

4.2.2 *Ja'far b. Ḥarb*

030019 CA'FER b. HARB

Abū l-Faḍl Ja'far (b. Muḥammad) b. Ḥarb al-Hamdānī, also called al-Ashajj, 'scar face',<sup>1</sup> died a mere two years after his namesake, in 236/850 at the age of 59.<sup>2</sup> He was no jurist,<sup>3</sup> and he did not write on *al-nāsikh wal-mansūkh* either. He did, however, engage in exegesis, but with the objective of employing it against the predestinarians, in a *K. mutashābih al-Qur'ān* that would be valued for generations to come.<sup>4</sup> And of course he, too, was an ascetic,<sup>5</sup> albeit not as disaffected towards the state as Ibn Mubashshir. After all, Ibn Abī Duwād succeeded in persuading him to take part in a *disputatio* in the presence of al-Wāthiq. However, he avoided performing the prayer behind the caliph. The courtiers were outraged at this insult, and Ibn Abī Duwād advised him to steer clear of the court in future as Wāthiq was a 'savage beast' (*sabu'*).

The story goes back to Khayyāṭ via Ka'bī. It was transmitted by Ibn al-Nadīm (*Fihrist* 213, 3ff.) and Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār (*Faḍl* 282, 10ff. > IM 73, 14ff., who was the only one, surprisingly, to include the *isnād*). *Sabu'* is corrupted to *tashayyu'* in *Faḍl*. Ḥākīm al-Jushamī appears to have come across this version already; he as well as Ibn al-Murtaḍā omit the word. – Furthermore Ja'far had taken his shoes off to pray; apparently this was not the custom in the palace.

It remains to be seen whether one should infer a close acquaintance between him and Wāthiq, as al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī did;<sup>6</sup> but he may well have taken part in more than one meeting, as his best friend at court was the Ibāḍite Yaḥyā b. Kāmil, at the time possibly still a member of Bishr al-Marīsī's school.<sup>7</sup>

1 Actually: 'the man with the scar on his forehead'. The sobriquet appears to have been avoided in Mu'tazilite sources. It was recorded by Ibn 'Asākir (*Tabyīn kadhīb al-muftarī*, 138, 13), by Shahrastānī (*Milal* 49, 3f./103, 9), by Abū Mu'īn al-Nasafī (Text xxviii 2), and by Baghdādī (*Farq* 188, 1/200, 11, where, however, the identity becomes clear only after a comparison with 188, 6/200, 16, and the name is furthermore corrupted in the Badr edition). A poem from Ma'arrī's *Luzūmiyyāt* mentions one Ashajj besides Aṣamm (Cairo ed. 1891, 1 209/Beirut ed. 1961, 1 259, ult.); it is not, however, referring to the two Mu'tazilites at all but rather to two of Bukhārī's authorities.

2 Thus *Fihrist* 213, 9, and Mas'ūdī, *Murūj* VII 231, 9f./V 21, 9f.; according to TB VII 163, 2ff., the date goes back to Khayyāṭ. Dhahabī, *Mizān* no. 1497 > Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān al-Mizān* II 113 no. 456, has the rather vague 'after 230'.

3 Thus at least if we go by the catalogue of his writings; but cf. Text xxviii 18.

4 Cf. the information on Catalogue of Works xxviii, no. 3.

5 *Fihrist* 213, 2f.; *Faḍl* 281, ult.

6 TB VII 163, 1.

7 Regarding him see p. 196f. below.