

# The Rite of the Water-Carrier: From the Circles of Sufis to the Rituals of Muharram

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**ABSTRACT:** Water-carrying (*saqqa'i*) is among the rituals of the month of Muharram that is observed throughout many cities in Iran. Historical sources testify to the prevalence of this practice among the *futuwwat* fellowships in Iran during the Ilkhanid period. A detailed elucidation of the practice of water-carrying and its ritual aspect appears in the *Futuwwat-namih-yi Sultani*. This and other treatises on *futuwwat* of the Safavid period demonstrate the strong link between the practice of water-carrying and the Shi'a mourning rituals during the month of Muharram. The practice gradually lost its initiation ceremonies and gained the status of a popular ritual during the Qajar and Pahlavi periods. Today, water-carrying is observed without any mention of its origins even though their hallmarks are clearly observable.

**KEYWORDS:** Sufism; *futuwwat* (*futuwwah*); *javanmardi*; water-carrying (*saqqa'i*); ritual; Muharram.

## Introduction

Water-carrying (*saqqa'i*) is among the mourning traditions observed during Muharram in Iran in numerous towns and cities. There are many water-carrying fellowships in such cities as Hamadan, Kashan, Tehran, Tabriz, Yazd, Arak, Kerman, Aran va Bidgul, Nush Abad, and Niasar. Notably, the practice is also observed with full ceremony in Qum and Mashhad, the pilgrimage cities of Iran where authorities are

keen to observe an orthodox air.<sup>1</sup>

Water-carrying consists of recounting the tribulations suffered by the family of the Prophet Muhammad (*ahl al-bayt*), especially as suffered by Husayn ibn 'Ali (the third Shi'a Imam) and his loyal followers. The tribulations are re-enacted as groups recite songs of lament in unison but without the accompaniment of other prevalent displays of mourning such as chest-beating and self-flagellation with chains, and without the use of such instruments as cymbals (*sinj*) and drums.<sup>2</sup> This ritual recounting is expressed in verse and in the form of woeful songs that follow the rhythm of traditional Persian music.

Every year on the day of 'Ashura (10 Muharram) the water-carrying ritual takes shape. The water-carriers split into two groups, each group comprising two sub-groups, one of which functions as the master (*naqib*)<sup>3</sup> and the other as the disciple. The disciple group is larger. The 'Ashura mourners – who gather in the *husayniyyahs* or *saqqa-khanihs* (water houses) – form four distinct circles. Songs of lament are recited by the two master groups, while the two disciple groups chime in the singing of the chorus (*tarji'* or *tarkib-band*) or a half of each line.

The peculiar beauty, melancholy, and musical rhythm render the water-carrying ritual exceptionally moving. In addition to the melodious rhythm of the participants, the element which is yet more appealing is the content of the dirges, which generally contain references to Qur'anic teachings, mystical concepts and intuitions, historical accounts, and legendary beliefs. And it is these elements that distinguish these dirges from the ordinary forms of folk poetry.

The water-carrying ritual can also take another form involving assemblies of water-carriers donning special mourning garments, carrying water skins on their shoulders, and holding a cup in their hands, as they wait on and serve water to the mourners. While engaged in this service, they recite accounts of the afflictions suffered by the family and loyal followers of Imam Husayn and especially of their thirst. (And this may be one of the reasons why dirges generally follow a slow beat – so that the recitation of dirges would not interfere with serving water to the mourners.)<sup>4</sup>

The aim of this paper is to further describe the ritual of water-carrying in Iran, both past and present, and its relation to the *futuwwat* (Persian: *javanmardi*) fellowships.<sup>5</sup> My discussion will be mainly based on Persian sources although some reference will be made to early Western visitors to Iran. But before elaborating on the tradition of water-carrying it is appropriate to elaborate on the tradition of *futuwwat*.

## Futuwwat

Despite the many studies on the tradition of *futuwwat*, many questions remain unanswered concerning its origins in Iran. The relation of *futuwwat* to the Malamati,<sup>6</sup> Qalandari,<sup>7</sup> and 'Ayyari<sup>8</sup> traditions of a Sufi ilk is unclear. Fellowships practicing *futuwwat* have assumed multiple manifestations in various periods of history and in response to diverse circumstances.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, the student of *futuwwat* may find that as one mystery is resolved, further mysteries become uncovered.<sup>10</sup> For this reason only the briefest outline of *futuwwat* can be given here.<sup>11</sup>

The *futuwwat* that finds expression in the treatises on *futuwwat* (Persian: *futuwwat-namih*s) has a number of forms. On one end of the spectrum, there is the Sufi *futuwwat* that is based on a preoccupation with God and meticulous attention to the virtues of the Prophet, the Companions, and other religious authorities. Abu 'Abd al-Rahman Sulami's *Kitab al-Futuwwah* is an exposition of this variety. But there is also the licentious and libertine *futuwwat* prevalent in the third and fourth centuries AH, which readily and unashamedly flouted social, moral, and religious norms.<sup>12</sup> In the sixth century AH, during the reign of Nasir, the ruler of Baghdad, a moderate and syncretic form of *futuwwat* also existed. This form of *futuwwat* was somewhat between the two opposing forms of *futuwwat* just mentioned, having drifted away from them. The lifestyle of its devotees was somewhat more lavish and it consisted of a merely theatrical manifestation of *futuwwat*.<sup>13</sup>

*Futuwwat* continued to flourish in Iran throughout the seventh and eighth centuries AH as a tendency assimilated into the broader Sufi matrix. This was demonstrated in the Sufi and ritual tendencies of the various guilds, as noted by the famed traveller Ibn Battutah in his *Al-Riblah*.<sup>14</sup> In the treatises written by Sufi devotees during this period, one describes a ritual form of *futuwwat* that seeks to conform rigorously to the ethos of the Prophet, the Companions, and especially of Imam 'Ali, who has been viewed as the epitome of magnanimity.<sup>15</sup> Typical examples of this literature are the two treatises by Shihab al-Din 'Umar Suhrawardi; the treatise of Mawlana Nasiri which is written in verse; a treatise by Najm al-Din Zarkub; 'Abd Al-Razzaq Kashani's *Tuhfat al-Ikhwān fī Khasa'is al-Fatyan*; Sayyid 'Ali Hamadani's *Risalat Futuwwatiyyah*; and a treatise commonly known as *Futuwwat-namih-yi 'Abd al-'Azim Khan-i Qarib*. It may be remarked that these treatises were intended in the main as moral books of instruction and edification for the different *futuwwat* fellowships, which were apparently identified with

professional guilds in this period.

The final social manifestation of *futuwwat*, which was strongly infused with Shi'a – and occasionally heretical (*ghali*) – beliefs emerged in the ninth century AH.<sup>16</sup> Husayn Wa'iz Kashifi's *Futuwwat-namih-yi Sultani* elucidates this strain of *futuwwat*, which was intimately connected with certain guilds whose occupations were ritual and theatrical.<sup>17</sup> This mode of *futuwwat* managed to flourish until the beginning of this century under various names, the last of which was the Darvishan-i 'Ajam, a group affiliated with the Khaksari lineage and which played an important role in the religious and social life of Iran and Asia Minor during the Safavid and Qajar periods. Their influence in literature led to the composition of tens of treatises, all of which put forth the same message as that of the *Futuwwat-namih-i Sultani*.

### *Water-Carrying and Futuwwat*

The account of 'Abd al-Karim Qushayri, put forth in his *Risalah Qushayriyyah*, concerning *futuwwat* shows that the Sufi code of morality has from early on viewed the voluntary serving of water to people as a requirement, or an indication of possessing *futuwwat*. The water-carriers who would quench the thirst of travellers and passers-by without the expectation of compensation were considered as ranking among the virtuous practitioners of *futuwwat*. As Qushayri records from Dhu al-Nun Misri:

'He who wishes to meet the virtuous *javanmardan* should travel to Baghdad and meet the water-carriers of Baghdad.'

They said, 'How is that?'

He said, 'When I was incriminated for my affiliation [with *futuwwat* fellowships] and was taken before the Caliph, I saw a water-carrier wearing a nice turban on his head, holding slender and new pottery pitchers in hand. "Does he serve water to the Sultan?" I asked. "No, he rather serves water to the public", they said. I took one of the pitchers and drank water, and then I asked my companion to pay him a dinar, but he did not accept. He said, 'You are here as a prisoner and it would be contrary to my *javanmardi* should I ask for a fee.'<sup>18</sup>

Another point worthy of mention is that in the hagiography of Sufi

personages, one comes across instances where *saqqa* (water-carrier) is used to designate the former *mashayikh*.<sup>19</sup> Walid ibn 'Abd Allah Saqqa was a disciple of Dhu al-Nun Misri; 'Ali ibn Shu'ayb Saqqa and Abu Bakr Saqqa are among the eminent personages revered by Sufis.<sup>20</sup> Likewise, one notices such names as Darvish Abu Turab Saqqa in the treatment of the *Futuwwat-namih-yi Sultani* of the *mashayikh* of the *futuwwat* lineage.<sup>21</sup>

Based on the finding of a number of studies, Sa'di Shirazi, who was an admirer of Shihab al-Din 'Umar Suhrawardi, was committed to the service of water-carrying as a rite of initiation to be allowed entry into the *futuwwat* fellowship. As documented by a number of historians – an account that *Futuwwat-namih-yi Sultani* also corroborates – Sa'di was engaged for many years in the service of water-carrying, following his acquaintance with Suhrawardi despite his enjoying an affluent life, which demonstrates that his water-carrying service was not to acquire a livelihood and so was motivated solely by his attachment to *futuwwat*.<sup>22</sup>

Moreover, as 'Abd al-Razzaq Kashani says in *Tuhfat al-Ikhwān fi Khas'is al-Fatyan*, the ritual drinking of saltwater as an initiatory rite for admission into a *futuwwat* fellowship.<sup>23</sup> According to legend, this rite originated with 'Ali and the Prophet. However, as opposed to the other treatises, *Tuhfat al-Ikhwān* speaks of a water-and-raisin drink instead of the alternative saltwater drink: 'Currently, the water-carriers, who constitute a particular guild, make their [initiatory] drink from raisin-water, of which the Prophet made a drink and sent for the Forty Men.'<sup>24</sup>

Historically, both commercial and non-commercial water-carriers were found in the Muslim lands. Indeed, water-carrying was a vocation for some and a means of subsistence, from which people could derive their livelihood. Professional water-carriers in Egypt, for instance, numbered in the thousands.<sup>25</sup> With regard to water-carrying solely as a meritorious deed in order to gain proximity to God, the Prophet and the Shi'a Imams can be seen as being supportive. Numerous reports on the importance of storing water for quenching the thirst of fellow human beings and animals are believed to support the tradition of water-carrying. These reports speak of the lofty status of water-carriers and their rewards in the Hereafter.<sup>26</sup> Undoubtedly, given the terrain of much of the Islamic world, and especially the parched and barren land of Arabia, water-carrying was seen as something important,

Water-carrying was especially important during times of war. It is reported that Imam 'Ali was responsible for delivering water to the Muslim army in the battles of Badr and Hudaibiyyah and that in the

night preceding the Battle of Badr, Imam ‘Ali braved the night and obtained water while fear of the enemy kept the rest of the Muslims reluctant to approach the wells of Badr.<sup>27</sup> In Karbala, the responsibility of obtaining water was entrusted to ‘Abbas ibn ‘Ali, whose loyalty and magnanimity not only moves the mourners of Husayn but has also had considerable influence on the water-carrying tradition of the *futuwwat* devotees, as is evidenced by the *Futuwwat-namih-yi Sultani*.

It was the latter form of water-carrying that in time acquired a ritual function, and, starting from the Timurid period, took on a special form as it was incorporated into Shi‘a rituals and particularly in the ritual mourning for Imam Husayn. It is this tradition of water-carrying with which the present article is concerned.

### *Water-Carrying and the Ritual Recitation of Eulogy (Maddahi)*

The earliest source on the connection between the water-carrying of the *futuwwat* devotees with the ritual water-carrying performed during the commemoration of the Tragedy of Karbala on ‘Ashura is Mulla Husayn Wa‘iz Kashifi’s *Futuwwat-namih-yi Sultani*. The author states that as early as the ninth and tenth centuries AH, the water-carrying tradition was identified with the commemoration of ‘Ashura, hence its incorporation of the tradition of reciting eulogies of the Prophet and his family (*ahl al-bayt*) – and it is in this form, and in conjunction with these elements, that it has carried on to the present time.

Elaborating on the professional performers (*ma‘rikah-giran*), Kashifi distinguishes three categories: ‘They are three groups: first, the *maddahan* (eulogists), the *gharakhanan*,<sup>28</sup> and the *saqqayan* (water-carriers); second, the *khavasskhanan*<sup>29</sup> and the *basatandazan*,<sup>30</sup> third, the story and legend tellers.’ He continues by further placing the eulogists into four divisions: the poet-eulogists, the water-carriers, the eulogists who borrow the poems of renowned poets, and finally those who memorize some stray verses and, wandering from one house to the next, make the eulogy of Muhammad’s descendents the excuse for their begging and who are therefore not true eulogists.<sup>31</sup>

That Kashifi excludes the latter group, who take up the recitation of eulogies of the *ahl al-bayt* as an occupation, from the fold of the true eulogists is an indication that the water-carrying practitioners of *futuwwat* proffered their service without asking for a fee. Thus, he adds

that the eulogist 'must not recite eulogy for [pecuniary] gain or reward but rather for the pleasure of God and the pursuit of the reward of the Hereafter.'<sup>32</sup>

Speaking of the water-carriers Kashifi says,

Water-carriers are both eulogists and water-carriers, and they are a respectable group, and their merit is indeed great. God – blessed and exalted is He – says, 'and their Lord will give them to drink a pure drink.' And though the designation *saqqa* (water-carrier) or *saqqa'i* (water-carrying) is unbefitting God, yet the action of giving water is ascribed to Him.<sup>33</sup>

Kashifi relates a report from the Prophet concerning the divine reward for serving water to Muslims and then continues to explain that water-carrying is a blessed and beneficial occupation that yields abundant reward. He then goes on to mention four prophets and two saints as the originators of the water-carrying tradition, citing a short account of the water-carrying of each of these figures. The four prophets are Noah, who served water in the Ark; Abraham, who served water in the deserts; Khidr, who, having drank from the water of life, quenches the thirst of those lost in the wilderness, saving them from death; and Muhammad, whose serving of water occasioned the conversion of a number of people to Islam. As regards the saints, he names Imam 'Ali, who provided water to the soldiers of the army of Islam during the Battle of Uhud and who will preside in the Hereafter over the Pool of Kawthar as the water-bearer.<sup>34</sup>

From the saints, His Eminence, the king of *wilayah*, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, who provided water during the Battle of Uhud to the thirsty and will tomorrow on the Day of Judgment preside as the water-bearer of the Pool of Kawthar, serving water on the Plane of Resurrection to the thirsty from among his friends and supporters.<sup>35</sup>

The words of Kashifi, indicating that Imam 'Ali will serve only his friends and supporters, suggest his Shi'a tendency – a tendency implied time and again on various occasions. But what is unprecedented in the *futuwwat* literature before Kashifi is the mention of the tragedy of 'Ashura. This mention may be viewed as the turning point that has ever since connected the devotees of *futuwwat* with the rituals of 'Ashura. Although this connection is taken up by the *futuwwat* literature and the treatises of the *qalandari* fellowships of the Safavid period, it doesn't

receive the same clear emphasis as it does in Kashifi.

The second saint whom Kashifi credits as a precursor of the water-carrying tradition is ‘Abbas ibn ‘Ali. That the status of *wilayah* (sainthood or divine authority) is attributed to ‘Abbas ibn ‘Ali is also important and serves as another indication of the increasing prominence that the tragedy of Karbala was gaining in the religious and cultural milieu of the period, and it was precisely this prominence that encouraged Kashifi to pen *Rawdat al-Shuhada*. On this point, he writes:

The second [of the saints] is ‘Abbas ibn ‘Ali who on the Day of ‘Ashura carried the water skin on his shoulder to slake the thirst of the women and children. Intent on going to the River Euphrates, he requested leave from Imam Husayn. The Prince said, ‘O ‘Abbas, you are my standard-bearer; I fear lest your departure may cause our army to be dispersed.’ ‘Abbas said, ‘O Brother, I have no choice but to go, for I pity the children, and their thirst sets my heart aflame. I shall go to either obtain water or to give my head in so doing.

In deep water I shall plunge  
Either to drown or to bring back some gem.

This task is dangerous but I will venture  
To colour thereby red either my face or my neck.

And as ‘Abbas approached the bank of the river and filled the water skin and sealed it, he sought to drink water, but remembering the thirst of Imam Husayn and his children, he drank water not. Throwing the water skin over his shoulder, he mounted, and as is reported, those cursed demons besieged him and severed his arms – and this account is indeed lengthy.<sup>36</sup>

Thereafter Kashifi mentions a point that suggests that at his time, water-carrying was related to the rituals of ‘Ashura, and this is made especially plain when we take into consideration that he stipulates the recitation of eulogy as a requirement of water-carrying. He continues,

And whosoever carries and serves water today out of love for the martyrs of Karbala, he is following and conforming to ‘Abbas ibn ‘Ali, who is the leader of the water-carriers of the nation of Islam, and whosoever doubts this, he cannot be ranked for certain as a water-carrier.<sup>37</sup>

Further on, Kashifi identifies Salman Farsi and Sa'di Shirazi as 'elders' in the tradition of water-carrying, which is important in view of Salman's admiration for 'Ali and Sa'di's fame as a eulogist of the Prophet and his family.

And some ascribe water-carrying in this nation, after the Amir ['Ali] and 'Abbas, to Salman Farsi, who would carry a water skin on his shoulder and take it to the house of Lady Fatimah, and this is a valid report that Salman the Elder is in this function the king of all men. And Shaykh Muslih al-Din Sa'di Shirazi would also do this, and these men are designated as the 'life-givers'.<sup>38</sup>

Kashifi then enumerates ten requirements for water-carrying, some of which are indicative of its ritual aspect, such as that the water-carrier must have permission from the head of a *majlis* (assembly, gathering) in order to enter therein; that he should prefer going to public places and assemblies such as a mosque, lodge (*khanaqah*), or *langar*,<sup>39</sup> or that, in addition to retaining one's ritual purity (*tabarah*) and bearing oneself well in dealing with people, 'he must not expect a fee for water-carrying but should rather perform this work solely for God, the Exalted, so that he should not be deprived of otherworldly reward'.<sup>40</sup>

Another point can be made on water and the tragedy of Karbala. In Chapter 7 of *Futuvvat-namih-yi Sultani*, entitled 'Precepts on Eating Food and Drinking Water', one of the stated precepts for drinking water is to curse the murderer of Imam Husayn. This implies the strong influence of the tragedy of 'Ashura on the social and religious mores of Iran in the tenth century AH. As Kashifi writes,

Imam Zayn al-'Abidin is reported as having said that when you drink water, you should curse the murderer of Imam Husayn, and being enquired on that account, he [the Imam] said, 'My father obliged me in the Desert of Karbala to recall his thirst and curse his murderer when drinking water.'<sup>41</sup>

### *The Tradition of Water-Carrying in the Futuvvat Literature of the Safavid Period*

In the treatise *Futuvvat-namih-yi Saqqayan*, which probably dates from the early Safavid period (if not before), the strong link between water-carrying and the tragedy of 'Ashura is evident. In the following passage

this is clear, although mention of Imam Hasan is probably a mistake.

Should they ask you of how water-carrying was initiated, then you must reply that Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn – may God be pleased with him – failed to obtain water in the Desert of Karbala. Thus, His Great Eminence, Gabriel, filled a water skin with water and took it to the family of Muhammad Mustafa as they were thirsty.<sup>42</sup>

It should be mentioned that in another place the treatise introduces Gabriel and 'Ali as the first and last water-carriers: 'Should they ask, "Who was the first in the world to perform water-carrying?" You must answer that the first was Gabriel, and the last was the king of all men, Murtada 'Ali, may God ennoble his countenance.'<sup>43</sup>

Furthermore, the treatise connects the origin of three elements of the water-carrying tradition with the marriage of Fatimah and Imam 'Ali and names Imam 'Ali ibn Musa al-Rida as one of the 'elders' of the water-carrying tradition.<sup>44</sup>

In one particular Qalandari treatise that dates from the reign of Shah Sulayman Safavi, in which one clearly recognizes Shi'a and heretical (*ghali*) tendencies, there is abundant mention of the tragedy of 'Ashura and copious praise for the martyrs of Karbala. Besides treating a number of the Qalandari symbols and ritual accoutrements and practices (such as, *jaridih*, *tugh*, and *dhikr*, which in time became increasingly associated with the rituals of Muharram),<sup>45</sup> the treatise also speaks of water-carrying and relates it to Imam Husayn. 'Should they ask, "From whom does water-carrying come?" You must reply, from Imam Husayn, the water-bearer of the Pool of Kawthar.'<sup>46</sup> This statement would place the Qalandari author at odds with Shi'a doctrine which reserves this privilege of dispensing water from the heavenly Pool of Kawthar for Imam Ali.

In a treatise belonging to the Haydaris<sup>47</sup> of the Safavid period (dated 1111-1113 AH) entitled *Risalih dar Bab-i Pust-i Takya va Kajkul* there is an extensive discussion on eulogy, water-carrying, and homily. In relation to the occupation of water-carrying, the treatise cites the report, 'The most meritorious of charities is water giving, though it be between two rivers', and offers the following exposition:

On the Night of Ascension (*mi'raj*), Gabriel placed a crown on the blessed head of the Prophet, and the Prophet bequeathed the crown on the Day of Ghadir to 'Ali, who bequeathed it to the *hasanayn* [Imams Hasan and Husayn],

and from them it passed down to the Forty Men. The *tanurib*<sup>48</sup> they receive from Salman Farsi, and the water skin and the *zirmashk*<sup>49</sup> from the Prophet. And the water skin and the *zirmashk* are determined by consensus.<sup>50</sup> The employment of the *zirmashk* in the present time is in keeping with the tradition of the Prophet, as the cursed Abu Jahl once deprived the Best of Ladies [Fatimah, the daughter of the Prophet] of water. The Lady of the Hereafter [Fatimah] went to the Prophet and said, 'I shall now perish from thirst'. The Prophet held his blessed finger out, and from it came such water as quenched her thirst. It is on this account that it was said that the drink is received from the Prophet.<sup>51</sup>

Another important and explicit source that has been discovered in this connection describes the initiation required of water-carriers.

They should wander about the town from the eve of the ninth of Muharram until two in the afternoon on the tenth of Muharram while carrying a water skin filled with pebbles weighing forty five *mans* [a measure of mass] and wearing fetters around their feet, praising the prophets and saints and the martyrs of Karbala in order to be admitted as water-carriers. Only then would they be granted the garb of the water-carrier – which consisted of such items as a *lung*,<sup>52</sup> *qanturib*,<sup>53</sup> *rishtih*,<sup>54</sup> *bazu*, and *muhrih* – at the hands of their elder (*pir*).<sup>55</sup>

The importance of the water-carrying tradition among the Qalandars of the Safavid period can also be seen in the coinage of a new term by this fellowship: '*kadu matbakh*' for an invention. The first appearance of this term occurs in the *Qalandar-namih-yi Arbab al-Tariq* (1083 AH). According to this source, *kadu matbakh* was a pumpkin that was covered with leather, and four chains were then attached to it, which was then used for carrying food and especially for water-carrying. This invention resembled such previous instruments as *kashkul* and *zanbil* and so Adham Khalkhali (eleventh century AH) wrote a book entitled *Kadu Matbakh-i Qalandari*, similar to the well-known miscellanies that were generically entitled *kashkul*.<sup>56</sup> This *sui generis* coinage highlights all the more clearly the flourishing of the tradition of water-carrying among the Qalandars.<sup>57</sup>

We should of course bear in mind that the *kashkul*, along with other

items of the Qalandari accoutrements, were employed in the Safavid period and later in connection with the rite of water-carrying and the rituals of Muharram. The evidence to show the connection between the *kashkul* of the Qalandars with the rituals of 'Ashura appears in a mocking (*hajviyyih*) verse by Aqa Muhammad 'Ali Bihbahani (otherwise known as Āl-i Aqa). In this invective poem, which elaborates the code of conduct observed by the Qalandars and their peculiar terms and accoutrements (such as *kubnih dalq*,<sup>58</sup> *kamarband*,<sup>59</sup> *pust*, *takhtih pust*,<sup>60</sup> and *kashkul*), the poet mentions the *kashkul* in connection with the name of 'Abbas ibn 'Ali, the standard-bearer and water-carrier of Karbala. This clearly indicates that the Qalandars had infused these articles with the spirit of 'Ashura. One line of this poem, which is in address to the Qalandar comrades, reads,

Your *kashkul* in hand like 'Abbas,  
A hundred [men] like Ash'ath would there be as your sack-carrier.<sup>61</sup>

Bihbahani was a particularly vehement opponent of the Sufis and his reference to Ash'ath ibn Qays, a disloyal opponent of Imam Ali (A), is used to undermine them. In Bihbahani's view the water-carriers were not better than Ash'ath even though they seemed pious on the outside.

References to the *kashkul* can also be found in the Qajar period. On the *kashkul* of a dervish the following words were engraved in adulation of 'Abbas ibn 'Ali: "Abbas who is renowned in every city and country."<sup>62</sup>

What all these resources indicate is that the tradition of water-carrying as one of the rites observed by the *futuwwat* and Qalandari fellowships was in this period associated with the Imams of the Shi'a school, the commemoration of 'Ashura, and in more general terms with Shi'a doctrine. And though this tradition underwent certain changes in various periods, nevertheless the ritual basis of this tradition has remained intact. That is to say, though the water-carrying tradition in later periods and especially in the contemporary period has been appropriated by the public who perform it in groups as a mourning tradition in commemoration of the tragedy of Karbala and who have no clue as to its Sufi origins, the Sufi vestiges leave no doubt that the contemporary water-carrying tradition is the extension and continuation of that same tradition that was observed by consecutive lines of initiation of the *futuwwat* and the Qalandari Sufis.

## *Observations of Travellers and Scholars in the Safavid and Qajar Periods*

In addition to the *futuwwat* treatises and the Qalandari literature, we can gather historical information concerning the tradition of water-carrying in the Safavid and Qajar periods from the travelogues of Western travellers and, occasionally, from the observations of Iranian scholars. In Tavernier's travelogue we come across a description of the Sufi lodges in Isfahan which details the accoutrements and garb of the members and relates speeches by two dervishes, one young and the other old. The account continues by stating that the dervishes would place in front of their houses a large bowl of water along with several cups, cooling the water with ice when the weather was hot; passers-by would drink from this water without having to pay.<sup>63</sup>

In the travelogue by Ivan Gress, one reads the following as regards the water-carriers of the later Safavid period:

The water-carriers carry a large water skin with a bent back through the streets. As they walk to and from one end of town to the other, they make their presence known to the thirsty and needy by striking two discs of copper together and ringing bells. The thirsty would then approach them and ask for water. The water-carrier would pour some water into a small bowl and hand it to the requester. They would of course not charge any fee from the common folk; the nobles and courtiers of town would, however, provide for them by their pensions.<sup>64</sup>

Awliya Chalabi's travelogue records the commemoration of 'Ashura in Qazvin and explains that even the nobles participated in the traditional commemoration of this day out of respect for Imam Husayn. He writes, 'In this period, people are served water in crystal cups, and some of the nobility and eminent personages hang flasks around their necks and serve water in order to please Imam Husayn.'<sup>65</sup>

In his *Varzish-i Bastani*, Partaw Baydayi names the location referred to by Tavernier as a *saqqa-khanib* (water house) and the dervishes in question as the Sufis of the Khaksari lineage, whose traditional ritual performance and water-carrying survived until the early Pahlavi period. Recounting the story of Darvish Kabuli (whom the Khaksariyyah view as their initiatory progenitor) in meeting with Imam Husayn in Karbala, Baydayi stresses the influence of this story on the Khaksari

traditions and points out the role of the Khaksari water-carriers and performers in the mourning ceremonies of Muharram.

The picture that Baydayi offers based on his observations resembles to a great extent the reports of the Safavid period. He writes,

Till just a few years ago, one of the groups that participated in the mourning processions of 'Ashura was the water-carriers' group, each member of which held a *kashkul*. Some members, however, wore a leather apron and carried a water skin over their shoulders and a mug in hand, serving water to people while positioned at the head of the group.

The accoutrements that the heads of this group, especially the performers, employed were generally symbols of poverty (*faqr*), such as *lung*, *rishtih* (or *kushti/kusti*), and we see the same belts embellished with pieces of brass and other metals that Tavernier had observed and written about four hundred years ago, and these are still worn by the water-carriers and are called *shir-qullab*.

In certain provinces, these groups carry a portable *saqqa-khanih* along with them that is positioned ahead of the group, and to it a number of bells are attached, which are occasionally rung. Each group of water-carriers had a few performers, who were called *sukhanvar*. These performers would stop at fixed intervals, or in front of the shops consecrated to the Seventeen Lineages of Poverty (*bifdah silsilih-yi faqr*), or when passing by the banners and spears of other groups so as to 'respond' to the banners and spears, which was done by reciting poems designated as *sukhan*. This act of responding (*sukhanvari*) was generally commenced by the head of the group, who was referred to as the *ustad*.<sup>66</sup>

After elaborating on the function of the *sukhanvars* in the ceremonies of the month of Muharram and the practice of *rawdih-khani*, which would take place in the lodges (*takiyyih*) that were constructed by the residents of a community, Baydayi explicates that the erection of the *sardam* by the *sukhanvars* was on account of their participation in the rituals of mourning and especially their water-carrying procession; he writes,

From what has been written thus far and from the combination of the indications mentioned, we come to the

conclusion that ever since the proliferation and expansion of the mourning for the Master of Martyrs and especially during the Safavid period, in which this development reached its highest point of perfection, so much so that every Shi'a community organized a number of mourning groups (*dastih*), the Khaksariyyah lineage of dervishes, who by virtue of their descent from Darvish Kabuli considered themselves more intimately involved in this affair [the commemoration of Imam Husayn's martyrdom], founded the groups of water-carriers and, for the sake of their singing and recitation, designated the *saqqa-khanibs* as their gathering places, whereat they decorated them with symbols of poverty and a variety of accoutrements identified with the impoverished.<sup>67</sup> And since they were engaged in singing, they chose, in order to accommodate their singing and recitation, these same *saqqa-khanibs*, which naturally served also as their smoking lodges – and hence the appellation *sardam* – and which they venerated as sacred and blessed.<sup>68</sup>

Baydayi's view that the Khaksaris established a water-carrying group through Darvish Kabuli is incorrect because Darvish Kabuli was not a real person but a fictitious character. Also, the water-carrying ritual was performed during the Timurid, that is, before the Khaksaris were even founded. Despite these inaccuracies in Baydayi's account, his observations concerning the participation of the water-carrying dervishes in the mourning ceremonies of Muharram in the late-Qajar and early-Pahlavi periods, and the resemblance in their practice with the water-carriers of the Safavid period are nevertheless significant.<sup>69</sup>

One finds various reports by tourists and travellers that observed that water-carrying in the mourning ceremonies of Muharram during the Qajar period was accompanied by the recitation of lamentful songs. Benjamin, for instance, writes the following account of his observations of the Takiyyih-i Dawlat:

The most salient figure to attract the attention was a handsome old man who carried an earthen pitcher in one hand and a cup in the other, serving water to the spectators [of a passion play (*ta'ziyyih*)] who had gathered in the Takiyyih-i Dawlat. It was reputed that the man has been doing this for the past forty to fifty years in fulfilment of a vow he made to quench the thirst of people during the

month of Muharram in remembrance of the parched martyrs of Karbala. He fulfils this vow every year in various lodges, including Takiyyih-i Dawlat.<sup>70</sup>

There were also children who served water as a votive fulfilment on behalf of their parents. Eubin writes:

On all four corners of the lodge (*takiyyih*) there are pools full of water, and young boys clad in Arabic dress fill their vessels from the water of the pools and serve water to the people present in the lodge in remembrance of 'Abbas, as a votive fulfilment on behalf of their fathers and mothers.<sup>71</sup>

There are also reports of water-carrying accompanied by the recitation of dirges and eulogies. One source thus describes water-carrying in the ceremonies of Muharram:

In one part of the scene were the water-carriers who were a symbol of the Imam's thirst prior to his death. They carry water skins made from bull leather and filled full on their backs, seemingly indifferent to their weight. Furthermore, each water-carrier is surrounded by five young adult men who circumambulate three consecutive times round an area ten feet in diameter in a harmonious order and rhythm.<sup>72</sup>

Furthermore, Henry-Rene D'Allemagne writes,

The water-carriers of town, with their intricately coloured and very interesting water skins, were first to appear on the scene. As they passed by, the spectators, remembering the parched lips of Husayn and suppressing their grief in their throats, incessantly cried, 'Thirsty, O Husayn; oppressed, O Husayn.'<sup>73</sup>

Describing a water-carrier from Simnan's not-too-distant past, Panahi-Simnani reports,

A man with a red scarf over his shoulders and a water skin on top of that, wearing a hat and holding a cup, walked with the mourning procession while singing a sorrowful verse: 'The water-carrier of the King of the Parched. Would that my head be covered with soil'.<sup>74</sup>

## *The Sufi Rite of Initiation into Fellowships of Water-Carriers in Contemporary Kashan*

As mentioned above, the water-carrying ritual is even today practiced in many Iranian cities. But in two cities in particular, Kashan and Hamadan, there are clear indications of the Sufi heritage in the water-carrying practice.

The tradition in Hamadan is that the fellowships of water-carriers put on a number of accoutrements, most of which are relics of the 'Ayyari and *futuwwat* fellowships. These accoutrements include the *lung*; the *kashkul* along with the chain and the clasp (*qullab*); the distinctive water-carrying belt, with the emblem of a lion attached to the middle and a clasp on each end; *nat'*, a metal cup; black garb along with a long black shawl; *lachak*, a black headscarf; and finally, the *'iqal*, a black or white circular cord as worn by Arabs over the *lachak* to secure it in place.<sup>75</sup>

Yet another ritual that fellowships of water-carriers observe – and that clearly suggests Sufi origin – is the rite of initiation. This rite is still extant in present-day Kashan – a unique and fascinating reminder of the old ways. Any form of initiation as part of admission into a group is suggestive of occult and mystic fellowship. This is especially so when, as in Kashan, it is at the hands of an elder (*pir*) or guide (*murshid*). This elder is designated in the water-carrying fellowships as a father (*baba*), an explicit vestige of the Qalandari tradition. The elder dresses the initiate in the water-carrying garb and recites certain formulae and incantations. Most interesting is the conferral of the distinctive water-carrying accoutrements (*vaslih*), which may include up to six pieces: hat, the lion emblem and the clasps, *kashkul*, goblet, tunic, *rishtih* or *shadd* (cord); these water-carrying accoutrements have been passed down from the Timurid and Safavid periods.<sup>76</sup> The initiate pledges an enduring commitment to the water-carrying fellowship and rite by which he is bound for the remainder of his life.

Another factor that illustrates the connection between water-carrying and Sufi traditions is the content of the *tarji'-band* poem that the *baba* recites on bestowing the water-carrying garb on the initiate, lines of which are repeated by those present at the ceremony. This is probably one of the few popular traditions in which the spirit of occult fellowship is preserved, reflecting the mystic traditions of old. The initiation is recounted by Mu'tamidi.<sup>77</sup>

According to Mu'tamidi when the parents would decide to formally

pledge their children to the service of Imam Husayn as water-carriers they would prepare for a grand ceremony in their home. Invited were water-carriers of the fellowship and their *baba*. The water-carriers would start by reciting eulogies in praise of the Imams, especially Imam Ali and Imam Husayn, and then they would recite elegies and dirges in the style of the water-carriers. The *baba* of the fellowship would then announce the occasion of the ceremony and summon the child, introducing him to the assembly. A tray, which contained the child's water-carrying garb along with a bowl of rosewater and some sweets, was then placed before the *baba* of the fellowship. The *baba* would recite the *tarji'-band* poem for the admittance of new water-carriers and for their donning of the water-carrying garb. The poem consisted of several stanzas, and on completion of each stanza, the participants would chime in singing the last line of the poem while a piece of the water-carrying garb was fitted on the child.

The phrases of the poem were similar to the phrases uttered in Sufi gatherings of remembrance (*dhikr*) and whirling (*sama'*). Each stanza of this poem contained such incantations as *ya wahhab* (O Bestower), *ya mashkur* (O Appreciative), *ya subhan* (O Glorified), *ya sattar* (O Concealer), and *ya habl al-matin* (O Firm Rope). In this relation, one may point to such locutions as *majma'-i sahibdelan wa 'arifan* (gathering of the enlightened and the mystics), *idhn-i murshidan* (permission of the guides), *pir-i tariqih* (elder of the order), *taslim-i faqr* (surrendered to poverty), *takrim-i faqr* (glorifying poverty), *iqlim-i faqr* (domain of poverty), and most importantly *ta'lim-i faqr* (teaching poverty). An example of an initiation poem is as follows:

My vow [I pledge] in this assembly, O possessors of heart and gnostics;  
 I place the crown of flowers on my head by the leave of the *murshids*.  
 I shed tears of grief in remembrance of the head of the King of the Parched,  
 As from the injustice of the heavens was his head atop the spears of Kufis.  
 I shall say, invoking *inna fatahna*, the secret of secrets of Husayn,  
 May my soul a thousand times be sacrificed for you, O Husayn.  
 Of no little grief is your pain and mourning, O Husayn.

My *shir va qullab*, which is from the lion-slaying warriors,  
 Is less valuable than the elders of the path of knowledge.  
 On my belt, which is worth wearing,  
 Is the *dhikr* of *ya wahhab*, which is the best banner.  
 I shall say now with a sorrowful and grieving melody, O Husayn,  
 May my soul a thousand times be sacrificed for you, O Husayn?  
 Of no little grief is your pain and mourning, O Husayn.

As long as my heart is aflame from the love of Husayn;  
 There comes perpetually from my eyes pure blood.  
 I utter the *dhikr* of *ya mashkur* in the presence of the old and the young,  
 Placing the *kashkul* over my shoulder in lieu of the water skin.  
 As I receive my position from 'Abbas, the water-carrier of Husayn,  
 May my soul a thousand times be sacrificed for you, O Husayn.  
 Of no little grief is your pain and mourning, O Husayn.

On this Path the *lung* displays the intensity of my submission to poverty;  
 In place of the *nat*, I shall don a hundred-fold the honour of poverty.  
 I shed tears of grief from the torment of the Master of the Realm of Poverty;  
 The *dhikr* of *ya sattar* I shall say this moment as [I am] trained in poverty.  
 That I may give the accounts of the griefs of Husayn, [I shall cry,]  
 May my soul a thousand times be sacrificed for you, O Husayn.  
 Of no little grief is your pain and mourning, O Husayn.<sup>78</sup>

The water-carrying garb and accoutrements comprised six things. Firstly there was a hat made of valuable *tirmih* fabric, which Mu'tamidi says was seen as the crown of honour for mourning and serving Imam Husayn. Secondly, there was the *shir va qullab* – a wide leather belt, one end of which had a lion (*shir*) shaped clasp and the other had a hook called a '*qullab*'. Thirdly, the *kashkul* – an item which was placed on the novice's shoulder as his water skin. Fourthly, a cup, which was given to the initiate to hold in his hand. Fifthly, the *lung*, which was actually a replacement for the *nat* – the leather apron formerly worn by water-carriers on their backs over which the water skin was placed. Lastly, a red cord was given to the initiate to tie around his waist as a symbol of grief for Imam Husayn.

Once the initiate was clad and the poem reached its end, says Mu'tamidi, the ceremony would be concluded by the recitation of a supplication and of Surah al-Fatihah. Rosewater, sweets, food were served to the participants and the *baba* who had admitted the child and managed the ceremony would be granted a gift. After the ceremony the child was formally and permanently recognised as a water-carrier and any of his children would also come to be considered as water-carriers and would come to participate in the mourning ceremonies of the water-carriers despite not being initiated. Whenever and wherever the mourning ceremonies of the water-carriers took place the initiate was bound to attend and to perform his duty upon being summoned. To violate this commitment without justification was considered a breach of loyalty and an affront to the sacred person of Imam Husayn.

## Conclusion

The water-carrying tradition is among the most significant and elegant mourning rituals of Muharram in Iran. This paper has attempted to show that the ritual originates in *futuvvat* fellowships. Starting from the Timurid period, it gradually took on a ritual and popular dimension, which reached its climax during the Safavid and Qajar periods. Today the tradition is independent of professional guilds and *futuvvat* fellowships. However, water-carrying has managed to retain its original features and exhibits the strong influence that Sufi and *futuvvat* fellowships have had on the mourning rituals of Muharram.

## Table of Key Transliterated Terms

| Term Appearing in Text | Persian    | Term With Diacritics |
|------------------------|------------|----------------------|
| Bazu                   | بازو       | Bāzū                 |
| Dalq                   | دلّق       | Dalq                 |
| Dastih                 | دسته       | Dastih               |
| Futuvvat-namih         | فتوّت نامه | Futuvvat-nāmih       |
| Jaridih                | جریده      | Jarīdih              |
| Javanmardi             | جوانمردی   | Javānmardī           |
| Kadu matbakh           | کدو مطبخ   | Kadū maṭbakh         |
| Kashkul                | کشکول      | Kashkul              |
| Khanqah                | خانقاه     | Khānqāh              |
| Kusti/kushti           | کستی\کشتی  | Kustī/kushtī         |
| Lung                   | لنگ        | Lung                 |
| Qalandar               | قلندر      | Qalandar             |
| Qanturih               | قنتوره     | Qanturih             |
| Mashayikh              | مشایخ      | Mashayikh            |
| Muhrih                 | مهره       | Muhrih               |
| Nat'                   | نطح        | Naṭ'                 |
| Pir                    | پیر        | Pir                  |
| Pust                   | پوست       | Pūst                 |
| Rawdih                 | روضه       | Rawḍih               |
| Rishtih                | رشته       | Rishtih              |
| Saqqa                  | سقا        | Saqqā                |
| Saqqa'i                | سقائی      | Saqqā'i              |
| Saqqa-khanih           | سقاخانه    | Saqqā-khānih         |

|             |           |             |
|-------------|-----------|-------------|
| Sardam      | سردم      | Sardam      |
| Sukhan      | سخن       | Sukhan      |
| Ta'ziyyih   | تعزیه     | Ta'ziyih    |
| Takiyyih    | تکیه      | Takiyih     |
| Tanurih     | تنوره     | Tanūrih     |
| Tarji'-band | ترجیع بند | Tarjī'-band |
| Tirmih      | ترمه      | Tirmih      |
| Tugh        | توغ       | Tūgh        |

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Sayyid Husayn Mu'tamidi, 'Azadari-yi Sunnati-yi Shi'ayan dar Iran va Jahan', in *Zuhur I* (Qum, 1378), 502-549.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 414.

<sup>3</sup> One of the figures of authority in a *futuwwat* order.

<sup>4</sup> Mu'tamidi, 'Azadari-yi Sunnati-yi Shi'ayan dar Iran va Jahan', 417.

<sup>5</sup> The Arabic form of *futuwwat* is *futuwwah*.

<sup>6</sup> The Malamati order probably originated in the third century AH in Nishapur in the Khurasan province of Iran. A Malamati is he or she who is an opponent of his/her ego (*nafs*) and therefore rejects any type of worldly pleasure. See C. H. Imber, 'Malamatiyya' in *Encyclopedia Islamica* VI (Leiden: Brill, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1991), 243-248.

<sup>7</sup> The Qalandaris were a mysterious Iranian cult of the fourth to sixth centuries AH (tenth to twelfth centuries CE). Although the name 'Qalandari' was known in society, their activities and gatherings were a secret. Due to the similarity of the Qalandaris to the Malamatis they have been conflated with them, see: Muhammad Rida Shafi'i-Kadkani, *Qalandariyyih dar Tarikh: Digardisi-ha-yi Yik Idiuluzhi* (Sukhan: Tehran, 1386), 62.

<sup>8</sup> The 'Ayyaris were usually connected with anti-social behavior including rioting, extortion, and robbery. 'Ayyaris called themselves 'Fityan'. 'Ayyari is used as a synonym for *javanmardi*.

<sup>9</sup> 'Abd al-Husayn Zarrinkub, *Just va Ju dar Tasavvufi Iran* (Amir Kabir; Tehran: 1367), 349.

<sup>10</sup> Muhammad Rida Shafi'i-Kadkani, *Qalandariyyih dar Tarikh: Digardisi-ha-yi Yik Idiuluzhi* (Sukhan: Tehran: 1386), 158.

<sup>11</sup> For further information on *futuwwat* see F. Taschner & C. Cahen, 'Futuwa' in *Encyclopedia Islamica* II, 961-969; Lloyd Ridgeon, *Morals & Mysticism in Persian Sufism: A History of Sufi-Futuwwat in Iran* (Routledge: London, 2010); Mohsen Zakeri, 'Javanmardi', in *Encyclopedia Iranica* (15 December 2008) <<http://www.iranica.com/articles/javanmardi>>. Accessed 12 January 2010.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> See Abu al-'Ala 'Afifi, *Malamatiyyih, Sufiyyih, va Futuwwat*, trans. Nusrat Allah Furuhar (Elham: Tehran, 1376), 48-49; Zarrinkub, *Just va Ju dar Tasavvufi Iran*, 349; 'Abd al-Baqi Gulpinarli, *Futuwwat dar Kishvar-ha-yi Islami*, trans. H. Subhani; (Ruzanih: Tehran, 1379), 10-12.

<sup>14</sup> See Ibn Battutah, *Al-Rihlah* I, ed. Mustafa Qassas & Muhammad 'Abd al-Mun'im (Dar Ihya al-'Ulum: Beirut, 1987/1407), 292-294, 297, 303-305.

<sup>15</sup> Ibn al-Mi'mar, *Kitab al-Futuwwah* (with an introduction by Mustafa Jawad) (Al-Muthannah: Baghdad: 1958), 135-136 & 297-298.

<sup>16</sup> '*Ghali*' refers to the beliefs of a heretical sect (the '*ghulat*') who revere the Shi'a Imams as divine incarnations.

<sup>17</sup> Husayn Wa'iz Kashifi Sabzivari, *Futuwwat-namih-yi Sultani*, ed. Muhammad Ja'far Mahjub (Bunad-i Farhang-i Iran: Tehran, 1350), 273-394. A translation has been published as *The Royal Book of Spiritual Chivalry*, trans. Jay R. Crook (Chicago: Great Books of the Islamic World, 2000). Also see Arley Loewen, 'Proper Conduct (*Adab*) is Everything: The *Futuwwat-namah-i Sultani* of Husayn Wa'iz-i Kashifi' in *Iranian Studies* XXXVI, no. 4 (2003), 543-570.

<sup>18</sup> 'Abd al-Karim Qushayri, *Risalih-yi Qushayriyyih* (Farsi translation), ed. Badi' al-Zaman Furuzanfar; ('Ilmi va Farhangi: Tehran, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., 1374), 360.

<sup>19</sup> *Mashayikh*, pl. of shaykh, meaning master and great spiritual leader.

<sup>20</sup> 'Abd al-Rahman Jami, *Nafahat al-Uns min Hadarat al-Quds* (Ittila'at: Tehran, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 1375), 33, 108, 191.

<sup>21</sup> Kashifi Sabzivari, *Futuwwat-namih-yi Sultani*, 125.

<sup>22</sup> Muhammad Rida Shafi'i Kadkani, 'Sa'di dar Salasil-i Javanmardan', in *Majallih-yi Mutali'at 'Irfsani* (Winter 1384), no. 2, 105-116.

<sup>23</sup> 'Abd al-Razzaq Kashani, *Tuhfat al-Ikhwān fi Khas'is al-Fatyan*, ed. Sayyid Muhammad Damadi ('Ilmi va Farhangi: Tehran, 1369), 230.

<sup>24</sup> Mihran Afshari & Mahdi Madayini (eds.), *Chahardah Risalih dar Bab-i Futuwwat va Asnaf* (Nashr-i Chishmih: Tehran, 1381) 290.

<sup>25</sup> Ibn Battutah, *Al-Rihlah* I, 65. For other sources on commercial water-carrying see Mirza Husayn Tahwildar *Jughrafi-yi Isfahan*, ed. Manuchihr Sutudih (Tehran University Press: Tehran, 1342), 120; and Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Qurashi, *Ma'alim al-Qurbah fi Ahkam al-Hisbah*, ed. Muhammad Mahmud Sha'ban & Sadiq Ahmad 'Isa (Cairo, 1976) 349-50.

<sup>26</sup> Mu'tamidi, 'Azadari-yi Sunnati-yi Shi'ayan dar Iran va Jahan', 450-454.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> The *gharakhanan* are those who sing farewells or greetings for the hajj pilgrims.

<sup>29</sup> The *khavasskhanan* are those Sufis who openly disclose the spiritual secrets.

<sup>30</sup> The *basatandazan* are those Sufis who are devoted to serving food to the needy.

<sup>31</sup> Kashifi, *Futuwwat-namih-yi Sultani*, 282.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 284.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 292.

<sup>34</sup> It has been said above that Imam 'Ali served water during the battles of Badr and Hudaibiyyah, but historical accuracy was never the main purpose of the *futuwwat* literature.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 293-294.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 295.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 296.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 294-295.

<sup>39</sup> The *langar* was the meeting place of the practitioners of *futuwwat*. See Muhammad Ja'far Mahjub, 'Chivalry and Early Persian Sufism', in *Classical Persian Sufism: From its Origin To Rumi* trans. Leonard Lewisohn (London: KNP, 1993), 549-581.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 296.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 235.

<sup>42</sup> Iraj Afshar, 'Futuvvat-namih-yi Saqqayan', in *Namvara-i Duktur Mahmud Afshar V*, (Bunyad-i Muqafat-i Duktur Afshar: Tehran, 1371), 3888.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 3891.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 3891 & 3892.

<sup>45</sup> *Jaridih* – a special flag of the Qalandaris which, from the Qajar period onwards, was used as a sign of mourning. *Tugh* – of Chinese origin; *tu* means sign and flag, a stick pillar that showed the gathering place of army. See Doerfer, G., *turkische und Mongolische Elemente im Neupersischen*, Wiesbaden 1963-1975, Vol. 2, p. 621. *Tugh* as a religious sign was used by *Fityan* (see: Kashifi, 286 & 288). *Dhikr* – remembrance, especially the recited prayers, supplications, and invocations.

<sup>46</sup> Iraj Afshar, *Ayin-i Qalandari (Majmu'i'i az Athar-i Qalandariyyih-i Mu'asir / A Collection of Contemporary Qalandariyya Works)* (Tehran: Intisharat-i Faravan, 1374/1995-96), 177.

<sup>47</sup> The Haydaris were a branch of Sufis and Qalandaris in the Safavid period. They followed Qutb al-Din Haydar Savuji who opposed the other groups such as the Ni'matis who followed Shah Ni'mat Allah. See: Afshar, *Ayin-i Qalandari*, 170.

<sup>48</sup> The leather clothing which Qalandars wore was known as '*tanurih*'.

<sup>49</sup> *Zirmashk* is the fabric worn beneath the water skin for the comfort of the water-carrier.

<sup>50</sup> The water-carriers, who formed different groups, had to come to an agreement with their fellow groups as to the number of water skins allocated to them.

<sup>51</sup> Afshari & Madayini (eds.), *Chahardah Risalih dar Bab-i Futuvvat*, 293.

<sup>52</sup> A garment that was fastened around the waist and was certainly a symbolic element of Qalandar apparel in the Safavid period. See Afshar, *Ayin-i Qalandari*, 162.

<sup>53</sup> *Qanturih* – a short Qalandari cloth.

<sup>54</sup> *Rishtih* – some cotton string which Qalandaris tied on their waist. It was symbol of initiation into the *futuvvat* circle.

<sup>55</sup> Mehran Afshari, 'Introduction', in *Futuvvat-namih-ha va Rasa'il-i Khaksariyyih: Sih Risalih* (Pazhuhishgah-i 'Ulum-i Insani: Tehran, 1382), 68.

<sup>56</sup> Shafi'i Kadkani, *Qalandariyyih dar Tarikh*, 277; Adham Khalkhali, *Kadu Matbakh-i Qalandari* (Surush; Tehran, 1370).

<sup>57</sup> Mehran Afshari, 'Introduction', 39.

<sup>58</sup> *Dalq* – the fur-robe of Qalandaran

<sup>59</sup> *Kamarband* – see *rishtih*, note 52.

<sup>60</sup> *Takhtih pust* – an animal hide which was used by Qalandaris as a carpet.

<sup>61</sup> See Muhammad Ja'far ibn Aqa Muhammad Ali, *Fadayaht al-Sufiyyah* (With *Tanbih al-Ghafilin* by Mahmud ibn Muammad 'Ali Bihbahani) (Ansariyan: Qum, 1413 AH), 64-67.

<sup>62</sup> James Allen, *Hunar-i Fuladsazi dar Iran*, trans. Parviz Tannavuli (Yassavuli: Tehran, 1381), 54.

<sup>63</sup> Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, *Les six voyages, de Turquie et de Perse* II, (Paris, 1981), 138.

<sup>64</sup> Ivan Gress, *Safir-i Ziba: Sargudhasht va Safarnamih-yi Safir-i Faransih dar Darbar-i Sultan Husayn*, trans. 'Ali Asghar Sa'idi (Intisharat Tehran: Tehran, 1372), 395. I must add that the striking of two discs is probably a reference to the popular mourning tradition of cymbal-striking (*sinj-zani*).

<sup>65</sup> Mayel Bektash, 'Ta'ziyeh and its Philosophy', in *Ta'ziyeh Ritual and Drama in Iran*, ed. Peter Chelkowski (New York: New York University Press & Soroush Press, 1979), 105-106.

<sup>66</sup> Husayn Partaw Baydayi Kashani, *Tarikh-i Varzish-i Bastani: Zurkhanib* (Zuvvar: Tehran, 1382), 43-44.

<sup>67</sup> A thorough consideration of the accoutrements symbolising poverty would require a separate study.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 45-46.

<sup>69</sup> See Muhammad Ja'far Mahjub, 'Sukhanvari' in *Adabiyat-i 'Ammiyanib-yi Iran* (Tehran: Nashr-i Chashma, 1382), 1053-1078.

<sup>70</sup> S. G. W. Benjamin, *Persia and the Persians*, (London, 1887), 387.

<sup>71</sup> Eugene Eubin, *La Perse d'aujourd'hui-Iran* (Mesopotamie: Paris, 1980), 170.

<sup>72</sup> 'Ali Bulukbashi, *Ta'ziyyib-khani dar Durib-yi Fath 'Ali Shah: Dar Barib-yi Ta'ziyyib va Ti'atr*, ed. Lalih Taqian (Nashr-i Markaz: Tehran, 1374), 22-44.

<sup>73</sup> Henry-Rene D'Allemagne, *Az Khurasan ta Bakhtiari* II, trans. Ghulamrida Sami'i (Tavusi: Tehran, 1378), 275.

<sup>74</sup> Muhammad Ahmad Panahi-Simnani, *Ādab va Rusum-i Mardum-i Simnan* (Pazhuhishgah: Tehran, 1374), 280 & 420.

<sup>75</sup> Hamid Farzanih, 'Azadari Hay'at-ha-yi Saqqa-ha-yi Hamadan va Hamadanian-i Muqim-i Tihran', in *Farhang-i Mardum*, no. 26 (7<sup>th</sup> year), 283-284.

<sup>76</sup> See Kashifi, *Futuwwat-namih-yi Sultani*, 296-297.

<sup>77</sup> Mu'tamidi, 'Azadari-yi Sunnati-yi Shi'ayan dar Iran va Jahan', 472-474.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 474-475.

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