



ĠADĪR ḲOMM

ĠADĪR ḲOMM (lit. “pool of Ḳomm”), the name of a pool near a small oasis along the caravan route between the cities of Mecca and Medina, near an area currently known as Joḥfa. According to Shi‘ites, this is the site at which the Prophet Moḥammad announced the authority of ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭāleb (q.v.) over the Muslim community on 18 Du‘l-ḥejja 10/16 March 632, as he was returning from the Farewell Pilgrimage (Ḥajjat al-wadā‘) to Mecca. Many Sunnite authorities likewise consider Ġadīr Ḳomm the site of a Prophetic announcement regarding ‘Alī, but do not recognize it as a political appointment; in fact, some of the most extensive collections of Ġadīr Ḳomm material can be found in three Sunnite sources, namely the *Mosnad* of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, Ebn ‘Asāker’s *Ta’rīk madīnat Demašq* (XLII, pp. 187-238), and Ebn Kaṭīr’s *al-Bedāya wa’l-nehāya* (V, pp. 150-63).

i. *In Shi‘ite literature.*

ii. *Ġadīr festival (‘Īd-e Ġadīr).*

i. IN SHI‘ITE LITERATURE

According to the Shi‘ite version of events, Moḥammad had been instructed by God at some earlier point (during the pilgrimage rites on the day of ‘Arafāt or during the *me’rāj*) to reveal the *walāya* of ‘Alī to his community; but he had hesitated, fearing the community’s rejection. At Ġadīr Ḳomm, God insisted that



Moḥammad reveal this message, sending down Qur’ān 5:67: “O Messenger! Make known that which has been revealed to you from your Lord, for if you do not, you will not have revealed his message. God will protect you from mankind.” Moḥammad therefore reveals the “*walāya*” of ‘Alī, first asking the crowd: “Am I not closer (*awlā*) to the believers than they are to themselves?,” and then making the following announcement: “For whomever I am their lord (*mawlā*), ‘Alī is their lord (*mawlā*); O God, befriend the friend of ‘Alī and be the enemy of his enemy.” This announcement was then followed, some time the same day, by the revelation of Qur’ān 5:3: “This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favor unto you, and chosen for you, as religion, Islam” Since this Shi’ite tradition is directly connected to these two koranic verses, a good deal of material about Ġadīr Ḳomm can be found in Shi’ite commentaries on the Qur’ān (see [EXEGESIS ii](#)), the earliest examples of which draw heavily on lengthy, explanatory traditions attributed to the fifth imam, Moḥammad al-Bāqer. Shi’ites also contend that Abū Bakr, ‘Omar, and all of the Companions of the Prophet present on this occasion gave ‘Alī the *bay’a* or the pledge of “hearing and obeying” after the Prophet’s announcement.

It is interesting to note that Ġadīr Ḳomm does not appear among ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭāleb’s arguments for his own legitimacy as included in the *Nahj al-balāgha*, although it seems that the tradition became an important argument for ‘Alid legitimacy some time in the 2nd/8th century. Shi’ites consider the earliest piece of literature memorializing the Ġadīr Ḳomm event to be a poem reportedly composed by the Prophet’s poet, Ḥassān b. Ṭābet, on the occasion itself. In fact, the earliest datable references to Ġadīr Ḳomm can be found in the *Hāšemīyāt* of the 8th-century Shi’ite poet Komayt b. Zayd Asadī (pp. 152-53, 156) and in the *Ketāb Solaym b. Qays*, an early Shi’ite polemical text dating perhaps to the 2nd/8th century, which deals extensively with Ġadīr Ḳomm (II, pp. 828-29).

In the codification of the Twelver Shi’ite doctrine of the imamate in the 10th-11th centuries C.E., Ġadīr Ḳomm is most relevant as evidence to support the theory of *naṣṣ* (i.e., the notion that every imam must be specifically designated by his predecessor), which is a central part of Twelver doctrine. For example, Kolaynī’s *al-Kāfi*, the earliest of the four canonical works of Twelver Shi’ite Hadith, places the tradition in the chapters on the specific designation (*tanṣīṣ*) of ‘Alī and the Imams (I, pp. 289-91); and in more systematic doctrinal works the tradition is discussed almost exclusively within the context of the argument for *naṣṣ* (e.g., Šarīf Mortazā, *al-Šāfi* II, pp. 258-325; Karajākī, II, pp. 84-98). The Ġadīr Ḳomm tradition receives more general



attention in less systematic Twelver Shi'ite works, such as the *Amālī* collections of Ebn Bābawayh (pp. 2-3, 109, 111, 514) and Abū Ja'far Ṭūsī (pp. 247, 332, 334, 343, 545-556). Twelver Shi'ite authorities also produced often lengthy treatments of the meaning of the word *mawlā*, in which extensive arguments were given to prove that, in the context of the Ġadīr Ḳomm tradition, the title denoted a position of political authority over the community; the earliest examples of this can be found in Ebn Bābawayh's *Ma'ānī al-aḳbār* (pp. 63-72), in Shaikh Mofīd's short treatise *Ma'nā al-mawlā*, and in Šarīf Mortazā's *al-Šāfi fī'l-emāma* (II, pp. 258-325). Discussions of the meaning of Ġadīr Ḳomm by later Shi'ite authors generally reproduce or expand upon the arguments found in these works (e.g., Amīnī, I, pp. 340-99).

Ġadīr Ḳomm is also a popular topic in two other genres of Shi'ite literature which became common somewhat later, namely, anti-Sunni polemical works (e.g., Ṭabarsī, I, esp. pp. 137-62, 333-53; Ebn Ṭāwūs, *Ṭarā'ef*, pp. 303-24) and collections of *manāqeb* traditions for 'Alī and the later Imams (e.g., Ebn Šahrāšūb, III, pp. 28-55). The fact that Ġadīr Ḳomm is related by many prominent Sunnite compilers on the authority of numerous Companions, many of whom were not 'Alid legitimists and some of whom are usually considered to have been enemies of the 'Alid cause, is put to good use in these two genres. Sunnite authorities are frequently cited as sources for the tradition and a common motif is that of the anti-'Alid Companion who is reminded of the Ġadīr Ḳomm tradition, to which he was a witness, and who then expresses either regret or fear of God's punishment for having thereafter abandoned the *walāya* of 'Alī. These works also make the point, implicitly or explicitly, that while Sunnites and Shi'ites agree on traditions regarding the virtues of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭāleb, the Twelver Shi'ites flatly reject Sunnite traditions regarding the virtues of the first three caliphs and anti-'Alid Companions.

Ġadīr Ḳomm has also been a popular theme in Shi'ite poetry up until this century, and there are numerous Arabic and Persian poetical collections on the subject, often known by the generic title *ġadīrīyāt* (see Amīnī, esp. III-VII, and *al-Darī'a* XVI, pp. 26-28). The first recorded examples of such collections date from the 4th/10th century and may have arisen in connection with the emergence of Ġadīr Ḳomm as an official religious holiday under the Buyids at that time. The best modern Twelver Shi'ite work on Ġadīr Ḳomm is that of Amīnī, *al-Ġadīr*, an eleven-volume work, which aims to collect all the material on Ġadīr Ḳomm in Sunnite and Shi'ite works of Hadith, history, commentary on the Qur'ān, and poetry, as well as extensive biographical material on the



prominent transmitters of the tradition and on the authors and poets who memorialized it in their work.

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ii. ĠADĪR FESTIVAL (ĪD-E ĠADĪR)

The anniversary of the Prophet’s remark, on 18 Ḍu’l-Ḥejja 10/16 March 632, about the status of Imam ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭāleb became a public holiday in 352/963 when the Shi‘ite ruler of Baghdad, the Buyid Mo‘ezz-al-Dawla Aḥmad, ordered the city to celebrate the occasion. No record of such public observance prior to this time is known, although Shi‘ite sympathizers did not fail to cherish the event in their writings, particularly in poetry (Amīnī, I, pp. 270-72, II, p. 388). The reports of Muslim chroniclers such as Ebn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200; XIV, p. 151), Ebn al-Aṭīr (d. 630/1233) and Ebn Kaṭīr (d. 774/1373; XI, p. 259) of this event indicate the innovative character of the celebration. Ebn al-Aṭīr wrote: “On the 18th of Ḍu’l-Ḥejja of this year, Mo‘ezz-al-Dawla ordered that Baghdad should be decorated, and fires be lit at the police headquarters, and festivities be public, and the markets be opened at night as during the holidays, and that the drums be beaten and the bugles sounded, in happy commemoration of the Feast of Ġadīr, i.e., Ġadīr Ƙomm. It was a well-attended/memorable (*mašhūd*) occasion (Beirut, VIII, pp. 549-50).”

Another chronicler, Moḥammad b. ‘Abd-al-Malek Hamadānī (d. 521/1127), recorded that “fire games” were played on the night of Īd-e Ġadīr and shops were open all night. In the morning, Shi‘ite sympathizers moved to the Qorayš cemetery (present-day Kāzemayn) and performed the special Īd prayer (apud Faqīhī, p. 469). Ebn al-Jawzī (XV, p. 14) also mentioned the fire games and added that a camel was slaughtered to honor the occasion in the year 389/998.

The above accounts describe the performance of a Shi‘ite feast in the capital of the ‘Abbasid caliphate in spite of the fact that the city was mainly populated by the Sunnites. It was the second festive holiday carried out by Mo‘ezz-al-Dawla in that year. The first one was the public mourning performance of ‘Āšūrā (q.v.), the anniversary of the martyrdom of Imam Ḥosayn (Ebn al-Aṭīr, Beirut, VIII, p. 549), which practically gave birth to Muḥarram processions. Muslim historians generally laid emphasis on the role of Mo‘ezz-al-Dawla in initiating such practices because of his Persian and Shi‘ite backgrounds. The Buyids, like other people of Persian stock, grew up in a strong tradition of festivity. The



Persians were considered to be among the most festive people by Abū Rayḥān Bīrūnī (d. 440/1048), who reported that they had a myth or history behind every day which determined whether the day was lucky and preferable or unlucky and detestable for them (*Āṭār*, p. 230).

It should be noted, nevertheless, that Mo‘ezz-al-Dawla launched the ‘Āšūrā and Ġadīr observations in the eighteenth of his twenty-two years of reign in Baghdad. This raises the possibility that he could have been impressed by the news of Fatimid conquests in North Africa and their promotion of Shi‘ite rituals. In his writing on Fatimid rites and customs, Aḥmad Maqrīzī (d. 845/1441) suggested that the observance of ‘Īd-e Ġadīr was a well-established Fatimid practice. He described the occasion in Egypt as the day when “widows were married, dignitaries, chiefs, shaikhs, and commanders used to receive apparels and donations; camels were slaughtered and distributed among the needy, and slaves were also freed” (II, p.389).

In reaction to Shi‘ite practices of ‘Īd-e Ġadīr, some Sunnites of Baghdad, according to Ebn al-Jawzī, celebrated the 26th of Du‘l-Ḥejja as the anniversary of the entrance of the Prophet and Abū Bakr into the Ṭawr cave (XV, p. 14; Ebn al-Aṭīr, Beirut, IX, p. 155). The Buyid officials did not oppose such celebration, but the clash of Shi‘ite and Sunnite sympathizers was often inevitable. According to Ebn Kaṭīr, the clash of ‘Īd-e Ġadīr in 371/981 left several casualties. To prevent the bloodshed, Buyid officials banned the observance of both the Moḥarram procession and ‘Īd-e Ġadīr celebration in the years 382/992 and 392/1001, but they lifted the ban for the day of ‘Āšūrā in 402/1011 (Ebn Kaṭīr, XI, pp. 331, 370).

Observation of Shi‘ite rituals including ‘Īd-e Ġadīr reached its peak during the reign of ‘Azod-al-Dawla (d. 372/983; q.v.), who advanced the work of Mo‘ezz-al-Dawla in all directions. The frequent visitation of the shrines of the Imams (*zīārat*) and the making of wills to be buried in the blessed soil of the Imams’ sanctuaries (Ebn Ṭāwūs, p. 132) can be considered as the legacy of the Buyids, especially of ‘Azod-al-Dawla. The Ghaznavids, who ruled a large part of Persia during the same period, did not officially observe ‘Īd-e Ġadīr. Nevertheless, Bīrūnī, the astronomer at the Ghaznavid court, mentioned the occasion as an established feast (*īd-Āṭār*, p.334).

There are no records of any significant observance of ‘Īd-e Ġadīr under the Saljuqs and thereafter, although some Saljuq sultans visited the Shi‘ite shrine cities and some Mongol rulers who embraced Shi‘ism performed Shi‘ite rites.



The silence of ‘Abd-al-Jalīl Qazvīnī (560/1164) on ‘Īd-e Ġadīr and the tradition recorded by Ebn Ṭāwūs (d. 693/1293) that the day of Ġadīr was more known and observed [by angels] in the sky than on earth (p. 106) confirm the absence of the celebration of ‘Īd-e Ġadīr during this period.

The celebration of ‘Īd-e Ġadīr was renewed in Persia by the Safavids whose legitimacy was *inter alia* based on Imam ‘Alī’s investiture by the Prophet at Ġadīr Khomm. No records of the exact date of the renewal of this festival by Shah Esmā‘īl I (q.v.) is available, although it is known that, after his triumphant arrival in Tabrīz in 907/1501, he made the phrase “*‘Alī walī Allāh*” (‘Alī the friend of God) a Shi‘ite credal statement as well as part of the *adān* (the Muslim call to prayer) and also had it inscribed on his coins (Możtar, ed., p. 149; Šokrī, ed., p. 53; *EIr.* VI, p. 30). The contemporary Persian scholar Ḍabīḥ-Allāh Šafā suggested that the coincidence of Nowrūz with the event at Ġadīr Kōmm as well as with the day that Imam ‘Alī was officially recognized as the caliph contributed to the survival of Nowrūz in Persia (*Adabīyāt* V, p. 86). It apparently was an established festival in the reign of Shah Ṭahmāsp I (930-84/1524-76; ‘Abdī Beg, p. 79). Under Shah Solaymān, according to European travellers, “lavish banquets were given on that occasion” (Calmard, p. 160).

The writings of two late Shi‘ite authors, Ḥorr ‘Āmelī (d. 1104/1693) and Moḥammad-Bāqer Majlesī (d. 1111/1700), indicate an attempt to perpetuate the occasion as a festival. ‘Āmelī proposed that the anniversary of this day was recommended by the Imams to be observed as a festival (‘īd) in which charity should be paid and, what is more, the covenant of the Shi‘ites with the Imam [‘Alī] must be remembered (*tadyakkor al-‘ahd*). To fast and to visit the tomb of the Imams were considered two ways of the remembrance (Ḥorr ‘Āmelī, V, p. 224, X, p. 302). Majlesī in many chapters of his voluminous book merited the occasion as the most rewarding holiday (*afzal al-a’yād*), and recorded a special invocation for visiting the shrine of Imam ‘Alī or his remembrance on this day (XCVII, pp. 358-73).

The incorporation of ‘Īd-e Ġadīr in the main body of Shi‘ite jurisprudence contributed to the promotion of the festival during the Qajar period. The occasion was usually celebrated with public banquets and the reception at court of the ‘*olamā*’ and dignitaries. In 1249/1833, the ‘Īd-e Ġadīr was observed for a whole week as it was combined with the royal marriages of several princes (Hedāyat, *Rowzat al-šafā* X, pp. 76-77). During the Qajar period, the ceremony often involved decorating the streets with lights and fire games, and



occasionally the king or one of the *'olamā'* would deliver a sermon (Rāvandī, VI, pp. 615-18). However, towards the end of the Qajar period, the parade of the military and civilian units and royal or ministerial visitation of the shrine of Qom became popular (Šarīf Kašānī, p. 811).

During the Pahlavi period, the official ceremony was reduced to a reception for a small number of second ranked *'olamā'* and state officials by the Shah; but the public usually celebrated Īd-e Ġadīr by decorating *bāzārs* with flags, adornments, and sometimes with triumphal arches. The book *al-Ġadīr* appeared in this period, which, instead of the customary reproduction of Shi'ite tradition reports, based the justification of the Shi'ite doctrine of the Imamate on Sunnite sources, thereby contributing to a Shi'ite-Sunnite rapprochement despite its polemical character. Reading excerpts from this book has been added to the public Īd-e Ġadīr ceremony in present day Persia.

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