



## EBN SA'D, 'OMAR

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**EBN SA'D, 'OMAR** (k. Kūfa 66/686), commander of the Omayyad troops at Karbalā'. Son of the famous Arab general Sa'd b. Abī Waqqāṣ, he had just been made deputy-governor (*nā'eb*) of Ray by 'Obayd-Allāh b. Zīād (see [EBN ZĪĀD](#)) and was to go to Dastabā to quell a Daylamite rising when he was called back to check Ḥosayn b. 'Alī's insurrection. It was only under the threat of losing his post that he finally obeyed and marched at the head of 4,000 men, reaching Karbalā' on 3 Moḥarram 61/3 October 680. Although he cut off Ḥosayn's access to water, he tried to negotiate a settlement. At the urging of Šamer (known as Šemr by the Shi'ites) b. Dī'l-Jawšan 'Āmerī, a former follower of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭāleb, Ebn Zīād ordered Ebn Sa'd to attack Ḥosayn immediately and threatened to give Šamer the command of the army. On the evening of 10 Moḥarram/10 October, Ebn Sa'd sent an ultimatum to Ḥosayn through 'Abbās b. 'Alī (Ṭabarī, II, pp. 308-20). The next morning Ebn Sa'd attacked, apparently hoping that Ḥosayn and his followers would surrender, but the circumstances ended in massacre. Historical evidence indicates that Ebn Sa'd was reluctant to fight Ḥosayn (Ṭabarī, II, pp. 309-11), and his intervention probably saved the life of 'Alī b. Ḥosayn Zayn-al-'Ābedīn (q.v.). On the other hand, most traditions show him eager to obey Ebn Zīād's orders. He thus had Ḥosayn's corpse trampled by ten horsemen (Ṭabarī, II, pp. 365-68; Mas'ūdī, *Morūj* III, p. 259; cf. Bal'amī, ed. Rowšan, p. 711, tr. Zotenberg, IV, p. 45). Ebn Sa'd was executed in Du'l-Ḥejja 66/July 686 by Ebrāhīm b. Aštar, at Moktār's orders, during the latter's rebellion, for his role in the tragedy of Karbalā' (Ṭabarī, II, pp. 671-74; Hawting).



Although Turco-Persian literature of Karbalā' has elaborated on Ebn Sa'd's villainy, many historical features of his character have been retained down to the most recent *ta'zīas*, such as his eagerness to keep his post in Ray and his reluctance to kill Ḥosayn. In the *Moktār-nāma*, Ebn Sa'd is cursed by his own wife, who is the sister of the Shi'ite rebel Moktār, and his severed head is cursed by his Shi'ite younger son (pp. 209-11; Kāšefī, pp. 262 f.). An old tradition holds that Ray, the price paid to him for Ḥosayn's blood, was under a divine curse (Yāqūt, *Boldān*, Beirut, III, p. 118; C. Barbier de Meynard, *Dictionnaire géographique de la Perse*, Paris, 1861, p. 278). Ebn Sa'd's chastisement is sometimes shown as particularly horrible; in the story of Moḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiya, Ebn Sa'd and Ebn Zīād are smeared with naphtha and set on fire (Calmard, p. 267). In Safavid Persia 'Omar b. Sa'd was sometimes burnt in effigy in a ritual similar to the "killing of 'Omar" (*'Omarkošān*), perhaps because of a popular confusion with the caliph most hated by the Persian Shi'ites (Calmard, p. 500). In *ta'zīas* Ebn Sa'd is the only bad character who feels remorse for his own villainy; he is ashamed to have killed Ḥosayn and protects 'Alī Zayn-al-'Ābedīn and the women of the [Ahl-e Bayt](#), ordering them to be taken to Kūfa in covered litters (*maḥāmel mastūra*; Dīnavarī, ed. Guirgass, p. 270; Kāšefī, pp. 349-50, 360). In some *ta'zīas*, he even seems opposed to the killing of Ḥosayn (Mamnoun, pp. 67 ff.). But in spite of his hesitation and belated remorse, he remains a typical villain in the eyes of Moḥarram mourners. His arrogance while riding his horse and addressing himself to Ḥosayn has become proverbial (*meṭl-e Ebn-e Sa'd*; 'A.-A. Dehḳodā, *Amṭāl o ḥekam*, Tehran, 1352 Š./1973, III, p. 1403).

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