



DĀMĀD, MĪR(-E), SAYYED MOḤAMMAD BĀQER

DĀMĀD, MĪR(-E), SAYYED MOḤAMMAD-BĀQER b. Mīr Šams-al-Dīn Moḥammad Ḥosaynī Astarābādī (d. 1041/1631), leading Twelver Shi'ite theologian, philosopher, jurist, and poet of 17th-century Persia. He inherited the title Dāmād (son-in-law) from his father, who had married the daughter of the famous Shi'ite theologian Shaikh 'Alī b. Ḥosayn Karakī, known as Moḥaqqueq-e Tānī (d. 940/1534). For his contributions to philosophy Mīr Dāmād was later dubbed *mo'allem-e tāleṭ* (the third teacher), thus being classed with Aristotle and Fārābī, the first and second teachers respectively.

Life. Mīr Dāmād was born in Astarābād and studied in Mašhad with his maternal uncle Shaikh 'Abd-al-'Ālī b. 'Alī b. Ḥosayn (d. 993/1585) and Sayyed Nūr-al-Dīn 'Alī b. Abī'l-Ḥasan 'Āmelī, a student and son-in-law of Shaikh Zayn-al-Dīn 'Alī b. Aḥmad 'Āmelī, Šahīd-e Tānī. In 983/1575 he received an *ejāza* (license, diploma) from Shaikh Ḥosayn b. 'Abd-al-Šamad 'Āmelī (d. 984/1576), the father of Shaikh Bahā'-al-Dīn Moḥammad 'Āmelī (q.v.). During the reign of Sultan Moḥammad Ḳodā-banda (985-95/1578-87) Mīr Dāmād went to Isfahan (Eskandar Beg, pp. 146-47), where he studied with Mīr Faḳr-al-Dīn Moḥammad Sammākī Astarābādī, himself a student of [Ġīāṭ-al-Dīn Manšūr Daštakī](#) (d. 948/1541). Mīr Dāmād led the Friday prayer service in Isfahan after the enthronement of Shah Šafī (1038-52/1629-42; Moḥammad Ma'šūm, pp. 82, 96).



Mīr Dāmād's own students included Ṣadr-al-Dīn Šīrāzī, known as Mollā Ṣadrā (d. 1050/1640); Sayyed Ḥosayn b. Ḥaydar Karakī 'Āmelī (fl. ca. 1029/1620); Sayyed Aḥmad 'Alawī 'Āmelī, who married his daughter; Ḳalīl b. Ġāzī Qazvīnī (d. 1088/1677); Mollā Šamsā Šams-al-Dīn Moḥammad Ġilānī (d. 1098/1687); Qoṭb-al-Dīn Aškevarī; and the poet Moḥammad-Ḥasan Zolālī Ḳvānsārī (d. 1024/1615).

Philosophy. Mīr Dāmād's fifty surviving works, not all complete, attest his versatility as a thinker. He wrote mostly on philosophy, fusing within the framework of Twelver Shi'ism aspects of the philosophy of Avicenna with the illuminationist (*ešrāqī*) philosophy of Šehāb-al-Dīn Sohrawardī (d. 570/1191). Mīr Dāmād distinguished between *yamānī* and *yūnānī* (Greek) philosophy, the former associated with the *yamīn* (right side), or the east, as the source of light and revelation, the latter with darkness and purely rational knowledge, in accordance with illuminationist principles. His best-known philosophical achievement was development of the concept of *ḥodūt-e dahrī* (origination in perpetuity) as an expression of God's relation to the world.

The question whether God created the world in time or both God and the world are eternal has been a constant theme in Muslim theology and philosophy (see [dahrī ii](#)). Avicenna had distinguished three levels of time and eternity and had defined the world, its intelligences, and the heavenly spheres as essentially (*be'l-dāt*) "posterior" to God. However, although he perceived God as necessary and the world as contingent, he considered them coeternal, existing in the realm of *dahr* (perpetuity).

In *Ketāb al-qabasāt* (ed. M. Moḥaqqueq, Tehran, 1356 Š./1977), completed in 1034/1625, Mīr Dāmād criticized Avicenna's use of the term *dahr* as inconsistent (pp. 1-10). He charged that sometimes it referred to a distinct category, at others to an element of *sarmad* (eternity). As an example of the latter usage, Avicenna depicted the relation of God to "the Active Intelligence or to the (highest) heaven" as on the level of relations between eternals, a level that he called both *dahr* and *sarmad*. Mīr Dāmād argued that, if God and the world are coeternal, the difference between God and what is "not God" threatens to disappear. Furthermore, to the extent that Avicenna reduced the "essential" priority of God's creation to the rank of the "mental," rather than the real, Mīr Dāmād argued, the distinct priority of each became merely nominal.

In *Ketāb al-qabasāt* Mīr Dāmād attempted to prove that Avicenna's concept of



essential origination (*ḥodūt-e dātī*) had evolved into one of real origination at the level of *dahr* (*ḥodūt-e dahrī*). In this effort Mīr Dāmād drew on such sources as Plato's *Timaeus*, the *Theology of Aristotle*, Avicenna's own *Šefā'*, and *Ketāb al-mo'tabar* by Abu'l-Barakāt Baġdādī (d. after 560/1164-65), though he criticized their views that the world is either eternal in itself or created in time from outside. Important also was Sohrawardī's doctrine of the priority of essence over existence. Mīr Dāmād posited *sarmad*, *dahr*, and *zamān* (time) as three real, ontological—not merely “mental”—and distinct categories of time. *Sarmad* is the level at which God exists, unique and alone. *Zamān* is the realm of the changing, physical world. Mīr Dāmād argued that God had brought the physical world into existence by means of intermediate archetypes, which exist in the middle realm, *dahr*. *Dahr* was thus conceived as preexisting *zamān* but having itself been created from *sarmad*, the realm of the divine essence. Each of these three realms exists independently, even though each has a clear relation to the other two. Ultimately, therefore, God as the divine essence was the cause of all things, even as in His essence nothing may be said to exist (Rahman, 1975, p. 109; idem, 1980, pp. 139-42; Nasr, *Camb. Hist. Iran*, p. 672; idem, 1966, pp. 915-17).

Mīr Dāmād's other treatises on philosophy include *al-Jadawāt* (Particles of fire; Bombay, 1302/1884; Tehran, 1360 Š./1981), composed in Persian at the command of Shah 'Abbās I (996-1038/1588-1629) in response to Indian scholars' questioning why Moses was not consumed by the fire that swept the hilltop when God appeared to him. In this treatise the entire range of Mīr Dāmād's metaphysics is displayed, including critiques of the Aristotelian and Peripatetic aspects of Avicenna's ideas on the relations between the first intellect and other intelligences, recourse to illuminationist concepts of “the world of separated imagination,” and use of the numerical symbolism of letters and their relations to the planets. Mīr Dāmād also cited the Qur'ān, Hadith, and his own poetry (Nasr, 1966, pp. 917-22).

Al-Resālat al-kaḷ'īya (ed. and tr. H. Corbin as “Confessions extatiques de Mīr Damād, maître de théologie à Ispahan (ob. 1041/1631-1632),” in *Mélanges Louis Massignon* I, Damascus, 1956, pp. 331-78; cf. 1972, pp. 9-53) is a metaphysical explication of a spiritual vision that Mīr Dāmād experienced while at prayer in Isfahan in 1023/1614. In *al-Šerāṭ al-mostaqīm*, dedicated to 'Abbās I, he dealt with the relationship between the eternal and the created, in *al-Ofoq al-mobīn* with being, time, and eternity. Other works included *al-Taqdīsāt*, in Persian, and *Sedrat al-montahā*. All these treatises were completed before 1025/1616



(Eskandar Beg, I, pp. 146-47). In *Taqwīm al-īmān* Mīr Dāmād discussed being, creation, and God’s knowledge. He also composed commentaries on the *Esteḥṣār* of Naṣīr-al-Dīn Ṭūsī (d. 672/1274) and the metaphysics in the *Šefā’* of Avicenna. In *Resāla fī madḥab Arestāṭāles* he drew on the ideas of Fārābī in his discussion of the views of Plato and Aristotle on time and eternity (Nasr, 1966, p. 917 n. 53).

Mīr Dāmād’s role in establishing approaches later adopted by Mollā Ṣadrā, Ṣamsā Gīlānī, and Sayyed Aḥmad ‘Āmelī, led Henry Corbin (in his edition of *al-Resālat al-kaḥfīya*, p. 333) and Sayyed Hossein Nasr (*Camb. Hist. Iran*, pp. 669-70) to dub him “the real founder and central figure” of the “school of Isfahan.”

Jurisprudence. Like another member of the “school of Isfahan,” Shaikh Bahā’ī, Mīr Dāmād favored the rationalist jurisprudence of the Oṣūlīs, who upheld the authority of the *faqīh* as the deputy in practical matters for the Imam during the occultation. His text on Twelver jurisprudence and *oṣūl-al-dīn* (lit., “principles of religion”) *al-Sab’ al-šedād* (Tehran, 1317/1899), composed in 1023/1614, reveals this predilection. It contains a spirited defense of conjectural proofs (*al-adella al-ḡannīya*) as employed in philosophy, albeit in conformity with the Twelver rejection of *ra’y* (opinion) and *qīās* (analogy), for example. His allusions to agreement between the “*foqahā’* and Oṣūlīs among us” and “among *al-āmma*” (the Sunnis; pp. 51, 89) on various principles are an acknowledgment of the Oṣūlīs’ intellectual debt to the Sunni ‘*olamā’*, a debt criticized by some contemporary Akḡbārīs (Newman, 1992, pp. 51, 254-55; see [akḡbārīya](#)). Mīr Dāmād’s support for the expanded authority of the Twelver *foqahā’* during the occultation is apparent in his arguments for the performance and conduct of congregational prayer by the *faqīh* on Fridays during the occultation (*Ketāb al-qabasāt*, p. 39).

Mīr Dāmād also composed ‘*Oyūn al-masā’el*, and, in Persian, *Šāre’ al-najāt*, two handbooks of Shi’ite *feqh* and *oṣūl al-dīn*, both apparently incomplete. On Hadith he wrote *al-Rawāšeḡ al-samāwīya* (Tehran, 1311/1893; Qom, 1405/1984) and commentaries on two of the four most authoritative early Shi’ite collections of Hadith, *al-Ta’līqa ‘alā Ketāb al-Kāfī* (ed. M. Rajā’ī, Qom, 1403/1982) on Kolaynī’s *al-Oṣūl men al-Kāfī* and another on Ṭūsī’s *Ketāb al-esteḡṣār*. He was also the author of *al-Ta’līqa ‘alā Ektīār ma’refat al-rejāl al-ma’rūf be-Rejāl al-Kaššī* (ed. M. Rajā’ī, I, Qom, 1404/1983), a commentary on *Ektīār ma’refat al-rejāl*, Ṭūsī’s abridgment of Moḡammad b. ‘Omar Kaššī’s early Twelver biographical dictionary. In addition, Mīr Dāmād defended Ṭūsī’s rational



interpretation of Twelver Hadith against critics of the Safavid period.

Mīr Dāmād composed poetry in Persian and Arabic under the pen name Ešrāq, an allusion to his sympathy with the views of Sohrevardī. His poetical output includes a *maṭnawī* entitled *Mašreq al-anwār* (see his *Dīvān*, Isfahan, 1310 Š./1931).

Relations between clergy and state. Mīr Dāmād was an intimate of the Safavid court during the reigns of both ‘Abbās I and Shah Šafī (1039-52/1629-42). Stories linking Shaikh Bahā’ī, Mīr Dāmād, and ‘Abbās I (e.g., Modarres, p. 59), even if their details are inaccurate, suggest a close relationship among the three. Mīr Dāmād died while accompanying Shah Šafī on a visit to the Shiite shrines in Iraq.

From the Buyid period such rationalist Twelver scholars as ‘*Alam-al-Hodā Šarīf Morṭaẓā* (d. 436/1044) had permitted the *faqīh*, the Imam’s deputy, to interact with the established political institution, in order to serve or protect the interests of the Twelver community. The Oṣūlī ‘Alī Karakī was well known for his close association with the Safavid court. Commentators who accept the designation “school of Isfahan” have also accepted the implicit corollary that the brand of “gnostic Shi’ism” practiced by its members predisposed them to “radical political indifferentism” (e.g., Amir Arjomand, p. 23). In fact, it appears that Mīr Dāmād’s acceptance of the deputyship of the *faqīh* both in jurisprudence and in community practices paralleled that of such moderate Oṣūlīs as Shaikh Bahā’ī and such moderate Aḳbārīs as Fayẓ Kāšānī (d. 1091/1680; Newman, 1986). These scholars also continued the close personal relations with the court initiated by Karakī.

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