



AḤMAD B. 'OMAR B. SORAYJ

AḤMAD B. 'OMAR B. SORAYJ, ABU'L-'ABBĀS, Shafe'ite author from Shiraz (249/863-306/918-19). He studied *feqh* with some of the most prominent scholars of the second generation after Šāfe'ī; his first official post mentioned in the sources was that of *qāẓī* in Shiraz. The last decades of his life he spent in Baghdad, where he acquired great fame as a teacher. The vizier 'Alī b. 'Īsā is said to have urged him to take over the post of a *qāẓī al-qoẓāt*, but Ebn Sorayj refused. He wrote many treatises, mostly concerned with polemics about juristic methodology. The first disciples of Šāfe'ī had not been able to preserve the delicate compromise worked out by their master between the fixed sources of Muslim jurisprudence, i.e., the Qur'ān and Tradition (Hadith), and the means of further theoretical development and practical application, i.e., the methods of deduction. In the course of the 3rd/9th century a rather wide range of opinions as to the scope of independent reasoning could be noticed among the followers of Šāfe'ī. On the one hand the Zahirite school came into being, which wanted to keep strictly to the traditional Islamic sources, rejecting *qīās* (analogy) as an instrument of arriving at clear decisions. On the other hand first attempts are made at compromise between Tradition and speculative reasoning (*kalām*) in regard to methods of argumentation. These attempts could not remain without influence on the development of juristic methodology. Ebn Sorayj is reported to have been the first Shafe'ite to introduce dialectic disputations into the field of jurisprudence, stating that *kalām* could not do any harm to *feqh*. Owing to this conviction, which he had formed probably during his famous controversies with Moḥammad b. Dā'ūd, the son of the founder of the Zahirite school, Ebn Sorayj must be considered as



one of those who laid the foundations of the Shafe'ites' disposition to give speculative reasoning a wide range of application within their intellectual activities; Aš'arī, Ebn Sorayj's younger contemporary, was likewise a Shafe'ite; and in the 5th/11th century the Shafe'ites were denounced for using pure *kalām* and neglecting Hadith. Nothing has come down to us from Ebn Sorayj's literary production, which is said to have amounted to 400 titles. Sobkī (d. 756/1355), author of the well-known bibliographical dictionary of the Shafe'ite school, already had to express his regret that he could find very few of these works.

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