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al-Manşūr bi-llāh al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad

Al-Manşūr bi-llāh al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad (r. 1006–29/1597–1620), also known as al-Qāsim al-Kabīr (al-Qāsim the Great), was the eponymous founder of the Qāsimī dynasty (*al-dawla al-Qāsimiyya*) of Zaydī Shī'ī Imāms from which the last Imāmī dynasty in Yemen also traced their descent. In later literature, he is usually referred to as al-Manşūr al-Qāsim, following his Imāmī title, al-Manşūr bi-llāh. He is best remembered for having revived the resistance against the Ottoman occupation and thus for preparing the ground for the subsequent expulsion of the Ottomans from Yemen, a task completed by his son al-Mu'ayyad Muḥammad (r. 1029–54/1620–44). His descendants effectively ruled Yemen for two centuries.

Al-Qāsim was born in Şafar 967/November 1559 in the district of al-Sharaf (today's al-Mahābisha), northwest of Şan'a'. He claimed descent from the first Zaydī Imām in Yemen, al-Hādī ilā l-Ḥaqq Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn (r. 284–98/897–911), and his grandson Yūsuf al-Dā'ī (d. 403/1012; he was not generally recognised as Imām by Zaydī scholars); however, there were no Imāms after them in his direct line of descent. Living as a young scholar in Şan'a', he experienced the Ottoman occupation and was after some time suspected by the Ottomans of being opposed to their rule. He fled to the

district of al-Sharaf and travelled around there and in neighbouring districts north of Şan'a' for several years.

Al-Qāsim made the call for his imāmate (*da'wa*) in 1006/1597 but had to retreat to remote areas, such as Baraṭ, in the far north-east, after being attacked by the Ottomans or tribes loyal to them. In 1015/1606, he took back from the Ottomans the famous mountain fortress of Shahāra, which thereafter remained an important base for him and his descendants. Local biographies and historiographies detail how he waged an insurgency-like war against the Ottomans, who responded by dispatching ever more troops (Tritton). Local tribes and elites were important in this game of power, and many changed sides more than once. Some *sayyid* families (those claiming descent from the prophet Muḥammad), most notably the powerful Sharaf al-Dīn family centred on the fortress of Kawkabān and the nearby towns of Shibām and Thulā', sided with the Ottomans. Several truces were concluded, and after the final one, shortly before his death, the Ottomans allowed al-Qāsim to rule parts of the north.

Through his military successes against the Ottomans, which gained him popular respect, al-Qāsim curbed the power of other regional *sayyid* houses that had recently claimed the imāmate, such as the Sharaf al-Dīn family, and the Mu'ayyadī Imāms of Şa'da. In his call for the imāmate and thereafter, he used the rhetoric of *jihād*. As usual among Zaydī Imāms, *jihād* against the Ottomans was legitimated not by the fact that his enemies were Sunnīs but by the oppression and moral decay of their governors and allies.

Although he is best remembered as a warrior Imām, al-Qāsim was also a scholar of rank who left numerous works, including