

## Karbala Mourning among the Fāṭimid-Ṭayyibī Shīʿa of India:

### Doctrinal and Performative Aspects of Sayyidnā Ṭāhir Sayf al-Dīn's Arabic *Marthiya*, "O King of Martyrs" (*Yā Sayyida l-Shuhadāʾi*)

Tahera Qutbuddin  
The University of Chicago

**ABSTRACT:** The *Sayyid al-Shuhadāʾ* lament – a poignant fifty-one-stanza Arabic *marthiya* composed by the Ṭayyibī Dāʿī l-Muṭlaq Sayyidnā Ṭāhir Sayf al-Dīn (d. 1385/1965) – holds an iconic status in the Karbala tradition of the Fāṭimid-Ṭayyibī Shīʿa of India. This article transcribes, translates, and analyses the lament to showcase a distinct religious tradition within a hybrid cultural milieu. Its forms intersect with Arabic poetic conventions set in pre-Islamic times; its themes overlap with Twelver-Shīʿī Karbala laments in Arabic, Persian, and Urdu from the Middle East and South Asia; and its performance stems from melodic Persianate-Urdu recital. Simultaneously, it reflects the Fāṭimid-Ṭayyibī heritage, particularly the teachings of al-Muʿayyad al-Shīrāzī (d. 470/1078), including the fundamentals of their Imāmate doctrine and the salvific importance of weeping for Ḥusayn.

**KEYWORDS:** Karbala, *marthiya*, Imām Ḥusayn, Sayyidnā Ṭāhir Sayf al-Dīn, India, Arabic poetry, Ṭayyibīs, Fāṭimids/Ismāʿīlis, Dāʿūdī Bohra, al-Muʿayyad al-Shīrāzī

Over the centuries, poets and prose writers from different Shīʿī denominations, far-flung lands, and varying linguistic and cultural backgrounds have composed numerous elegies and narratives recounting the martyrdom of the Prophet Muḥammad's grandson Ḥusayn (d. 61/680) in Karbala. Of these, a handful of texts have become widely established within their faith communities, such that they form the recognizable face of these communities' Karbala lament rituals. Perhaps the best known is Kāshifī's (d. 910/1504) ten-chapter Persian epic, *Rawḍat al-shuhadāʾ* (Garden of martyrs), widely performed in the Twelver Shīʿī world. For the Ṭayyibīs of India (Dāʿūdī Bohra Fāṭimid-Ismāʿīlī Shīʿa; more on them shortly),

that iconic status is held by *Yā sayyida l-shuhadāʾī* (O king of martyrs),<sup>1</sup> a fifty-one-stanza Arabic lament (*marthiya*) composed in the early twentieth century by their fifty-first Dāʾī I-Muṭṭlaq, Sayyidnā Ṭāhir Sayf al-Dīn (d. 1385/1965). This poem – henceforth referred to as “the *Sayyid al-Shuhadāʾī* lament” – has characterized and framed the Ṭayyibīs’ Karbala commemoration since its composition in 1348/1929. In this article, after I briefly introduce the reader to the Ṭayyibīs’ Karbala mourning tradition and to Sayf al-Dīn and his literary legacy, I transcribe, translate, and analyse the lament, never studied before in Western academe, to demonstrate its distinct religious tradition within a hybrid cultural milieu.

Ṭayyibī works remain largely unpublished and the community’s practices remain mostly unscrutinized. In this article, I cite manuscripts from the Ṭayyibī Da‘wa’s private libraries and publications from specialized community bookstores and refer to personal observations of community events and individual practices to contextualize the tradition and the lament.

In the fourteen hundred years since Karbala, Muslims, especially the Shī‘a, have continued to mourn Ḥusayn as an integral part of their religiosity. The names of the martyrs, the manner of their killing, the cruelty of the enemy, the thirst endured by Ḥusayn’s company, and the suffering of the women and children are all deeply familiar aspects of the Karbala tragedy and are recounted in Ṭayyibī sermons and elegies during Muḥarram and other occasions. Part of this vibrant, ongoing tradition of Ṭayyibī Karbala mourning, the *Sayyid al-Shuhadāʾī* lament has had an extraordinary impact on Ṭayyibī religious life. Eloquent in diction, moving in theme, and encompassing the entire Karbala narrative in a cosmic-theological yet deeply personal epic, it has become the keystone for every public recounting of the Karbala tragedy. Since Ḥusayn is mourned in almost every sermon, the *Sayyid al-Shuhadāʾī* lament is recited in almost every Ṭayyibī religious assembly. Because the Ṭayyibīs deem the Dāʾī to be the living standard-bearer of Ḥusayn’s call to truth, the lament holds weighty authority for them. Children

---

\* Sayyidnā Ṭāhir Sayf al-Dīn was the author’s grandfather.

\*\* I am grateful to the anonymous reviewers and the SSR editors Professor Sabine Schmidtke and Professor Hassan Ansari for valuable feedback. I also thank my siblings Dr. Aziz Qutbuddin and Dr. Bazat-Saifiyah Qutbuddin for help in locating sources.

<sup>1</sup> Translated here as “king”, *sayyid* in its original pre-Islamic context means literally “chieftain” of a tribe. In the Ṭayyibī tradition, *sayyid* denotes a religious leader and is frequently used interchangeably with *mawlā* (master or lord).

memorize stanzas in religion classes, and many adults recite stanzas, some even the entire poem, in moments of personal grief or even as part of their daily liturgy. Within the centuries-long tradition of Ṭayyibī elegies, the *Sayyid al-Shuhadā'* lament has become the hallmark of the Karbala tradition.

### **The Tradition: The Ṭayyibīs and Their Karbala Laments**

The Ṭayyibīs are a Shī'ī Muslim community based in India belonging to the Musta'li branch of the Fāṭimid-Ismā'īlis.<sup>2</sup> They profess allegiance to the twenty-first Imām, Ṭayyib (b. 524/1130), son of the Fāṭimid Imām-Caliph Āmir (r. 495–524/1101–1130), and to the “concealed” Imām in his line known by the name of his forebear, Ṭayyib. The ancestors of the Ṭayyibīs in India converted to Islam in the fifth/eleventh century at the hand of missionaries sent to Gujarat and the Deccan by the Fāṭimid Imām-Caliph Mustanşir (r. 427–487/1036–1094). Their religious institution – like that of the Fāṭimids – is termed *Da'wa*, referencing the Qur'anic verse “The true *da'wa* ('call') belongs to God”.<sup>3</sup> Their leaders, deemed vicegerents of the concealed Imām, hold the title *Dā'i*, or one who calls to God; the full title is *al-Dā'i l-Muṭlaq* (*Dā'i* with full authority). In India, the community is often called “Bohra”, meaning “honest merchant”, presumably because many of the earliest Hindu converts belonged to that profession. They mostly speak the Indo-European language Gujarati in an Arabic- and Persian-infused form called “Lisān al-Da'wa” or “Da'wat nī zabān” (language of the *Da'wa*). Several Ṭayyibī denominations have branched out over the centuries on the basis of different lines of leadership. The majority denomination are the Dā'ūdī Bohra, to whom our poet belongs, and “Ṭayyibī” in this article refers to them. Currently, they reside mostly in India and Pakistan, with a small indigenous community in Yemen and diaspora communities worldwide.

The Ṭayyibīs have inherited a rich tradition of Karbala lament. Developed from Fāṭimid practices in North Africa and Egypt in the fourth/tenth through sixth/twelfth centuries that included the recitation of lament poetry for Ḥusayn, sermons relating the Karbala narrative, and a commemorative “banquet of

---

<sup>2</sup> For an overview of the history and doctrines of the Ṭayyibī Da'ūdī Bohra, see T. Qutbuddin, “Bohras” (with a fuller set of primary and secondary source references); T. Qutbuddin, “Da'udi Bohra Tayyibis”; S. Qutbuddin, “History of the Da'udi Bohra Tayyibis”; Blank, *Mullahs on the Mainframe*.

<sup>3</sup> Qur'an 13:14: *Lahū da'watu l-ḥaqq*.

grief” (*simāt al-ḥuzn*),<sup>4</sup> the tradition progressed through an early Ṭayyibī phase in Yemen up to the tenth/sixteenth century<sup>5</sup> and continued thereafter in India. Their present-day Karbala rituals are grounded in this early heritage. They include nine days of Muḥarram sermons (*majālis al-wa‘z* or *majālis al-‘azā*); in addition to mourning Ḥusayn, emphasis in these sermons is on dissemination of Ṭayyibī learning); on ‘Āshūrā’ especially but also on other occasions, an impassioned narration of Ḥusayn’s martyrdom (*maq̄tal* or *shahādat*); weeping; breast-beating with the palm of the hand (*mātam*; Urdu: *sīnā-zanī*); visitation (*ziyārat*) of Ḥusayn’s shrine in Karbala, as well as that in Cairo, where Ḥusayn’s severed head is believed to be buried; “banquet of grief” meals (*niyāz*); and recitation of elegies (referenced in the sing., *marthiya*). These rituals are similar to those of their Twelver Shī‘ī brethren in South Asia, but there are other Twelver mourning rituals – passion-plays, banner processions, candle lighting, effigy burning, self-flagellation, and virtual visitation<sup>6</sup> – in which they do not engage.

Over the centuries, Ṭayyibī savants have composed elegies in Arabic, Urdu, and Lisān al-Da‘wa, and these are recited in private and public Ṭayyibī events alongside Urdu elegies composed by Twelver Shī‘ī poets. The most widely recited Arabic elegies come from the pens of three eminent Da‘wa personages who were also prolific poets. The nineteenth Yemeni Dā‘ī, Sayyidnā Idrīs ‘Imād al-Dīn (d. 872/1468), wrote two *marthiyas* for Ḥusayn; one opens with these lines: *Ḥuznūn adāba jawāniḥi wa-fu‘ādī – wa-asāla damī mitla fayḍi l-wādī. Lammā dhakartu banī l-nabīyyi Muḥammadīn – wa-muṣābahum bi-akuffi āli Ziyādī* (A grief that melted my body and my heart – that made my tears flow like the flood rushing down the valley. I recalled the family of the Prophet Muḥammad – and their killing at the hands of the children of Ziyād).<sup>7</sup> The Indian scholar Sayyidī ‘Abdē-‘Alī Muḥyī l-Dīn (d. 1326/1908), who was Ṭāhir Sayf al-Dīn’s teacher and mentor, composed nine *marthiyas* for Ḥusayn; one opens with these lines: *Yā Ḥusaynan wa-mā nasītu*

<sup>4</sup> On Fāṭimid sponsorship of ‘Āshūrā’ assemblies of mourning in Egypt in al-Azhar Mosque and the royal palace, see Maqrīzī, “Mā kāna yu‘mal fi yawm ‘Āshūrā”, in *Khiṭaṭ*, vol. 2, pp. 417–421. See assessment of ‘Āshūrā’ as a popular Fāṭimid festival in Walker, “Egyptian Popular Festivals”, pp. 69–76. For the North African period, see Nu‘mān, *K. al-Majālis wa-l-musāyarāt*, pp. 396–397. For Karbala prose addresses in Cairo, see al-Mu‘ayyad al-Shirāzī, *al-Majālis al-Mu‘ayyadiyya*, vol. 1, pp. 34–36 (majlis 9); vol. 2, pp. 309–310 (majlis 150). More on these shortly.

<sup>5</sup> For Yemen, see references to ‘Āshūrā’ mourning assemblies in ‘Imād al-Dīn, *Nuzhat al-afkār*, passim.

<sup>6</sup> I.e. ritualized recitation of prayers and greetings, without physically being present at the shrines.

<sup>7</sup> ‘Imād al-Dīn, two *marthiyas* in *Dīwān*, MS; *Subḥat*, pp. 130–151.

*Ḥusaynā – qad talaqqayta fī riḍā Llāhi ḥaynā ... lahfū nafsī lā yanqaḍī li-Ḥusaynin – wa-dhawīhi wa-ṣaḥbihi l-muṣṭafaynā* (Ḥusayn! I have not forgotten Ḥusayn! You accepted death in compliance with God’s will. ... My soul will not cease its laments for Ḥusayn and his family and companions!).<sup>8</sup> The third source is Sayyidnā Ṭāhir Sayf al-Dīn himself, who composed the *Sayyid al-Shuhadā’* lament and who was particularly influenced by the laments composed by his mentor, Muḥyī l-Dīn. Following Sayf al-Dīn, the tradition has continued.

### **The Poet: Sayyidnā Ṭāhir Sayf al-Dīn (1888–1965)**

The fifty-first Dā’ī l-Muṭlaq of the Ṭayyibī Dā’ūdī Bohra, Sayyidnā Ṭāhir Sayf al-Dīn, came from a long line of Dā’īs and Da’wa savants. The son of the forty-ninth Dā’ī, Sayyidnā Muḥammad Burhān al-Dīn (d. 1323/1906), his lineage goes back eight hundred years to Rājā Tārmal, vizier of the Rajput ruler of Gujarat, Siddharāja Jayasimha (r. 1094–1143 CE). Rājā Tārmal, along with his brother Rājā Bhārmal and Siddharāja himself, was among the first converts to Fāṭimid Shī’ī Islam in the subcontinent. Rājā Tārmal’s son, Sayyidī Fakhr al-Dīn al-Shahid (fl. sixth/twelfth century), Sayf al-Dīn’s forebear, was one of the first local missionaries of the Fāṭimid Imām-Caliph Mustanṣir in India.

Sayf al-Dīn was born in Surat in 1888, became Dā’ī l-Muṭlaq in 1915, moved to Mumbai in 1932, and died there in 1965.<sup>11</sup> His magnificent shrine, the Rawḍat Ṭāhira, with its marble walls inscribed with the entire Qur’an in gold letters, is now also the final resting place of his successor and is visited daily by thousands of devotees. The Ṭayyibīs’ spiritual leader for half a century, he heralded a period of advancement for institutions of social welfare, male and female education, and community organization. Respected as a scholar, visionary, and unifier, he served five consecutive terms, until his demise, as the unanimously elected chancellor of Aligarh Muslim University. When he paid his first visit to Aligarh in 1953, Dr. Zakir Husain (d. 1969) – then vice chancellor of Aligarh University and later president of India – said in his welcome speech that whereas earlier chancellors had been rulers with *sikka* (coin) struck in their names,

---

<sup>8</sup> Muḥyī l-Dīn, nine *marthiyas* in *Dīwān*, MS; *Subḥat*, pp. 188–220.

<sup>11</sup> On Sayf al-Dīn’s career, see the Ṭayyibī publication *A Golden Panorama*; S. Qutbuddin, “History of the Da’udi Bohra”, pp. 301–305; Toorawa, “Ṭāhir Sayf al-Dīn”.

this chancellor, although he held no worldly dominion, possessed “a *sikka* stamped on the hearts of the Muslims of India”.<sup>12</sup>

[INSERT Fig. 1: Sayyidnā Ṭāhir Sayf al-Dīn delivering a sermon in al-Masjid al-A‘zam (Saifee Masjid), Mumbai, in the early 1960s]

In addition to his duties as head of the community, Sayf al-Dīn was a prolific author and poet.<sup>13</sup> He wrote more than forty Arabic books, titled *Rasā’il* (sing. *Risāla*) *Ramaḍāniyya*, issuing a treatise every Ramaḍān between 1337/1919 and 1384/1964. Their lengths ranged from about a hundred pages in the earliest to six hundred in the later ones. He also composed more than ten thousand verses of Arabic religious poetry and a handful of poems in Lisān al-Da‘wa.<sup>14</sup> The vast collection of his transcribed Lisān al-Da‘wa sermons through his fifty-plus years of preaching are also preserved in the Da‘wa archives, as are transcripts of some Urdu speeches given to Muslim communities. In both prose and poetry, he elucidated doctrine, history, and law; offered counsel for living a godly life and preparing for the hereafter; and praised the Prophet Muḥammad, ‘Alī, Fāṭima, the Imāms, the Dā‘īs, and other spiritual savants. In his prose works, he incorporated a large portion of the Ṭayyibī prose and poetic heritage in excerpts prefaced with his own rhymed-prose introductions. His *Dīwān* also contains laments for his immediate predecessors and a beloved daughter and sister, as well as two long poems of around two hundred verses each, one titled

---

<sup>12</sup> On Sayf al-Dīn’s relations with Muslim and Hindu leaders in India and his teachings of communal harmony, see Abde-Ali Qutbuddin, “Vision of the Dawoodi Bohra Muslim Leader”; T. Qutbuddin, “Teachings and Practice of Sayyidna Taher Saifuddin”.

<sup>13</sup> On Sayf al-Dīn’s literary production, see T. Qutbuddin, “Da’udi Bohra Tayyibis”, pp. 342–343. On his *Risālas*, see Aziz Qutbuddin, “Taḥmīd”, pp. 254–287.

<sup>14</sup> Published earlier in the *Risāla Ramaḍāniyya* of their year of composition, Sayf al-Dīn’s Arabic poems were posthumously collected in his *Dīwān* under the title *Jawāhir al-balāgha*; his Lisān al-Da‘wa poems – published earlier as individual chapbooks – are anthologized in *Dhikrā shahādat al-Ḥusayn*, pp. 64–70, 81–114, 186–196.

“Philosophy of the intellect” and another that is autobiographical and describes the milestones of his tenure as Dā‘ī.<sup>15</sup>

Sayf al-Dīn composed several prose and poetry laments for Ḥusayn. In addition to the *Sayyid al-Shuhadā’* lament (his first, composed, as mentioned earlier, in 1348/1929), his poetry corpus includes four further elegies regularly recited in Ṭayyibī assemblies. Two are Arabic elegies in traditional two-hemistich *qaṣīda* form: (1) *Yā imāma l-ḥaqqi mawlānā l-Ḥusayn* (O true Imām, Mawlānā Ḥusayn), forty verses, *ramal* meter, composed in 1363/1944;<sup>16</sup> and (2) *‘Alayka salāmu Llāhi maḥlūma Karbalā* (God’s peace on you, O slain Imām of Karbala), forty verses, *ṭawīl* meter, composed in 1378/1959.<sup>17</sup> Two earlier laments are in Lisān al-Da‘wa: (3) *Mātam karō Ḥusayn ‘alayhi l-salām nō* (Mourn Ḥusayn, peace upon him), forty verses, composed in Muḥarram 1360/1941 – this elegy also has an Urdu version;<sup>18</sup> and (4) *Karbala mā sū balā mā Muṣṭafā nī āl chhē-Karbala mā sū Ḥusayn ibn-ē ‘Alī nō ḥāl chhē* (What calamity has befallen Muṣṭafā’s progeny in Karbala! What suffering has Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī endured in Karbala!), fifty-one verses, likewise composed in 1360/1941 during a trip to Sri Lanka (then called Ceylon).<sup>19</sup> The opening line of this last Lisān al-Da‘wa poem echoes the Twelver Shī‘ī Sharīf Raḍī’s (d. 406/1015) famous Arabic lament *Karbala lā zilti karban wa-balā – mā laqī ‘indaki ālu l-Muṣṭafā* (Karbala, may you always face trouble and calamity! What suffering has Muṣṭafā’s progeny endured on your soil!),<sup>20</sup> further demonstrating Sayf al-Dīn’s familiarity with sister traditions. In addition, one of his lengthy Lisān al-Da‘wa counsel poems contains nine stanzas recounting the Karbala tragedy, including two narrating the final moments of Ḥusayn’s martyrdom that are often recited in Ṭayyibī gatherings.<sup>21</sup> Finally, he also composed nine prose addresses in literary Arabic

---

<sup>15</sup> On this poem, see Aziz Qutbuddin, “Qaṣīdah-Autobiography of Syedna Taher Saifuddin”.

<sup>16</sup> Sayf al-Dīn, *Dīwān*, vol. 2, pp. 325–328; *Majmū‘at barakāt ‘Āshūrā’*, pp. 75–82; *Dhikrā shahādat al-Ḥusayn*, pp. 32–37.

<sup>17</sup> Sayf al-Dīn, *Dīwān*, vol. 2, pp. 182–187; *Majmū‘at barakāt ‘Āshūrā’*, pp. 83–89; *Dhikrā shahādat al-Ḥusayn*, pp. 38–43.

<sup>18</sup> *Dhikrā shahādat al-Ḥusayn*, pp. 198–209.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 193–196.

<sup>20</sup> Raḍī, *Dīwān*, vol. 1, pp. 44–47; partially cited in ‘Imād al-Dīn, *Uyūn al-akhbār*, vol. 4, p. 189, probably Sayf al-Dīn’s source.

<sup>21</sup> *Dhikrā shahādat al-Ḥusayn*, pp. 89–90, beginning: *Shimr yē āwī nē thokar nē mārī* (Shimr came forward and kicked Ḥusayn to the ground).

called *salām* (greetings) to Ḥusayn, three to six pages each, for pilgrims to recite during their visits to Ḥusayn's shrines in Karbala and Cairo.<sup>22</sup>

### The *Sayyid al-Shuhadā'* Lament

Sayyidnā Ṭāhir Sayf al-Dīn composed the *Sayyid al-Shuhadā'* lament during one of his visits to Karachi in pre-Independence India in 1348/1929. First reciting it in Muḥarram sermons during the visit, he published it later that same year in his Ramaḍān treatise titled *Ṣibghu nūr* (Hue of light).<sup>23</sup> The lament opens by addressing Ḥusayn with “O king of martyrs” (*Yā sayyida l-shuhadā'ī*). This same address also forms part of a two-line refrain repeated at the end of each stanza: “I grieve for you, Ḥusayn, O king of martyrs” (*wā-lahfatā yā Ḥusaynā – yā sayyida l-shuhadā'ī*). The first stanza sets up the poem in an intimate, personal frame, with direct address to Ḥusayn and a first-person possessive pronoun identifying the poet as one who weeps for him – “I shall weep for you through the age” (*ṭūla l-zamāni bukā'ī*). It also introduces in kernel form the main elements of the poem: Ḥusayn's name, his lofty status as the pure Imām, his tragic martyrdom in Karbala, and the theme of ceaseless weeping for his suffering. These compressed allusions foreshadow the contents and philosophy of the poem. The poem's poignancy is achieved through emotive flourishes which include expressions of grief (e.g. *wā-lahfatā*, *passim*, and *āhin*, stanza 2), moving expressions of personal relationships, especially Ḥusayn's with his sister Zaynab and his daughter Sakīna (stanzas 12–15), and an epic presentation of Karbala as a battle between good and evil (*passim*). Most Urdu elegies produced in the subcontinent, including the few composed by Ṭayyibī Bohras, focus on one particular hero or theme;<sup>24</sup> in contrast, the *Sayyid al-Shuhadā'* lament lays out the main features of the battle, including the martyrdoms of Ḥusayn and other individuals from the Prophet's family and the events following Karbala. These parallel the major elements of the Ṭayyibī sermonic recounting of Karbala. Overall, the lament follows the chronological progression of the *Maqṭal* (narrative of the Karbala killing), presenting the entire tragedy of Karbala in a single, sweeping tale.

---

<sup>22</sup> *Al-Barakāt wa-l-qurubāt*, vol. 1, pp. 32–77.

<sup>23</sup> Sayf al-Dīn, *Ṣibghu nūr*, pp. 144–157.

<sup>24</sup> See Trivedi, “Appropriating an Iranian Literary Tradition”, p. 168; Naim, “Art of the Urdu Marsiya”, p. 110.

### *The Poet's Preface*

The following is the text of Sayf al-Dīn's Arabic preface to the *Sayyid al-Shuhadā'* lament in *Şibghu nūr*,<sup>25</sup> presented alongside my English translation. The preface is important not only as a literary artefact connected to the lament but also for analysing the lament's Ṭayyibī mourning doctrines (more on this in the analysis).

Assembly of believers! May God shower the same mercy on you that he showered on the most pious of his servants. May he grant you freedom from the punishment of the Fire, ordain for you Paradise, and make your allegiance to your masters a shield for you from the Fire.

Let us recite here a poem mourning the one for whom angels wept in the sky, when the demonic faction tore the robe of his sanctity on earth. All prophets wept for him. All legates of their eras and savants wept for him. All believing men and women wept for him. Just as they wept for him in past times, they will continue to weep for him in future eons.

It is reported that God's Messenger (God's blessings on him and his descendants) ordained Paradise for the person who weeps, causes someone to weep, or endeavours to weep for Ḥusayn. Triumphant the person who frees himself from the Fire by weeping for Ḥusayn!

I, his servant, servant of the pious Imāms in his pure and virtuous line, and bondman of Muḥammad's pure descendants, have composed this poem. My tears pour like rain in remembrance of the suffering of my master, the Imām.

معشر المؤمنين رحمكم الله برحمة رحم بها عباده  
الأبرار ❀ وأعتق رقابكم من عذاب النار ❀ وأوجب لكم  
الجنة ❀ وجعل لكم ولاء مواليكم من النار جنة ❀

لنشده هنا قصيدة في الرثاء على من بكت عليه في  
السماء الملائكة ❀ لما فتكت به في الأرض الأمة  
الهالكة ❀ وبكت عليه جميع الأنبياء ❀ وجميع من  
كان في أدوارهم من الأوصياء والأولياء ❀ وبكى عليه  
المؤمنون والمؤمنات ❀ ولن يزالوا يبكون عليه كما بكوا  
فيما مضى فيما هو آت ❀

ولقد أتى عن رسول الله صلح أنه أوجب الجنة لمن  
بكى عليه أو أبكى أو تباكى ❀ فيا فوز من فك رقبتة  
بالبكاء عليه من النار فكاك ❀

وتلك القصيدة نظمها عبده وعبد الأمة الأبرار من ذريته  
الطاهرة الطيبة ❀ مملوك آل محمد الطاهرين ودموعه  
كصوب الغمام على مصيبة مولاه الإمام صيبة ❀

<sup>25</sup> Sayf al-Dīn, *Şibghu nūr*, pp. 144–157.

### Text and Translation

The following is the text of the *Sayyid al-Shuhadā'* lament alongside my translation. I have attempted to render the Arabic into lucid English that, while remaining true to the original, reads with some semblance of poetic cadence rather than as a literal crib. The translation is, therefore, not word-for-word but line-to-line; it does not adhere to the grammar of the original text but endeavours to convey the essence of the lines. Also, the poem contains allusions to Fāṭimid-Ṭayyibī doctrine; less known doctrines are explained briefly in the analysis section of the article.

1. O king of martyrs  
Fifth of the five robed in purity  
Upon the great tragedy  
that befell you in Karbala  
I shall weep through the long age  
*I grieve for you, Husayn*  
*O king of martyrs*  
يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ خَامِسَ أَهْلِ الْكِسَاءِ  
عَلَى عَظِيمِ بَأْسٍ نَالَكَ فِي كَرْبَلَاءِ  
طُولَ الرِّمَانِ بُكَائِي وَالْهَمَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ
2. Son of God's messenger  
Best of kings  
I utter lament upon lament for you  
One follows another without ceasing  
Mingled with tears of blood  
*I grieve for you, Husayn*  
*O king of martyrs*  
يَا أَبْنَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ يَا خَيْرَ شَاهِنَشَاهِ  
أَهٍ عَلَيْكَ فَآهٍ تَتْرَى بَعِيرٍ تَتَاهِ  
مَعَ دَمْعَةٍ حَمْرَاءِ وَالْهَمَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ
3. Flow out, O spirit  
Gush forth, O eye  
Your master is slain with a silver blade  
Cruelly wielded by a ruthless enemy  
Most evil of all cursed foes  
*I grieve for you, Husayn*  
*O king of martyrs*  
فِيضِي أَيَا نَفْسٍ فِيضِي فِيضِي أَيَا عَيْنٍ فِيضِي  
مَوْلَاكَ مَقْتُولُ بَيْضٍ مِنْ ظُلْمٍ ضِدُّ بَغِيضٍ  
شَرُّ الْعَدَى اللَّعْنَاءِ وَالْهَمَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ
4. O believers, all  
Weep for the great Imām  
Weep for the blessed king  
Weep for the upright master  
Weep for the son of the best of all  
women  
يَا مَعْشَرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ابْكُوا الْإِمَامَ الْمُبِينَا  
ابْكُوا الْهَمَامَ الْيَمِينَا ابْكُوا الْوَلِيَّ الْأَمِينَا  
ابْكُوا أَبْنَ خَيْرِ النِّسَاءِ وَالْهَمَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا

*I grieve for you, Husayn  
O king of martyrs*

يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ

5. Weep for Imām Ḥusayn  
Embodiment of truth  
Wellspring of generosity  
Who drank death's cup to save God's  
religion  
Parched and thirsty in Karbala

إِنكُومَا الْإِمَامَ الْحُسَيْنَا  
مَنْ كَانَ لِلْحَقِّ عَيْنَا  
مَنْ كَانَ لِلْجُودِ عَيْنَا  
قَدْ ذَاقَ فِي اللَّهِ حَيْنَا  
عَطْشَانًا فِي كَرْبَلَاءِ  
وَالْهَمَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا

*I grieve for you, Husayn  
O king of martyrs*

يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ

6. Weep long and hard  
For that martyred Imām  
In the morning and at night  
And you shall receive abundant reward  
On the day of requital

إِنكُومَا بِكُوءٍ طَوِيلَا  
ذَاكَ الْإِمَامَ الْقَتِيلَا  
إِنكُومَا بِكُمْ وَالْأَصِيلَا  
تُعْطُونَ ثَوَابًا جَزِيلَا  
فِي الْحَشْرِ يَوْمَ الْجَزَاءِ  
وَالْهَمَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا

*I grieve for you, Husayn  
O king of martyrs*

يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ

7. Alas for Muḥammad's exiled grandson  
Martyred in Karbala  
His womenfolk tormented  
Driven through the wilderness  
By enemy hordes

أَوِ غَرِيبُ مُحَمَّدٍ  
فِي كَرْبَلَا مُسْتَشْهِدٍ  
حَرِيمُهُ بَعْدُ نُضْهِدٍ  
تُسَاقُ فِي كُلِّ فِدْفِدٍ  
فِي زُمرِ الْأَعْدَاءِ  
وَالْهَمَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا

*I grieve for you, Husayn  
O king of martyrs*

يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ

8. Revelation's children  
Crushed in calamity's millstone  
Slain by the hands of Fate  
Their stars waned and vanished, one by one  
On the day of 'Āshūrā'

عَلَى بَنِي الْوَحْيِ دَارَتْ  
رَحَى الْبَلَايَا وَجَارَتْ  
أَيْدِي الزَّمَانِ فَعَارَتْ  
نُجُومُهُمْ وَتَوَارَتْ  
فِي يَوْمِ عَاشُورَاءِ  
وَالْهَمَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا

*I grieve for you, Husayn  
O king of martyrs*

يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ

9. In the forenoon, Ḥusayn called out  
To the assembled foe:  
I am the Prophet's grandson  
Who has thirsted three full days

أَضْحَى الْحُسَيْنُ يُنَادِي  
بَيْنَ جُمُوعِ الْأَعَادِي  
إِنِّي أَبْنُ طَهٍ وَصَادٍ  
مُنْذُ ثَلَاثِ صَادٍ

- I ask only for a mouthful of water  
*I grieve for you, Husayn*  
*O king of martyrs*
10. Wicked, they heeded not his plea  
They quenched not his thirst  
They killed him  
– The whole world’s benefactor –  
Dry and parched  
*I grieve for you, Husayn*  
*O king of martyrs*
11. I grieve for Zaynab  
She weeps bitterly for her brother  
She dyes her hair in his blood  
Her tears pour down like rain  
She has no veil on her head  
*I grieve for you, Husayn*  
*O king of martyrs*
12. She keens: Son of my mother!  
Grandson of the Prophet!  
Noonday sun and full moon!  
Great is my sorrow  
In exile and enslaved  
*I grieve for you, Husayn*  
*O king of martyrs*
13. Alas for my grief, Husayn  
Alas for my exile, Husayn  
Alas for my suffering, Husayn  
Alas for my destruction, Husayn  
O refuge of the pious  
*I grieve for you, Husayn*  
*O king of martyrs*
14. Brother, the enemy are striking Sakīna  
Their blows cause her pain  
She cries out: Rise, father, rise!  
O father, they are hurting me
- أَطْلُبُ شُرْبَةَ مَاءٍ وَالْهَفَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ
- لَمْ يَسْمَعُوا مِنْهُ قَوْلًا وَإِذْ شَقُّوا مَا سَقَوْا لَّا  
بَلْ قَتَلُوا مِنْهُ مَوْلَى عَمِّ الْبَرَّاءِ طَوْلًا  
عَلَى أَشَدِّ ظَمَاءٍ وَالْهَفَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ
- يَا لَهْفَتَا لَزَيْنَتَا تَبْكِي أَخَاهَا وَتَنْدُبُ  
مِنْ دَمِهِ الشَّعْرَ تَخْضِبُ وَالِدَمْعُ كَالْعَيْشِ يَسْكُبُ  
وَهِيَ بِغَيْرِ رِدَاءٍ وَالْهَفَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ
- صَارِحَةٌ يَا بِنَ أُمِّي سَبَطَ النَّبِيُّ الْأُمِّي  
شَمْسٌ ضُحَى بَدْرٌ تَمَّ يَا عَظْمَ هَمِّي وَعَمِّي  
فِي غُرْبَةٍ وَسَبَاءٍ وَالْهَفَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ
- وَالْهَفَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا وَأَعْرَبْنَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
وَأَكْرَبْنَا يَا حُسَيْنَا وَاضْطَّعْنَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
يَا مَوْلَى الْأَنْفِيَاءِ وَالْهَفَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ
- أَخِي سَكِينَتُهُ تُلْطَمُ تُوجَعُ ضَرْبًا وَتُؤَلَّمُ  
تَقُولُ قُمْ يَا أَبِي قُمْ يَا أَبَتَاهُ أَظْلَمُ

- Save me from these brutes  
*I grieve for you, Husayn*  
*O king of martyrs*
15. Father, my father, where are you?  
Dearest father! Why have you gone away?  
Have you forgotten your daughter?  
Take me with you wherever you may be  
I cannot live without you  
*I grieve for you, Husayn*  
*O king of martyrs*
16. O brother! 'Alī is ill and weak  
Shackled in irons  
Made to walk from Iraq to Syria  
Barefoot, without shoes  
O the scorching heat!  
*I grieve for you, Husayn*  
*O king of martyrs*
17. A shattering calamity  
A devastating cataclysm  
When daughters of the best of creation  
Are enslaved by an army of criminals  
And driven like slave women  
*I grieve for you, Husayn*  
*O king of martyrs*
18. I grieve for 'Alī  
Mirror image of the Prophet  
That proud warrior  
Who refused to allow  
An adulterer's son to rule over God's saints  
*I grieve for you, Husayn*  
*O king of martyrs*
19. I grieve for Husayn's infant son  
Great in virtue  
A villain shot him with an arrow  
He passed away – pending Judgement Day –
- فِنِي مِنَ الْأَشْقِيَاءِ وَالْهَفَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ
- أَبِي أَبِي أَيْنَ أَنْتَا يَا أَبْتَا لِمَ بِنْتَا  
نَسِيْتَ هَلْدِي الْبِنْتَا خُذْنِي مَعَا حَيْثُ كُنْتَا  
فَلَا أَعِشْ فِي التَّنَائِي وَالْهَفَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ
- أَخِي عَلِيٍّ مُدْنِفٍ مُكَبَّلٍ مُسْتَضْعَفٍ  
يَمْشِي إِلَى الشَّامِ مِنْ طَفٍّ بِلَا حِذَاءٍ وَلَا خُفٍّ  
أَهْ عَلَي الرَّمْضَاءِ وَالْهَفَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ
- أَجْلِلْ بِهَا مِنْ رَزِيَّةٍ أَعْظَمَ بِهَا مِنْ بَلِيَّةٍ  
بَنَاتُ خَيْرِ الْبَرِيَّةِ سَبِي الْجُمُوعِ الشَّقِيَّةِ  
يُسَقْنَ سَوْقَ الْإِمَاءِ وَالْهَفَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ
- يَا لَهْفَتَا لِعَلِيٍّ شَبِيهِ طَهَ النَّبِيِّ  
ذَاكَ الْكَمِيِّ الْأَبِيِّ لَمْ يَرْضَ بِابْنِ الدَّعِيِّ  
يَحْكُمُ فِي الْأَوْلِيَاءِ وَالْهَفَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ
- يَا لَهْفَتَا لِحَفْلٍ لَهُ عَظِيمِ الْفَضْلِ  
رَمَاهُ نَذْلٌ بِنَبْلِ مَضَى لِيَوْمِ الْفَضْلِ

- In his father's upraised hands  
*I grieve for you, Husayn*  
*O king of martyrs*
20. I grieve for 'Abbās  
A battle lion  
Strongest supporter  
Of his regal brother  
Who died covered in blood  
*I grieve for you, Husayn*  
*O king of martyrs*
21. I mourn the wedding  
That took place in the heat of the skirmish  
Between pure bride and pure groom  
Weeping, she followed him, also weeping  
As he rushed to the battlefield  
*I grieve for you, Husayn*  
*O king of martyrs*
22. More fearsome than Resurrection  
The day in which the noble Imām  
At the very end of his time on earth  
Bid farewell to his gathered womenfolk  
And to Zayn al 'Ābidīn  
*I grieve for you, Husayn*  
*O king of martyrs*
23. I grieve for Kisrā's daughter  
Whom they bound with fetters  
A chaste, virtuous lady  
Mother of all the Imāms  
Shining stars and pure savants  
*I grieve for you, Husayn*  
*O king of martyrs*
24. I grieve for Rabāb  
Anguished and inconsolable  
Her heart is turbulent  
Her tears flow and flow
- فِي يَدِهِ الْعُلَيَاءِ وَالْهَفَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ
- يَا هَفُّ لِعَبَّاسٍ هَزْبِرِ يَوْمِ الْبَاسِ  
أَصْبَحَ خَيْرَ مُوَاسٍ لِصِنْوِهِ الْقَسْقَاسِ  
مُضْرَجًا بِالِدَّمَاءِ وَالْهَفَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ
- وَاحْسُرَتَا لِمَالِدِكَ أَوْتِنَةَ الْإِعْتِرَاكِ  
زَاكِيَةً مَعَ زَاكِ بَاكِيَةً إِثْرَ بَاكِ  
يَذْهَبُ فِي الْهَيْجَاءِ وَالْهَفَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ
- يَوْمٌ مِنَ الْحَشْرِ أَرْوَعِ إِذِ الْإِمَامِ الْأَرْوَعِ  
فِي آخِرِي الْعَهْدِ وَدَعِ تِلْكَ السَّرِيَّاتِ أَجْمَعِ  
وَزَيْنَ آلِ الْعَبَاءِ وَالْهَفَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ
- يَالْهَفَّتَا بِنْتُ كِسْرَى قَدْ أَوْتَقُوهُمَا أَسْرَا  
كَانَتْ بِنُورًا طَهْرًا أُمَّ الْأَيْمَّةِ طَهْرًا  
الْعُرْرِ الْأَزْكِيَاءِ وَالْهَفَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ
- يَالْهَفَّتَا لِلرَّبَابِ ذَاتِ جَوَى وَأَكْتِيَابِ  
فُوَادِهَا فِي أَضْطِرَابِ دُمُوعُهَا فِي أَنْصِيَابِ

- A dirge is on her lips  
*I grieve for you, Husayn*  
*O king of martyrs*
25. I grieve for Kubrā and Şughrā  
Who are crushed  
By this great calamity  
They have run out of fortitude  
Enormous their grief  
*I grieve for you, Husayn*  
*O king of martyrs*
26. Umm Kulthūm  
Is ever seen  
Mourning her noble brother  
Her tears are blood  
Her breaths intense  
*I grieve for you, Husayn*  
*O king of martyrs*
27. She tears her garments in a frenzy of grief  
She uses her tresses to veil her face  
– the mirror image of a full moon –  
For the enemy has snatched her cloak  
How else to preserve modesty?  
*I grieve for you, Husayn*  
*O king of martyrs*
28. I grieve for the widows  
Who clutch fatherless infants  
Their noble husbands gone  
Those proud warriors  
Lie prostrate in the open desert  
*I grieve for you, Husayn*  
*O king of martyrs*
29. I grieve for those noble women  
Exposed to the enemy horde  
Bereft in Karbala  
Calling out
- مُنْشِدَةً لِلرَّثَمَاءِ وَالْهَفَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ
- يَا لَهْفُ كُبْرَى وَصُغْرَى كِنَاتُهُمَا فِي كُبْرَى  
مِنَ الدَّوَاهِي تَتْرَى لَنَا تَسْتَطِيعُ الصَّبْرَا  
فِي شِدَّةِ الْغَمِّمَا وَالْهَفَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ
- وَأُمُّ كُلْثُومٍ لَمِّمْ تَنْزَلُ تُرَى فِي مَاتَمِ  
عَلَى أُخِيَّتِهَا الْأَكْرَمِ نُجْرِي دُمُوعًا مِنْ دَمِ  
مَعَ نَفْسِ الصُّعَدَاءِ وَالْهَفَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ
- مَشْقُوقَةُ الْجَيْبِ وَلَهْيِ تَسْتُرُ بِالشَّعْرِ وَجْهَهَا  
قَدْ كَانَ لِلْبَدْرِ شِبْهَا إِذْ نَزَعَ الْقَوْمُ مِنْهَا  
بُرْقَعَهَا لِلْحَيَاءِ وَالْهَفَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ
- وَالْهَفَّتَا لِأَيْمَامِي يَحْمِلْنَ غُرًّا يَتَامِي  
فَقَدْنَ صَيِّدًا كِرَامَا شُمَّ الْأُنُوفِ عِظَامَا  
صَرَعِي بِذَاكَ الْعَرَاءِ وَالْهَفَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ
- لَهْفِي عَلَى طَاهِرَاتِ بَيْنَ الْعَدَى حَاسِرَاتِ  
كَرَائِمٍ نَادِيَاتِ فِي كَرْبَلَا صَارِحَاتِ

- To their valiant men  
*I grieve for you, Husayn*  
*O king of martyrs*
30. Their garments torn  
Hearts in shock  
Backs weighted with grief  
Lives beset  
With hardship and suffering  
*I grieve for you, Husayn*  
*O king of martyrs*
31. I grieve for the children  
Who wail loudly and sob  
Bound with ropes  
With no one to save them  
Their fathers dead  
*I grieve for you, Husayn*  
*O king of martyrs*
32. I grieve for the young men  
From the Prophet's family  
Who fought Husayn's assailants  
With all their strength  
And gave their lives for him  
*I grieve for you, Husayn*  
*O king of martyrs*
33. I grieve for his loyal companions  
Gallant and fierce  
Lions of combat  
Who were thrown to the earth  
And died fulfilling their pledge  
*I grieve for you, Husayn*  
*O king of martyrs*
34. Of those radiant peers  
Some were killed by spears  
Others were hurled to the ground and slain  
Yet others had their throats cut
- لِلسَّادَةِ الْأَسْرِيَاءِ وَالْهَفَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ
- مُشَقَّقَاتِ الْجُيُوبِ مُفَجَّعَاتِ الْقُلُوبِ  
مُحَمَّلَاتِ الْكُرُوبِ مُقَاسِيَاتِ الْخُطُوبِ  
مَنْ الْبَلَاءِ وَالْعَنَاءِ وَالْهَفَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ
- لَهْفِي عَلَى الْأَطْفَالِ يَبْكُونَ بِالْإِعْوَالِ  
قَدْ أُوتِقُوا بِالْجِبَالِ لَيْسَ لَهُمْ مِنْ ثَمَالِ  
لِعَيْبَةِ الْأَبَاءِ وَالْهَفَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ
- لَهْفِي لِأَهْلِ الْفُتُوَّةِ مِنْ أَهْلِ بَيْتِ النَّبُوَّةِ  
مُبَارِزِينَ بِقُوَّةِ دُونَ الْحَسَنِينِ عَدُوَّهُ  
فَدَوْهُ يَوْمَ اللَّقَاءِ وَالْهَفَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ
- يَا لَهْفَتَاهُ لِصَحْبٍ لَهُ كَمَاةٌ غُلْبٍ  
أَسَادِ يَوْمِ الْحَرْبِ قَدْ صُرِعُوا فِي التُّرْبِ  
مُؤَفِّينَ حَقِّ الْوَفَاءِ وَالْهَفَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ
- فَمِنْ طَعِينِ جَرِيحٍ وَمِنْ شَهِيدِ طَرِيحٍ  
وَمِنْ قَتِيلِ ذَبِيحٍ صَلَّتِ الْجَبِينِ صَبِيحٍ

- On the searing sands of Ṭaff  
*I grieve for you, Husayn*  
*O king of martyrs*
35. Martyrs who fought in God's path  
Men of purity and bliss  
Generosity and virtue  
Excellence and benevolence  
Upright stalwarts, all  
*I grieve for you, Husayn*  
*O king of martyrs*
36. Alas for the wraith of light, my father be its  
ransom!  
Essence of the ages  
House of the manifest lord  
Pure body that the evil legion's horses  
Viciously trampled  
*I grieve for you, Husayn*  
*O king of martyrs*
37. Can a believer be consoled?  
Has there been a tragedy equal to this one?  
Here is Husayn's head  
Raised high on a spear  
Gleaming like the sun  
*I grieve for you, Husayn*  
*O king of martyrs*
38. Alas, the Imām's head  
In a basin before the enemy  
Who sits on his throne  
Mocking, wielding a cane  
Striking those pearly teeth  
*I grieve for you, Husayn*  
*O king of martyrs*
39. Weep, O believers! The Prophet weeps  
The chaste lady weeps  
Husayn's exalted father weeps  
His noble brother weeps
- فِي الطَّيْفِ بِالصَّحْرَاءِ وَالْهَفَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ
- لِلَّهِ مِنْ شُهَدَاءِ أَطَائِبِ سُعْدَاءِ  
أَكْكَارِمِ فُضْلَاءِ أَمَائِلِ بُدَلَاءِ  
فِي دِينِهِمْ حُنْفَاءِ وَالْهَفَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ
- يَا بَابِي شَبَّحَ نُورِ قَدْ كَانَ لُبِّ الدُّهُورِ  
وَيَبَّتَ رَبِّ الظُّهُورِ خِيُولُ قَوْمِ بُرُورِ  
وَطَيْئَتْهُ بِاعْتِدَاءِ وَالْهَفَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ
- هَلْ مُؤْمِنٌ يَتَسَلَّى أَهْلَ كَهْذِي جُلَى  
رَأْسِ الْحُسَيْنِ مُعَلَّى عَالَى السِّنَانِ تَجَلَّى  
لَأَلَدَاؤُهُ كَذُكَاةِ وَالْهَفَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ
- بِالْهَفَّتَا فِي الطَّسْتِ رَأْسُ إِمَامِ الْوَقْتِ  
وَالضُّدُّ فَوْقَ التَّخْتِ يَنْكُتُ هُزْءًا بِنَكْتِ  
تَغْرًا لَهُ ذَا بَهَاءِ وَالْهَفَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ
- إِبْكُوا فَهَذَا الرَّسُولُ يَبْكِي وَهَذَا الْبِتُولُ  
وَذَا أُبُوهُ الْجَلِيلُ وَذَا أَخُوهُ النَّبِيلُ

- All the prophets weep  
I grieve for you, *Husayn*  
O king of martyrs
40. Fāṭima Zahra' weeps  
The sky weeps  
The earth weeps  
The radiant religion weeps  
Weep for him, O believers!  
I grieve for you, *Husayn*  
O king of martyrs
41. O legion of evil, may you be damned!  
You came together as one hand  
To stab religion's heart  
The pith  
Of God's chosen saints  
I grieve for you, *Husayn*  
O king of martyrs
42. O legion of evil, may you be cursed!  
You killed a soul  
Innocent and pure  
Of heavenly origin  
And radiant light  
I grieve for you, *Husayn*  
O king of martyrs
43. O incarnate proof of the merciful lord  
Essence of the ages  
Banner of the faith  
Patron of the aspirer  
Most generous benefactor  
I grieve for you, *Husayn*  
O king of martyrs
44. Your servant weeps for you  
Your servant mourns for you  
Your servant offers his life for you  
The verse he has composed
- فِي زُمْرِ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ وَالْهَفَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ
- فَاطِمَةُ الزَّهْرَاءُ تَبْكِيهِ وَالْحَضْرَاءُ  
تَبْكِيهِ وَالْعَبْرَاءُ وَالسَّادِعَةُ الْغُرَاءُ  
فَأَبْكُوهُ أَهْلَ الْوَلَاءِ وَالْهَفَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ
- يَا أُمَّةَ السُّوءِ تَبَا لَكُمْ غَدَوْتُمْ إِلَيَّا  
لَقَتَلِ مَنْ كَانَ قَلْبًا لِلدِّينِ بَلْ كَانَ لُبًّا  
مِنْ صَفْوَةِ الْأَصْفِيَاءِ وَالْهَفَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ
- يَا أُمَّةَ السُّوءِ تَعَسَا لَكُمْ قَتَلْتُمْ نَفْسًا  
زَكَّتْ وَطَابَتْ عَرَسًا لَمْ تَنْمُ إِلَّا قُدْسًا  
بُنُورَهَا الْوَضَّاءِ وَالْهَفَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ
- يَا حُجَّةَ الرَّحْمَانِ يَا صَفْوَةَ الْأَزْمَانِ  
يَا عَلَمَ الْإِيمَانِ يَا مُعْطِيًا لِلْأَمَانِي  
يَا أَكْرَمَ الْكُرَمَاءِ وَالْهَفَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ
- عَبْدُكَ ذَا يَبْكِيكَ عَبْدُكَ ذَا يَرْثِيكَ  
عَبْدُكَ ذَا يَفْدِيكَ قَدْ قَالَ ذَا الشُّعْرِ فِيكَ

- Is a mark of his servitude  
*I grieve for you, Husayn*  
*O king of martyrs*
45. O just Imām  
Grandson of the best of prophets  
Son of the honeybees' sovereign  
I offer my life, my family, as your ransom  
My mother, my father, my children  
*I grieve for you, Husayn*  
*O king of martyrs*
46. O descendant of Husayn  
My protector and guardian  
Incarnate proof of the Glorious Lord  
Sanctuary for the wise  
Refuge for the sincere  
*I grieve for you, Husayn*  
*O king of martyrs*
47. Benevolence, O Imām of the Age!  
Be kind to your humble servant  
Forgive his sins and draw him close  
He has no refuge but you  
O cool shadow of the Mighty Lord  
*I grieve for you, Husayn*  
*O king of martyrs*
48. God, bless Husayn  
Honour him  
Sanctify and exalt him  
Grant him your gentlest mercy  
As long as raindrops fall  
*I grieve for you, Husayn*  
*O king of martyrs*
49. Bless, too, his grandfather and father  
God's own visage  
His mother and brother  
His companions and descendants
- أَدَاءَ حَقِّ الْفِدَاءِ وَالْهَفَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ
- يَا إِمَامَ الْعَدْلِ يَا سِبْطَ خَيْرِ الرُّسُلِ  
يَا بَنَ أَمِيرِ النَّحْلِ فَدَتَكَ نَفْسِي وَأَهْلِي  
أُمِّي أَبِي أَبْنَائِي وَالْهَفَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ
- يَا بَنَ الْحُسَيْنِ الشَّهِيدِ خَيْرَ رَقِيبِ شَهِيدِ  
حُجَّةِ رَبِّ مَجِيدِ عُمْدَةَ كُلِّ رَشِيدِ  
يَا مَلْجَأَ الْخُلَصَاءِ وَالْهَفَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ
- يَا صَاحِبَ الْعَصْرِ لُطْفًا بَعْدَكَ الْقِنُّ عَطْفًا  
عَفْوًا وَعَفْرًا وَزُلْفًا لَمْ يُلْفِ غَيْرَكَ كَهْفًا  
يَا ظِلَّ ذِي الْكِبَرِيَاءِ وَالْهَفَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ
- لِللَّهِمَّ صَلِّ وَسَلِّمْ عَلَى الْحُسَيْنِ وَكَرِّمْ  
بَارِكْ عَلَيْهِ وَعَظِّمْ وَأَرْحَمْهُ رَبِّ تَرْحَمْ  
مَا أَنْهَلَ قَطْرُ السَّمَاءِ وَالْهَفَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ
- وَجَدَّهُ وَأَبِيهِ وَجْهَ الْإِلَهِ الرَّجِيهِ  
وَأُمَّهُ وَأَخِيهِ وَصَاحِبِهِ وَبَنِيهِ

So radiant and grand  
I grieve for you, Ḥusayn  
O king of martyrs

أَهْلِ السَّنَا وَالسَّنَاءِ وَالْهَفَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ

50. I ask you in their name  
Dispel my hardships  
Multiply my blessings  
Transform my flaws to virtues  
Hear my prayer, O Lord!  
I grieve for you, Ḥusayn  
O king of martyrs

وَأَكْشِفْ بِهِمْ كُرْبَاتِي ضَاعِفْ بِهِمْ بَرَكَاتِي  
بَدِّلْ بِهِمْ سَيِّئَاتِي جَمِّعْهَا حَسَنَاتِي  
يَا رَبِّي أَسْمَعْ دُعَائِي وَالْهَفَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ

51. Maledictions on Yazīd  
His helpers and his aides  
Cruel felons  
Who wronged the noble scions  
Of the house of Yāsīn  
I grieve for you, Ḥusayn  
O king of martyrs

وَالْعَنَ يَزِيدَ اللَّعِينَا وَنَاصِرًا وَمُعِينَا  
لَهُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَا عَلَى بَنِي يَاسِينَا  
السَّادَةَ النُّجَبَاءِ وَالْهَفَّتَا يَا حُسَيْنَا  
يَا سَيِّدَ الشُّهَدَاءِ

### Thematic Frame

The following is the *Sayyid al-Shuhadā'* lament's thematic frame, presented in list format in nine broad segments:

- I. **Stanzas 1–6. The opening.** Address to Ḥusayn as the Messenger's descendant and one of the "People of the Cloak" (*ahl al-kisā'*). The poet's exhortation to himself to weep for his slain master. Direction to believers to weep, with a description of Ḥusayn's exalted stature and the reward that awaits those who weep for him.
- II. **Stanzas 7–10. Two framing laments.** Grief for the hardships faced by the Prophet's family in and after Karbala. A dramatic depiction of Ḥusayn's asking for water.
- III. **Stanzas 11–17. A narrative on the tongue of Ḥusayn's sister Zainab.** The plight of the family immediately after Ḥusayn's killing. Dramatization of Zaynab unveiled, hair dyed in Ḥusayn's blood, piteously weeping. Her words imploring Ḥusayn to rise and defend his daughter Sakīna and his son 'Alī Zayn al-Ābidīn.

- IV. **Stanzas 18–22. Martyrs and leave taking.** The killing of Ḥusayn’s sons, the youth ‘Alī Akbar and the infant ‘Alī Aṣghar, Ḥusayn’s brother ‘Abbās, and his nephew ‘Abd Allāh, with an account of ‘Abd Allāh’s Karbala marriage to Ḥusayn’s daughter Sakīna. Ḥusayn’s farewell to his son and successor ‘Alī Zayn al-‘Ābidīn and the women of the family.
- V. **Stanzas 23–31. The desolation of the women.** Ḥusayn’s wives Shahr Bānū (Bint Kisrā) and Rabāb, his daughters Fāṭima Kubrā and Fāṭima Ṣuḡhrā, his sister Umm Kulthūm, and all the Karbala widows and orphans.
- VI. **Stanzas 32–35. Mourning the martyrs.** The Family of the Prophet and Ḥusayn’s companions, slain by swords and daggers, pierced by spears and arrows; their virtues.
- VII. **Stanzas 36–38. Desecration of Ḥusayn’s corpse.** Horses trampling Ḥusayn’s body; his severed head raised on a spear, then placed in a basin in front of the enemy.
- VIII. **Stanzas 39–47. Penultimate address, reflecting the lament’s opening stanzas in loose ring composition.** Directions to believers to weep for Ḥusayn; Muḥammad, ‘Alī, Fāṭima, and Ḥasan weep for him, the earth and the sky weep for him, God’s *Da‘wa* weeps for him. Maledictions on the evil community who killed Ḥusayn. Plea for aid to Ḥusayn and his descendant, the living Imām.
- IX. **Stanzas 48–51. Prayer.** Benedictions for Ḥusayn, alongside Muḥammad, ‘Alī, Fāṭima, Ḥasan, his companions, and his descendants, and plea for their intercession. Supplication to God to ease hardships and multiply blessings. Malediction on Yazīd and on those who supported him in killing Ḥusayn.

### **Analysis of the Lament’s Doctrines and Performance: A Distinct Religious Tradition within a Hybrid Cultural Milieu**

The *Sayyid al-Shuhadā’* lament weaves its rich Arabic heritage of Fāṭimid-Ṭayyibī doctrine and philosophy into an Indian Gujarati-Urdu-Persian context. In this section, I explore this distinct perspective and hybrid palette under four rubrics. Highlighting the lament’s doctrinal anchor in Fāṭimid-Ṭayyibī heritage, the first three rubrics address the cosmic significance of Ḥusayn’s martyrdom and of weeping for him in Fāṭimid-Ṭayyibī philosophy; the lament’s grounding in the Fāṭimid Dā‘ī al-Mu‘ayyad al-Shīrāzī’s (d. 470/1078) tradition of prose lament (*nawḥa*) and “*da‘wa* poetry”, particularly in their

themes of Karbala mourning, Imāmate doctrines, symbolic Qur'an interpretation (*ta'wīl*), and closure segments of prayer and plea; and its adherence to the early historical reports of Ḥusayn's martyrdom as narrated in Fāṭimid-Ṭayyibī texts. The fourth rubric teases out disparate strands of the lament's complex synthesis to highlight its hybrid Arabic-Persian-Urdu poetic form and communal performance, particularly the manner in which its elegiac themes and classical forms intersect with Arabic poetic conventions set in pre-Islamic and early Islamic times, and the way in which its melodic performance stems from Persianate Urdu practices of Karbala lament recital.<sup>26</sup> It should be noted that the lament's techniques of grief evocation as well as its raw content, though not discussed beyond a few remarks in this article, also overlap significantly with Twelver Shī'ī Karbala laments in Arabic, Persian, and Urdu from the Middle East and South Asia.

#### *Cosmic Significance of the Karbala Tragedy: The Philosophy of Weeping for Ḥusayn*

In the *Sayyid al-Shuhadā'* lament's preface, transcribed earlier, Sayf al-Dīn cites Prophet Muḥammad's hadith "Whoever weeps, causes someone to weep, or endeavours to weep for my grandson Ḥusayn – Paradise is decreed for him". For Ṭayyibīs, Ḥusayn's martyrdom has existential implications. Like many others, they mourn him as the Prophet's beloved grandson, as someone who sacrificed everything for justice, and as a righteous and courageous leader, but above all, they mourn him as a redeemer. There are personal aspects to their mourning, of course. In Ṭayyibī belief, weeping for Ḥusayn is the way that we, fourteen hundred years later, can be with him in Karbala; by our weeping, we become part of the event. But these personal aspects are grounded in the redemption Ḥusayn's martyrdom brings to each individual who mourns him. In the Ṭayyibī worldview, Ḥusayn's martyrdom and the act of weeping for it are woven into the fabric of salvation, and this ideology strongly underpins the *Sayyid al-Shuhadā'* lament. The theme of weeping is common in all Arabic, Persian, and Urdu elegies, but in Ṭayyibī laments,

---

<sup>26</sup> For an overview of elegy in the Muslim tradition, see the entry on *marthiya*, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., online (Pellat, Arabic; Hanaway, Persian; Haywood, Urdu). For translations of key pieces and a summary, see Clarke, "Elegy (*Marthiya*) on Husayn". For historical development in India, see Trivedi, "Appropriating an Iranian Literary Tradition"; Naim, "Art of the Urdu Marsiya"; and Hyder, *Reliving Karbala*.

including the earlier *marthiyas* mentioned in the section on the Ṭayyibī lament tradition, it denotes the redemptive force for believers who weep for Ḥusayn and the cosmic significance of his martyrdom.

In several of his Ramaḍān treatises, Sayf al-Dīn explains the integral role played by Ḥusayn's martyrdom in humankind's redemption. The main points are as follows: (1) The child Ḥusayn had promised the Prophet to repay the community's debt, to sacrifice his life and even his children: "I am the one for it, grandfather!" (*anā li-dhālika yā jaddāh*).<sup>27</sup> (2) He embraced martyrdom because that was God's will.<sup>28</sup> (This point was emphasized also in Muḥyī l-Dīn's opening lament line quoted earlier, "You accepted death in compliance with God's will".) (3) He "repaid the debts of those who went before and those who are yet to come".<sup>29</sup> (5) The Qur'anic verse «He gave them protection from fear» (*wa-āmanahum min khawf*) alludes to Ḥusayn's martyrdom.<sup>30</sup> (6) "The testament of faith (*kalimat al-shahāda*) will remain alive till the day of resurrection because of Ḥusayn's martyrdom (*shahāda*)."<sup>31</sup> (7) Those who weep for Ḥusayn will receive the Prophet's intercession on Judgement Day and be rewarded with Paradise.<sup>32</sup> In summary, Ṭayyibīs believe that Ḥusayn died to redeem our sins, and that our weeping for him enables us to receive redemption.

This two-part philosophy is the backbone of Sayf al-Dīn's framing, which evokes the points discussed above. Tears permeate the *Sayyid al-Shuhadā'* lament. Observe these lines coming one after the other in the opening stanzas: "Upon the great tragedy that befell you in Karbala, I shall weep through the long age" (stanza 1); "I utter lament upon lament for you, one follows another without ceasing, mingled with tears of blood" (stanza 2). "Flow out, O spirit, gush forth, O eye" (stanza 3); "O believers, all: Weep for the great Imām, weep for the blessed king, weep for the upright master, weep for the son of the best of all women" (stanza 4). The above lines evoke the unspoken yet familiar association with the weeper's salvation. In the next few stanzas, that causal link is made explicit: "Weep for Imām Ḥusayn,

---

<sup>27</sup> Sayf al-Dīn, *Nahr al-nūr*, p. 145.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154.

<sup>29</sup> Sayf al-Dīn, *Tadhkiratu labīb*, p. 338.

<sup>30</sup> Sayf al-Dīn, *Nahr al-nūr*, pp. 144–157; Qur'an 106:4.

<sup>31</sup> Sayf al-Dīn, *Silsilatu ni'matin 'uzmā*, p. 408.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 411.

embodiment of truth, wellspring of generosity, *who drank the cup of death to save God's religion*, parched and thirsty in Karbala” (stanza 5). “Weep long and hard for that martyred Imām in the morning and night, and you shall receive abundant reward on the day of requital” (stanza 6). Near the end of the lament in stanza 40, where Sayf al-Dīn again brings in concentrated directives to weep, the cosmic-theological import of Ḥusayn’s martyrdom is fully disclosed in a reminder to mourners that the sky and the earth weep for Ḥusayn; indeed, God’s religion itself weeps for him. This point was also made by the nineteenth Yemeni Dā‘ī, ‘Imād al-Dīn, in his lament, cited earlier, in which he wrote, “the sky wept for him and this world, both” (*bakati l-samā’u ‘alayhi wa-l-dunyā ma’an*).

### *Grounding in al-Mu’ayyad al-Shirāzī’s Tradition of Prose Lament (Nawḥa) and Fāṭimid Da‘wa Poetry*

Al-Mu’ayyad al-Shirāzī (d. 470/1078) was a prominent Fāṭimid Dā‘ī, scholar, poet, and diplomat, who used his many talents to propagate the Fāṭimid religio-political mission. His collected writings deeply influenced Ṭayyibī thought. This is especially true of his eight hundred weekly Thursday lectures, titled *al-Majālis al-Mu’ayyadiyya* (Assemblies of wisdom), in which he offered symbolic interpretations (*ta’wīl*) of the Qur’an and Shari‘a, as well as his *Dīwān*, which, based on the same theology, formed the template for the Fāṭimid *da‘wa* poetry tradition.<sup>33</sup> Sayyidnā Ṭāhir Sayf al-Dīn – known to Ṭayyibīs as “Mu’ayyad-i Aṣghar” (the younger Mu’ayyad) – imbibed the stimulus of the original Mu’ayyad in his preaching and writing. Influenced by Mu’ayyad’s verse, his *Sayyid al-Shuhadā’* lament used Mu’ayyad’s Imāmate themes, as well as his plea for succour and benediction closure segments. Equally influenced by Mu’ayyad’s lectures, it followed their theological teachings and emphatically and often verbatim echoed the language and content of their prose Karbala laments (*nawḥa*). Mu’ayyad’s prose laments – in majālis 9 and 150 – formed the opening address of his lectures which fell on or around the day of ‘Āshūrā’;<sup>34</sup> they were recited regularly by Sayf al-Dīn in his Muḥarram *wa’z* sermons and formed the direct prototype for

<sup>33</sup> On al-Mu’ayyad’s life, works, and poetry, see T. Qutbuddin, “Al-Mu’ayyad al-Shirāzī”; T. Qutbuddin, *Al-Mu’ayyad al-Shirāzī*, passim. On his influence on Ṭayyibī poetry, see *ibid.*, pp. 299–333. On al-Mu’ayyad’s *ta’wīl* theology, see T. Qutbuddin, “Principles of Fatimid Symbolic Interpretation”, passim.

<sup>34</sup> Mu’ayyad, *Majālis*, vol. 1, pp. 34–36 (majlis 9); vol. 2, pp. 309–310 (majlis 150).

the latter's *Sayyid al-Shuhadā'* lament. As the following comparisons demonstrate, the themes and language of Sayf al-Dīn's lament, especially in the opening and closing stanzas, are derived from Mu'ayyad's prose and poetry.

The *Sayyid al-Shuhadā'* lament praises Ḥusayn's virtues on a metaphysical plane as the incarnate emblem of God's religion and His divine light. Ḥusayn is a "wraith of light", "house of the Lord of Manifestation",<sup>35</sup> and "essence of the ages" (stanzas 36 and 43). He is "religion's heart" (stanza 41, cited above), "innocent and pure, heavenly origin, radiant light" (stanza 42), "banner of faith", and "proof of the Merciful Lord"<sup>36</sup> (stanza 43). Poetry is dense and it alludes to doctrines without spelling them out, but if one understands the underlying theological orientation, formulaic phrases signal profound concepts. More than anything else, it is these doctrines that characterize Mu'ayyad's Fāṭimid *da'wa* poetry tradition and form the heart of his *Majālis* – discussed in detail in an earlier publication<sup>37</sup> – and they constitute Sayf al-Dīn's theological substrate in the *Sayyid al-Shuhadā'* lament.

In addition to theological underpinnings, the final stanzas of the lament include six successive closure segments typical of Mu'ayyad's *da'wa* poetry tradition that I have also discussed with copious examples elsewhere.<sup>38</sup> These Mu'ayyad-style closure segments comprise a plea for succour to Ḥusayn (stanza 43), declarations of the poet's willingness to lay down his life for him (stanzas 44–45), and a plea for succour to the Imām of the age (stanzas 46–47). They also include benedictions on Ḥusayn and his family and supporters (stanzas 48–49), entreaties to God through Ḥusayn's and his pure family's intercession to dispel hardships and multiply blessings (stanza 50), and maledictions on Yazīd and his supporters (stanza 51).

---

<sup>35</sup> In Fāṭimid-Ṭayyibī doctrine, the Imām is God's caliph on earth, the divinely guided guide in whom God's light is manifest.

<sup>36</sup> In Fāṭimid-Ṭayyibī doctrine, the Imām is God's living proof on earth, in the sense that he proves God's existence to humans in his teachings, and also in the sense that his very presence – because he establishes God's faith – constitutes proof of God's existence.

<sup>37</sup> On Imāmate doctrines in Mu'ayyad's poetry, see T. Qutbuddin, *Al-Mu'ayyad al-Shirāzī*, pp. 105–116. These doctrines are ubiquitous in his *Majālis*; e.g. vol. 1, p. 48 (majlis 12); vol. 1, p. 212 (majlis 45); and passim.

<sup>38</sup> On Mu'ayyad's closure segments, see T. Qutbuddin, *Al-Mu'ayyad al-Shirāzī*, pp. 191–200.

In both Mu'ayyad's and Sayf al-Dīn's poems, these closure segments are infused with theological weight. For example, the benediction represents a typical closure formula in the *da'wa* poetry tradition, yet it also illustrates its *ta'wīl*-based multivalence (stanzas 48–49). Straightforward on the surface, these lines, like most other statements in Ṭayyibī poetry that appear uncomplicatedly exoteric to the uninitiated, signal to the initiated an esoteric allusion. Observe, for example, stanza 48, which invokes God's benedictions on Ḥusayn, where the poet says, "Grant him your gentlest mercy as long as raindrops fall." The Arabic term used to denote benedictions, *ṣalawāt*, comes from the same three-letter root (Ṣ-L-W) as the word *ṣila* (lit., joining). The Ṭayyibīs believe that *ṣalawāt* denotes the chain of Imāms who will continue unbroken in Muḥammad's line till Judgement Day.<sup>39</sup> The continuity (*ṣila*) of the Imāmate is underscored by repurposing the conventional phrase "as long as raindrops fall". In classical Arabic literature, lines like this one – "as long as the stars keep shining", "as long as the sun rises", and so on – mean "for all time". Here, the line denotes the continuity of the Imāmate for all time. The choice of the rain image is also significant. In addition to its function in the conventional pre-Islamic supplication for rain to water the grave of a slain warrior, rain in the Islamic tradition signifies God's mercy. Here, its use in tandem with *ṣalawāt* signals that just as Muḥammad is described in the Qur'an as God's "mercy for all worlds" (*raḥmatan li-l-ālamīn*),<sup>40</sup> the same embodiment of God's mercy continues in Muḥammad's line, in the person of Ḥusayn and those of his descendants, one Imām after another, till the last day. Stanza 49 continues the invocation of blessings on "Ḥusayn's grandfather", the Prophet Muḥammad; "his father", 'Alī; "his mother", Fāṭima; "his brother", Ḥasan; "his companions", the martyrs of Karbala; and "his descendants", the Imāms. The possessive pronoun "his" connects them all, each to the other, through the relationship of each with Ḥusayn.

This grouping of God's chosen ones connected through the person of Ḥusayn signals further the integral role of Ḥusayn's martyrdom for the continuity of God's mercy and the redemption of humankind – in other words, for the historical actualization of the *ṣalawāt* benediction.

---

<sup>39</sup> Nu'mān, *Ta'wīl al-da'ā'im*, vol. 1, pp. 303–304; Mu'ayyad, *Majālis*, vol. 2, p. 396 (majlis 163); vol. 4, pp. 424–425 (majlis 373).

See details in Aziz Qutbuddin, "Taḥmīd", pp. 174–176.

<sup>40</sup> Qur'an 21:107.

Ḥusayn's descent from the Prophet (and his parentage from 'Alī and Fāṭima, and through them, again, from the Prophet) has been a crucial theme in the teachings of most Shī'ī denominations through the centuries, and it is also prominent in the *Sayyid al-Shuhadā'* lament. What is noteworthy in our context is the particular set of subthemes within this larger theme that Sayf al-Dīn chooses to highlight, which may be traced back to subthemes that Mu'ayyad had highlighted. In stanzas 41 and 42, Sayf al-Dīn calls down curses on "the evil community" (*ummat al-saw*)<sup>41</sup> of so-called Muslims – the word "community" (*umma*) signals that they are people who claimed to be Muslim – who killed Ḥusayn. This idea connects with Mu'ayyad's majlis 9, in which he addresses the audience of Fāṭimid devotees saying, "May God protect you from the faction who challenged their Prophet in the case of the sons of his daughter, who attempted to destroy the house of guidance *by killing their Prophet's family*."<sup>42</sup> Mu'ayyad continues in the same text, "The Prophet who is the path to safety and the bridge to salvation for all souls deserved better than to have this calamity knock on his door, and to have *his own community's arrows* target his home."<sup>43</sup> What may be seen as an otherwise dry theological point – the issue of Ḥusayn's descent from the Prophet – is rendered poignant by the context of Ḥusayn's assailants being themselves Muslims, who claim Muḥammad as their prophet and guide to salvation. Another kinship aspect of the *Sayyid al-Shuhadā'* lament points to Ḥusayn's purity as one of the five special members of his family, namely, Muḥammad, 'Alī, Fāṭima, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn; stanza 1 addresses Ḥusayn as "fifth of the five robed in purity" (lit., fifth of the People of the Cloak) whom the Prophet is reported to have enveloped in a "cloak of purity" (*kisā' al-taḥhīr*) upon the revelation of the Qur'anic verse "God wishes to remove all impurities from you, O people of the house, and to purify you fully".<sup>44</sup> This subtheme, too, is common among Shī'ī groups generally; the point of interest here is that it occurs in the opening lines of Sayf al-Dīn's lament for Ḥusayn, just as it occurs in the opening lines of Mu'ayyad's majlis 9 lament for Ḥusayn, where he invokes blessings on "God's Messenger ... Muḥammad, from whom and from 'the people of whose house God

---

<sup>41</sup> In Fāṭimid-Ṭayyibī doctrine, every prophet and Imām is the principle of good. Loving him is good in absolute terms, and holding enmity for him is evil. For this reason, those who participated in killing Ḥusayn are called "the evil community".

<sup>42</sup> Mu'ayyad, *Majālis*, vol. 1, p. 34 (majlis 9).

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>44</sup> Qur'an 33:33: *Innamā yurīdu Llāhu li-yudhhiba 'ankumu l-rijsa ahla l-bayti wa-yuṭahhirakum taḥhīrā*. Nu'mān, *Da'ā'im al-Islām*, vol. 1, pp. 35, 37.

removed all impurities and purified them fully”.<sup>45</sup> The implication is again cosmic: that such a pure one as Ḥusayn, who was part of the larger pentad of pure ones, should be killed is a matter that is relevant to the entire cosmos. Yet another specific aspect of the kinship theme common to both Mu’ayyad and Sayf al-Dīn is the importance given to the present Imām’s descent from Ḥusayn. Stanza 46 of Sayf al-Dīn’s lament echoes the emphasis in Mu’ayyad’s *da’wa* poetry tradition on the present (concealed) Imām’s descent from the Prophet Muḥammad.<sup>46</sup> These lineage-based epithets for Ḥusayn and his descendant, the living Imām signal the continuity of God’s direct guidance for successive generations through Muḥammad’s physical and spiritual heirs.

What is also noteworthy about the lineage markers in the *Sayyid al-Shuhadā’* lament is their sheer volume, again following Mu’ayyad’s practice. Stanza 2 addresses Ḥusayn as “[grand]son of God’s messenger”. Stanza 4 directs believers to weep for “the son of the best of all women”. Stanza 8 grieves over “revelation’s children”. Stanza 45 addresses Ḥusayn again as “grandson of the best of Prophets, son of the honeybees’ sovereign [‘Alī]”.<sup>47</sup> And so on. In addition, many stanzas indirectly emphasize the familial connection, including stanza 32, which grieves for “the young men from the Prophet’s family”. These stanzas echo Mu’ayyad’s prose laments, in which Ḥusayn’s prophetic lineage and Imāmate are prominent themes. In majlis 150, for example, Mu’ayyad refers to Ḥusayn as “the slain Imām thrown upon the desert sands, son of ‘Alī Murtaḍā and Fāṭima Zahrā’”; and there are many more such references that we see over and over in his lines mourning Ḥusayn.

---

<sup>45</sup> Mu’ayyad, *Majālis*, vol. 1, pp. 34–35 (majlis 9). The verse is also referenced in the opening and closing formulas and in various other contexts explaining the stature of the Prophet’s family in *ibid.*, majālis 36, 80, 135, 178, 199, 244, 320, 356, 365, and 376. Mu’ayyad’s poetry also directly references this Qur’anic verse in a praise poem with the opening line *Salāmun ‘alā l-‘itrati l-ṭāhira*, “Greetings to the pure progeny”; *Dīwān*, p. 287 (poem 41) and *passim*.

<sup>46</sup> On Mu’ayyad’s emphasis on the Imām’s descent from the Prophet Muḥammad in his poetry, see T. Qutbuddin, *Al-Mu’ayyad al-Shirāzī*, pp. 146–149.

<sup>47</sup> In Fāṭimid-Ṭayyibī doctrine, honeybees (*naḥl*), who cooperate to protect their hive and produce sweet honey, are a symbol for believers (and for the Imāms). ‘Alī is designated the honeybees’ sovereign (*amīr al-naḥl*). See Mu’ayyad, *Majālis*, vol. 1, p. 100 (majlis 23) and vol. 3, pp. 446–447 (majlis 300), citing Qur’an 16:68. See also ‘Alī’s words “I am the believers’ king-bee” (*anā ya’sub al-mu’minīn*), in *Nahj al-balāgha*, ḥikma 245.

In addition to doctrinal resonances, the *Sayyid al-Shuhadā'* lament contains unmistakable verbatim echoes of Mu'ayyad's prose laments. Perhaps the most clear is the vocative phrase *Ma'shar al-mu'minīn* (Believers, all!). This phrase was Mu'ayyad's typical opening address in each of his eight hundred *majālis*. In Ṭayyibī sermons, that address, usually voiced in a passionate tone of deep grief, signals the onset of Mu'ayyad's text. Bridging to this usage of Mu'ayyad's text in the Ṭayyibī sermon, stanza 4 at the beginning of the *Sayyid al-Shuhadā'* lament uses the same address, "O believers, all" (*Yā ma'shara l-mu'minīnā*) to communicate plainly to those familiar with the tradition the connection to Mu'ayyad.

Weeping for Ḥusayn, a central theme of Sayf al-Dīn's laments as discussed in the previous section, echoes Mu'ayyad's lament both in its broader aspects and in some of its specific language. Referencing the cosmic implications that make weeping for Ḥusayn an intrinsic part of belief, stanza 4's address to "Believers, all" segues into an injunction to "weep for the great Imām" (*ibkū l-Imāma l-Ḥusaynā*). This echoes Mu'ayyad's majlis 150, which, after the vocative address to "Believers, all", enjoined the audience to shed tears using the same imperative, "Weep!" (*ibkū*).

There are further verbatim echoes. Mu'ayyad's majlis 150 continues, "Make flow ... tears of blood, not water" (*afīḍū ... daman lā dam'ā*), using another imperative verb (*afīḍū*) which is replicated by Sayf al-Dīn in stanza 3, "Flow out (*fīḍī*), O spirit. Gush forth (*fīḍī*), O eye." Mu'ayyad's majlis continues further, "Will you not weep for one whose robe of sanctity the demonic faction tore on earth, prompting the angels to weep in the sky", a line that is duplicated in the *Sayyid al-Shuhadā'* lament's preface, transcribed earlier in this article, which begins with Mu'ayyad's exact phrases (in reverse order): "Let us recite here a poem lamenting the one for whom angels wept in the sky, when the demonic faction tore the robe of his sanctity on earth."<sup>48</sup> Yet another example of verbatim echo is found in stanza 8 of the lament, which begins, "Revelation's children crushed in calamity's millstone ... on the day of 'Āshūrā'." This repeats the lines in Mu'ayyad's majlis 9, "Truly, 'Āshūrā' is the day on which calamity's millstone crushed the family of your Prophet."<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>48</sup> Sayf al-Dīn, *Ṣibghu nūr*, p. 144.

<sup>49</sup> Mu'ayyad, *Majālis*, vol. 1, p. 34 (majlis 9): *Inna yawma 'Āshūrā'a huwa l-yawmu lladhī dārat fīhi 'alā ahli bayti nabiyyikum rahā l-miḥan, wa-jārat aydī l-zaman, wa-hutikat sutūru l-furūḍi wa-l-sunan.*

### *Conservative Historical Rendering of Ḥusayn's Martyrdom*

Sayyidnā Ṭāhir Sayf al-Dīn preached that all expressions of lament for Ḥusayn were to be respected. He provided monetary support for Twelver Shī'ī passion play (*ta'ziya*) processions in Mumbai and Surat, and even sent Bohras to participate. But in his own discourses – in prose and in poetry, and in his *Sayyid al-Shuhadā'* lament – he chose to anchor the narrative in early historical reports of Karbala. This conservative approach may be attributed to a desire to preserve the solemnity of the occasion, to maintain a strict distinction between commemoration and carnival. Many Shī'ī communities in India and Pakistan supplement their prose and poetry narratives of the Karbala tragedy with mythical themes added for dramatic effect. There are some clerics who remind preachers that they should be more factual in narrating Karbala,<sup>50</sup> but they often raise controversy by doing so, and in many elegies and live narrations in the subcontinent, folkloric additions remain common.<sup>51</sup> In contrast, most officially sanctioned Ṭayyibī sermons and poems, especially Sayf al-Dīn's *Sayyid al-Shuhadā'* lament, render into verse the events as reported in the early sources, without the embellishment of poetic myths.

The Ṭayyibīs' main source for the Karbala narrative is *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn* (Ḥusayn's slaying) compiled by the Kufan author Abū Mikhnaf Lūṭ ibn Yaḥyā (d. 157/774). Abū Mikhnaf's *Maqṭal*, now lost, is preserved in the histories of Ṭabarī (d. 310/922) and Balādhurī (d. 279/892)<sup>52</sup> as well as in other early histories; the

---

<sup>50</sup> E.g. Naqvi, *Shahīd-i insāniyyat*; Amrohvi, *Mujāhid-i a'zam*; Najafi, *Sa'adat al-dārayn fi maqṭal al-Husayn*; and the teachings of the Karachi-based scholar Syed Sharfuddin Moosvi. I thank Dr. Sulayman Hassan for these references.

<sup>51</sup> These include elaborations of a marriage between Ḥusayn's daughter Fāṭima Kubrā and his nephew Qāsim, son of Imām Ḥasan. They also include imaginative descriptions of the heroes taking leave of the women, and tales endowing Ḥusayn's horse with speech. Some Urdu elegies borrow motifs from Hindu folk literature. See Trivedi, "Appropriating an Iranian Literary Tradition", *passim*.

<sup>52</sup> Ursula Sezgin (*Abū Miḥnaf*, pp. 116–123) suggests that Abū Mikhnaf's original work is lost, and its various manuscripts and editions are reworked versions. Excerpts are preserved in Balādhurī's *Ansāb al-ashraf*, vol. 2, pp. 453–519, and in Ṭabarī's *Tārīkh*, vol. 5, pp. 400–470; trans. *History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 19, pp. 91–183. Excerpts from Abū Mikhnaf's account are also found in Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī's (d. 356/967) *Maqātil al-Ṭālibiyyīn*, pp. 84–124. Using a cautious approach, I avoid in this article the possibly corrupted editions of Abū Mikhnaf's *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, instead using Balādhurī's and Ṭabarī's more established histories to render the Abū Mikhnaf account.

Ṭayyibīs rely mostly on the presentation of the Fāṭimid Dā‘ī al-Qāḍī l-Nu‘mān (d. 363/974) in his *Sharḥ al-akhbār* (Elucidation of historical reports) and on that of the Ṭayyibī Dā‘ī Idrīs ‘Imād al-Dīn (d. 872/1468) in his *‘Uyūn al-akhbār* (Wellsprings of historical reports).<sup>53</sup> The latter also includes a smattering of further detail that appears in, and could possibly be derived from, two medieval texts: the Twelver Shī‘ī Ibn Ṭāwūs’s (d. 664/1266) *al-Malhūf* [or: *al-Luhūf*] *‘alā qatlā l-ṭufūf* (Mourning the slain ones of Karbala) and the Ḥanafī Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī’s (d. 654/1256) *Tadhkirat al-khawāṣṣ* (Reminder for the elite). The reports from Nu‘mān’s and ‘Imād al-Dīn’s works are distilled in *Agharr al-Majālis* (Most radiant assembly), a narrative originally compiled by Shaykh Hibat Allāh Aḥmadābādī (fl. early thirteenth/nineteenth century) under the direction of the forty-third Ṭayyibī Dā‘ī, ‘Abdē-‘Alī Sayf al-Dīn (d. 1232/1817), and updated and augmented by Ṭāhir Sayf al-Dīn; this volume serves as the Ṭayyibīs’ main handbook for the narration of the Karbala tragedy.<sup>54</sup> Ṭāhir Sayf al-Dīn draws on these sources for his prose and poetic presentations of Ḥusayn’s martyrdom. In addition to his sermons, many of which are recorded in audio format or written transcriptions, his treatise *Nahr al-nūr al-sha‘sha‘ānī* (Incandescent river of light) discourses at some length on historical and theological aspects of Ḥusayn’s martyrdom, some of which were mentioned in the present article’s earlier section on doctrine.<sup>55</sup>

The *Sayyid al-Shuhadā’* lament’s conservative rendering may be demonstrated by comparing stanzas that expound a certain theme with the historical texts’ reports of the same theme (italics are used to highlight similarities). Note that the point of the comparison is not to prove that Sayf al-Dīn directly sourced his material from the texts mentioned above, although he may very well have done so; the point is to demonstrate that the anecdotes and themes he referenced in his lament, with many specific details of the events, are for the most part ones that are recorded in those early sources.

Al-Qāḍī l-Nu‘mān reports ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn’s killing thus:<sup>56</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Nu‘mān, *Sharḥ al-akhbār*, vol. 3, pp. 135–253; ‘Imād al-Dīn, *‘Uyūn al-akhbār*, vol. 4, pp. 113–202. ‘Imād al-Dīn, as mentioned earlier, also composed Arabic elegies for Ḥusayn.

<sup>54</sup> *Agharr al-Majālis* forms part 9 of the ten-part *al-Majālis al-‘Ashūriyya* (‘Ashūrā’ assemblies).

<sup>55</sup> Sayf al-Dīn, *Nahr al-nūr*, pp. 144–157.

<sup>56</sup> Nu‘mān, *Sharḥ al-akhbār*, vol. 3, pp. 152–153; ‘Imād al-Dīn’s report (*‘Uyūn al-akhbār*, vol. 4, p. 141) conforms almost exactly to Nu‘mān’s. The sources speak of three sons who were with Ḥusayn in Karbala, and their identities are sometimes confused

‘Umar ibn Sa‘d’s [warriors] ... called out to ... ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn ... “You are a blood relation of the Commander of the Faithful,” meaning the accursed Yazīd. They were referring to the fact that [Mu‘āwiyā’s sister and Yazīd’s paternal aunt] Maymūna bint Abī Sufyān was his maternal grandmother, since [‘Alī’s] mother was Laylā bint Murra, whose mother was Maymūna bint Abī Sufyān. They said to him: “If you wish, we will grant you immunity and safe passage.” ... ‘Alī replied: “God’s messenger’s kinship is more worthy of consideration.” Then he charged against them, all the while reciting these [spontaneously composed] verses:

I am ‘Alī, son of Ḥusayn, son of ‘Alī  
 I swear on God’s House that I am closer to the Prophet than you are.<sup>57</sup>  
 I shall strike you with my sword and protect my father,  
 By God, the *bastard’s son* [‘Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād] *will never rule over us!*

Abū Mikhnaf (in Ṭabarī) also reports the verses and Ḥusayn’s lament. Ibn Ṭāwūs adds that ‘Alī bore a close resemblance to the Prophet Muḥammad.<sup>58</sup> Drawing on these historical reports, stanza 18 of the *Sayyid al-Shuhadā’* lament mourns ‘Alī as “*mirror image of the Prophet ... who refused to allow an adulterer’s son to rule over God’s saints*”.

---

because all three are often referred to by the name “‘Alī” and/or by one of two epithets rotating among them, “Akbar” (older) and “Aṣghar” (younger). Sayf al-Dīn – perhaps deliberately in order to stick to what is confirmed in the historical data – avoids using this controversial nomenclature altogether in the *Sayyid al-Shuhadā’* lament, referring to the older of the two killed in Karbala as simply “‘Alī” and to the younger as “the infant”. The explanation for the double confusion is complex. The historical sources agree that “‘Alī” was the given name of Ḥusayn’s two older sons. They also agree that the one who survived Karbala was the one with the special title Zayn al-‘Ābidīn (Ornament of All Worshipers). But they differ as to whether he was the older (Akbar) ‘Alī, or the younger (Aṣghar) ‘Alī. Shī‘ī sources, including Nu‘mān (*Sharḥ al-akhbār*, vol. 3, pp. 153–154, 256–266), insist that Zayn al-‘Ābidīn, the one who survived Karbala, was the older ‘Alī (then twenty-nine years old according to Nu‘mān, *al-Majālis wa-l-musāyarāt*, pp. 522–523), and the one who was killed was the younger ‘Alī (then about seventeen years old; his mother was Laylā, from the Umayyad clan). Most Sunni sources assert the contrary, calling Zayn al-‘Ābidīn the younger ‘Alī and the son of Laylā killed in Karbala the older ‘Alī. To complicate the question further, this latter ‘Alī, whose mother was Laylā, is known in South Asia (including in Ṭayyibī Bohra sermons and laments) as ‘Alī Akbar (or simply Akbar), and this epithet is used vis-à-vis Ḥusayn’s third and youngest son – an infant named in the historical sources as ‘Abd Allāh – whom the South Asian tradition knows as the six-month old ‘Alī Aṣghar (or simply Aṣghar).

<sup>57</sup> ‘Imād al-Dīn’s report (*‘Uyūn al-akhbār*, vol. 4, p. 141) contains the plural “we are closer to the Prophet”.

<sup>58</sup> ‘Imād al-Dīn, *‘Uyūn al-akhbār*, vol. 4, pp. 141–142; Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, vol. 5, pp. 446–447; Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Malḥūf*, p. 166.

The following three reports from Abū Mikhnaf's *Maqṭal* as reported by Ṭabarī (and in similar words by Balādhurī) describe the desecration of Ḥusayn's body. First, Abū Mikhnaf recounts the Kufan army's trampling of the slain body under their horses' hooves thus:

[The Umayyad commander in Karbala] 'Umar ibn Sa'd called out to his companions: "Who will trample Ḥusayn with their horses?" Ten volunteered, among them Ishāq ibn Ḥaywa al-Ḥaḍramī ... and Aḥbāsh ibn Marthad ... al-Ḥaḍramī. *They came to Ḥusayn's [body] and trampled it with their horses' [hooves], until they had crushed the back and chest.*<sup>59</sup>

Drawing on this historical report, stanza 36 of the *Sayyid al-Shuhadā'* lament mourns "the pure *body which the evil legion's horses viciously trampled*". Next, Abū Mikhnaf recounts the Umayyad governor 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād's parading of Ḥusayn's severed head in the streets of Kufa thus:

*'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād raised Ḥusayn's head [on a spear] and ordered that it be paraded through the streets of Kufa. Then he called Zaḥr [sic] ibn Qays and commanded him to carry Ḥusayn's head and the heads of his companions to Yazīd ibn Mu'āwiya.*<sup>60</sup>

'Imād al-Dīn specifies that Ḥusayn's severed head was raised on a spear.<sup>61</sup> The word "spear" is not mentioned in Ṭabarī's Abū Mikhnaf account, but the verb *naṣaba*, whose meanings include "placing something and raising it", is used, presumably meaning "raised on a spear".<sup>62</sup> Drawing on these historical reports, stanza 37 of the *Sayyid al-Shuhadā'* lament exclaims, "Here is Ḥusayn's head raised high on a spear, gleaming like the sun."

Further, Abū Mikhnaf recounts the Umayyad caliph Yazīd's desecration of Ḥusayn's head in his court at Damascus thus:

When the Kufan delegation arrived with Ḥusayn's [decapitated] head ... in Damascus ... they entered Yazīd's presence, and placed the head in front of him, and narrated to him the whole story. ... He gave permission for all the people to come in, and they entered. Ḥusayn's head was set up in front of Yazīd. *Yazīd was holding a cane with which he was striking Ḥusayn's mouth and front teeth.* ... A man called Abū Baraza al-Aslamī, a Companion of the Messenger of God, challenged Yazīd, saying: "Do you strike ... Ḥusayn's mouth?"

---

<sup>59</sup> Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḫh*, vol. 5, pp. 453–455; trans. *History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 19, p. 163; Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, vol. 2, p. 507.

<sup>60</sup> Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḫh*, vol. 5, p. 459; trans. *History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 19, p. 168; Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, vol. 2, p. 507.

<sup>61</sup> 'Imād al-Dīn, *Uyūn al-akhbār*, vol. 4, pp. 161–164.

<sup>62</sup> Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿarab*, s.v. "N-Ṣ-B".

... Many are the times I have seen the Messenger of God kissing it! Truly, Yazīd, your supporter on Judgement Day will be Ibn Ziyād, and [Ḥusayn's] supporter will be Muḥammad!" Then [Abū Baraza] stood up and left.<sup>63</sup>

Al-Qāḍī l-Nu'mān and Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī report Ibn Ziyād's – rather than Yazīd's – violation of Ḥusayn's head by striking his teeth with a cane.<sup>64</sup> 'Imād al-Dīn provides both reports, Ibn Ziyād's and Yazīd's.<sup>65</sup> Additionally, Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr (d. 280/893) describes Ḥusayn's head being "*placed in a basin*" in front of Yazīd.<sup>66</sup> Drawing on these historical reports, stanza 38 of the *Sayyid al-Shuhadā'* lament grieves, "Alas, the Imām's head in a basin before *the enemy who sits on his throne mocking, wielding a cane, striking those pearly teeth.*"

Other stanzas from the *Sayyid al-Shuhadā'* lament may also be parsed against the historical sources in the same way. The following are some cursory comparisons:

- Stanza 9's portrayal of Ḥusayn's calling out to the Umayyad army that he was the Prophet's grandson is parallel in context and content to Abū Mikhnaf's account (via Ṭabarī) of Ḥusayn's oration addressing the Kufans on the day of 'Āshūrā'.<sup>67</sup>
- Stanza 16's portrayal of 'Alī Zayn al-'Ābidīn's illness and shackles and his journey from Karbala to Damascus is parallel to Abū Mikhnaf's account (via Ṭabarī).<sup>68</sup>
- Stanza 19's portrayal of Ḥusayn's infant son being killed by an enemy arrow in his father's arms is parallel to al-Qāḍī l-Nu'mān's narrative.<sup>69</sup>
- Stanza 21 on the wedding between Ḥusayn's daughter Sakīna and his brother Ḥasan's son 'Abd Allāh is also based on al-Qāḍī l-Nu'mān's account. Nu'mān reports the marriage between 'Abd

---

<sup>63</sup> Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, vol. 5, p. 465; trans. *History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 19, pp. 175–176; Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashraf*, vol. 2, pp. 509.

<sup>64</sup> Nu'mān, *Sharḥ al-akhbār*, vol. 3, p. 170; Sibṭ, *Tadhkirat al-khawwāṣṣ*, pp. 256–257.

<sup>65</sup> 'Imād al-Dīn, *Uyūn al-akhbār*, vol. 4, pp. 159–165, 172–173.

<sup>66</sup> Ṭayfūr, *Balāghāt al-nisā'*, p. 70.

<sup>67</sup> See the text of Ḥusayn's oration in Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, vol. 5, pp. 423–426; trans. *History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 19, pp. 122–124; also in Sibṭ, *Tadhkirat al-khawwāṣṣ*, pp. 251–253. See text, translation, and analysis in T. Qutbuddin, *Arabic Oration*, pp. 216–227.

<sup>68</sup> Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, vol. 5, p. 460.

<sup>69</sup> Nu'mān, *Sharḥ al-akhbār*, vol. 3, pp. 177–178; also narrated in Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, vol. 5, p. 447; Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashraf*, vol. 2, pp. 497–498.

Allāh ibn al-Ḥasan and Sakīna bint al-Ḥusayn (without, however, specifying that the marriage took place in Karbala), saying the groom was martyred before the marriage could be consummated.<sup>70</sup>

- Stanza 24's portrayal of Ḥusayn's wife Rabāb singing a dirge reflects the verses grieving for Ḥusayn which 'Imād al-Dīn attributes to her.<sup>71</sup>
- The portrayal in stanzas 33 and 34 of Ḥusayn's companions killed by spear and sword amalgamates Abū Mikhnaf's account of the martyrdoms of Zuhayr ibn Qayn, Muslim ibn 'Usajā, Ḥabīb ibn Muẓāhir, and other companions of Ḥusayn.<sup>72</sup>

Of the historical themes in the elegy, there are two that I have not been able to trace back to the early sources: Ḥusayn's sister Zaynab dying her hair in his blood (stanza 11), and the weeping bride following the groom to the battlefield (stanza 21). Notwithstanding these anomalies, the numerous comparisons listed above show that by and large, the *Sayyid al-Shuhadā'* lament offers a conservative, factual account of the Karbala tragedy.

### ***Hybrid Form and Communal Performance: Classical Arabic Conventions and Indian Persian-Urdu Influence***

In certain aspects, the *Sayyid al-Shuhadā'* lament combines classical Arabic conventions with Persian-Urdu Indian practices. In structure, it devises what appears to be a hybrid Arabic-Persian formula of meter and rhyme. In performance, it follows the liturgical function of Fāṭimid assemblies of mourning in medieval Cairo, in combination with melodic practices of Urdu religious poetry in India.

The *Sayyid al-Shuhadā'* lament is part of a series of poems in which Sayyidnā Ṭāhir Sayf al-Dīn produced hybrid Urdu-Arabic structures. His model for experimenting in Arabic-Urdu form hybridity could be the stanzaic Arabic poem composed by his grandfather, the forty-seventh Dā'ī Sayyidnā 'Abd al-Qādir Najm al-Dīn (d. 1302/1885), in praise of Imām 'Alī: *Hal maẓharu dhī l-'arshi siwā šinwi l-rasūlī – fī kulli ẓuhūrī* (Is there a manifestation of the Lord of the Throne other than the Prophet's brother – in every

---

<sup>70</sup> Nu'mān, *Sharḥ al-akhbār*, vol. 3, pp. 180–181.

<sup>71</sup> 'Imād al-Dīn, *Uyūn al-akhbār*, vol. 4, pp. 186–187.

<sup>72</sup> Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, vol. 5, pp. 435–441; trans. *History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 19, pp. 137–143.

manifestation?).<sup>73</sup> Sayf al-Dīn composed a Lisān al-Da‘wa pastiche of his grandfather’s poem in the same form and melody.<sup>74</sup> He also composed several other stanzaic poems, two Lisān al-Da‘wa “counsel poems” (*naṣīhat*),<sup>75</sup> and a handful of Arabic panegyrics, including a five-line stanzaic poem beginning *Al-yawma ʿidu Ghadīri Khummī* (Today is the Eid of Ghadīr Khumm) which he himself characterized as being “cast in the mold of Indian melody” (*sabakahu fī l-laḥni l-hindī*);<sup>76</sup> and of course, the *Sayyid al-Shuhadā’* lament.

In terms of meter, the *Sayyid al-Shuhadā’* lament is based on the rare *mujtathth* meter of classical Arabic in its standard truncated form: *mustaf’ilun fā’ilātun*. The metrical feet may be expressed in the terminology of the Western Classical tradition in the following sequence of long (-) and short (~) syllables: <- - ~ - / - ~ - ->. The Arabic meter is mapped on to a stanzaic form of Persianate Urdu poetry, the seven-line *haft-band*, itself derived from the classical Arabic stanzaic *musammaʿ*.<sup>77</sup> In each stanza of the *Sayyid al-Shuhadā’* lament, the first five lines are new and the last two are a *tarjīʿ-band* refrain (lines 6–7).<sup>78</sup> In short, each stanza follows the pattern of 5 + 2 lines, five new and two repeated, each line in the meter *mustaf’ilun fā’ilātun*.

In terms of rhyme, the formula may be expressed as <Aaaaa-XA, bbbba-XA, cccca-XA>, explained thus: The *Sayyid al-Shuhadā’* lament’s main rhyme is the glottal stop *hamza* (ʾ) followed by the long vowel *ī* (denoted by the symbol “a” in the above formula). This rhyme is introduced in the opening stanza 1, in

<sup>73</sup> Najm al-Dīn, *Dīwān; Subḥat*, pp. 47–51.

<sup>74</sup> Sayf al-Dīn, *Mazhar chhē bhalā kawn Khudā nā anē hamnām – Maulānā ‘Alī chhē* (Who is the manifestation of God and His namesake? – It is Mawlānā ‘Alī), *Dhikrā shahādat al-Ḥusayn*, pp. 69–75.

<sup>75</sup> Sayf al-Dīn, *Allāh ta‘ālā nō ḥamd tū karjē* (Give praise to God Most High) and *Birādar tū naṣīhat sun* (Brother, listen to my counsel), in *Dhikrā shahādat al-Ḥusayn*, pp. 81–114.

<sup>76</sup> Sayf al-Dīn, *Anhāru riyāḍi l-janna*, pp. 13–16; the poem is also transcribed in his *Dīwān*, vol. 2, pp. 211–214.

<sup>77</sup> The classical Arabic *musammaʿ* is described as follows: “[Its] single stanzas, normally all of the same structure, consist of two elements: first a fixed number of lines that rhyme with each other, the rhyme, however, changing from one stanza to the next (separate rhymes), followed by a stanza-closing line that rhymes with the end lines in all other stanzas of the poem. ... One encounters the same meters (particularly *ṭawīl*, *basīṭ*, *wāfir*, *ramal*, etc.) and themes (*nasīb*, praise, wine description, etc.) in the *musammaʿ* that are also found in normal *shiʿr*” (Schoeler, “Musammaʿ”).

<sup>78</sup> See details of *tarjīʿ-band* and *haft-band* in Thiesen, “Tardjīʿ-Band and Tarkīb-Band”.

lines 1–5, whose rhyme words are *shuhadā’ī*, *kisā’ī*, *balā’ī*, *Karbalā’ī*, *bukā’ī*. The stanza’s penultimate line, 6, which is part of the refrain, ends in Ḥusayn’s name (*Ḥusaynā*, symbol “X”). In the first stanza, and in each stanza throughout the poem, the repeated line 6 breaks with the rhyme scheme and, by its difference, underscores the name “Ḥusayn” that sits in the highlighted slot of the rhyme word. The name, moreover, ends in a drawn-out *ā* sound, particularly suited for lament in Arabic grammar’s *nudba* (lament) form: *Ḥusaynā*. Closing the stanza, line 7 repeats the opening line (*maṭla’*) of the poem, *yā sayyida l-shuhadā’ī* (O king of martyrs) and thus the main rhyme, *’ī* (symbol “A”). As mentioned earlier, these two lines, 6–7, form a refrain which is repeated in each stanza of the lament: *wā-lahfatā yā Ḥusaynā / yā sayyida l-shuhadā’ī* (I grieve for you, Ḥusayn / O king of martyrs). In each of the stanzas after stanza 1, the first five lines are new. Of these, the non-chorus lines, 1–4, possess their own internal rhyme (symbols “b”, “c”, and so on), and line 5 conforms to the lament’s main rhyme *’ī* (symbol “a”). The chorus lines, 6–7, are repeated verbatim (symbol “XA”); the repeated line 7 of the chorus, as already noted, ends in the lament’s main rhyme, *’ī*. For example, in stanza 2, lines 1–4 possess the internal rhyme *-hī*, i.e. the consonant *h* followed by the long vowel *ī* in the rhyme words: *-Llāhī*, *shāhanshāhī*, *āhī*, *tanāhī*. Line 5 goes back to the lament’s main rhyme scheme, *’ī*, with the rhyme word *ḥamrā’ī*. Lines 6–7 repeat the refrain: *wā-lahfatā yā Ḥusaynā / yā sayyida l-shuhadā’ī*.

In terms of performance, the *Sayyid al-Shuhadā’* lament draws on Indian Urdu traditions combined with Arabic ones, as well as the Fāṭimid-Ṭayyibī, Egyptian-Yemeni heritage mentioned earlier. Arabic elegies for Ḥusayn in the present Indian Ṭayyibī setting – like the Urdu poems of *na’at*, *qawwālī*, and *marthiya*<sup>79</sup> – are always voiced in melody. These Ṭayyibī elegies, as well as other Ṭayyibī Arabic poems including panegyrics for the Prophet and his family and poems addressed in prayer to God, are liturgically performed in a *cappella* recitation, collectively or individually but without accompanying instruments. The practice probably goes back many centuries. An epistle composed by Sayf al-Dīn’s great-grandfather, the forty-fifth Dā’ī l-Muṭlaq Ṭayyib Zayn al-Dīn (d. 1252/1837), records an Arabic *qaṣīda* poem that “has

<sup>79</sup> On the melodic voicing of Urdu *marthiya*, see Trivedi, “Appropriating an Iranian Literary Tradition”, p. 160.

been cast in the mould of Indian melody, so that audiences of all assemblies can attain rapture from its loud and strong chant”.<sup>80</sup>

Ṭayyibī Karbala laments in Lisān al-Da‘wa and Urdu are frequently performed in sophisticated melodies. Like their South Asian Urdu counterparts, some are recited with *sōz* (lit., burning of the heart) in long, drawn-out syllables, others with a fast beat accompanied by breast-beating (*mātam*). In contrast, Ṭayyibī Arabic laments usually follow a simpler rhythmic pattern of chanting similar to the Persian melodic recitation called *khwānandagī* and are typically not accompanied by *mātam*. The recitation of the *Sayyid al-Shuhadā’* lament falls somewhere in between. Unlike most other Ṭayyibī elegies in Arabic, it is frequently accompanied by *mātam*. On the other hand, its recitation is simpler than those of its Lisān al-Da‘wa and Urdu counterparts, though more complex than those of its Arabic equivalents, and the relative complexity stems from its hybrid stanzaic form. Of the seven lines of each stanza in the *Sayyid al-Shuhadā’* lament, lines 1–4, which have the same internal rhyme, are chanted in low pitch. Line 5 moves to a higher pitch, which is continued in line 6, the first line of the refrain. The final line, 7, the next line of the refrain, descends, coming full circle to match line 1. The composer of the melody is not known – perhaps it was one of the Dā‘ī’s attendant clerics – but knowing what we know of Sayf al-Dīn’s hands-on direction in Da‘wa matters, he would likely have been the one to give final approval.

The swelling pitch reflects the build-up of the meaning. Let us take the first five lines of stanza 1. Following the same melody and low pitch, lines 1–4 gradually build up the meaning: address to Ḥusayn as the king of martyrs, description of his high station, and introduction of the tragedy and the place. Moving to a higher pitch, line 5 crescendos with a statement that completes the grammatical structure of the sentence and provides the lament’s framing theme of weeping discussed at length earlier: “I shall weep through the long age.” The phrase “my weeping” (*bukā’ī*) in this line comes in the emphatic final rhyme word position, and its two consecutive long vowels deepen its mournful notes. In terms of rhyme, meter, and melody, the phrase signals the main point of the poem: to weep for Ḥusayn.

---

<sup>80</sup> Zayn al-Dīn, *Risāla*, MS; excerpted in Sayf al-Dīn, *Baḥru faḍlin kabīr*, p. 125: *Wa-qaḍ ufrigha fī qālabi laḥnin hindī, li-yaṭriba ahlu kulli nadī, idhā unshida ‘alayhim bi-ṣawtin ‘alī, wa-ma‘a l-‘uluwwi jalī.*

Stanza 11 about Zaynab provides another illustration of the employment of rising pitch. The low-pitched lines 1–4 build up the meaning: the poet introduces Zaynab and grieves for her, then describes her as weeping for her brother and as soaking her hair in his blood, and depicts her tears pouring like rain. Moving to the higher-pitched line 5, the meaning crescendos in the shame of her unveiling: “She has no veil on her head”, with the key word “veil” (*ridāʿī*) differentiated from the first four with its echo of the main rhyme of the poem, *ī*, and positioned in a place of emphasis as the final rhyme word. The first four lines, especially the painful image of Zaynab dyeing her hair in her slain brother’s blood, are also starkly disturbing. But the mention of this physical object, the veil, evokes for the audience the ultimate heartrending scene of pillage that follows the killing and stems from it: the dishonouring of the Prophet’s granddaughter.

A final example is the penultimate stanza 50. Again, the low-pitched lines 1–4 build up the meaning. In a follow-up from the benediction stanzas on Ḥusayn and his family, the lines supplicate God, in their name, with three specific applications: to dispel hardships, multiply blessings, and transform flaws into virtues. The higher-pitched line 5, which also utilizes the lament’s main rhyme in the phrase “my prayer” (*duʿāʿī*), brings all those prayers together in a heartfelt plea: “O Lord, hear my prayer!”

Two recordings illustrate the performative aspects discussed above, and they highlight the continued importance of the *Sayyid al-Shuhadāʿ* lament in Ṭayyibī Muḥarrām ritual. The recordings also demonstrate the link the Ṭayyibīs continue to accentuate between Sayyidnā Ṭāhir Sayf al-Dīn’s and al-Muʿayyad al-Shirāzī’s laments. The first recording – from the era of the fifty-second Dāʿī – is by his second-in-command in the spiritual hierarchy, the “*Maʿdhūn*,” reciting stanza 13, *Wā-lahfatā yā Ḥusaynā* (Alas for my sorrow, Ḥusayn!), in a Muḥarrām sermon in the midst of a large Bohra congregation in the mosque in Indore, 1411/1993 ([LINK](#)); the video clip comes towards the end of the three-hour sermon and follows on from a recitation of al-Muʿayyad’s prose lament (not shown in the clip). It starts with the words in Lisān al-Daʿwa: “O mourners of Ḥusayn, we recite the *nawḥa* [lament] of Mawlānā l-Muʿayyad al-Shirāzī and perform *mātām*. His Dāʿī, Ṭāhir Sayf al-Dīn Mawlā, holds the same station, and we also recite his *nawḥa* and perform *mātām*. I, Sayyidnā [Burhanuddin]’s servant, will recite the lament. You, too, recite with me and perform *mātām*.” Then the Arabic stanza is recited in an impassioned voice with drawn-out syllables, after which the cleric seated in the audience (not shown in the clip) leads the

response recitation of the same stanza, which rings out from the congregation. The camera pans out to show the roused congregation reciting together and performing *mātam*, and this segues into their *mātam* with the collective, rhythmic cry *Yā Ḥusayn* (O Ḥusayn!). The second recording is an audio recitation of the complete *Sayyid al-Shuhadā'* lament by Bohra reciters from Mumbai, 2014 ([LINK](#)).

The performative aspect of the *Sayyid al-Shuhadā'* lament deserves detailed analysis by experts on anthropology and music. Nevertheless, the aspects discussed here suffice to demonstrate its skilled steering of pitch to emphasize emotive aspects of meaning.

### Concluding Remarks

As demonstrated in the preceding pages, Sayyidnā Ṭāhir Sayf al-Dīn's *Sayyid al-Shuhadā'* lament provides a noteworthy example of the mature Ṭayyibī poetic tradition that preserves its doctrinal individuality yet closely engages with sister traditions of Karbala lament in theme, form, and performance. Opening a window into a relatively unstudied denomination of Shī'ī Muslims, the lament's analysis showcases its presentation of some fundamental concepts of Fāṭimid-Ṭayyibī doctrine, its narration of the tragedy of Karbala in line with early historical sources, and its continuity with the writings of the Fāṭimid Dā'ī al-Mu'ayyad al-Shirāzī.

### Bibliography

Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *Maqātil al-Ṭālibiyyīn*, ed. Aḥmad Ṣāqr, Beirut: Mu'assasat al-'Alamī, 1998.

Abū Mikhnaf, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn* (reconstructed), Qum: Mu'assasat al-Wafā', 1409/1988.

Aḥmadābādī, Hibat Allāh, under direction of Dā'ī 'Abdē-'Alī Sayf al-Dīn, updated and augmented by Dā'ī Ṭāhir Sayf al-Dīn, *Agharr al-Majālis*, Surat: Jāmi'a Sayfiyya Publications, 1366/1947.

Amrohvī, Shākīr Ḥusayn, *Mujāhid-i a'zam*, Lahore: Dār al-Thaqāfa al-Islamiyya, 2001.

al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, ed. Maḥmūd al-Firdaws al-'Azīm, Damascus: Dār al-Yaqāza al-'Arabiyya, 1996.

*al-Barakāt wa-l-qurubāt*, Mumbai: Ṭayyibī Da‘wa Publications, 1420/1999.

Blank, Jonah, *Mullahs on the Mainframe: Islam and Modernity among the Daudi Bohras*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001.

Clarke, Lynda, “Elegy (*Marthiya*) on Husayn: Arabic and Persian”, *Al-Serat* 12 (1986), <http://alhassanain.org/english/?com=book&id=251>.

*Dhikrā shahādat al-Ḥusayn*, Surat: Ṭayyibī Da‘wa Publications, Jāmi‘a Sayfiyya, 1404/1984.

*A Golden Panorama: Life and Works of His Holiness Dr. Syedna Taher Saifuddin*, Mumbai: Ṭayyibī Da‘wa Publications, 1385/1965.

Hanaway, W. L., “*Marthiya*, 2. In Persian Literature”, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W. P. Heinrichs, Leiden: Brill, online edition.

Haywood, J. A., “*Marthiya*, 4. In Urdu Literature”, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W. P. Heinrichs, Leiden: Brill, online edition.

Hyder, Syed Akbar, *Reliving Karbala: Martyrdom in South Asian Memory*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Malhūf ‘alā qatlā l-ṭufūf*, ed. Fāris Tabrīziyān al-Ḥassūn, Qum: Dār al-Uswa, 1417/1996.

‘Imād al-Dīn, Idrīs, *Dīwān*, MS, Mumbai and Surat: Ṭayyibī Da‘wa libraries.

‘Imād al-Dīn, Idrīs, *Nuzhat al-afkār*, MS, Mumbai and Surat: Ṭayyibī Da‘wa libraries.

‘Imād al-Dīn, Idrīs, *‘Uyūn al-akhbār wa-funūn al-āthār fī dhikr al-nabī al-muṣṭafā l-mukhtār wa-waṣīyyihi ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib qātil al-kuffār wa-ālihimā l-a’imma al-aṭhār ‘alayhim ṣalawāt Allāh al-‘azīz al-ghaffār*, vol. 4, ed. Ma’mun Sagherji, London and Damascus: Institut français du Proche-Orient, 2007.

Kāshifī, Kamāl al-Dīn Ḥusayn Wā‘iz, *Rawḍat al-shuhadā*, ed. ‘Aqīqī Bakhshāyishī, Qum: Daftar-i Nashr-i Navīd-i Islām, 2000.

*Majmū‘at barakāt ‘Ashūrā*, Mumbai: Ṭayyibī Da‘wa Publications, 1969.

- al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ al-ma'rūf bi-l-Mawā'iz wa-l-i'tibār bi-dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa-l-āthār*, 5 vols, ed. Ayman Fu'ād Sayyid, London: Al-Furqān Islamic Heritage Foundation, 2002.
- al-Mu'ayyad al-Shirāzī, *Dīwān*, ed. Muḥammad Kāmil Ḥusayn, Cairo: Dār al-Kātib al-Miṣrī, 1949.
- al-Mu'ayyad al-Shirāzī, *al-Majālis al-Mu'ayyadiyya*, vols. 1–4, ed. Ḥātim Ḥamīd al-Dīn (sole critical edition), Bombay and Oxford: Oxford Printers, 1975–2011; vols. 1–8, ed. Ḥusām Khaddūr, Salamiyya and Damascus: Dār al-Ghadīr, 2008–2017; vols. 1–3, ed. Muṣṭafā Ghālib, Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1974–1984; vols. 1–8, MSS in Ṭayyibī Da'wa libraries, Mumbai and Surat.
- Muḥyī l-Dīn, 'Abdē-'Alī, *Dīwān*, MS, Mumbai and Surat: Ṭayyibī Da'wa libraries.
- al-Najafī, Muḥammad Ḥusayn, *Sa'ādat al-dārayn fī maqṭal al-Husayn*, Islamabad: Islamic Book Center, 1967, [LINK](#).
- Najm al-Dīn, 'Abd al-Qādir, *Hal mazharu dhī l-'arshi*, in *Dīwān Sayyidnā 'Abd al-Qādir Najm al-Dīn*, MS, Mumbai and Surat: Ṭayyibī Da'wa libraries.
- Naim, C. M., “The Art of the Urdu Marsiya”, *Islamic Society and Culture: Essays in Honour of Professor Aziz Ahmad*, ed. Milton Israel and N. K. Wagle, New Delhi: Manohar Books, 1983, pp. 101–116.
- al-Naqvī, 'Alī Naqī, *Shahīd-i insāniyyat*, Lucknow: Kitāb Nagar, [1962].
- al-Nu'mān, al-Qāḍī, *Da'ā'im al-Islām*, 2 vols, ed. Āṣif Fayḍī, repr. Beirut: Dār al-Aḍwā', 1991; trans. Asaf Fyzee and Ismail Poonawala, *The Pillars of Islam*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- al-Nu'mān, al-Qāḍī, *Kitāb al-Majālis wa-l-musāyarāt*, ed. Ḥabīb al-Faqqī, Ibrāhīm Shabbūh, and Muḥammad Ya'lāwī, repr. Beirut: Dār al-Muntaẓar, 1996.
- al-Nu'mān, al-Qāḍī, *Sharḥ al-akhbār fī faḍā'il al-a'imma al-aṭḥār*, 3 vols, ed. Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī al-Jalālī, Qum: Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī, 1414/1993.
- al-Nu'mān, al-Qāḍī, *Ta'wīl al-da'ā'im*, 2 vols, ed. Muḥammad Ḥasan al-A'zamī, Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1967–1972.
- Pellat, Charles, “*Marthiya*, 1. In Arabic Literature”, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W. P. Heinrichs, Leiden: Brill,<sup>2</sup> online edition.

- Qutbuddin, Abde-Ali, "The Vision of the Dawoodi Bohra Muslim Leader Syedna Taher Saifuddin and His Relations with Prime Minister Nehru and Education Minister Azad", *Taqreeb: Propagation of Harmonious Relations in Mughal, British and Independent India*, ed. M. Isharat Ali Molla, Kolkata, India: University of Calcutta Press, 2020, pp. 19–28.
- Qutbuddin, Aziz, "The Qaṣīdah-Autobiography of Syedna Taher Saifuddin", MA dissertation, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 2005.
- Qutbuddin, Aziz, "Taḥmīd: A Literary Genre? A Study of the Arabic Laudatory Preamble with a Focus on the Fāṭimid-Ṭayyibī Tradition", PhD thesis, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 2009.
- Qutbuddin, [Bazat-]Saifiyah, "History of the Da'udi Bohra Tayyibis in Modern Times: The *Da'is*, the *Da'wat* and the Community", *A Modern History of the Ismailis: Continuity and Change in a Muslim Community*, ed. Farhad Daftary, London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2011, pp. 297–330.
- Qutbuddin, Tahera, *Arabic Oration: Art and Function*, Leiden: Brill, 2019.
- Qutbuddin, Tahera, "Bohras", *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd ed., ed. K. Fleet, G. Kramer, D. Matringe, J. Nawas, and E. Rowson, Leiden: Brill, 2013, no. 2, pp. 45–66.
- Qutbuddin, Tahera, "The Da'udi Bohra Tayyibis: Ideology, Literature, Learning, and Social Practice", *A Modern History of the Ismailis: Continuity and Change in a Muslim Community*, ed. Farhad Daftary, London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2011, pp. 331–354.
- Qutbuddin, Tahera, "Al-Mu'ayyad al-Shīrāzī", *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd ed., ed. K. Fleet, G. Kramer, D. Matringe, J. Nawas, and E. Rowson, Leiden: Brill, 2020, no. 2, pp. 121–127.
- Qutbuddin, Tahera, *Al-Mu'ayyad al-Shīrāzī and Fāṭimid Da'wa Poetry: A Case of Commitment in Classical Arabic Literature*, Leiden: Brill, 2005.
- Qutbuddin, Tahera, "Principles of Fatimid Symbolic Interpretation (*Ta'wīl*): An Analysis Based on the *Majālis Mu'ayyadīya* of al-Mu'ayyad al-Shīrāzī (d. 470/1078)", *Reason, Esotericism, and the Construction of Authority in Shii Islam*, ed. Edmund Hayes and Rodrigo Adem, Leiden: Brill, forthcoming 2021.

Qutbuddin, Tahera, “The Teachings and Practice of Sayyidna Taher Saifuddin: Pluralist Communal Harmony with Committed Individual Faith”, *Taqreeb: Propagation of Harmonious Relations in Mughal, British and Independent India*, ed. M. Isharat Ali Molla, Kolkata, India: University of Calcutta Press, 2020, pp. 10–18.

al-Raḍī, al-Sharīf, *Karbala lā zilti karban wa-balā*, in *Dīwān*, 2 vols, Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1961, vol. 1, pp. 44–47; recitation by anonymous, 14 September 2018,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zTyrp8WQBQw>.

al-Raḍī, al-Sharīf, comp., *Nahj al-balāgha*, ed. and trans. Tahera Qutbuddin, *The Measure of Eloquence: The Words and Wisdom of ‘Alī*, New York: New York University Press, forthcoming 2022.

Sayf al-Dīn, Ṭāhir, *Jawāhir al-balāgha al-ladunniyya (Dīwān)*, 2 vols, Dubai: Ṭayyibī Da‘wa Publications, 1414/1993.

Sayf al-Dīn, Ṭāhir, *Rasā’il Ramaḍāniyya* (Ramaḍān treatises), 44 vols, Surat and Mumbai: Leaders Press and Ṭayyibī Da‘wa Publications, 1335–1384/1919–1964: *Anhāru riyāḍi l-janna* (1357/1938); *Baḥru faḍlin kabīr* (1352/1934); *Nahr al-nūr al-sha’sha’ānī* (1374/1955). *Ṣibghu nūr* (1348/1929), *Silsilatu ni‘matin ‘uzmā* (1370/1951); *Tadhkiratu labīb* (1369/1950).

Sayf al-Dīn, Ṭāhir, *Yā sayyida l-shuhadā’i*, in *Ṣibghu nūr*, Mumbai: Ṭayyibī Da‘wa Publications, 1348/1929, pp. 144–157; in *Jawāhir al-balāgha al-ladunniyya (Dīwān)*, Dubai: Ṭayyibī Da‘wa Publications, 1414/1993), vol. 1, pp. 4–16; in *Majmū‘at barakāt ‘Āshūrā’*, Mumbai: Ṭayyibī Da‘wa Publications, 1969, pp. 39–51; in *Subḥat farā’id al-balāgha*, Surat: Ṭayyibī Da‘wa Publications, 1430/2009, pp. 152–169; and in numerous Bohra chapbooks; recitation by Fatemi Marsiya Party, Mumbai, 2014, <https://www.fatemidawat.com/prayers/qasidas-marsiyas-and-salaams/ya-sayyida-ash-shuhadaai-composed-by-syedna-taher-saifuddin>; recitation by Khuzaima Qutbuddin in Muḥarram sermon, Indore, 1411/1993, <https://youtu.be/Hv6iOS9QDDs>.

Schoeler, Gregor, “Musammaṭ”, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W. P. Heinrichs, Leiden: Brill, online edition 2012.

Sezgin, Ursula, *Abū Miḥnaf: Ein Beitrag zur Historiographie der umayyadischen Zeit*, Leiden: Brill, 1971.

Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Tadhkirat al-khawwāṣṣ*, Najaf: al-Maṭba‘a al-Ḥaydariyya, 1964.

*Subḥat farā'id al-balāgha*, Surat: Ṭayyibī Da'wa Publications, Jāmi'a Sayfiyya, 1430/2009.

al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḫ al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, ed. Muḥammad Abū l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, 5th ed., Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1979; trans. *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 19: *The Caliphate of Yazīd b. Mu'āwiyah*, trans. I. K. A. Howard, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990.

Ṭayfūr, Ibn Abī Ṭāhir, *Balāghāt al-nisā'*, ed. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Hindāwī, Cairo: Dār al-Faḍīla, 1998.

Thiesen, F., "Tardjī-Band and Tarkīb-Band", *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W. P. Heinrichs, Leiden: Brill, online edition 2012.

Toorawa, Shawkat, "Ṭāhir Sayf al-Dīn", *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W. P. Heinrichs, Leiden: Brill, online edition 2012.

Trivedi, Madhu, "Appropriating an Iranian Literary Tradition: Marsiya in the Indian Context", *Journal of the Indian Musicological Society* 36–37 (2006), pp. 149–172.

Walker, Paul, "Egyptian Popular Festivals in the Fāṭimid Period", *History and Islamic Civilization: Essays in Honour of Ayman Fu'ād Sayyid*, ed. Obada Kohela, Cairo: al-Dār al Miṣriyya al-Lubnāniyya, 2014, pp. 69–91.