

influential scholarly and political circles in Damascus, Aleppo, and Istanbul during his adolescence. With the support of these people he was made *naqīb al-ashrāf* of Aleppo at the strikingly young age of 24. In 1879 he became religious adviser to the young Sultan ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd II. Abū l-Hudā spent the rest of his life in this position in Istanbul, where he died.

In the scholarly literature there are conflicting assessments of Abū l-Hudā. Older publications see his astonishing career as a feature of the growing influence of reactionary and conservative circles in Istanbul, which countered the *tanzīmāt* and culminated in the reign of ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd II. In these assessments, Abū l-Hudā is depicted as one of the most important Arab propagandists of the sultan’s pan-Islamic politics. In more recent literature, it has been argued that Abū l-Hudā owed his career to allies in the reformist circles that supported the *Tanzīmāt*. It has also been shown that pan-Islamic propaganda played a comparatively minor role in his many writings. In any case, as a political adviser in the sultan’s entourage, Abū l-Hudā maintained an extensive network of sources all across the Ottoman Empire and therefore had easy access to important information that formed the basis of his political memoranda.

Abū l-Hudā was a *shaykh* of the Rifā‘iyya *ṭarīqa*, with which he had become affiliated as a young boy. Once established in the sultan’s entourage in Istanbul, he became the most important Rifā‘iyya *shaykh* of the Ottoman Empire. He spread the Rifā‘iyya order by publishing Sūfī manuals, as well as implementing the publication of older Rifā‘iyya literature, and by initiating into the *ṭarīqa* Arab scholars who had come to Istanbul seeking his intercession in various administrative matters. The network of Abū

l-Hudā’s associates thus expanded rapidly, primarily integrating scholars from northern Syria and Iraq, including several members of the Ālūsī family. From 1887 onwards, important Rifā‘iyya shrines in Iraq were renovated, enlarged, or constructed, and this, in turn, contributed to the growth of the order there. This government support for the Rifā‘iyya was aimed at integrating Iraq’s Shī‘a population into the Sunnī Ottoman Empire while diminishing the influence in Baghdad of the Qādiriyya, which was at the core of anti-centralist tendencies in that city.

After the mid-1890s Abū l-Hudā’s influence declined rapidly, eventually leading to an almost total collapse of his network. In his later writings, especially those written after 1900, Abū l-Hudā devoted more space to political issues, particularly the new ideology of nationalism, and argued for a multinational empire.

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Abū Jahl

Abū Jahl (d. 2/624), the “Father of Ignorance,” was the Qurashī leader of Muḥammad’s pagan opponents in Mecca. His actual name was ‘Amr b. Hishām b. al-Mughīra of the Makhzūm of the Quraysh. This derogatory nickname was reportedly given to him by the Prophet,

and was designed to replace his actual *kunya*, Abū l-Ḥakam. The Prophet declared that he who calls Abū Jahl Abū l-Ḥakam commits a grave sin (al-Balādhurī, 1:141; 10:173–4). A verse by Ḥassān b. Thābit, Muḥammad’s poet, states that “his kinsmen named him Abū Ḥakam, but God named him Abū Jahl” (Ḥassān, 1:261). His mother was Asmā’ bt. Mukharriba al-Ḥanzaliyya of the Tamīm (see Kister, 326–30). She met Hishām b. al-Mughīra in Najrān, where he proposed to her, and she agreed to marry him on the condition that he take her to Mecca. There she gave birth to Abū Jahl as well as to al-Ḥārith. Her husband died and she married his brother Abū Rabī’a b. al-Mughīra and gave birth to ‘Ayyāsh b. Abī Rabī’a, as well as to ‘Abdallāh and Umm Ḥujayr (al-Balādhurī, 10:173; Ibn Sa’d, 8:300). Abū Jahl is often disparagingly referred to in the sources as “son of the Ḥanzaliyya” (e.g., al-Wāqidī, 1:34, 36, 44). His wife Umm Mujālid gave birth to his son ‘Ikrima (Ibn Sa’d, 5:444).

He is described in the sources as “thin, with stern countenance, sharp tongue and piercing look” (Ibn Hishām, 2:260), or with a squint (al-Balādhurī, 1:145). He had a scar on his knee as a result of a fall he took at a young age during a banquet at the house of ‘Abdallāh b. Jud‘ān. It was Muḥammad who pushed him. The scar helped identify his body in the battlefield of Badr (al-Wāqidī, 1:90). He was killed there in the year 2/624 when fighting with the Quraysh against the Muslims, at the age of seventy (al-Balādhurī, 1:147).

Abū Jahl appears to have been a wealthy man who took an active part in the caravan trade between Mecca and Syria (Ibn Sa’d, 2:6; 3:9). His high position as leader of the Makhzūm gave rise to a tradition relating that when Muḥammad was making his first steps as a prophet and still hiding his

message, he prayed to God to strengthen Islam with one of the two persons whom God loved best, ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb or ‘Amr b. Hishām. It was ‘Umar who eventually embraced Islam (Ibn Sa’d, 3:242–3, 267, 269; al-Balādhurī, 10:288). In spite of Abū Jahl’s failure to become a Muslim, tradition has it that when his son ‘Ikrima embraced Islam after the conquest of Mecca (8/630), Muḥammad declared that one must never curse ‘Ikrima’s father, because cursing the dead harms the living. The Prophet also prohibited the Muslims from calling ‘Ikrima, “son of Abū Jahl,” so as not to curse the dead (Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, 3:1082).

Abū Jahl is said to have been a bitter enemy of Islam, together with Abū Lahab and ‘Uqba b. Abī Mu‘ayṭ (Ibn Sa’d, 1:201; al-Balādhurī, 1:141). He appears to have been even more extreme in his enmity towards Muḥammad than al-Walīd b. al-Mughīra, an older leader of the Makhzūm and Abū Jahl’s paternal uncle. Some traditions say that al-Walīd was relatively sympathetic to Muḥammad, but Abū Jahl made him change his attitude (al-Wāhidī, 250–1). Abū Jahl is said to have been involved in the boycott of Muḥammad’s clan of Hāshim and he was reportedly opposed to its eventual termination (Ibn Hishām, 2:16). Some reports maintain that the document of the boycott was kept with his aunt (Ibn Sa’d, 1:209). His enmity towards Muḥammad appears to have been rooted in traditional tensions within the Quraysh. In a candid confession attributed to him, he admits that Muḥammad is sincere but says that he cannot bear the idea that the clans of the Quṣayy—his own clan of Makhzūm was not one of them—should have all the sacred offices of the Ka‘ba as well as the honour of prophethood, leaving nothing to the rest of the Quraysh (al-Wāhidī, 123).

Some traditions describe the humility and frustration that occasionally overwhelmed Abū Jahl in Muḥammad's presence, which caused him to obey the Prophet on certain matters, to the astonishment of his tribesmen (Ibn Hishām, 2:28–30; al-Balādhurī, 1:147). He was especially overwhelmed with frustration due to the failure of an attempt on Muḥammad's life (Ibn Sa'd, 1:203). A relatively lenient aspect of his personality comes out in traditions in which his name occurs among leaders of Quraysh who reportedly tried to come to terms with the Anṣār on the eve of Muḥammad's *hijra*, with the intention of preventing, or at least postponing, Muḥammad's departure to Medina (Lecker, 161–3).

However, in most traditions, Abū Jahl figures as an energetic foe of Islam. The sources provide a handful of episodes in which he persecutes Muḥammad and abuses his prophetic message and the Qur'ānic admonitions about the Day of Judgement, etc., while stating his devotion to his own pagan religion and preventing others from becoming Muslims (e.g. al-Balādhurī, 1:141f.). He is even said to have forced his own uterine brother, 'Ayyāsh b. Abī Rabī'a to return to Mecca and not complete his *hijra* to Medina. When 'Ayyāsh returned to Mecca Abū Jahl arrested him, but eventually he managed to escape and join Muḥammad in Medina (Ibn Sa'd, 4:129). Many of the episodes are recorded in the *tafsīr* of various Qur'ānic verses (e.g. 6:26, 33, 52, 108, 122; 8:19; 9:113; 17:60; 20:2; 28:56; 38:5; 44:49; 74:11–26). The best-known Qur'ānic passage is perhaps 96:9–19, which deals with a person preventing a "servant" from praying. The commentators say that this passage was revealed after Abū Jahl had vowed to tread on Muḥammad's neck if he ever saw him prostrating himself.

Abū Jahl is the one who is said to have insisted that the Quraysh set out to the battle of Badr, against the advice of other Meccan leaders (al-Wāqidī, 1:43–4; Ibn Sa'd, 2:13), and to have forced Meccans to participate against their will (al-Wāqidī, 1:35–6). Such deeds earned for him the title "the pharaoh of this community," which Muḥammad reportedly called him (al-Balādhurī, 1:141). When informed of the death of Abū Jahl at Badr, Muḥammad reportedly fell prostrate in gratitude to God (Tottoli, 310–1). Several Companions took pride in having participated in the killing of Abū Jahl, namely Mu'adh b. 'Amr and one of the sons of 'Afrā' bt. 'Ubayd, who wounded him, and 'Abdallāh b. Mas'ūd, who finished him off (al-Wāqidī, 1:91; al-Balādhurī, 1:147).

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