



ḤĀKEM BE-AMR-ALLĀH

ḤĀKEMBE-AMR-ALLĀH, ABU 'ALI MANŞUR, the sixth Fatimid caliph and sixteenth Isma'ili Imam (r. 386-411/996-1021). Born in 375/985, Abu 'Ali Manşur succeeded his father 'Aziz (r. 365-86/975-96) at the age of eleven on 28 Ramazān 386/14 October 996 with the caliphal title of al-Ḥākem be-Amr-Allāh. The first Fatimid ruler to have been born in Egypt, Ḥākem had been proclaimed as heir-apparent (*wali al-'ahd*) in 383/993, on the death of his elder (and sole) brother, Moḥammad.

Arguably the most controversial member of the Fatimid dynasty, Ḥākem confronted numerous difficulties and uprisings during his relatively long reign. While he did not lose any important territories in North Africa, the Isma'ili communities there were massacred by Sunni mobs led by their influential Māleki jurists. Relations between the Fatimids and the Carmatians (q.v.) of Bahrain also remained hostile. On the other hand, Ḥākem's Syrian policy was successful, as he managed to extend Fatimid hegemony to the emirate of Aleppo. Above all, the persistent rivalries between the various factions of the Fatimid armies, especially the Berbers and the Turks, overshadowed the other problems of Ḥākem's caliphate.

Initially, Barjawān, his *wāseṭa* (the equivalent of a vizier, as intermediary between ruler and subjects) acted as the virtual head of the Fatimid state. However, after the latter's removal in 390/1000, Ḥākem held the reins of power in his own hands, limiting the authority and terms of office of his *wāseṭas* and viziers, of whom there were more than fifteen during the remaining twenty years of his caliphate.



Ḥākem maintained a keen interest in the organization and operation of the Fatimid Isma‘ili *da‘wa* centered in Cairo. Under his reign it was systematically intensified outside the Fatimid dominions, especially in Iraq and Persia. In Iraq, the *dā‘īs* (q.v.) now concentrated their efforts on a number of local amirs and influential tribal chiefs with whose support they aimed to uproot the ‘Abbasids. Foremost among the Fatimid *dā‘īs* of this period operating in the eastern provinces was Ḥamid-al-Din Kermāni (q.v.), the most accomplished Isma‘ili theologian-philosopher of the entire Fatimid period. The activities of Kermāni and other *dā‘īs* soon led to concrete results in Iraq: in 401/1010 Qerwāš b. al-Moqallad, the Shi‘i ‘Oqaylid ruler of Mawṣel, Kufa and other towns, acknowledged the suzerainty of Ḥākem, and similarly ‘Ali b. al-Asadi, chief of the Banu Asad, declared his loyalty in Ḥella and other districts under his control. Others followed suit. Alarmed by these developments, the ‘Abbasid caliph Qāder adopted retaliatory measures to check the spread of Isma‘ilism within the very seat of his realm. In particular, in 402/1011 he assembled a number of Sunni and Shi‘i scholars at his court and commanded them to declare in a written document that Ḥākem and his predecessors lacked genuine Fatimid ‘Alid ancestry. This so-called “Baghdad manifesto” was read out in Friday mosques throughout the ‘Abbasid domains. Qāder also commissioned several refutations of Isma‘ili doctrines, including that written by the Mu‘tazilite ‘Ali b. Sa‘id al-Eṣṭakri (d. 404/1013).

Ḥākem also made the education of the Isma‘ilis and the Fatimid *dā‘īs* a priority; in his time, various study sessions (*majāles*) were established in Cairo, where he also completed the construction of the Friday mosque that still bears his name. Ḥākem provided financial support and endowments for these educational activities. The private “wisdom sessions” (*majāles al-ḥekma*) devoted to esoteric Isma‘ili doctrines and reserved exclusively for initiates, now became organized so as to be accessible to different categories of participants. Ḥākem himself often attended these sessions, which were held at the Fatimid palace.

One of Ḥākem’s most important contributions was the founding in 395/1005 of the *Dār-al-‘elm* (House of Knowledge), sometimes also called *Dār-al-ḥekma* (Maq-rizi, 1853-54, 1995; Halm, 1997, pp. 71-78). A wide range of religious and non-religious subjects, ranging from the Qur‘ān and Hadith to philology and astronomy, were taught at the *Dār-al-‘Elm*, which was equipped with a vast library. Many Fatimid *dā‘īs* received at least part of their training in this major institution of learning, which served the Isma‘ili *da‘wa* (mission) until the



downfall of the Fatimid dynasty.

Ḥākem's reign witnessed the genesis of what was to become known as the Druze religion. From around 408/1017, a number of *dā'īs* who had come to Cairo from Persia and Central Asia, prominent amongst whom were Ḥasan Aḳram, Ḥamza b. 'Ali and Moḥammad Darzi (Darazi), propagated new doctrines attributing divinity to Ḥākem, effectively founding a new religious movement which proclaimed the end of the era of Islam. This Druze movement (later named after Darzi) was the cause of much unrest during the closing years of Ḥākem's caliphate. Contrary to the claims of later Sunni authors, however, there is no evidence to suggest that Ḥākem himself encouraged them. In fact, the leadership of the *da'wa* organization was categorically opposed to this movement, and the chief *dā'i* Ḳatkin al-Ẓayf invited Kermāni to Cairo to refute officially their doctrines on theological grounds. Kermāni wrote several works to that effect, which were successful in checking the further spread of such doctrines within the inner circles of the *da'wa*.

Ḥākem also concerned himself with the moral standards of his subjects; many of his numerous edicts (*sejellāt*) preserved in later sources are of an ethico-social nature. He was also prepared to mete out severe punishment to high officials of the state who were found guilty of malpractice. Anṭāki and the Sunni historiographers have generally painted a highly distorted and fanciful image of this caliph-imam, portraying him as a person of unbalanced character with strange and erratic habits. However, modern scholarship is beginning to produce a different account on the basis of Ḥākem's own edicts and the circumstances of his reign. As a result, Ḥākem is emerging as a tactful leader who was popular with his subjects.

In the final years of his reign, Ḥākem displayed a growing inclination toward asceticism. He dressed simply and rode on a donkey through the streets of Cairo, unaccompanied by guards. He also took to nocturnal and solitary excursions in the countryside. On the night of 27 Šawwal 411/13 February 1021, Ḥākem left for one of his usual outings to the Moqaṭṭam hills outside of Cairo, but never returned. A futile search was conducted for the 36-year-old caliph-imam; only his riding donkey and his bloodstained garments were found. The mystery of Ḥākem's disappearance was never solved.



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