



## EBN ABĪ JOMHŪR AḤSĀ'Ī, MOḤAMMAD

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**EBN ABĪ JOMHŪR AḤSĀ'Ī**, Moḥammad b. Zayn-al-Dīn Abi'l-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Ḥosām-al-Dīn Ebrāhīm (b. ca. 837/1433-34; d. after 25 Du 'l-Qa'da 904/4 July 1499), Shi'ite thinker. He lived and taught in his home town of Aḥsā in Baḥrayn, Najaf, and Mašhad during the last half of the 15th century. His best known work, the *al-Mojlī*, which is actually his commentary and super-commentary on a *kalām* treatise by himself, is important as an example of the immediate scholastic precursor to the kind of Shi'ite intellectual synthesis which would flower during the Safavid period and come to be called *ḥekmat-e elāhī* and whose most famous exponent was Mollā Ṣadrā (d. 1050/1640). This synthesis relies on the Islamic *kalām* tradition, the Islamic peripatetic tradition most prominently represented in the work of [Avicenna](#) (d. 1037), the *Ešrāqī* tradition issuing from the work of Sohrawardī (k. 587/1193), and finally the high Sufism of the ontologists who relied on the oeuvre of [Ebn al-'Arabī](#) (d. 638/1240). Madelung (p. 150) has called the *Mojlī* "a mirror of the religious ideas and aspirations of the previous three centuries." But it must be remembered that these ideas are presented by Aḥsā'ī in their distinctive (and apparently Twelver) Shi'ite form. Thus he and the more famous Ḥaydar Āmolī (d. after 787/1385-86) and the more obscure Rajab Borsī (d. 714/1411) may be seen as a trio of post-Mongol, near-contemporary Shi'ite authors who were attracted to the world of images (*'ālam al-meṭāl*) as the most likely place for their utopia to be established. None of them seems to have ever anticipated the kind of worldly theocracy (functioning under the direct supervision of the



Hidden Imam) that the Safavids eventually would be able to establish. It remains nonetheless beyond dispute that the success of the project depended heavily on the type of piety found in the *Mojlī*.

An example of this synthesis in his work is the all-important Shi'ite topic of *walāya*. Aḥsā'ī relies heavily upon Ebn al-'Arabī's formulation: *Walāya* represents a universal and supreme relationship to the divine, according to which every prophet is also a bearer of *walāya* and may therefore be designated, in some sense, as a *walīy* (see [AWLĪĀ'](#)). However, not every *walīy* is the bearer of *nobūwa* (prophecy). Thus, while Moḥammad is a prophet (*nabīy*), he is also a *walīy*. It is this fact that renders *walāya* superior to prophecy. Aḥsā'ī sees in such a formulation grounds for the theological elevation of the Imams, preeminently represented by 'Alī (*Mojlī*, p. 488). The metaphysical theory supporting this doctrine is the distinctive emanation scheme called *tajallī* (the self-manifestation of God). Again, Aḥsā'ī appropriates Ebn al-'Arabī's vision, which came to be known as *waḥdat al-wojūd* (unity of being), to Shi'ite theology (*Mojlī*, pp. 204-05). Another example is his interpretation of the *basmala*. Ebn Abī Jomhūr takes as his starting point the statement of Ebn al-'Arabī in the *Fotūḥāt*, that the *bā'* should be interpreted according to its three modes: form, sound, and vowelizing. The form of the *bā'* corresponds to the *malakūt*, the pronunciation to the *jabarūt*, and the vowelizing represents the testimony of *molk*. Ebn Abī Jomhūr adds the characteristically Shi'ite comment that the hidden (*maḥdūfa*) *alef* (the one that disappears when the Arabic words *be* and *esm* are connected) represents the Hidden Imam, the eventual *Qā'em* (viz., upright *alef*; *Mojlī*, p. 5).

Ebn Abī Jomhūr was a prolific writer dealing with the usual range of Islamic learned topics and is dubbed a mystic (*'āref*), a traditionist (*moḥaddet*), and a legist (*faqīh*; *al-Darī'a* XX, p. 13). In addition to the very old and rare printed edition of the *Mojlī*, one of his collections of Hadith has been published recently. The most complete list of his works is in Madelung (pp. 151-53). It seems certain that Ebn Abī Jomhūr's thought had a special influence on the formation of the early 19th century religious movement founded by [Shaikh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī](#), who apparently fell heir to his library; this movement was to issue eventually in the Bābī and Bahā'ī religions (Corbin, IV, p. 222). The most recent discussion of his life and work is given in *DMBE*.



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