



ḤAYYA 'ALĀ ḲAYR AL-'AMAL

ḤAYYA 'ALĀ ḲAYR AL-'AMAL, a religious formula, meaning “Come to the best of actions,” included in the call to prayer (*adān*) by all three major branches of Shi'ism, Twelvers, Zaydis and Isma'ilis, since they believe it to have been an original part of the *adān* throughout the lifetime of the Prophet and of his successor, Abu Bakr, being removed at the beginning of 'Omar ebn al-Ḳaṭṭāb's caliphate. The earliest source to mention this formula seems to have been the Sunnite Moḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Šaybāni's (d. 189/805) recension of Mālek's *Mowaṭṭa'* (Howard, p. 220). Shi'ite tradition, as in other cases (e.g. *mot'a*, temporary marriage), considers 'Omar to be responsible for distorting the original rite by omitting these words from the *adān*. According to a recurrent account, 'Omar ordered the removal of the sentence in question, which is said to have been uttered between the two formulae *ḥayya 'alā al-ṣalāt* (“Come to the prayer”) and *ḥayya 'alā al-falāḥ* (“Come to the salvation”), because he feared “that people would rely [only] upon prayer . . . and abandon the [duty of] *jehād*” (Abu Moḥammad al-Faḏl b. Šāḏān, p. 106; Majlesi, LXXXI, p. 140; for a similar Isma'ili attitude, see al-Qāzi al-No'mān, I, p. 189). In the Shi'ite *adān* this formula comes after the rhyming pair *ḥayya 'alā al-ṣalāt* and *ḥayya 'alā al-falāḥ*, rather than between them.

Shi'ite tradition, however, is not unanimous that the words *Ḥayya 'alā ḳayr al-'amal* allude to the duty of prayer. Among other explanations, these words are taken to refer to the duty of devotion and loyalty (*walāya*) toward the family of the Prophet, or alternatively to the duty of reverence (*birr*) toward Fāṭema and her descendants (Ebn Bābuyah, pp. 41–42, whence Majlesi, LXXXI, p. 134).



It is noteworthy that despite the significance of this formula *de jure*, Shi'ites, throughout most of their history, have refrained from uttering it, preferring dissimulation (*taqiya*); that is, they were reluctant to use openly a formula differing from the one accepted by the majority Sunnites (see e.g. Majlesi, LXXXI, pp. 119, 134).

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