



ABŪ MOSLEM EŞFAHĀNĪ

ABŪ MOSLEM MOḤAMMAD B. BAḤR AL-EŞFAHĀNĪ AL-KĀTEB, secretary, official, man of letters, and Mu'tazilite Qur'ān commentator, b. 254/868, probably in Isfahan. Nothing is known about his teachers. He must have come to Baghdad at an early age, for there he visited the house of the poet Boḥtorī, who left Iraq in 279/892. At a social gathering in the caliphal court, he argued eloquently his claim that his home town Isfahan was the most pleasant spot on earth. In Baghdad he also became personally acquainted with the later 'Abbasid vizier 'Alī b. 'Īsā, who used to express his longing for him and to describe him in complimentary terms. The latter events cannot be dated, and it is uncertain if they occurred during his first stay in Baghdad or a later one (if he ever visited the city again). Some time before 287/900, he became secretary of Moḥammad b. Zayd al-Dā'ī, 'Alid ruler of Ṭabarestān and Gorgān (270-87/884-900). He is mentioned at the 'Alid court at Gorgān together with the prominent Mu'tazilite scholar Abu'l-Qāsem Balkī, whom he may have met in Baghdad and with whom he may even have traveled to Gorgān. It is likely that he was influenced by the theological doctrine of Balkī.

Few details are known about his later career. In 300/912-13 Abu'l-Ḥosayn b. Abi'l-Baḡl, appointed tax director of Isfahan, wrote him from Baghdad putting him in charge of the office of domains (*dīwān al-żīā*) and, after his own arrival in the town, confirmed him in the office. In 303/915-16 Abū Moslem was appointed chief accountant (*mostawfi*) in Šīrāz to the tax collector Moḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Rostam. In 306/918-19 'Alī b. 'Īsā, at the suggestion of Ebn Abi'l-Baḡl, put him jointly with Aḥmad b. Sa'd in charge of taxation in Isfahan and



gave them free hand over their predecessor, Ebn Rostam. He is known to have been present in Isfahan in 316/928. In Šawwāl, 321/September/October, 933, when Ebn Rostam died, Abū Moslem was once more entrusted with his position of tax director. A month later ‘Alī b. Būya conquered Isfahan and deposed him. Abū Moslem died toward the end of 322/autumn, 934.

The following titles of his works, none of which is extant, are mentioned in the sources. 1. *Ketāb jāme’ al-ta’wīl le-moḥkam al-tanzīl* (or *Šarḥ al-ta’wīl*), a Qur’ān commentary based on Mu’tazilite doctrine in fourteen volumes, which he used to present in his discussion circle. The book became famous for its elegant style. Šarīf al-Mortažā quoted and discussed some of the interpretations of Koranic verses in his *Gorar wa’l-dorar*. It was praised by Shaikh Abū Ja’far Ṭūsī in the introduction of his Qur’ān commentary *al-Tebyān* and occasionally quoted in Ṭabresī’s Qur’ān commentary *Majma’ al-bayān*. More regularly it is quoted in the Qur’ān commentary *al-Tahdīb* of the Mu’tazilite Ḥākem Jošamī (extant in manuscript). 2. *Ketāb jāme’ rasā’eleh*, a collection of his epistles. 3. *Ketāb al-nāseḳ wa’l-mansūk*. He is reported to have held that none of the verses of the Qur’ān was abrogated and to have interpreted the verses commonly considered as abrogating or abrogated accordingly. 4. A book about grammar (*fī’l-naḥw*). Abū Moslem also composed poetry in Arabic and Persian. A few verses of his Arabic poetry are quoted by Yāqūt. Abu’l-Faraġ Eşfahānī relates from him in his *Aġanī*.

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