



'ABDALLĀH B. MO'ĀVĪA

'ABDALLĀH B. MO'ĀVĪA B. 'ABDALLĀH B. JA'FAR AL-ṬAYYĀR B. ABŪ ṬĀLEB, a Talebid rebel in western Iran in 127-29/744-47. Of his birth and early life the sources tell us only that he was of noble H āšemī descent on both sides. His grandfather, 'Abdallāh b. Ja'far, a courtier of Mo'āvīa I, lost favor under 'Abd-al-Malek and died, apparently in straightened circumstances, in 80/699-700 at Medina. The grandson may have been born there about the same time. 'Abdallāh b. Mo'āvīa grew up to have a considerable reputation as a poet, and is the subject of a special chapter in *Aḡānī*. He appeared at Kūfa during the governorship of 'Abdallāh b. 'Omar b. 'Abd-al-'Azīz (from 126/744) "on a visit seeking (the governor's) bounty" (Ṭabarī, II, p. 1879; cf. *Aḡānī* XII, p. 226). The visit was not political, but perhaps connected rather with poetical or musical interests. Ebn Mo'āvīa, we are expressly told, had no intention of revolting; however, he was carried away by the course of events.

The Omayyad caliph Yazīd III b. al-Valīd died in Ḍu'l-ḥeǰǰa, 126/September, 744. News reached Iraq that allegiance had been pledged to Yazīd's brother, Ebrāhīm. This action was accepted by the governor and people of Iraq. Then came the further news that Marvān b. Moḥammad, for long the trusted general of the Omayyads, and grandson of Marvān I (but excluded from the succession because of his birth) had refused to give his allegiance and had marched to Syria to dethrone Ebrāhīm. This event led to confusion in Iraq; the Shi'ites of Kūfa, who were still smarting from their defeat when Zayd b. 'Alī had made a bid for the caliphate (122/740), now seized the opportunity to proclaim 'Abdallāh b. Mo'āvīa caliph. The latter, who had already been placed



under surveillance by the governor of Iraq, lent himself to the project (Moḥarram, 127/October-November, 744). He was soon joined by a numerous following, which included the Zaydīya of Kūfa, the Yamanī (South Arabian) chiefs, as well as many of the opposite faction, notably the Rabī‘a, and (now or later) important Kharijite elements. Some of the ‘Alid leaders preferred to dissociate themselves from the insurrectionary movement, which had appeared to unite all parties against the Syrians; they advised Ebn Mo‘āvīa to try his fortune in Fārs and the east.

After a short interval, Ebn Mo‘āvīa marched from Kūfa against ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Omar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, who was then in Ḥīra. In the ensuing battle, the insurgents were defeated in spite of their numbers; “the ground was white with the followers of ‘Abdallāh b. Mo‘āvīa,” says Ebn al-Aṭīr (repr., V, pp. 325-27). Ebn Mo‘āvīa took refuge in the castle of Kūfa and then withdrew to Madā‘en. But the rebellion was by no means over. With renewed support from Kūfa and fresh partisans, Ebn Mo‘āvīa passed eastward to the provinces of Jebāl and Fārs; in the course of the following year, most of western Iran submitted to him: Ḥolvān, Hamadān, Qūmes, Dāmḡān, Ray, Isfahan, Shiraz, Kermān, and Qom are mentioned as having done so. At Isfahan and later at Eṣṭaḡr, he set up an ephemeral court, from which he levied taxes and sent out governors. Such different personalities as the Omayyad Solaymān b. Hešām, the Kharijite Šaybān Yaškorī, and even, remarkably enough, the future caliph Abū Ja‘far Maṣū‘ and other ‘Abbasids were to be found there. When Eṣṭaḡr passed into the possession of one of his followers, Ebn Mo‘āvīa moved there, probably in late 128 or early 129; his first headquarters was a monastery (*dayr*) near the city. But soon he had to meet the challenge presented by the Omayyad general ‘Āmer b. Żobāra who had been sent by Ebn Hobayra, the new governor of Iraq. Having made contact with Marvān at Mosul, he now arrived with reinforcements to crush the rebellion. A battle was fought at Marv-al-šādān (locality uncertain). Ebn Mo‘āvīa was decisively defeated and his followers scattered; the principal men sought safety in such distant places as Sind, ‘Omān, and Egypt. He himself withdrew to Šīrāz, then took the road to Khorasan. Ebn Żobāra followed him as far as Jīroft in Kermān. Then he crossed the Great Desert with a few companions and finally reached Herat, where he and his brothers were interned. The famous letter in which ‘Abdallāh b. Mo‘āvīa appealed to Abū Moslem from prison is preserved in *Aḡānī*. Abū Moslem, who by this time had gained power in Khorasan, regarded Ebn Mo‘āvīa as dangerous and refused his appeal. He was killed in prison. Ebn al-Aṭīr mentions that his tomb in Herat was known and visited (V, p. 373).



Authors such as Nawbak̄tī and Šahrestānī speak of the religious view of ‘Abdallāh b. Mo‘āvīa and his followers, which, as reported, are very heretical. Šahrestānī says that he and his followers apparently upheld a doctrine of transmigration of souls. It was said by some that the testament of ‘Alī to Moḥammad b. al-Ḥanafīya had passed to ‘Abdallāh b. Mo‘āvīa, not to the ‘Abbasids. From these works and from remarks in historical narratives, it would appear that he was not, in any strict sense, a religious leader, though once he had accepted the imamate a religious role was imposed on him. As Ḍahabī puts it, he was “one of the men of the world and the sons of the present age” (*Ta’rīk al-eslām*, Cairo, 1367f./1948f., V, p. 97).

‘Abdallāh b. Mo‘āvīa appears as a personality with a strong popular appeal who was also capable of imposing his leadership on such men as Manšūr b. Jomhūr, a former governor of Iraq, and other important officials. At the same time, there is no special evidence of any political ability in his handling of a revolutionary situation, which, in Isfahan, seems to have been favorable; and he was defeated in all his battles. Support for ‘Abdallāh b. Mo‘āvīa’s movement by the Iranian *mawālī* is not specifically mentioned in the sources; but it is, perhaps, to be assumed.

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