

was broken by a powerful chief who was able to abrogate the will of the assembly and install himself as a tyrant. In such cases, power would be concentrated in this chief, and it was he who would designate the members of the assembly, collect taxes, declare war, etc. A powerful *amghar* could subordinate other chiefs and extend his rule over an increasingly expansive area. In such circumstances, he would abandon the title of *amghar* and instead take the more prestigious title of *caïd* (*qā'id*). The best examples are provided by the “lords” of the High Western Atlas in Morocco, whose emergence is described in detail by Robert Montagne. Currently, the *amghar* of the Berber-speaking tribes of Morocco designates a local representative to the Ministry of the Interior. The historical prestige accorded to the status of *amghar* has ended.

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## Āmina

**Āmina**, the mother of the prophet Muḥammad, was the daughter of Wahb b. 'Abd Manāf of the clan of Zuhra of the Quraysh and Barra bt. 'Abd al-'Uzzā of the clan of 'Abd al-Dār (Ibn Sa'd, 1:59). Her husband was 'Abdallāh b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, to whom she was married while

she was staying with her uncle Wuhayb b. 'Abd Manāf, who was her guardian (Ibn Sa'd, 1:94–5). Muslim tradition regards the marriage as part of a divine scheme: An old Yemenī scholar, well versed in the holy scriptures, reportedly recognised prophethood and kingdom in 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's nostrils and stated that one of them—prophethood—would be found in the clan of Zuhra. Accordingly, 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib married a woman of that clan (Hāla bt. Wuhayb), and took another one, namely Āmina, for his son 'Abdallāh (Ibn Sa'd, 1:86. For more versions see Rubin, 86).

The traditions about Āmina's pregnancy with Muḥammad revolve around the motif of the light of Muḥammad (*nūr Muḥammad*) that was seen blazing on 'Abdallāh's forehead, signaling the essence of Muḥammad hidden in his loins. It is related that 'Abdallāh's divine blaze attracted several women who knew what it meant and hoped to gain it, thus becoming the Prophet's mother. However, 'Abdallāh eventually entrusted it to Āmina, who conceived Muḥammad, and thereupon the light disappeared from 'Abdallāh's forehead. The transmission of the light to Āmina is described as a cosmic event that had extraordinary effects all over the world. During her pregnancy Āmina reportedly saw a vision in which she was informed of the identity of her child and was ordered to name him Muḥammad or Aḥmad. She also saw light coming out of her that lit up the palaces of Boṣrā (Bostra), in Syria. When she gave birth to Muḥammad she saw the same light coming out of her (Rubin, 83–9). Some reports maintain that the birth took place in the ravine (*shī'b*) of Abū Ṭālib (al-Kulaynī, 1:439; Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, 1:26).

Āmina is said to have died when Muḥammad was six, on her way back to Mecca from a visit with her son to his

kinsmen in Yathrib (= Medina). Her death occurred at al-Abwā’ and she was buried there. Muḥammad reportedly visited her grave during his journey to Mecca in the year of al-Ḥudaybiyya (6/628) (Ibn Sa’d, 1:116–7). Other reports maintain that her grave was in Shi’b Abī Dubb (al-Azraqī, 432), Mecca’s old burial ground. Still other reports say that she was buried in al-Rā’i’a (Yāqūt, 3:22). She reportedly died at the age of 20 (al-Suyūṭī, 225).

The story of Muḥammad’s visit to his mother’s grave is usually associated with Q 9:113: “It is not for the Prophet and the believers to ask pardon for the idolaters, even though they be near kinsmen, after that it has become clear to them that they will be the inhabitants of Hell.” This verse is said to have been revealed in response to Muḥammad’s prayer at his mother’s grave, in which he asked God to forgive her sins (al-Wāḥidī, 152). Muslim writers tried to diminish the impact of the notion that Muḥammad’s mother as well as his father had died as sinners deserving Hell. Some writers claimed that the Prophet’s parents belonged to *ahl al-fatra*, i.e., persons who died during an interval between two prophets (in their case, Jesus and Muḥammad). Because of this circumstance, they would have had no direct source of guidance and therefore would be given the chance to be tested in the next world; if they were to profess belief then, they would be saved from Hell. Other arguments were offered: that God brought Muḥammad’s parents back to life and they expressed their belief in him (al-Suhaylī, 1:194–5; al-Qurṭubī, 14–5); or that they had lived as adherents of the *ḥanīfiyya*, i.e., the monotheistic religion of Abraham. (For the various arguments see al-Suyūṭī, 225–43; Rubin, 75, n. 43.)

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#### al-‘Āmm wa-l-Khāṣṣ

‘Āmm and khāṣṣ, often translated as “general” and “specific,” respectively, are a key pair of technical terms in the Islamic and Arabic sciences. They are most intensively discussed in writings on Islamic legal hermeneutics (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), at the intersection of law (*fiqh*), theology (*kalām*), grammar (*nahw*), and Qur’ānic exegesis (*tafsīr*). Jurists used these terms to denote the breadth of application of legal rules (*ahkām*) by deeming expressions, particularly in the Qur’ān and *ḥadīth*, as either ‘āmm or khāṣṣ, in which case such expressions exhibit the qualities of generalness of reference (*‘umūm*) or specificity of reference (*khuṣūṣ*). These terms and cognates also occur frequently in non-specialised domains of writing (including in other Islamicate languages) to mean “general” and “specific,” “masses” and “elites,” and so on.

It is unclear in which field ‘āmm and khāṣṣ first emerged as technical terms. Both terms appear in early works of *tafsīr* in a loose technical sense and also as labels for Qur’ānic text types (Versteegh, 74–5,