



## ‘ĀMMA

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‘ĀMMA (pl. *‘awāmm*), a common Emāmī Shi‘ite appellation for the Sunnites. Roughly equivalent to *ahl al-ḵelāf*, *al-moḵālefūn*, *al-ḵaṣm*, or *al-ḵomhūr*, it is more obviously pejorative, in that it implies an identity between Sunnites and *‘amma* in the sense of “ignorant masses.” It is not clear at precisely which point the term *‘amma* in the technical Emāmī sense began to be employed; it appears in traditions attributed to Moḥammad al-Bāqer (d. 115/733; cf. Kešši, *Rejāl*, Naḵaf, n.d., p. 114), and was probably current among his disciples. The expression *maqālat al-‘awāmm* (“the doctrine of the generality;” Nawbaḵtī, *Feraq al-šī‘a*, ed. H. Ritter, Istanbul, 1931, p. 23), which is used with reference to an unspecified non-Shi‘ite doctrine said to have existed already at the time of Ḥosayn’s death (61/680), seems to reflect later terminology. *‘amma* is contrasted with *ḵāṣṣa*, and *al-ḵāṣṣa wa’l-‘amma* means either “Shi‘ites and Sunnites” or, by extension, “everyone.” The term is not always confined to the Sunnites in the strict sense; it spans on occasion all enemies of Shi‘ism, such as the followers of anti-Shi‘ite tyrants in antediluvian times (Ebn Bābawayh, *Ekmāl al-dīn*, Naḵaf, 1389/1970, p. 132), or members of the first generation of Islam who allegedly deprived ‘Alī of the succession (this latter category of *‘amma* is sometimes identified with the Morḵe’a; see Ṭorayḥī, *Maḵma‘ al-baḥrayn*, n.p., 1307/1889-90, pp. 36-37; Maḵlesī, *Beḥār al-anwār* [Iran], 1305-15/1887-97, VII, p. 5).

In Emāmī literature, *‘amma* often refers specifically to Sunnite theologians or doctors, and *maḵhab al-‘amma* is a blanket term for the Sunnite schools of jurisprudence. Emāmī biographical works contain references to *‘ammī*



scholars who exhibited Shi‘ite sympathies in at least some of their writings (cf., e.g., Kešši, *Rejāl*, p. 333; Ṭūsī, *Fehrest*, Naǧaf, 1380/1961, pp. 86, 130, 145, 210; Ebn Šahrāšūb, *Ma‘ālem al-‘olamā’*, Naǧaf, 1380/1961, pp. 25, 43, 61, 72, 76, 81, 118, 135, 138). Traditions transmitted on the authority of the ‘amma are accepted when they can profitably be cited for polemical purposes. Such dispensation does not, however, extend to legal Hadith; indeed, an important principle has it that where two traditions contradict each other, the believer should follow that Hadith which contradicts the practice of the Sunnites (*kelāf al-‘amma*; see Kolaynī, *al-Kāfi* I, Tehran, 1375/1955-56, p. 68; Moḥsen Fayż Kāšānī, *al-Nawāder fī jam‘ al-aḥādīṭ*, Tehran, 1960, p. 35; G. Lecomte, in *Le Shi‘isme Imāmīte*, Paris, 1970, pp. 100-01). One reason given for this is that ‘amma practice follows that of the people of ‘Alī’s days who would ask him for a legal opinion only to act in opposition to it (Ebn Bābawayh, *Elal al-šarā‘e’*, Naǧaf, 1966, p. 531). The principle of *kelāf al-‘amma* may, however, be set aside for reasons of *taqīya* (ibid.).

The ‘amma are repeatedly accused of ignorance and injustice (‘Alī b. Aḥmad Kūfī, *al-Esteḡāta*, n.p., 1930-, p. 141; Karāǧakī, *Ketāb al-ta‘aǧǧob*, Mašhad, 1322/1904, pp. 2-3). At times they are even described as unbelievers (Naǧafī Ešfahānī, *Enāyat al-rażawīya*, Tehran, 1319/1901, pp. 163-64, 167), though such strong condemnation is normally reserved for the militantly anti-Shi‘ite elements among them, the *nāṣeba*. Works entitled *Al-radd ‘ala’l-‘amma* and composed in the last two centuries (*al-Ḍarī‘a* X, pp. 210-11 ) attest to the continued prevalence of the term among Emāmī writers.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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See also Nawbaktī, *Feraq al-šī‘a*, pp. 51, 59.

Sa‘d b. ‘Abdallāh, *al-Maqālāt wa’l-feraq*, Tehran, 1963, pp. 19, 73, 82.

‘Ayyāšī, *Tafsīr*, Qom, 1380/1960-61, I, pp. 82, 200.

Ebn Bābawayh, *Elal*, pp. 389, 522.



Kešši, *Rejāl*, Karbalā, 1963, pp. 275, 493.

Moḥsen Fayz Kāšānī, *al-Maḥajjāt al-bayzā'*, Tehran, 1339-42 Š./1960-63, I, p. 1.

Ṭorayḥī, *Majma' al-baḥrayn*, p. 542.

*A'yān al-šī'a* I/1, Beirut, 1370/1951, pp. 29, 63.