

Book Review

A SUFI MARTYR.

By A. J. Arberry.

(Allen and Unwin, 28s.).

Review by R. W. J. Austen.

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This small volume contains, for the most part, a translation of a work entitled *Shakwā al-gharīb* (Complaint of a Stranger Exiled from Home), written by 'Ain al-Qudāt al-Hamadhāini, shortly before he was murdered in his prime in 1131.

The author was a Sufi and Shafi'ite lawyer, some of whose writings on the teachings of Sufism had incurred the wrath of the religious authorities who had brought about his imprisonment. He was accused of heresy in respect of his statements on the nature of prophecy, his insistence on the need for the spiritual master and his statement that God is "the All", which was regarded as pantheistic. In answer to these charges he wrote the *Shakwā al-gharīb* in order to show that he was innocent of heresy and also that his accusers had jealously and deliberately mis-represented what he had written. He bases his defence on two main points which he argues with considerable skill. The first of these is that his statements had been judged out of context and the second that his accusers had no proper understanding of Sufi terminology, and were thus not qualified to pass judgement on him.

Two things would appear to have prejudiced his cause. Firstly, he had shown considerable brilliance from an early age and had written daringly on Sufi doctrine. It is not altogether surprising, therefore, that the older and more established scholars should have regarded him with suspicion and envy. Secondly, the Vizier of the time was an evil and tyrannical man, which would have tended to exacerbate the fanaticism of those under him.

Although not of the same stature and importance of al-Hallāj and al-Suhrawardī, 'Ain al-Qudāt is certainly deserving of the care and effort which Professor Arberry has devoted to him.

Once again Professor Arberry has made available to the public, in a manner which will appeal both to the academic and the more general reader, the work of a notable Sufi. The translation is accurate and lucid and the introduction and notes provide a wealth of information regarding the life and writings of the author.

*We have learned with regret of the death of Professor Arberry a few days after this review was written.
Editor.*