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Ziyāra Ritual to Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī as
a Metapragmatic Icon of Wilāya

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The Poetic Performativity of a *Ziyāra* Text in Fashioning the *Ziyāra* Ritual to Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī as a Metapragmatic Icon of *Wilāya*

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Abstract

This article examines a *ziyāra* text from Ibn Qūlawayh’s (d.978/9) *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt* (The Perfection of the Visitations) by engaging with the poetic performativity of the ritual discourse. The study demonstrates how the text’s ‘form’ and poetic density fashion the *ziyāra* ritual as a metapragmatic icon of *wilāya* for the early Shī‘i community. This may serve as a case-study for the methodological potential of linguistic anthropology to analyze sectarian difference during Imāmi Shī‘ism’s formative period.

Keywords

Kāmil al-Ziyārāt, Shī‘a, *ziyāra*, Ḥusayn, Imām, *wilāya*, ritual, performativity, *salām*, *shahada*, ‘Alī b. Bābawayh

Both Andrew Newman and Najam Haider consider the *ziyāra* ritual to the graves of the Shī‘i Imāms as a clear embodiment of the early Imāmi Shī‘i sectarian identity from as early as the 8th century CE. They suggest that the pilgrimage manuals produced in this period directly impacted Shī‘i practice whilst also shedding light on the way the medieval Shī‘a performed the *ziyāra* ritual.¹ Many of these texts were composed at a sensitive time for the Shī‘a. Newman characterizes this period as *al-Ḥayrā*² (The Uncertainty) to express the challenges the community faced in light of the believed occultation of the twelfth and final Imām. The development of Shī‘i pilgrimage literature at this time might thus be understood as a response to the challenge of how to articulate an Imāmi identity in this period of uncertainty.³

Despite the recognition of these texts’ importance, we have yet to see a detailed examination of their contents. Engaging with such manuals using approaches in linguistic anthropology can, as I seek to

¹Najam Haider, “Prayer, Mosque, and Pilgrimage: Mapping Shī‘i Sectarian Identity in 2nd/8th Century Kūfa,” *Islamic Law and Society* 16, no. 2 (2009): 172.

Andrew Newman, *Twelver Shī‘ism: Unity and Diversity in the Life of Islam, 632-1722* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 38.

² Newman draws on a key theological work compiled at this time (937 CE), *Kitāb al-Imāma wa-l Tabṣīra min al-Ḥayra: The Book of Imamate the Enlightenment from the Uncertainty* by ‘Alī b. Bābawayh. *Ibid.*, 57.

demonstrate in this paper, shed light on their rhetorical work in articulating sectarian difference in this formative period.

As a distinct genre of religious literature, *ziyāra* manuals reflect an authoritative textual tradition, which compiled *aḥādīth* of the Imāms’ supplications and ritual activities at the graves of their forefathers. These traditions mirrored the formulation of Muḥammad’s prophetic *sunna* that directed the embodied practice of rituals within both Shī‘ī and Sunni traditions. With an enduring memory of centuries of persecution of Shī‘ī devotees, the *ziyāra* ritual codified in these manuals may reflect a larger attempt to harness a distinct communal identity and sense of self-assurance at such a tumultuous time.

The text under study is a *ḥadīth* from Ibn Qūlawayh’s (d. 979/80 CE) manual, which is titled *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt* (The Perfection of the Visitations). This is the earliest extant Shī‘ī pilgrimage manual, dating from the late tenth century, and thus served as the prototype for all subsequent pilgrimage manuals in both its tone and stylistic structure.

The *ḥadīth* is attributed to the sixth Shī‘ī Imām, Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq (d. 765 CE) who instructs his companions on how to perform the *ziyāra* to third Shī‘ī Imām, Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī in Karbalā’, Iraq, the site of Ḥusayn’s martyrdom and burial. The memory of Ḥusayn and his martyrdom was (and continues to be) extremely significant for the Shi‘a as a center point for the community’s collective memory.

I posit that the *ḥadīth*, in its ritual context, enacts the Imāmi trope of *wilāya*⁴ (loosely defined here as the divine authority of the Imāms) both for the ritual subject and the Other. This argument anchors itself in a critique of speech-act theory by engaging with the poetic performativity of the text rather than focusing on isolated lexical content. My analysis draws on Stasch’s work on ritual as poetically dense figuration of macrocosmic order in the microcosmic action of the ‘here-and-now’.⁵ I thus seek to demonstrate how the poetics of the text fashion the *ziyāra* ritual as a metapragmatic icon of *wilāya*, which appears to have been a distinctive theological characteristic of the early Shī‘ī community.

As the purpose of the current study is not an exposition of the concept of *wilāya*, but rather its enactment in the *ziyāra* ritual, I rely on Amir-Moezzi’s definition, which for all intents and purposes, serves as a summary of various theological works from this period. Noting the semantic complexity of *wilāya*, Amir-Moezzi divides the term into two semantic layers: (1) *wilāya* applied to the imāms of the prophet refers to their ontological status or their sacred initiatory mission. (2) Applied to the Imāms’ faithful, *wilāya* refers to the love, faith and submission that the initiated owe to their initiatory guide (the imām or prophet).⁶

In what follows, I specifically look at the form of the discourse as well as the (assumed) bodily orientations expressed in the text as semiotic resources that contribute to the *ziyāra*’s poetic density. I employ ‘poetic’ here as the ‘form’ of the discourse. More specifically, I refer to the stylistic elements of the discourse such as repetition, alliteration, parallelism, etc., that following Herzfeld, should not be

⁵ Rupert Stasch, “Ritual and Oratory Revisited: The Semiotics of Effective Action,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 40 (2011): 160.

⁶ Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, *The Spirituality of Shi‘i Islam* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 246-7.

separated out and treated as mere ‘aesthetics’, but are integral to our understanding of how “...rhetoric shapes and even creates social relations.”⁷ Within this paradigm, I suggest that the frame of the ritual’s discourse is a central locus of its performative ‘force’. I focus on two linguistic elements of the text’s frame: (1) the reflexive and reportive calibrations of the descriptors in the text (such as bearing witness and the *salām*), and (2) how the participant roles of speakers and addressees are filled and related.⁸

This analysis is limited to the section of the *ḥadīth* that details the *ziyāra* ritual performance. When compared to the narrative dialogue at the beginning of text, it is clear that the elaborate poetic density of the *ziyāra* section sets it apart from other actions (i.e. the narrative dialogue).

1) THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN REFLEXIVE AND REPORTIVE CALIBRATIONS:

i) The Performativity of the *Salām*

Upon entering the *Ḥā’ ir*, or the immediate vicinity of Ḥusayn’s grave, the devotee is instructed to utter a series of sentences that begin with saying, “Peace be upon you O Allāh’s Decisive Proof and son of his Decisive Proof.” The placement of this Islamic greeting at the beginning of the text contextualizes the entire *ziyāra* ritual as a formal address or greeting to Ḥusayn and marks the liminal moment of entry into the space. As the first words exchanged between actors in a dialogue, the dyadic quality of the ‘*salām*’ statements bring the devotee, Ḥusayn, his forefathers, and Allāh into a dialogic space and thereby frames this ritual encounter as a formal address. Thus, embedded in the very process of addressing Ḥusayn, is the creation of his active presence at his shrine and the devotee’s acknowledgement of Ḥusayn’s divine authority.

The ‘*salām*’ as a greeting, might further be understood as an offer of security such that the recipient or addressee of the *salām* is safe from the speaker’s harm. Responding to the *salām* is considered a social obligation as this ‘exchange’ creates the setting for further conversation. In the context of the *ziyāra*, the *salām*, might be understood along similar lines. Uttering the *salām* to initiate the *ziyāra* as a dialogic ritual asserts a certain association with or loyalty to the addressee. The *salām* therefore, by addressing Ḥusayn, not only creates his presence as a living entity capable of affecting the world, but more broadly, it produces a dialogue mode of negotiating with another (in this case Ḥusayn) by modeling the ways in which the devotee’s actions are contingent on his response.⁹ If prayer, as Goody states, “...[is] an attempt to negotiate goals with powerful beings placed in the Other slot,”¹⁰ then the devotee’s uttering of the *salām* seeks to negotiate Ḥusayn’s affirmation or acceptance of his/her loyalty and offer of ‘peace’ which warrants receiving Ḥusayn’s ‘security’ in the form of intercession in front of Allāh.¹¹

⁷ Michael Herzfeld, *Cultural Intimacy: Social Poetics in the Nation-State* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 145.

⁸ I draw on Luke Fleming and Michael Lempert’s survey chapter in Luke Fleming and Michael Lempert, “Poetics and Performativity” in *The Cambridge Handbook of Linguistic Anthropology*, eds. N.N. Enfield, Paul Kockelman, and Jack Sidnell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 496.

⁹ Esther N. Goody, “Social Intelligence and Prayer as Dialogue,” in *Social Intelligence and Interaction*, ed. Esther N. Goody (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 207.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 219.

¹¹ See the lines that begin with “...I have come to you as a guest to beg for the perfection of my position with Allāh and to keep my foot steady in following your path. And to beg for the path that does not prevent its followers from receiving a guarantee from you...”

The same ‘*salām*’ statements later appear in the same order, but are instead prefixed with the verb ‘*Ash-hadu* or I bear witness’. I suggest that the paradigmatic relationship between these two sections in their parallel structure and repetition establishes the discourse as a metapragmatic icon of *wilāya*. However, before developing this point further, a closer analysis of the *shahāda* statements is required.

ii) The Performativity of the *Shahāda*:

Shahāda or bearing witness comes from the verbal noun *shahida* which means to be present (as opposed to absent), and consequently denotes seeing with one’s own eyes, or witnessing an event. The trope of bearing witness to one’s belief holds a ubiquitous position in both Shī‘i and Sunni ritual life- with its applications ranging from liturgical to juridical contexts. According to Bennacer, the *shahāda* in its various contexts, “...not only testifies to a belief one might hold; it is the attestation of a reality that one has seen and recognized as true.”¹² This ‘seeing’ can be interpreted as an act of perception of a reality that, when “articulated through the recitation of the *shahāda*...comes to constitute evidence of that reality.”¹³ The explicit performativity of the *ziyāra* text’s *shahāda* in its poetic structure, I posit, creates similarities within and across these religious discourses (such as the standard *shahāda*) that function metapragmatically and thus provide an interpretation of what is being done in the text and its ritual context more broadly.¹⁴

In an Islamic context, the *shahāda* is a declaration of the belief and awareness of the oneness of God and Muḥammad’s prophethood. In a specifically Shī‘i context, it also includes declaring the *wilāya* (divine authority) of ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, Muḥammad’s successor. As such, the *shahāda* is the public speech-act that confirms an individual’s inclusion in the Muslim community. In the *ziyāra* text, the *shahāda* trope is extended to frame very specific positions of Ḥusayn and his martyrdom; thereby imbuing him and belief in his positions with the same authority as the central articles of faith that effectively deem an individual ‘Muslim’.

The *shahāda* prefix, in producing first-person-indicative active sentences, transforms the reportive calibration of these statements into reflexive ones and thus gives them their performative force. However, this reflexivity is not wholly accounted for by the lexical content (i.e. the explicit performative verb of bearing witness), but also by its active present tense. The act of bearing witness implicates temporality in a way that events of a mythical or historical past (Ḥusayn’s martyrdom) and future (Ḥusayn being avenged) are made relevant in the context of the *ziyāra* ritual ‘here and now.’ As such, the *shahāda*’s poetics in this text, both in paralleling the prototypical *shahāda* and its reflexivity, are simultaneously indicating and substantiating the devotee’s undoubted belief in Ḥusayn’s *wilāya*. The devotee’s presence in the ritual space is thus itself a testimony to his/her faith and submission to Ḥusayn, the martyr and is consequently an embodiment of both semantic layers of *wilāya* that Amir-Moezzi outlines.¹⁵

¹² Dominika Bennacer, “Bearing Witness to the (In)visible Activism and the performance of witness in Islamic orthopraxy,” *Performance Research* 13, no.13 (2008), 66.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹⁴ Fleming and Lempert, “Poetics and Performativity,” 490.

¹⁵ See footnote 5.

Furthermore, in order for the act of bearing witness to be felicitous, the existence of an audience to essentially acknowledge the testimony is required. The declarations or testimonies in this text thus not only affirm one’s commitment to the *wilāya* of Ḥusayn, but also communicate inclusion into the Shī‘i community vis-à-vis the Sunni majority. Just like the initiatory uttering of the standard *shahāda* of Allāh’s oneness and Muḥammad’s prophethood, these statements, in their ritual context, effectively produce the very group identity they seek to describe. The *shāhada* thus works performatively to express communal boundaries by indexing the *ziyāra* as a proclamation of Shī‘i sectarian identity.

Another use of the term *shahāda* is tied to its signification of martyrdom (where a *shahīd* is a martyr). While this essay does not allow for a thorough discussion of this term, the connection between witnessing and martyrdom was firmly established quite early in the Islamic tradition. Martyrdom in the cause of Allāh was (and perhaps still is) understood as the supreme testament to one’s faith. Ḥusayn’s particularly tragic martyrdom, which is central to Shī‘i collective memory, is thus the ultimate witnessing of Allāh’s truth and the truth of his prophet. If the *shahāda* in speech effectively makes an individual a ‘Muslim’, then Ḥusayn is understood in the tradition to effectively be the ‘ultimate Muslim’ in the act of martyrdom.

In the text, however, Ḥusayn and his martyrdom also constitute the *shahāda* for the devotee and are thus also things ‘to be witnessed’. In uttering these *shahāda* statements, the ritual subject renders Ḥusayn not just the ultimate witness (*shahīd*; martyr), but also the supreme object of witnessing (also *shahīd*: witnessed) for his devotees. In Arabic, *shahīd* denotes both the agent and recipient of the verb ‘to witness’. This duality expressed in the *ziyāra* text, mirrors the tradition’s concept of *wilāya* as the Imām is both Allāh’s exemplary devotee (in being his slave) and is himself an object of devotion (as Allāh’s representative, and his witness over the creation). While we do not have a developed understanding of its performative functions; I suggest (although preliminarily at this stage) that the *jinās* (or alliteration based on derivatives of the same root) in paragraph 9, works to communicate these multiple layers of witnessing. We might also ask more explicitly, what is at stake in enunciating words in this language ideology? How are spoken words viewed, as opposed to those that are read or listened to?¹⁶

iv) Parallelisms between the Salām and Shahāda:

The repetition of the initial *salām* statements with the *shahāda* prefix produces a certain type of formality that frames the entire ritual text by restricting the units of articulation¹⁷ and thus its semantic field. Niloofar Haeri suggests that repetition as *practice* in fact offers the possibility for creativity and the opportunity to undermine a ritual’s rigidity.¹⁸ However, her analysis of the ritual daily prayers cannot be extended to pilgrimage rituals. Thus as Bloch argues, the repetition embedded in these highly bounded parallel statements enacts the authority of the text and reproduces a communal Shī‘i identity based in very restricted understanding of *wilāya*. These repeated statements reinforce the same concepts outlined in the previous section, but produce them in the ‘here and now’ context of the *ziyāra*

¹⁶ I thank Simon Coleman for raising this question in his generous comments in reviewing this work.

¹⁷ Maurice Bloch, ‘Symbols, Song, Dance and Features of Articulation: Is Religion an Extreme Form of Traditional Authority?’ *European Journal of Sociology* 15 (1974).

¹⁸ Niloofar Haeri, “The Private Performance of *Salat* Prayers: Repetition, Time, and Meaning” *Anthropological Quarterly* 86, no.1 (2013): 26.

ritual that presumably has ‘real’ spiritual and communal consequences- the formation and declaration of the Shī‘i subject.

II: PARTICIPATORY ROLES:

i) Speakers: Imperative and Declarative Language:

An analysis of the robust frame of the text’s performative language must also consider how the participant roles of the speaker and addressees are filled and related. While the brevity of this paper does not afford a detailed discussion of the ambiguity of voice throughout the text, the chain of narrators links the Imām to the ritual subject such that it further reinforces the Imām’s authorship of the text.

The section of the text to be recited during the *ziyāra* is nested within a canopy of personal authorities in which the speaker includes al-Ṣādiq as the originator and animator of the speech and the chain of narrators as simply animators. The ritual subject’s utterance of the text is thus a highly mimetic activity in which he/she reads and subsequently recites the Imām’s words rather than his/her own. The chain of narration and the narrative dialogue that precedes the ritual text clearly frames its performance as mimetic. However, as highly entextualizable speech, the poetics of the section of the *ḥadīth* to be recited during the *ziyāra* as an isolated body of text has a similar framing function. The imperative sentences throughout the text (i.e. send blessings, recite, repeat, take ten steps, walk, move, stand, point, etc.) work metacommunicatively to indicate the authoritative origin of the text through the language of instruction.

As such, the ritual subject in uttering the text is constantly aware of its divine, or *Imāmī* origins. Presumably, the instructional phrases would not be recited aloud, and thus the poetics of the text’s orality, specifically the patterning of spoken and unspoken text during the *ziyāra*, enact its authoritative origins. In doing so, it constructs a certain reflexivity in the *ziyāra* ritual, being a re-presentation rather than copying of the Imām’s words. Perhaps it is in this ‘re-presentation’ that the formation of the ritual subject can be understood since he/she is effectively not fashioning him/herself as the imām, but as his follower who is subject to his instruction. The ontological distinction between following and embodying the Imām might thus be indexed through the poetics of imperative (read silently) and declarative (read aloud) language throughout the text.

In addition to framing the poetics of the textual discourse, the imperative phrases also guide kinesic movement and bodily orientation in the ritual space. For example, throughout the ritual, the subject is instructed to, “stand with your face towards his (Ḥusayn’s) face and recite...” The poetic performativity of the combination of these semiotic resources can perhaps best be illustrated in light of Urban’s work on native South American origin myth telling. Urban identifies the poetic patterns of role alternation in the ceremonial uttering of the origin-myth’s syllables (*wāñeklèn*) to enact a model for and model of coordination. This coordination in turn represents the Shokleng cultural ideology of social solidarity.¹⁹ In the case of the *ziyāra* text, the imperative language extends beyond exemplifying the instructive role of the Imām as a result of his *wilāya*. The continuous reinforcement of the Imām’s

¹⁹ Greg Urban, “Ceremonial Dialogues in South America,” in *The Interpretation of Dialogue*, ed. T. Maranhão (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), 101-2, 106.

authorship exhibits the wider role of his words in mediating the devotee’s ritual encounter with Ḥusayn. More specifically, the imperative language mediates one’s physical contact with Ḥusayn’s grave as it guides his/her bodily orientation in the space. The declarative language however, mediates one’s contact with ‘the living martyr Ḥusayn’ beyond his body. I suggest that these poetics are thus models for and models of mediated contact with the divine wherein contact with the Imāms is mediated by their effects- their words. This mediation in turn represents the wider cultural ideology of *wilāya* whereby contact with Allāh is mediated through contact with his direct effect- the *Ahl al-Bayt*²⁰ (including the Imāms) themselves. The poetics of the text specifically in the alternation of imperative and declarative language, transfigures the entire *ziyāra* performance into a ‘culturally inflected metapragmatic icon’²¹ of *wilāya* both in terms of the Imāms’ divine authority and thus mediatory ontology as well as the Shī‘i subject’s obedience and submission to their instructions.

ii) Addressees: Repetition

Mid-way through the recited section of the text, the object of address shifts from Ḥusayn to all of the Shī‘i Imāms (or the *Ahl al-Bayt* more generally) who are not buried at this site. This is marked by the shift from second person singular suffix ‘*ka*’ to the plural ‘*kum*’ in the repeated sentence: “Those who seek Allāh start with you (pl.)” The text that follows this continues to use this plural suffix. This seamless yet sudden shift repeated in each line paired with the repeated preposition ‘*bi*’ or with/through are indexical and iconic of messages of the same mediating position outlined above as Allāh is also made the explicit agent of the verbs in each sentence. At the same time, it communicates the treatment of the ‘Imām’ as a type or category in addressing all of the Imāms at the grave of only one.

Matthew Pierce’s analysis of the collective biographies of these Imāms produced in the same period of this *ziyāra* text highlights the blurring of the lines between the imām’s historical lives and the emergence of the ‘Imām’ as a typology of its own. Pierce identifies the theme of martyrdom and the cosmological narratives of the primordial existence of the Imāms as an emanation of divine light in order to illustrate this category. The sources in this period, he argues suggest an established understanding that whatever was said about one imām, could in many ways be said of all twelve.²² The term *wilāya*, was similarly used in these terms where the *wilāya* of one Imām (ie; ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, the first Shī‘i Imām) indexed the *wilāya* of the Imāms more broadly.

Here, I look to engagements with Jakobson’s theory (1960) that the juxtaposition of elements standing in relations of likeness- and- difference within a text produces its poetic effects. The tension between the addresses to Ḥusayn marked by the ‘*ka*’ as well as the ‘*bi-kum*’ phrases presumably addressing all Imāms, reflects the indexical and iconic relations between the ritual spacetime of the *ziyāra* and the larger macrocosmic orders (i.e. the ‘Imām’ as a type and his mediatory function) it signifies. Furthermore, the devotee is still facing the face of Ḥusayn, whilst he/she is addressing all of the Imāms in this section of the text. The indexical and iconic coordination between the devotee’s bodily

²⁰ *Ahl al-Bayt* refers to the Prophet Muḥammad and selected individuals from his household- namely, Fāṭima his daughter, ‘Alī his son-in-law and cousin, and the Imams from the sons of ‘Alī .

²¹ See Michael Silverstein, “‘Cultural’ Concepts and the Language-Culture Nexus,” *Current Anthropology* 45, no. 5 (2004): 621-52.

²² Matthew Pierce, *Twelve Infallible Men: The Imams and the Making of Shi‘ism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).

orientation and the text produce an additional metapragmatic icon of the Imāms’ intermediary position being understood through the metaphor of being ‘*Wajh* Allah’ or the face of Allāh that is central to their *wilāya*.

Amir-Moezzi notes that *wilāya* also signifies the ontological status of the Imām as being the “locus for the manifestation of God...”²³ on earth. The Imām “reveals God, he provides access to what may be known of him, he is the *deus revelatus*- a matter of early doctrine since the time of...al-Ṣādiq.”²⁴ The trope of organ metaphors (in this case, specifically the ‘face’) communicates this ontological status. The face of Allāh is thus the first thing that is apparent from him and thus the devotee’s first point of contact. While these terms are not used in the text, the devotee bodily orientation in this space embodies this metaphor. By physically facing Ḥusayn’s face, the ritual subject, is making contact with the face of Allāh, in this metaphorical yet very literal sense. Once again, the physical proximity to Ḥusayn combined with the verbal address in second-person plural, metapragmatically produces the ‘Imām as type’ trope.

Other sections of include *aḥādīth* that describe those who have visited the graves of Ḥusayn or ‘Alī as having visited all of the Imāms. Amir-Moezzi explains, “While it is true that each imām possess his own saintliness, his...representation in the devotions of the believers, at the same time...the entire group [of the twelve imāms]...forms a unique and sacred entity and are considered identical as the acting ‘organ’ of God.”²⁵ At the end of the ritual speech, the devotee is instructed to, “...stand behind the grave of Abī ‘Abdillāh (Ḥusayn) and establish a six unit prayer while facing the grave.” Mapping out the ritual subject’s movement controlled by the text, Ḥusayn’s grave would stand between the devotee’s face and the *Qibla* (the direction of the Ka‘ba in Mecca towards which the unit prayers addressed to Allāh must be performed). One might read this as a direct enactment of making contact with Allāh by turning towards his first point of contact; his face. Thus the poetics of the ‘*bi-kum*’ statements and the devotee’s bodily orientation frame the *ziyāra* to Ḥusayn in Karbala as a *ziyāra* to all of the Imāms through the dense indexical iconicities between the performance of the speech itself and the devotee’s broader understanding of the Imām’s ontological position.

Conclusion

The conclusions drawn in this paper highlight how the text’s poetic density works to fashion the *ziyāra* ritual to Ḥusayn’s grave as a metapragmatic icon of both semantic layers of *wilāya*; enacting both the Imāms’ ontological difference from humanity and their devotee’s love and loyalty for them. This is perhaps most succinctly illustrated by the fact that these written and recited texts as a genre are also called *ziyārāt*, sharing the name of the ritual pilgrimage itself. While this essay provides a number of ways to engage with the poetic performativity of the *ziyāra*, a number of lacunas still remain. As this is a tenth-century text, we cannot determine the extent to which they reflect the ritual activities of the tenth-century Shi‘a. We also do not know if such a text was memorized or if sections were recorded and read by pilgrims. We can however, infer that these texts within the manual were indeed used by pilgrims due to their ubiquitous presence in subsequent manuals and larger devotional corpuses.

²³ Amir-Moezzi, *The Spirituality of Shi‘i Islam*, 249.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 250.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 391.

TEXT

Ḥadīth Number 2:²⁶

My father, ‘Alī ibn Ḥusayn, and Muḥammad ibn ḥasan all narrated to me from Sa‘d b. ‘Abdillāh, from Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. ‘Īsā, from Qāsim ibn Yaḥyā, from Ḥasan ibn Rāshid, from Ḥusayn ibn Thuwayr ibn Abi Fākhītah, who said:

Yūnus ibn Zabyān, Mufaḍḍal ibn ‘Umar, Abū Salamah al-Sarrāj, and I were sitting with Abī ‘Abdillāh²⁷.

Yūnus was the eldest among us and he spoke (to the Imām) on our behalf.

Yūnus asked, “May I sacrifice myself for you! What should I say when I attend the gathering of these people? – Referring to Banī Abbās.²⁸”

The Imām replied, “When you attend their gatherings, extol us and then say, ‘O Allāh! Grant us ease and pleasure.’ Verily if you do this, you will see that which you want.”

I (Ḥusayn ibn Thuwayr) asked, “May I sacrifice myself for you! I remember Ḥusayn increasingly. What should I say (when I remember him)?”

The Imām replied, “You should repeat three times, “Peace be upon you O Abā Abdillāh.” Verily the salām (sending of peace) reaches Ḥusayn from near and far.

Indeed, when Abū ‘Abdillāh (Ḥusayn) died, the seven heavens, the seven earths, everything within them, everything between them, everyone who moves in Paradise and in Hell from among the creation of our Lord and everything which can and cannot be seen, cried over Abī ‘Abdillāh (Ḥusayn) except for three things.

I asked, “May I sacrifice myself for you! What are those three things?”

The Imām replied, “Basra, Damascus, and the family of ‘Uthmān.²⁹”

²⁶ Ibn Qulawayh al-Qummi, *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt*, transl. Sayyid Mohsen al Husaini al-Milani (Miami: Shiabooks.ca, 2008), 410-15.

²⁷ Agnomen of the sixth Shī‘ī Imām, Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq (d. 765)

²⁸ This refers to the Abbasid dynasty that ruled from 750 to 1258 remembered in the Shī‘ī tradition for their animosity towards the Shī‘ī Imāms and their followers. The Shi‘a consider various Abbasid caliphs responsible for killing the 6th to 11th Imāms.

²⁹ Uthman b. Affān (d.655) was the third caliph after the Prophet Muḥammad and among those whom the Shi‘a consider to usurp the right of leadership from the first Shī‘ī Imām, ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib. ‘Uthmān was from the Umayyad family who assumed power after his death. The Umayyad caliph Yazid b. Mu‘āwiyah ordered for Ḥusayn’s killing.

I asked, “May I sacrifice myself for you! I want to go to the *ziyāra* (visitation) of Ḥusayn. How should I perform it and what should I recite?”

(1) The Imām said: When you go to Abī ‘Abdillāh (Ḥusayn), perform a *ghusl*³⁰ on the shores of the Euphrates and wear your most purified clothes. Then walk barefoot (toward the grave) because you are in one of the *Ḥarams* (sacred sites) of Allāh and his messenger (Muḥammad). You should increasingly recite *Takbīr*³¹ and *Tahlīl*³² and increasingly glorify and sanctify Allāh. Send blessings on Muḥammad and his family until you arrive at the door of the *Ḥā’ir*³³.

(2) Then recite the following:

As-salāmu ‘alayka yā Ḥujjatallāhi wabna Ḥujjatih. As-salāmu ‘alaykum yā malā’ikatallāh wa zuwwār qabr ibn nabiyillah.

Peace be upon you O Allāh’s Decisive Proof and son of his Decisive Proof. Peace be upon you O Allāh’s angels who are the visitors of the grave of the son of Allāh’s prophet.

(3) Then take ten steps, stop, and say “Allāhu Akbar” thirty times. Then walk toward the grave from the direction of the face.

(4) Stand with your face toward his face and your back toward *Qibla*³⁴ and recite:

(5) As-salāmu ‘alayka yā Ḥujjatallāhi wabna Ḥujjatih. As-salāmu ‘alayka yā qatīllāhi wabna qatīlih. As-salāmu ‘alayka yā thārallāhi wabna thārih. As-salāmu ‘alayka ya witr allāhil mawtūr fi-samāwāti wal arḍ.

Peace be upon you O Allāh’s Decisive Proof and the son of His Decisive Proof. Peace be upon you O Allāh’s slain one and the son of His slain one. Peace be upon you O one whose avenger is Allāh and the son of the one whose avenger is Allāh. Peace be upon you O Allāh’s un-avenged one in the heavens and the earth whose revenge is yet to be taken by Allāh.

(6) Ash-hadu anna damaka sakana fil khuld, wa-qsha’ arrat lahu aẓillatul ‘arsh, wa bakā lahu jamī’ al-khalā’iq.

I bear witness that your blood has dwelled in the eternal Paradise. The carriers of the throne shivered because of it, and all of creation have wept over it.

(7) Wa bakat lahus-samāwātus-sab’u wal araḍūn as-sab’u, wa mā fī hinna, wa mā baynahunna, wa man yataqallabu f-il jannati wan-nār min khalqi rabbīnā, wa mā yurā wa mā lā yurā.

And the seven heavens, the seven earths, that which is in them, that which is between them, and all of the seen and unseen creation of our Lord who move within Paradise and Hell cried over your blood.

³⁰ *ghusl*: general ablution, uninterrupted washing, in ritually pure water, of the whole of the human body

³¹ *Takbīr*: reciting the statement *Allāhu Akbar*; Allāh is greater (than being described with the descriptions of his creation).

³² *Tahlīl*: reciting the statement *Lā ilāha Illa Allāh*; There is no god but Allāh.

³³ *Ḥā’ir*: The holy mound or sacred boundaries of Ḥusayn’s grave. The specific dimensions vary based on the context in which the term is used.

³⁴ The direction of *Ka’ba* in Mecca. Muslims pray the daily prayers facing this direction.

(8) *Ash-hadu annaka Ḥujjatullāh wabnu Ḥujjatih. Wa ash-hadu annaka qatīlullāh wabnu qatīlih. Wa ash-hadu annaka thārallāh fi-l arḍi wabnu thārih. Wa ash-hadu annaka witrullāhi-l-mawtūr fis-samāwāti wa-l- arḍ.*

I bear witness that you are Allāh’s Decisive Proof and the son of His Decisive Proof. I bear witness that you are Allāh’s slain one and the son of His slain one. I bear witness Allāh is your avenger and the avenger of your father on earth. I testify that you are Allāh’s un-avenged one in the heavens and the earth whose revenge is yet to be taken by Allāh.

(9) *Wa ash-hadu annaka qad ballaghta wa naṣaḥta. Wa wafayta wa wāfayt. Wa jāhadta fi sabīlirabbik. Wa maḍayta ‘alā baṣīratin lilladhi kunta ‘alayh shahīdan wa mustash-hidan wa shāhidan wa mash-hūdā(n).*

I bear witness that you announced (the message of Allāh) advised (the people). You were devoted and faithful to Allāh and you fought in the way of your Lord. I bear witness that you died with insight, the same way that you lived- as a martyr who desired martyrdom and as the witness (over Allāh’s creation) who was witnessed (by Allāh).

(10) *Anā ‘abdullāhi wa mawlāka wa fi Ṭā‘ atik. Wa-l wāfidu ilayk. Altamisū kamāl al-manzilati ‘indallāh. Wa thabāt al qadami fil hijrati ilayk. Was-sabīl alladhī la yakhtaliju dūnaka minad-dukhūlī fi kifālatikal-latī umirta bihā.*

I am Allāh’s slave and your servant who is at your service. I have come to you as a guest to beg for the perfection of my position with Allāh and to keep my foot steady in following your path. And to beg for the path that does not prevent its followers from receiving a guarantee from you- the guarantee that Allāh has ordered you to give (to your followers).

(11) *Man arādallāha bada`a bikum. Man arādallāha bada`a bikum. Man arādallāha bada`a bikum.* Those who seek Allāh start with you. Those who seek Allāh start with you. Those who seek Allāh start with you.

(12) *Bikum yubayyinnullāhu –l kadhib. Wa bikum yubā`idullāhuz-zamān al-kalīb. Wa bikum fataḥallāh wa bikum yakhtimullāh. Wa bikum yamḥnullāhu mā yashā`, wa bikum yuthbit.*

Allāh clarifies the lies through you and he keeps the times of affliction away through you. Allāh started (his creation) with you and shall end it with you. And Allāh cancels or confirms that which he pleases through you.

(13) *Wa bikum yafukku-dhulla min riqābinā. Wa bikum yudrikullāh tirata kulli mu` min yuṭlab.* Allāh removes disgrace from us through you and he shall avenge the un-avenged blood of the believers through you.

(14) *Wa bikum tunbitul arḍu ashjārahā. Wa bikum tukhrijul ashjāru athmārahā. Wa bikum tunzilū-samā`a qatrahā wa rizqahā.*

The trees in the earth grow through you and they become fruitful through you. And the skies rain and send down sustenance through you.

(15) *Wa bikum yakshifullāhu –l Karb. Wa bikum yunazzillu allāhu-l ghayth.*

Allāh removes anguish through you and he showers down the rain (of mercy) through you.

(16) *Wa bikum tusabbihullāha-l arḍul-latī taḥmilu abdānakum. Wa tastaqirru jibālūhā ‘ala marāsīhā*

The earth that carries your bodies sanctifies Allāh through you. And is it is through you that the mountains are firmly fixed in the land.

(17) *Irādatu rabbi fi maqādīr umūrihi tabḥītu ilaykum. Wa taṣḍuru min buyūtikum waṣ-ṣādiqū ‘ammā fuṣṣila min aḥkām al- ‘ibād.*

The will of Allāh with regards to his destined affairs descends to you and is issued from your houses. The true and detailed rulings, which govern Allāh’s slaves, are issued from your houses.

(18) *La‘inat ummatun qatalatkum, wa ummatun khālfatkum, wa ummatun jahadat wilāyatakum, wa ummatun zāharat ‘alaykum, wa ummatun shahidat wa lam tustash-had, Alḥamdulillāhi-lladhī ja‘ala an-nār ma`wāhum, wa bi`sa wirdul wāridīn, wa bi`s-al wirdū al-mawrūd.*

Cursed are those who killed you, those who opposed you, those who denied your divine authority, those who supported one another against you, and those who were present but were not martyred with you. Praise be to Allāh who made Hell their final destination. What a terrible abode Hell is and what an evil dwelling is their dwelling.

(19) *Alḥamdulillāhi Rabbil ‘Ālamīn*

Praise be to Allāh the Lord of the worlds.

(20) Then repeat each of the following statements three times:

(21) *Ṣallallāhu ‘alayka ya Abā ‘Abdillāh. Anā ilallāhi mimman khālafik barī`un.*

May Allāh’s blessing be upon you, O Abā ‘Abdillāh. I seek nearness to Allāh by disassociating myself from those who opposed you.

(22) Then move toward Ḥusayn’s son, ‘Alī³⁵ who is located next to the feet of Ḥusayn and recite:

(23) *As-salāmu ‘alayka yabna rasūlillāh . As-salāmu ‘alayka yabna amīr al-mu`minīn, as-salāmu ‘alayka yabnal Ḥasani wal Ḥusayn. As-salāmu ‘alayka yabna Khadijat-al Kubrā wa Fāṭimata al-Zahrā`.*

Peace be upon you O son of the messenger of Allāh (Muḥammad). Peace be upon you O son of the Commander of the Believers³⁶. Peace be upon you O son of Ḥasan and Ḥusayn.³⁷ Peace be upon you, O son of Khadija³⁸ the Great, and son of Fāṭima the radiant one³⁹.

³⁵ ‘Alī b. Ḥusayn is one Ḥusayn’s sons who was killed at Karbala`. He is also known as ‘Alī al-Akbar (The Eldest ‘Alī).

³⁶ This is a title the Shī‘a attribute to ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 661) the first Shī‘i Imām who is also Muḥammad’s son in-law and cousin.

³⁷ The second and third Shī‘i Imāms and sons of ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib.

³⁸ Khadija (d. 619) was the wife of Muḥammad who bore Fāṭima (d.632), the only daughter of Muḥammad he left behind.

³⁹ Fāṭima is the daughter of Muḥammad and Khadija, the wife of ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, and the mother of Ḥasan and Ḥusayn.

(24) Then repeat each of the following statements three times:

(25) *Sallallāhu ‘alayk . La‘anallāhu man qatalak. Anā ilallāh minhum barī’un.*

May Allāh’s blessing be upon you. May Allāh’s curse be upon those who killed you. I seek nearness to Allāh by disassociating myself from them.

(26) Then stand up and point with your hand toward the martyrs, repeating each of the following statements three times:

(27) *As-salāmu ‘alaykum fuztum wallāh.*

Peace be upon you. I swear to Allāh that you have achieved victory.

(28) Then recite:

Falayta annī ma’akum fa’afūza fawzan ‘aziman.

I wish I was among you so that I could have achieved a great victory.

(29) Then go around the grave and stand behind the grave of Abī ‘Abdillāh (Ḥusayn) and establish a six unit prayer while facing the grave.

(30) By doing (all of) this, your visitation is complete. You can choose to stay or leave if you want.