



ABU'L-ḤASAN ŠAMSĀBĀDĪ

ABU'L-ḤASAN ŠAMSĀBĀDĪ, ĀYATALLĀH (1326-96/1908-76), an influential *mojtahed* of Isfahan who was murdered on 7 April 1976 under mysterious circumstances. Born into a family of religious scholars of Māzandarānī origin that had settled in Isfahan in the early 19th century, Šamsābādī received his preliminary education in Isfahan under the guidance of his father, Mīrzā Moḥammad Ebrāhīm, and Ḥājj Mollā Abu'l-Qāsem. At the age of twenty-five he went to Najaf, where he stayed for about twelve years, studying under the important scholars of the day, such as [Āyatallāh Abu'l-Ḥasan Ešfahānī](#), Shaikh Żiā'-al-dīn 'Erāqī, and Mīrzā 'Abd-al-Hādī Šīrāzī. After returning to Isfahan, he gradually established himself as one of the leading religious authorities of the city, functioning as a representative there first of Āyatallāh Ko'ī and then Āyatallāh Komeynī. On 7 April 1976, while on his way to the mosque, he was abducted by unknown assailants and soon after was found dead, strangled with his own turban.

His death occasioned a vast outpouring of grief in Isfahan, and the bazaar of the city was closed in protest. The official press sought to connect his murder with an alleged controversy over a book that had been published shortly before the event, *Šahīd-e jāvid* by Shaikh Ne'matallāh Najafābādī. According to *Keyhān* (25 Ordībehešt 1355/15 May 1976), Najafābādī offered a novel interpretation of the struggle of Imam Ḥosayn against the Omayyads; he claimed that the Imam was motivated by political ambitions of a personal nature and his death in battle did not, therefore, constitute a martyrdom. Šamsābādī supposedly denounced this heretical view and was murdered as an



act of vengeance by the partisans of Najafābādī. This explanation failed to win credence, above all because the contents of *Šahīd-e jāvid* differ completely from the summary given in *Keyhān*; the book glorifies the uprising of Imam Ḥosayn as a model for Muslims to follow in the present age (see especially pp. 12-13), and it was in fact banned soon after its publication. In addition, Šamsābādī was known to have denounced, shortly before his death, the substitution of the “imperial” for the Islamic solar calendar, and suspicions of government responsibility for his murder was widespread. These suspicions were not lessened by the arrest of Sayyed Maḥdī Hāšemī, a figure well-known in the Isfahan region in the religious opposition to the shah, who, together with five associates, was charged with the murder of Šamsābādī. Despite the absence of credible evidence, he was convicted and condemned to death, although this sentence was later commuted. The trial of Hāšemī and his group may well have been intended to produce dissension in the ranks of the Islamic movement by presenting one religious leader as guilty of murdering another. It remains finally to be said that Āyatallāh Kādemī, an associate of Šamsābādī, still regards the case as unsolved and does not hold SAVAK responsible (personal interview, Isfahan, 18 December 1979).

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