



The Words of Ali B. Al-Husayn^(as)
In the Sahifa Al Sajjadiyya

Alone With the Beloved

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Alone with the Beloved:
The words of ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn in
The Ṣaḥīfa Sajjādiyya

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ABSTRACT

For over thirteen centuries the *Ṣaḥīfa al-Sajjādiyya* has enjoyed importance amongst Muslims, its authorship attributed to °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn (d. 95/713-4), the great grandson of Prophet Muḥammad, and fourth Imam in the Twelver *Shī'ī* School.

Despite its immense and rich repository, the study of Shī'ism has mostly been a neglected branch of Islam in the West, consequently little has been written on the *Ṣaḥīfa*, other than a significant and valuable translation with an introduction by Chittick.

This, being a first serious research of the *Ṣaḥīfa* focuses to reconstruct its context, based on the thesis that to understand a text is to follow its dynamics, its movement from what it says to that which it discloses, including a biography, investigation into authenticity, an exploration of style and themes and conclusion.

Chittick describes the *Ṣaḥīfa* as “one of the deepest veins of Islamic spirituality”. Religion and even non-religious systems although diverse, universally and inevitably aim to achieve a better life by guiding the individual and community by what is most natural in the form of common human values and aspirations. These are reflected and resonated in the *Ṣaḥīfa*, directing both the individual and community towards growth and thereby fulfilling their own purpose.

The *Ṣaḥīfā Sajjādiyya* invites the reader to ponder over the depths of goodness inherent in the human being as it serves as a treatise of instruction in the development of the human self. God, as the Object of the *Ṣaḥīfa* portrays the most noble rank befitting humanity, serving as both a Means and the Ultimate goal for the culmination of human beauty.

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In His Name the Most Elevated

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Chapter 1

Prologue

For over thirteen centuries the *Ṣaḥīfa al-Sajjādiyya*, lit. *The Book of Sajjād*, has been considered to be a literary work of great importance amongst Muslims, and a part of the Islamic literary inheritance.

According to Chittick (p.xv, 1988), the *Ṣaḥīfa al-Sajjādiyya* (The Prayer Manual of Sajjād)¹ is today one of the oldest prayer texts in the Islamic tradition. Attributed to have been authored by the great grandson of the Prophet Muḥammad; °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn (38-95/658-9 - 713-4), it has been part of the rich history of Islamic ritual.

It has also been part of the rich history of Islamic thought, holding a pivotal and essential position as a manual of prayers, particularly treasured within the *Shī°a Ithnā °Asharī* (Twelver) school (hereafter referred to as the *Shī°i/Shī°a*)² while its

¹ Ibn al-Ḥusayn, °Alī (Zayn al-°Ābidīn) (1988) *Al-Ṣaḥīfat al-kāmilat al-Sajjādiyya (The Psalms of Islam)*, (Trans.& Introd. by William Chittick) London, Muhammadi Trust

² Van Donzel, E (1994) *Islamic Desk Reference*, Leiden E.J. Brill

The term *Shī°a* (lit. party, group), is used to denote the general name for a group of various Muslim sects, the starting point of which is the recognition of the Prophet's son-in-law °Alī b. Abī Ṭālib as the legitimate caliph after the death of the Prophet, the followers of whom were called *Shī°at °Alī* (the party or followers of °Alī). More than °Alī, who is considered as the first Imam and was assassinated in 40/661, it was his son al-Ḥusayn, killed in 61/680 by government troops, that was the seed of the *Shī°a*. There are two major groups of believers amongst the *Shī°a*, with the majority (primarily found in Iran and Iraq) following the Twelver (*Imami Ithnā °Asharī*) version. The term "*Shī°a*" is often taken to be synonymous with the Twelvers. There are also several forms of Sevens *Shī°a* sects, the largest being known as *Ismā°ilis*. The Sevens and Twelvers differ regarding the rights of succession after the death of Muḥammad, but they agree on the unlawful usurpation of the rightful authority of Muḥammad's family and descendants. Other minor groups exist that grew out of the *Shī°a*, such as the *Zaydis* who believe in the same first four Imams as the Twelvers and Sevens, but differ on the fifth. They are thus known as Fivers. According to the Twelvers, the twelve descendants of °Alī are Imams and have a special status; they are less than the Prophet, but higher than ordinary mortals. They are regarded as direct corporeal and spiritual successors of the Prophet, infallible, divinely inspired, and chosen directly by God by designation - *naṣṣ*. Both major *Shī°a* sects believe that the last Imam (either

significance is still universally acknowledged among Muslims from other theological schools.

From early days, the prayers of Sajjād have become a part and parcel of the identity and lives of those who have used and drawn from it, becoming an essential part of Islamic spiritual life; Chittick describes it as “one of the deepest veins of Islamic spirituality” (Chittick, p. xivi, 1988).³ This vein can surely have been said to sustain and nourish the minds and souls of the *Shīʿa* communities in particular as much now as then, and possibly for Muslims in general. Amongst the *Shīʿa*, the *Ṣaḥīfa* is considered in rank only after the Qurʾān and the *Nahj al-Balāgha* of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661).

Moreover it is a popular and well-established principle amongst the *Shīʿa* that the authorship of the words contained in the *Ṣaḥīfa* belongs to the great-grandson of Prophet Muḥammad himself, namely ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn - also known as Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn and Sajjād - who in the *Shīʿa* school of thought is considered to be the fourth Imam.

It could be stated that the study of Shīʿism has for the most part been a neglected branch of Islamic studies in the West. However, during the last few decades a select group of scholars have given considerable attention to particular areas within Shīʿi Islam. The forerunners in this group include Rudolph Strothmann (1877-1960), Louis Massignon (1883-1962) and Henry Corbin (1903-1978). More recently scholars like Etan Kohlberg, M.A Amir-Moezzi, Farhad Daftary, Moojan Momen, Ḥusain M. Jafri,

the Seventh or the Twelfth) is in occultation, kept alive by God. For our purpose, when making reference to *Shīʿa*, it is meant to be the Twelvers unless otherwise specified.

³ Ibn al-Ḥusayn, ʿĀlī (Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn) (1988) *Al Ṣaḥīfat al-kāmilat al-Sajjādiyya (Psalms of Islam)*, (Transl. & Introd. by William Chittick) London, Muhammadi Trust

Heinz Halm, Wilferd Madelung and others have further improved our understanding of Shī'ī Islam.

Despite this recent research, particularly the first two centuries have not received the same share of modern scholarship and in-depth study they deserve. The general body of Muslim heresiographers have generally regarded the *Shī'ī* as those who digressed from the norm. Western scholars of Islam have many times adopted a similar view and treated Shī'ī Islam as a digression or heterodoxy as opposed to an orthodoxy.

Similarly the *Ṣaḥīfa* being a text of such substance and significance, no thorough study has been undertaken of it, apart from Howarth's dissertation in part-fulfilment of his M.A., and Chittick's introduction to the translation. However, Chittick's translation and introduction of the *Ṣaḥīfa* and *Risālat al-ḥuqūq* are a welcomed and essential contribution to the vast and rich literary Islamic and Shī'ī heritage.

The *Ṣaḥīfa* and some sayings and poems, and the *Risāla*⁴ are the only surviving works going back to °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn.

The importance of these document and the possibility of a wider reading, a besides analytical and linguistic investigation have been largely overlooked in Islamic scholarship and particularly in Western scholarship where these texts still remain fairly unknown. Most of the studies done on the texts, even that done by Chittick (1988) has adopted a reductionist approach by focusing only on its place within Muslim ritual. In order to advance a wider application within Islam and beyond, based

⁴ The *Risāla* is believed to be a treatise in the form of a reply from °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn to one of his disciples. The treatise discusses rights of subjects and objects while covering a wide range of issues, such as the right of God upon His creatures, to the rights of different human beings in various positions in society with concern to their relationship to each other. At closer study and from the other side of the same coin, these rights are translated to mean duties and obligations the human beings ought to undertake and uphold towards each other and God, in order to achieve individual and social harmony and balance.

on a re-reading of °Alī b. Ḥusayn's texts it is necessary to move from a ritualised *status quoist* reading to a quest for the historical and spiritual °Alī b. Ḥusayn.

Methodology, Approach, Aim and Objective

In this research I intend to do two things, firstly I will study and reconstruct the historical context in which the *Ṣahīfa* was produced. This approach will be based on the thesis that to understand it is to follow the dynamics of the work, its movement from what it says to that about which it speaks. Beyond my situation as a reader, beyond the situation of the author, I offer myself to the possible mode of being-in-the-world that the text opens up and discloses to me in what Gadamer calls *Horizontverschmelzung* in historical knowledge. Secondly, applying the Reader Response Theory, I will engage the texts from a contemporary discourse. This will focus primarily on a flesh and blood, and socially located reader. Attention will also be given to praxis.

Although the *Ṣahīfa* is used in ritual, and sometimes theological discourses, it's a written text that has been circulated within Muslim society for centuries. Consequently, it's may also be treated as a form of literature and that means that we will have to examine its validity as a historical text attributed to °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn. In other words, the production of the *Ṣahīfa* can be seen to have taken place in a similar manner to that of literature. Thus, it is possible to study it critically with the same methods that are used to study any other ancient literature. For example, we will ask questions about the setting within which the text emerged and the motives that were the directing force for its production. The text will then be delineated by observing

changes in literary style, shifts in vocabulary and phrasing, breaks in continuity, types of connectors, thematic, and factual inconsistencies. Thus, through the process of textual criticism we will try to identify changes that may have occurred in the transmission of the text while at the same time employing literary criticism to examine the content of the text; such as its language, composition, and origin. This includes a philological study of the text, analysis of its content, investigation of the sources used, determining the literary genre of particular passages, and drawing judicious conclusions regarding the authorship of the text.

In order to have a better appreciation of the context of the *Ṣaḥīfa*, the circumstances and environment within which they were produced and to provide a wider perspective of the life of ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn, We will begin with seeking to explore the milieu contemporary to him and prior to him, during the life of his great grandfather Prophet Muḥammad (d. 632/11) and also before, relating only significant issues in order to enhance and develop and augment this study as an in depth and detailed historical survey would fall outside the scope of this work. The massacre at Karbalā (680/61) where he was present will also be related.

Subsequently we will advance to the following chapter where I will draw a picture of his life and personality, affording a valuable window to the author and through him to the text and a closer glance of his mindset.

With this behind us we will move forward to seek to investigate the text as a textual production observing its historical background, tracing its origins and transmissions, continuing to undertake a critical study of the text's authenticity, attempting to apply both traditional Islamic and contemporary Western methods. This will also entail a

linguistic analysis of the text, examining its forms and literary aspects. Moreover, an account will also be given of reports of what has been said of the *Ṣaḥīfa*.

Following this, the next chapter will explore the style and salient themes found across the *Ṣaḥīfa*, before finally arriving at the closing remarks and conclusion. Where reference is made to the Qur'ān Yūsuf °Alī's translation has been used unless otherwise indicated.

It is my hope that in this research I will be able to show first; how the text is as relevant today as it was when it was first produced and secondly; how a demythologised °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn as a historical figure represents the contemporary human aspirations.

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CHAPTER 2

The *Ṣahīfa* and °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn: An insight into their Context and Setting

1. Setting the Context

This chapter will serve to be preparing to the thesis generally. It will examine the contemporary thoughts and trends of the time and milieu during °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn, such as the social, political and theological state of affairs and characteristics of the time, going back to the period of his great grandfather Prophet Muḥammad (d. 11/632) and prior, referring to the most significant issues as seen complementary to the thesis.

This would afford the study with a fuller understanding of °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn as it is necessary that the wider context of his life is examined. It could be argued that it may be close to impossible to understand the fuller and wider perspective of the texts and the personality of °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn without considering his background inasmuch as him being from the Banū Hāshim and being the great grandson of Prophet Muḥammad and grandson of °Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, both towering and significant figures in the Islamic landscape.

However, in order to confine this study within boundaries only the most considerable events will be expounded upon, as the enquiry otherwise would be far too broad and also fall outside the parameters of this work.

It is commonly accepted amongst all Muslims that Prophet Muḥammad and his family hold a high and esteemed position within Islam, so much so that they are accorded an elevated rank in the Qur'ān above all other believers. This is in line with the Qur'ān relating similar importance to past prophets and their families, prophets who prayed for divine assistance and favour towards their righteous family members, kin and offspring.⁵ A well known example of this is the verse known as the verse of *tathīr* (purification).

⁵ Q. 33:33-4, 19:58, 6:84-9, 37:76-7, 57:26, 11:71-3, 4:54

...And Allāh only wishes to remove all abomination from you, ye members of the Family, and to make you pure and spotless.⁶

Another example depicting the status of the family of the Prophet can be seen in the following verse:

We gave him Isaac and Jacob: all (three) guided: and before him, We guided Noah, and among his progeny, David, Solomon, Job, Joseph, Moses, and Aaron: thus do We reward those who do good...

...These were the men to whom We gave the Book, and authority, and prophethood: if these (their descendants) reject them, Behold! We shall entrust their charge to a new people who reject them not.⁷

Thus in light of the Qur'ān the successorship of the prophets in relation to *mulk* (leadership), *ḥukm* (rule), *ḥikma* (wisdom), *kitāb* (the book) and Imamate (a divine institution in relation to leadership)⁸ is something that belongs to the descendants and close family of the prophets.

In Madelung's judgement the Prophet Muḥammad could not have considered the continual leadership after him over the Muslim community regarding his succession in any other way than reflecting in the light of the Qur'ān inasmuch as following the example of succession of the previous prophets.⁹ However, in Watt's opinion in that the most obvious choice in successorship after the Prophet was Abū Bakr as he was the Prophet's trusted counsellor and a leading deputy and personality, while also being one of the most significant converts in the early days of Islam.¹⁰ The contested succession to Muḥammad is clearly the key question in the Shī'ī school of thought and the principal factor separating the *Shī'ā* from the *Sunnī* majority.

⁶ Q. 33:33

⁷ Q. 6:84-9

⁸ For further elaboration on the Shī'ī view on Imamate see footnote in following chapter under *How Imamate Came to him*

⁹ Madelung, *The Succession*, pp. 16-17

¹⁰ Watt, *Muhammad, Prophet and Statesman* (Oxford, 1961), pp. 35-6

These nascent trends and issues after the Prophets demise would clearly be seen to have implications and an impact upon the life of °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn during his life. The issue of succession is not as simple as to who the leader of the new Muslim community would be and the question is not only *who* the successor of Muḥammad was but also the nature of the *role* of this successor, for it is on both these points that both of these schools of thought have differing views.

However it is not the aim nor the place of this study to evaluate the details of the succession to Muḥammad or to analyse the differing views of the *Sunnī* and *Shīʿa* as that would digress from the aim; which is to provide a closer insight into the circumstances and the milieu of °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn and the era preceding him. Thus only significant and major circumstances have been taken into account in order to provide and arrive at a fuller picture of his persona and position.

1.1 Background

It is commonly believed by Muslims that Prophet Muḥammad’s lineage can be traced back to the patriarch Abraham. Thus, for the *Shīʿa*, the lineage of °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn is also linked to Abraham through his father Ḥusayn b. °Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, his grandmother Fāṭima bint Muḥammad, grandfather °Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and great grandfather Prophet Muḥammad b. °Abdullāh b. °Abd al-Muṭṭalib. *Shīʿa* theologians uphold that °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn merits a privileged status since his ancestor Abraham, being venerated by Christians, Jews and Muslims alike, holds an esteemed position in the monotheistic faith systems. Moreover the Qur’ān explicitly indicates that Muḥammad, his great grandfather, followed the way and creed of Abraham.¹¹

¹¹ Q.2:128-30, also refer to Naqvī, °Allāhma °Alī Naqī *Shahīd al-Insāniyyat* The Martyr for Mankind (hereafter referred to as Naqvī) p. 1. Also note interchangeable use for Abraham and Ibrāhīm. Also see Q. 3:68 where it reads: ‘Without doubt, among men, the nearest of kin to Abraham, are those who follow him, as are also this Messenger and those who believe: And Allāh is the Protector of those who have faith.’ Also see 22:78

Furthermore the Prophet also revived aspects of Abraham's life which has significantly influenced the faith and conduct of Muslims.¹² Thus, for *Shī'ca* theologians, 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn's status is not based on a mere genealogical link with Abraham but also on a spiritual connection through Prophets Ishmael, Ishaq, and their successors. The narrative of God's commandment upon Abraham to sacrifice his son holds an important position in Islam. The Qur'ān describes the commandment as a divine test from God upon Abraham and how God averted the actual slaughter at the final moment and had a sacrificial animal replace his son.¹³

According to *Shī'ca* exegesis, the Qur'ān clearly states that the actual sacrifice which was merely postponed in order to be replaced by a far greater sacrifice from among Abraham's descendants;

So when they had both submitted their wills (to Allāh), and he had laid him prostrate on his forehead (for sacrifice), We called out to him "O Abraham! Thou hast already fulfilled the vision!" - thus indeed do We reward those who do right. For this was obviously a trial- And We ransomed him with a momentous sacrifice: *And We left (this blessing) for him among generations (to come) in later times:*¹⁴

The last part of the above verse is thus interpreted as referring to the sacrifice and massacre of Ḥusayn, his family and companions at Karbalā, -where Zayn al-Ābidin

¹² Many aspects and rituals during the *Ḥajj*, Pilgrimage to Mecca, are imitations of the acts of Abraham, such as the slaughter of the sacrificial animal in Mina which is also commemorated by Muslims around the world as the *'Īd al-ʿadḥa* or *'Īd al-qurbān*, the festival of sacrifice.

¹³ Q. 37:102. Then, when (the son) reached (the age of) (serious) work with him, he said: "O my son! I see in vision that I offer thee in sacrifice: Now see what is thy view!" (The son) said: "O my father! Do as thou art commanded: thou will find me, if Allāh so wills one practising Patience and Constancy!"

Mīr Aḥmed 'Alī, S.V. (2005) *The Holy Qur'ān The Final Testament, Text, with English Translation and Commentary, With Special Notes from Ayatullāh Āgha Ḥāji Mirzā Mahdī Pooya Yazdī*, New York, Tahrike Tarsile Qur'ān Inc., Fifth U.S. Edition. In his commentary regarding this verse Mahdī Pooya states: "Sleep is a state of partial consciousness for the prophets of Allāh, so their dreams come true and are fulfilled. What Ibrāhīm, as a prophet of Allāh, saw in his dream [to sacrifice his son Ismā'īl] was as valid as an experience in wakefulness. Ibrāhīm told Ismā'īl what he saw in the dream as an indication, and Ismā'īl accepted it as an imperative."

¹⁴ Q. 37:103-8, also see Naqvi, p. 1.. Also see Mīr Aḥmed 'Alī, S.V. (2005), where Mahdī Pooya states: "What Imam Ḥusayn bin 'Alī saw in his dream in Madina was also an imperative. The Holy Prophet asked him: 'Go to Iraq and give your life in the cause of Allāh, because Allāh has so willed.'

In the case of Ismā'īl the sacrifice was stopped but the sacrifice Ḥusayn offered was accepted by Allāh as *dhibḥin aẓīm* according to verse 107." For further elaboration on these verses also refer to Ṭabāṭabāi's monumental exegesis *al-Mizān*.

was also present- as a fulfilment of God's promise to carry out the sacrifice from *among generations (to come) in later times*.¹⁵ This is succinctly captured by °Allāma Muḥammad Iqbāl, also known as *Iqbāl-e-Lahorī* where he says:

Ismail was the beginning, Ḥusayn was the ultimate¹⁶

Although this is by no means an agreed interpretation among all scholars of Qur'ānic exegesis, it has been influential among devout *Shī'ca* scholars and followers.¹⁷

Alongside the Prophet, being his great grandfather, the other towering personality in Islam was the grandfather to be of °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn, namely °Alī b. Abī Ṭālib who was born on the 13th Rajab 24. It is widely reported among both the *Sunnī* and *Shī'ca*, the *Shī'ca* popularly accepting that he was born in the *Ka'ba* in Mecca, an incident that

¹⁵ Mir Aḥmed °Alī, S.V. (2005), Mir Aḥmed °Alī states in his commentary about verse 107 states that; "... the sacrifice with which Ismā'īl was ransomed is described as *great* by Allāh , therefore it must be great in [an] absolute degree. An ordinary ram by no means, in any sense whatsoever, can be termed as great; moreover under no circumstances a ram can be greater than Ismā'īl son of Ibrāhīm, both the most distinguished prophets of Allāh , in whose progeny Allāh had appointed His divinely commissioned Imams (see commentary of Baqarah : 124). The ransom, therefore, is essentially a great sacrifice Allāh had kept in store for [the] future when the religion of Allāh would be perfected and completed after the advent of the Holy Prophet.

It was indeed a great and momentous occasion when two men of God stood ready to offer to Allāh that which was dearest to them to seek His pleasure, then Allāh puts off this great manifestation of "devotion and surrender to His will" which was the real purpose of the trial (not blood and flesh) to a future date, so that the "devotion and surrender to Allāh's will" should be demonstrated in a greater style and degree than what Ibrāhīm and Ismā'īl could. This type of service Imam Husayn performed, many ages later, in 60 A.H., and as he was a descendant of Ibrāhīm and Ismā'īl the credit of "the great sacrifice" goes to them also...a close study of which makes clear that his sacrifice has been rightly mentioned as *dhibhin aẓīm* in this verse." For further elaboration on these verses also refer to Ṭabāṭabāī's monumental exegesis *al-Mizān*.

¹⁶ Ibid. For further reading on Iqbāl's poetry on Ḥusayn b. °Alī also see: Schimmel, Annemarie (1986) *Al-Serat, Vol XII*, Harvard University

¹⁷ As for verse 107 the *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* states: *Then We ransomed him, the one whom he had been commanded to sacrifice, namely, Ishmael or Isaac — two different opinions — with a mighty sacrifice, [a mighty] ram from Paradise, the same one that Abel had offered as sacrifice: Gabriel, peace be upon him, brought it and the lord Abraham sacrificed it as he cried, Allāhu Akbar, 'God is Great'. The tafsīr of Ibn Kathīr narrates a report from Ibn °Abbās with a similar meaning as "A ram which had grazed in Paradise for forty years." As for verse 108 the *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* and *Tanwīr al-Miqbās min tafsīr al-°Abbās* both relate the verse to mean praise for Abraham to come in later generations.*

had been never been reported to have taken place previously or after.¹⁸ It would not be difficult to imagine what commotion the news of this birth would have caused as it would have spread around Mecca and further onwards by people coming for pilgrimage as they returned back. After some years Muḥammad would follow the example of his uncle Abū Ṭālib when he took the young °Alī under his guardianship and care.

After the death of his protector, carer and uncle Abū Ṭālib and his wife Khadīja, who had been a great support for him, the persecutions against Muḥammad increased in number and intensity. This eventually led to the *hijra*, Muḥammad's migration from Mecca to Medina in the year 622.¹⁹ The Quraysh, receiving information of this sent an armed troop who surrounded Muḥammad's house with intent to kill him before his imminent departure. However to their surprise they found that Muḥammad had managed to leave and instead found °Alī in his place inside his bed.²⁰ *Shī'ca* commentators also interpret in their exegesis that the following verse refers to this

¹⁸ Al-Mufīd, *al-Irshād* under the section of °Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, al-Ḥakīm in *Mustadrak*, page 483, Vol. III., Nūr al-Dīn b. Sabbāgh al-Mālikī in *Fusūl al-muḥimma*, Part 1, p.14., Muhammad ibn Talḥa al-Shāfi'ī in *Maṭālib al-sa'ūl*, page 11. Among modern historians, both stating that °Alī b. Abī Ṭālib was born inside the Ka'ba see; Al-Akkād °Abbās Mahmūd (2006) *Al-'Abqariya al-Imam °Alī*, Beirut, Al-maktaba al-asriyya, and Muḥammad Sayyid al-Ṭanṭāwī (2001) *Min Faḍā'il al-°Ashrat al-Mubashshirīn bil Janna*, Beirut.

¹⁹ The migration to Medina would still not bring an end to the aggression of the Quraysh and resulted in continued confrontations. There are numerous accounts of °Alī's courage, valor, chivalry and contributions on the battlefield where he was prominent. His fame grew with every battle as well as the fact that he single-handedly, destroyed many of Arabia's most famous and feared warriors wielding the legendary bifurcated sword known as *Dhu-l fiqār*. In the battle of Uhud he had the special role of protecting Muhammad when most of the Muslim army fled from the battlefield and where the famous slogan was coined: *There is no brave youth except °Alī and there is no sword which renders service except Dhu-l fiqār*. Ibn al-Athīr, °Alī, *Al-Kāmil fī al-Tarīkh*, vol. 3, p. 107. For further references also see Ashraf, Shahid (2005) *Encyclopedia of Holy Prophet and Companions* Anmol Publications PVT. Ltd, p. 36, pp 66-68. Merrick, James L. (2005) *The Life and Religion of Mohammed as Contained in the Sheeah Traditions* Kessinger Publishing, p. 247; Zeitlin, Irving M. (2007) *The Historical Muhammad* Polity, p.134

²⁰ Ibn Ishāq, p. 223; Naqvi p. 3

particular incident, and according to them together with many other verses and prophetic traditions further distinguishing the position of °Alī b. Abī Ṭālib.

And there is the kind of man who gives (sells) himself to earn the pleasure of Allāh. And Allāh is full of kindness to (His) devotees.²¹

In the year 623²² the grandmother to be of °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn, Fāṭima, whom Muḥammad dearly loved and considered as his own flesh and blood, being his only surviving child, was married to °Alī b. Abī Ṭālib after many suitors had been refused.²³ From such distinguished and venerated personalities were born °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn's father Ḥusayn b. °Alī, his uncle Ḥasan b. °Alī, (more known as Imam

²¹ Q. 2:207. Mīr Aḥmed °Alī, S.V. (2005) in his commentary narrates this incident as follows: "Thalabi, Ghazali, the author of *Aḥyā-ul °Ulūm*, and all the *Shī°a* commentators say that this verse was revealed to praise °Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, when he slept in the bed of the Holy Prophet, during the night of *hijrat*. Immediately after the death of Abū Ṭālib, Abū Sufyān, the chief of the branch of °Umayyah, succeeded to the principality of Makka. A zealous votary of the idols, a mortal foe of the line of Hāshim, he convened an assembly of the Quraysh and their allies. All tribal heads held a conference on the instigation of Abū Sufyān and Abū Jahl. It was resolved that one man from every tribe should go to the Holy Prophet's house in the darkness of the night and kill him jointly, in order to divide the guilt, and baffle the vengeance of the Banī Hāshim. In the stupidity of their ignorance, they forgot that Allāh is seeing, hearing, and His *hand* (°Ālī) was alive, who, from his earliest days, had committed himself to save the Holy Prophet at all costs. In the dark night, the conspirators surrounded the house of the Holy Prophet. Meanwhile, Allāh commanded the Holy Prophet to leave Makka at once and go to Madina. The Holy Prophet intimated °Alī of the divine plan and asked him to lie down on his bed, in order to lead the enemies into thinking that it was the Holy Prophet himself who was sleeping, thus giving him enough time to go away from Makka (unnoticed). °Alī asked the Holy Prophet if his lying down in his bed would save the Holy Prophet's life, to which he answered in the affirmative. So °Alī lay down on the Holy Prophet's bed, covering himself with his blanket. °Alī made a willing choice of certain death, as the blood-thirsty enemies were lurking around the house to kill the Holy Prophet in his bed at any time during the night."

²² The actual date of the marriage is unclear, but likely took place in 623, although some sources say it was in 622. USC-MSA Compendium of Muslim Texts, *Fatimah*, *Et*. Brill

²³ *Saḥīḥ Bukhārī*, vol. 2, pp. 74, 185, 189; *Saḥīḥ Muslim*, vol. 2, p. 290; Naqvi, p. 4
Again *Shī°a* commentators uphold that the choice of °Alī as her spouse was by divine dispensation and command, as the Prophet would not do anything except by divine command: "Your Companion is neither astray nor being misled. Nor does he say (ought) of (his own) desire. It is no less than inspiration sent down to him". Q. 53:2-4. Fāṭimah's own position and standing would further be laid out by the many honorific titles given to her, among them from her father Muhammad Such as *Sayyidat al-nisā al-°ālamīn* (the leader of all the ladies of the worlds), *Umm abihā* (Mother of her father), *Siddiqā* (the truthful), *Ṭāhira* (the pure) and so forth. Amīn, Hassan (1968–73) *Islamic Shī°ite Encyclopedia* Beirut, Slim Press, Vol. 4. p.98

Ḥusayn and Imam Ḥasan) and aunts Zaynab and Kulthūm bint ʿAlī, the latter two who would also be with him through the massacre and ordeal at Karbalā.

Historical sources point out that immediately following the Prophet's death in Medina (11/632) there was a dispute regarding his succession and an *ad hoc* assembly by the notables and leading figures in Islam met at the *saqīfa* (assembly hall) in Medina to settle on the essential question of leadership.²⁴

However the election that ended in favour of ʿAbdullah b. ʿUthmān (d. 13/634), better known by his *kunya* or agnomen, as Abū Bakr was not as simple as is generally believed. A conspicuous absentee during this election was ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn's grandfather, the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law, as he had remained at the Prophet's deathbed and occupied with the funeral services. Several sources suggest the existence of at least a few people at this early meeting at the *saqīfa* who felt that ʿAlī had a valid claim to the succession who considered that in the view of a number of statements made by Muḥammad in his lifetime, ʿAlī should have occupied the leading position – not only as the temporal head (caliph) but also as the spiritual head (Imam). They objected giving the *bayʿa* (allegiance) to Abū Bakr stating they would not give it to anyone but ʿAlī, although Abū Bakr was considered a prominent companion of Muḥammad during his lifetime and subsequently became the first Muslim to rule after him. The followers of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib however believed he violated Muḥammad's direct orders and effectively a coup d'état was orchestrated.²⁵

²⁴ Ibn Iṣḥāq, *al-Sīra*; Madelung, Wilferd (1997) *The Succession to Muhammad* Cambridge University Press

²⁵ Al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*, vol 1, p. 1817; al-Yaʿqūbī, *Tarīkh* (Beirut, n.d.) vol. 2, pp. 123 ff.; Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā* (Beirut, n.d.), vol. 3, pp. 110 ff. Also refer to later sources such as Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-tarīkh* (Beirut, 1997), and Al-Ṣuyūṭī, *Tarīkh al-khulafā*

What is significant from the point of view of this study and historically are reports which maintain such claims and sentiments about °Alī and his family and which are contained in the earliest Islamic writings.²⁶ Some accounts uphold that the dissent raised in favour of °Alī did not quiet down after the decision was made in favour of Abū Bakr at the *saqīfa*.²⁷ These sentiments survived in varying degrees during the reign of the two following Caliphs, °Umar b. al-Khattāb (d. 644) and °Uthmān b. al-Affān (d.656) which in the future would have a significant impact upon the life of Zayn al-°Ābidīn.

It was during the last years of the reign of °Uthmān b. °Affān (d. 656) that the social and political unrest began leading to his assassination, after which the Muslims rallied around the grandfather of Zayn al-°Ābidīn, °Alī .b Abī Ṭālib to take up the office of the Caliphate. °Alī reluctantly accepted, as he describes the situation in his famous *Khutba Shiqshiqiyya*.²⁸

²⁶ Even during the lifetime of the Prophet there are claims there was a group very attached to °Alī who on that account came to be known as the *Shī'ca* of °Alī . See al-Rāzi, *Kitāb al-zīna*, and Āl-Nawbakhtī, *Firāq al-shī'ca*, p. 15

²⁷ Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, ed. M. Ḥamīdullāh (Cairo, 1959) vol. 1, pp. 579-91; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, vol. 1, pp. 1837-45; Ibn Hishām, *Sirat Rasūl Allāh*, ed. M. Saqqā et. al. (Cairo, 1936), vol. 4, pp. 307-10; al-Yā'qūbī, *Ta'rikh*, vol. 2, pp. 123-6

²⁸ A part of which is as follows: "...At that moment, nothing took me by surprise, but the crowd of people rushing to me. It advanced towards me from every side like the mane of the hyena so much so that Ḥasan and Ḥusayn were getting crushed and both the ends of my shoulder garment were torn. They collected around me like the herd of sheep and goats. When I took up the reins of government one party broke away and another turned disobedient while the rest began acting wrongfully as if they had not heard the word of Allāh saying: *That abode in the hereafter, We assign it for those who intend not to exult themselves in the earth, nor (to make) mischief (therein); and the end is (best) for the pious ones.* (Q.28:83) Yes, by Allāh , they had heard it and understood it but the world appeared glittering in their eyes and its embellishments seduced them. Behold, by Him who split the grain (to grow) and created living beings, if people had not come to me and supporters had not exhausted the argument and if there had been no pledge of Allāh with the learned to the effect that they should not acquiesce in the gluttony of the oppressor and the hunger of the oppressed I would have cast the rope of Caliphate on its own shoulders, and would have given the last one the same treatment as to the first one. Then you would have seen that in my view this world of yours is no better than the sneezing of a goat..." *Nahj al-Balāgha*, sermon 3

°Alī's rule lasted between the years 656-661, this was one of the more chaotic periods in Muslim history, and also coincided with the First *Fitna* during which a schism took place which led to the first civil war in Muslim history, leading to °Alī's fatal wounding while leading prayers in the mosque of Kūfa, ending in his death (40/661). The Kūfans then pledged allegiance to °Alī's son Ḥasan b. °Alī, being Zayn al-°Ābidīns uncle, who ruled for a short period. During this time, Mu°āwiya b. Abū Sufyān held command of the largest force in the Muslim Empire, and had declared himself caliph, despite °Alī's explicit instructions and designation - *naṣṣ*, of Ḥasan and that only the *Ahl al-Bayt* of Muḥammad were to reign the caliphate²⁹, and marched his army into Iraq, the seat of Ḥasan's caliphate. War followed during which Mu°āwiya gradually subverted the generals and commanders of Ḥasan's army with large sums of money deceiving promises and threats until the army rebelled against him. Finally, Ḥasan was forced to make peace and to yield the caliphate to Mu°āwiya. These events during this continued tumultuous period would ultimately lead to the massacre at Karbalā where most part of the males in °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn's family were killed along with their few companions and where he remained as one of the only male survivors.

The massacre at Karbalā and the events that took place there would form to greatly impact upon the life and persona of °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn. In the next chapter we will closer examine his personal biography, the person, and the mindset, providing us with a window to the author and through him to the text.

²⁹ Madelung, Wilferd (1997) *The Succession to Muhammad: A Study of the Early Caliphate* Cambridge University Press, pp. 313 and 314. Madelung further describes the status quo; “°Umayyad highhandedness, misrule and repression were gradually to turn the minority of °Alī's admirers into a majority. In the memory of later generations °Alī became the ideal Commander of the Faithful. In face of the fake °Umayyad claim to legitimate sovereignty in Islam as God's Vice-regents on earth, and in view of °Umayyad treachery, arbitrary and divisive government, and vindictive retribution, they came to appreciate his [°Alī's] honesty, his unbending devotion to the reign of Islam, his deep personal loyalties, his equal treatment of all his supporters, and his generosity in forgiving his defeated enemies.”, pp. 309-10

MPhil B

Chapter 3

Life and Works of °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn

Introduction

This chapter will explore the life and contribution of °Alī b al-Ḥusayn and establish a link between the socio-cultural and political context of that time with the text attributed to him. Although the *Ṣahīfa* is generally viewed as a text on devotional supplication (*du'a*), however it can also be read as a wider commentary of the time in which it was produced. The *Ṣahīfa* and other texts attributed to °Alī b al-Ḥusayn are part of the literary, theological, spiritual, and political discourse of that era. Thus, there is in the text an interplay between spirituality, theology, and history.

1.1 General Sketch

°Alī b. al-Ḥusayn was born in Medina, according to most sources in the year 37-38/658-9.³⁰ He may have been too small to have remembered his grandfather °Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, whom he lived with for two years and who was killed in 41/661. He was brought up in the presence of his uncle Ḥasan b. °Alī (d. 49/669) with whom he lived for 12 years and his father Ḥusayn b. 'Alī (d. 60/680) whom he lived with for 23

³⁰ Qarashī mentions that °Alī b. al-Husayn's grandfather °Alī b. Abī Ṭālib or father Husayn b. °Alī hurried at his birth arrival to perform the religious rites of birth by reciting the *adhān* (call to prayer) in the right ear and the *iqāma* (second imminent call to prayer) in the left ear. On the seventh day of his birth, his father sacrificed a ram for him (in the ceremony of *aqīqa*), cut his hair and distributed silver or gold as equal to weight of the hair as alms to the poor and needy according to the Prophetic traditions. Qarashī p. 13-14

years.³¹ Ḥasan and Ḥusayn b. °Alī were the Prophet's grandchildren from his daughter Fāṭima. Many *Shī'ca* sources state that his mother was Shahrbanū or Shazanān as she is also called, the daughter of Yazdigird, the last Sasanian king of Persia.³² Due to this, according to Ibn Khallikān he was said to be *Ibn al-Khiyaratayn*, the 'son of the best two', meaning the Quraysh among the Arabs and the Persians among the non-Arabs.³³ According to some accounts, his mother was brought as a captive to Medina during the caliphate of °Umar, who wanted to sell her. °Alī suggested instead that she be offered her choice of the Muslim men as a husband and that her dower be paid from the public treasury. °Umar agreed and she chose °Alī's son Ḥusayn. She is said to have died shortly after giving birth to her only son °Alī, Zayn al-°Ābidīn.³⁴

At this stage we shall not recount in detail the massacre at Karbalā' in 60/680, when Ḥusayn b. °Alī and many of the male members of his family were killed by the forces of the °Umayyad caliph Yazīd, an event which had effects to a great extent on the Islamic world and gave impetus to the nascent *Shī'ca* movement. Several accounts are related concerning his grief over this tragedy. One such account is that for twenty years whenever food was placed before him, he would weep.³⁵

³¹ Al-Mufīd, Abū °Abdullāh Muḥammad, *Kitāb al-Irshad*, Qum, Ansariyan Publications

³² Al-Qarashī, B (1988) *Ḥayāt al-Imam Zayn al-°Ābidīn*, Beirut, Dar al-adwa' and Al-Amīn, H. *A°yān al-Shī'ca*

³³ Ibn Khallikān, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad (1970) *Wafayāt al-a°yān wa anbā' abnā' al-zamān*, vol. III, Beirut, Dar Sādir

³⁴ Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a°yān wa anbā' abnā' al-zamān*, vol. III

³⁵ One day a servant said to him, "O son of God's Messenger! Is it not time for your sorrow to come to an end?" He replied, "Woe upon you! Jacob the prophet had twelve sons, and God made one of them disappear. His eyes turned white from constant weeping, his head turned grey out of sorrow, and his back became bent in gloom, though his son was alive in this world. But I watched while my father, my brother, my uncle, and seventeen members of my family were slaughtered all around me. How should my sorrow come to an end?" See introduction of *Ṣaḥīfa al-Sajjādiyya (Psalms of Islam)*

Zayn al-°Ābidīn resided in Medina until his death at the age of fifty-four in the year 95/713-4.³⁶ He was the object both of great sympathy because of the massacre of his family, and of veneration as the great grandson of the Prophet. He dedicated his life to learning and worship and became an authority on prophetic traditions and law, but he was known mostly for his nobility of character and his piety, which earned him his sobriquet already in his lifetime. The details that have reached us about his life in Medina mainly take the form of anecdotes affirming his constant preoccupation with worship and acts of devotion.³⁷ He fathered fifteen children, eleven boys and four girls.³⁸

After Karbalā, there were a number of different factions in the Shī°i community, not all of whom supported °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn as the rightful leader and Imam of the Muslim community. Many Shī°a, such as those involved in the *Tawwābūn* movement, felt that the °Umayyads had to be overthrown and that it was the duty of the Imam to lead a revolt, however he refused to become involved with politics.³⁹

1.2 Childhood

Qarashī mentions that difficulty and pain accompanied him from the time of his childhood; among them being that his mother died while he was in infancy.⁴⁰ He also states that Ḥusayn b. °Alī his father, tried his best to save her from the illness

³⁶ Al-Mufīd, *Kitāb al-Irshād*

³⁷ Padwick, C. *Muslim Devotions*

³⁸ Al-Amīn, H. *A°yān al-shī°a* and Al-Mufīd, *Kitāb al-Irshād*

³⁹ Padwick, C. *Muslim Devotions*

⁴⁰ Al-Imam Zayn al-°Ābidīn, p. 18, He reports that: “He (Zayn al-°Ābidīn) was born weak and thin. Gleams as faint as dim worry appeared in his eyes. These broken gleams indicated coming grief.” Qarashī p. 13

described as childbed fever, but was unable to do so. The fever had become intense and she suffered from severe pain for numerous days until she died. Ḥusayn b. °Alī together with prominent Muslim figures and a large number of Muslims escorted her burial procession and she was finally buried in Kūfā.⁴¹ His father then arranged for a nursemaid to see to the care of his son °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn. Qarashī describes the nursemaid as a righteous lady, treating the child just like an affectionate mother would treat her own son and that °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn grew up in an atmosphere of intense secrecy regarding the death of his natural birth-mother, and no one told him about her death until he had become grown up lest he would become saddened.⁴² There are two other narratives regarding his mother one of which is that she threw herself in the river Euphrates after the incident at Karbalā while the others says that she was among those who survived Karbalā.⁴³

Qarashī describes him as quite thin and weak as he became old due to his constant worship, and also due to the effects and sorrow from the massacre at Karbalā.⁴⁴ However, despite this, al-Shaykhani al-Qādirī narrates about him that “beholders were fixed in a gaze at the handsomeness of his face.”⁴⁵

It is also interesting to note that the most well known of the titles or agnomen that °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn became known by, *Sayyid al-°Ābidīn* (the master of worshippers) is reported to have had its roots from the Prophet Muḥammad himself. One such report

⁴¹ Qarashī, p. 20

⁴² Imam Zayn al-°Ābidīn , p. 19, Qarashī p. 21

⁴³ EI. Vol XI, p. 482

⁴⁴ Qarashī, p. 21

⁴⁵ *Al-Şirāʾ al-Sawī fī Manāqib āl al-Nabī*, p. 192

is from Al-Hāfiz b. °Asākir who reported on the authority of Sufyān b. °Ayyina on the authority of b. al-Zubayr, who said:

“While we were (sitting) with Jābir, °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn came. Jabir said to him: ‘When I was (sitting) with Allāh’s apostle, may Allāh bless him and his family, al-Ḥusayn came to him. He (the Prophet) embraced him (al-Ḥusayn), kissed him, sat him beside him and said; ‘A son will be born from this son who will be called °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn, and a caller will call out on the day of Judgment’; ‘let Sayyid al-°Ābidīn stand up’, ‘and he [i.e. °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn] will stand up.’”⁴⁶

The first years of °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn were spent under the wings of his father Ḥusayn b. °Alī, paternal uncle Ḥasan b. °Alī and grandfather °Alī b. Abī Ṭālib. The period with his grandfather lasted about two years after which °Alī b. Abī Talib died as a result from sustaining injuries after an assassination attempt at the Mosque of Kūfā during prayers by the infamous °Abd al-Rahmān b. al-Muljim, known as Ibn Muljim. The climate that followed may be described as quite turbulent, with much unrest, particularly for those who subscribed to the leadership of °Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and the Imamate. Those who considered °Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and the Imams after him as the temporal and spiritual leaders came to be known as the *Shī°ca* (lit. followers, and in this context the *Shī°ca* °Alī, i.e. the followers of °Alī).⁴⁷

⁴⁶ *Tārīkh al-Dimishq*, vol 36 p. 142. There are other similar reports attributed to the Prophet though with the variation of the agnomen *Zayn al-°Ābidīn* (the ornament of worshippers) °*Ilal al-Sharāyi°c*, p. 87, *Bihar* vol 46, p. 3. However there are opinions opposing such views such as Ibn Taymīyya who states that; “this does not have any source, and that the knowledgeable people have not narrated it.” *Minhāj al-sunna*, vol. 2, p. 123, Qarashī, p. 16. There are several other agnomina that °Alī b. al-Husayn became known by through his lifetime apart from the two most famous *Zayn al-°Ābidīn* and *Sayyid al-°Ābidīn* such as; *Dhū al-Thafanāt*, *al-Sajjād*, *al-Zakī*, *al-Amīn* and *Ibn al-Khiyaratayn*. Qarashī pp 17-20

⁴⁷ Nasr explains this concept as follows: “Shī°ism was not brought into existence only by the question of the political succession to Muhammad as so many Western works claim (although this question was of course of great importance). The problem of political succession may be said to be the element that crystallized the Shī°ites into a distinct group, and political suppression in later periods, especially the martyrdom of Imam Husayn-upon whom be peace-only accentuated this tendency of the Shī°ites to see themselves as a separate community within the Islamic world. The principal cause of the coming into being of Shī°ism, however, lies in the fact that this possibility existed within the Islamic revelation itself and so had to be realized. Inasmuch as there were exoteric [Zāhirī] and esoteric [Bāṭinī] interpretations from the very beginning, from which developed the schools (*madh°hab*) of the Sharia

It is evident that °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn grew up in the midst and surrounding of prominent personalities of Islam. As mentioned, his father Ḥusayn, uncle Ḥasan and aunts Zaynab and Umm Kulthūm all of them being the children of °Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and Fāṭima and thus the grandchildren of the Prophet and Abū Ṭālib. He may have been too young to remember the ordeal surrounding the death of his grandfather °Alī .b Abī Ṭālib, at which he was about two years old. He was subsequently looked after by his paternal uncle Ḥasan and father Ḥusayn, both of whom poured much affection, love and care unto the child. Qarashī mentions that Ḥusayn found his son’s qualities noble and similar to that of the Prophet, thus he took great care of him and instilled within him noble values, and accompanying him most of the time.⁴⁸ It appears very likely that despite the tragic circumstances of the loss of his mother as a child and the difficult circumstances surrounding his grandfather’s death, he was showered with great care and affection from his family members. There is an interesting incident when °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn as a child became ill, his father Ḥusayn hurried to visit him and asked him if he wanted or wished for anything saying; “What do you wish my little son?” He replied; “I wish I would be among those who did not suggest (anything) to their Lord. I am satisfied with what my Lord decides.” Ḥusayn was greatly moved by these words of his son and admired the indication of his great knowledge and deep sense of faith and said with admiration; “Bravo! You are similar to Abraham, the Friend of Allāh (referring to Abraham’s title *Khalīl Allāh*) when

and Sufism in the *Sunnī* world, there also had to be an interpretation of Islam, which would combine these elements in a single whole. This possibility was realized in Shī‘ism, for which the Imam is the person in whom these two aspects of traditional authority are united and in whom the religious life is marked by a sense of tragedy and martyrdom... Hence the question which arose was not so much who should be the successor of Muhammad as what the function and qualifications of such a person would be.” Nasr, *Shī‘ite Islam*, preface, pp. 9 and 10

⁴⁸ Qarashī p. 24

[angel] Gabriel asked him; ‘Have you any need?’ He (Abraham) replied; ‘I do not suggest (anything) to my Lord, rather Allāh is sufficient and the best Agent!’⁴⁹

1.3 How Imamate came to him

Shī‘a scholars and historians provide various accounts regarding how °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn received the Imamate.⁵⁰ One of the earliest incidents is reported to be during the lifetime of his grandfather °Alī b. Abī Ṭālib. Qarashī describes it to be the time when °Alī b. Abī Ṭālib had been wounded⁵¹ and was in the last hours of his life, he

⁴⁹ Bihar, vol. 46, p. 46. For further reading also see commentaries in Q. 21:68-71, 29:24, 37:97-98

⁵⁰ A succinct account of *Imamat* in *Shī‘a* belief is found in the translators forward of “The Story of Karbalā” by °Alī Nazari Munfarid, translated by Sayyid Hussein Alamdar and is given here as follows: “*Imamat*: The position of leadership in religious and civil matters in Islamic society is known as *imamat*, and the holder is known as the *imam*. It is the belief of Shī‘i Muslims that Allāh the Almighty must have designated an *imam* for the people after the death of the Holy Prophet (peace be with him and his family) to uphold the culture and laws of the religion and to guide people on the way of truth. The term *imam* as used in a technical sense in Shī‘ism differs from general usage of [the] term in Arabic, where it means ‘leader’ or in *Sunnī* political theory where it means the caliph himself. As used technically in Shi’ism the term refers to the person who contains within himself the ‘Muhammedan-light’ which was handed down through Fāṭima (peace be upon her), the daughter of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his family), and °Alī (peace be upon him) the first *imam* to the others terminating with the hidden *imam* who is to appear again one day as the awaited al-Mahdī (peace be upon him). As a result of the presence of the light, the *imam* is considered to be sinless *ma’sum* and to possess perfect knowledge of the esoteric as well [as] the exoteric order.

The *imams* are like [a] chain of light issuing from the ‘Sun of Prophecy’ which is their origin, and yet they are never separated from the ‘Sun’. Whatever is said by them emanates from the same inviolable treasury of inspired wisdom. Since they are an extension of the inner reality of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his family), their words really go back him. That is why their sayings are seen in the Shī‘ite perspective as an extension of the Prophetic *ḥadīth*, just as the light of their being is seen as [a] continuation of the Prophetic light. In Shī‘ite eyes, the temporal separation of the *imams* from the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) does not at all effect their essential and inner bond with him or the continuity of the ‘Prophetic-light’ which is the source of his as well [as] their inspired knowledge. Munfarid, °Alī Nazari, (1997) *Qissal-Karbalā*, transl. Alamdar Sayyid Hussein (2001) *The Story of Karbalā*, Qum

⁵¹ It was on the 19th in the month of Ramadan, in the Great Mosque of Kūfa while worshipping that the assassination attempt on °Alī made by the Khawārij °Abd-al-Raḥmān b. Muḥjam. The poison coated sword of Ibn Muḥjam severely wounded him during prostration in the Morning prayer. See Ṭabaṭabāi, Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn (1979). *Shī‘ite Islam*. Suny press. Translated by Seyyed Hossein Nasr. P. 192.

At this °Alī gave an order to his sons that they should not attack the Khārijis, stipulating instead that if he survived, pardon would be given to his attacker Ibn Muḥjam, and if he died, only one equal stroke should be given to him (regardless of whether or not he dies from the it). See Kelsay, Jhon (1993). *Islam and War: A Study in Comparative Ethics*. Westminster, John Knox Press. P. 92.

gathered his family members and sons around him, including °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn. He entrusted the Imamate to his sons, Ḥasan first and that Ḥusayn was to succeed his brother Ḥasan. °Alī also designated the young grandson as the future Imam (after Ḥusayn). Qarashī narrates that °Alī recited the greetings of the Prophet to °Alī b al-Ḥusayn and to his future son Muḥammad b. °Alī al-Bāqir (who was to be the fifth Imam, after °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn).⁵²

Furthermore there are reports that the Prophet himself in his lifetime appointed and foretold of his twelve successors and trustees after him while also mentioning their names.⁵³ Al-Qarashī further states that had there been no texts indicating and confirming the Imamate of °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn even then his ideals and his outstanding qualities would be enough to confirm it.⁵⁴ There is also a fascinating account of the Black Stone at the *Ka'ba* testifying to his Imamate at a time of dispute.⁵⁵

A few days later after the attack, °Alī died on February 28, 661 (21 in the month of Ramadan 40 A.H). The *qiṣās* (lit. equal retaliation) was fulfilled by his son Ḥasan and equal punishment was meted out to Ibn Muljim as had been stipulated according to °Alī's wish. See Madelung, Wilferd (1997). *The Succession to Muhammad: A Study of the Early Caliphate*. Cambridge University Press.

⁵² Qarashī p. 24. Furthermore the famous *Shī'a* traditionist al-Kulaynī (d. 328 or 329/939 or 940) records a narration in his magnum opus *al-Kāfī*, that °Alī b. Abī Ṭālib appointed his son Ḥasan as the Imam and gave him the tablets of the prophets and asked his sons Ḥusayn and Muḥammad b al-Ḥanafīyya and his other sons as well as the chiefs of his followers to bear witness to that. He then told Ḥusayn; "You are the one who will undertake the office of the Imamate after your brother al-Ḥasan, and Allāh's Messenger ordered you to give the tablets (of the prophets) to your son Zayn al-°Ābidīn, for he will be the *ḥujja* (proof) after you." He then took °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn who was still a child by the hand and said to him; "Allāh's Apostle, may Allāh bless him and his family, ordered you to designate your son, Muḥammad al-Bāqir, as an Imam after you, and recite to him the greetings of Allāh's Apostle and that of mine." Qarashī p. 89-90, Also see *Al-Kāfī* in *The Chapter of textual Imamate of al-Ḥasan*

On the 'Prophetic Tablets' see Al-Majlisī, Muḥammad Bāqir. *Ḥayāt al-Qulūb Stories of the Prophets: Characteristics and Circumstances of the Prophets and their Successors*, Qum, Ansariyan Publications

⁵³ *Kifāyat al-Athar*, p. 311, Al-Tūṣī, *al-Ghayba*, p. 105, *Mukhtasar al-Baṣā'ir*, p. 39, *Kitāb Salīm b. Qays*, p.94

⁵⁴ Qarashī also mentions another report from al-Zuhrī (d. 124/742) which states: "I was with al-Ḥusayn b. °Alī when °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Asghar (i.e. Zayn al-°Ābidīn) came in. So al-Ḥusayn called him, embraced him and kissed him between his eyes. I (i.e. al-Zuhrī) turned to Imam al-Ḥusayn and asked him, son of Allāh's Apostle, who will be the Imam after you? Al-Ḥusayn replied: 'This son of mine, °Alī, will be the Imam. He is the father of the Imams.'" See Qarashī p. 90

⁵⁵ There is also a very interesting account that Seyyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvī discusses when Muḥammad al-Ḥanafīyya who was Ḥusayn's brother from their father °Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, made the claim for the

2.1 Hagiographical reports on His Personality and Spiritual Standing

There appears to be a general consensus among early as well as later Muslims regarding the noble personality and high spiritual standing of °Alī b al-Ḥusayn. The Medieval Arabic biographer Ibn Khalikān writes in his *Wafāyat al-a°yān*:

The merits and noble qualities of Zayn al-°Ābidīn are so many that they cannot all be listed.⁵⁶

The details regarding his personality have been recorded in hagiographical texts from both the *Sunnī* and *Shī°a* traditions. Jābir b. °Abdallā al-Anṣārī (d. 78/697) the well-known and senior companion of the Prophet would express his great admiration of the Imam by saying; “None of the children of the prophets was like °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn (i.e.

Imamate after the death of Ḥusayn on the proviso that Ḥusayn had become Imam after the death of his elder brother, and thus he would now become the Imam after his brother Ḥusayn. °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn rejected this claim by declaring that he was the Imam by divine appointment.

Apparently this difference would not come to a resolve and finally °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn suggested that the *Ḥajar al-Aswad* (the black stone attached in the corner of the *Kab°a*) should be approached for ultimate judgment. This was agreed by Muḥammad al-Ḥanafīyya and both parties went to Mecca during the season for pilgrimage when thousands of pilgrims had gathered.

Rizvi comments on the very extraordinary situation and says: “The stranger than fiction news must have spread like a wild fire that °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn and Muḥammad al-Ḥanafīyya wanted the ‘Black Stone’ to judge between them. Everyone must have wondered how a stone could judge between two people. They must have eagerly waited to see the outcome when the two parties would approach the stone. What would they say when the stone being a stone, would not respond to their arguments!” In front of what must have been a much anticipating crowd both uncle and nephew advanced towards the ‘Black Stone’ and Muḥammad al-Ḥanafīyya first addressed it, however without receiving any response. Zayn al-°Ābidīn then said to his uncle; “Had you O uncle, been the *waṣī* (successor) and the Imam, it would certainly have answered you.” Muḥammad al-Ḥanafīyya then replied and said; “Now O nephew, you pray and ask it.” °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn then prayed to God and then asked the ‘Black Stone’ to declare in clear Arabic as to who would be the *wasi* and the Imam after Ḥusayn b. °Alī. There was a tremor in the stone and then it spoke in clear Arabic saying; “O Allāh , verily *Wiṣāya* (succession) and *Imāma*, after al-Ḥusayn b. °Alī is for Zayn al-°Ābidīn °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn, son of °Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and Fāṭima bint Rasūlillā”. Muḥammad al-Ḥanafīyya accepted the judgment and subsequently declared his allegiance to °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn as the Imam and *waṣī*. Rizvi further comments and says; “...the miraculous nature of the episode and the timing served its purpose. The pilgrims on returning to their homes must have felt compelled to narrate this strange story; and thus the Shī°as throughout the Muslim world would come to know, without any formal proclamation, that Imam Zayn al-°Ābidīn was their divinely-appointed leader and guide.” Rizvi, Seyyid Saeed Akhtar, (1979) *Al-Serat* vol, 5, no’s 3-4, *The illustrious period of the Imamate of Imam Zayn al-°Ābidīn*. Also see Ṭabraṣī *al-Ihtijāj*, al-Kulaynī *al-Kāfi*, Baṣā’ir *al-Darajāt*, *I°lam al-Warā*, Ibn Shahrāshūb *Manāqib*, Majlisi *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 11

⁵⁶ Ibn Khalikān, *Wafāyat al-a°yān*, vol.3, p.269.

none of them could match him in respect of his exceptional being, personality and character).”⁵⁷

°AbdAllāh b. °Abbās (d. 68/690), despite his old age and prominent position among people he would respect the younger °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn and would stand up from his seat when seeing him saying; “Welcome the most beloved one (*Marhaban bi-l ḥabīb al-ḥabīb*)!”⁵⁸

The well-known scholar and jurist Muḥammad b. Muslim b. Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. 124/741-2) is found to have stated his view regarding the personality °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn in many sources: “I have never seen a Hāshimī like °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn.”⁵⁹

“I have never met among the *Ahl al-Bayt* (Members of the House) a person more meritorious than °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn.”⁶⁰

Above Al-Zuhrī is referring to the well-known Prophetic tradition mentioned previously which states; “When the Day of Judgment takes place, a caller will call out from inside the Throne; ‘Let the lord of the worshippers stand up! So he will stand up.’”⁶¹

Sufyān b. Ayyina relates that he asked al-Zuhrī if he had ever met °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn to which he replied; “Yes, I have met him. I have never met a person more meritorious than him. By Allāh, I have never known that he had a friend in secret or an enemy in public”, at which he was asked why that was and he replied; “Because all those who

⁵⁷ Qarashī, p. 104, *Ḥayat Imam Muḥammad al-Bāqir*

⁵⁸ Qarashī, p.104, *Tā’rikh Dimishq*, vol. 36, p. 147

⁵⁹ Qarashī, p.104. Al-Asfahānī, al-Afghānī Abū Farrāj *Khulāsat Tahdīb al-Kamāl*, vol.15, p.325

⁶⁰ Qarashī, p.105

⁶¹ Qarashī p. 105, *Tā’rikh Dimishq*, vol. 36, p. 140

loved him envied him out of their abundant knowledge of his outstanding merits, and all those who hated him took care of him because he took great care of them.”⁶²

Thābit b. Safiyya (d. 150/767) better known as Abū Hamza Thumālī from the well known supplication given to him by °Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and named after him (i.e. the supplication of Abū Hamza Thumālī) is reported to have said: “I have never heard that there is a person more ascetic than °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn except [his grandfather] °Alī b. Abī Ṭālib.”⁶³ Another similar report with an addition is; “I have never heard that there is a person more ascetic than °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn, who caused to weep all those who were in his presence when he talked about asceticism and preaching.”⁶⁴

His grandson and sixth Shī‘i Imam, Ja‘far b. Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765) said of him that: “None of °Alī’s children [i.e. °Alī b. Abī Ṭālib] was more like and nearer to him in manner of dress and understanding than °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn.”⁶⁵

His high esteem was not merely confined to his supporters and followers but also extended to those who bore enmity or malice against him. An example of this can be found in the words of °Abd Allāh al-Malik b. Marwān (d. 86/705) who was known to harbour animosity towards the members of the *Ahl al-Bayt*.⁶⁶

The well-known poet al-Farazdaq (d. 109-111/728-730) was among those who held °Alī b. Al-Ḥusayn in high esteem and composed his much famed ode at the incident

⁶² Qarashī, p.105-6, *Ilal al-Sharāy‘i*, p. 88, *Wasā’il al-Shī‘a*, vol. 5, p. 541, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 46, p. 64

⁶³ Qarashī p. 108, *Safīnat al-Biḥār*, vol. 1, p. 571

⁶⁴ Qarashī p. 109, Al-Mufid, *al-Amālī*, p. 117

⁶⁵ Qarashī p. 110, Al-Himyārī, *Diwān*, p. 362

⁶⁶ At one occasion he met with °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn and found him to be fatigued and weak due to excessive worship and said to him in astonishment; “Exertion has appeared on your face while Allāh has already promised to grant you good, you are a part of Allāh’s Messenger, may Allāh bless him and his family, your lineage is close to him, your means is certain, you have outstanding merits over the people of your House and time, and you are endowed with virtues, knowledge, religion and piety with which none before you or after you has ever been endowed with except your previous ancestors.” Qarashī p. 111, Al-Majlisi, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 46, p. 75

during the time of pilgrimage when both Hishām (d.125/743), the son of the °Umayyad caliph °Abdul Malik and Zayn al-°Ābidīn were trying to reach the Black Stone around the much crowded *Ka°ba*.⁶⁷

We find even Ibn Taymīyya (d. 728/1328), known for his hostile and unsympathetic views concerning the *Ahl al-Bayt* report in favour of °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn.⁶⁸

It appears from the hagiographical literature available on °Alī Ibn al-Ḥusayn that he is a celebrated figure in various schools of thought who have reported on the personality of °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn, despite their different thoughts and inclinations it can be said that they were unanimous in their regard for him.

Whether the above narratives of °Alī b al-Ḥusayn’s personality and spiritual standing can be authenticated or not is a question that deserves an independent critical study, a study that would fall outside the scope of this thesis. What is certain however from the above hagiographical statements is that he clearly enjoys an exalted position in the lives of both *Shī°ca* and *Sunnī* Muslims. What can be said though of him regarding the view of his contemporaries and the historians, who although at times had differing doctrines and inclinations is that they seem to be very much in line with Shī°i view

⁶⁷ As the Imam approached the people just made way and a path was clear for him with respect, however Hishām, being who he was, still had to struggle his way through the crowds. He was deeply offended at this, and sarcastically inquired who this man was that had been given such respect and preference by the people. Farazdaq, being present at the scene with Hishām, when hearing this remark, composed the famous ode spontaneously and recited it addressing Hishām b. °Abdul Malik stating: This is he whose ability the valley (of Mecca) recognises, and whom the (sacred) House recognises (as do) the sanctuary *al-hill*, and the area outside the sanctuary. This is the son of the best of all Allāh’s servants. This is the pure pious man, the pure eminent man. When he comes to touch the corner of the wall of the *Ka°ba*, it almost grasps the palm of his hand. He takes care to be modest and he is protected from his error (i.e. °isma/ma°sūm). He only speaks when he smiles. None of mankind has within their souls such primacy as he does nor such grace as he does. Whoever knows Allāh , knows His friend *walī*. Religion is from the House of this man. Ibn Khalliqān, (1996) *Wafayāt al-a°yān wa-anbā° abnā° al-zamān*. New Delhi, Kitab Bhavan, pp.119-21. *Nihāyat al-A°rāb*, vol. 21, pp. 331. Lalani, Arzina (2004) *Early Shī°i Thought; The Teachings of Imam Muhammad al-Bāqir* New York, I.B. Tauris, p. 45

⁶⁸ “As for °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn, he was among the leading figures of the next generation [*tabi°in*] in knowledge and religion. He had humility, secret alms [i.e. he would give out alms in secret without anyone’s knowledge in a way that the people who received the alms would not even know who their benefactor was] and other qualities. He was famous.” Qarashī p. 118, *Minhāj al-Sunna*, vol. 2, p. 123

that it is necessary for the ‘Imam’ to be the most meritorious, righteous and knowledgeable person of his time.

Furthermore, any discussion on the inter-relationship between the *Ṣaḥīfa* and °Alī b. Al-Ḥusayn and the wider context within the *Shī‘a* tradition will have to consider the place and significance of Karbalā in *Shī‘a* discourse. While the event of Karbalā is significant to both *Sunnī* and *Shī‘as*, it has had a greater impact on *Shī‘a* identity.⁶⁹

3.1 Karbalā – The Prelude

In order to have an enhanced understanding of an event and to understand it clearer, it becomes necessary to analyse and consider the history and occurrences that are behind it and related to it, whether directly or indirectly, so that an attempt can be made to *see through the eyes of the author* of the *Ṣaḥīfa*.

Such would also be the case behind the events of Karbalā which have lead to shape the identity and have impacted the people who relate with it. It may be considered that

⁶⁹It is remarked that we are the beings of our experiences, meaning that influences surrounding us have a related and sometimes very considerable impact in shaping our beings, such as political, social, economical, domestic and other influences. For further information see Ibn Ṭufayl, Muḥammad ibn °Abd al-Malik and Gauthier, Léon (1981), *Risāla Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān*, p. 5, Editions de la Méditerranée and the writings of; Locke, John. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book 2, Ch. 9

There can be little doubt concerning the significance of situations and events in the life of °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn, events from his infancy and early childhood, as a teenager and as an adult and their effect on him. The question may rather be how and to what degree they impacted him. Among the major events as mentioned earlier, we find him becoming orphaned at an early age, bearing the lineage and heritage of his father Ḥusayn ibn °Alī, grandfather °Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, and great grandfather Prophet Muḥammad, together with the political and social situations surrounding them and him. Not the least, the influence of the theological position in which he was considered to be part of a vital link as the Imam, according to the *Shī‘a*. However it can almost certainly be said that the most overwhelming experience in his life must have been the events of Karbalā.

For further information see Ibn Ṭufayl, Muḥammad ibn °Abd al-Malik and Gauthier, Léon (1981), *Risalat Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān*, p. 5, Editions de la Méditerranée and the writings of; Locke, John. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book 2, Ch. 9

the events leading to Karbalā would have their traces much further back in time than when they occurred in 61/680, which also have been discussed previously.⁷⁰

It is not within the scope of this study that we examine closely in detail the political situation and the intricate power grapples that were present including the social conditions and also inequities that existed amongst the different people, such as the *Anṣār* and the *Muhājirūn*, the wealthy and the poor, the Arabs and non-Arabs, the Muslims and non-Muslims and also the theological conditions in as much as all the different factions that had began emerging among the Muslims and the effects and influences of such views and the ethical and moral values and circumstances that were prevailing during the era. However, the previous discussion would have provided us with a window and a sketch nonetheless of the turbulent and at times chaotic period. The resistance and opposition from the °Umayyads would continue in various forms against the Hāshimī's from the time of the Prophet throughout the time of °Alī b. Al-Ḥusayn, the culmination of which could be seen to be the event of Karbalā.

⁷⁰ Interestingly, al-Ṭabarī reports in his *al-Ta'rikh* the legend of the birth of Hāshim, Muḥammad's great grandfather and °Abd Shams, father of °Umayya, who were both born as twins and were conjoined, as the finger of one was stuck to the forehead of the other. In order to separate the infants the finger was severed and resulted in a wound with the ensuing flowing of blood. The blood that had flowed from this wound was taken as the ominous foreshadowing of the bloodshed between their descendants. Ever since, Muḥammad, his family and followers were meted with and offered great resistance and difficulty from the °Umayyad's. Ṭabarī, *al-Ta'rikh*, I 1089, Naqvi, p. 5. Later as the years passed °Umayya, vying for popularity and position would create ill-will and antagonise his much held popular uncle Hāshim. During a time when a famine struck Mecca, Hāshim provided the residents with plentiful supplies in the form of bread broken in soup (being one of the opinions leading to his title Hāshim). This won him great popularity and acclaim; however it only further greatly spurred °Umayya's jealousy against his uncle. °Umayya in order to win position attempted to match this grand sense of munificence; however his motives were soon foiled and traced, being considered as unworthy. °Umayya, in a state of discomfiture confronted and challenged Hāshim before an independent referee, in order to contest Hāshim's claim of superiority. Out of the conditions in this contest was that the unsuccessful party would have to be exiled from Mecca for a period of ten years. Subsequently the referee ruled against °Umayya, who accordingly had to leave the city of Mecca and retired in Syria. Further to the narrative of the birth of Hāshim and °Abd Shams, in this way, the enmity between the Hāshimis and °Umayyads had sprang which would last for generations to come. However, an even greater and shattering blow to the °Umayyad prestige was the birth of Muḥammad, for now from the house of Hāshim there was a prophet. Ṭabarī, *al-Ta'rikh*, I 1090, Naqvi, p. 5

The °Umayyads, from the time of the Caliphate of °Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, with Mu°āwiya b. Abū Sufyān at the forefront as the governor of Syria, had refused to pay allegiance to °Alī's Caliphate being determined to fight against the Hāshimites and paralyse them, which also led to divisions of the Muslims. Zayn al-°Ābidīn had to witness his uncle Ḥasan and later, his father Ḥusayn go through this ordeal during the government of Mu°āwiya and after him, Yazīd b. Mu°āwiya. Ḥusayn had not risen against Mu°āwiya during his time due to honouring the peace treaty that his brother Ḥasan had to sign with Mu°āwiya and also due to the fact as he understood his revolt would have failed, similar to what had occurred to his brother Ḥasan, as Mu°āwiya had very cleverly turned the situation to his favour implementing strong policies and wealth.⁷¹

Despite the treaty which had stipulated the rule to go back to Ḥasan b. °Alī and the Hashimites after his death, Mu°āwiya (d. 60/680) had actively scheming to instate his son Yazīd as the next ruler after him, and thus for the first time in Islam establishing dynastic rule and deviating from Islamic norms. Many notable leaders considered this unacceptable, including Ḥusayn b. °Alī, Zayn al-°Ābidīn's father.⁷² Mu°āwiya had left Yazīd with written instructions with specific strategies on how to deal with these people, with special warning about Ḥusayn b. °Alī, as he was the only blood relative and also grandson of the Prophet Muḥammad.⁷³ Also Ḥusayn, being the only living grandson of the Prophet remained as the most significant threat to this dynastic rule. Yazīd was successful in coercing the majority of others, however in

⁷¹ For further reference to the peace treaty see; Āl Yāsīn, Shaykh Rādī (1997) *Sulḥ al-Ḥasan: The Peace Treaty of al-Ḥasan* Qum, Ansariyan Publications. Madelung *The Succession*, pp. 324-25. Tabatabaei, (1979), p.196

⁷² Al-Muqarram, °Abd al Razzāq (2005) *Maqṭal al-Ḥusain: Martyrdom epic of Imam al-Ḥusain*, Beirut, Al-Kharsan Foundation for Publications, pp. 21-33

⁷³ Ibid. P. 32

order to strengthen his position and rule as the Caliph of the Muslims, also demanded Ḥusayn to pay allegiance (bay[°]a) to him, thus intending that Ḥusayn had confirmed and supported his rule with the stamp of approval, giving it legitimacy.

Ḥusayn denied this with his famous words; *Mithlī lā yubāyi[°]ū mithlah* “someone like me can never pay allegiance to someone like him.” Below is an extract of his statement;

We are the household of the Prophet, the substance of the Message, the ones visited by the angels; it is through us that Allāh initiates and concludes. Yazīd is a man of sin, a drunkard, a murderer of the soul the killing of which Allāh has prohibited, a man who is openly promiscuous. A man like me shall never swear the oath of allegiance to a man like him.”⁷⁴

Shortly after the coercive attempt demanding his allegiance, Ḥusayn left Medina for Mecca to perform the pilgrimage with his family including his son Zayn al-[°]Ābidīn and a small group of followers. During this period many letters were received by Ḥusayn from the people of Kūfā, the former seat of the Caliphate of his brother Ḥasan and father [°]Alī. The letters stated the people request for him to come and guide them, assuring him of their support.⁷⁵ In order to answer their calls and better evaluate the situation, he sent his cousin Muslim b. [°]Aqīl as his representative. He was initially welcomed by the people and most swore allegiance to Ḥusayn and him. At this preliminary conclusion Muslim replied to Ḥusayn stating that the situation was favourable. However the situation soon turned in Kūfā after the arrival of [°]Ubayd-Allāh b. Ziyād as the newly appointed governor by Yazīd, and Muslim together with

⁷⁴ Al-Muqarram, [°]Abd al Razzāq (2005) *Maqatal al-Ḥusain: Martyrdom epic of Imam al-Ḥusain*, Beirut, Al-Kharsan Foundation for Publications, in Ch. 1. The statement is also found with the following addition; “... *I look upon death as but the felicity of martyrdom and I regard life among oppressors and transgressors as nothing but agony and torture. By God I will never give you my hand like a man who has been defeated; nor will I flee like a slave.*” Also see *Hadīyyat al-Dabab*, p. 111

⁷⁵ Ṭabarī, II 233-5. Howard, I.K.A. (1975) *Events and Circumstances Surrounding the Martyrdom of al-Ḥusain b. [°]Alī* al-Serat Journal, Vol 1, 1975, no. 2, The Muhammadi Trust of Great Britain. Halm (2004), p.13

his host Hānī b. °Urwā were executed.⁷⁶ The people who had earlier sworn allegiance had been intimidated and threatened by °Ubayd-Allāh and had not put up any considerable resistance.⁷⁷

Meanwhile Yazīd had despatched an army with °Umar b. Sa°d b. al-°Ās as the head, with instructions to intercept and kill Ḥusayn b. °Alī during the Ḥajj.⁷⁸ As this news reached Ḥusayn, he decided to leave Mecca, just a day before the starting of the pilgrimage, and only performed the °Umra (minor pilgrimage) in order to prevent the strong possibility of violation of the sanctity of the Ka°ba and the surrounding area of Mecca, by the spilling of his blood.⁷⁹

As Ḥusayn was preparing to leave for Kūfā, the news of the death of Muslim not yet having reached him, some of the leaders of Mecca met with him, advising him of not journeying towards Kūfā. However, if he was determined, then at least not to take any women or children on this perilous journey. Ḥusayn had however resolved to continue with his plan and addressed the people of his intentions before his departure.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Ṭabarī, II 264-71. Howard, I.K.A. (1975) *Events and Circumstances Surrounding the Martyrdom of al-Ḥusayn b. °Alī*. Ch. 5

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Al-Gulpaygānī, Shaykh Lutfullāh Ṣāfi (1954) *Muntakhab al-athār fī akhbār al-Imam al-Thāni °Ashar*, Maktabat al-Būdhār Jumhūrī. pp. 304. Al-Muqarram, °Abd al Razzaq (2005) *Maqatal al-Ḥusayn: Martyrdom epic of Imam al-Ḥusayn*, Beirut, Al-Kharsan Foundation for Publications. P. 130

⁷⁹ Al-Ṭabarī, *Al-Tārīkh* vol. 6, p. 177. , Ibn Nama. *Muthār al-aḥzān*. p. 89

⁸⁰ We find the following narration of his address:” The death is a certainty for mankind, just like the trace of [a] necklace on the neck of young girls. And I am enamored of my ancestors like eagerness of Jacob to Joseph ... Everyone, who is going to devote his blood for our sake and is prepared to meet Allāh , must depart with us...” Ibn Ṭāwūs, Sayyid, *Luhūf* Tradition no.72

It could be imagined these events would have had a significant effect on Zayn al-°Abidīn , having to leave the city of Medina in haste, being his great grandfather's city and then leaving Mecca under such threatening circumstances.⁸¹

En route to Kūfā, Ḥusayn's small caravan were met with the tragic news of his cousin, Muslim's execution and how the people had swiftly turned.⁸² Ḥusayn however still decided to continue and was intercepted by Yazīd's army, only two days away from Kūfā by a contingency of Yazīd's army of about 1000 men, led by Ḥurr b. Riyāḥī. Ḥusayn's caravan was prevented to move forward by the orders of Yazīd and Ḥurr's army forced them to camp at al-Ṭaff, at a place out of reach from the vital water supply of the river Euphrates.⁸³ When Ḥusayn was informed the place was also known as Karbalā, he exclaimed; "O Allāh! I seek refuge with You against *karb* [affliction] and *balā*' [trial and tribulation]" and continued; "Here we shall erect our tents, here our blood shall be spilled, here we shall meet our death and from here we

⁸¹ Before leaving Medina Ḥusayn left his will with his brother Muḥammad b. Ḥanafiyya, and stated his intentions and objectives in order to refute the rumours instigated by the °Umayyads that he had risen for attaining power and government and to disunite people. His will read: "This is the will of al-Ḥusayn Ibn °Alī to his brother Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya. Al-Ḥusayn testifies that there is no god except Allāh , the One and Only God, Who has no partner, and that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger who brought the truth from Him, that Paradise is true, and that Hell is true, that the Hour [of reckoning] is approaching; there is no doubt about it, and that Allāh will resurrect those in the graves.

I did not march out exultingly, nor recklessly, nor seeking to make corruption in the land, nor to oppress anyone. Rather, I marched out seeking to reform my grandfather's nation. I desire to enjoin what is right and to forbid what is wrong [*amr bi-l ma'rūf wa nahī °ani-l munkar*] and to follow the Sunna of my grandfather and of my father °Alī Ibn Abu Ṭālib. So, whoever accepts me an acceptance of righteousness, Allāh is the Master of what is right, and whoever refuses, I shall persevere till Allāh judges between me and the people; surely He is the best of judges. This is my will to you, brother, and my success comes only from Allāh ; upon Him do I rely, and to Him is my return."

It appears from the previous statement and his will that Ḥusayn b. °Alī realised the end of the fateful journey that lay ahead. Al-Bahrānī, °Abdullah Nur-Allāh , *Maqatal al-°Awālim*, p. 54. Al-Khawārizmī, *Maqatal al-Ḥusayn*, Vol. 1, p. 188. Al-Muqarram, °Abd al Razzāq (2005) *Maqatal al-Ḥusayn: Martyrdom epic of Imam al-Ḥusayn*, Beirut, Al-Kharsan Foundation for Publications. Ch. 22

⁸² Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh* p. 995. Al-Muqarram, °Abd al Razzāq (2005) *Maqatal al-Ḥusayn: Martyrdom epic of Imam al-Ḥusayn*, Beirut, Al-Kharsan Foundation for Publications. P. 141. Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāya*. Part.8. p. 168

⁸³ Al-Turayhī, *Al-Muntakhab*. Al-Muqarram, °Abd al Razzāq (2005) *Maqatal al-Ḥusayn: Martyrdom epic of Imam al-Ḥusayn*, Beirut, Al-Kharsan Foundation for Publications. Ch. 36

will rise once again on the day of Resurrection! My grandfather, the Messenger of Allāh, had informed me so.”⁸⁴

3.2 Karbalā

Having considered the prevailing circumstances and conditions during and before the time of °Alī b. Al-Ḥusayn, albeit in brief, would have provided us with a clearer understanding of the situation that culminated at Karbalā

These events would later have a profound impact upon the life of °Alī. b. al-Ḥusayn, shaping his personality and also subsequently resulting in and forming his identity and subsequently his words as the author of the *Ṣaḥīfa*. We find Majlisī in his *Bihār* mentioning this where he has written a chapter dedicated to °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn with the heading; “His Mourning and Weeping on the Martyrdom of his Father, May the Grace of Allāh be on Both”⁸⁵

⁸⁴ al-Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 10, p. 188. Ibn Ṭāwūs *Al-Luhūf*. There is also an interesting narrative found in the *Nafas al-Mahmūm* relating to this incident when Husayn came to know the name of the place which reads; “...Then Imam started weeping and said: *Umm Salmā has informed me, that one day Gabriel came to the presence of Prophet Muhammad (S), and you [Husayn] were with me. Suddenly the Prophet said, 'Leave my child', hearing this I left you and the Prophet made you sit on his lap. Gabriel asked him, 'Do you cherish this child?' The Prophet replied in the affirmative. Then Gabriel said, 'Your Umma will kill him, and if you desire I shall show you the earth of the place where he shall be martyred.'* The Prophet showed his willingness to do so. Then Gabriel spread his wings towards Karbalā and showed the Prophet the place. Thus when Imam Husayn was told that the name of the place was Karbalā, he smelt the earth and said; *'This is the same place regarding which Gabriel had informed the Prophet, and I shall be killed herein.'*” See al-Qummī, °Abbās *Nafas al-Mahmūm*, ch. 18, section 14.

⁸⁵ He writes in that chapter stating: “And it is said that he (i.e. Imam Zayn al-°Abidīn) continued to weep till his eyes were endangered. And whenever he took water to drink, he wept till the tears filled the pot. Someone talked to him about it and he replied: ‘Why should not I cry, when my father was denied the water which was free to the beasts and animals?’ And never was food brought to him but that he wept, so much so that a servant told him: ‘May I be your ransom, O Son of the Messenger of Allāh ! I am afraid that you would die (of this weeping).’ The Imam said: ‘I only complain of my distraction and anguish to Allāh... Never do I remember the massacre of the children of Fāṭima but that tears choke me.’” Al-Majlisī *Bihar al-Anwar - His mourning and Weeping on the Martyrdom of his Father, May Grace of Allāh be on Both* Vol. 11. Rizvi, Seyyid Saeed Akhthar (1979), *The Illustrious Period of the Imamate of Imam Zayn al-°Abidīn* in *Al-Serat*, Vol. 5, nrs. 3 & 4

It is not possible within this study to fully investigate and narrate the events taking place at Karbalā; however it is also not possible *not* to mention them as they were probably the most significant events in the life of °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn. For the sake of brevity we will give a few succinct accounts that somewhat capture these events. Finding himself together with his family and small number of companions on the plains of Karbalā we find that Ḥusayn tried to reason with his antagonists in order to avoid confrontation, using rationale and mentioning his merits and lineage;

... Then Hosein mounted his horse, and took the Koran and laid it before him, and, coming up to the people, invited them to the performances of their duty: adding, *O God, Thou art my confidence in every trouble, and my hope in all adversity!* ... He next reminded them of his excellency, the nobility of his birth, the greatness of his power, and his high descent, and said, "Consider with yourselves whether or not such a man as I am is not better than you; I who am the son of your Prophet's daughter, besides whom there is no other upon the face of the earth. °Alī was my father; Jaafar and Hamza, the chief of the martyrs, were both my uncles; and the apostle of God, upon whom be peace, said both of me and my brother, that we were the Chief[s] of the youth of Paradise. If you will believe me, what I say is true, for by God, I never told a lie in earnest since I had my understanding; for God hates a lie. If you do not believe me, ask the companions of the apostle of God [here he named them], and they will tell you the same. Let me go back to what I have..."⁸⁶

Despite trying to reason with the °Umayyad forces, they were not convinced and the impasse ended in the massacre of Ḥusayn b. °Alī together with the male members of his family and his companions. Zayn al-°Ābidīn describes the day, which is also known as the day of °Āshurā (lit. meaning 'the tenth' signifying the tenth of the month of Muḥarram in the Islamic calendar) as one of the most difficult days.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Ockley, Simon *The History of the Saracens*, London, pp. 404-5

⁸⁷ No day was more difficult for Allāh 's Messenger than the Day (Battle) of Uhud in which his uncle Hamza b. °Abd al-Muṭṭalib, the lion of Allāh and the lion of His Messenger, was killed, and after it was the Day (Battle) of Mu'ta in which his cousin Ja'far b. Abī Ṭālib was killed. Then he (Zayn al-°Ābidīn) said: There was no day like the Day of al-Ḥusayn, when thirty thousand men advanced against him (while) they claimed that they belonged to this community, and that they (wanted) to seek proximity to Allāh, the Great and Almighty, through (shedding) his blood. He (al-Ḥusayn) reminded them of Allāh, but they did not learn (from him) till they killed him out of (their) oppression and aggression. Al-Majlisī *Biḥār al-Anwār* vol. 9, p. 147. Qarashī, p. 135

When Ḥusayn remained alone, the male members of his family and companions slain he called out for assistance, as Qarashī describes the moment;

Imam al-Ḥusayn, who was afflicted with disaster, looked with great sadness and sorrow at the members of his family and his companions. He saw them slaughtered like sheep on the sand of Karbalā under the heat of the sun's rays, and he heard his womenfolk weeping and lamenting over their martyred ones. He did not know what would happen to them after his martyrdom. That tragic sight had a great effect on him, so he sought help to protect the womenfolk of Allāh's Apostle, may Allāh bless him and his family, saying: "Is there anyone to protect the womenfolk of Allāh's Apostle, may Allāh bless him and his family? Is there any monotheist to fear Allāh through us? Is there any helper who seeks hope from Allāh through helping us?"⁸⁸

Qarashī further describes the moment of Ḥusayn's calling and Zayn al-°Abidīn waking up from his partial unconsciousness, due to severe illness, when hearing his father, struggling to get up, leaning on a stick, to come to his assistance. Ḥusayn seeing this called out to his sister Umm Kulthūm; "Hold him back lest the earth becomes void of the descendants of the family of Muḥammad!" As Ḥusayn was surrounded by the °Umayyad soldiers, severely wounded and his condition worsening with no hope of survival, we find an account of him turning his face towards the sky, in a state of *munajāt* (intimate conversation with God);

*O Allāh! Sublime You are, Great of Might, Omnipotent, Independent of all creation, greatly Majestic, Capable of doing whatever You please, Forthcoming in mercy, True of Promise, Inclusive of Blessings, Clement, Near to those who invoke Him, Subduing His creation, Receptive to Repentance, Able, Overpowering, Appreciative when thanked, Remembering those who remember Him! You do I call upon out of my want, and You do I seek out of [my] need! From You do I seek help when in fear and cry when sorrowful! Your help do I seek in my weakness, and upon You do I rely! O Allāh! Judge between us and our people, for they deceived and betrayed us! They were treacherous to us, and they killed us though we are the °Itrat [family] of Your Prophet and the offspring of the one You love; Muḥammad whom You chose for Your Message and entrusted with the revelation! Do find an ease for our affair and an exit, O most Merciful of all merciful ones!
Grant me patience to bear Your destiny, O Lord! There is no god but You! O Helper of those who seek help! I have no god besides You, nor do I adore anyone but You!
Grant me to persevere as I face Your decree, O Helper of the helpless, O Eternal One*

⁸⁸ Qarashī, p. 141. *Ḥayāt al-Imam al-Ḥusayn* vol. 3, p. 274

*Who knows no end, O One Who brings the dead back to life, O One Who rewards every soul as it earned, do judge between me and them; surely You are the Best of judges.*⁸⁹

As Ḥusayn was drawing his final breaths the following account is given;

Zainab the wise, cried out, “O Muḥammad! O father! O °Alī ! O Ja°far! O Hamza! Here is Ḥusain in the open, slain in Karbalā!” Then Zainab said, “I wish the heavens had fallen upon the earth! I wish the mountains had crushed the valley!” She was near al-Ḥusain when °Umar Ibn Sa°d came close to her flanked by some of his men.

Al-Ḥusain was drawing his last breath she cried out, “O °Umar! Should Abū °Abdullah be killed as you look on?!” He turned his face away. His tears were flooding his beard. She said, “Woe unto you! Is there [not] any Muslim man among you?” None answered her. Then [°Umar] Ibn Sa°d shouted at [the] people, “Alight and put him to rest!” Al-Shimr was the first to do so. He kicked the Imam with his foot then sat on his chest and took hold of his holy beard. He dealt him twelve sword strokes. He then severed his sacred head...⁹⁰

The persecution continued even after the men had been killed, when the enemy soldiers set upon the camp and tents of Ḥusayn’s family;

Ḥussein accepted and set out from Mecca with his family and an entourage of about seventy followers. But on the plain of Kerbela they were caught in an ambush set by the ... caliph, Yazīd. Though defeat was certain, Hussein refused to pay homage to him. Surrounded by a great enemy force, Hussein and his company existed without water for ten days in the burning desert of Kerbela. Finally Hussein, the adults and some male children of his family and his companions were cut to bits by the arrows and swords of Yazīd's army; his women and remaining children were taken as

⁸⁹ Al-Muqarram, °Abd al Razzāq (2005) *Maqṭal al-Ḥusain: Martyrdom epic of Imam al-Ḥusain*, Beirut, Al-Kharsan Foundation for Publications. Al-Kaf°ami. Ch. 55 where the author also quotes the following references; *Misbāḥ al-Mutaḥajjid* and *Iqbāl al-a°māl*. Both references are quoted in *Mazār al-Biḥār*, p. 107. Al-Hā°irī, Sayyid Kāẓim al-Rashtī *Asrār al-Shahāda* p. 423. *Riyād al-Masā°ib*, p. 33.

⁹⁰ Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, Vol. 10, p. 206. Al-Khawarizmi, *Maqṭal al-Ḥusain*, Vol. 2, p. 37. Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta°riḫ*, Vol. 6, p. 259. Ibn Tāwus, *Al-Luhuf*, p. 73. Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil*, Vol. 4, p. 32. al-Ṭabarī, *Ta°riḫ*, Vol. 6, p. 259. Al-Bahrānī, °Abdullāh Nūr-Allāh, *Maqṭal al-Awālim*, p. 100. Al-Khawarizmi, *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, Vol. 2, p. 36- and ongoing pages.

Howard also mentions this from Ṭabarī’s narration; *Finally there was only al-Ḥusayn left. The forces wavered for a moment, hesitant about killing the grandson of the Prophet. However, Shimr b. Dhī Jawshin led a group against him. Zur°a b. Sharik al-Tamūmī and Sinan b. Anas al-Nakha°i actually delivered the death blows. It was Sinan who cut off al-Ḥusayn s head. Altogether al-Ḥusayn s stabbed 33 times and struck 34 times. The camp was given over to plunder. Bahr b. Ka°b took al-Ḥusayn’s sarawil; Qais b. Ash°ath his qatifa. The men even took some of the clothes from the women. However they did not harm the women. They also found the sick son of al-Ḥusayn, °Alī, and wondered whether they should kill him. °Umar b. Sa°d ordered that he should not be killed nor the women touched. Ṭabarī, II 365-7. Howard, I.K.A. (1975) *Events and Circumstances Surrounding the Martyrdom of al-Ḥusain b. °Alī* al-Serat Journal, Vol 1, 1975, no. 2, The Muhammadi Trust of Great Britain, pp. 3-13*

captives to Yazīd in Damascus. The renowned historian Abu Reyhan al-Birunī states; “... then fire was set to their camp and the bodies were trampled by the hoofs of the horses; nobody in the history of the human kind has seen such atrocities.”⁹¹

Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi describes the aftermath and relates that no Imam could have begun his Imamate in a more painful tragic circumstance and situation than °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn. He says;

No Imam began his Imamate in a more tragic atmosphere. The first day of his Imamate saw him seriously ill and a captive of the army of Yazīd in Karbalā. His father and predecessors had sacrificed all he [they] had on the altar of truth; and Imam Zayn al-°Ābidīn found himself with a group of helpless widows and orphans being led from place to place, from the *darbar* [palatial court] of Ibn Ziyād to the court of Yazīd. Finally they were thrown into a prison, where the Imam spent the first year of his Imamate, cut off from the followers of his father and unable to look after their affairs.”⁹²

⁹¹ Chelkowski, Peter. J (1979) *Ta'ziyeh: Ritual and Drama in Iran*, New York, p. 2

⁹² Al-Serat, vol. 5, no's 3&4 (1979)

MPhil B

Chapter 4

The place of the *Ṣaḥīfa al-Sajjādiyya*

In Muslim Tradition: An Analysis Into Authenticity

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section deals with the *Ṣaḥīfa* as a textual production by focusing on the historical background of the *Ṣaḥīfa*, tracing its origins and transmissions.

The second section will undertake a critical study of the *Ṣaḥīfa*'s authenticity, attempting to apply both traditional Islamic and contemporary Western methods. Furthermore, this will entail a linguistic analysis of the *Ṣaḥīfa*, examining their forms and literary aspects, such as their styles, language and the use of intertextuality and allusion to other sources. This will be done in order to evaluate whether the *Ṣaḥīfa* may or may not be placed within a specific time period and attributed to an author.

The third section will be examining the text specifically through a traditional evaluation, also considering the *matan* and *sanad*, and opinions expressed concerning the *Ṣaḥīfa*.

1.1 Background of the *Ṣaḥīfat al-Sajjādiyya*⁹³

According to Shī'ī tradition, °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn had collected his supplications and taught them to his children, especially Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. 120/738)⁹⁴ and Zayd (d. 122/740). In later times the text became widely disseminated among the Shī'ā of all persuasions. The specialists in the science of ḥadīth, such as Al-Najāshī and Al-Khū'i, maintain that the text is *mutawātir*;⁹⁵ in other words, it was generally known from earliest times and has been handed down by numerous chains of transmission, while its authenticity has never been questioned. In fact, Ibn Shahrāshūb (d. 588/1192) refers to the popular view according to Shī'ī belief that after the advent of Islam, the *Ṣaḥīfa* was amongst the earliest composed works, after the writings of °Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and Salmān al-Fārsī, Abūdharr al-Ghaffārī, Asbagh b. Nabāta,

⁹³ The title *Al-Ṣaḥīfa al-Sajjādiyya* simply means 'The Book of al-Sajjād'. Al-Sajjād is one of the titles given to °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn and signifies 'the one who constantly prostrates himself in prayer'. Another well-known title is *Zayn al-°Abidīn* which denotes 'the ornament or adornment of the worshippers'. The text is often called *Al-Ṣaḥīfat al-Kāmilat*, or *Al-Ṣaḥīfat al-Kāmilat al-Sajjādiyya*, which is, 'The Perfect', or 'Complete', 'Book of al-Sajjād'. According to its commentator Sayyid °Alikhān Shirāzī (d.1120/1708-09), the word *Kāmila* refers to the perfection of the style and content. According to Chittick some sources state that the adjective was added to differentiate it from another, incomplete version of the work, which is known among the *Zaydis*'. The *Ṣaḥīfa* has been called by various honorifics, such as 'Sister of the Qur'ān' (*Ukht al-Qurān*) 'Gospel of the Folk of the House' (*Injīl Ahl al-Bayt*), and 'Psalms of the Household of Muḥammad' (*Zabūr Āli Muḥammad*). See Ṭīhrānī, Aqā Buzurgh, (1983) *Al-Dharī'a ilā taṣānūf al-Shī'a*, Beirut, Dār al-aḍwā' The appended word 'Sajjādiyya' to *Ṣaḥīfa* in the title of the text makes reference to one of the agnomens or titles of °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn. This kind of usage is common when making reference to possession or ownership in the Arabic language, particularly in view of authorship and attribution of a document to its writer. Al-Shirāzī, Al-Sayyid °Alikhān (1961-2) *Talkhīṣ al-Riyāḍ: aw tuḥfat al-tālbīn al-muqtaṭaf min Riyāḍ al-sālikīn fī sharḥ ṣaḥīfah Sayyid al-Sājidīn*, vol. I, Tehran. *Al Ṣaḥīfat al-kāmilat al-Sajjādiyya (Psalms of Islam)*. Al-Qummī, Abbās (1994) *Safīnat al-biḥār al-anwār wa madīnat al-ḥikm wa l-āthār*, vol. V, Dār al-Uswa

⁹⁴ There is a discrepancy regarding the date of death with variations from 120/738-125/743. According to al-Mufid (d. 413/1022) in his *Kitāb al-Irshād* the death date is 120/738

⁹⁵ An extensive study of some of the chains have been done by Al-Abṭāḥī in *Al-ṣaḥīfat al-sajjādiyyat al-jāmi'a* and also by, Al-Shirāzī, Al-Sayyid °Alikhān in *Talkhīṣ al-Riyāḍ*. Other biographical evaluations such as al-Khū'i's *Rijāl*, al-Najāshī's *Al-fihrist*, and Ibn Hajar's *Lisān al-mīzān*, to name just a few, have all discussed the biographies and status of the narrators in their entries.

°Ubaydallāh b. Abī Rāfi°, all from the first/sixth century.⁹⁶ Traditionally, in the opinion of the majority of Shī°i scholars, from the early era to the contemporary, it has been upheld that the *Ṣaḥīfa* traces its roots back to °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn and has been known during the ages by the honorifics. During the years Shī°a scholars have unanimously agreed, without denial, that the *Ṣaḥīfa* traces its roots back to Zayn al-°Ābidīn, the different opinions may be due to the different collections of prayers the scholars have collected.⁹⁷

However, according to Chittick’s translation, the arrangement of the text allows to draw a certain distinction between the fifty-four supplications, which make the main body of the text, and the additional supplications which make up the fourteen addenda (including the prayers for the days of the week) and the fifteen *munajāt* or ‘whispered prayers’. He maintains that the original fifty-four supplications show an undeniable freshness and unity of theme and style, while the latter, especially the *munajāt*, add a certain orderliness and self-conscious artistry which may suggest the hand of an editor.⁹⁸ The addenda are said to have been collected and added to the text by Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Makkī, known as al-Shahīd al-Awwal (the ‘first martyr’), the famous author of *Al-Lum°at al-Dimishqīyya* in jurisprudence (*fiqh*) who was killed in Aleppo in 786/1384. The fifteen *munajāt* have been added to several modern editions of the *Ṣaḥīfa* and seem to have been brought to the attention of the main body of the Shī°a by °Allāma Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī (d. 1109/1698), author of the monumental compilation of Shī°i ḥadīth, *Biḥar al-Anwār*.

⁹⁶ Al-Māzandarāni, Muḥammad b. °Alī b. Shahrāshūb, *Ma°ālim al-°ulamā*, Beirut, Dār al-aḍwā°, also see Ṭihrānī, Aqā Buzurgh, *Al-Dharī°a*

⁹⁷ Al-Nūri *Mustadrak al-Wasā°il*, vol. III

⁹⁸ *Al Ṣaḥīfat al-kāmilat al-Sajjādiyya (Psalms of Islam)*

Over the years many scholars have written about the *Ṣaḥīfa* and numerous commentaries have been written, Buzurg Ṭīhrānī lists them in the *Dharīʿa* to be close to seventy, with one of the earlier commentators being ʿAllāmah al-Ḥillī (d.726/1325) and Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī (d. 1109/1698).

2.1 Authenticity of Text

As with any classical document or text not being free from and exempted from the critique and analysis concerning its historical reliability, particularly in light of modern scholarship, a study of the authenticity of the *Ṣaḥīfa* is inescapable. Questions concerning the authenticity of the text, which have also been put to the body of early Arabic poetry, started early, and in ʿUmayyad times at the latest and have continued since.⁹⁹ To undertake a serious study and analysis of the relative historical reliability of the individual supplications found in all the versions of the *Ṣaḥīfa*, would be a study of great proportions, an undertaking which would certainly fall outside the scope of this study, as it alone may equal independent research in itself. However, for the sake of our study we have attempted a serious analysis into the subject without necessarily expending critical examination and investigation. The study of the authenticity of the *Ṣaḥīfa* may be undertaken in a number of ways. To begin with, we have chosen a study of the semantic meanings and usages of the word *Ṣaḥīfa*, in order to evaluate the historical meanings of the word and identify what they indicate to. This is followed by a linguistic analysis of the text in order to assess the possible similarities and differences in the manner of the author’s deployment of language and use of allusion and reference. Furthermore, an attempt will also be made here to look

⁹⁹ Jones, A (1992) *Early Arabic Poetry – Marāthi and Ṣuʿlūk Poems*, Oxford, Ithaca Press

at any possible significant and characteristic or thematic usages that may be specific to the text. An analysis of this kind, for a text of this nature, is significant as it may be one of the few alternatives besides the traditional analysis to candidate for critical examination. Such an analysis may possibly be able to place the *Ṣaḥīfa* within a certain time frame, together with traditional analysis. Moreover, this kind of analysis may indicate any specific usage that may direct towards indicating authorship. The last part of this section, deals with how traditional Islamic scholarship has evaluated and transmitted texts. Together with an analysis and application with reference to the *Ṣaḥīfa*, a brief overview will be given concerning the sciences (*‘ilm al-ḥadīth* and *‘ilm al-rijāl*) developed for evaluating texts. For the object of our study and analysis, as for the *Ṣaḥīfa*, reference will be made to the text established by al-Shahīd al-Awwal translated by Chittick.

2.2 Semantic meanings and usage of the word *Ṣaḥīfa*

According to Ibn Manzūr (d. 711/1311) the word *ṣaḥīfa* is meant to be something that is written upon.¹⁰⁰ Al-Zuhri (d. 742/1341) maintains that *muṣḥaf* (pl. of *ṣaḥīfa*, other forms of the plural are *saḥā‘if*, *suḥufun* and *suḥfun*) is a collection of that which is ‘written between two covers’, similarly Al-Jawharī (d. ca 860/1456) refers to the word *ṣaḥīfa* to mean book.¹⁰¹ According to Lane (d. 1876) *ṣaḥīfa* is something written on paper or skin, it may also mean a book or a volume, a letter or an epistle, something synonymous with *kitāb* (book).¹⁰² Watt gives it a similar meaning, he

¹⁰⁰ Ibn Manzūr, M (1993) *Lisān al-‘arab*, vol. VII, 3rd Ed. Beirut, Dār Ihyā al-turāth al-‘arabi/Mu’assasa al-tārikh al-‘arabi

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Lane, E.W. (1984) *Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. II, Cambridge, Islamic Ṣaḥīfa Society

however adds that it may be applied especially to fragments of the Qur’ān or Ḥadīth or any other document of a solemn nature, whence finally are the written *ṣahīfa* themselves.¹⁰³

An example of the early usage of the word can be found from the Qur’ān:

“...and this is in the books (*ṣuḥuf*) of the earliest (revelation), the books of Abraham and Moses”¹⁰⁴

Another example of the early usage of the word may be demonstrated according to Ibn Hanbal¹⁰⁵ (d. 241/855) and Ibn Māja¹⁰⁶ (d. 272/886), when the Prophet, just before his death asked for a *ṣahīfa* for writing upon at his dictation.¹⁰⁷

From the above there seems to be concurrence regarding the meaning of *ṣahīfa* to be something that is written, either in a book form or otherwise, from the classical to the contemporary era. Watt further maintains that the term (*ṣahīfa*) appears contemporaneously with the advent of Islam, but must evidently have existed before then.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ *EP* vol. VIII, ‘*Ṣahīfa*’

¹⁰⁴ Qur’ān chapter 87:18-19

¹⁰⁵ Ibn Hanbal, A. *Musnad*, vol. III

¹⁰⁶ Ibn Māja, *Zuhd*, 7

¹⁰⁷ Abdul Ra’ūf discusses this in his article of ḥadīth literature and divides the collection of this literature into stages designated as, *ṣahīfa*, *muṣannaḥ*, *musnad*, *ṣahīh* and the analytical stages. He discusses the ambivalent attitude existing at the beginning of the first century concerning the writing down of ḥadīth due to the obvious benefits of retention and also the fear of that the ḥadīth might later be confused with the Qur’ān. Nonetheless, what appears interesting is that the first stage is called the stage of *ṣuḥuf*. In spite of the unsure attitude existing at the time, °Abdul Ra’ūf says: Nevertheless, some fifty Companions [pl. *aṣḥāb*] and almost as many Followers [pl. *tābi’in*] are said to have possessed manuscripts, then called *ṣuḥuf* (sing. *ṣahīfa*), i.e., some material in which ḥadīth were included. °Abdul Ra’ūf, M. (1983) ‘Ḥadīth Literature – I: The Development of the Science of Ḥadīth’ in Beeston, A.F.L et al. (eds.) (1983) *Arabic Literature to the end of the °Umayyad Period*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press

¹⁰⁸ *EP* vol. VIII, ‘*Ṣahīfa*’

The appended word ‘*Sajjādiyya*’ to *Ṣaḥīfa* in the title of the text makes reference to one of the agnomen or titles of °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn, meaning ‘the one who frequently prostrates’. This kind of usage is common when making reference to possession or ownership in the Arabic language, particularly in view of authorship and attribution of a document to its writer. E.g. an epistle or letter attributed to a person called Ja°far may be given the title *Risāla Ja°fariyya*.

2.3 Linguistic Analysis

A close reading of the *Ṣaḥīfa*, will expose differences in the language and style used by the author. However, what is common is that the author makes constant reference and allusion to the verses of the Qur’ān and the ḥadīth. As the text is punctuated with ḥadīth and verses, it is in many places throughout that such references are acknowledged.

We find in the *Ṣaḥīfa* examples of this kind as it is a frequent address for reference to the verses of the Qur’ān and ḥadīth as well, both directly and in allusion. Whereas such sources are of course employed in other prayer manuals,¹⁰⁹ in the *Ṣaḥīfa* we find that such usage demonstrates knowledge and familiarity of an intimate nature to the sources, being one of the hallmark features characterising it. The language and style of the *Ṣaḥīfa* is generally Qur’ānic, or drawn from the Qur’ān and ḥadīth, it may have been for this reason the *Ṣaḥīfa* is also known as *Ukht al-Qur’ān* (The sister of the Qur’ān).¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ E.g. °Abd al-Qādir al-Jilāni’s (d. 561/1166) *Aḥzābun wa awrādun wa ad’iyatun li °Abd al-Qādir al-Jilāni* in Padwicks’s *Muslim Devotions*

¹¹⁰ Tihriānī, Aqā Buzurgh, (1983) *Al-Dharī°a*, vol. XV

The following are some examples where this can be seen; Chittick illustrates one such instance regarding the theme of the predominance of God’s mercy. He sets the scene of the worshipper, when faced with the reality of both the mercy and wrath of God, he does everything to seek out the one and avoid the other. This theme is constant in devotional literature but particular in the *Ṣaḥīfa*. The pattern for this is set in the well-known supplication of the Prophet saying; ‘I seek refuge in Thy good pleasure from Thy displeasure and in Thy pardon from Thy punishment. I seek refuge in Thee from Thee.’¹¹¹ Here the worshipper prays to God for protection against God Himself, as there is in reality no other threat of significance. God is He who pardons and punishes, He who’s pleasure and displeasure is earned. What is more is that the supplicant can be confident that God’s mercy will eventually overcome, since God’s Essence is mercy, and His wrath only accidental. Mention of God’s predominating mercy is found in the Qur’ān¹¹² as being *all embracing*, however no such suggestion is made that His wrath is so universal. Allusion to these Qur’ānic and ḥadīth sources can be found in several places within the *Ṣaḥīfa*, such as in ‘His Supplication in Seeking Asylum with God’:

O God, if Thou willest, Thou wilt pardon us through Thy bounty and if Thou willest, Thou wilt chastise us through Thy justice...
 ...and grant us sanctuary from Thy chastisement through Thy forbearance,
 for none of us has the endurance for Thy justice and none of us can reach deliverance without Thy pardon!¹¹³

Another example of a similar allusion can be found in ‘His Supplication on the Day of Sacrifice and on Friday’:¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Muslim, Ṣalāt 222; Tirmidhī, Da‘wāt 75, 112; Padwick C. *Muslim Devotions*

¹¹² Q. 7: 156, 40: 7

¹¹³ Reference is to Chittick’s translation of the *Ṣaḥīfa* as established by al-Shaḥīd al-Awwal, 10:1-2

O God, nothing repels Thy wrath but Thy clemency, nothing repels Thy displeasure but Thy pardon, nothing grants sanctuary from Thy punishment but Thy mercy, and nothing will deliver me from Thee except pleading to Thee before Thee...¹¹⁵

This is further illustrated in ‘His Supplication against that which he Feared and Dreaded’, this verse is almost identical with the one found in ‘His Supplication on the Day of Sacrifice and on Friday’:

My God, nothing repels Thy wrath but Thy clemency, nothing delivers me from Thy punishment but Thy pardon, nothing rescues from Thee but Thy mercy and pleading to Thee!¹¹⁶

A language similar to that of the *Ṣaḥīfa* can be found in the prayers ascribed to the legendary Ḥaṣan al-Baṣrī (d.110/728) who has come to be known as one of the first mystics.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ ‘The Day of Sacrifice’ also known as ‘Īd al-Adḥā referring to the 10th of Dhil Ḥijja in the Islamic calendar which marks the end of the *Ḥajj*.

¹¹⁵ *Al Ṣaḥīfat al-kāmilat al-Sajjādiyya (Psalms of Islam)* 48:13

¹¹⁶ Ibid 60:1. It is worth noting an incident Chittick mentions related to the above concerning Zayn al-‘Ābidīn, in his introduction to the *Ṣaḥīfa*, which he says is in complete character to the emphasis upon God’s mercy and forgiveness. One day Zayn al-‘Ābidīn was told that Ḥaṣan al-Baṣrī (d.110/728), the famous ascetic, had said: ‘It is not strange if a person perishes as he perishes. It is only strange that a person is saved as he is saved.’ ‘Āli b. al-Ḥusayn replied, ‘But I say that it is not strange if a person is saved as he is saved; it is only strange that a person perishes as he perishes, given the scope of God’s mercy. (Biḥār al-anwār, Vol. LXXV, p. 153), *Al Ṣaḥīfat al-kāmilat al-Sajjādiyya (Psalms of Islam)*,p.XLI

¹¹⁷ He was a contemporary of ‘Āli b. al-Ḥusayn and was known for his spiritual and saintly personality, what is more is that a unique manuscript of *Ri’āya lī huqūq Allāh* (Observance of the Duties to Allāh), said to be one of the earliest books on mysticism and a compilation of Ḥaṣan al-Baṣrī’s writings, is said to have survived and to be found at Oxford University. See Muṭaḥhari, M, Ṭabaṭabāī, M.H., Khumaynī, R. (1991) *Light Within Me*, Karachi, Islamic Seminary Publications. There has not been an opportunity to substantiate this, however should it be so, it is intended to seek access to the manuscript for further study in the doctoral thesis. For this analysis an example of a prayer for forgiveness can be found in Quṭb al-Dīn al-Ḥanafī’s compilation: “O Allāh , I seek forgiveness for every sin... to which my hand, nourished by Your ample sustenance, extended. And while sinning I hid myself behind Your veil from the people...I relied on Your assurance of safety and forgiveness; and I took refuge in You, with Your clemency, not to smite me, and I depended on You, with Your noble countenance and pardon, to forgive me!” See Al-Baṣrī, H (2004) *Prayers for Forgiveness: Seeking Spiritual Enlightenment through Sincere Supplication*, White Thread Press (Translated by ‘Abdurrahmān b. Yūsuf) Alluding to Q. 39: 53-4, Bukhāri, vol IX, ch.93, narration 485

A closer reading of the prayers attributed to Ḥaṣan al-Baṣrī would reveal certain similarities to the *Ṣaḥīfa*, such as allusion, reference and use of expression. This could be due to the fact, amongst other things, that both personalities were of a high spiritual standing, and interestingly also that the language employed in the *Ṣaḥīfa*, when compared, is suggestive of being from the same early period. There are many additional examples to draw from which would be found in the thematic study in the subsequent chapter of this thesis.

2.4 *Sajʿ* in the *Ṣaḥīfat al-Sajjādiyya*

Another distinguishing linguistic feature the author employs is the recurrent employment of *sajʿ* or Arabic rhyme. In addition to demonstrating exceptional proficiency in composition and rhetoric, the *sajʿ* adds to the element of eloquence to the text. The author may also have had the readers in mind as this may have been due to ease for the readers to memorise some of the supplications and to harmonise the flow of the text. However, there are places where this *sajʿ* is breached:

*Lā yamlukūna ta'khīran ʿammā qaddamahum ilayhi
Wa la yastaḥī'ūna taqadduman ilā ma akhkharahum ʿanhu.*¹¹⁸

In the above example of the *Ṣaḥīfa* taken from the first supplication, the verb *lā yamlukūna* is rhymed with *la yastaḥī'ūna*. The verbal noun *ta'khīran* is immediately followed by the verb *qaddamaha*, which is on the same morphological scale as *ta'khīr* (*akhkhara -ta'khīr / qaddama - taqdīm*). However, after the verb *yastaḥī'ūna* the verbal noun *taqadduman* is used instead of *taqdīm*, which rhymes with *ta'khīr* and is

¹¹⁸ *Al Ṣaḥīfat al-kāmilat al-Sajjādiyya (Psalms of Islam)*, p.16

from the same morphological scale as the verb *akhhara*, which immediately follows *taqaddum*. This change in the choice of words is designed to change the meaning of the supplication. The rhyme is then applied again in the remaining lines of the supplication.¹¹⁹

It is a correct and acceptable form but one that seems to have appeared in later writings when Arabic etymology (*al-ishtiqāq*) developed. Most early Arabic dictionaries do not have these forms.

What is interesting is that this may raise the question whether the examples are frequent enough to indicate that the work, the whole body or parts, may be of a later period, different to what is popularly believed? It may not be the place here, for the sake of brevity and conciseness, to undertake a detailed and comprehensive study for such an analysis. What can be said is that word substitution may have taken place during transmission, which may be very likely, since it is claimed that the *Ṣahīfa* was transmitted textually, it is not clear whether the original text contained the diacritical points and vowels or not. It is possible that the scribes of later copies later inserted these vowels.

However, if this may tantamount to the text being manufactured or contrived and also from a different time period is difficult to envisage, as the ‘errors’ would be too conspicuous and blatant not to have been avoided and noticed. Furthermore, if it may

¹¹⁹ The language used in the *Ṣahīfa* is generally much similar to that of the Qur’ānic era, a language that can be found in prayers and traditions of the same period. For example the well known prayers of *Mashlūl* (the Lame one) and *Kūmayl*, ascribed to °Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661) and the prayer called the prayer of *Abū Hamza al-Thumālī* of Thābit b. Dīnār, popularly known as Abū Hamza Thumālī, who lived during the time of the 4th, 5th and 6th of the *Shī‘a* Imams. Thus can be said to be quite old, and may be classified as high Arabic. There are however, two nouns that appear to stand out as later constructions. The forms of the nouns *insāniyya* (of *insān*) and *bāhimiyya* (of *bāhīma*) are not common in any of the early Arabic writings. The word *insāniyya* in the supplication is used to mean humanity, the opposite of savagery or beastliness (*bāhimiyya*). However, the words *insīyyun* (derived from *ins*) and *wahshīyyun* (derived from *wahsha*) are commonly used in ancient Arabic writings (including the Qur’ān and ḥadīth) to mean humanity and beastliness respectively. In fact, the construction of the form *insāniyyun* as opposed to *insīyyun* was not known to early grammarians and linguists. See *Lisān al-‘Arab* and *Taj al-‘arūs* concerning the morphology of these words.

be a case of manufacturing, the question arises why the text were not attributed to any of the later Imams, such as Ja'far b. Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq (d.148/765) or 'Alī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā (d.202/818), who were historically more renowned and attribution to whom may have been less challenging? This is a question that may remain unanswered. Moreover, what may be maintained is that changes in the forms of the actual words, as long as not damaging the body of the text and changing the meaning, would not equal to questioning the integrity of the work. A reference related to this can be found in *al-Kāfi* in 'The Book of Excellence of Knowledge' regarding the quoting of books and traditions, and adhering to them. Muḥammad b. Mā'sūm enquired from Abū 'Abdillāh (Imam Ja'far b. Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq):

“I hear the tradition from you and then (when quoting it to others) I add to it and subtract something from it.” The Imam replied, “It does not matter if you intend to convey the meaning of the tradition”¹²⁰

Reference to a similar narration is also found in *al-Kāfi*, this time from Dāwud b. Farqad who asked the same:

I hear the words and then intend to relate them as I have heard from you, but I cannot recall your words. The Imam enquired of me; “Do you deliberately change my words?” I replied; “No not at all!” The Imam further enquired; “Do you intend to convey my meaning?” I replied; “Certainly!” At this the Imam observed; “Then it does not matter.”¹²¹

Apart from the above words discussed, there are other points that can be made regarding the language and grammatical construction of the *Ṣaḥīfa*. We shall only

¹²⁰ Al-Kulayni, Al-Raḍī. (1978) *Al-Uṣūl al-kāfi*, vol. I , no. 142-2, p. 132, Tehran, Wofis

¹²¹ Ibid. vol. I, no. 143-3, p132

make reference to such points later in this thesis when they contribute to our interpretation of the central questions of this study.¹²²

2.5 Authenticity of Early Arabic Poetry

Although, as mentioned earlier, such discussions concerning authenticity have always taken place, the debate was once again brought to light after doubts were cast concerning the authenticity of early Arabic poetry by Ṭaḥa Ḥusayn and Margoliouth in the 1920's. The propositions of both these scholars, which were put forward independently are described by Jones (1992) to be quite flawed, and he describes the counter arguments propounded by their opponents to be better.¹²³ The debate however drew to a close, not least because of the epilogue to Arberry's *The Seven Odes*, in which the arguments were set out, analysed and rebutted.¹²⁴ Understandably it would not be the place here to discuss the whole body of arguments for or against concerning the discussion of authenticity of early Arabic poetry, as it would make the discussion extensive and take it outside our bounds. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that perceptive scholars as they are called by Jones, such as Gibb, who were not even directly involved in the debate would forward a succinct case in favour of authenticity and had this to say (*Arabic Literature* p. 21):

¹²² Moreover, concerning the discussion of authenticity, if we can draw from the discussion concerning the body of early Arabic poetry, which may well apply here due to the similarities. The foremost similarities being, amongst others, that both are textual documents, and both are claiming to trace their origins back to the same timeframe

¹²³ Jones, A (1992) *Early Arabic Poetry – Marāthi and Ṣu'ūk Poems*, Oxford, Ithaca Press

¹²⁴ Arberry, A. J. (1957) *The Seven Odes: The First Chapter In Arabic Literature*, London, Allen & Unwin

... it would have been impossible for the *rāwīs* of the eighth century, if they had nothing behind them but the undoubtedly genuine productions of the seventh, to have imagined the markedly different poetry of the pre-Islamic age, and to have invented all its particular local and personal diversities. While it may very seldom be possible to provide objective evidence for the authenticity of any given poem with complete certitude, nevertheless (and notwithstanding all possible sources of error, verbal modification, or re-arrangement) there can be no doubt that the commonly accepted nucleus of poems ascribed to the poets of the sixth century is a faithful reproduction of their poetic output and technique, and thus substantially authentic. Most, indeed, of what must have been an immense volume of poetry has perished, but what survives includes, at least, all those works which have been most highly esteemed by every generation of native critics.¹²⁵

Before entering the final part in our study of authenticity, which is the Traditional Analysis, an evaluation of the issues of linguistic analysis may give rise to some interesting matters to questions discussed in the sections concerning Arabic rhyme and Arabic poetry. Moreover, an assessment of the linguistic analysis of the *Ṣaḥīfa* with regard to allusion, reference and use of language draws the picture of an author with an intimate familiarity to and knowledge of the sources (Qur’ān and the *sunna*). Chittick, in his words, when in the process of comparing and contrasting the *Ṣaḥīfa* and the personality of ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn “with a text which expresses the highest aspirations of the Muslim souls”,¹²⁶ says:

...if the author of the *Ṣaḥīfat al-kāmila* was not Imam Zayn al-‘Ābidīn, he – or they – would in any case have to have been a spiritual authority of equal rank.¹²⁷

It may well be appropriate here to say that such a familiarity appears to be quite coherent and in character with the personality of ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn, who is considered largely by the majority of the body of Muslim scholars to be held in the highest

¹²⁵ Gibb, H.A.R. (1998) *History of Arabic Literature*, Cosmo Publications

¹²⁶ *Al Ṣaḥīfat al-kāmilat al-Sajjādiyya (Psalms of Islam)*, p.XX

¹²⁷ *Al Ṣaḥīfat al-kāmilat al-Sajjādiyya (Psalms of Islam)*, p.XIX-XX

esteem. Further reference to his personality will be given subsequently in the biography.

3.1 Traditional Analysis

Traditional Islamic scholarship has evaluated texts and transmitted documents in two ways: first by a critical study of the chain of transmitters of the text, or what is known as the *ṣanad*.¹²⁸ Secondly, by a critical study of the subject matter of the text, what is known as the *matan*. Moreover, if the chain itself is believed to be interrupted or broken (*munqati'*) the authenticity of the tradition or text will be questioned. If the subject-matter of the text or the *matan* is found to be contradicting the Qur'ān and other authenticated ḥadīth, or *ʿaql* (reason), or if the language is not believed to be from the period in which the narration or text is supposed to have originated, it will not be accepted as authentic.¹²⁹

Ḥadīth scholars have further divided the authentic report or the *ṣaḥīḥ* into two main categories: the *mutawātir* (multiple successive transmissions) and the *āḥād* (single transmission) or *ḵabar al-wāḥid*.¹³⁰ The use of this terminology and methodology is

¹²⁸ The study of the transmitters making up the *ṣanad* developed into an independent science known as *rijāl* (literally 'men') in order to provide biographical details about the narrators' dates of birth and death, their theological affiliations, their reliability and personal characters, their precision and accuracy in recording and transmitting reports, among other things.

¹²⁹ However, if such conditions are fulfilled in a narration then that narration will be classified as authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*). Failure to fulfil any one of the conditions will relegate the narration from the level of *ṣaḥīḥ* to that of *ḍaʿīf* (weak) or even *mawḍūʿ* (spurious) depending on the degree of the problem in the *ṣanad* or *matan*.

¹³⁰ A *mutawātir* report is one that is transmitted by a large number of narrators that it would be impossible for them all to have agreed to fabricate it. Scholars are not agreed as to the minimum number of transmitters that constitutes *mutawātir*. The *ḵabar al-wāḥid* or solitary report is that which has failed to reach the level required for *mutawātir*.

not restricted to Ḥadīth Criticism only; it is commonly and frequently applied to other fields as well.¹³¹

For example, in Arabic linguistics and lexicography the *ṣanad* played a very significant role in the study of words and their meanings. According to Suyūṭī (d.910/1505), any meaning of a word would not be accepted until certain conditions were fulfilled.¹³²

Furthermore, ʿc Abū al-Faḍl, expresses a similar opinion from the *Lumaʿi-l adilla* of Ibn al-Anbarī to that of Suyūṭī, with the addition of the influence and implications on language and law.¹³³ From this it may be arrived to the fact that the study of the chain of transmitters was not limited to ḥadīth literature only.

Those who have written on the authenticity of the *Ṣaḥīfa* have claimed that their chains are *mutawātir*.¹³⁴

¹³¹ While this terminology and method of textual criticism was first developed primarily to examine and probe traditions attributed to the Prophet or his followers, it was later applied by scholars from other Islamic disciplines to study and examine the authenticity of their documents and *Ṣaḥīfa*. For example, legal theorists, theologians, exegetes, and linguists were known to apply the *isnād* system in their works. The humanistic nature of the Islamic educational system at that time which tended to train students in all relevant disciplines without specialisation made it possible for scholars later specialising in, say, linguistics to employ and experiment with the theories developed in law, tradition studies, or exegesis.

¹³² Conditions such as; the meaning had to be transmitted from the Arabs through an authentic and reliable chain of narrators who were considered just. Moreover the narrators had to be considered reliable to the effect that their reports would be deemed as acceptable. The meaning of the language of the reports would have to come from authorities in the Arabic language. Furthermore the transmitter was expected to have heard the word and meaning directly from the source, hearsay was not accepted and the report had to be transmitted through celebrated chains of narrators (*mutawātir*). See Al- Zabīdī, M. *Taj al-ʿarūs*.

¹³³ In his opinion the transmission of language can be divided into two categories: *Mutawātir* and *āḥād*. “*Tawātur* is normally the language of the Qurʾān and may also include the language of the Prophetic tradition and other Arabs when transmitted by a large number of reliable Arabs. This category is the most reliable and is considered one of the sources of Arabic grammar, and is also accepted by all scholars of the Arabic language... According to the scholars of Islamic jurisprudence (*uṣūl*), while *āḥād* are regarded as reliable proof in Islamic law, they are not that reliable and acceptable in language studies.” See Al- Zabīdī, M. *Taj al-ʿarūs*, p.56

¹³⁴ Such as; Al-Sayyid ʿAlīkhān Al-Shirāzī in *Talkhīṣ al-Riyāḍ*, Al-Abṭāḥī, M. *Al-ṣaḥīfat al-sajjādiyyat al-jāmiʿa*, Al-Amīn, H. *Aʿyān al-shīʿa*

There are many chains that have been used to transmit the *Ṣaḥīfa*.¹³⁵ The most popular are those leading back directly to Muḥammad al-Bāqir b. °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn, and al-Shaḥīd al-Khālīd Zayd b. °Alī also the son of Zayn al-°Ābidīn. Zayd is said to have possessed a manuscript of the *Ṣaḥīfa* in his custody, which was later passed on to his children and to the children of °Abdullah b. al-Ḥasan al-Muthanna, as mentioned in the beginning of the manuscript.¹³⁶ There was yet another manuscript in the hands of Muḥammad al-Bāqir.¹³⁷ According to al-Abṭahī, in Majlisī's account, the number of narrators in the chains of those who transmitted the *Ṣaḥīfa* reached over fifty six thousand people¹³⁸, this number is consistent with the view held by other scholars as well.¹³⁹ Furthermore, Chittick mentions a reference found in Mishkāt's and Mar°ashi's introduction to the *Ṣaḥīfa*, that Majlisī's father, Mullā Muḥammad Taqī Majlisī (d.1070/1659-60) counted all the chains of transmission by which he had received the *Ṣaḥīfa* to be more than a million.¹⁴⁰ What possibly could have been meant is the number of reporters in all of the chains.

The wording of the *ṣanad* itself suggests that the *Ṣaḥīfa* may have been transmitted both orally and as a written document. The narrator in the beginning of the chain uses the verb *ḥaddathanā* ('he related to us'), which is an indicator that he is reporting directly from his sources as opposed to the words °an (from), which allows the

¹³⁵ Al-Abṭahī, M. (2003) *Al-ṣaḥīfat al-sajjādiyyat al-jāmi'a*, Qum, Mu'assasat al-imam Mahdi, see also Al-Amīn, M. (1986) *A°yān al-shī°a*, vol. I, Beirut, Dār al-ta°āraf lil-maṭbū°āt

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid

¹³⁹ See Al-Qarāshī's *Ḥayāt al-Imam Zayn al-°Ābidīn*, and Ḥusayn °Alī' Maḥfūz's article in al-Balagh Magazine, no. 7, year 1

¹⁴⁰ See introduction of *Al Ṣaḥīfat al-kāmilat al-Sajjādiyya (Psalms of Islam)* p. xxi, where Chittick refers to *Al-Ṣaḥīfat al-kāmilat al-Sajjādiyya*, with introductions by Sayyid Muḥammad Mishkāt and Sayyid Shihāb al-Dīn Mar°ashī, Tehran, 1942

possibility of indirect transmission.¹⁴¹ Another verb used in the same *ṣanad* is *akhbaranā* (he informed us) which is a technical term used by narrators to indicate that they are transmitting from a written document.¹⁴² The words *qirā'atan ʿalayhi wa anā asmaʿ* (he recited it to him while I was listening) also used in the chains explicitly suggests that the *Ṣaḥīfa* was being circulated and transmitted in written form. Likewise, verbs such as *samiʿtuha* (I heard it) also suggest that the transmission of the *Ṣaḥīfa* is through unbroken chains.

Since there are hundreds of such chains used to transmit this work, discussing each chain individually will prove to be an exhausting task and a study of this magnitude, is perhaps more suitable in the fields of Tradition studies or Ḥadīth criticism. It is not the intention here to analyse all the chains and the biographies of fifty six thousand or more narrators who are believed to have transmitted this work since such a study has already been undertaken by others in the field of *rijāl* and ḥadīth studies.¹⁴³

The terms *ṣaḥīfa* seems to suggest that the text may have been written by the author himself and not merely attributed to him.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ According to ḥadīth scholars the direct method where the verb *ḥaddathanā* is employed is one of the most reliable methods in transmitting reports.

¹⁴² This is common when a report is read from a text in the presence of the narrator or narrators.

¹⁴³ Extensive studies of some of the chains have been done by Al-Abṭaḥī in *Al-ṣaḥīfat al-sajjādiyyat al-jāmiʿa* and also by, Al-Sayyid ʿAlīkhān Al-Shirāzī in *Talkhīṣ al-Riyāḍ*. Other biographical works such as al-Khūʿī's *Rijāl*, al-Najāshī's *Al-fihrist*, and Ibn Hajar's *Lisān al-mīzān*, to name just a few, have all discussed the biographies and status of the narrators in their entries.

¹⁴⁴ Normally in Arabic a *risāla* is a written document produced by the author himself, similarly the term *ṣaḥīfa* is also applied to a document attributed to a given author. For example, the famous *Ṣaḥīfa Hammām Ibn Munabbah* is so-called because it is believed to have been authored by Hammām b. Munabbah (d. 132/750) himself. Therefore if *Ṣaḥīfa Sajjādiyya* had been authored by X and attributed to Sajjād, it would be titled *Ṣaḥīfa X min marwiyyāt Sajjād* (the *Ṣaḥīfa* of X containing the traditions of Sajjād). Such a title (*Ṣaḥīfa Hammām Ibn Munabbah min marwiyyāt Abī Hurayra*) was used to describe the *Ṣaḥīfa* of Hammām whom scholars believe was reporting directly from Abū Hurayra. The question came up whether Abū Hurayra himself had authored the narrations found in the manuscript of Hammām. The conclusion arrived at by scholars was that the title itself suggested that the document was written by Hammām himself containing the traditions from Abū Hurayra. Therefore, it is very

Regarding the authenticity of the *Ṣaḥīfa*, Chittick in his introduction, maintains that:

The opinion of the writer of these lines concerning the authenticity of the *Ṣaḥīfa* – admittedly based only upon an intimate acquaintance with the text gained through months spent in translation – is that the original fifty-four prayers go back to Zayn al-°Ābidīn, that the addenda are nearly as trustworthy, and that the *munajāt* may have been worked upon by others. But the *Ṣaḥīfa* in its larger forms probably contains a good deal of material from later authors.¹⁴⁵

Of course it may be difficult to identify exactly what would have convinced Chittick concerning the authenticity of the *Ṣaḥīfa*. However, it may be observed that what seems to be an additional factor –and perhaps the deciding factor– over and above his investigation and analysis, which may have led to give the identity of a ‘person’, it seems that the ‘intimate acquaintance’ gained with the text by spending months in translation, as mentioned above, may have given gave a ‘face’ to that person, the person and the face being that of °Alī b. Ḥusayn Zayn al-°Ābidīn.

What many of those who work with and translate texts of various kinds might agree with, is that often an in-depth and close relationship may gradually evolve towards the object of study, which in turn might allow the text to be viewed from ‘within’ rather than to be observed from the ‘outside’.

Traditionally, in the opinion of the *Shī°a* at least, there has been no doubt concerning the integrity and authorship of the *Ṣaḥīfa*.¹⁴⁶

unlikely that a *ṣaḥīfa* is ever attributed to anyone other than the original author. See Ibn Manzūr, *M Liszān al-°arab* and Al- Zabīdī, *M. Taj al-°arūs*

¹⁴⁵ *Al Ṣaḥīfat al-kāmilat al-Sajjādiyya (Psalms of Islam)* Introduction, p. XX

¹⁴⁶ Al-Amīn mirrors this belief succinctly as he says: “The strongest proof for the authenticity of *al-Ṣaḥīfa al-Sajjādiyya* is that it contains pure words, matchless eloquence, excellent meanings... wonderful ways for seeking His (God’s) pardon and generosity, and imploring Him. Hence this pearl belongs to that sea... Besides it is very well known, its chain of authorities are numerous and go back to its author, Imam Zayn al-°Ābidīn, may Allāh bless him and his pure fathers and his pure children. The trustworthy narrators reported it through their numerous, successive chains of authority on the authority of Zayn al-°Ābidīn, peace be on him. Zayd, the martyr, had copies of it, and he handed them over to his children, who handed them over to the children of °Abd Allāh b. al-Ḥasan al-Muthanna...

Although there is some disagreement among non-*Shīʿa* scholars regarding the authorship of the *Ṣaḥīfa*,¹⁴⁷ it is not maintained within the body of *Shīʿa* scholarship as mentioned, particularly in the minds of *Shīʿa* worshippers who use the prayer manual. For them, according to Howarth (1991, p.19) “the value of the book cannot be divorced from the history and personality of Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn himself.”¹⁴⁸ He records an interesting incident in his thesis to illustrate this point as recounted by Naṣr: Henry Corbin, a noted Western scholar in *Shīʿa* studies, remarked once to the well-known *Shīʿa* scholar ʿAllāma Ṭabaṭabāʾī, the compiler of the renowned commentary of the Qurʾān, *al-Mizān*, that “Western scholars claim that ʿAlī is not the author of the *Nahj al-balāgha*.” The ʿAllāma “raised his head and answered in his usual gentle and calm manner”, and replied:

“For us whoever wrote the *Nahj al-balāgha* is ʿAlī, even if he lived a century ago.”¹⁴⁹

and al-Bāqir, peace be on him, had copies of it as well. The people took great care of narrating it, verifying its words and copies, and they went on reciting its supplications by night and day.” Al-Amīn, H. A *ʿyān al-Shīʿa*, see also, Al-Qarashī, B (1988) *Ḥayāt al-Imam Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn*

¹⁴⁷ Howarth, T (1991) *Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn’s Ladder: An Exploration of Imam ʿAlī ibn Ḥusayn’s Al-Ṣaḥīfat al-kāmilat al-Sajjādiyyah*, Birmingham. This being Howarth’s dissertation in reference to the mentioned title, in which he makes reference to Madelung’s *Die Shīʿa* (1987) *Die Shīʿa* in Gätje’s *Grundriss der Arabischen Philologie*, Bd. 2: Literaturwissenschaft, Weisbaden, Reichert

¹⁴⁸ Howarth, T (1991) *Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn’s Ladder: An Exploration of Imam ʿAlī ibn Ḥusayn’s Al-Ṣaḥīfat al-kāmilat al-Sajjādiyyah*

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, See also Chittick, W. (1980) (Ed. and trans.) *A Shīʿite Anthology*, selected by S.M.H. Ṭabaṭabāʾī with an intro. By S.H.Naṣr, London, Muhammadi Trust

MPhil B

CHAPTER 5

The Style and Themes in the *Ṣaḥīfa Sajjādiyya*

Regrettably not much has been written on the aspect of style or the themes contained within the *Ṣaḥīfa* independently. The Arabic commentaries on the *Ṣaḥīfa*¹⁵⁰ largely focus on the linguistic analysis of the terms and phrases used by the Imam ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn in addition to supplementing the contents of the prayers with supporting reports by the Prophet and the Imams in the *Shīʿa* tradition. In this respect the only contribution appears to be from Chittick in his introduction to the translation of the *Ṣaḥīfa*¹⁵¹ and Colin Turner's article on Prayers within the Twelver *Shīʿa* tradition.¹⁵²

Padwick's *Muslim Devotions* is, as described by Colin Turner, a *magnum opus* that covers the whole Muslim world in terms of the practise of prayers, yet is weakest when it comes to the subject of prayers within the Twelver *Shīʿa* tradition.¹⁵³ Padwick does touch upon the *Ṣaḥīfa* but not independently, yet in fairness does cover certain themes contained within the *Ṣaḥīfa* in a more general sense. Turner in his article has offered a broad sevenfold categorisation of prayers within the Twelver *Shīʿa*

¹⁵⁰ Such as the *Talkhīṣ al-riyāḍ*, of Al-Sayyid ʿAlīkhān al-Shirāzī, (1961-2) Tehrān

¹⁵¹ Ibn al-Ḥusayn, ʿĀlī (Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn) (1988) *Al Ṣaḥīfat al-kāmilat al-Sajjādiyya (Psalms of Islam)*, (Trans.& Intro. by William Chittick) London, Muhammadi Trust

¹⁵² Turner, Colin. Eds. Luft, J.P. & Turner, Colin *Aspects of Devotional Life in Twelver Shīʿism – The Practice of Duʿā* (2008) Abingdon, Oxon. Routledge. Also note that words 'Prayer' and 'Supplication' are at times used interchangeably unless specified otherwise.

¹⁵³ Ibid. P. 376

tradition;¹⁵⁴ the prayers within *Ṣaḥīfa* generally fall into five of these genera. Chittick's work, although brief, is insightful and very useful in acquainting the reader with the personal, spiritual and theological dimensions that run through the cross-section of the prayers. Thus from Chittick's introduction of describing the style of the *Ṣaḥīfa* and the category description given by Turner in his article together with a general understanding of prayers within the Muslim world by Padwick we have a very small nonetheless a very useful point of beginning into the study of the *Ṣaḥīfa* within the English language.

Our analysis of the *Ṣaḥīfa* in what will follow will be to explore at both the general structure of the prayers and the content of the prayers. As for the structure, we will look at the way in which the Imam generally begins and ends his prayers. In terms of the contents we will first look at the fundamental tenets that are present within the prayers such as the notion of Unity of God, Essential lack and Need inherent within the creatures, which forms the overall worldview of the Imam and determines the creature-God relationship. After this we will elaborate on factors that are subordinate to the above such as ethical, social and spiritual. Finally we will place the prayers of the *Ṣaḥīfa* into broad categories and genera in terms of the prayers recited spontaneously or being premeditated, highly spiritual or semi spiritual and rational, together with placing them in other lesser fundamental categories. In our discussion on both the style and the content, we will, as far as possible, site from the broader Islamic spiritual literature in order to give a better understanding of why the Imam has employed his particular style and content.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. Pp. 384-97

1. The Style of Supplications in terms of Content and Structure

The style and contents of prayers within the *Ṣaḥīfa* generally transcend religious limitations and boundaries. We cannot deny that both the style and the contents of the prayers are a product of the influence of Islam upon the Imam¹⁵⁵, yet there is a deep sense of humanness about the prayers that would appeal to any individual. The Imam's approach is in the context of his 'createdness' and 'creaturliness' that is common across humanity. In this sense he unhesitatingly displays his strengths and weaknesses, joys and sorrows, anxiety at situations beyond his control and a deep need for a God in Whom he confides and seeks support from. These are the psychological challenges that face all human beings in the course of their lives regardless of creed and culture. The prayers in brief are what I term as 'spiritual ethics', designed to bring a state of wholesomeness within an individual and do not necessarily require an individual to profess faith in a particular belief or doctrine. With the exception of the Names of Allāh, personalities of Islam and references to eschatology, there is not much that would delineate these prayers as something particular to the Muslim. On that note we notice that prayers generally are an ideal means to create that much needed moral common ground of discourse between people of different religious persuasions, however in particular the ethical-spiritual content within the prayers of the *Ṣaḥīfa* may even appeal to people of non-religious persuasion. In brief the language of the prayers within the *Ṣaḥīfa* in many instances is a human language with an appeal to humanity at large.

¹⁵⁵ Such as concepts of *Tawḥīd*, *Nubuwwa*, *Ma'ād* etc.

Having said this we can consider the style of the supplications within the *Ṣahīfa* in terms of both the structure and the contents. The contents, as mentioned above, have a broad human appeal and shall be dealt with in subsequent sections; as for the structure, it is very much inline with the particular Islamic and *Shīʿa* teachings and whose relevance would not be appreciable by readers who are not acquainted with the spiritual etiquettes of prayers within Islam. The Imam commences every prayer with the Praise of God and sends salutations upon the Prophet and the members of his household and ends the prayers with salutations.¹⁵⁶ In many prayers the Imam frequently invokes the blessing of God upon the Prophet and his family during the course of the prayers not merely at the beginning and end.¹⁵⁷ The reason for this is that there are uncountable reports from the Prophet and the Imams that God accepts prayers and supplications when they commence with His praise, similarly there are numerous reports stating that a guaranteed means for the granting of requests is to invoke God’s blessings upon the Prophet and his household.¹⁵⁸

The Qur’ān commences with the praise of God in the very first chapter named *Surat al-Ḥamd* or *Surat al-Fātiḥa* (the Chapter of Praise or Opening) where it states: *al-*

¹⁵⁶ In fact the first two supplications are titled *In Praise of God* and *Blessings upon Muḥammad and his Household*.

¹⁵⁷ For example see verse 3 in *His Supplication for Good Outcomes*, verse 12 in *His supplication in repentance* and verse 4 in *His Supplication in Sorrow*.

¹⁵⁸ Among these numerous narrations we find for example: “Abu Kahmas narrates from Imam as-Ṣādiq ‘[One day] a man entered the mosque and began [praying for his need] before praising Allāh and sending salutations on the Prophet. So the Prophet said, “The servant hastened [in calling] his Lord.” Then came in another [person], he offered prayers (*salāt*), praised Allāh, the All-mighty, the Majestic, and sent blessings on the Messenger of Allāh. So the Prophet of Allāh said, “Ask and you shall be granted.”” In *Al-Āsifī*, Shaykh Muḥammad Mahdī *Supplication in the Eyes of the Ahlul Bayt* Tehran, Ahlul Bayt World Assembly (ABWA) where the author quotes from *Uṣūl al-Kāfi*, p.525; and *Wasā’il al-Shīʿa*, vol.4, p. 1127, ḥadīth 8788. Another similar report is: ‘Safwān al-Jammāl narrates from Imam as-Ṣādiq; “Any supplication by which Allāh, the All-Mighty, the Majestic, is called upon is obscured *maḥjūb* from the heavens until [the supplicant sends] blessings on Muḥammad and his Progeny.”” Ibid. *Uṣūl al-Kāfi*, p.528; and *Wasā’il al-Shīʿa*, vol.4, pg.1135, ḥadīth no.8826

ḥamdu-li-llāhi rabbil-‘ālamīn “All praise is for Allāh the Nurturer of the worlds...”¹⁵⁹

Similarly the Muslim daily devotions, which comprise of seventeen units to be prayed throughout the day, contain the statement: *sami‘ Allāhu liman ḥamidah* “Surely Allāh responds to the one who praises Him” in every single unit.¹⁶⁰ As for the invocation of blessing and salutation upon the Prophet and his family the Qur’ān states: *inna allāha wa malāikatahu yuṣallūna ‘ala n-nabiyy yā ayyuhalladhīna āmanū ṣallū ‘alayhi wasallimū taslīman* “Indeed Allāh and His angels send blessing upon the Prophet thus O you who believe, invoke blessings and salutations upon him!”¹⁶¹

1.1 Basic General Tenets of the Prayers within the *Ṣaḥīfa*

1.1.1 Individuality and Spontaneity

The *Ṣaḥīfa* is a collection of prayers recited by the Fourth *Shī‘a* Imam ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn on various occasions of his life and in different personal and psychological states. Prayers in Islam and within the Twelver *Shī‘a* tradition enjoy a prominent place within the communal and individual life of the Muslim. Prayers fundamentally are means of relation and connection between the individual and God and fall into a

¹⁵⁹ Q. 1:2

¹⁶⁰ Mar‘ashī, Muḥammad Qāḍī (2003)*Method of Salat* Transl. Saleem Bhimji, Qum, Ansariyan Publications

¹⁶¹ Q. 33:56. It is interesting to note that the call to invoke blessings *ṣallū* is in the form of an imperative verb, stressing its significance, moreover as also expressed by a Muslim speaker; God being the object of worship, in this case however, it is an act of worship that God Himself is also taking part in together with His creation. Thus commencing prayers with the praise and eulogy of God and the blessing upon the Prophet is not a mere form of courtesy, rather this act is considered, in spiritual terms, as part of the cause for the securing of Divine succour where the supplicant advertently resorts to means that are tested and verified. The Prophet has stated to the effect that invocation of salutation upon him and members of his family can never go unanswered by God, hence the believers ought to pray to God after invoking the blessing, for God is not a miser Who responds to one part of the prayer and ignores the other.

variety of classifications as attested to by all three of the above authors. The most central and the broadest category of prayers is one of obligatory and recommended. The manner and the method, together with the time and place for the performance of the obligatory prayers is prescribed and fixed by the Prophet, whereas the recommended prayers have a scope for personal improvisation in terms of time, place, personal state and occasion. By and large it is this allowance of personal improvisation and formulation of prayers that marks the fundamental distinction between the obligatory and recommended prayers. The non-obligatory recommended prayers as mentioned above are of various genera such as supplications for needs or on special occasions or for others to mention but a few, and are such that the individual can be both spontaneous and original.¹⁶²

The key terms used within the Qur'ān denoting prayers, generally of both the obligatory and supererogatory categories but with greater emphasis on the non-obligatory are *Du'ā* and *Dhikr*. *Dhikr* a verbal noun from the root verb in Arabic *dhakara*, literally means to make a mention of or to remember¹⁶³ and is used frequently within the Qur'ān in the general sense of consciously connecting with God in great frequency and on all occasions. For example we have the following verses from the Qur'ān, at the completion of the main ceremonies of the major pilgrimage, the *Hajj*: "Then remember Allāh as you remember your forefathers or a more intense remembrance"¹⁶⁴ Or: "Remember Allāh an abundant remembrance and glorify Him at

¹⁶² The non-obligatory prayers are highly recommended and encouraged by the primary sources of Islam: The Qur'ān and the *Sunna* or the Prophetic and in the case of the *Shī'a*, the Imami tradition, to the extent that they are intended to form the very identity of the individual and the community alike.

¹⁶³ Lane, E.W. (1984) *Arabic-English Lexicon*, Cambridge, Islamic Texts Society

¹⁶⁴ Q. 2:200

daybreak and at dusk”¹⁶⁵ and finally verses in the praise of righteous people such as: “Those who remember Allāh standing, sitting and on their sides, they reflect upon the creation of the heavens and the earth and state; our Lord! You have not created this in vain, save us from the chastisement of the Fire.”¹⁶⁶

As for the word *du^cā* from the root verb *da^cā*, literally means to call or call upon.¹⁶⁷ *Du^cā* within the Qur’ān denotes a direct, spontaneous and an unpretentious communication with God. Verses such as those depicting the psychological state of anxiety where an individual in the face of danger lets go of inhibition and calls upon God, for example: “They call upon God imploring Him...”¹⁶⁸ There are numerous verses within the Qur’ān where the word *du^cā* gives the meaning of a personal and direct relationship between the creatures and their Lord in which God, in an encouraging tone, commands the creatures to call upon Him. For example the verse: “Say to My servants of Me that I am indeed near, I respond to the supplication of one who calls upon Me whenever he calls upon Me.”¹⁶⁹ And: “Call on to Me and I shall respond.”¹⁷⁰ Such verses encourage a personal unpretentious relation with God where an individual feels at liberty with the procession of a more or less, right on God to approach Him on the individual’s terms. Whereas verses such as: “Call Allāh or call

¹⁶⁵ Q. 3:41, 76:25

¹⁶⁶ Q. 3:191 also 24:36 where the houses of such people are mentioned; ... (*Lit is such a Light*) in houses in which Allāh has permitted to be raised to honour; for the celebration, in them, of His name: In them is He glorified in the mornings and in the evenings, (again and again). Although the word *Dhikr* within the Sufi culture is predominantly used to denote the guided spiritual practice of disciplining the soul through the silent or pronounced invocation of the names of God, we see that the verses above are giving a much broader meaning of remembering God in whatever way befitting to the individual.

¹⁶⁷ Lane, E.W. (1984) *Arabic-English Lexicon*, Cambridge, Islamic Texts Society

¹⁶⁸ Q. 41:51, 29:65

¹⁶⁹ Q. 2:186

¹⁷⁰ Q. 40:60

al-rahmān (Most Merciful) whichever you call upon, Allāh has the beautiful Names,”¹⁷¹ give right to personal improvisation and formulation of communication with God to the individual’s desire. Although the devotees do repeat the *ad‘īya* (plural of *du‘ā*) dictated by the Imams for various occasions however, even in such ceremonial performances, the individual is ideally required to be in a psychological state where the *du‘ā* is intended as a personal discourse with God which is made possible by the universal language of the *du‘ā* as mentioned above.

The tenets of *dhikr* and *du‘ā*, namely the frequent remembrance of God on all occasions and the display of an intimate personal relation with God resulting in an unpretentious natural and spontaneous communication with God to the formulation of an individual’s desire and choosing are the essentials of supererogatory communication with God. The *Ṣahīfa* in its entirety depicts these two tenets where the Imam in every prayer displays his individuality and *humanness*, where he at a very personal and intimate level portrays a direct relationship with God in which he unashamedly and unassumingly speaks to God from the depths of his soul. This is fairly apparent from a cursory reading of the titles of the prayers and their contents. For example, we have prayers that the Imam has recited at mornings and evenings, on the completion of the recitation of the Qur’ān, and Day of fast-breaking, among others. In contrast, we have prayers he recited for seeking help in paying his debts, asking for water during drought, when death was mentioned or prayers for his parents, children and friends.

¹⁷¹ Q. 17:110

Finally at a personal level there are prayers recited when he was sick, making confession of his inadequacies, atonement at acts of wrongdoing,¹⁷² in moments of fear and for removal of worries. In every one of these prayers there is a very personal tone that the Imam is using where he professes his own state of inadequacy and calls upon the mercy of God.

1.2 Particular tenets of prayers within the *Ṣaḥīfa*

1.2.1 Theological Tenets- Unity of God and the notion of Lordship and Servant-hood

Within the *Shīʿa* tradition there are numerous reports from the Prophet and the Imams that talk of *duʿā* as the essence of worship and the best form of worship.¹⁷³ In turn worship in Islam is the fundamental reason for the creation of humans and the Jinn as attested to by the verse: “I have not created Jinn and Men except for My worship.”¹⁷⁴ In Muslim theology and spirituality, worship establishes the distinction between God and His creatures. Through worship an individual acknowledges his or her state of *createdness* and need to God, and establishes God’s rank of being the Creator and the

¹⁷² For further reading on the apparently contradictory notion of *repentance* and *wrongdoing* of the Prophets and Imams and *infallibility* within *Shīʿa* thought see Chittick’s introduction in the *Ṣaḥīfa*. Also see the writings of Henry Corbin on Imamology and Roberts, Avens (1988) *Corbin’s Interpretation of Imamology & Sufism* Hamdard Islamicus 11/2

¹⁷³ There are also plentiful references to this in the Qur’ān, such as; Q. 25:77, 40:60, 42:13 etc. Similarly, as for narrations we have for example a report from the Prophet in *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol.93, p.300; “Supplication is the essence *mukhkh* of worship. One who maintains supplication shall never perish.” Another example is from Imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq in *Al-Mahajjat al-Baydā*, vol. 2, p. 283; “There is an honourable position near Allāh which can only be earned through supplication.” Al-Āsifi, Shaykh Muḥammad Mahdī *Supplication in the Eyes of the Ahlul Bayt* Tehran, Ahlul Bayt World Assembly (ABWA)

¹⁷⁴ Q. 51:56

One in a state of absolute completion without any deficiency. *Du'ā* in this sense of marking a distinction between God and the creatures occupies a fundamental position with the *Shī'c* spiritual and theological outlook. For example Imam °Alī in his famous prayer popularly known as *Du'ā Kumayl*, highly recommended to be prayed by the faithful on the eve of Thursdays, states towards the end;

Indeed You have decreed upon Your servants to worship You and have commanded them to pray to You and have guaranteed Your response. Thus to You O Lord I turn my face, and towards You I extend my hands, by Your honour grant my prayer... Forgive the one who owns nothing but a Du'ā...¹⁷⁵

Du'ā, in essence, is therefore a conscious acknowledgment of need to God and God's state of untarnished perfection. Chittick terms this tenet of the prayers within *Ṣaḥīfa* as *tawḥīd* (the Unity of God) in Devotional Mode. The Imam in his prayers as Chittick points out, continuously attributes all goodness, mercy, love, perfection... to God in a way compatible with the Unity of God as in “there is no god but God”, “there is no love except through God's initiative”, “there is no knowledge but in God”, “there is no mercy except from God”.... Whilst at the same time attributing all deficiency, lack, sin and inadequacy to his own self.¹⁷⁶

The dimension of *Tawḥīd* is a central principle of the prayers within the *Ṣaḥīfa* where the other tenets that are mentioned below are seen as its facets and subordinate to it.

¹⁷⁵ Chittick, William *Supplications* Qum, Ansariyan Publications. Al-Qummī, °Abbās (2003) *Mafātīḥ al-Jinān – Keys to Heaven* (Transl. Murtaza Ahmed Lakha), Stanmore/Mumbai, Kumail And Kausar Publications

¹⁷⁶ Ibn al-Ḥusayn, °Ālī (Zayn al-°Ābidīn) (1988) *Al Ṣaḥīfat al-kāmīlat al-Sajjādiyya (Psalms of Islam)*, (Transl. & Introd. by William Chittick) London, Muhammadi Trust

1.2.1.1 Variety of Names and Attributes of God to approach Him by during various needs

Different trends of thought within the Islamic intellectual traditions have classified the Names and attributes of God in somewhat of a different manner each in accordance with their particular outlook. Fundamentally, each group within the *Shī'ca* tradition accepts the notion of the essential unity between God, His Attributes and Names due to the strict teachings of Unity of God within the Shī'i religious literature; the only difference in this respect is in terms of the variety of function of God in relation to the world and His envisaged purpose from creation. Chittick alludes to some of the approaches to the Attributes of God within the Muslim intellectual traditions, however due to the lack of scope within his introduction to the *Ṣaḥīfa* he does not discuss the issue in the context of the prayers of the Imam.

The theologians look at the Attributes of God in terms of affirmation and negation or in terms of the Attributes of the Essence and Act of God¹⁷⁷ whereas the theosophers¹⁷⁸ and mystics focus more on the distinction of the Attributes of Beauty and Majesty whilst looking at the world as a stage for the display of God's Attributes and Names. Rūmī reduces human-Divine psychology squarely to the Attributes of Gentleness and Severity where each human state corresponds to a facet of God's Attribute of Mercy or Wrath, through which individuals both connect with God and arrive at the fullness

¹⁷⁷ Subḥānī, Ja'far Tabrīzī *Ilāhiyāt 'alā hadī al-kitāb wa-l sunna wa-l 'aql* Qum, Mu'assasat al-Imam al-Ṣādiq a.s. vol. 1, 'The Attributes of God'

¹⁷⁸ Al-Kāshānī, Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ *Uṣūl al-ma'ārif*, Markaz Intishārāt Daftar Tablīghāt Islāmī, ch. 3, Discussion on the Names of God

of their vested potentials.¹⁷⁹ This is precisely the manner in which the *Shīʿa* Imams have introduced the notion of the function of the Names of God through their teachings and in particular through the prayers.

The famous *Duʿā* by the name of *al-Jawshan al-Kabīr*¹⁸⁰ which is recited by the faithful in the nights of the month of Ramadan and is attributed to the Prophet of Islam consists of a thousand Names and Attributes of God. The prayer of *al-Jawshan al-Kabīr* describes God’s absoluteness, unity and perfection through His various Names and Attributes in relation to His function in human life. For example; “O Friend for one who has no friend... O Physician for one who has no physician... O Strength of the weak... O One Who elevates Ranks... O One Who defends...” and so forth. Thus from reading the prayers of the Imams we find that there are Names and Attributes of God for particular types of situations through which He is to be invoked and approached.

Imam ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn follows this method prominently in certain prayers within the *Ṣaḥīfa*.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁹ Chittick, William (1983) *Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī – The Sufī Path of Love* Albany, State University of New York Press, part 1

¹⁸⁰ *Jawshan al-Kabīr* literally means the great armour or coat of armour. This prayer is reported from ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn tracing back to his great grandfather the Prophet, who was given the prayer during one of the battles by Angel Gabriel. In that battle the Prophet was wearing a very heavy coat of armour and was hurting due to it. It was then that Angel Gabriel descended saying he had brought this *Jawshan* (coat of armour) to be recited as a protection for him and his *Umma*. Al-Qummī, ʿAbbās (2003) *Mafātīḥ al-Jinān – Keys to Heaven* (Transl. Murtaza Ahmed Lakha), Stanmore/Mumbai, Kumail And Kausar Publications. Also see; Bhimji, Saleem *The Importance of the Duʿā Jawshan Kabīr*, where the author also refers to the books *Balad al-Amīn* and *Misbaḥ al-Kafaʿmī* containing the report.

¹⁸¹ For example in *The Whispered Prayer of the Utterly Poor* he states “...nothing will relieve my distress other than Thy mercy ...remove my injury other than Thy clemency...” where both mercy and clemency are the Attributes of God. Or at another instance in the same prayer he supplicates: “...O Security of the fearful... O Patron of the righteous... O Responder to the supplication...” where Security, Responder etc. are the Names of God corresponding to the particular supplication. In this way we find that the Imam invokes God through an Attribute or a Name of God most suitable for the type of prayer being made in terms of pleading for forgiveness, or asking for provisions or requesting Divine assistance and so on.

1.1.2 Spiritual Dimensions

Great emphasis is placed upon the individual psychological state of the supplicant to the extent that the individual state is seen as a means of assurance for the Divine response. In this respect several spiritual factors as forming the overall psychological state of an individual are dictated by the Prophet and the Imams. These factors, to list the main ones are things such as; the softness of heart (al-riqqah), tearfulness, acknowledgment of sin, directedness to God etc. I term these tenets generally as the *dimension of the individual's conscious presence and God-focus*.

In several reports from the Prophet and the Imams, the faithful are exhorted to approach God through a state of softened heart and tearfully.¹⁸² Similarly, elsewhere they are told be God-focused during prayers and being mindful that they are in the presence of God who sees and hears them¹⁸³, and finally the supplicant is told to have full faith and confidence of Divine grace at the point of prayer. All these factors in turn are, as taught by the Prophet and the Imams, assured means of securing God's response.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² Al-Āsifī, Muḥammad Mahdī *Supplication in the Eyes of the Ahlul Bayt*, Tehran, Ahlul Bayt World Assembly (ABWA), part 3, where the author is stating that the Prophet is reported to have said; "Avail yourself of the opportunity of prayer (*du'ā'*) at the softening (of the heart); for it is a mercy", *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol.93, p.313. Another narration from Imam al-Ṣādiq where he said; "When your skin quivers and your eyes shed tears, then you have drawn closer! Your need has been considered", in *Wasā'il al-Shī'a*, vol.4, p.1141, ḥadīth 8763.

¹⁸³ Mahmoud Ayoub quotes the famous Prophetic narration from Muslim and Bukhārī which says; "Worship God as if you see Him, and if you cannot see Him, then know that He can see you!" Ayoub, Mahmoud (2005) *Islam: Faith and History*, ONEWorld Publications. pp. 68–9

¹⁸⁴ Al-Āsifī, Muḥammad Mahdī *Supplication in the Eyes of the Ahlul Bayt*, Tehran, Ahlul Bayt World Assembly (ABWA), part 3, where its stated that; "The author of *al-Durr al-Manthūr* reports from Ma'ādh b. Jabal that the Holy Prophet (S) said, 'Had you recognized Allāh with the recognition due to Him, your prayers would have dislodged the mountains.'"

The Imam displays the above psychological states throughout his prayers but more so in some of them than others. For example we see in his *Supplication of Confession and Seeking Repentance*:¹⁸⁵ where he says; “So here I am my Lord, standing at the gate of Thy might, the standing of the lowly, the surrendered, asking Thee in my shame, the asking of the destitute, the pitiful... He is bowed before Thee, bent, his head lowered, thrown down, his legs shaking in fear, his tears flooding his cheeks....” (*Ṣaḥīfa*, p. 44).

Moreover, Chittick brings an interesting discussion in his introduction to the *Ṣaḥīfa* in relation to the Imam’s attitude of confessing sins and considering himself to be utterly unworthy. Whereas on the one hand the *Shī‘a* theologians maintain that the Imams are flawless creatures in every respect, yet on the other we witness from the prayers of all of them without exception, and especially from ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn, such admission and confession of sin. This, as Chittick points out of sort, is in keeping with the Imam’s conscious acknowledgement of his inadequacy in the presence of God’s perfection, not that the Imam is guilty of crimes associated entities lesser than him.¹⁸⁶

1.1.3 Ethical and Moral Dimensions

The Prophet, when asked about his missionary role and purpose, replied: “I have been sent to complete or perfect the noble human traits.”¹⁸⁷ Similarly the Qur’ān states in the praise of the Prophetic conduct: *wa innaka la ‘alā khuluqin ‘aẓīm* “Indeed you

¹⁸⁵ Ibn al-Ḥusayn, ‘Ālī (Zayn al-‘Ābidīn) (1988) *Al Ṣaḥīfat al-kāmilat al-Sajjādiyya (Psalms of Islam)*, (Transl. & Introd. by William Chittick) London, Muhammadi Trust, supplication nr. 12

¹⁸⁶ Also see Roberts, Avens (1988) *Corbin’s Interpretation of Imamology & Sufism*, Hamdard Islamicus 11/2

¹⁸⁷ *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 6017, *Al-Muwatta’a* of Imam Mālik in the Book of Morals 1627/8

possess lofty human traits.¹⁸⁸ Acquisition or completion of befitting human morals has been a priority on the agendas of the Prophets and the saints. Imam °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn places great emphasis on human moral makeup, outlook and conduct through his prayers. Human values are dealt with fundamentally from the perspective of rights of others upon an individual, where the *other* is not constituted by mere other persons, but also in terms of one’s own soul, mind and limbs. Thus, moral betterment is considered by the Imam as the betterment of oneself through the reformation of character and by fulfilment of the rights of others. The rights of others fall into three categories: The rights of God, the rights of the individuals’ own person and the rights of other creatures. The Imam seeks pardon from God for the transgressions committed against the rights of the others in the above sense and invokes Divine assistance to redress the situation wherever possible. There are three major parts within the *Ṣaḥīfa* that deal with moral issues in a direct way, these are- *The Treatise of Rights*¹⁸⁹, *Prayer for Worthy Morals* and *The Prayer of Penance*.

The *Prayer for Worthy Morals*,¹⁹⁰ again talks of the betterment of the soul fundamentally before talking of interaction with others. In the *Prayer of Penance*,¹⁹¹ the Imam implores God through admission of his transgression upon his soul, upon

¹⁸⁸ Q. 68:4

¹⁸⁹ Also known as *Al-Risālat al-Huqūq*, and is added as an appendix to the Muhammadi Trust’s Publication of the *Saḥīfa*. In *The Treatise of Rights*, the Imam thoroughly elaborates on the morality of justice and righteousness where he explains the specific and particular rights the “other” has on an individual through the right that the soul has upon the individual. Hence for example he talks of the rights of the eyes, stomach and hands upon the individual, then he speaks of the rights of the parents, neighbours etc. In this way he roots the whole notion of morality as primarily relating to the human soul which then at a secondary level relates to interaction and attitude to other persons beyond the individual. See Chittick’s introduction to *The Treatise on Rights*, pp. 279-

¹⁹⁰ Known as *Du°ā Makārim al-Akhlāq*, and is supplication nr. 20 in the *Saḥīfa*. For example the Imam prays there; “O Lord! Do not elevate me in the estimation of people but that You lower me equally in my own esteem within my soul”, this in order that arrogance and pride may not result from the praise of people. Furthermore, after at a point he prays; “When anyone speaks ill of me then let me not reciprocate in a like manner, rather let me bear silently and wish them well.”

¹⁹¹ Known as *Du°ā al-Tauba*, supplication nr. 12

the rights of God and rights of other creatures and asks for Divine pardon and assistance in rectifying the wrongs that he has committed.

1:1:4 Social and Political Dimensions

The Qur'ān in several places teaches that the human community has essentially been a single community and that there has always been a single *dīn* (religion or a way of submission) See for example verses such as: *Mankind was one single nation, and Allāh sent Messengers with glad tidings and warnings...*¹⁹²

However in particular the Qur'ān talks of the Muslim community as a single entity where the community almost forms the greater identity of its members. Elsewhere and to a lesser degree, the Qur'ān addresses the issue of the shared identity and fates of the People of the Book, *Ahlul Kitāb* or the religious traditions branching from Abraham namely the Jews, Christians and Muslims through verses and at places the Qur'ān guarantees salvation and deliverance to the believers, Jews, Christians and the Sabaeans: “Those who believe (in the Qur'ān), and those who follow the Jewish (scriptures), and the Christians and the Sabaeans,- any who believe in Allāh and the Last Day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord; on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.”¹⁹³

The understanding that the *umma* in particular is a single family is further emphasised though numerous Prophetic traditions encouraging a general concern for other Muslims such as: “Indeed, if a person does not have concern for the affairs of the

¹⁹² Q. 2:213

¹⁹³ Q. 2:62

Muslims then this, in reality, is a deficiency in ones Islam.”¹⁹⁴ Similarly from al-Ṣādiq we have: “To see to the needs of a believer is better than the acceptance of a thousand pilgrimages performed with all its rites and freeing a thousand slaves for the sake of Allāh.”¹⁹⁵

The Imam, in line with this Qur’ānic and Prophetic outlook, invokes God’s blessings upon previous prophets, their religions and adherents. The Imam states for example; “O God... in every era and time in which Thou didst send a messenger and set up for people a director, from the period of Ādam down to Muḥammad (God bless him and his household), from among Imams of guidance and the Leaders of the God-fearing (upon them be peace – remember them with forgiveness and good pleasure!”¹⁹⁶ Needless to say, such prayers are a product of untarnished human sentiments and can be a potent means for inter-religious dialogue in our modern pluralistic world where through the core literature of Islam and by one of its most celebrated personalities, pluralism as opposed to mere inclusivism is advocated as a part of the Islamic worldview. At other instances we have numerous examples where the Imam prays for the *Umma* and the rectification of its affairs, the soldiers guarding the Muslim frontiers, neighbours and believers, such as in the prayers of; *His Supplication for himself and the People under his Guardianship, His Supplication for his Neighbours and Friends when he Mentioned them, His Supplication for the People of the Frontiers, etc.*¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁴ Al-^cUthaymīn, Shaykh Muhammad ibn Sāliḥ *Al-Sahwatul Islāmiyya Dawābit wa Tawjihāt*, p.77

¹⁹⁵ Haeri, FadhlAllāh Shaykh (1999) *Prophetic Traditions in Islam – On the Authority of the Family of the Prophet*, London, Muḥammadi Trust of Great Britain & Zahrā Publications, p. 219

¹⁹⁶ Supplication 4:2

¹⁹⁷ Supplications; 5, 26 and 27

1.1.5 Esoteric Dimensions

In a certain number of prayers such as the *Munājāt* or the Whispered Prayers, the Imam interacts with God through an informal, mystical and Sufi like manner. Here the language is one of love where formality and courtesy in addressing God feature less prominently. These appear at such moments where the Imam has his guard down and has let go of his inhibitions and approached God on the terms of a loving friend who desires non-other than his friend. The Imam in these prayers, unlike the other supplications, does not show as much concern about salvation and deliverance from Hell, rather the emphasis in these prayers is upon the meeting with God, absorption and effacement within God. The Imam supplicates for the attainment of the love of God and beholding the splendour of His Face. These are prayers in which intuition and love carry an individual beyond the threshold of reason and intellect. Prayers such as: *The Whispered Prayer of the Lovers* and *The Whispered Prayer of the Beseechers*,¹⁹⁸ amongst others, clearly demonstrate, that the Imam is in a very private moment of intimacy with his Most Beloved and at the core desires nothing beyond God, for example he says;

My God! Who can have tasted the sweetness of Thy love,
Then wanted another in place of Thee?
Who can have become intimate with Thy nearness,
Then sought removal from Thee?¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁸ Prayers 77 and 73 in the *Ṣaḥīfa*

¹⁹⁹ ‘The Whispered Prayer of the Lovers’, 77:1

2. Broad Categories of the Prayers within the *Ṣaḥīfa*

Although the cross-section of the prayers within the *Ṣaḥīfa* maintain the fundamental feature of God-creature relation, where God is the source of all good and the creature as the point of deficiency, yet the manner of prayer and content allow us to group them into different genera. As mentioned earlier, both Chittick and Turner have shed some light on the subject. We will look at the category of prayers in accordance to both these authors in what follows. Although the distinctions these authors make in terms of the categories may not be exhaustive, nonetheless are admirable contributions to an overall understanding of the nature of prayers contained within the *Ṣaḥīfa*.

2.1 Broad Genera- Spontaneous and Premeditated

Chittick in his introduction to his translation to the *Ṣaḥīfa* makes a distinction among the prayers in terms of those that were supplicated spontaneously and those that were recited and practised. In this respect, Chittick states, the prayers generally are those that were offered spontaneously by the Imam on behalf of his own self with the exception of prayers that were ceremonially offered on particular events or those offered for others such as the prayer for his parents. The prayer for the Day of *‘Arafa*, for example, Chittick observes, must have been taught by the Imam to his disciples due to its ceremonial recital on the Day of *‘Arafa*. Similarly Chittick believes that the prayer for his parents must have been a dictation of the Imam to his followers based on certain sentiments contained within the prayer and the Imam’s own personal

circumstances.²⁰⁰ This then is a broad twofold category of the prayers in terms of those prayed spontaneously and those that were premeditated.

2.2 Another Broad Genera- Rational and Intuitive

This is another broad category of prayers based on the psychological state of the Imam. Although neither Chittick nor Turner have mentioned this directly, both have alluded to it in some ways. By and large we find that the Imam addresses God in a very courteous and a formal way where his words are fashioned and expressed in a way that are of a sober devotee who supplicates to his Lord, Authority and Master. Here the Imam is restrained, constrained, contained and acutely aware of the distinction between Master and servant or slave. However there are a number of prayers such as the *Munājāt* where the Imam allows himself the liberty to address God in a less formal manner. Here the Imam talks more as a lover obsessed with God rather than a slave talking to his master. In these prayers the *heart* and the intuition of the Imam seems to predominate his reason in relation to what he seeks from God. These prayers speak of the meeting with God, His love and His presence. I have decided to term the distinction here as *distinction based on the predominance of either reason or spiritual intuition*.

2:2 Five Particular Genera

Following are five categories of the seven categories given by Turner in his article²⁰¹ on the general types of prayers within the *Shī'ā* tradition found within the *Ṣaḥīfa*:

²⁰⁰ See Chittick's introduction of the *Ṣaḥīfa*, p. XXVI *The Role of Supplication*

2.2.1 Prayers designed as paeans of praise and thanks to God

Although most prayers in the *Ṣaḥīfa* begin with the praise to God there are certain prayers specifically dedicated to that, such as the very first prayer with the title ‘Praise of God’ where the Imam says:

Praise belongs to God,
The First, without a first before Him,
The Last, without a last behind Him.
Beholders’ eyes fall short of seeing Him,
Describers’ imaginations are not able to depict Him.²⁰²

Another example is seen in *His Supplication when Perils were Repelled or Requests quickly granted*, where we find:

O God,
to Thee belongs praise for Thy excellent accomplishment
and for Thy trial which Thou hast turned away from me!
But make not my share of Thy mercy
the well-being which Thou hast quickly granted to me,
lest I become wretched through what I have loved
and someone else gain felicity through what I have disliked!²⁰³

2.2.2 Invocations that include requests of forgiveness and clemency

The *Ṣaḥīfa* is punctuated with supplications that reach out for God’s forgiveness and mercy, such as the prayers of *His Supplication Asking Pardon*, *His Supplication in Seeking Pardon*, *His Supplication in Repentance*, such as:

²⁰¹Turner, Colin. Eds. Luft, J.P. & Turner, Colin *Aspects of Devotional Life in Twelver Shī‘ism – The Practice of Du‘ā* (2008) Abingdon, Oxon. Routledge

²⁰² Supplication 1, p. 15

²⁰³ Supplication 18, p. 64. Chittick further comments that “the terms ‘wretchedness *shiqā* and ‘felicity’ *sa‘āda* refer to Heaven and Hell, not to the misery or happiness of this world.” See. P. 267 in the *Ṣaḥīfa*

This is the station of him whom sins have passed from hand to hand.
Offenses' reins have led him on, and Satan has gained mastery over him.
He fell short of what Thou hast commanded
through neglect and he pursued what Thou hast prohibited in delusion...
...O God, so here I am: I have come to Thee obeying Thy command
(for Thou hast commanded supplication) and asking the fulfilment of Thy
promise,
(for Thou hast promised to respond) Thou hast said,
Supplicate Me and I will respond to you ²⁰⁴

...O God, I repent to Thee in this my station from my sins, great and small,
my evil deeds, inward and outward,
my lapses, past and recent,
with the repentance of one who does not tell himself that he might disobey
or secretly think that he might return to an offense... ²⁰⁵

In the supplications of repentance we also find ʿAlī .b Ḥusayn not only repenting for his own inadequacies towards God, but also seeking forgiveness and repair for the wrongdoings towards others, seeing them ultimately as his own shortcomings, such as 'His Supplication in Asking Pardon for Misdeeds to God's Servants and for Falling Short in their Rights and that his Neck be Set Free from the Fire':

O God, I ask pardon from Thee
for the person wronged in my presence whom I did not help,
the favour conferred upon me for which I returned no thanks,
the evildoer who asked pardon from me and whom I did not pardon,
the needy person who asked from me and whom I preferred not over myself,
the right of a believer who possesses a right incumbent upon me
which I did not fulfil,
the fault of a believer which became evident to me and which I did not conceal,
and every sin which presented itself to me and which I failed to avoid.

I ask pardon, my God, for all of these and their likes, with an asking of pardon
in remorse which may act as an admonisher against similar things ahead of me... ²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ Q. 40:60

²⁰⁵ Supplication nr. 31, p. 104

²⁰⁶ Supplication nr. 38, p. 127

2:2:3 Prayers for individual's spiritual betterment or for the spiritual, emotional and material wellbeing of others

In this category we also find many prayers, perhaps the most well-known being 'His supplication on Noble Moral Traits and Acts Pleasing to God' also known as *Du'ā Makārim al-Akhlāq*. Here we find the Imam intensively conversing with God in beseeching Him to assist him to refine his character, for example:

O God, bless Muḥammad and his Household,
cause my faith to reach the most perfect faith, make my certainty the most excellent
certainty, and take my intention to the best of intentions
and my works to the best of works!

O God, bless Muḥammad and his Household,
adorn me with the adornment of the righteous,
and clothe me in the ornaments of the god-fearing, through
spreading justice, restraining rage,
quenching the flame of hate, bringing together the people of separation,
correcting discord, spreading about good behaviour,
covering faults, mildness of temper, lowering the wing,²⁰⁷ beauty of conduct,
gravity of bearing, agreeableness in comportment,
precedence in reaching excellence, preferring bounteousness,
refraining from condemnation, bestowing bounty on the undeserving,
speaking the truth, though it be painful,
making little of the good in my words and deeds, though it be much,
and making much of the evil in my words and deeds, though it be little!²⁰⁸

2.2.4 Prayers that are made on behalf of others

In this group we find prayers such as 'Prayers for his Parents, for his Children, for his Neighbours and Friends, the People of the Frontiers' etc., such as:

²⁰⁷ Chittick refers to this as 'being gentle' as the expression is employed in the Q. 15:88 which reads; *Strain not thine eyes. (Wistfully) at what We have bestowed on certain classes of them, nor grieve over them: but lower thy wing (in gentleness) to the believers.* And also Q. 26:215: *And lower thy wing to the Believers who follow thee.* See *Ṣaḥīfa*, p. 267

²⁰⁸ Supplication nr. 20, p. 67

...And single out my parents, O God, for honour with Thee and blessings from Thee,
O Most Merciful of the merciful!

...and let me be devoted to them, with the devotion of a compassionate mother!
Make my obedience and devotion to them more gladdening to my eyes
than sleep to the drowsy and more refreshing to my breast
than drink to the thirsty, so that I may prefer their inclination
to my inclination, set their satisfaction before my satisfaction,
make much of their devotion to me though it be little,
and make little of my devotion to them though it be great...²⁰⁹

2.2.5 All prayers not locatable in any of the above

In this category we have prayers such as the ‘Fifteen Whispered Prayers’, ‘His Supplications for the Days of the Week’ and various other supplications such as ‘His Supplication Against what he Feared’ etc:

My Lord, make me not the target of affliction nor the object of Thy vengeance,
respice me, comfort me, release me from my stumble,
and send not affliction after me, for Thou hast seen my frailty,
and the paucity of my stratagems. So give me patience,
for I, my Lord, am weak, and I plead to Thee, my Lord!

‘I seek refuge in Thee from Thee’, so give me refuge!²¹⁰

Albeit not extensive, trying to remain within the boundaries of this study, which may well be extended much further, the reader would have a better and hopefully richer understanding of this classical literary textual heritage within Islam, of the main streams that run through the text and the various arteries they flow into, taking us towards the end of this study ending with the conclusion to follow.

²⁰⁹ Supplication nr. 24, p. 86

²¹⁰ Supplication nr. 60, p. 218. Furthermore Chittick comments on *I seek refuge in Thee from Thee*, alluding to the Prophet's supplication; ‘I seek refuge in Thy good pleasure from Thy displeasure and in Thy pardon from Thy punishment. I seek refuge in Thee from Thee.’ See pages 277 and 275.

MPhil B

CLOSING REMARKS

The aim of undertaking the study of this masterful piece of spiritual literature was to allow myself a chance of being introduced to the treasury of wisdom and gems of human beauty, which I found not only serve to enlighten minds but also instil confidence in our abilities. As people we are at times faced with situations in our lives where we stand defeated amidst trials and adversities, while on other occasions life may lose all sense of purpose and meaning. It is at such moments that we most require reassurance and encouragement together with an enduring sense of purpose to continue living meaningful lives.

The truest form of encouragement and purpose can only come from within us and through the beauty of our humanity. It is this very humanity that leads us to a sense of fulfilment and satisfaction, and it is that one reality which bonds us through its indiscriminating and undiscerning want to extend goodness.

It equally shares among all of us whether we belong to a faith scheme or otherwise. Faith, religion and even non-religious systems despite their variety, inevitably aim at bringing about a better life by directing the individual and community through that which is most natural in the form of common human values.

I found in the *Ṣaḥīfa Sajjādiyya* an invitation to me as a reader and the supplicant to ponder over the depths of goodness inherent in the human being as it serves as a treatise of instruction in the development of the human self.

God, as the Object of these prayers and devotions portrays the most noble rank befitting humanity, and He serves as both a Means and the Ultimate goal for the culmination of human beauty. This beauty is then reflected in the attainment of personal contentment and genuine concern for others in a way allowing us to empathise and celebrate in their pains and joy through unconditional love.

The realisation of such level of being would represent the embodiment of the beauty of God and human completion. I hope the words of °Alī b. al-Ḥusayn someday will also touch the hearts of those who come across the *Ṣaḥīfa* and whereby naturally directing their growth and thereby fulfilling their own purpose.

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*"Wisdom is the lost property of the Believer,
let him claim it wherever he finds it"*

Imam Ali (as)