

Introduction

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

This book contains a brief yet documented narrative of an incident that took place in Karbala”, Iraq, in 61 A.H. (After Hijra, or Hegira)/680 A.D. It has stamped the history of the Muslim nation ever since, and it will continue to do so till the reappearance of the Awaited One, the Mahdi from among the offspring of Prophet Muhammad (ص). It refers to a revolution against tyranny and oppression led by Imam al-Husayn (ع) son of Imam Ali ibn [son of] Abu [father of] Talib (ع) and grandson of Prophet Muhammad (ص).

The confrontation left a lone male survivor from Imam al-Husayn’s camp: Imam al-Husayn’s son Ali, titled "as-Sajjad," the one who quite often prostrates to Allah, and also "Zain al-Abidin," the best of worshippers of Allah. He later became the fourth in the series of the Twelve Infallible Imams (ع). His offspring migrated to north Africa where they founded the Fatimide caliphate that lasted from 296 – 566 A.H./909 – 1171 A.D.

Having conquered Egypt in 358 A.H./969 A.D., they built Cairo in order to make it their capital and founded in the next year the al-Azhar mosque and university. The latter was founded by caliph “al-Muizz li Deenillah,” Abu Tameem Maadd ibn al-Mansur who was born in 319 A.H./931 A.D. and died in 365 A.H./975 A.D.; he ruled from 341 A.H./953 A.D. till his death.

The bloody confrontation between Husayn’s tiny group of family members and supports and the huge army raised according to orders issued by the ruler of his time, namely Yazid “son” of Mu’awiyah , which is referred to in history books as the Taff Battle, started on the first day of Muharram, 61 A.H. October 4, 680 A.D. and ended ten days later with the barbaric killing of Imam al-Husayn (ع) and all males with him __ with the exception of his ailing son referred to above, namely Ali __, including his infant Abdullah, who was six months old and who was shot with an arrow in the neck.

Imam al-Husayn (ع) was pleading to those folks to give Abdullah some water to drink. Imam al-Husayn (ع) and his small band were not permitted to the end to have access to the water of the Euphrates that lied a short distance from their camp. This reveals the extent of cruelty of those who fought Imam al-Husayn (ع) and his small band of supporters, the brave defender of principles and the reformer of the

nation that he was, the man whom the Prophet on many occasions praised and honoured as one of the Masters of the Youths of Paradise, the other Master being his older brother Hassan (ع).

Imam al-Husayn's body was trampled under the hoofs of the soldiers' horses and his head was cut off, placed on top of a spear and paraded before his women and children, who were all tied and chained as captives and conveyed in the most cruel manner the entire distance from Karbala", as the Taff area came to be called, to Damascus, Syria, seat of the Umayyad tyrant Yazid "son" of Mu'awiyah ibn Abu Sufyan.

The heads of the other heroes who fought on Imam al-Husayn's side were also cut off and paraded in the same manner as trophies although Islam does not permit the mutilation of anyone's body, be he a Muslim or a non-Muslim. Little did those killers care to know about Islam, and the same can be said about those who refrain from condemning them and who, thus, share in the burden of sins those killers shall bear on the Day of Judgment.

The primary sources of this book are: Maqatal al-Husayn by Abdul-Razzaq al-Masawi al-Muqarram, and Tarikh al-Umam wal Mulak by Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarar at-Tabari (better known as Tarikh at-Tabari). Several secondary references, in Arabic and English, have been consulted and are cited in elaborate footnotes.

It is hoped that this book will open the eyes of new Muslim converts in the West in general and here in the U.S. in particular so that they may see the other side of the coin. Most of them were not taught Islamic history because, in most likelihood, it would indict their mentors. It is also hoped that such converts will realize the pitfalls of little knowledge which is surely a dangerous thing.

There is a story behind every book. This one is no exception. As of the date of writing this Introduction (Shawwal 1419 A.H./February 1999), Northern Virginia Muslims who love and revere Imam Husayn (ع) do not have a place of their own where they can assemble to commemorate the Karbala" tragedy, the greatest of all; therefore, they have to meet here and there, mostly at homes and apartments of their brethren who can accommodate them.

The most prominent of such dedicated brethren have been: Hamzah ash-Shawwaf (nicknamed Abu Muhammad-Ali), Abdul-Muhsin as-Sa'igh (Abu Abdul-Aziz), and Ahmed al-Haddad (Abu Abdullah). These brethren have always opened their homes and hearts to all those who cherish the memory of Imam Husayn (ع) and of all other Imams belonging to the Prophet's Progeny, "Ahl al-Bayt," peace and blessings of Allah be upon all of them. During the past commemoration (Muharram 1419/May 1998), an Azari brother named Salashour who runs a rug store tried his best to make us feel at home, permitting us to use the premises of his business for the first ten days of the month of Muharram.

It was there and then that another very dedicated brother named Ja'far Madan suggested that I write a few pages in English about the martyrdom of Imam Husayn (ع) in order to circulate them on the Internet. Alhamdu-Lillah, both I and he did what we promised. Then Br. Madan asked me whether I would

consider turning those few pages into a book for the American and European readers. We liked the idea.

You see, a good word, a wise suggestion, is like a seed; if it finds the right soil, it will shoot roots and sprout, and soon a seed becomes a tree bearing fruit, and the fruit carry seeds that will eventually be sowed, and they, too, will set roots, sprout and bear fruit..., and so on. May the Almighty bless and reward our dear brother Ja'far Madan for his suggestion, and may He bless all other dedicated brethren like him. May He forever guide our steps to what He loves and prefers, *Allahomma AAameen*.

As the Dedication suggests, the publication of this book has been made possible by the generosity of a number of such dedicated lovers of Imam al-Husayn (ع), and of his Ahl al-Bayt (ع), and who reside in metropolitan Washington, D.C., and elsewhere. The author apologizes if some of the photographs are not of good quality. May the Almighty reward all those who brought this book to light and who circulate it and help others benefit from it with the very best of His rewards in the life of this world and in the hereafter, *Allahomma AAameen*.

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