



ĀL-E 'ABĀ

ĀL-E 'ABĀ, “The Family of the Cloak,” i.e., the Prophet Moḥammad, his daughter Fāṭema, his cousin and son-in-law 'Alī, and his grandsons Ḥasan and Ḥosayn. The designation is generally held to derive from an incident recorded in both Sunni and Shi'ite books of Tradition: Wearing a striped cloak of black camelhair, the Prophet went out one day and encountered first Ḥasan, then Ḥosayn, then Fāṭema, and finally 'Alī. He took each in turn under his cloak, and when all were gathered beneath it, the Koranic verse 33:33 was revealed to him: “God wishes only to remove taint from you, people of the Household, and to make you utterly pure” (see, for example, *Ṣaḥīḥ Moslem*, English tr. by A. H. Siddiqui, Lahore, 1975, IV, pp. 1293-94). The context in which this fragment of revelation was placed relates in general to the wives of the Prophet, but Shi'ite commentators are unanimous in taking the incident of the cloak as proof that the expression, “People of the Household,” includes only 'Alī, Fāṭema, and their descendants (see S. M. Ḥ. Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *al-Mizān fī tafsīr al-Qor'ān*, Beirut, 1393/1973, XVI, p. 311). Sometimes the designation, “the Family of the Cloak,” is also connected with the *mobāhala*, the occasion on which the Prophet challenged a delegation of Christians from Najrān to invoke God's curses on whichever of the two parties present—Muslim and Christian—erred in its doctrine concerning Jesus (Qur'ān 3:61), for then, too, the Prophet was accompanied by 'Alī, Fāṭema, Ḥasan and Ḥosayn (see L. Massignon, *La Mubahala de Médine et l'hyperdulie de Fatima*, Paris, 1935; idem, “Mubāhala,” *ET*¹, supplement, p. 150). The incident of the cloak later came to serve as archetype for initiatic investiture with a cloak in Sufism. According to S. H. Nasr (*Sufi Essays*, London, 1972, p. 109), it signified “the transmission of



universal *walāyah* [sainthood] of the Prophet in the form of the partial *walāyah* to Fāṭimah.”

Finally, the following Hadith recorded by Ṭabarānī may be noted: “I, ‘Alī, Fāṭema, Ḥasan, and Ḥosayn will be gathered in a single dome close to the divine throne” (quoted in Moṣṭafā Kamāl-al-dīn Bakrī, *al-Ṣalawāt al-hāme‘a*, ed. A. Fikri Yavuz, Istanbul, 1967, p. 290). In the light of this Hadith, the incident of the cloak may be seen as a terrestrial anticipation of the gathering beneath the dome.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Given in the text.