



‘ALĪ B. ḤOSAYN B. ‘ALĪ B. ABĪ ṬĀLEB

‘ALĪ B. AL-ḤOSAYN B. ‘ALĪ B. ABĪ ṬĀLEB, ZAYN-AL-‘ĀBEDĪN, the fourth Imam of the Emāmī Shi‘ites. His *konyas* are given as Abu’l-Ḥasan, Abu’l-Ḥosayn, Abū Moḥammad, Abū Bakr, and Abū ‘Abdallāh. According to most sources, he was born in 38/658-59 in Medina. Other dates mentioned are 33/653-54, 36/656-57, 37/657-58, and 50/670. His mother was a slave variously named Ġazāla, Solāfa, Salāma, Šāhzanān, Šāhbānūya, and otherwise. According to reports of a legendary character, she was a daughter of Yazdegerd, the last Sasanian king of Persia, captured in the Arab conquest; ‘Alī was thus considered “the son of the two elect” (*ebn al-kīaratayn*) among the Arabs and the Persians. This descent is commonly accepted by Shi‘ite tradition but is not confirmed by the early sources and is rejected by some of the genealogists. According to Ebn Qotayba, his mother was said to be from Sind. ‘Alī was present at the massacre of his family at Karbalā’ in 61/680 but did not participate in the fighting, since he was ill, and thus survived the battle. In order to distinguish him from an elder brother also named ‘Alī, who was killed, he is referred to as ‘Alī Ašġar, though some Shi‘ite sources maintain that he was the elder ‘Alī (‘Alī Akbar). Occasionally he is called ‘Alī Awsaṭ in order to distinguish him from an infant brother, ‘Alī or ‘Abdallāh, who was also killed. According to the battle accounts, Šamer b. Ḍi’l-ĵawšan wanted to kill him despite his illness but was prevented by others, including ‘Omar b. Sa’d. When he was led as a prisoner before ‘Obaydallāh b. Zīād in Kūfa, the latter ordered his execution but left him alive at the entreaty of his aunt, Zaynab. He was sent with the women to Damascus,



where the caliph Yazīd gave him the choice of staying at the court or returning to Medina with a gift of money; he chose the latter. In later life he avoided any involvement in seditious activity and tried to maintain good relations with the Omayyad caliphs. During the rebellion of Medina in 63/683 he sent a letter to Yazīd assuring him of his loyalty and sheltered the wife and movable property of the Omayyad Marwān, with whom he had a friendship pre-dating their departure for Ṭā’ef. He himself left Medina and stayed on an estate nearby. After the conquest of Medina, he was received and honored by Yazīd’s commander, Moslem b. ‘Oqba, at the specific instruction of the caliph. In 62/684 he received Ḥosayn b. Nomayr, the successor of Moslem b. ‘Oqba, on his return from Mecca and provided him with fodder for his horse at a time when ‘Abdallāh b. Zobayr was already widely acclaimed as the new caliph. He never pledged allegiance to the latter, though he evidently maintained some relations with the Zobayr party. He personally conveyed his sister, Sokayna, to her marriage with Moṣ’ab b. Zobayr, ‘Abdallāh’s brother and viceroy of Iraq; and at that time he received a gift of 40,000 dinars from him. His relations with Moḳtār, the Shi’ite rebel in Kūfa, were cautious. It is unlikely that (as some sources state) the latter originally offered to put his movement under the auspices of ‘Alī b. Ḥosayn, rather than of his uncle Moḥammad b. Ḥanafīya, or that he sent the head of ‘Omar b. Sa’d to him, rather than to his uncle. Moḳtār is said to have presented him with an expensive slave girl, who became the mother of his son Zayd, and with a gift of 100,000 dirhams. After the death of Moḳtār ‘Alī wrote the caliph ‘Abd-al-Malek, offering him the sum and stating that he had neither wanted to use it nor dared to return it. The caliph persuaded him to keep the money. It is equally improbable that he publicly cursed Moḳtār in the Ka’ba, at least during the latter’s lifetime, as reported in some sources. Later he is said to have aroused the jealousy of the Omayyad prince Heṣām, before his caliphate, when the pilgrims in Mecca paid more respect to the ‘Alid than to him. On this occasion Farazdaq improvised his famous eulogy of ‘Alī b. Ḥosayn widely reported in the sources. However, most or all of the poem ascribed to Farazdaq in varying versions has been judged inauthentic (see J. Hell, “Al-Farazdaq’s Loblied auf ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusain,” *Festschrift Eduard Sachau*, Berlin, 1915, pp. 368-74; J. Weiss in *Der Islam* VII, 1917, pp. 126ff.). In Sunnite collections of Hadith ‘Alī b. Ḥosayn appears as a transmitter from ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Abbās, his uncle Ḥasan, his father, ‘Amr b. ‘Oṭmān, and others. The chief transmitter from him was Zohrī, who is said to have described him as the most excellent of the Hashimites. He was involved in a dispute with his cousin Ḥasan b. Ḥasan about the administration of the *ṣadaqāt* of ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭāleb but soon agreed to leave it to the Hasanid;



nevertheless Imamite sources maintain that he became the administrator of 'Alī's *ṣadaqāt*. The date of his death is most often given as 94/712-13 or 95/713-14; other dates mentioned are 92/710-11, 93/711-12, 99/717-18 and 100/718-19. He was buried next to his uncle, Ḥasan, in the cemetery of Baqī' in Medina. He had four sons from his wife, Omm 'Abdallāh b. Ḥasan b. 'Alī, and numerous children from concubines.

In Shi'ite hagiography Imam 'Alī b. Ḥosayn appears in particular as the perfect worshipper. Like his grandfather 'Alī, he prayed 1,000 *rak'as* every day and night. During the month of Ramaẓān, he would utter nothing but prayer, imploring God's forgiveness and glorifying and magnifying him. His constant prostration in worship earned him his honorifics Sajjād, Zayn-al-'ābedīn, and Du'l-tāfenāt, the latter referring to the seven calluses which every year formed on, and fell off, his skin in the sports touching the ground in prostration. He was also of matchless generosity in giving alms and presents to the poor. Thus he permanently provided 100 families in Medina with their sustenance. Every night he went out with a sack of food on his back, knocking at the doors of the indigent, and gave freely to whoever answered while covering his face in order not to be recognized. Thus he was held to be stingy during his lifetime, and only after his death did many people find out that their livelihood had come from him. Among the miracles he worked were: the speaking of the Black Stone of the Ka'ba in favor of his claim to the imamate in the presence of his rival Moḥammad b. Ḥanafiya, his conversing with a gazelle in the desert, and his restoring youth to a 113-year-old woman. Shi'ite tradition ascribes to him, besides some devotional poetry and short texts, a collection of prayers for various occasions known as *al-Ṣaḥīfat al-kāmela*, which enjoyed great popularity, especially in the Safavid period, when it was translated into Persian and received numerous commentaries. Several supplements to the original collection have been gathered by late scholars. A *Resālat al-ḥoqūq*, on the rights of God upon man, also ascribed to him, is reproduced in two versions in Ebn Bābūya's *Ketāb al-keṣāl* and Ebn Šo'ba's *Toḥaf al-oqūl*. Some Shi'ite sources assert that his death was due to poisoning by the caliph Walīd or by Heṣām b. 'Abd-al-Malek.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ebn Sa’d, V, pp. 156-64.

Ebn Qotayba, *al-Ma’āref*, ed. Ṭ. ‘Okāša, Cairo, 1960, pp. 214ff.

Balāḍorī, *Ansāb al-ašrāf* IV/2, ed. M. Schloessinger, Jerusalem, 1938, pp. 34, 39.

Ya‘qūbī, *Ta’rīk*, pp. 363-66 and index.

Mobarrad, *al-Kāmel*, ed. M. A. Ebrāhīm, and S. Šaḥḥāta, Cairo, 1968, II, pp. 120ff. and index.

Ṭabarī, index.

Mas‘ūdī, *Morūj*, index.

Abu’l-Faraǰ, *Aǧānī*; see *Guidi, Tables*, p. 496.

Mofīd, *al-Eršād*, ed. K. Mūsawī Mīāmavī, Tehran, 1377/1957-58, pp. 237-44.

Abū No‘aym, *Ḥelyat al-awlīā’*, Cairo, 1351-57/1932-38, III, pp. 133-45.

Ṭabresī, *E’lām al-warā*, Najaf, 1390/1970, pp. 256-64.

Ebn al-Jawzī, *Šefat al-šafwa*, Hyderabad, 1355-56/1936-37, II, pp. 52-57.

Ebn Ḳallekān (Beirut) III, pp. 266-69.

Ḍahabī, *Ta’rīk al-Eslām*, Cairo, 1367-/1947-, IV, pp. 34-39.

Ebn Kaṭīr, *al-Bedāya wa’l-nehāya*, Cairo, 1351-58/1932-39, IX, pp. 103-15.

Ebn ‘Enaba, *‘Omdat al-ṭāleb*, ed. M. Ḥ. Āl Ṭālaqānī, Najaf, 1380/1961, pp. 99, 192-94.

Ebn Ḥaǰar, *Tahḍīb al-tahḍīb*, Hyderabad 1325-27/1907-09, VII, pp. 304-07.

Edrīs Qorašī, *‘Oyūn al-aḳbār* IV, ed. M. Ġāleb, Beirut, 1973, pp. 142-79, 109-11.

Majlesī, *Behār al-anwār*, Tehran, 1956-, XLVI, pp. 2-209.



D. M. Donaldson, *The Shiite Religion*, London, 1933, pp. 101-11.

A'yān al-šī'a IV/1, pp. 308-461. Sezgin, *GAS* I, pp. 526-28.

W. Chittick, *A Shi'ite Anthology*, Albany, 1980, pp. 113-22 (tr. of two prayers from *al-Saḥīfat al-kāmela*).