



DU'L-FAQĀR

DU'L-FAQĀR (lit., “provided with notches, grooves, vertebrae”), the “miraculous sword” of Imam ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭāleb, with two blades or points, which became a symbol of his courage on the battlefield. According to some sources, it was taken as booty at the battle of Badr (2/624) by the Prophet Moḥammad, who gave it to ‘Alī at the battle of Oḥod (3/625). A voice is supposed to have recited *lā sayf ellā Du'l-Faqār wa lā fatā ellā ‘Alī* (There is no sword but Du'l-Faqār, and there is no one brave but ‘Alī; Ṭabarī, I/3, pp. 1359, 1402; in the Shi‘ite tradition *lā fatā ...* comes first; Bal‘amī, ed. Rowšan, III, p. 169; Dehḳodā, s.v. Du'l-Faqār; cf. Dozy, II, s.v. *faqara*; both versions of this formula became popular as inscriptions on swords throughout the Islamic world; Mittwoch).

Some early Shi‘ites believed that Du'l-Faqār was brought down from heaven by the archangel Gabriel and given, together with other relics of the Prophet, as a sign to the imams (Kolaynī, I, pp. 337 ff.; cf. Donaldson, pp. 82-83). It supposedly bore the inscription *wa lā yoqtal Moslem be-kāfer* (no Muslim shall be slain by an unbeliever; Ebn Sa‘d, apud Mittwoch; 1960, p. 486; cf. Moosa, pp. 186-87, 365). On the day of resurrection ‘Alī is supposed to wield the apocalyptic Du'l-Faqār (Ayoub, p. 229).

In *Omm al-keṭāb* it is claimed that Du'l-Faqār was imbued with spiritual power by God’s command, according to sayings attributed to the fifth imam, Moḥammad al-Bāqer (d. ca. 117/735; cf. Moosa, p. 72). Later it was supposedly in the possession of Imam ‘Alī al-Rezā (d. 203/818; Kolaynī, I, pp. 339-40) and was said eventually to have fallen into the hands of the ‘Abbasids (Mittwoch). The sword also figured in the beliefs of the **Ahl-e Ḥaqq** of western Persia



(Moosa, p. 207), where it represented the angel Moṣṭafā, incarnation of divine fury (Mokri, p. 378; tr., p. 132; for beliefs about Du'l-Faqār in other Shi'ite sects, see Moosa, pp. 71, 337-38).

Du'l-Faqār became the most prominent 'Alid symbol and is omnipresent in Shi'ite rituals. In Turkish and Persian *maqtal-nāmas* (martyrdom narratives), down to Ḥosayn Wā'ez Kāšefī's 16th-century *Rawzat al-šohadā'*, Imam Ḥosayn carries it in his hand at the battle of Karbalā' (Calmard, pp. 226, 528). The "avenger" of Ḥosayn's blood, Moḥammad b. Ḥanafiya, also fights with it (Calmard, p. 264). 'Alī (Ḥaydar-e Karrār "the impetuous lion") and Du'l-Faqār were often celebrated in Persian classical poetry by Šahīd Balkī, Farrokī, Manučeḥrī, Nāšer-e Kōsrow, Mas'ūd-e Sa'd, Sūzanī, Kāqānī, and others (Deḥkōdā, s.vv.), as well as in Sunni, Shi'ite, and especially Sufi devotional poetry. In the 13th century Jalāl-al-Dīn Moḥammad Rūmī portrayed Du'l-Faqār as the incarnation of al-Ḥaqq (lit., "divine truth," in a Sufi context referring to God; Moosa, p. 71). Shah Esmā'īl I "Kaṭā'ī," (907-30/1501-24), in his Azeri Turkish *Dīvān*, also claimed to carry it as a sign (Calmard, p. 480).

Although it was used particularly for finials on banners and standards in Safavid and Qajar Persia, Du'l-Faqār seems to have been more popular in Ottoman and Mughal domains. This impression may result partly from the fact that in the Persian lion-and-sun emblem the lion, symbolizing 'Alī, generally does not wield a two-bladed sword (Malcolm, pp. 565-66; cf. Jamālzāda; Nayyer Nūrī; Dōkā'). Double-bladed or double-pointed swords were represented on coins, however. There are also representations with notched, undulating two-edged blades and a small double point (Dōkā', 1344 Š./1965, pp. 21-22, figs. 17, 19; cf. *Survey of Persian Art*, pl. 1423E). In the hierarchy of the *fotowwa* (lit., "brotherhoods"), the Persian origin of which has now been demonstrated (Baldick), Du'l-Faqār was the emblem of the intermediate level, "those of the sword" (Šrarrāf, p. 108; cf. Baldick, p. 351). Images of the double-pointed sword on banners carried among the *marāteb* ("dignities") in Moḥarram processions in India are called *barzakī* or *qodratī*, perhaps reflecting Savafid usage (Šarīf, pp. 160-61, fig. 11: a pair of scissors). The main banner of the Qoṭbšāhīs of Golconda (901-1098/1496-1697) was provided with two large "arms" representing 'Alī's sword (Greenfield, p. 269).

As 'Alī and his family are venerated by most Muslims, representations of Du'l-Faqār are common in both official and popular iconography. In Sufi letter symbolism the *lām-alef*, considered a single letter, is often compared to a sword (or to scissors) and particularly to Du'l-Faqār (Schimmel, p. 419; for



other types of imagery, cf. Lassy, p. 214; see Figure 28 and Figure 29, below). In popular Turkish iconography the letter *yā* in 'Alī's name is often extended to form a two-bladed sword (Aksel, pp. 49, 61, 124-25). *Ḍu'l-Faqār* was also abundantly represented in 17th-century Mughal miniature paintings (Titley, index, s.v. *Ḍū'l-faḳār*).

In Islamic folklore *Ḍu'l-Faqār* is connected with magic, and from as early as Fatimid times there have been many legends about its miraculous origin and its two blades or points, effective against the evil eye or any enemy (Zawadowski, p. 37). The image of 'Alī and *Ḍu'l-Faqār* was popular on amulets accompanied by the koranic verses used against the evil eye (68:51-52; Donaldson, pp. 130-31, 240). Many mountain passes are said to have been cut by 'Alī's magic sword, and some actually bear the name *Ḍu'l-Faqār*, particularly those near Torbat-e Jām, Tang-e Šamšīrbor, Fīrūzkūh, and Ṭāq-e 'Alī near Kermān (Massé, *Croyances* II, p. 411; Dehḳodā, s.v.). Warm springs near Mašhad are also said to be the result of such a stroke. Whenever 'Alī drew *Ḍu'l-Faqār* the mountain of Qāf is supposed to have trembled (Donaldson, pp. 90, 150; cf. Moosa, p. 71).

Ḍu'l-Faqār also became a widely used *laqab* (honorific), often attached to another title ("beg," "khan," "pasha," "sultan," etc.).

Figure 28. The name 'Alī written twice, in mirror image, topped by a crown (ṭāj) and interlaced at the bottom with a pair of double-bladed swords. Turkish, influenced by letter symbolism propagated by the Persian and Turkish Ḥorūfīya sect. The inscription reads *lā fatā ellā 'Alī, lā sayf ellā Ḍu'l-Faqār*. (Drawing by Jacqueline Calmard after Aksel, p. 108.)

Figure 29. The invocation *yā 'Alī*, with reference to 'Alī also in the human-faced lion and the double-bladed sword. Turkish, influenced by letter symbolism propagated by the Persian and Turkish Ḥorūfīya sect. (Drawing by Jacqueline Calmard after Aksel, p. 88.)



BIBLIOGRAPHY

(For cited works not found in this bibliography and abbreviations found here, see “Short References.”)

M. Aksel, *Türklerde dinî resimler*, Istanbul, 1967.

M. Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering in Islam*, the Hague, 1978.

J. Baldick, “The Iranian Origin of the Futuwwa,” *AIUON* 50/4, 1990, pp. 345-61.

J. Calmard, *Le culte de l’Imām Ḥusayn. Étude sur la commémoration du drame de Karbalā dans l’Iran pré-safavide*, Ph.D. diss., Université de Paris III (Sorbonne), 1975.

Y. Dokā’, “Tārīkča-ye tağyīrāt wa taḥawollāt-e derafš wa ‘alāmat-e dawlat-e Īrān ...,” *Honar o mardom* 31, 1344 Š./1965, pp. 13-24; 32-33, 1344 Š./1965, pp. 21-38.

B. A. Donaldson, *The Wild Rue*, London, 1938.

R. Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes*, 2nd ed., II, Leiden and Paris, 1927. Ebn Sa’d, *Ṭabaqāt* I, Beirut, 1960, p. 486.

K. Greenfield, “Shia Standards of Hyderabad,” *The Moslem World* 27, 1937, pp. 269-72.

M.-‘A. Jamālzāda, “Beyraqhā-ye Īrān dar ‘ahd-e Şafawīya,” *Honar o mardom* 39-40, 1344 Š./1965, pp. 10-13.

T. W. Juynboll [P.Voorhoeve], “Atjèh,” in *EI*² I, pp. 739-43.

Abū Ja‘far Moḥammad Kolaynī, *Oṣūl al-kāfi*, ed. and tr. Ḥ. S. J. Moṣṭafawī, 4 vols. in 2, Tehran, n.d.

R. Kriss and H. Kriss-Heinrich, *Volks Glaube im Bereich des Islam* II, Wiesbaden, 1962.

I. Lassy, *Persiska mysterier*, Helsingfors, 1917. J. Malcolm, *History of Persia* II, London, 1815.



- E. Mittwoch, “Dhū’l-Faḡār,” in *EI*² II, p. 233.
- M. Mokri, ed. and tr., *La grande assemblée des fidèles de vérité au tribunal sur le mont Zagros en Iran. Dawra-ī dīwānā-gawra*, Paris, 1977.
- M. Moosa, *Extremist Shiites. The Ghulat Sects*, Syracuse, N.Y., 1987.
- Ḥ. Nayyer Nūrī, “Dayl-ī bar selsela-ye maqālāt ...,” *Honar o mardom* 77-78, 1345-48 Š./1966-69, pp. 61-74.
- A. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, Chapel Hill, N.C., 1978.
- J. Šarīf, *Qānūn-e Eslām*, tr. G. A. Herklots as *Islam in India*, 2nd ed., London, 1921; repr. London, 1972.
- M. Šarrāf, *Rasā’el-e javānmardān*, Tehran and Paris, 1352 Š./1973.
- N. Titley, *Miniatures from Persian Manuscripts*, London, 1977.
- Ḥosayn Wā’eẓ Kāšefī, *Rawzat al-šohadā’ ...*, ed. M. Ramazānī, Tehran, 1344/1955.
- G. Zawadowski, “Note sur l’origine magique du Dhoû-l-faḡâr,” in *En terre d’Islam* (Lyons), 3ème sêr. 21, 1943/1, pp. 36-40.

(JEAN CALMARD)

Figure 28. The name ‘Alī written twice, in mirror image, topped by a crown (ṭāj) and interlaced at the bottom with a pair of double-bladed swords. Turkish, influenced by letter symbolism propagated by the Persian and Turkish Ḥorūfiya sect. The inscription reads lā fatā ellā ‘Alī, lā sayf ellā Du’l-Faḡār. (Drawing by Jacqueline Calmard after Aksel, p. 108.)

Figure 29. The invocation yā ‘Alī, with reference to ‘Alī also in the human-faced lion and the double-bladed sword. Turkish, influenced by letter symbolism propagated by the Persian and Turkish Ḥorūfiya sect. (Drawing by Jacqueline Calmard after Aksel, p. 88.)