



BALYĀNI, AMIN-AL-DIN

BALYĀNI, AMIN-AL-DIN, famous mystic of [Kazerun](#) (d. 11 D̄o'l-Qa'da 745/16 March 1345).

Amin-al-Din Moḥammad b. 'Ali b. Mas'ud was a famous Sufi who lived at the time of the [Inju dynasty](#) in [Fars](#). The principle source for his life is *Meftāḥ al-hedāyat va mešbāḥ al-enāyat*, written in 1346 by his disciple Maḥmud b. 'Oṭmān. It is a summary of another text by the same author titled *Javāher al-aminiyya*, which has not survived (Šeyḵ-al-Ḥokamā'i, "Moqaddameh," p. 51).

Balyāni came from a family of scholars and Sufis who traced their descent back to [Abu 'Ali Daqqāq](#) (d. 1014), a famous mystic of Nishapur (Maḥmud b. 'Oṭmān, pp. 5-6, 17-18; Širāzi, pp. 61-64, 190-95, 198-202; Ebn Zarkub, pp. 186, 195; Šeyḵ-al-Ḥokamā'i, "Moqaddameh," pp. 35-42; Šams, pp. 542-43). His hagiographer portrays him as the restorer of the [Kāzaruni](#) order of dervishes founded by Moršed-al-Din Abu Ešḥāq (d. 1033), but his spiritual lineage can also be traced back to Abu Najib 'Abd-al-Qāhir Sohravardi (d. 1168) (Maḥmud b. 'Oṭmān, p. 18; Ebn-e Zarkub, p. 186).

Amin-al-Din was born in Balyān, a village near the city of Kazerun (Maḥmud b. 'Oṭmān, pp. 5-6, 164), where he died in 1345. He was buried in the *Ḳānaqāh-e 'olyā* that he had built in the mountains north of the city (Maḥmud b. 'Oṭmān, pp. 175-79; Ebn Zarkub, p. 195; Faṣiḥi, p. 69). Maḥmud b. 'Oṭmān (pp. 27, 173-75, 184) does not mention whether he had any wives or children, but the author does refer to a person called Moḥebb-al-din Moḥammad whose title was Šeyḵ Zādeh or son of a sheikh (*Meftāḥ*, pp. 27, 173-175, 184). This was



probably his son (Šeyk-al-Ḥokamā'i, "Moqaddemeh," p. 39).

Amin-al-Din's earliest religious studies were in Balyān, under the local masters. He began by learning the Qur'an. He later received a solid religious education from his father, and studied *feqh* and the hadith under Kāzaruni masters. According to Maḥmud b. 'Oṭmān (pp. 7-8, 17, 40), he travelled to Širāz to complete his religious knowledge. From a very early age he frequented Sufi circles. While he was still a child, his father took him to the *kānaqāh* every evening. His uncle, Awḥad-al-din 'Abdollāh, initiated him into the mystical way (Maḥmud b. 'Oṭmān, p. 7; Ebn Zarkub, pp. 186-87; Jāmi, pp. 258-61). At the age of fourteen, he received spiritual instruction in the practice of the invocation of God's name as well as public lecturing on the chain of initiation from his uncle, and not long after that, he invested Amin-al-din with the Sufi cloak, which allowed him to preach to his disciples the spiritual teachings of the Kazaruni confraternity (*tariqeh*).

Amin-al-din believed that mortification and supererogatory exercises are practices through which the carnal soul (*nafs*), the seat of the passions, can be purified. Accordingly, he practiced an extreme bodily asceticism and abstained from everything illegal or doubtful. He eschewed the pleasures of the table and refused to wear sumptuous clothing, which for him represented a life of luxury (*Meftāḥ*, pp. 9, 10-11). He continuously engaged in *dekr*, which he considered the best way of approaching God.

Balyāni's teachings were firmly rooted in respect for the Šari'a. He set out rules that his disciples had to abide by during their retreat. In *kalvat*, in a state of permanent ritual purity, any true follower of his teachings should keep eating, sleeping and speech to a minimum. His disciples were encouraged to continually engage in *dekr*, as recalling the name of God, like assiduous reading of the Qur'an, was believed to purify the human soul (*Meftāḥ*, pp. 27-28). Balyāni forbade *sama'* or ritual Sufi dance in solitude (*kalvat*), but it was permitted while the *kānaqāh* was being built (*Meftāḥ*, pp. 34, 52-53, 157). He warned his disciples that if they were to progress on the mystical path, they should not let themselves be carried away by ecstatic claims (*šaṭḥ*) or uncontrollable ecstasy (*tāmāt*), as these practices were contrary to the Šari'a (*Meftāḥ*, p. 35; Šayk-al-Ḥokamā'i, "Moqaddameh," pp. 11-12).

Balyāni had many disciples, listed by name in *Meftāḥ*. The most famous was Maḥmud b. 'Oṭmān himself, who says that he spent forty years in his service (*Meftāḥ*, p. 9). Some of them gained fame for their copious literary output.



Ḳvāju Kermāni wrote many poems in which he mentions Amin-al-din (Soheyli Ḳvānsāri, “Moqqadameh,” pp. 68-71; *Divān*, pp. 74-76; Aḍekkā’i, pp. 126-29). Ebn Zarkub, the author of the *Širāz-nāmeḥ*, was another disciple, who claims to have compiled a book of Balyāni’s sayings and poetry (Ebn Zarkub, pp. 194-195). Members of the Inju dynasty such as Šaraf-al-din Maḥmud Šāh held Amin-al-din in high esteem. Maḥmud Šāh’s son Jalāl-al-Din Mas’ud Šāh, who wrote a letter to Balyāni, considered himself a disciple of Balyāni (*Meftāḥ*, pp. 55-57, 65-66; Ġani, pp. 10-13; Šayḳ-al-Ḥokamā’i, “Moqaddameh,” pp. 31-33).

Balyāni was the founder of a Sufi covenant dedicated to **Moršed-al-Din Abu Ešḥāq Kāzaruni** (*Meftāḥ*, pp. 164-178; Aḍekkā’i, pp. 126-29; Šayḳ-al-ḥokamā’i, “Moqaddameh,” pp. 13-17). Maḥmud b. ‘Oṭmān depicts his building project as a continuation of Kāzaruni’s efforts to establish a covenant for the Kazeruni order of dervishes (Aigle, 1995; idem, 1997; idem, 2013). He began by having a public fountain (*seqāya-ye moršedi*) built to the east of the mosque. It was completed in 1310. He then enlarged the Moršedi congregational mosque. He also had a hospital (*dār al-šefā*) built in 1323, and in 1326 a school for teaching the **hadith** (*dār al-ḥadiṯ*). His last building, dated 1332, was a shelter (*dār al-‘ābedin*) where strangers and travelers could retire to carry out their devotions. With the exception of the *dār al-ḥadiṯ*, whose costs were covered by Sayyed Šams-al-din Yazdi, who had founded a similar institution in Yazd (Aubin, 1975), Balyāni funded all these construction projects single-handedly.

Balyāni’s spiritual influence along with his dedication to serving the people of Kazerun established him as the city’s great spiritual figure (Aigle, 1997). In a celebrated *ḡazal*, **Ḥāfeẓ** lists Amin-al-Din, whom he describes as “the last of those saints who are in charge of the affairs of men” (*bāqi-e abdāl*), as one of the figures who had a benign influence on the people of the “kingdom of Fārs” during the reign of the Inju ruler Šayḳ Abu Ešḥāq (Aḍekkā’i, p. 127; text in Ġani, p. 75).

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