



AMAL AL-ĀMEL

AMAL AL-ĀMEL FĪ ‘OLAMĀ’ JABAL ‘ĀMEL, biographical dictionary of Shi‘ite (Etnā‘ašarī) scholars originating from the Jabal ‘Āmel in south Lebanon, composed by Moḥammad b. Ḥasan b. ‘Alī Mašġarī, known as Ḥorr-e ‘Āmelī (1033-1104/1624-1693). The author was born at Mašġar in the Jabal ‘Āmel, where he studied with his father and several other relatives. By about the age of forty he had exchanged a precarious status as a member of an ill-regarded minority in the Ottoman empire for a new life in Safavid Persia, which offered itself as a natural ally to all Etnā‘ašarīs outside its borders. In 1073/1663 he settled in Mašhad and functioned there as the *šayk-al-eslām* of the sanctuary of ‘Alī al-Rezā, but in spite of his scholarly reputation he remained a foreigner; when he was presented to Shah Solaymān (1077-1105/1667-94) by his colleague Moḥammad-Bāqer Maġlesī (1037-1110/1627-99), he seems to have left the impression of a certain rusticity. This may have been the deeper reason why at the end of his life, taking up a suggestion that had come to him in a dream shortly after his arrival at Mašhad, he undertook to demonstrate the intellectual heritage of his native land through the biographies of its scholars. He says explicitly that he seeks to show the antiquity and importance of Shi‘ite culture in the Jabal ‘Āmel; in this respect, and in view of the constant influx of ‘Āmelī scholars into Safavid Persia, he intends to supplement older—and purely “eastern”—*reġāl* works, the last of which had been *Manhaġ al-maqāl* by Mīrzā Moḥammad b. ‘Alī Astarābādī (d. 1027/1618).

It has always been noted that, in its present form, the book does not entirely correspond to the program expressed in the title. Only the first part deals with



the Jabal 'Āmel; it contains more than 200 biographers of 'olamā' and rowāt originating from this region. Among them, no less than twenty six names belong to the closer family of the author himself. But he resists the temptation to make extensive propaganda *pro domo*: The biographies of his father (no. 52) and his grandfather (no. 138) are surprisingly short. In his autobiography (no. 154) he is equally sparing of detailed information, but he gives a list of his books and reproduces much of his poetry. Part II was originally destined to have a different title: *Taḍkerat al-motabaḥḥerīn fi 'olamā' al-mota'aḳkerīn*. Its intention differs accordingly; it is conceived as a short manual calling to mind the names of Shi'ite scholars who lived after the time of the Šayk-al-ṭā'efa, Moḥammad Ṭūsī (d. 459/1067), down to Ḥorr-e 'Āmelī's own days. It comprises more than 1,000 biographies, many of which are short and incomplete as to dates. The author frequently quotes, under the name Montaḳab-al-dīn, the famous *Fehrest* of Montaḳab-al-dīn 'Alī b. Bābūya Qomī (d. after 585/1189; cf. the text in the last volume of Maḳlesī's *Beḥār al-anwār*). Although he pretends to have included all the material found in this work, this is evidently not the case.

The author does little to explain the strange discrepancy of the two parts. He may have originally planned to write two books. But at least in the stage of actual composition, he must have decided to put them together; for we hear that he started writing the first part in 1096 (cf. biography no. 205), whereas the entire work was already finished one year later. A note in the manuscript of Naḳaf, Āyatallāh 245, says that it is based on the fourth copy of the third *moswadda* which was finished in early Ša'bān, 1097/late June, 1686. The author's autograph copy was—and still is?—in the possession of Ḥorr-e 'Āmelī's descendants in south Lebanon. There are two lithograph editions (Tehran, 1302/1884-85, together with the *Montaha 'l-maqāl* by Moḥammad b. Esmā'īl Ḥā'erī; and Tehran, 1304/1886-87, together with the *Manḥaḳ al-maqāl* by Astarābādī) and a printed edition in two volumes, Naḳaf, 1385/1965.

Like many other biographical works the *Amal al-āmel* found numerous continuations and supplements (cf. *al-Ḍarī'a* III, pp. 337f., no. 1222-25; IV, p. 411, no. 1812; *Amal al-āmel*, intro., I, pp. 59f.). Among them, the *Tatmīm Amal al-āmel* by Moḥammad b. 'Alī b. Ebrāhīm Baḥrānī (second half of the 12th/18th century) also included the poets and the scholars of Bahrain, from where that author stemmed. The most recent continuation is the *Takmelat Amal al-āmel* by Šadr-al-dīn Ḥasan 'Āmelī (d. 1354/1935).



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