



MO'AYYAD FĪ'L-DIN ŠIRĀZI

MO'AYYAD FĪ'L-DIN ŠIRĀZI (ca. 1000-87), outstanding and multitalented representative of the Fatimid religious and political mission (*da'wa*) in the service of the Caliph/Imam Mostanşer bi'llāh (r. 1036-94). Mo'ayyad excelled as missionary-agent (*dā'i*), statesman and scholar. In his theological and philosophical writings he brought the Isma'ili spiritual heritage to its pinnacle. As prose author and poet he shows a masterful command of Arabic literary style and rhetoric.

Born into an Isma'ili family in Shiraz, the capital of the Buyid province of Fars in south-western Persia, his full name is Abu Nāşer Hebat-Allāh b. Musā b. Abi 'Emrān b. Dāwud al-Širāzi. The honorific name Mo'ayyad fī'l-Din ("The one aided" – by God – "in religion") was probably bestowed upon him when he was appointed the highest rank of chief missionary (*dā'i al-do'āt*) in the central administration of the Fatimid *da'wa* (see Canard, "Da'wa") in Cairo in 1059.

Mo'ayyad is the author of a unique work of memoirs known as *Sirat al-Mo'ayyad fī'l-Din* (The life of Mo'ayyad fī'l-Din), a personal and thrilling work of history that mirrors, in the life and destiny of a *dā'i*, the mutual relationship between Fatimids, 'Abbasids and Buyids under the growing pressure of the Turkmen invasion from Central Asia into the heart-lands of the Islamic world. Furthermore, the *Sira* is a rich source for the organisation and the norms of the clandestine network of the Isma'ili *da'wa*. The book covers, in three main parts, more than twenty years of Mo'ayyad's career. The first part is an account of his temporary successful, but lastly failed missionary work in favour of the Fatimids at the court of the Buyid prince Abu Kālijār Marzobān



(r. 1024-48) of Fars. Mo'ayyad further reports his experiences after his flight to Cairo, where envious and egoistic court-officials directed the young Caliph/Imam Mostanşer according to their own interest and tried to prevent the continuation of the ambitious arrivals career. Against his own will, Mo'ayyad was sent as head of a diplomatic delegation to northern Syria in 1056-58. There, at the fringes of the Fatimid empire, he was to build up an alliance under Fatimid command between the rebellious 'Abbasid general Abu'l-Ḥāreṭ Basāsiri (see Canard, "Al-Basāsīrī") and local Bedouin chiefs against the Turkmen Sunnite Saljuqs who already had made an end to Buyid rule and taken over power in the 'Abbasid capital in 1055. In the epilogue of the *Sira* Mo'ayyad celebrates the triumph of Basāsiri who – without further support from the Fatimids – occupied Baghdad, exiled the Caliph and established the Friday prayer in the name of Mostanşer for a year (1058-59).

As a reward for his merits during his political mission in Syria, Mo'ayyad was appointed chief *dā'i* after his return to the Fatimid capital. In that office, he was administering the affairs of the *da'wa*, teaching missionaries from both inside and outside the Fatimid empire, as the philosopher-poet Nāşer Ḳosrow of Badaḳşān and Lamak b. Mālek Ḥammādi, a high representative of the loyal Solayhid state in Yemen. Mo'ayyad is also the author of eight hundred lectures (*Majāles al-ḥekma*, i.e. "sessions of wisdom") he held in front of the community of believers every Thursday in Cairo. These sermons, which are the largest collection of this genre in the literary heritage of the Isma'ilis, contain the essence of his religious and philosophical thinking.

In addition to the *Majāles*, Mo'ayyad is the author of religio-philosophical treatises, prayers and more than sixty Arabic *qaşidas* (panegyrics) that contain a wide range of Fatimid theological and ideological motives. Mo'ayyad's poems still play a prominent role in the ritual liturgy of the Isma'ili Bohrās (see on them Fyzee, "Bohorās") in India today. Among them, he is still praised and respected today as spiritual guide and leader.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary sources: Abu Naṣr Hebat-Allāh Mo'ayyad fi'l-Din al-Širāzi, *Diwān al-Mo'ayyad fi'l-Din dā'i al-do'āt*, ed. M. Kāmel Hosayn, Cairo, 1949.

Idem, *al-Majāles al-mo'ayyadiya*, I and III and 3, ed. Moṣṭafā Ġāleb, Beirut, 1974-84; I and II, ed. Hātem Ḥāmed-al-Din, Oxford and Bombay, 1975-86.

Idem, *Sirat al-Mo'ayyad fi'l-Din dā'i al-do'āt*, ed. M. Kāmel Hosayn, Cairo, 1949.

Secondary sources: M. Canard, "Al-Basāsīrī," *EI2*.

Idem, "Da'wa," *EI2*. Farhad Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs. Their History and Doctrines*, Cambridge, New York, and Melbourne, 1990.

A. A. A. Fyzee, "Bohorās," *EI2*. Verena Klemm, *Memoirs of a Mission: The Ismaili Scholar, Statesman and Poet al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Din al-Shirazi*, London, 2003.

I. Poonawala, "Mu'ayyad fi'l-Din," *EI2*. Bazat-Tahera Qutbuddin, *Al-Mu'ayyad fi al-Din al-Shirazi: Founder of a New Tradition of Fatimid Da'wa Poetry*, Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass., 1999.

November 16, 2004