



## BAĠDĀDĪ, 'ABD-AL-QĀHER

**BAĠDĀDĪ, 'ABD-AL-QĀHER B. ṬĀHER ŠĀFE'Ī TAMĪMĪ** (ca. 350/961-429/1038), mathematician, Shafe'ite jurist and Ash'arite theologian. He was born in Baghdad, the son of a wealthy merchant by the name of Ṭāher b. Moḥammad b. 'Abd-Allāh b. Ebrāhīm (cf. *Ta'rik Baġdād* IX, p. 358 n. 4923; Sobkī, *Ṭabaqāt*<sup>2</sup> V, pp. 51ff.). Early on his father left the capital and settled in Nīšāpūr; there he spent much of his money for scholarly purposes and by that acquired some recognition among the educated circles of the town. The son had wide interests; he was said later on to master seventeen different disciplines. As early as 370/980-81, he took part, as he reports himself (*Farq bayn al-feraq*, ed. Badr, p. 213.10ff.), in a discussion with a Karrāmī theologian in the presence of Nāṣer-al-Dawla Moḥammad b. Ebrāhīm Sīmjūr, the military commander of the Samanids. Yet we do not know anything about his career during the next forty years. We suspect that his theological activities were possibly hampered by the growing influence the Karrāmīya acquired in Nīšāpūr. Sūbūktigin (d. 387/997) who had taken the place of the Simjurids as supporter of the declining Samanid suzerainty was impressed by the asceticism of Abū Ya'qūb Eshāq b. Maḥmašād, a Karrāmī living in Nīšāpūr; his son Maḥmūd (of Ġazna) supported Abū Ya'qūb's son Moḥammad b. Eshāq and made him *ra'īs* of the town in 398/1007. We may assume that it was during this period that 'Abd-al-Qāher wrote his (lost) *Ketāb fażā'eḥ al-Karrāmīya*. The Karrāmī *ra'īs* was deposed in 410/1019, but the opposition that got the better of him was directed by a Hanafite, the *qāzī* Šā'ed b. Moḥammad Ostowā'ī, whereas 'Abd-al-Qāher was a Shafe'ite. Only in 411/1020, when profiting from the new intellectual climate the Shafe'ite jurist and Ash'arite theologian Abū Eshāq Ebrāhīm b.



Moḥammad Esfarā'inī started lecturing in the 'Aqīl mosque in Nišāpūr, did the tide seem to turn in his favor. He attended Esfarā'inī's courses and, after the latter's death in 418/1027, took over his chair. He was then in his late sixties and universally known as Shaikh Abū Maṣṣūr or Abū Maṣṣūr-al-Motakallem. His prestige was, however, rather short-lived, for when the Saljuqs appeared on the horizon one decade later he left for Esfarā'in. Toḡrel entered Nišāpūr in Šawwāl, 429/July, 1038; 'Abd-al-Qāher died in Esfarā'in in the same year. He seems to have had relations with this town long before; perhaps he studied there with Esfarā'inī before 411. Esfarā'in was a stronghold of Shafe'ism; moreover, 'Abd-al-Qāher's tribe, the Tamīm, had settled there. His daughter may have been the mother of Šāhfūr b. Ṭāher Esfarā'inī (d. 471/1079).

Since we do not hear of any official position held by 'Abd-al-Qāher it is quite possible that, besides spending his father's great fortune, he gained his living as a mathematician and geometer. As such he is mentioned by Neẓāmī 'Arūzī in the beginning of the third chapter of his *Čahār maqāla* (ed. Qazvīnī, p. 61.14f.), as the author of a *Ketāb al-takmila* on arithmetic which was highly praised. The only trace of his activity in this field is his *Ketāb al-izāh 'an oṣūl ṣenā'at al-massāh*, a treatise on the art of surveying (i.e., mostly on plain geometry) which is preserved in its Arabic original and a Persian translation of the sixth century (facsimile edition of both texts by Aḥmad Goļčīn-e Ma'ānī, Tehran, 1347 Š./1968).

In theology and jurisprudence he was strong in disputation; this may have cost him some sympathies. As a Shafe'ite, he composed verses against Abū Ḥanīfa (cf. Sobkī, *Ṭabaqāt*<sup>2</sup> V, p. 142.3ff.) and started a protracted controversy with a Hanafite jurist who had defended the superiority of his *madhhab* (for the contents cf. Sobkī, pp. 145ff., n. 4, according to the *Ṭabaqāt al-wostā*). He wrote *Manāqeb al-emām al-Šāfe'ī* and fought for Šāfe'ī's doctrine that the Qur'an may not be abrogated by the Sunna (ibid., pp. 136f., n. 4). He composed a commentary on the *Meftāḥ fi forū' al-Šāfe'īya* by Ebn al-Qāṣṣ Ṭabarī (d. 335/946; cf. *Kašf al-zonūn* (Istanbul), p. 1769.20f.). In theology, he retains, together with his teacher Esfarā'inī and Ebn Fūrak (d. 406/1015), the responsibility for the spread of Ašḥ'arism in Nišāpūr and obviously also Esfarā'in. Like the two others, he adjusted the doctrine to the requirements of anti-Karrāmī polemics; thus, in contrast to Aš'arī's or Bāqellānī's approach, he used metaphorical language in the explanation of the divine attributes in order to avoid Karrāmī anthropomorphism. His *Ketāb oṣūl al-dīn* (Istanbul, 1346/1928) which, for each problem of scholastic theology, defines the "orthodox" Ašḥ'arite position after



having enumerated the “sectarian” aberrations, was certainly intended as a kind of catechism for the general reader.

In Europe, ‘Abd-al-Qāher has been mainly known as a heresiographer. His *Ketāb al-farq bayn al-feraq* which heavily leans on older sources but furnishes some original information, was edited three times (by Moḥammad Badr, Cairo, 1328/1910; by Moḥammad Zāhed Kawṭarī, Cairo, 1367/1948; by Moḥyī-al-Dīn ‘Abd-al-Ḥamīd, Cairo, [1964]): There is an English translation (in two parts: part 1 by K. Chambers Seelye, New York, 1920; part 2 by A. S. Halkin, Tel Aviv, 1935) and a Persian one (by Moḥammad Jawād Maškūr, Tehran, 2nd ed., 1344 Š./1965). ‘Abd-al-Qāher’s grandson(?) Šāhfūr b. Ṭāher used the book in his courses and published an adapted version under the title *al-Tabṣīr fī’l-dīn* (ed. Kawṭarī, Cairo, 1374/1955). The Hanbalite scholar ‘Abd-al-Razzāq Ras’anī (d. 661/1263) shortened it into a *moḳtaṣar* (ed. Ph. Hitti, Cairo, 1924). ‘Abd-al-Qāher had used most of the material contained in the book in his *Ketāb al-melal wa’l-neḥal* (ed. A. N. Nader, Beirut, 1970).

He seems to have been positive toward Sufism. He wrote a treatise about the superiority of a patient poor man over a grateful rich one (*Kašf al-ḡonūn*, Istanbul, p. 462, last line). Qoṣayrī was among his pupils.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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