



'ALĪ AL-HĀDĪ

'ALĪ AL-HĀDĪ, ABU'L-ḤASAN, B. MOḤAMMAD B. 'ALĪ B. MŪSĀ AL-'ASKARĪ, the 10th imam of the Emāmī Shi'ites (d. 254/868). Besides Hādī, his most common epithet is Naqī; in Shi'ite sources he is often referred to as Abu'l-Ḥasan al-Ṭāleṭ. He was born, according to the best authenticated report, on 16 Du'l-ḥejja 212/7 March 828 in Ṣorayyā (?), a village three miles from Medina founded by his great-grandfather, Mūsā al-Kāzem. Other dates given for his birth are in Raġab or Du'l-ḥejja, 213 or 214/September, 828/January, 830. His mother was a concubine named Samāna or Sūsan, probably of Maġrebī origin. When his father, Imam Moḥammad al-Jawād, died in Baghdad on 6 Du'l-ḥejja 220/30 November 835, he was still a minor. According to his father's will, he was to receive his estates, property, and slaves after reaching majority to the exclusion of his brother Mūsā. The followers of his father generally recognized him as imam. Later a small group broke away under unexplained circumstances, claiming that Mūsā was the imam; they soon returned to allegiance to 'Alī, since Mūsā dissociated himself from them. After the accession of Motawakkel (r. 232-47/847-61) to the caliphate, the governor of Medina, 'Abdallāh b. Moḥammad b. Dā'ūd Hāšemī, wrote the caliph, warning about the activity of 'Alī and his followers. The imam in turn sent a letter to Motawakkel defending himself against the accusations and complaining about the governor. Motawakkel replaced the governor and, in a letter, assured 'Alī of his highest regard and trust but requested that he move to the caliph's residence, together with those members of his family, clients, and servants whom he might wish to bring along. He sent Yaḥyā b. Harṭama b. A'yan to Medina to provide the imam with a military escort. Motawakkel's letter as



quoted by Kolaynī and Shaikh Mofīd may well be authentic, though its date was evidently wrongly transmitted to Mofīd as Jomādā II, 243/October, 857, instead of 233/January, 848. When the imam reached Baghdad, many people gathered to see him, and the governor, the Taherid Eshāq b. Ebrāhīm, rode out to meet him and stayed with him for part of the night. He arrived in Sāmarrā’ on 23 Ramazān 233/1 May 848. The caliph did not immediately receive him but, on the next day, assigned a house for his residence. The imam remained in Sāmarrā’ for the rest of his life; he is quoted as stating that he had come there involuntarily but would leave only against his will, since he preferred the quality of its air and water. Though under constant observation, he was free to move in the town and shared in the life of high society. He was evidently able to maintain contact with his representatives among his followers, sending them his instructions and receiving through them the financial contributions of the faithful from the *ḵoms* and religious vows. He later bought several houses in Sāmarrā’. According to Ṭabarī and Kolaynī, he died on 26 Jomādā II 254/21 June 868. Other dates mentioned in the sources fall within Jomāda II and Raġab 254/June-July, 868. The caliph Mo’tazz sent his brother Abū Aḥmad Mowaffaq to lead the funeral prayer for him. When large crowds gathered to lament him, his corpse was returned to his house, which he had bought from the Christian Dolayl b. Ya’qūb, and was buried there. His son Abū Ja’far Moḥammad, who had originally been expected to succeed him in the imamate, had died before him in Sāmarrā’. Two other sons survived him—Ḥasan, who became his successor, and Ja’far.

Emāmī tradition relates many miracles of Imam ‘Alī al-Hādī; he is described in particular as endowed with the knowledge of the languages of the Persians, Slavs, Indians, and Nabateans, as foreknowing unexpected storms and as accurately prophesying deaths and other events. Thus he is reported to have cursed Motawakkel and to have correctly predicted his death within three days after the caliph had either humiliated him (by ordering him, together with other Hashimites and dignitaries, to dismount and walk in front of himself and Fath b. Ḳaḡān) or had imprisoned him. In the presence of Motawakkel, he unmasked a woman falsely claiming to be Zaynab, the daughter of Imam Ḥosayn, by descending into a lions’ den in order to prove that lions do not harm true descendants of ‘Alī (a like miracle is also attributed to his grandfather ‘Alī al-Rezā). He brought a lion pictured on a carpet to life and made it swallow an Indian juggler who had, on the order of Motawakkel, tried to put him to shame by his tricks; and he turned a handful of sand and stones into gold for a needy follower. According to Ebn Bābūya, he was



poisoned by Motawakkel or Mo'tamed (r. 256-79/870-92), neither of whom, however, was caliph at the time of the death of the Imam. A theological treatise on human free will and some other short texts and statements ascribed to him are quoted by Ebn Šo'ba Ḥarrānī (*Toḥaf al-'oqūl*, Beirut, 1389/1969, pp. 338-58).

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