



EBN AŠTAR

EBN AŠTAR, the name usually given to Abu No‘mān Ebrāhim b. Mālek al-Aštar b. al-Hāreṭ al-Naḳa‘i (i.e., of al-Naḳa‘, a branch of the South Arabian Maḏḩej tribal group), Arab chief and Shi‘ite military leader (d. at Maskin on the Tigris, in Jomādā I 72/September-October 691). His father Mālek Aštar was ‘Ali’s general at Šeffin in 37/657, at which battle Ebn al-Aštar is said to have been present. If so, he can only have been a small boy then, for he is described as a young man (*fatā ḩadat*, *ḩadat*) nearly 30 years later. Ebn al-Aštar’s prominence is due to his association with Moḳtār, and his active career is confined to a few years subsequent to the death of al-ḩosayn b. ‘Ali (61/680). He was head of the latter’s partisans in Kufa (al-ḩosayniya). But al-Moḳtār, apparently in 66/685, was able to secure his support by means of an apparently fraudulent letter from Moḩammad b. al-ḩanafiya, and with his help became for a time master of Kufa. Probably Ebn al-Aštar’s greatest exploit was his defeat, on 10 Moḩarram 67/6 August 686, of a numerically superior Umayyad army advancing from Syria to crush Moḳtār. His troops on this occasion consisted largely of the ḩamrā’ of Kufa, i.e., freedmen (*mawāli*) of Persian origin. A visitor to the ‘Alid camp before the battle said that he heard no word of Arabic spoken until he reached the camp of the commander (Dinawari, ed. W. Guirgass, Leiden, 1888, p. 302). Ebn al-Aštar became Moḳtār’s governor for Mosul and al-Jazira. It is possible that his titular authority extended to Armenia and Azarbaijan. After the death of Moḳtār in Kufa in the same year, Ebn al-Aštar submitted to Moṣ‘ab al-Zobayr, to whom he remained loyal; he was killed with him at Maskin. Mas‘udi presents a story claiming that Ebn al-Aštar was the real father of the last Umayyad caliph, Marwān II (Mas‘udi,



Tanbih, p. 281).

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See the indices to Ṭabari; Ebn al-Aṭir; and Balāḍori, *Ansāb* IV A. See also the account of Moḳtār in Ebn Aṭam al-Kufi, *Ketāb al-fotuḥ* VI, Hyderabad, 1392/1972.

Masʿudi, *Moruj al-ḍahab* V, pp. 244-46.

Idem, *Ketāb al-Tanbih*, Baghdad, 1357/1938, pp. 199, 270.

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