



ASTARĀBĀDĪ, MOḤAMMAD AMĪN

ASTARĀBĀDĪ, MOLLĀ MOḤAMMAD AMĪN B. MOḤAMMAD ŠARĪF AL-AKBĀRĪ, founder of the 17th-century Akbārī school. His first teacher of Hadith was Moḥammad b. ‘Alī b. Ḥosayn ‘Āmelī (d. ca. 1009/1600), under whom he studied in Naḡaf (not Mašhad; cf. Brockelmann, *GAL*, S. II, p. 577), receiving the *ejāza* at the beginning of 1007/1598. He also spent some years of his youth (including the year 1010/1601) in Shiraz, and later lived in Medina and in Mecca, where he died in 1033/1623-24 or 1036/1626-27.

Though it has not yet been noted, there appears to exist a *prima facie* case for arguing that Astarābādī spent several years in India. The main argument lies in the fact that after Astarābādī’s arrival in Mecca he dedicated one of his works (the *Dāneš-nāma-ye šāhī*) to the Golconda ruler Moḥammad Qoṭbšāh (1020/1612-1035/1626). Indeed, Astarābādī may well have participated in the movement of scholars from various Islamic countries to Golconda, where they were sometimes accorded high-ranking positions by the Shi‘ite Qoṭbšāhī dynasty. One may be tempted to identify him with the Astarābādī who arrived in Golconda in 1013/1604 and rose to the position of finance minister (Mīr Jomla) at the court of Moḥammad-qolī Qoṭbšāh (989/1581-1020/1612) (see Ferešta, tr. Briggs, III, pp. 286-87; M. A. Muid Khan, *The Arabian Poets of Golconda*, Bombay, 1963, p. 24); however, such an hypothesis is weakened by the incompatibility of dates: Astarābādī states in his *Fawā’ed madanīya* that he studied in Mecca with his last teacher, Moḥammad b. ‘Alī Astarābādī (d.



1028/1619) for a period of ten years, beginning in 1015/1606. The reports on the Mīr Jomla, on the other hand, mention that he kept his post throughout the reign of Moḥammad-qolī Qoṭbšāh, had to relinquish it after several years in the service of Moḥammad-qolī's nephew and successor Moḥammad Qoṭbšāh, returned to Persia in 1023/1614 and spent four years at the Safavid court of Shah 'Abbās I (d.1038/1629) before coming back to India, to the Mughal court of Jahāngīr (d. 1037/1627) (see Eskandar Beg, p. 883; Mo'tamad Khan, *Eqbāl-nāma-ye jahāngīrī*, Calcutta, 1865, pp. 111-13; A. M. Siddiqi, *History or Golconda*, Hyderabad, 1956, pp. 92f., 320; *Tūzok-e jahāngīrī*, tr. A. Rogers, *Memoirs of Jahāngīr II*, London, 1914, index). Moreover, in his writings Astarābādī gives the impression of being a rather vain man, which makes the absence (as far as I have been able to ascertain) of any allusion to an important Indian position rather suspect.

Astarābādī's encyclopedic knowledge ranged from *kalām* and logic to medicine and *adab*; yet he was particularly interested in Hadith (he composed commentaries on three of the Four Books of Imami traditions) and in *oṣūl al-feqh*. It was his preoccupation with the latter which brought him both fame and notoriety. Astarābādī initially adhered to the prevalent doctrine of *ej̄tehād*, but then changed his views, perhaps as a result of his association with Moḥammad b. 'Alī Astarābādī, who reportedly told him that he had been predestined by God to "revive the *ṭarīqa* of the Aḳbārīs." Moḥammad Amīn states that he spent several years in Medina in solitary meditation before returning to Mecca and completing the *Fawā'ed madanīya* (in Rabī' I, 1031/January-February, 1622). The work is written in a sharp polemical tone. Astarābādī claims that the Aḳbārī doctrine was followed by all disciples of the imams, and that elements of the Oṣūlī doctrine (which he considers to be of Sunni origin) were only introduced into Imami thought in the 3rd/9th and 4th/10th centuries by Ḥasan b. 'Alī (or 'Īsā) b. Abī 'Aqīl and Moḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Jonayd. According to Astarābādī, Shaikh Mofīd's endorsement of the works of these two was a major factor in the adoption of Oṣūlī principles by Imami scholars in subsequent generations. Astarābādī is unsparing in his criticism of the *mojtaheds*, and goes so far as to accuse some of them of polytheism and unbelief.

Reaction to the *Fawā'ed* was swift and caustic. Shaikh 'Alī b. Moḥammad b. Ḥasan b. Zayn-al-dīn Šahīd 'Āmelī (d. 1103/1691-92), who claims (in his *al-Sehām al-māreqa men aḡrāz al-zanādeqa*) to base his portrayal of Astarābādī on eye-witness accounts, maintains that he suffered from hallucinations



induced by his addiction to various opiates, that he claimed to be infallible, had delusions of grandeur and wished to achieve power and fame by misleading the ignorant. Astarābādī's name (Moḥammad Amīn = "the praiseworthy and trustworthy"), 'Āmelī wryly notes, is an example of designating something by its opposite. Yet the *Fawā'ed* did not merely provoke intense vituperation against its author. It also proved instrumental in bringing about the rise of the Akbārīs in Safavid Persia; it was alternately attacked and defended in numerous works (one early refutation, the *Šawāhed* [or *Fawā'ed*] *makkīya* of Nūr-al-dīn 'Alī b. 'Alī 'Āmelī [d. 1068/1657-58] is printed on the margin of the 1312/1894-95 and the 1321/1904 editions of the *Fawā'ed*); and it remained the focal point in the internecine debates which raged between Akbārīs and Oṣūlīs until the final Oṣūlī victory in the nineteenth century.

Other extant works of Astarābādī (only the *Fawā'ed madanīya* has been printed) include the aforementioned *Dāneš-nāma-ye šāhī* (apparently the only work of Astarābādī composed in Persian), which encompasses in forty chapters a wide range of subjects; the *Taḥqīq onmūdaǰ al-Dawwānī*, an exposition of the chapter on logic from the *Onmūdaǰ al-'olūm* of Jalāl-al-dīn Dawwānī Ṣeddīqī (d. 907/1501 or 908/1502); the *Resāla fī mabāheṭ talāta*, which deals with various theological questions; and the *Fawā'ed makkīya*, which is also concerned with theology. Works mentioned in the *Fawā'ed madanīya* but probably lost include the *Šarḥ Oṣūl al-kāfi*, *Šarḥ Tahdīb al-aḥkām*, *Ketāb fī radd mā aḥdataho 'l-fāzelān*, and *Fawā'ed daqā'eq al-'olūm al-'arabīya*.

Doctrine. In his exposition of the Akbārī doctrine, Astarābādī maintains that ideally there should be absolute certainty (*yaqīn wāqe'ī*) that all religious laws conform with God's will. While such certainty is impossible to achieve, it can be established with certainty that all religious laws are based on the sayings of the imams as recorded in the traditions. In other words: What matters for religious practice is the certainty (which Astarābādī terms "customary," *yaqīn 'ādī*) that a particular rule was promulgated by an imam, and not the unverifiable assumption that this rule reflects the will of God.

There are various means of ascertaining that a particular tradition derives with certainty from an imam (i.e., that it is *qaṭ'ī al-worūd* or *al-ṣodūr*); checking the trustworthiness of the transmitters is one obvious method (it should be noted that for Astarābādī, a *teqa* is someone who does not lie, and not necessarily someone who is an Imami). All traditions included in the classical Four Books are *ṣaḥīḥ*, in the sense that they definitely contain the words of the imams.



Once the soundness of the derivation of a tradition has been established, the rule which it comprises gains absolute validity and has to be followed even when, for the purpose of precautionary dissimulation (*taqīya*), it enjoins a practice not in accordance with the true Shi'ite doctrine. The purport of such a rule is clear (i.e., it is *qaṭ'ī al-dalāla*) because it was elucidated by an imam who by nature is not only infallible, but also incapable of producing a statement that is open to misunderstanding by an Arabic-speaking person. The *mojtaheds*, of course, did not share Astarābādī's view that statements by an imam were necessarily unambiguous. They argued that even at best one could never claim for a given interpretation that it was *certainly* correct, only that it was highly probable.

The imams also laid down rules to be followed in cases of apparently contradictory traditions. Astarābādī's view is that where these rules do not enable one to arrive at a clear decision in favor of a particular tradition, an attitude of *tawaqqof* should be adopted: None of the traditions should be followed, but at the same time no blame should be attached to someone who acts in accordance with one of them.

Astarābādī's insistence on traditions of the imams as the sole source of religious law and doctrine leads to his rejection of *ešmā'* and of reason as other *oṣūl al-feqh*. He goes further than some other Aḵbārīs in claiming that even the Qur'ān cannot in itself be considered as a source of law; but for the exegesis of the imams (in the form of traditions), it would have remained beyond human comprehension.

See also [Aḵbārīya](#).

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