



A'MAŠ, ABŪ MOḤAMMAD

A'MAŠ, ABŪ MOḤAMMAD SOLAYMĀN B. MEḤRĀN ASADĪ (in some sources, erroneously, Azdī) KĀHELĪ KŪFĪ, 1st-2nd/7th-8th century Shi'ite scholar, traditionist, and Qur'ān reader. He was born between 58/677-78 and 61/680-81 in his father's native village of Damāvand (Donbāvand) in Ṭabarestān, or in Kūfa, to which the family had moved. Shi'ite biographers state that the date of his birth coincided with Ḥosayn's martyrdom at Karbalā (10 Moḥarram 61/10 October 680); some claim that his father was a witness to the massacre. In Kūfa A'maš became a *mawlā* of the Kāhelī branch of the Banū Asad and lived in their quarter, although it is also mentioned that he resided among the 'Awfī branch of the Banū Sa'd. He is said to have visited Baghdad, but he spent most of his years in Kūfa, where he died between 145/762 and 151/768 (according to many authorities, in Rabī' I, 148/765).

As a Qur'ān reader, A'maš generally followed the readings of Ebn Mas'ūd; as can be seen from his own codex (*moṣḥaf*), of which a few examples have survived. His authority was such that people who attended his recitations would sometimes correct their copies of the Qur'ān in accordance with his readings. Abū 'Obayd (d. 224/839) mentions him as one of the five *qorrā'* of Kūfa; later he was included among the Fourteen Readers, generally in the eleventh place.

A'maš was one of the first scholars to engage in evaluating the trustworthiness of transmitters of Hadith (*'elm al-teqāt*). He is often referred to as *teqa* himself and was even given the honorary appellation *moṣḥaf* in recognition of his trustworthiness. But he was also accused of *tadlīs*, on the grounds that in



certain cases he falsely claimed direct reception of traditions; in particular, he was accused of claiming to have heard traditions from Anas b. Mālek, while in fact receiving them from Anas' disciples. The alleged claim would have enhanced his stature by making him a Successor (*tābe'ī*). Some scholars went so far as to accuse him of having corrupted the Kufan tradition.

A'maš transmitted Ḥeǰāzī, as well as his own Iraǰi, material, but had little respect for the Syrian tradition. Zohrī (to whom he is often compared) was reportedly very impressed when he discovered the extent of A'maš's knowledge. A prolific traditionist, A'maš is said to have transmitted 1,300, or even 4,000, traditions, many of which were included in the sound Sunni collections. A'maš is counted among those scholars who believed that traditions should be memorized and handed down orally rather than committed to paper. He appears, however, to have changed his mind on this subject in his later years: The traditions which he transmitted were recorded by his numerous students; a *ṣaḥīfa* composed (or dictated) by him became known in the transmission of Wakī b. Jarrāš. A'maš was well-known for his impeccable Arabic, and felt no qualms in correcting faulty Arabic in traditions which he transmitted. He was considered an authority on the laws of inheritance (*farā'eż*), but his expertise in other branches of religious law seems to have been more limited. Thus, on the death of Ebrāhīm Naǰā'ī (d. 95/713-14 or 96/714-15), A'maš was chosen as his successor on questions of *farā'eż* but not on matters of *feqh* in general. He was also faulted for transmitting traditions of a legal nature without grasping their full significance. On certain legal issues he had his own opinion; e.g., while most authorities interpreted Qur'ān 2:187 as meaning that during Ramaǰān the daily fast commences when the light of day spreads in the horizon, A'maš followed a tradition of Ḥoǰayfa b. Yamān that permitted delaying the last meal before the fast (the *saḥūr*) until just before sunrise. It appears exaggerated, however, to argue (as does one of his biographers) that A'maš had his own *madhab*.

A'maš's Shi'ite tendencies came to the fore on numerous occasions. He rudely rejected a demand by Hešām b. 'Abd-al-Malek that he write down for him traditions about 'Oṭmān's merits and 'Alī's defects. In fact, he is an authority for accounts hostile to 'Omar, 'Oṭmān, and Mo'āwīa. He told the caliph Maṇšūr that he knew by heart ten thousand traditions on the merits of 'Alī; he dictated some of these traditions to Sayyed Ḥemyārī, who then used the material for his poems. When Abū Ḥanīfa came to visit A'maš on his deathbed and urged him to retract some of his pro-'Alid traditions, A'maš adamantly refused. He



also transmitted traditions on *fazā'el al-Ḥosayn*, and induced one of his Kufan neighbors to make a pilgrimage to Ḥosayn's tomb. Shi'ite interpretations of certain Koranic verses are attributed to him.

The precise nature of A'maš's Shi'ism is a moot point between Imamite and Zaydī scholars, each side claiming him for itself. He is mentioned in the *Ketāb al-rejāl* of Abū Ja'far Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067) and in later Imamite works as a disciple of Imam Ja'far Ṣādeq (from whom he is known to have transmitted). Yet the fact that Šahīd Ṭānī Zayn-al-dīn b. 'Alī 'Āmelī (d. ca. 966/1558) reproaches some Imamite biographers for having failed to mention A'maš in their lists might point to a lack of unanimity among Imamites on A'maš's position. There are also attempts to absolve him from the taint of *waqf* (meaning here the belief that Ja'far Ṣādeq was the last Imam).

In Zaydī literature, A'maš is mentioned as having recognized the imamate of Zayd b. 'Alī without actively supporting his rebellion. Together with other scholars and pious men, he gave moral support to the revolt in 145/762-63 of Moḥammad b. 'Abdallāh al-Nafs al-Zakīya and his brother Ebrāhīm, and he is even reported to have vowed that he would have joined the battle himself but for his blindness. When news reached him of Ebrāhīm's death in battle, A'maš declared that if he were assured of the support of the Kufan populace he would march on Manšūr's palace and wreak vengeance on the 'Abbasids. Another indication that A'maš accepted the Zaydī tenet of *korūj* can be seen from the fact that he did not consider it a sin for Ḥasan b. Šāleḥ (d. 168/784) to preach rebellion.

The available evidence does not allow us to decide whether A'maš was a Zaydī or an Imamite; in any case such distinctions were not always clear-cut at his time. But obviously he was a fervent supporter of the *ahl al-bayt* and was so regarded by both friend and foe. Thus Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal is said to have warned his followers against reading Karābīsī's *Ketāb al-modallesīn*, since it contained pro-Shi'ite pronouncements by A'maš, while Jāḥeẓ referred to him as a *rāfeẓī* who transmitted traditions about 'Alī of dubious authenticity. Attempts were also made to strengthen anti-Shi'ite arguments by placing them in A'maš's mouth. For example, A'maš is the authority for a story that those jinn who condemn Abū Bakr and 'Omar for their treatment of 'Alī are the followers of Eblīs, or that the worst group among the jinn are the *rāfeẓa*.

In theology A'maš belongs to the anti-Murji'ite, predestinarian tradition which was centered among the Shi'ite of Kūfa and was first anti-Omayyad and later



anti-'Abbasid. He approvingly quotes Ebrāhīm Naḳa'ī, who declared that the Morje'a were more hateful to him than the *ahl al-ketāb*. A'maš's anti-Murji'ism is connected with his open hostility to Abū Ḥanīfa and the school which bears his name. A'maš's biographers have recorded various scathing remarks made by A'maš at Abū Ḥanīfa's expense. These remarks are in line with what we are told about A'maš's uncouth manners and often coarse sense of humor. Yet A'maš was also scrupulously religious, lived in dire poverty, and believed in refraining from any contact with those in power. He refused to let a physician tend him during his last illness, and asked to be buried without a funeral, since he thought he did not deserve one. It is not surprising that in Sufi literature he is regarded as an ascetic.

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