



QĀZI SA'ID QOMI

QĀZI SA'ID QOMI, Moḥammad-Sa'id b. Moḥáammad-Mofid, Shi'ite philosopher, jurist, and mystic of the Safavid period (b. 1049/1640, d. after 1107/1696). Qāzi Sa'id was a close confidant of, and personal physician to, [Shah 'Abbās II](#) (r. 1052-77/1642-66). He was known in his lifetime as a teacher of philosophy and a physician. He was aptly known as *Ḥakim-e Kuček* (Younger Philosopher/Physician), compared to his elder brother, who was also a philosopher-physician; he is known in the historiography as Qāzi Sa'id, because he served as a shari'a judge (*qāzi*) in Qom in the reign of Shah 'Abbās II.

Life. Qāzi Sa'id was born into a scholarly family of philosopher-physicians (*ḥokamā*) in Qom on 10 Du'l-Qa'da 1049/3 March 1640. His first teacher was his father, who trained him in medicine and the fundamentals of philosophy in his hometown. He probably began his studies in philosophy at the Madrasa-ye Ma'suma with the theologian and poet 'Abd-al-Razzāq Lāhiji (d. 1072/1661-62), the son-in-law of the most famous Safavid philosopher, [Mollā Šadrā Širāzi](#) (d. 1045/1635-36) and a prominent illuminationist (see [ILLUMINATIONISM](#)) Avicennan. Lāhiji wrote a commentary on [Avicenna's](#) *al-Ešārāt wa'l-tanbihāt* (Pointers and reminders) as well as a large commentary on a major work of Avicennan philosophical theology (*kalām*), the *Tajridal-e'teqād* (Sublimation of belief) of Naṣir-al-Din Ṭusi (d. 672/1274). It was with him that Qomi began his study of Avicenna. A favorite of Shah 'Abbās II, Lāhiji probably encouraged Qomi to follow his brother to Isfahan.

Qomi, a precocious talent, migrated to Isfahan in around 1658 to seek



patronage at the court of Shah 'Abbās II, where his elder brother Moḥammad-Ḥosayn was already a member of the circle of court physicians. There he continued his studies in philosophy with the idiosyncratic dervish-philosopher Rajab-'Ali Tabrizi (d. 1080/1669), who taught at the Madrasa-ye Šayḡ Loṭf-Allāh, and the rational and religious disciplines with the Safavid polymath [Mollā Moḥsen-Moḥammad Fayḡ-e Kāšāni](#) (d. 1091/1680), another son-in-law of Mollā Šadrā. The former arguably was the greater influence; it is from him that Qomi transmitted a critique of Mollā Šadrā, in particular rejecting his theory of substantial motion, advocating a thoroughly apophatic semantics of existence applied to God and adhering to essentialist metaphysics. This influence is most clearly discernable in Qomi's early work *Kelid-e behešt* (Key to Paradise), which is wholly derived from Tabrizi's thought.

Darviš Moḥammad-Šāleḡ Lonbāni was another recipient of the shah's favor; and, given his inclinations and connections, he may well have been associated with Qāzi Sa'id, who along with his brother was personal physician to 'Abbās II according to the official history of the period. Both brothers are described in chronicles as "Galen of the age" (*Jālinus al-zamān*), which may just be a hyperbolic recognition of their skill as philosopher-physicians, but could also signal their official status as chief physicians and intimates of the shah (Waḥid-e Qazvini, pp. 176, 254).

Soon after Qomi's arrival in Isfahan, he was ordered to construct a dervish lodge (*takia*, *kāneqāh*) for his teacher and the shah's favorite, Fayḡ. Being close to and inclined towards Sufism, in 1070/1660 Qomi hosted two Anatolian Sufi guests, Darviš Mošṭafā and Darviš Majnun, who were interested in meeting their Safavid counterparts, particularly Tabrizi and Lonbāni. At his home, they met Shah 'Abbās II, the patron of Tabrizi and famed for his love of Sufis (*šāh-e darviš-dust*). The shah ordered that a plot of land be set aside for these Sufis, where they could practice their meditation, self-reflection, retreats, and ecstatic experiences; the *takia-ye Fayḡ* was completed later that year. The shah was a regular visitor to Qomi's house in Qom. Finding favor, Moḥammad-Sa'id was appointed a *qāzi* in Qom by 'Abbās II. His cordial relationship with the monarch was in line with that of his teachers, who were also recipients of the shah's patronage. He was quite happy to serve the shah, because he adhered to a traditional Twelver Shi'ite separation of political and religious offices both in the absence of the Imam and through a recognition that the authority of the Prophet and his successors, the Imams, was essentially spiritual, ethical, and religious and not political. Thus, recognizing the authority of 'Abbās II to



appoint him to a judicial post did not pose a problem.

However, on the accession of Shah Solaymān (r. 1077-1105/1666-94) in 1077/1666, he lost favor and was imprisoned in *Alamut*. This may well have been due to his Sufi reputation; certainly, the change of monarch signaled a change in policy towards philosophy and mysticism and its toleration in Isfahan. However, he was soon restored to his position and was even appointed *šayk al-eslām* of Qom in 1099/1690, where he spent the rest of his life teaching and administering justice and traveling back and forth to the capital. He died sometime after 18 Ramažān 1107/20 April 1696, the completion date for his famous commentary on the *Ketāb al-tawḥid* of the Imami Shi'ite traditionist *Ebn Bābawayh* known as "Shaikh Ṣaduq" (d. 381/991).

Works. Most of Qomi's works are commentaries, particularly of Hadith material, and most of them are incomplete. His works in rough chronological order are the following:

(1) *Kelid-e behešt* (Key to paradise; ed. S. M. Meškāt, Tehran, 1936), in Persian, is an early work based on the teachings of Rajab-'Ali Tabrizi, particularly on the ontology of apophasis and the absolute equivocality (*ešterāk-e lafzi*) of being. In this text, he insists that the One is purely devoid of names and attributes (arguably a fundamental Twelver Shi'ite doctrine) and that there is no correspondence between the existence of the cosmos and the pure essence of the divine. There is no semantic content shared between the applications of the term "existence" (*wojud*) to God, and to the cosmos; it is merely the term that is shared. Thus there is neither an extensional nor intensional equivalence between the existence of God and that of the cosmos. It, of course, follows that he upholds along with Tabrizi a thorough essentialism known as the doctrine of *ašālat al-māhiya* (ontological primacy of essence or quiddity): God emanates essences and bestows upon them existence. Such a faithful rendition, the work has often been attributed to Tabrizi himself. The edition is based on a manuscript, probably an autograph, dated 1674.

(2) *Šarḥ al-arba'in* (ed. Najafqoli Ḥabibi, Tehran, 1379 Š./2000), an Arabic commentary on forty narrations from the Imams, which remains incomplete. He began (and probably completed most of) the work on the commentary in 1079/1668, when he was thirty years old, as he says in the proemium. The work remained incomplete, only extending to comment upon twenty-seven narrations. There is a certain amount of overlap with the commentary on Ebn



Bābawayh's *al-Tawḥid*, in which he refers to this text. The difference is that in this text the commentary is more extended, and the commentary on *al-Tawḥid* often has an abbreviated tone. Narrations I to IX and XI are also found in the commentary on *al-Tawḥid*. Narration XII has the longest commentary and is close to the subject of the treatise *al-Fawā'ed al-raḏawiya* in his collection *al-Arba'iniyāt*. The original text is an extended disputation between the eighth Imam 'Ali al-Reżā (d. 203/818) and 'Emrān the Sabian at the court of the 'Abbasid caliph Ma'mun (r. 189-218/813-33) in the presence of theologians of different denominations. It is a text full of theological terminology focused on the nature of God, creation, and the cosmos. As such, it gives Qomi an excellent opportunity to express his metaphysics of the divine who is above being and his cosmogony and theory of the soul, which all draw heavily on the *Plotiniana Arabica*.

(3) *Ta'liqāt* (Glosses) on the *Theology of Aristotle* (ed. S. J. Āštiāni in *Montakabāti az āṭār-e ḥokamā-ye Irān*, III, Tehran, 1356 Š./1977, pp. 79-286) comprises a commentary on the first four *mayāmer* of this famous Arabic version of sections of Plotinus's *Enneads* IV-VI, incorrectly ascribed to Aristotle, and it closely follows and criticizes the earlier glosses of Avicenna. No more of the work is extant; it is most likely that, as with his other works, Qomi never finished it. Most of the text is taken up with the crucial *mimar* I on the nature of the soul, its pre-existence and provenance and its journey in this world imprisoned in a body. A more complete and correct manuscript (MS Tehran University Central Library 3662) has never been used for an edition (The present writer is currently preparing a critical edition based on this manuscript). It is unclear when he wrote this work. One suspects that it is an early work, because it is in his early work, particularly after he had studied with Lāhiji and Kāšāni, that he was concerned with engaging with Avicennism. Further, he does not refer to any of his works in the *Glosses*. However, at the same time, it is not mentioned in any of his later works. It does not follow that its attribution is incorrect. The language and argument of the *Glosses* share much with his commentaries on Hadith. Moreover, his later works rarely cite or comment upon passages from the first four *mayāmer*, which are the subject of the commentary in the *Glosses*. When they do, they never overlap. This suggests that he knew, and implied, that he had already dealt with those sections previously.

(4) *Al-Arba'iniyāt le-kašf anwār al-qodsiyāt* (The forty treatises revealing the lights of holy beings) is a collection of treatises that remain incomplete (if he



was ever serious about a collection of forty treatises). The present edition (ed. Najafqoli Ḥabibi, Tehran, 2003) and the manuscripts comprise ten treatises. The collection was collated sometime between 1099/1688 and Ṣafar 1102/November 1690 in Isfahan according to the earliest manuscript, which is an autograph, present in the library of the shrine in Mashad (MS *Āstān-e Qods-e Rażawi* 21617). The first treatise, *Ruḥ al-ṣalāt* (Spirit of the prayer), is dedicated to the memory of his teacher Fayż-e Kāšāni, which means that it must have been written after 1091/1680; and at the end he says that he has discussed the topic more fully in his commentary on *al-Tawḥid*, and we know that section was completed in 1685. The second treatise, *Ešāra wa bešāra* (Allusion and glad tidings), on the seven canonical readings of the Qur'an was completed, as he says, on the night of 21 July 1678 in Qom. The third treatise, *al-Fawā'id al-rażawiya*, is a commentary on the exchange regarding the nature of God between the eighth Imam 'Ali al-Reżā (hence the title of the treatise) and the Jewish *Exilarch* (*ra's al-jālut*, Rosh Golah). It was completed on 18 January 1688. This treatise draws heavily on the theology of the One found in the *Plotiniana Arabica*. The fourth treatise is a key defense of the doctrine of temporal incipience. *Merqāt al-asrār wa me'rāj al-anwār fi bayān rabṭ al-ḥādeṭ be'l-qadim wa ḥoduṭ al-'ālam* (Ascent of secrets and the ascension of lights explaining the connection between the Eternal and the incipient and the incipience of the cosmos) was completed in Qom, when the author was thirty-five years old, on 16 February 1674. *Al-Nafaḥāt al-elāhiya wa kawāṭer al-elhāmiya* (Divine breath and inspired insights), the fifth treatise, is a critique of the doctrine of *aṣālat al-wojud* (ontological primacy of existence, as opposed to essence) associated with the philosopher Mollā Ṣadrā, and a discussion of psychology. It was completed in Qom in Moḥarram 1084/April 1673. The next treatise, *al-Anwār al-qodsiya*, is a Neoplatonic discussion of hylomorphism and was completed in Qom on 2 April 1674. The seventh treatise, *al-Maqṣad al-asnā fi taḥqiq māhiyat al-ḥaraka* (The furthest goal in investigating the nature of motion), is a critique of Mollā Ṣadrā's doctrine of substantial motion (*ḥaraka jawhariya*), and was completed in Qom in 1677. The eighth treatise, *al-Ḥadiqa al-wardiya fi taḥqiq al-sawāneḥ al-me'rājiya* (The rose-garden in the investigating of the accounts of the ascension) is a discussion of the Prophet's ascension into heaven as a paradigm for the journey of the human soul. The ninth treatise, *al-Borhān al-qāṭe' wa'l-nur al-sāṭe'* (The decisive proof and the rising light), is a modified translation into Arabic of a Persian treatise of Qomi's teacher Rajab-'Ali Tabrizi entitled *Etbāt-e Wājeb* (Proof of the Necessary Being). It is particularly important for its doctrine of the absolute equivocality (*ešterāk-e lafzi*) of being, again criticizing Mollā Ṣadrā. Although Tabrizi's



original is devoid of Neoplatonic citations, Qomi complements the argument with citations on the One that is above being. The final treatise of the collection, *al-Ṭalā'e' wa'l-bawāreq*, is a series of allusions and short treatments of issues in philosophy and theology and draws heavily for its cosmogony on the *Plotiniana Arabica*.

(5) His *magnum opus* is probably his vast commentary in three volumes on Ebn Bābawayh's early Shi'ite Hadith collection, the *Ketāb al-tawḥid* (ed. Najafqoli Ḥabibi, Tehran, 1373-78 Š./1994-99; separate publication of *Asrār al-'ebādāt*, Tehran, 1339 Š./1960). The late Safavid period, which continued the taste for the preservation and internalization of the Shi'ite heritage, saw the proliferation of commentaries on this text, of which the first (and most extensive) to be completed was that of Qāzi Sa'id. From the manuscripts, we learn that he completed the first volume in Isfahan in July 1682, the second volume on 12 November 1687 in Isfahan, and the third volume 20 April 1696, the probable year of his death (or at least the earliest date for it). The commentary represents his mature thought, and he refers to his earlier works in it. Yet another work marked by Neoplatonism, he consistently juxtaposes and interrogates the narrations with citations from the Arabic Plotinus.

A couple of his commentaries on the *Ḥardīṭ al-besāṭ* and the *Ḥardīṭ al-ḡamāma* remain in manuscript. The latter was studied extensively by Corbin (*En Islam iranien* IV, pp. 150-201). Non-extant works include *Asrār al-ṣanā'i fī ba'z al-'olum*, which was completed in 1669 and may have been a continuation of the treatise by [Mir Fendereski](#) on the same topic, and the marginal note (*ḥāšīa*) on the *Šarḥ al-ešārāt* of Ṭusi (Afandi, II, p. 284; Modarres, IV, p. 412).

Contribution. Qāzi Sa'id is not easy to categorize. On a number of issues, he reveals himself to be independent of the existing Islamic philosophical traditions, either because of his adherence to a philosophy grounded in the Shi'ite tradition or on sound Neoplatonic lines. On the question of knowledge, for example, he rejects both the Avicennan account of knowledge acquired through experience and conjunction with the forms in the active intellect as well as the illuminationist account of knowledge through direct presence. He instead opts for a Platonic account of recollection of the soul from its pre-existence, another doctrine rejected by many of his contemporaries. He thus represented an alternative philosophical tradition in the Safavid period, one marked by a thorough apophatic theology and a deep attachment to Neoplatonism, as expressed in the *Theology* and other fragments of the *Plotiniana Arabica*. But his Neoplatonism was markedly Shi'ite, as Henry



Corbin had already noticed: just as his understanding of some of the foundational texts of Shi'ism is mediated by the Arabic Plotinus, so too is his reception of Plotinus mediated by a Shi'ite worldview. This is precisely what makes him so peculiar; certainly his use of the *Theology* is quite distinct from both Mollā Ṣadrā and Mir Dāmād (see [DĀMĀD](#)), insofar as he is not a critical thinker when it comes to the text. His approach to the *Theology* is somewhat akin to his approach to the narrations of the Imams: there is an aspect of revelation attached to the text, and he was constantly concerned with reconciling it with his thought and defending it against detractors such as Avicenna. The Arabic Plotinus remained the most significant influence on his philosophical thinking, and his use of it is yet more evidence for the historian of the critique of Avicennism in the Islamic East by the Safavid period. Philosophers such as Mollā Ṣadrā had moved on to construct new syntheses. But Qomi surpassed Avicenna by delving further back into the history of philosophy and resurrecting a primordial text, which for him reflected a truth as clear and uncontaminated as the Qur'an. It is perhaps for this antiquarian reason that his works have been sidelined by other more radical philosophers of the Safavid period.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

For the editions of his works, see the references in the article. Biographical sources. 'Abd-Allāh Afandi, *Riāz al-'olamā'*, ed. A. Ḥosayni, 6 vols., Qom, 1401/1981, II, p. 284.

Moḥammad-Taqi Beg Arbāb, *Tāriḳ-e Dār al-imān-e Qom*, ed. H. Modarresi, Qom, 1353 Š./1974, p. 95. *Ayān al-šī'a* IX, p. 344.

Moḥammad-Bāqer Ḳvānsāri, *Rawzāt al-jannāt*, 8 vols., Tehran, 1351 Š./1972, IV, p. 9. Modarres, *Rayḥānat al-adab* IV, p. 412.

Moḥammad-Ṭāher Naṣrābādi, *Tadkera-ye Naṣrābādi*, ed. V. Dastgerdi, Tehran, 1937, pp. 167-68, 209-10.



Moḥammad-Ṭāher Waḥid-e Qazvini, *Abbās-nāma*, ed. I. Dehqān, Arāk, 1330 Š./1951, pp. 176, 254-55.

Moḥammad-Yusof Wāleh-e Qazvini, *Kold-e barin*, ed. M. R. Nāṣeri, Tehran, 1380 Š./2001, pp. 529, 540, 592, 620-22, 628.

Şafi-al-Din Qomi, *Kolāşat al-boldān*, ed. H. Modarresi, Qom, 1356 Š./1977, p. 240.

Waliqoli Şamlu, *Qeşaş al-kāqāni*, ed. H. Sādāt-Nāşeri, Tehran, 1371-74 Š./1992-95, II, pp. 43-45.

Hāj Mirzā Moḥammad-Ma 'şum Ma'şum-'Ali Shah, *Tarā'eq al-ḥaqā'eq*, ed. M. J. Maḥjub, 3 vols., Tehran, 1339-45 Š./1960-66, III, p. 162.

Studies. Henry Corbin, "De la philosophie prophétique en Islam shi'ite," *Eranos Jahrbuch* 31, 1962, pp. 49-116.

Idem, *En Islam iranien*, 4 vols., Paris, 1971-73, IV, pp. 123-201.

Idem, *Temple and Contemplation*, tr. L. Sherrard, London, 1986, pp. 183-262.

C. Jambet, *L'Orient des lumières*, Paris, 1981. Moḥsen Kadivar, "Manzelat-e falsafi-e Qāzi Sa'īd Qomi," *Ā'ina-yepažuheş* 32, 1374 Š./1995, pp. 20-30.

S. H. Rizvi, "Neoplatonism Revived: Qāḏī Sa'īd Qummī's *Glosses* on the *Theology of Aristotle*," in *Arabic Philosophy: Sources and Reception*, ed. P. Adamson, London, forthcoming.