



## ABŪ 'ALĪ FĀRESĪ

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**ABŪ 'ALĪ FĀRESĪ**, ḤASAN B. AḤMAD B. 'ABD-AL-ĠAFFĀR (288-377/900-87), grammarian at the court of the Buyid 'Azod-al-dawla (d. 366/977). He was born in Fasā, a small town in the district of Shiraz, to a Persian father and an Arab mother from the tribe of Sadūs. Ḥasan's family facilitated his mastery of Arabic and Persian and provided reasonable financial resources. In his twenties, he moved to Baghdad to study grammar and philology. He sat at the feet of many shaikhs, among whom were the prominent philologists and grammarians of the time: al-Zajjāj, Ebn Dorayd, Ebn al-Sarrāj, Ebn Mojjāhed, and Mabramān. Many of Abū 'Alī's ideas concerning the different readings of the Qur'ān, a subject to which he later devoted his work *al-Ḥoǰǰa*, must have been inspired by Ebn Mojjāhed (d. 324/935). Mabramān (d. 345/956), an outstanding grammarian, used to teach the Book of Sībawayh (*al-Ketāb*) for 100 dinars, a sum which not many students could afford. Abū 'Alī took his course, since he was not content with studying *al-Ketāb* with Ebn al-Sarrāj. In fact *al-Ketāb*, the opus magnum of the Basran grammatical school, was the center of Abū 'Alī's activities throughout his life. He was considered unique among contemporary grammarians for his comprehensive knowledge of that book (Tawḥīdī, *Emtā'*, Cairo, 1939-44, I, p. 131). Tawḥīdī adds that, in philology, Abū 'Alī relied a great deal on the books of Abū Zayd Anṣārī, a fact which Abū 'Alī's books also confirm.

Abū 'Alī left Baghdad after more than 30 years. In 341/952 in Mosul, he met the man who became his most devoted disciple, Ebn Jennī. Not much impressed with the grammarians of that city (Ebn Jennī, *Moḥtasab*, Cairo, I, p. 186), Abū



'Alī, accompanied by his student, continued on to Aleppo, where he stayed until 347/958. The court of the Hamdanid amir, Sayf-al-dawla, where many illustrious poets, grammarians, and philologists gathered, must have attracted Abū 'Alī's attention. The Aleppo period proved to be both challenging and inspiring to the shaikh and his student, through discussions, disputes, and consultations about specific problems. *Al-Masā'el al-Ḥalabīyāt* ("The Aleppo problems") represents one link in a long chain of books written by Abū 'Alī to solve grammatical and philological problems. Each book of *Problems* is named after the place where those problems were raised (e.g., *Baṣrīyāt*, *Šīrāzīyāt*, *Ahwāzīyāt*, *Demašqīyāt*, etc.), as though its author were considered the grand mufti in this field. On the authority of Zobaydī, the Andalusian grammarian (d. 379/989-90; *Ṭabaqāt al-naḥwīyīn*, Cairo, 1973, p. 130), Abū 'Alī must have left Aleppo in response to an invitation extended to him by the Buyid amir, 'Azod-al-dawla; he arrived in Shiraz after spending some time in Damascus, Baghdad, and other places. He stayed at the Shiraz court for no less than twenty years (348-68/959-79). He was held in the highest esteem by 'Azod-al-dawla, who became one of his students in grammar. In Shiraz his talents were directed to systematic work and were not limited to occasional disconnected problems. There he was able to produce his three main works: *al-Ḥoǰǰa*, *al-Īzāḥ*, and *al-Takmila*, all of which he dedicated to the Buyid amir. It is not by chance that he was joined in Shiraz by his former student and friend Ebn Jennī, and later by Motanabbī, who became intimately attached to Abū 'Alī through Ebn Jennī. After Baghdad was annexed to the domains of 'Azod-al-dawla (in 366/977), Abū 'Alī chose to settle in the city which he loved most. His will specified that one-third of his money (an amount of 30,000 dinars) he bequeathed to the grammarians of Baghdad (Jazarī, *Ġāyat al-nehāya*, Cairo, 1933, I, p. 207).

Abū 'Alī spent about seventy years in full dedication to learning, either in meeting with shaikhs or in debating, teaching, and writing. Learning was his only joy, and it seems that he rarely indulged in worldly pleasures such as wine-drinking (*Emtā'* I, p. 132). Ebn Jennī envies him, because as a celibate, he was neither fettered with family obligations, nor engaged in earning a living (*Ḳaṣā'eṣ* I, Cairo, 1952, p. 277; cf. *Moḥtasab* I, p. 34). As a teacher, he represents the typical modest and inspiring educator. He used to recite a Koranic verse or a line of poetry and then invite the students to raise questions (*Ḳaṣā'eṣ* III, Cairo, 1957, p. 328), encouraging them to give their personal opinions and suggestions. His intelligence must have been of the type that is kindled by friction or that relies on moments of intuition. At one time he asked his



teacher, Abū ‘Abdallāh Baṣrī, why this faculty of intuition (*kāṭer*) is not present always, hinting that it must be some sort of heavenly revelation. His teacher said, “I think it is. But intuition can not be based on sheer ignorance. Don’t you see that Ḥāmed, the grocer, can not be intuitive?” (*Ḳaṣā’eṣ* I, p. 207). As a Mu‘tazilite, he was not only influenced by Mu‘tazilite doctrines in his comments on certain Koranic verses, but he also used Mu‘tazilite intellectual methods as a basis for his grammatical studies. He took great interest in *qīās* (analogy) and *‘elal* (logical derivation). He used to say, “I tolerate making mistakes in fifty philological problems but not in one analogical problem” (Anbārī, *Nozhat al-alebbā’*, Cairo, 1967, p. 317). These interests seem to have rendered his books difficult. He wrote *al-Ḥoḷḷā* for reciters of the Qur’ān; but Ebn Jennī testifies that they avoided the book, because it contains many things that were not comprehensible even by the great shaikhs among them (*Moḥtasab* I, p. 197). This, together with some disused terminology, might explain why modern scholarship has not paid much attention to Abū ‘Alī’s works, so that only part of *al-Ḥoḷḷā* has been edited. In fact, Abū ‘Alī did not produce new theories in his field so much as new interpretations. His sensitivity to dialects and his knowledge of Persian enabled him to develop certain comparative philological points (*Ḳaṣā’eṣ* I, pp. 91, 92, 243). Though he had many bright students, only Ebn Jennī was able to elaborate on his teacher’s suggestions and develop some of his hints into extensive studies (cf. chap. al-Ešteqāq al-kabīr in *Ḳaṣā’eṣ* II, p. 133ff.).

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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See also: *Fehrest*, p. 64.

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Idem, *Moḷam*, s.v. Fasā. Ebn Ḳallekān (Beirut), II, pp. 80-82.



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*EF*<sup>2</sup> II, pp. 802-03.