Ein Knigge für Sufi's*, in *RSO* 32, 1957, 485-524). The statement made by Hudjwīrī and repeated by ʿAṭṭār that Bishr went barefoot because he was so deeply moved in contemplation of God, is hard to understand—and, together with the explanations given by Hudjwīrī and ʿAṭṭār, mere theory. Bishr is said to have called himself "the barefooted" and to have been called to account for this by a girl who said "All you have to do is to buy a pair of sandals for two *dānik*, but then you would no longer have your beautiful name". Al-Hafi is also the name of the dervish in Lessing's *Nathan der Weise*. Although Reiske's *Abilfedae Annales Moslemici*, i, Leipzig 1754, where our Ṣūfī appears on page 193, *vulgo Beschr ol Hafi* [*seu nudipes*] *dictus*, had already appeared by the time Lessing's play was written, it can hardly be regarded as its source. Lessing is more likely to have sought Reiske's advice personally, or to have derived the name from d'Herbelot (cf. *Baschar al-Hafi* and *Hafi*).

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BISKRA, town and oasis of the Zībān in the south-east of Algeria and on the northern fringe of the Sahara. It is situated at an altitude of between 100-120 metres, on the alluvial cone and the west bank of the Oued Biskra, at the mouth of a wide depression which extends from the Awrās massif to the western Saharan peaks of the Atlas Mountains. This has always been a route much used by nomads and conquering shepherds. Its blue sky, seldom streaked with clouds, its mild winter climate (mean temperature for January 11.2° = 52° F.) make of it a winter resort (it has numerous hotels); but its summer climate is torrid (33.3° = 92° F. in July) and favourable to the ripening of dates. Rains are fairly rare (156 mm. = 6.14 ins. per year) and, above all, irregular. The palm grove which covers an area of 1300 hectares, numbers more than 150,000 palm trees and thousands of fruit trees; it is irrigated by the waters of canalised springs. In the cold season, the surplus water makes it possible to irrigate vast fields of wheat and barley at the southern end of the oasis, where the harvest begins in April. The European town, which has grown into the administrative, commercial and tourist centre, is laid out on a grid plan; it was built upstream from the palm-grove, near a fort. The Muslim cultivators are dispersed in villages, in houses of crude brick. These are mainly to the south, surrounding the ruins of an ancient Turkish fortress. These villages are: Msid, Bab al-Dorb, Ras al-Guerria, Sidi Barkat, Medjeniche, and Gueddacha; on the perimeter, a little apart, are Beni Mora, al Kora, Filiach and Aliya. Biskra, which is the chief centre of the Ziban group of oases, is a township of 52,500 inhabitants in all, among which are a few hundred Europeans. It is served by the railway which runs between Touggourt and Constantine, and by the pipeline, which, since 1958, has carried the petrol of Hassi-Messoud to the port of Philippeville, and will soon extend to Bougie.

Biskra is built on the site of the old city of Vescera, one of the Roman *limes* posts which doubtless was not occupied by the Byzantines. Its name dates back to the 3rd/11th century when it was conquered by the Aghlabids of al-Ḳayrawān with the whole of the province of Zāb (pl. Zībān) whose capital at that time was Ṭubna, in eastern Hodna. Under the Ḥammādids, Biskra was autonomous, with a council of *shaykh*s on which two families fought for pre-eminence: the Banū Rumman and the Banū Sindī. Al-Bakrī (Slane's translation 2nd ed., 111-12) speaks of its beauty and prosperity at that time and also describes its ramparts, the richness of its oasis and the Berber shepherds, Maghrāwa and Sadrāta, who led a nomadic existence round about. In the 6th/12th century Biskra succeeded Ṭubna, in the Almohad era, and finally supplanted Tahūda, known in antiquity as Tabudeos; according to al-Idrīsī, it was always well fortified. The Zāb had just been occupied by the Atbedj (Hilalian) Arabs coming from the east. A settled family of the Latīf tribe (from the Atbedj confederation), the Banū Muznī, sought to take over authority from the Banū Rummān who had old ties with the country. They succeeded in the 7th/13th century with the support of the Ḥafṣids of Tunis. Biskra became the principal town of the whole south-western region of the Ḥafṣid states but was, in effect, the capital of a prosperous and virtually independent principality, to which caravans came to barter the products of the Sahara for those of the Tell.