

Opposing the Imām

Islam's fourth caliph, 'Alī, can be considered one of the most revered figures in Islamic history. His nearly universal portrayal in Muslim literature as a pious authority obscures centuries of contestation and the eventual rehabilitation of his character. In this book, Nebil Husayn examines the enduring legacy of the *nawāṣib*, early Muslims who disliked 'Alī and his descendants. The *nawāṣib* participated in politics and discussions on religion at least until the ninth century. However, their virtual disappearance in Muslim societies has led many to ignore their existence and the subtle ways in which their views subsequently affected Islamic historiography and theology. By surveying medieval Muslim literature across multiple genres and traditions including the Sunnī, Mu'tazilī, and Ibādī, Husayn reconstructs the claims and arguments of the *nawāṣib* and illuminates the methods that Sunnī scholars employed to gradually rehabilitate the image of 'Alī from a villainous character to a righteous one.

Nebil Husayn is Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Miami, where his research considers the development of Islamic theology, historiography, and debates on the caliphate. Husayn obtained his Ph.D. in Near Eastern Studies from Princeton University.

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The Legacy of the Nawāṣib in Islamic Literature

NEBIL HUSAYN
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“Beware of mentioning ‘Alī and Fāṭima, for people detest nothing more than the mention of ‘Alī and Fāṭima.”

-A prominent chieftain among the descendants of ‘Alī
A little more than a century after the Prophet’s death

Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	page viii
<i>Note on Conventions</i>	x
Introduction	1
1 ‘Alī: A Contested Legacy	15
2 The Umayyads and the ‘Uthmānīs	39
3 The Mu‘tazilī: al-Jāhīz	65
4 The Ibāḍī: al-Wārjalānī	89
5 The Sunnī: Ibn Taymiyya	112
6 The Rehabilitation of ‘Alī in Sunnī <i>Hadīth</i> and Historiography	161
Afterword	182
Chapter 1 Appendix: Anti-‘Alid Statements in Historical Literature	186
Chapter 2 Appendix: Reports about the Umayyads and the ‘Uthmānīs	198
Chapter 5 Appendix: Ibn Taymiyya’s <i>Minhāj al-sunna</i>	205
<i>Bibliography</i>	212
<i>Index</i>	230

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ix

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Note on Conventions

The transliteration of Arabic names and phrases is based on the guidelines of the third edition of Brill's *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. The death dates of medieval Muslim scholars appear in the Islamic *hijrī* calendar (AH), followed by the Common Era date (CE). Otherwise, I refer to dates in the Common Era. I forgo citation of the *bāb*, *ḥadīth* number, or first line of a report; conventions that are inconsistently used in western scholarship on *ḥadīth*. I simply cite the volume and page number of a classical Sunnī or Shī'ī *ḥadīth* collection. To aid researchers seeking to follow up these references in Arabic, I cite editions that coincide with those digitized and made freely available on www.shiaonlinelibrary.com. All translations from the Arabic are my own.