Ḥusayn's Dirt: The Beginnings and Development of Šīʿī *Ziyāra* in the Early Islamic
Period

THESIS

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the earliest attestations of Šīʿī pilgrimage (*ziyāra)* in the early

Islamic era, its origins, and development. The practice of Šīʿī *ziyara*, whether in the

modern or pre-modern era has not been the subject of many studies. Most studies on Šīʿī

ritual tend to focus on Āšūrāʾ rituals that developed in the modern period, including the

Šīʿī passion play (*taʿzīya*), and self-flagellation or other self-mortification practices

(*tatbīr, zanğīr zanī*), and therefore do not shed light on early Šīʿism.

Ziyāra to Ḥusayn's tomb is one of the earliest rituals of the early Šīʿa community. For

that reason, understanding its origins and development is important for understanding the

demarcation of confessional boundaries in the early Islamic era. The goal of this paper is

to identify the time in which Šīʿī *ziyāra* began, the social and political circumstances

surrounding the practice, and identifying institutions interested in promoting the practice

for their own purposes. Through analysis of early Arab chronicles, the earliest extant Šīʿī

pilgrimage manual *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt* by Ibn Qūlawayh, and both Sunnī and Šīʿī

bibliographical dictionaries, I argue for the late 8th/early 9th century as the beginning of

the circulation of *ziyāra* traditions and the practice of *ziyāra*. I assert that the

development of *ziyāra* coincided with the institution of the Imāmī network of agents

(*wukalāʾ*) and envoys (*sufarāʾ*), who were tasked with collection the *ḫums* tithe and

served as mediators between the Imām and the Šīʿa community. Finally, I argue that

ii

ziyāra traditions must be understood in the context of the *faḍāʾil* genre, which represented an early Islamic contestation of sacred space, and that the Šīʿa scholars in the late 8th-9th century adopted this genre and its motifs to promote *ziyāra* to Karbalāʾ and to construct an authoritative discourse that affirmed the spiritual authority of the Imāms and those who claimed to represent them.

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Table of Contents

Ḥusayn's Dirt: The Beginnings and Development of Šīʿī *Ziyāra* in the Early Islamic Period

Šīʿī pilgrimage to the tomb of al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 680 CE), the Prophet Muḥammad's grandson, is one of the earliest attested specifically Šīʿī rituals in early Islam. Along with other Šīʿī rituals celebrated during the first week of the month of Muḥarram, it served to distinguish the Šīʿa community from those who did not recognize the right of Prophet's family (*ahl al-bayt*) to rule the nascent Islamic community after his death in 632 CE. Considering the importance of ritual in demarcating confessional boundaries, as well as the fact that the practice of visitation to Ḥusayn's grave (*ziyāra*) preceded the development of ʿĀšūrāʾ rituals in the Buyid period (932-1062 CE), an understanding of the origins, development, and social functions of this highly significant ritual is necessary to understand the beginnings of a distinct Šīʿī community. Yet compared to other Islamic rituals, the history and origins of the Šīʿī practice of *ziyāra* have not received adequate attention. Despite exaggerated claims of the immediate, pivotal role that the events of the Battle of Karbalāʾ in 680 CE and martyrdom of Ḥusayn played in the formation of Šīʿī ideas and identity[1]–claims which have rightly been

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[1] Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shiʿi Islam: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shiʿism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 32-33; Phillip Hitti, *History of the Arabs: From the Earliest Times to the Present,* (London: Macmillan, 1949), 191.

challenged[2]–the commemoration of Ḥusayn's martyrdom by subsequent generations did serve as a salient confessional marker. It is the objective of this study to identify the circumstances in which those commemorations occurred and their social and political contexts.

The few studies on early Šīʿī rituals that have been undertaken tend to focus on ʿĀšūrāʾ rituals and are limited to the modern period.[3] Even though Šīʿī visitation guides are the earliest attestations of the practice of *ziyāra* in Islamic history, most studies concentrate on later Sunnī tomb visitation. Attention has been given to 12[th-] and 13[th-]century pilgrimage manuals focusing on pilgrimage sites in medieval Egypt and Syria and the Sufi cult of the saints.[4] The Šīʿī practice of *ziyāra* does receive some attention in studies examining broader subjects such as Islamic ideas about death and funerary

[2] S.H.M Jafri, *Origins and Early Development of Shiʿa Islam*, (London: Longman Group, 1979), 211.

[3] Kamran Aghaie, *The Women of Karbala: Ritual Performance and Symbolic Discourses in Modern Shi'i Islam* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005) and *The Martyrs of Karbala: Shi'i Symbols and Rituals in Modern Iran* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004); David Pinault, *The Shiites: Ritual and Popular Piety in A Muslim Community* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992) and *Horse of Karbala: Muslim Devotional Life in India* (New York: Palgrave, 2001).

[4] Christopher Taylor, *In the Vicinity of the Righteous: Ziyāra and the Veneration of Muslim Saints in Late Medieval Egypt* (Leiden: Brill, 1999); Josef W. Meri, *The Cult of the Saints Among Muslims and Jews in Medieval Syria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

rituals.[5] Such studies are useful in establishing the wider cultural and social context of

early Šīʿī visitation rituals, but no works focus on Šīʿī *ziyāra*.

Though he deals with mortuary cults of late antique Christianity, Peter Brown's

historical and sociological analysis of the rise of the cult of the saints and pilgrimage in

early Christianity provides a useful starting point for examining the origins of Šīʿī

visitation of the tombs of the Imāms and pilgrimage guides. Rejecting the two-tiered

model of "elite" versus "vulgar" religion, Brown explains the controversy over late

Roman Christian devotion to the tombs' of saints as arising from the tension between the

ecumenical ideal of a Christian body united in belief and practice on the one hand and the

continued importance of kinship bonds on the other.[6] Rather than being the domain of the

recently converted pagan masses, he assigns a key role to wealthy lay Christians in

patronizing pilgrimage practices, and explains the cult of the saints as a spiritual

replication of patron-client relations that were significant in the late Roman world;

however, he maintains that such practices did not merely perpetuate social structures but

allowed participants to question the legitimacy of such relationships.[7] Elsewhere, he

explains that mortuary cults touch on the social conflict between the kinship group and

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[5] Werner Diem and Marco Schöller, *The Living and the Dead in Islam: Studies in Arabic Epitaphs*, vol. 1-3 (Wiesbaden: Harassowitz, 2004); Leor Halevi, *Muhammad's Grave: Death Rites and the Making of Islamic Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).
[6] Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, 24-32.
[7] Ibid, 63.

society as a whole: "Excessive celebration of funerary rites, undue expressions of loyalty to the memory or to the tombs of the dead, could become a lever by which one group might hope to assert themselves, in the name of the departed, among their living fellows."[8] Brown's characterization is usefully applied to Šīʿī *ziyāra* in that it seeks to elevate the social position and religious authority of the family of the Prophet, and especially the Twelve Imāms, which frequently conflicted with the Umayyad and early ʿAbbāsid caliphs' claims to political and religious hegemony. Although he does not address death or pilgrimage rites specifically, Bruce Lincoln similarly analyzes myth and ritual as authoritative discourse that either aims to perpetuate existing social and political structures, or, in the case of religions of resistance and revolution, to challenge such hegemonic discourses.[9] Such aims are not necessarily mutually exclusive, rather they can simultaneously challenge the hegemonic discourse of the religion of the elite and impose its authority on the laity, as is the case with 10th-century Šīʿī discourse. Although they have different perspectives, both Brown and Lincoln analyze religious ritual from a sociological perspective, particularly in terms of patronage and discourse about authority.

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[8] Brown, *The Cult of the Saints,* 24.

[9] Bruce Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 192-205 and *Religion, Rebellion, and Revolution: An Interdisciplinary and Cross-Cultural Collection of Essays,* ed. Bruce Lincoln (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), 268-72 and *Discourse and the Construction of Society: Comparative Studies of Myth, Ritual, and Classification* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 3-5.

Brown's brief comments on orthodox (presumably Sunnī) Islam's disapproval of mortuary cults' devotion to dead holy men touches upon the discursive issues at stake in pilgrimage practices:

> In Christian, as later in Muslim circles, tensions on this issue are articulated in terms of a conflict between correct teaching on the fate of the dead, on the one hand, and, on the other, beliefs and practices which are thought to represent misconceptions of 'true teaching,' and are frequently branded as 'superstitious' contaminations from pre-Christian or pre-Muslim sources of 'true' practice.[10]

Other studies have also characterized Sunnī opposition to the practice of *ziyāra* as a form of authoritative discourse against subordinate social groups. Halevi explains Kūfan traditionalists' particular disapproval of women's participation in funeral processions and wailing as not arising merely from the adherence of the piety-minded to putative Prophetic practice, but from the elite's anxiety over the role of women's lamentations *(niyāḥa)* in instigating pro-ʿAlid Kūfan revolts.[11] Much attention has been focused on Sunnī hostility in the late ʿAbbāsid period to the practice of *ziyāra* and the role of social and ideological discourse in Sunnī traditionists' critique of such rituals, particularly in the writings of Ibn Taymīya (1263-1328 CE) and his student Ibn Qayyim al-Ğawzīya (1292-

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[10] Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, 26.
[11] Halevi, *Muhammad's Grave*, 124-33.

1350 CE).[12] However, such studies do not discuss the functions of *ziyāra* in the early

Islamic era, as practiced by Šīʿa or Sunnīs. Nevertheless, issues of authoritative discourse

and social conflict in later Sunnī polemics are also at work in early Šīʿī discourse on

ziyāra, as I will argue below.

Examinations of the formative years of Šīʿī Islam tend to value doctrine over

ritual, with attention devoted to the origins and evolution of the doctrine of the Imāmate

and the Imām's designation of his successor (*naṣṣ*) as the distinguishing characteristic of

Imāmī Šīʿism, particularly during the lives of the Imāms Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. ca. 735

CE) and Ǧaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (ca. 700-765 CE).[13] A few studies attempt to connect the

practice of *ziyāra* to the doctrine of the Imāmate, if only in passing. Edmund Hayes,

applying Weber's concept of charisma to Šīʿism, contrasts the charismatic authority of

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[12] Schöller, *The Living and the Dead in Islam*, (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2004), vol. 2, 44, 70-82; Taylor, *In the Vicinity of the Righteou*s, 168-200, 203-212; Josef W. Meri, "The Etiquette of Devotion in the Islamic Cult of Saints," in *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, eds. James Howard Johnston and Paul Anthony Howard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 273-86.

[13] Marshall Hodgson, "How Did the Early Shīʿa Become Sectarian," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 75 (1955); Ron Buckley, "On the Origins of Shīʿī Ḥadīth," *The Muslim World,* 88, no. 2 (1998); Mohammad Ali Amir Moezzi, *The Divine Guide in Early Shi'ism: The Sources of Esotericism in Early Islam,* trans. David Streight (Albany: University of New York Press, 1994); Hossein Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation in the Formative Period of Shi'ite Islam: Abū Ja'far ibn Qiba al-Rāzī and His Contribution to Imāmite Shī'ite Thought* (Princeton: The Darwin Press, 1993); Arzina R. Lalani*, Early Shīʿī Thought: The Teachings of Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir* (London: I.B Tauris, 2000); W. Montgomery Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1973), *38-61, 156-75, 271-4; S.H.M. Jafri, The Origins and Early Development of Shi'a Islam* (London: Longman, 1979), 289-312.

Šīʿī Imāms such as ʿAlī and al-Ḥusayn, who fought against the usurpers of their rightful

claim to the caliphate, with the routinized charisma and traditional, legal authority of the

Imāms Muḥammad al-Bāqir and Ǧaʿfar al-Ṣādiq. Like others, he identifies al-Bāqir and

al-Ṣādiq's elaboration of the concept of *naṣṣ* as a key Imāmī doctrine distinct from Zaydī

or other ʿAlid claimants to the Imāmate who emphasized their qualifications based on

their uprising (*ḫurūǧ*) against the usurpers; however he also identifies the institution and

collection of alms (*ḫums*) and the practice of *ziyāra,* which he characterizes as "a

systematic representation of the symbolism of the Imām to the community," as a another

means of the routinization of charisma, though he focuses primarily on the former.[14]

Dakake also applies Weber's concept of charisma as a framework for understanding the

concept of *walāya* (allegiance or attachment to a charismatic person), which she sees as

the ideological essence of early pro-ʿAlid supporters and later Šīʿism. However, unlike

Hayes, she sees the development of Šīʿism as the constant perpetuation of charisma as

opposed to its early routinization in proto-Sunnīsm.[15] Although she endeavors to trace the

evolution of the conception of *walāya* and its use in various ʿAlid or Hāšimite revolts, she

engages in little criticism of late Umayyad and early ʿAbbāsid sources for these early

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[14] Edmund Hayes, *The Envoys of the Hidden Imām: Religious Institutions and the Politics of the Twelver Occultation Doctrine,* PhD Dissertation, 48-63.
[15] Maria Massi Dakake, *The Charismatic Community: Shiʿite Identity in Early Islam* (Albany: University of New York Press, 2007), 6-26.

events and, in general, takes the sources at face value. For example, in her brief mention of the night pilgrimage of the Tawwābūn in 684 CE to Ḥusayn's grave, she states that:

> It represents the first recorded instance in Islamic history of organized communal mourning and prayer at the tomb of a deceased and 'saintly' person. There are no references in Islamic sources to such a 'pilgrimage' for example to Muhammad's tomb in Medina at this early point in Islamic history, and ʿAlī's tomb was reportedly not widely known or publicized at this time (for fear of Umayyad desecration, no doubt).[16]

However, it remains an open question whether al-Ṭabarī's account, on the authority of Abū Miḫnaf, is a true attestation to this first *ziyāra,* or whether it is a later projection, as will be discussed below.

Recently Najam Haidar has attempted to rectify the focus on doctrine in Šīʿī studies by analyzing early Šīʿī rituals, particularly the role of the ritual curse (*qunūt*) and the audible *basmala*, as markers of sectarian identity. Although he also mentions Šīʿī *ziyāra* and Šīʿī *faḍāʾil* traditions concerning sacred Kūfan mosques as playing a prominent role in the demarcation of Sunnī and Šīʿī communal boundaries, he does not attempt to pinpoint the period in which *ziyāra* became a salient sectarian marker.[17]

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[16] Maria Massi Dakake, *The Charismatic Community,* 94.

[17] Najam Haidar, *The Origins of the Shīʿa: Identity, Ritual, and Sacred Space in Eighth-Century Kūfa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). For his discussion of role of *ziyāra* in this process, see 243-7.

In light of the paucity of works dealing specifically with early Šīʿī *ziyāra*, I will attempt to fill this research gap by examining the earliest attestations of Šīʿī *ziyāra* in Sunnī and Šīʿī sources, dating the beginning of Šīʿī pilgrimage practices, and offering suggestions about their origins and development. The sources studied are diverse, including Šīʿī traditions of the merits (*faḍāʾil*) of Karbalāʾ and Kūfa and visitation therein in Ibn Qūlawayh's (d. 979 CE) *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt*, and the chronicles of al-Ṭabarī (839-923 CE), Ibn Aʿṯam al-Kūfī (d. ca. 926-7 CE), and Abū l-Faraǧ al-Iṣbahānī (897-967 CE). As in most studies of early Islam, the late provenance of sources poses methodological challenges. This holds true especially for studies of Imāmī Šīʿism, since most of our sources for pre-Occultation events date to the late-9th and 10th century, a period that witnessed significant profound changes in Šīʿī religious thought. For that reason, scholars such as Watt tend to view Šīʿī narratives of events prior to Lesser Occultation in 874 CE as projections of later Twelver Imāmī traditionists who attempted to establish unbroken continuity between the beliefs and practices of the post-Occultation period to early luminaries such as Muḥammad al-Bāqir and Ǧaʿfar al-Ṣādiq.[18] In order to overcome this obstacle, I will examine and compare a wide variety of sources, both Sunnī and Šīʿī, and, when possible, identify common sources of traditions.

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[18] Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Though* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1973), 38-39, 54-56.

Furthermore, I will shed light on the origins of Šīʿī *ziyāra* by examining it in the context of pre-Islamic and early Islamic beliefs concerning sacred space and pilgrimage practices and the wider *faḍāʾil* genre in which early Muslims engaged in a contestation of sacred space in which no holy Islamic cities, even Mecca or Medina, had gained complete primacy. I will highlight the shared motifs and attested pilgrimage practices between Christian and Šīʿī hagiographical literature to suggest that Šīʿī conceptions of sacred space and pilgrimage practices were drawing on pre-Islamic precedents, which the early Šīʿī network of deputies (*wukalāʾ*), envoys (*sufarāʾ*) and traditionists (*muḥaddiṯūn*) adapted for their own discursive purposes. The study of common themes and motifs found in Šīʿī *ziyāra* and *faḍāʾil* traditions of other sacred cities, such as Jerusalem and Mecca, demonstrates how this same Imāmī network developing in the early-9th century adapted the *faḍāʾil* genre for polemical purposes and to encourage visitation to the tombs of the Imāms, especially the tomb of Ḥusayn at Karbalāʾ. Bruce Lincoln's theories of myth and ritual as authoritative discourse are helpful in analyzing the mythic material in *faḍāʾil* traditions to show how, rather than merely expressions of local pride, they assert claims to spiritual and political authority by the linking of sacred sites with the burial grounds of pre-Islamic prophets.

Accounts of the Tawwābūn's Visitation to Ḥusayn's Tomb

In this section, I will analyze the earliest mentions of *ziyāra* in early Islamic works and compare their contents and chains of transmission *(isnāds)* to identify their common sources and motifs to attempt to date the beginning of Šīʿī *ziyāra* practices. This undertaking is complicated by the late provenance of such works and the events which they describe, as well as obscurity of many of their sources. I will primarily examine al-Ṭabarī's (839-923 CE) *Tārīḫ al-Rusul wa l-Mulūk*, Ibn Aʿṯam al-Kūfī's *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*, Ibn Qūlawayh's (d. 979 CE) *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt*, and Abū l-Faraǧ al-Iṣbahānī's (897-967 CE) *Maqātil al-Ṭālibīyīn*.

Two events are often cited for the first act of *ziyāra* to Ḥusayn's tomb: the commemoration at Ḥusayn's tomb forty days after his death, which was attended by his family and other supporters, and the *ziyāra* made by the Tawwābūn in 684 CE. Late medieval Šīʿī accounts date the first act of *ziyāra* forty days after the battle of Karbalāʾ that occurred on the 10th of Muḥarram 61 AH/680 CE, most likely as an attempt to explain later *ziyāra* rituals performed during the annual mourning celebrations of *Arbaʿīn* (meaning, 'forty'). These reports appear well after the Buyid period in the 13th century. The earliest such report is found in ʿImād al-Dīn al-Ṭabarī's (d. 1153/4 CE) work *Bišārat al-Muṣṭafā* in which he describes Ǧābir b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Anṣārī (d. ca. 693 CE) and his bondsman *(mawlā)* ʿAṭīya al-ʿAwfī traveling to Karbalāʾ to visit Ḥusayn's grave. When they reach Karbalāʾ, Ǧābir washes himself in the Euphrates, wraps a cloth around his

waist, and puts perfume on his body. He then asks ʿAṭīya to guide him to the tomb so that

he can touch it. Upon doing so, he faints and falls on the grave. After ʿAṭīya revives him

he cries out "O Ḥusayn" three times. He then bears witness that Ḥusayn is the son of

Muḥammad, the seal of the Prophets, the fifth companion of the cloak, and that he was

appointed by ʿAlī. Then he turns to the graves of Ḥusayn's companions and says:

> I bear witness that you performed the prayers, gave alms, enjoined what is right
> and forbade what is wrong, waged *ǧihād* on the deviants (*al-mulḥidīn),* and served
> God until death came to you. By he who sent Muḥammad as a prophet in truth,
> we are partners in what you embarked on. I said to him, 'O Ǧābir, how is this so?
> For we descended into a valley, ascended a mountain, but were not slain by the
> sword. The troops' heads have been separated from their bodies, their children
> orphaned, and their wives widowed.' He said to me, 'O ʿAṭīya, I heard my
> beloved, the Messenger of God, say, 'He who loves a people will be gathered
> with them, and whoever loves the deeds of a people are associates in their deed.'
> By he who sent Muḥammad as a prophet with truth, my intentions and my
> companions' intentions are the same as Ḥusayn's and his companions.[19]

Ǧābir characterizes his pilgrimage to Karbalāʾ as a participation in the suffering

and martyrdom of Ḥusayn and his companions through his devotion to them and his

sharing in their motives, a theme that will be examined below.

The second account of this first *ziyāra* is found in Ibn Ṭāwūs's (d.1260 CE) *al-*

Malhūf ʿalā Qatlā al-Ṭufūf devoted exclusively to the Karbalāʾ narrative. In his account,

Ibn Ṭāwūs describes Ǧābir b. ʿAbd Allāh's visitation as coinciding with the return of

Ḥusayn's family from their captivity in Damascus:

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[19] ʿImād al-Dīn al-Ṭabarī, *Bišārat al-Muṣṭafā li-Šīʿa al-Murtaḍā*, ed. Ǧawād al-Qayyūmī
al-Iṣfahānī (Qum: Muʾassasat al-Našr al-Islāmī, 2001-2), 125-6.

When the women of Ḥusayn and his children returned from Syria and reached Iraq, they said to the guide, 'Take us by the way of Karbalāʾ.' They reached the place of Ḥusayn's downfall and found that Ǧābir b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Anṣārī, a group of the Banū Hāšim, and people from the Prophet's house had come to visit the grave of Ḥusayn and arrived at the same time. They met each other with weeping, mourning, and hitting [themselves] (*laṭm*). They set up assemblies of mourning (*maʾātim*) wounding to souls (*al-muqriḥa li-l-akbād*). The women of the Sawād gathered with them, and they stayed there for days.[20]

There are several reasons to doubt the historicity of these two reports. First, Ibn Ṭāwūs's description of *laṭm* and *maʾātim* seems to reflect later Šīʿī ʿĀšūrāʾ practices that developed during the Buyid era (932-1062 CE) and should, therefore, be considered anachronistic. The two reports also differ in their account of the pilgrimage's participants. Moreover, early Šīʿī *riǧāl* works, or bibliographical dictionaries, do not attribute to Ǧābir b. ʿAbd Allāh any act of *ziyāra*. The Šīʿī scholar al-Kiššī and Sunnī bibliographical dictionaries, writing at earlier dates, state that he witnessed the second *bayʿa* of the Anṣār and fought alongside ʿAlī at the battle of Ṣiffīn, and was one of the last living companions of the Prophet, giving death dates varying from 74, 77, and 78 AH.[21] One would think, given the importance of Šīʿī *ziyāra* in al-Kiššī's time in the first half of the 10th century, that Imāmī traditionists would make note of Ǧābir b. ʿAbd Allāh's pilgrimage to Ḥusayn's tomb. Moreover, the coincidence that both Ḥusayn's family and

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[20] Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Malhūf ʿalā Qatlā al-Ṭufūf,* ed. al-Šayḫ Fāris Tabrīziyān al-Ḥassūn (Tehran: Dār al-Uswa li-l-Ṭabāʿa wa-l-Našr, 2001), 225.
[21] Muḥammad b. ʿUmar al-Kiššī, *al-Riǧāl* (Qum: Muʾassasat al-Našr al-Islāmī, 2006/7), 38-40; Abū ʿUmar Yūsuf b. ʿAbd al-Barr, *al-Istīʿāb fī Maʿrifat al-Aṣḥāb,* ed. ʿAlī Muḥammad al-Baǧāwī (Beirut: Dār al-Ǧīl, 1992), 219-20.

Ǧābir b. ʿAbd Allāh arrived to Ḥusayn's tomb at the same time is improbable. Based on their anachronistic elements and late provenance, these late accounts should be treated with skepticism and seen as retrospective projections reflecting later *ziyāra* and ʿĀšūrāʾ rituals rather than historical fact.

The second earliest attested instance of *ziyāra* to Ḥusayn's tomb is that which the Tawwābūn, or the Penitents, made to Ḥusayn's grave in 684 CE during their revolt. Although the Umayyads easily crushed the revolt at ʿAyn al-Warda in January 685 CE and it had little political effect, in comparison to the contemporary revolts of Ibn Zubayr and al-Muḫtār al-Ṯaqafī, several Western scholars regard the revolt as decisive in the development Šīʿī identity and rituals. Accounts of the Tawwābūn seem to record not only the first act of *ziyāra* to Ḥusayn's tomb, including later Šīʿī rituals such as lamentation (*niyāḥa*) and prayers for intercession.

The earliest and most comprehensive account of the Karbalāʾ narrative and the revolt of the Tawwābūn is found in al-Ṭabarī's (d. 923 CE) chronicle, relying almost exclusively on Abū Miḫnaf (d. 774 CE). Most of the other early accounts preserved by earlier chroniclers, such as Ibn Saʿd (ca. 784-845 CE), Ibn Ḫayyāṭ (d. 854), al-Yaʿqūbī (d. 897 CE), al-Balāḏurī (d. 892 CE) and al-Masʿūdī (d. 956 CE),[22] offer very little

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[22] For accounts of Karbalāʾ and the Tawwābūn revolt see, Muḥammad b. Saʿd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kabīr* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Ḫānǧī, 2001), 421-60; Ḫalīfa b. Ḫayyāṭ, *Tārīḫ Ḫalīfa b. Ḫayyāṭ* (Riyadh: Dār Ṭayyiba, 1985), 234-235, 262; al-Yaʿqūbī, 155-60, 173; al-Balāḏurī, *Ansāb al-Ašrāf*, ii. 334-43; al-Masʿūdī, *Murūǧ al-Ḏahab*, vol. 3, 54-60, 93-6.

additional information and seem to either be condensing al-Ṭabarī's accounts or

independently drawing upon Abū Miḥnaf, differing only in minor details.[23]

Another important source of one of the earliest attestations of *ziyāra*, particularly

of the Tawwābūn is Ibn Aʿṯam's *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*. The date of Ibn Aʿṯam's death and his

writing of *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* is disputed and has not been definitively settled; however, since

I will base my argument for the earliest attestations of *ziyāra* on Ibn Aʿṯam's work, a

survey of the debates and issues around the dating of his life and work is in order.

Two dates have been advocated for the dating of Ibn Aʿṯam's writing of *Kitāb al-*

Futūḥ and his death. The usual death date offered by the earliest investigations is

314/926-7 CE. This date seems to be based on Frahn's dating of the text which

subsequent scholars adopted.[24] An earlier date of 819-20 CE has been argued most

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[23] The only significant difference between al-Yaʿqūbī and Ibn Aʿṯam's account is that al-Yaʿqūbī's description of the episode of Ḥusayn's chastisement of Zaynab for weeping over his foreshadowed death is told from the first-person perspective of ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn, al-Yaʿqūbī, 156-7.

[24] C.-M Frahn, *Indications bibliographiques relatives pour la plupart a la literature historico-geographique des arabes, des persans, et des turcs* (St. Petersburg: Academie imperiale des sciences, 1845) 16, no. 53. Frahn's date appears with a question mark and he does not offer any sources for it. Lindstedt suggests that Frahn estimated the date by simply placing Ibn Aʿṯam's death date between those of ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd al-Ḥarrānī and Ibn ʿAdī's, 288 AH and 365 AH, respectively. Ibn Aʿṯam appears as an intermediary transmitter between these two transmitters in *Tārīḫ Ǧuǧān*, see discussion below.; Carl Brockelmann, GAL (Leiden: Brill, 1943), 220; Fuat Sezgin, GAS, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 329; Charles Rieu, *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the British Mueseum*, vol. 1 (London: British Museum, 1879-83) 151a; C.A. Storey and Francois De Blois, *Persian Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Survey,* vol. 1, no. 261 (London: Royal Asiatic Society Survey, 1927), 207; Ilkka Lindstedt, "Al-Madāʾinī's Kitāb al-Dawla and the

forcefully by Conrad[25] and other scholars,[26] primarily based on the Persian translation of

Ibn Aʿṯam's work, the author of which states that his translation was based on a

manuscript dated to 204 AH. Conrad and Lindstedt make the most extensive arguments

for their respective dates, so it is worthwhile to discuss their arguments.

Both Conrad and Lindstedt agree that Ibn Aʿṯam's *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* is a multi-

layered text whose sections were written by different authors at different times. Their

conclusions about the date of Ibn Aʿṯam's text are largely based on how they understand

its historical transmission. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī's (1179-1229 CE) brief entry on Ibn Aʿṯam

attributes three works to him: a *Kitāb al-Maʾlūf*, a *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* which narrates up to

the reign of Hārūn al-Rašīd (r. 786-809 CE), and a *Kitāb al-Tārīḫ* which narrates up to

the last days of al-Muqtadir (r. 908-932 CE). Yāqūt states that Ibn Aʿṯam began his *Kitāb*

al-Tārīḫ during the reign of al-Maʾmūn (r. 813-33 CE) and that it is almost a continuation

(*ḏayl*) of *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*.[27] Conrad argues that the abrupt end of *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* and the

beginning of *Kitāb al-Tārīḫ* is marked in the extant text with the formula *tamma tārīḫ al-*

Death of Ibrāhīm al-Imām," in *The Transmission of al-Madāʾinī's Material:*
Historiographical Studies (Helsinki: University of Helsinki Press, 2013), 1-26.
[25] Lawrence I. Conrad, "Ibn Aʿṯam and his History," *al-ʿUṣūr al-Wusṭā* 23 (2015), 87-
125 and "The Conquest of Arwād: A Source-Critical Study in the Historiography of the
Early Medieval Near East," in *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East, Vol. I,*
Problems in the Literary Source Material (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1992), 349-50.
[26] M.A. Shaban, "Ibn Aʿṯham al-Kūfī", in *EI²;* Daniel Elton, "Ketāb al-Fotuḥ,"
Encylopaedia Iranica, 2012.
[27] Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Iršād al-arīb ilā Maʿrifat al-Adīb*, ed. D.S. Margoliouth (London:
Luzac, 1923), 379.

Futūḥ, that the latter is contained in the extant manuscript of *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*, and that Ibn Aʿṯam died before completing the former. He cites the lack of formulaic eulogies to God at the end of *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*, the lack of distinctive Šīʿī ideas, the work's preoccupation with al-Šāfiʿī (d. 820 CE) in the *Kitāb al-Tārīḫ*, and its adoption of standard annalistic conventions common to late-9th/early-10th historiography in the later portion of the book as evidence that Ibn Aʿṯam's work was continued later by Sunnī authors. Furthermore, he explains away the extant copies' lack of references to the reign of Muqtadir as a result of manuscript damage such that the last portion of the *Kitāb al-Tārīḫ* has not survived.[28] Lindstedt, on the other hand, claims that the *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* described by Yāqūt is all that has come down to us. Though he agrees that the *ḏayl* was compiled by later authors, he bases his claim on the *ḏayl's* narration from al-Maʾmūn (813-833 CE) up to the caliph al-Muʿtaṣim (r. 833-842 CE), which does not line up with Yāqūt's description.[29] Lindstedt's explanation for the discrepancy between Yāqūt's description and extant text seems the simplest explanation. Though a creative explanation, there is no evidence for any manuscript damage, so I will assume that the *Kitāb al-Tārīḫ,* as described by Yāqūt, is no longer extant.

Conrad's analysis of Ibn Aʿṯam's *isnād*s is inconsistent in that, although he admits that Ibn Aʿṯam often omits intermediate transmitters between him and historians such as

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[28] Conrad, "Ibn Aʿṯam and his History," 103-6.
[29] Lindstedt, "al-Madāʾinī's Kitāb al-Dawla and the Death of al-Imām Ibrāhīm, 16-17.

al-Madāʾinī (752-843 CE), in other places he seems to take such attributions at face value when it supports an early dating for Ibn Aʿtam's life. For example, he notes that in two traditions Ibn Aʿtam directly cites Nuʿaym b. Muzāḥim al-Minqarī, whereas in two others *isnād*s he cites him through intermediaries. Similarly, he recognizes that Ibn Aʿtam cites Ibn al-Kalbī (d. 819 CE) through Abū Yaʿqūb Isḥāq b. Yūsuf al-Fazārī,[30] yet, shortly thereafter, he is confident that Ibn Aʿtam heard his traditions from ʿAlī b. ʿĀṣim b. Suhayb (d. 816 CE) and al-Madāʾinī (d. 843 CE) directly.[31] Therefore, it seems that, although he is willing to admit the possibility of intermediaries between Ibn Aʿtam and his cited authorities, elsewhere he states that they were contemporaries with him. This seems largely to be based on a prior assumption of an early death date for Ibn Aʿtam.

Lindstedt offers compelling biographical evidence for Ibn Aʿtam's late death date based on his inclusion in a chain of transmission contained in Ḥamza b. Yūsuf al-Sahmī's (d. 1038 CE) *Tārīḫ Ǧurǧān* as follows: Abū Aḥmad ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAdī al-Ḥāfiẓ (d. ca. 976 CE) < Abū Muḥammad Aḥmad b. Aʿtam b. Naḏīr b. al-Ḥubāb b. Kaʿb b. Ḥabīb al-Azdī al-Kūfī < Abū ʿUmar [ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd b. Muḥammad] al-Imām al-Ḥarrānī (d. 880 CE). Ibn Aʿtam's place in this *isnād* is corroborated by al-Ḏahabī, Ibn Mākūlā, and Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn's description of Ibn Aʿtam as Ibn ʿAdī's teacher.[32] Therefore, the death

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[30] Conrad, "Ibn Aʿtam and His History," 115-16.
[31] Ibid, 116-17.
[32] Lindstedt, "Al-Madāʾinī's Kitāb al-Dawla and the Death of al-Imām Ibrāhīm," 17-18.

dates of Ibn Aʿtam's interlocutors push Ibn Aʿtam's life to the late 9th/early10th

centuries, almost a century after Conrad's proposed composition date for *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*.

Based on Lindstedt's arguments, I will adopt 926-7 CE as the death date of Ibn

Aʿtam. As Lindstedt admits, his argument does not explain the Persian translation's date

of 204 AH (819/820 CE) as the copying of the text. Although Lindstedt does not seem to

place much stock in Conrad's suggestion that the scribe misread 254 or even 304 as

204,[33] it seems possible because of the orthographic similarity of the Arabic numerals 2

and 3 and 0 and 5, and should not be ruled out. More studies on the Persian translation, as

well as the publication of a critical edition, may also help to resolve the issue of dating

Ibn Aʿtam's *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*.

Both al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Aʿtam's accounts of the Tawwābūn relate how the

ringleaders of the revolt who summoned Ḥusayn to Kūfa, but did not come to his aid, felt

great remorse after Ḥusayn was killed. To them, atonement for their abandonment of

Ḥusayn was only possible by taking vengeance on Ḥusayn's murderers or dying in the

attempt. They made Sulaymān b. Ṣurad al-Ḫuzāʿī their commander and vowed to gather

at al-Nuḫayla at an undetermined date. After the death of the Umayyad caliph Yazīd (r.

680-83 CE), they gathered at al-Nuḫayla and made a night journey to the place of

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[33] See Lindstedt, 19-20. Conrad also seems to have abandoned the argument of scribal error in his most recent article on Ibn Aʿtam, Conrad, "Ibn Aʿtam and his History," *Al-ʿUṣūr al-Wusṭā* 23 (2015), 87-125.

Ḥusayn's grave, first stopping at Dayr al-Aʿwar, continuing until they reached Aqsās of

the Banū Mālik on the banks of the Euphrates. There they began to weep over his death

and their abandonment of him:

> When Sulaymān b. Ṣurad and his companions reached the grave of Ḥusayn they
> cried out with one shout, 'O Lord, we abandoned the son of the daughter of our
> Prophet! Forgive us of our past [sins] and turn to us for you are the Forgiving and
> the Merciful. Have mercy on Ḥusayn and his true, martyred companions. We ask
> you to bear witness, O Lord, that we were killed for the same [reason] as they
> were. If you do not forgive us, then surely we will be among the losers.' They
> stayed with him one day and one night praying, weeping, and making
> supplication, and the people did not cease asking mercy on him that day until they
> prayed the daybreak prayer of the next day at his grave which increased their
> rage. Then they prepared their mounts, and Sulaymān ordered the people to
> depart. Not one man departed until he came to the grave of Ḥusayn, stood before
> him, asked mercy and forgiveness for him. He [the narrator Abū Ṣādiq] said, 'By
> God, I saw them thronging around his grave more than? the thronging of people
> around the Black Stone.'[34]

It is this passage that has prompted some Western scholars to consider the

Tawwābūn's visitation of Ḥusayn's grave as the origin of later Šīʿī *ziyāra*, ʿĀšūrāʾ, and

taʿziya rituals due to perceived parallels between the Tawwābūn's sentiments and actions

at the tomb and later Šīʿī *ziyāra* practices. For example, Dakake, in her brief discussion of

the night pilgrimage of the account, states that: "It represents the first recorded instance

in Islamic history of organized communal mourning and prayer at the tomb of a deceased

and 'saintly' person. There are no references in Islamic sources to such a 'pilgrimage' for

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[34] Muḥammad b. Ǧarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīḫ al-Rusul wa l-Mulūk*, vol. 5, ed. Muḥammad Abū
l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1968), 589-90; Ibn Aʿtam, *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*, vol. 6,
(Ḥaydarābād: Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif al-ʿUthmānīyah, 1968), 69.

example to Muhammad's tomb in Medina at this early point in Islamic history, and ʿAlī's tomb was reportedly not widely known or publicized at this time (for fear of Umayyad desecration, no doubt)."[35] However, it remains an open question whether al-Ṭabarī's attestation of a certain ritual practices such as lamentation and the making of supplication to Ḥusayn is historical or a later projection inserted into the account of the Tawwābūn revolt. Similarly, Ayoub also interprets the revolt of the Tawwābūn as an early manifestation of *taʿziya*:[36]

> This movement was to play an important role in the subsequent history of the Muslim community and, more importantly for our purpose, in the development of the *taʿziyah* tradition through the unswerving devotion of its members to the memory of the son of the Apostle of God and their equally unswerving determination to avenge.[37]

Though drawing parallels between the revolt of the Tawwābūn and later Šīʿī rituals, he offers no textual evidence to demonstrate such a link. Similarly, Halm identifies the Tawwābūn's preoccupation with their sin (*ḏanb* or *ḫaṭāʾ*) of failing to aid Ḥusayn at Karbalāʾ and desire to attain atonement (*tawba*) through martyrdom as "the constitutive

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[35] Dakake, *The Charismatic Community*, 94.
[36] Ayoub defines *taʿziya* broadly as "the sharing of the entire life of the suffering family of Muḥammad," not to be confused with the Iranian passion plays of the same name, Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering in Islam*, 148.
[37] Ibid, 152.

elements of Shi'a Islam," and the ethos of the Tawwābūn with ʿĀšūrāʾ rituals: "The Kufan penitents' movement marked the true beginning of Shi'i Islam. It expressed all the essential elements and concepts of Shi'i piety."[38] However, he does not seek to examine the historical or textual transmission of these traditions or how or when they became ritualized. A more sophisticated textual analysis of the idea of atonement (*kaffāra*) in the Tawwābūn revolt is found in Hawting's study in which he argues that God's injunction to the Israelites in 2:54 of the Qurʾān to "turn in repentance to your Creator and kill yourselves…and he will relent towards you," which became the rallying call of the Tawwābūn, was an early Islamic interpretation of Jewish mourning traditions concerning the Day of Atonement with which the 10th of Muharram coincided.[39] Ayoub and Halm's identifications of the origins of Šīʿī rituals in the revolt of the Tawwābūn, in addition to adopting amorphous units of analysis, such as guilt, sin, and desire for atonement, are hampered by an absence of historical and textual research in the transmission and reception of religious ideas and practices.

Moreover, despite these parallels between the actions and beliefs of the Tawwābūn and later Šīʿī rituals, there are important differences. It is noteworthy that

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[38] Heinz Halm, *Shi'a Islam: From Religion to Revolution,* trans. Allison Brown (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1997), 18-20 and *Shiism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), 140.

[39] G.R. Hawting, "The Tawwābūn, Atonement, and ʿĀshūrāʾ" in *The Development of Islamic Ritual*, ed. G.R Hawting (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), 174-78.

ʿImād al-Dīn al-Ṭabarī's descriptions of visitation as substitution for martyrdom at

Ḥusayn's side, examined above, though similar, differ from the Tawwābūn's yearning for

martyrdom as a means of atonement. Indeed, it is interesting that later Šīʿī accounts do

not highlight the uprising and martyrdom of the Tawwābūn as the ideal form of devotion

to prophet's family, but rather lamentation of Ḥusayn's death and visitation of his tomb.

In the later quietist, Imāmī Šīʿī tradition, the ideal form of devotion to Ḥusayn is not

uprising (ḫurūǧ) against Ḥusayn's murderers, but lamentation and visitation to his tomb.

In fact, the Imāms expressly disapproved of other ʿAlids' revolts and the waging of

ǧihād, the duty of which was overridden by the doctrine of dissimulation (taqiyya).[40]

Therefore, claims of seamless continuity between pilgrimage traditions expressed in the

accounts of the Tawwābūn with later Imāmī Twelver Šīʿī rituals are problematic.

Instead, I propose that the Tawwābūn's visit to Ḥusayn's tomb be understood in

the context of early Arabic tribal culture and the social and political functions of the

ǧabbāna, or tribal cemetery. This is not to deny the soteriological notions of atonement

motivating the participants in the revolt, but to suggest that the Tawwābūn's revolt also

be understood as a prototypical social institution of Arab tribal politics. Halevi and Djaït

have analyzed the ǧabbāna as spaces of civil disorder in which lamentations of fallen

tribesman, usually conducted by women, spurred the tribe to take revenge on their killers,

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[40] Denis McEoin, "Aspects of Militancy and Quietism in Imami Shi'ism," *Bulletin (British Society for Middle Eastern Studies)* vol. 11, No. 1 (1984), 19-20.

particularly during the turbulent period between the Battle of Karbalāʾ and the revolt of al-Muḫtār.[41] This practice continued into the period of early ʿAbbāsid Šīʿī revolts, including the revolt of Abū al-Sarāyā and Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. Ismāʿīl, which witnessed the flaring of ʿAlid revolts after visitations to Ḥusayn's tomb.[42] Seen in this light, the Tawwābūn's pilgrimage to Ḥusayn's grave and their dual mission of taking revenge upon his murderers and atoning for their sin of abandoning him differ from later quietist Imāmī Šīʿī *ziyara* traditions in the earliest pilgrimage manuals.

Ibn Aʿṯam's account of the Tawwābūn revolt, overall, does not differ significantly from Abū Miḫnaf's account as related by al-Balāḏurī and al-Ṭabarī. However, a small, but important, addition found in Ibn Aʿṯam's text of the account related above adds that as Sulaymān b. Ṣurad's companions were departing from Ḥusayn's tomb that they said farewell to him (*yuwaddaʿahū*).[43] The *wadāʿ* to Ḥusayn would later become an important sequence in prescribed prayers in Šīʿī pilgrimage manuals;[44] thus, it is possible that Ibn Aʿṯam added it to project a contemporary Šīʿī ritual onto the revolt of the Tawwābūn. Lindstedt notes Ibn Aʿṯam's practice of significantly reworking his sources with "legends

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[41] Halevi, *Muhammad's Grave*, 133; Hichem Djaït, *al-Kūfa: Naissance de la ville islamique* (Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 1986), 285-296.

[42] Abū al-Faraǧ al-Iṣbahānī, *Maqātil al-Ṭālibīyīn*, ed. al-Sayyid Aḥmad Ṣaqir (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Aʿlamī li l-Maṭbūʿāt, 1998), 426-27.

[43] Ibn Aʿṯam, vol. 6, 69.

[44] Ǧaʿfar b. Qūlawayh, *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt* (Qum: Našr Al-Faqāha, 1998), 104-6, 435-444.

and hearsay."[45] However, the veracity of Ibn Aʿṯam's additions is irrelevant for the purpose of dating the practice and origins of rituals associated with *ziyāra*. They attest to rituals and practices contemporary with Ibn Aʿṯam at the very least.

Another parallel between al-Ṭabarī's account and later Šīʿī pilgrimage manuals is the comparison between the practice of visiting Ḥusayn's tomb to the *Ḥaǧǧ*. Dakake notes this comparison and describes it as connecting the sanctity of Ḥusayn's blood descent from the Prophet to that of the Black Stone.[46] However, this seems to be just a personal interpretation, since she cites no one to attest to such an association. This interesting description in the account of the Tawwābūn's night pilgrimage touches on a trend in *faḍāʾil* traditions, to be examined below, in which the Dome of the Rock and Ḥusayn's tomb are compared to the Black Stone in the Kaʿba at Mecca. Thus, al-Ṭabarī's report and its comparison between Ḥusayn's grave and the Kaʿba reflect an early competition between cities vying for prominence that became a reoccurring theme in the *faḍāʾil* genre, which will be examined in more detail below.

Also interesting is the scarce mention of Karbalāʾ in the account of Ḥusayn's death and the revolt of the Tawwābūn. Although the site of Karbalāʾ is mentioned in both Ibn Aʿṯam and al-Ṭabarī's accounts of the battle, they locate Ḥusayn's tomb, which

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[45] Ilkka Lindstedt, *The Transmission of al-Madāʾinī's Material,* 40-44.
[46] Dakake, *The Charismatic Community*, 94.

Sulaymān b. Ṣurad and his companions visited, at Aqsās on the banks of the Euphrates.[47]

In his geographical dictionary al-Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī (1179-1229 CE) describes Aqsās as a

village or a district in Kūfa from which several ʿAlids took there *nisba*s, such as the

descendent of Zayd b. ʿAlī, Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad al-Aqsāsī.[48] Other geographical works

of the 10th century have little more to say about Karbalāʾ except its location west of the

Euphrates opposite the city of Qaṣr b. Mālik (later to become the ʿAbbāsid city of al-

Hāšimīya established by Abū al-ʿAbbās).[49] Although others associate Karbalāʾ with the

death of Ḥusayn, only al-Muqaddasī (d. ca. 990 CE) and al-Masʿūdī (d. 956 CE) mention

the presence of his tomb there. Also noteworthy are the multiple, varying etymological

explanations for the word Karbalāʾ itself. Al-Ḥamawī identifies Karbalāʾ as "the spot in

which Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī was killed on the fringe of Kūfa's wasteland," and offers four

different etymologies for it. He mentions the common explanation that it is a combination

of the words "calamity and affliction" (*karb wa-balāʾ*), which he supports with a report

that upon arriving at the spot of the battle, Ḥusayn asks his companions its name. When

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[47] Ibn Aʿṯam, vol. 6, 66-7; al-Ṭabarī, vol. 5, 589. Dakake also mistakenly identifies Karbalāʾ as the destination of the Tawwābūn's pilgrimage.

[48] Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿǧam al-Buldān*, (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1977), vol. 1, 236.

[49] al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm fī Maʿrifa al-Aqālīm*, in Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum, ed. M.J. de Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1967), vol. 3, 130; Abu Ishák al-Fárisí al-Istakhrí, *Viae Regnorum: Descriptio Ditionis Moslemicae*, in Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum, ed. M.J. de Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1967), vol. 1, 85; Ibn al-Fakîh al-Hamadhânî, *Compendium Libri: Kitâb al-Boldân*, in Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum, ed. M.J. de Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1967), vol. 5, 183.

one of them responds that it is called Karbalāʾ, in the contracted form, Ḥusayn exclaims:

"A land of calamity and affliction (*arḍi karbin wa-balāʾ*)![50] This seems to be a folk

etymology that is provided to Arabicize a foreign word by analyzing it in terms of Arabic

roots and morphology. This later Arabicization of the word possibly reflects the

subsequent rise in importance in Šīʿī history and ritual of a locale that receives little

notice in the earliest Arab and Syriac chronicles.[51] Another has asserted that the

etymology of Karbalāʾ is a combination of Akkadian and Aramaic with *karb* (Ak.

"temple") and *īlā* (Aram. "god"), thus meaning "temple of the gods." The author also

claims also asserts that Karbalāʾ was the site of a temple during the Babylonian era but

does not cite any sources for his assertion.[52] More studies need to be conducted before

definitively identifying the word Karbalāʾ with an Akkadian etymology and the site with

an Assyrian religious background. In any case, the confusion surrounding the origins of

the word and its subsequent Arabization and Islamicization indicate that traditions

concerning the Battle of Karbalāʾ, and Ḥusayn's burial there, were elaborated much later

when it became the site of religious devotion; however, the possibility of an Akkadian or

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[50] al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿǧam al-Buldān*, vol. 4, 445.
[51] For an examination of the few Syriac sources on Karbalāʾ and discussion of possible reasons for the general silence in the early Arabic and Syriac sources, see Antoine Borrut, "Remembering Karbalāʾ: The Construction of an Early Islamic Site of Memory," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*. 42 (2015), 258-70.
[52] Muḥammad Ḥasan Muṣṭafā Āl Klīdār, *Madīnat al-Ḥusayn* (Baghdad: Maṭbaʿat al-Naǧāḥ, 1947), 11.

Christian religious significance of the site also suggests the possibility that Islamic

scholars were reworking older traditions.

For the most part, Ibn Aʿṭam al-Kūfī produces condensed accounts of Abū

Miḥnafʾs traditions; thus, the possibility expressed by Shaban that Ibn Aʿṭam's account

could provide an alternative to al-Ṭabarī's chronicle does not seem to hold for the events

of Karbalāʾ and the Tawwābūn revolt.[53] However, Ibn Aʿṭam produces traditions

concerning these events that are not found in al-Ṭabarī and seem to be coming from a

different source. Most of these are mythical material and for the most part do not

significantly alter our understanding of the historical facts of the Battle of Karbalāʾ and

the Tawwābun revolt; however, they are significant because they are the earliest

attestations to important Šīʿī *ziyāra* rituals, particularly the taking of dirt from Ḥusayn's

tomb. Furthermore, much of his material and their chains of transmissions (*isnāds*) are

also found in our third important work on Šīʿī *ziyāra*, Ibn Qūlawayh's (d. 979 CE) *Kāmil*

al-Ziyārāt, the earliest extant example of Šīʿī pilgrimage manuals *(kutub al-ziyāra).* Little

is known about Ibn Qūlawayh, and though later sources attribute many works to him,

only his pilgrimage manual has survived. From the Iranian city of Qum, he studied under

Šīʿī luminaries such as al-Kulaynī (d. 940/941 CE) and Ibn Bābawayh (d. 923-991 CE)[54]

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[53] Shaban, M.A., "Ibn Aʿtham al-Kūfī", in *EI²*.
[54] Sayyid Muḥsin al-Amīn alʿĀmilī, *Aʿyān al-Šīʿa*, vol. 4 (Beirut: Dār al-Taʿāraf li-l-Maṭbūʿāt, 1983), 154.

both of whom were instrumental in the canonization of Šīʿī law, with their works *al-Kāfī* and *Man lā yaḥḍuruh al-faqīh*, respectively, being considered among the four canonical Šīʿī works (*al-kutub al-arbaʿa*). Many of the reports included in his pilgrimage manual are on the authority of these two principal figures. Al-Šayḫ al-Mufīd, also a towering figure in Šīʿī scholarship and law, preserved many of Ibn Qūlawayh's traditions in his pilgrimage manual *Kitāb al-Mazār*, which is an abridgement of a longer work of his that is no longer extant.[55] By the 10th century, Qum occupied a prominent position in Šīʿī jurisprudence. It was conquered by the Arabs in 644 CE and in the early 8th century began to attract pro-ʿAlid *muḥadditūn* many of whom fled Iraq after participating in unsuccessful ʿAlid and Zaydī revolts. By the 9th century, unlike the dispersed Šīʿī communities in Iraq and the Ḥiǧāz, Qum was a predominantly Imāmī Šīʿī city controlled by the Ašʿarī tribe who were notorious for their defiance of the caliphs in Baghdad, often refusing to pay the land tax (*al-ḫarāǧ*) and killing ʿAbbāsid envoys.[56]

Although Ibn Aʿtam prefaces his account of the Battle of Karbalāʾ and the revolt of the Tawwābūn with a collective *isnād*, the individual chains of transmission are often abbreviated and contain obscure or unknown (*maǧhūl*) transmitters; however, he includes several illustrious *aḫbārī*s, such as Abū Miḫnaf (d. 774 CE) and Hišām al-Kalbī (d. 819

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[55] Muḥammad al-Šayḫ al-Mufīd, *Kitāb al-Mazār*, (Qum: Muʾassasat al-Imām al-Mahdī, 1988), 16.
[56] Andrew J. Newman, *The Formative Period of Twelver Shīʿism*: *Ḥadīth as Discourse Between Qum and Baghdad* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 2000), 38-45.

CE),[57] in addition to *isnād*s including al-Wāqidī (748-823 CE).[58] According to Ibn al-Nadīm, al-Wāqidī also wrote two *maqtal*s of Ḥusayn and had secret Šīʿī loyalties.[59] Thus, it is possible that some material in Ibn Aʿṯam's chronicle not found in al-Ṭabarī, or other sources relying on Abū Miḫnaf, derive from al-Wāqidī's *maqtal* works. Ibn Aʿṯam also provides *isnād*s going back Muḥammad al-Bāqir that are possibly the sources for his traditions with clearly Šīʿī elements.

Ibn Aʿṯam begins his account of the events leading up to the Battle of Karbalāʾ with mythological traditions in which the slaying of Ḥusayn is miraculously foretold to Muḥammad and other companions. Although such material cannot be said to be historical, they contain several motifs that are also found in later Šīʿī *faḍāʾil* traditions and pilgrimage manuals. The first report describes Umm Faḍl, the wife of ʿAbbās,

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[57] al-Kalbī < Abū Miḫnaf < al-Ḥusayn b. Kuṯayr al-Azdī < his father; and al-Kalbī < Muḥammad b. ʿAwāna b. Ḥakam b. al-Hayṯam b. ʿAdī < ʿAbd al-Malik b. Sulaymān < Ayyūb b. Bašīr b. ʿAbd al-Maʿāfirī.

[58] Abū Ḥātim Sahl b. Muḥammad al-Ṣāniʿ [al-Siǧistānī] (d. ca. 869) < Nuʿaym b. Muzāḥim al-Minqarī (d. ca. 828) < Muḥammad b. ʿAmr b. Wāqid al-Wāqidī (d. ca. 823) < Muʿāḏ b. Muḥammad b. Yaʿqūb b. ʿUtba al-Qarašī < Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafīya (d. ca. 700); Abū Walīd b. Razīn < Abū Isḥāq [ʿAmr b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Subayʿī] al-Hamḏānī (d. ca. 744) < Abū ʿUmar Ḥafṣ b. Muḥammad < Ǧaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 765); al-Wāqidī < Muḥammad b. ʿUbayd Allāh b. ʿAnbasa < Muḥammad b. ʿUbayd Allāh < ʿAmr < his father; al-Wāqidī < ʿAbd al-Malik b. Sulaymān [al-Qarqasāʾī] < Ayyūb b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Muṣʿab < his father; al-Wāqidī < ʿAbd Allāh b. Buǧayr al-Sahmī < Saʿīd b. Qays al-Hamdānī (d. ca. 665); al-Wāqidī < Yaʿqūb b. Sulaymān < Banū ʿAbd Allāh al-Awsī < ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. al-Munḏir < Banū ʿAdī b. al-Naǧǧār < al-ʿAlāʾ b. Yaʿqūb al-ʿAǧlānī.

[59] Muḥammad b. Isḥāq b. al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, ed. Ayman Fuʾād Sayyid, vol. 2 (London: Al-Furqān Islamic Heritage Foundation, 2009) 307-9.

describing to the Prophet a disturbing dream she had in which a piece of the Prophet's body was cut off and placed in her lap. The Prophet tells her to be happy because her dream has foretold the birth of a son to Fāṭima for whom Umm Faḍl will be a wet-nurse. The narration then rushes ahead to after Ḥusayn's birth on a day when Umm Faḍl is nursing him. The Prophet comes to her house, takes Ḥusayn, begins playing with him, and Ḥusayn urinates on his robe, prompting Umm Faḍl to pinch him, for which the Prophet scolds her. She walks away to bring water to wash the Prophet's robe, but when she comes back she sees the Prophet crying. When she asks him why he is crying, he replies: "Gabriel came to me and informed me that my *umma* will kill this son of mine on the bank of the Euphrates, and he brought me red dirt."[60]

The motif of red or bloody dirt also later proliferates in Šīʿī traditions, likely a result of the rising popularity of the practice of ingesting dirt from Ḥusayn's grave at Karbalāʾ for its curative qualities, which will be examined further below. Ibn Aʿtam goes on to relate other traditions containing the dirt motif which are not entirely consistent with each other. He narrates Ibn ʿAbbas' description of angels informing Muḥammad of the death of Ḥusayn:

> I saw when Gabriel came down in a group of angels. They spread their wings weeping with sorrow for Ḥusayn [*qad našarū aǧniḥatahum yabkūna ḥuznan minhum ʿalā l-Ḥusayn*], and with Gabriel was a handful of dirt from the dirt of Ḥusayn that exuded pungent musk [*wa-ǧibrīlu maʿahu qabḍatun min turbati l-Ḥusayni tafūḥu miskan aḏfar*] which he gave to Fāṭima, the daughter of the

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[60] Ibn Aʿtam al-Kūfī, *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*, vol. 4, 211-12.

Prophet, and said: O Beloved of God, this is the dirt of your son Ḥusayn. The accursed ones will slay him in the land of Karbalāʾ. The Prophet then said to him: My dear Gabriel! Will a nation that slays my progeny and the progeny of my daughter prosper? [*hal tufliḥu ummatun taqtulu farḫī wa-farḫi ibnatī*] Gabriel replied: No, rather God will afflict them with disagreement and their hearts and tongues will differ to the end of the age [*yaḍribuhumu llāhu bi-l-iḫtilāfi fa-taḫtalifu qulūbuhum wa-alsinatuhum āḫir al-dahr*].[61]

A similar account is found in *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt:*

Ibn ʿAbbās said: The angel that came to Muḥammad informing him of the slaying of Ḥusayn was Gabriel, the faithful spirit, [with] spread wings, weeping and shouting [*manšūru l-aǧniḥati bākiyan ṣāriḫan*]. He carried some of the dirt of Ḥusayn as it was exuding like musk [*ḥamila min turbati l-Ḥusayni wa-hiya tafūḥu ka-l-miski*]. The Prophet said: Will my *umma* that slays my progeny prosper? [*wa-tufliḥu ummatī taqtulu farḫī*] Gabriel replied: God will afflict them with disagreement and their hearts will differ. [*yaḍribuhumu llāhu bi-l-iḫtilāfi fa-taḫtalifu qulūbuhum*][62]

The similar contents and phrasing of the report suggest a possible common source. In fact, the *isnād* that Ibn Aʿtam provides at the beginning of the account shares common names with those in Ibn Qūlawayh's account.[63] The common link in the two accounts seems to be a ʿAmr b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAnbasa. Although Ibn Aʿtam lists al-Wāqidī's source as Muḥammad b. ʿUbayd Allāh, another manuscript of Ibn Aʿtam's *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* has Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAnbasa rather than Muhammad b.

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[61] Ibn Aʿtam, vol. 4, 212-13.
[62] Ibn Qūlawayh, 131.
[63] Ibn Aʿtam's *isnād*: al-Wāqidī < Muḥammad b. ʿUbayd Allāh b. ʿAnbasa < Muḥammad b. ʿUbayd Allāh < ʿAmr < his father; Ibn Qūlawayh's *isnād*: Muḥammad b. Qūlawayh < al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī al-Zaʿfarānī < Muḥammad b. ʿAmr al-Aslamī < ʿAmr b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAnbasa < Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAmr < his father < Ibn ʿAbbās.

ʿUbayd Allāh b. ʿAnbasa,[64] suggesting the possibility of corruption of the names in the chain of transmission. This is not the only case in *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* in which the names of transmitters seem to be garbled; Conrad notes the damaged state of Ibn Aʿṯam's *isnāds*, as well as his tendency to cite obscure or unknown traditionists, exacerbated by the Hyderabad edition's errors and hypercorrections, all of which makes the process of identifying his sources painstaking and time consuming. However, Conrad minimizes the role played by textual transmission in the corruption of Ibn Aʿṯam's *isnād* and ascribes its opaqueness to his lackadaisical attitude toward chains of transmission that characterizes *qiṣaṣ* and early *aḫbārī* material, the content of which was shaped primarily by audience expectations and served didactic and entertainment purposes.[65] Such considerations aside, however, the citation of similar chains of transmission and evidence and analysis of parallel traditions in the Šīʿī *ziyāra* and *faḍāʾil* traditions allow us to reconstruct Ibn Aʿṯam's *isnād*. One of the primary transmitters of al-Wāqidī's material, Ibn Saʿd (784-845 CE), describes him as transmitting traditions from ʿAmr b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAnbasa (b. ʿAmr b. ʿUṯmān b. ʿAffān) from Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿUmar.[66] Ibn Saʿd was writing more than a century before Ibn ʿAṯam, so it is unlikely that his chain of transmission was corrupted. Ibn Qūlawayh later says that he heard the same *ḥadīṯ* related

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[64] Ibn Aʿṯam, *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*, vol. 4, 210.
[65] Conrad, "Ibn Aʿṯam and his History," 114-20
[66] Muḥammad b. Saʿd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kabīr* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Ḫānǧī, 2001), vol. 3, 73, vol. 5, 26.

to him by an unknown figure named al-Zaʿfarānī with an alternative *isnād* also going back to ʿAmr b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAnbasa.[67] Based on both the *isnāds* provided by Ibn Saʿd, who was writing more than a century before Ibn Aʿtam, and Ibn Qūlawayh, it is likely that the replacement of ʿAmr b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAnbasa with Muḥammad b. ʿUbayd Allāh b. ʿAnbasa in Ibn Aʿtam's chain of transmission was a subsequent corruption or scribal error due to the similar orthography of the two names.

ʿAmr b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAnbasa was the great-great grandson of the third caliph ʿUṯmān b. ʿAffān (r. 644-656 CE)[68] and is reported to have transmitted from Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAmr b. ʿAmr b. ʿUṯmān (d. 763 CE).[69] Although no death date is reported for ʿAmr b. ʿAbd Allāh, we can conclude from the fact that he narrated from Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAmr, who died in 763 CE and Ibn Aʿtam's report of al-Wāqidī (748-823 CE) narrating from him, that he must have lived in the last half of the 8th century, thus placing the date of the circulation of these traditions in the late 8th/early 9th centuries. As for Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAmr, also known as al-Dībāǧ, both Sunnī and Šīʿī sources state that he was a follower of ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Ḥasan b. al-Ḥasan

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[67] Ibn Qūlawayh, 133, ʿUbayd Allāh b. Faḍl b. Muḥammad b. Hilāl > Muḥammad b. ʿUmayra al-Aslamī > ʿAmr b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAnbasa > Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAmr > his father > Ibn ʿAbbās.

[68] ʿAlī b. Aḥmad b. Ḥazm al-Andalusī, *Ǧamharat Ansāb al-ʿArab*, ed. ʿAbd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1962), 82-83.

[69] Šams al-Dīn al-Ḏahabī, *Siyar Aʿlām al-Nubalāʾ*, ed. Šuʿayb al-Arnaʾūṭ (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 1996), vol. 5, 382.

al-Maḥḍ (d. 763), a descendant of al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib who was proclaimed the

Mahdī by his followers. Both were imprisoned in al-Hāšimīya by al-Manṣūr (r. 754-775

CE) and died in prison.[70] The association of Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAmr with a

group of clearly ʿAlid and Ḥasanid partisans and their attestation outside of Šīʿī sources

lends credibility to the soundness Ibn Aʿtam's *isnād* and places the circulation of these

reports in the late 8th/early 9th centuries.

Another parallel with the *ziyāra* traditions found in Ibn Aʿtam's account is the

ritual cursing of Ḥusayn's killers, examples of which Ibn Qūlawayh includes in several

prayers that are meant to be performed at the grave of Ḥusayn.[71] The narrators in Ibn

Aʿtam's account project this practice on supposed events occurring long before the battle

of Karbalāʾ. Two traditions have parallels with Ibn Qūlawayh's reports. The first account

on the authority of a Šaraḥbīl b. ʿAwn, which contradicts the above account of the angel

Gabriel informing Muḥammad of Ḥusayn's death, in which he describes the angel of the

sea descending from heaven to deliver the news:

> Rather the angel that came to Muḥammad was the angel of the sea. That is, one of
> the angels of Paradise [*malakan min malāʾika l-farādīs*] descended to the great
> sea, spread its wings over it, and cried loudly, 'O denizens of the seas! Don
> garments of mourning, for the son of Muḥammad is sacrificed and slain'…then he
> gave him [Muḥammad] a handful of the earth of Karbalāʾ and said, 'May this dirt
> be in your possession until you see the sign [of Ḥusayn's death].' Then that angel
> carried some of that dirt in one of his wings, and all the angels of the sky of the

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[70] al-Iṣbahānī, 171-72, 182-82; Ibn Ḥazm al-Andulusī, 82-83.
[71] Ibn Qūlawayh, 359, 366, 370-71, 374, 378-79, 382, 383, 385, 387-88, 391, 392-93,
407-08, 412-13, 414, 417, 421-22.

earth smelled it and it became unto them a sign and a report. Then the Prophet took the handful of dirt the angel gave to him and began to smell it while weeping and saying, 'O Allāh, do not bless the murderer of my son but take him to the fire of Hell.'[72]

Ibn Aʿtam goes on to depict angels descending from heaven to comfort Muḥammad before he curses Ḥusayn's killers. He also alludes to the sacredness and benefits of Ḥusayn's dirt:

> Every angel in the heavens descended to the Prophet, each one consoling him over Ḥusayn and telling him of them the rewards given from his dirt [*yuʿazzīhi fī l-Ḥusayni wa-yuḫbiruhū bi-ṯawābi mā yuʿṭā wa-yuʿraḍu ʿalayhi turbatuhu*] while the Prophet said: O Allāh, abandon him who abandoned him, kill him who killed him, and do not provide him with what he seeks. [*uḫḏul man ḫaḏalahū wa-qtul man qatalahū wa-lā tumtiʿhu bi-mā ṭalabahū*][73]

Ibn Qūlawayh provides a condensed version of the first tradition:

> The angel that came to the Messenger of God and informed him of Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī's death was the angel of the seas. That is, one of the angels of Paradise [*malakan min malāʾika al-firdawsi*] descended on the sea, spread its wings on it, and cried loudly and said, 'O denizens of the sea! Don garments of mourning, for the son of the Messenger of God is sacrificed [*yā ahlu l-biḥāri ilbisū aṯwāba l-ḥuzni fa-inna farḫa rasūli llāhi maḏbūḥu*]. Then it carried some of his dirt in its wings to the heavens and every angel smelled it and became unto him a sign. And he cursed his murderers, their followers, and their partisans.[74]

Ibn Qūlawayh's chain of transmission in the first report has the same common transmitters ʿAmr b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAnbasa and Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAmr al-

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[72] Ibn Aʿtam, 213-14.
[73] Ibid, 215.
[74] Ibn Qūlawayh, 143, al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī al-Zaʿfarānī > Muḥammad b. ʿUmar al-Naṣībī (al-Aslamī?) > Hišām b. Saʿd > his teachers.

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Dībāğ in Ibn Aʿṯam's *isnad* analyzed above. As for the second report, though it does not

have any common transmitters, the wording is similar to Ibn Aʿṯam's report:

> Did there remain an angel in the heavens that didn't descend to the Messenger of
> God, comforting him for his son Ḥusayn and informing him of the award of God
> for him, carrying to him his dirt, fallen, sacrificed, slain, wounded, cast aside, and
> abandoned? The Messenger of God said, 'O Allāh, abandon those who abandoned
> him, kill those who killed him, sacrifice those who sacrificed him, and do not
> provide him with what he seeks'. [*uḫḏul man ḫaḏalahū wa-uqtul man qatalahū
> wa-iḏbaḥ man ḏabaḥahū wa-lā tumtiʿhu bi-mā ṭalaba*].[75]

Ibn Qūlawayh mentions an alternative *isnād* of the same tradition.[76] A

comparison of the chains of transmission for these parallel accounts related by Ibn Aʿṯam

and Ibn Qūlawayh show that both are drawing on similar sources. Furthermore, the

projection of the act of cursing Ḥusayn's killers on Muḥammad, as well as pre-Islamic

prophets, provide a prophetic model for the ritual curse.

For the purpose of dating the earliest attestations of *ziyāra*, the most significant

tradition in Ibn Aʿṯam's account is an anachronistic exhortation by Salmān al-Fārisī to a

certain Hubayra b. Yuraym to either be among the martyrs of Karbalāʾ or one of the

pilgrims to Ḥusayn's grave:

> O Yuraym! If you live to see the day he dies [*in anta adrakta ayyāma maqtalihī*]
> and can be slain with him then be the first one to be killed with him, for all blood
> of the Day of the Resurrection after the prophets is the blood of Ḥusayn, then the
> blood of his companions that are killed with him. And look, O Yuraym! If you are

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[75] Ibn Qūlawayh, 131-2.
[76] Ibid, 133 ʿUbayd Allāh b. al-Faḍl b. Muḥammad b. Hilāl > Muḥammad b. ʿUmayra al-Aslamī > ʿAmr b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAnbasa > Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAmr > his father > Ibn ʿAbbās.

saved and are not killed with him, then visit his grave, for his grave is never empty of angels. Whoever prays two prostrations at his grave God will protect him from their wrath and aggression until he dies.[77]

Along with the account of the Tawwābūn in al-Ṭabarī, this is the one of the earliest references to the practice of *ziyāra* in early Islamic sources. Salmān's injunction to visit Ḥusayn's grave is clearly an anachronistic projection meant to encourage the practice of pilgrimage to his grave, as a kind of surrogate act of redemption to atone for not supporting Ḥusayn at the battle and being killed with him. The narrator himself abandons this pretense when he speaks of the massacre in the past tense [*aṣḥābihi llāḏīna qutilū bayna yadayhi*] and the current presence of angels at his grave [*fa-inna qabrahu lā yaḫlū mina l-malāʾikati abadan*]. The injunction to be among those killed with Ḥusayn reflects the ethos of guilt for not being among those who aided Ḥusayn and the impulse to redeem oneself through either avenging his death or martyrdom was also the motive for the revolt of the Tawwābūn as examined above, including al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Aʿtam.

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[77] Ibn Aʿtam, 224.

The Sources of Ibn Qūlawayh's *Ziyāra* Traditions

As demonstrated above, both Ibn Aʿtam and Ibn Qūlawayh seem to be drawing upon common sources for their hagiographical and mythological traditions on premonitions of Ḥusayn's death. I have identified some of the sources mentioned by Ibn Aʿtam but due to his non-systematic citation of his other sources, as well as their corrupted state and the mentioning of unknown transmitters, the profit of such attempts is limited. Therefore, I will turn to an examination of Ibn Qūlawayh's sources to suggest further possibilities for common sources. Furthermore, using both Sunnī and Šīʿī biographical dictionaries, I will identify and date the earliest attested pilgrimage manuals and the social context in which they circulated.

Ibn Qūlawayh extensively cites Saʿd b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Qummī (d. ca. 913/14 CE) through his father and other teachers. Although the individuals in the higher chain of transmission are overwhelming from Qum, those in the earlier portions of the *isnād*s are primarily Kūfan. Two sources, al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. al-Faḍḍāl al-Taymī al-Kūfī (d. 838/9 CE) and al-Ḥusayn b. Saʿīd b. Ḥammād al-Ahwāzī are particularly important because to them are attributed the earliest known pilgrimage manuals. Sunnī and Šīʿī biographical works alike describe them as companions of Šīʿa imāms and attest to their compilation of *ziyāra* traditions. Al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. Faḍḍāl was a companion of ʿAlī al-Riḍā (765-818)

and narrated traditions from him.[78] Al-Ḥusayn b. Saʿīd was also a companion of al-Riḍā[79] and Muḥammad al-Ǧawād (811-835).[80] The date of al-Ḥusayn b. Saʿīd's death is unknown, but his association with the Imām ʿAlī al-Riḍā suggests that he was a contemporary of Ibn Faḍḍāl.

According to al-Najāšī and al-Kiššī Ibn Faḍḍāl was famous for his ascetic practices and piety, going out to the desert of Qaṭīʿ al-Rabīʿ to pray:

> Al-Faḍl b. Šāḏān said: I was in Qaṭīʿ al-Rabīʿ reciting to a Quran reader named Ismāʿīl b. ʿAbbād when I saw people conversing with each other. One of them said, 'In the mountain is a man named Ibn Faḍḍāl who is more devout than he anyone we have seen or heard of. He goes to the desert and makes prostration. The birds come to him and alight upon him, thinking he is just a piece of worn cloth. The beasts graze around him, not fleeing from him due to their familiarity with him. And when troops of bandits come out seeking to raid or fight people and see his person, they became frightened and flee.[81]

In a description reminiscent of that of a late antique Christian holy man, al-Naǧāšī and al-Kiššī also relate that the spread of his pious reputation was sufficient to attract attention of Ṭāhirid magnate and al-Maʾmūn's general Ṭahīr b. al-Ḥusayn (776-822 CE) who attempted to extend to him his patronage:

[78] Aḥmad b. Ḥaǧar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Lisān al-Mīzān*, ed. ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ġudda (Beirut: Dār al-Bašāʾir al-Islāmiya, 2002), vol. 3, 75-6, Aḥmad b. ʿAlī al-Naǧāšī, *Riǧāl al-Naǧāšī* (Beirut: Dār al-Aḍwāʾ, 1988) vol. 1, 131; Ibn al-Nadīm mentions him but does not attribute a *ziyāra* work to him, Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, vol. 2, Part 1, 77-8.
[79] Ibn Ḥaǧar al-ʿAsqalānī, vol. 3, 166.
[80] al-Naǧāšī, vol. 1, 171-6., Ibn al-Nadīm, vol. 2, 74-5. Ibn al-Nadīm also does not attribute a *ziyāra* work to him.
[81] al-Naǧāšī, vol. 1, 128-9.

When he made the *ḥaǧǧ*, he circumcised Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn. The people extolled him for his power, wealth, and position before the authorities (*makānihi mina l-sulṭān*). He [Ṭāhir] had praised him [Ibn Faḍḍāl] but he did not go to him. So, he sent him a message saying, 'I would like for you would come to me, for it is not possible for me to come to you,' but he refused. His companions spoke to him concerning that and he said, 'What is the family of Ṭāhir to me? I have no relation to them and have no business with them.'[82]

Ibn Faḍḍāl was also associated with the short-lived sect of the Fatḥīya who affirmed the Imāmate of one of Ǧaʿfar al-Ṣādiq's sons ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Afṭaḥ, as well as the possibility of lateral succession of the Imāmate between two brothers after Ḥasan and Ḥusayn. It is also reported that after the death of Mūsā al-Kāẓim, a similar group endorsing lateral succession, claimed that Mūsā's son Aḥmad was designated Imām.[83] Some reports describe him as abandoning his Fatḥite views later in life, but others say he remained a Fatḥite until he died.[84]

The second known author of a *ziyāra* work mentioned above, al-Ḥusayn b. Saʿīd al-Ahwāzī is said to have been a prolific author, writing thirty books, including a pilgrimage manual. Al-Kiššī states that he introduced two future prominent eunuchs to ʿAlī al-Riḍā,[85] suggesting his connections with the Imāms and his association with the

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[82] Al-Naǧāšī, vol. 1, 129.
[83] Saʿd b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Ašʿarī, *Kitāb al-Maqālāt wa-l-Firaq*, ed. Muḥammad Ǧawād Maškūr (Tehran: Maṭbaʿ Ḥaydarī, 1962/3), 93, 110.
[84] al-Naǧāšī, vol. 1, 129-31; al-Kiššī, 400.
[85] al-Kiššī, 390.

developing network of agents, instituted under his father al-Kāẓim's imāmate, which was responsible for collecting the *ḫums* tithe from the Šīʿa community.[86]

Most of al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. Faḍḍāl and al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī al-Ahwāzī's reports come from Saʿd b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Ašʿarī (d. ca. 913/14 CE) through Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. ʿĪsā al-Ašʿarī (d. 887-893 CE), although another reoccurring *isnād* between Ibn Qūlawayh and al-Ḥusayn b. Saʿīd al-Ahwāzī is Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī al-Mihziyār < his father < ʿAlī b. al-Mihziyār al-Ahwāzī. al-Naǧāšī says that ʿAlī b. al-Mihziyār was from Dawraq, also known as Surraq, a city and a district (*kūra*) in Ḫūzistān adjacent to Iraq. His father was a Christian who converted to Islām, suggesting that ʿAlī converted at the same time as his father. Al-Kiššī also says that ʿAlī b. al-Mihziyār wrote a *Kitāb al-Mazār*, which he says is the same material as al-Ḥusayn b. Saʿīd's pilgrimage manual. ʿAlī b. al-Mihziyār appears to have been a prominent companion of the Imāms, narrating from al-Riḍā and al-Ǧawād and serving as a *wakil* for the al-Ǧawād and al-Hādī, as well producing rescripts (*tawqīʿāt*) from the Imāms to the Šīʿa.[87]

In conclusion, Šīʿī *riǧāl* works and their attestations of transmitters and compilers of *ziyāra* traditions are internally consistent, and coupled with the mention of both these transmitters in both Sunnī and Šīʿa *riǧāl* works and in Ibn Qūlawayh's pilgrimage

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[86] On the beginnings of the collection of the *ḫums*, see Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation*, 13-14.

[87] al-Naǧāšī, vol. 1, 74-6.

manual, we can confidently push the practice of *ziyāra* to Ḥusayn and other imāms'

tombs in the early 9th century during the reign of the ʿAbbāsid caliph al-Maʾmūn (813-

833 CE) or possibly earlier.

Early Attestations of Tomb Complexes at Ḥusayn's Tomb

Having identified the beginnings of Imāmī Šīʿī *ziyāra* traditions in the early 9th century, in this section I will attempt to briefly elucidate the social and political conditions in which such traditions circulated, particularly in the context of the Šīʿa Imāms' relationship with the ʿAbbāsid caliphate in which the practice of *ziyāra* was allowed to flourish despite intermittent persecution by the ʿAbbāsid caliphs.

Šīʿī historical accounts describe several early ʿAbbāsid caliphs' hostility to the Imāmī Šīʿa, as exemplified in the reigns of al-Manṣūr (r. 754-775 CE) and Hārūn al-Rašīd (786-809 CE). Al-Rašīd was said to have flooded the spot of Ḥusayn's tomb and cut down the tree of al-Sidra so that the Šīʿa would not know the location of his tomb;[88] however, the reign of al-Maʾmūn witnessed a brief rapprochement with the Imāmī Šīʿa in which the 8th Imām ʿAlī al-Riḍā was proclaimed the heir apparent to the caliphate.[89] Perhaps due to his favorable disposition to the Imāmī Šīʿa, whatever his motives, some modern Šīʿa scholars have stated that al-Maʾmūn restored Ḥusayn's tomb[90] and

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[88] Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, *Kitāb al-Amālī*, eds. ʿAlī Akbar Ġaffārī, Bihrād Ğaʿfarī (Tehran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīya, 2002), 484.

[89] For more details on the debate surrounding al-Maʾmūn's appointment of ʿAlī al-Riḍā as his heir and additional historical background, see M. Ali Buykkara, "al-Maʾmūn's Choice of ʿAlī al-Riḍā as His Heir," *Islamic Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (Autumn 2002), 445-466.

[90] al-Sayyid Ḥasan al-Ṣadr al-Kāẓimī, *Nuzhat Ahl al-Ḥaramayn fī ʿImārat al-Mašhadayn*, ed. al-Sayyid Mahdī al-Rağāʾī (Qum: Markaz al-Dirāsāt al-Islāmīya li-l-Ansāb, 2010), 28.

constructed a dome over it.[91] Though they do not list any contemporary sources for such

an act, they are feasible in light of al-Maʾmūn's conciliatory stance toward the Imāmī

Šīʿa and the evidence examined above for the beginning of the circulation of pilgrimage

manuals contemporary with al-Maʾmūn's reign (813-833 CE).

The earliest definitive attestation of some sort of structure over Ḥusayn's tomb is

found in historical accounts of the ʿAbbāsid caliph al-Mutawakkil's (847-861 CE)

destruction of Ḥusayn's tomb in 850 CE. Interpretations of al-Mutawakkil's motives

differ slightly, but in all of the accounts the result was the same: prevention of pilgrims

from making visitation to the grave of al-Ḥusayn. Al-Ṭabarī's account is laconic, but

mentions the destruction of structures around the tomb and threat of imprisonment for

those lingering at the tomb:

> Al-Mutawakkil ordered the demolition (*hadm*) of Ḥusayn's tomb and of the
> residences and houses that were around it, that the spot of the tomb be tilled,
> planted, and irrigated, and that people be prevented from coming to it (*muniʿa min
> ityānihī*). It is mentioned that an agent of the police chief called out, 'Whomever we
> find at his tomb after three days will be sent to *al-maṭbaq* (an underground prison).'
> So, the people fled and were prevented from going to it and the spot was plowed
> and farmed around it.[92]

Although Al-Ṭabarī does not use the word *ziyāra* to describe the actions of those

found at the tombs, this was clearly some sort of pilgrimage practice. Moreover, his

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[91] Muḥammad Ṣādiq Muḥammad al-Karbāsī, *Tārīḫ al-Marāqid* (London: al-Markaz al-Ḥusaynī li-l-Dirāsāt, 1998), vol. 1, 267.
[92] al-Ṭabarī, vol. 9, 185.

account attests to the construction of residences around the site of the tomb, most likely those of ʿAlids who hoped to gain blessing from living near the tomb. Yāqūt's geographical dictionary lists individuals of Šīʿī sympathies living at Aqsās.[93] Al-Masʿūdī also mentions al-Mutawakkil's preventing Ṭālibid visitation to Ḥusayn's tomb:

> Before his caliphate (al-Muntaṣir) the family of Abū Ṭālib was in a great trial (*miḥna*) and in fear for their lives. They had been prevented from making visitation (*ziyāra*) to Ḥusayn's tomb and to al-Ġarī in the land of Kūfa and others of their partisans (*ġayruhum min šīʿatihim*) were prevented from attending the martyriums (*mašāhid*). That order was from al-Mutawakkil in the year 236 (850/51).[94]

Al-Masʿūdī corroborates al-Mutawakkil's preventing of pilgrimages from making visitation to Ḥusayn's tomb, but does not confine this practice to ʿAlids, but rather to partisans of the family of Abū Ṭālib, suggesting that *ziyāra* was not only performed by Ḥusaynid sympathizers. Al-Masʿūdī goes on to describe how al-Mutawakkil's agent went to the tomb, destroyed the upper portions of it with a spade, and even audaciously dug down to the trench (*laḥd*) only to find no bones or any trace therein. He also describes how al-Muntaṣir later rescinded the order, allowing the Ṭālibids to resume visitation to the grave of Ḥusayn and other graves of the family of Abū Ṭālib.[95] The reference to the visitation of other tombs is a reminder that Ḥusayn's tomb was not the only tomb of the

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[93] Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿǧam al-Buldān*, vol. 1, 236.
[94] al-Masʿūdī, vol. 4, 51.
[95] Ibid, vol. 4, 51-2.

Prophet's family visited by pro-ʿAlid pilgrims, though they do not seem to receive as much attention in the pilgrimage manuals.

Although Abū l-Faraǧ al-Iṣbahānī's account contains slightly more supernatural elements in the description of the destruction of Ḥusayn's tomb, most of the details corroborate the details found in al-Masʿūdī and al-Ṭabarī. His account also contains mythological accounts similar to *ziyāra* traditions found in Ibn Aʿtam and Ibn Qūlawayh's works. Abū l-Faraǧ al-Iṣbahānī highlights al-Mutawakkil's animosity towards the Ṭālibids:

> Al-Mutawakkil was cruel to the family of Abū Ṭālib, harsh to all of them, preoccupied with their affairs, hating them greatly, and thinking ill of them. His vizier, ʿUbayd Allāh b. Yaḥyā b. Ḫāqān concurred in his ill-opinion of them and thought it good to deal harshly with them. They went to lengths that no ʿAbbāsid caliph before them had gone, namely, that they tilled the tomb of Ḥusayn and effaced its marks. He placed his sentries on all the roads who, whenever they found someone making visitation to him, would take them to him [al-Mutawakkil] and kill or torture them.[96]

In addition to confirming al-Ṭabarī's description of tilling the land around Ḥusayn's tomb and forbidding visitation to his tombs with the threat of violence, he emphasizes the unprecedented audacity of the act of violating of the sanctuary of the deceased, similar to what al-Masʿūdī describes. This expression of horror is to be expected from Abū l-Faraǧ al-Iṣbahānī as an ʿAlid sympathizer, as his work's purpose is to detail the persecution of the Ṭālibids, yet it is likely that non-ʿAlid's would be equally disgusted at the desecration

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[96] al-Iṣbahānī, 478.

of his tomb, due to general beliefs in the inviolability of tombs and their status as

sanctuaries.[97] His description of the circumstances leading to al-Mutawakkil's discovery

that one of his concubine's visitations to Ḥusayn's tomb and clandestine acts of visitation

during his reign contains beliefs concerning Ḥusayn's tomb similar to those of the *faḍāʾil*

traditions examined above:

> The reason for the tilling of the grave of Ḥusayn was that one of the singing girls
> was sent as a concubine to him who before his caliphate who would sing for him
> when he drank. After he assumed it (the caliphate) he sent for that singing girl and
> learned that she was absent. She was making visitation to the tomb of Ḥusayn
> where news of him reached her, so she hastened to return. She sent one of the
> concubines who he was cordial with to him and he asked, 'Where were you (all)?'
> She replied, 'My mistress went out to make the Ḥağğ (*ḫaraǧat mawlātī ilā l-ḥağğ*)
> in the month of Šaʿbān, and she made us go with her.' He asked, 'Where did you
> make the Ḥağğ (*ḥaǧaǧtum*) in Šaʿbān?' She replied, 'To the grave of Ḥusayn.'
> Then he flew into a rage, ordered her mistress [to be brought to him], imprisoned
> her, and liquidated her property.[98]

The use of the word *ḥağğ* for making visitation to Ḥusayn's tomb is significant.

Although in Šīʿī visitation manuals the distinction between the pilgrimage (*ḥağğ*) and

visitation (*ziyāra*) is maintained, analogies between the two practices were often made, as

demonstrated in above analyses of Ibn Aʿṯam and al-Ṭabarī's accounts of the revolt of the

Tawwābūn and Ibn Qūlawayh's reports on the superior merit of visitation to Ḥusayn's

grave over the *ḥağğ*, to be examined below. Moreover, al-Iṣbahānī's report of the

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[97] For discussions of pre-Islamic and Islamic conceptions of graves as sanctuary (*ḥimā*)
see, Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1967), 215-7.
[98] al-Iṣbahānī, 478.

concubines visiting Ḥusayn's grave in the month of Šaʿbān accords with the Šīʿī beliefs in the merits of doing *ziyāra* in that month, as opposed to the general custom of making the *ḥaǧǧ* in Ḏū l-Ḥiǧǧa.[99] Indeed, it seems that her remark of making the *ḥaǧǧ* in Šaʿbān is what roused al-Mutawakkil's suspicions. He continues to describe how he sent the same agent mentioned in al-Masʿūdī's account to till the land of his tomb, efface, and destroy everything around it. He proceeds to do exactly that, destroying the buildings around it, flooding water on it, and assigning around it two sentries every two miles to prevent the pilgrims from coming to it.

Abū l-Faraǧ al-Iṣbahānī then relates Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Ašnānī's account of his secret pilgrimage to Ḥusayn's tomb during al-Mutawakkil's reign. His report contains associations of Ḥusayn's corpse with perfume that we encountered above:

> In those days, I ceased making visitation out of fear. Then I performed it despite the risk to myself. One of the perfume sellers helped me in [performing] it, and we set out as pilgrims, being concealed during the daytime and traveling at night until we came to the outskirts of al-Ġāḍirīya. We set out from there at midnight and travelled between two sentries as they were sleeping until we came to the tomb which was hidden from us. We began to smell it and search for it until we came to it. The box (*al-ṣundūq*) that had been around it had been uprooted and burnt, water was running over it, and the spot of bricks (*mawḍiʿu l-libin*) had sank into the ground and become like a trench. Then we made visitation to it applying ourselves to it, and we smelled a fragrance from it that I had never smelt before. I said to the perfume seller that was with me, 'What scent is this?' He said, 'No, by God, I have never smelled a perfume like it.' Then we bid farewell to him (*waddaʿnāhu*) and placed markers around the tomb in several places.[100]

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99 Ibn Qūlawayh, 333-338.
100 al-Iṣbahānī, 479.

Like the traditions recorded by Ibn Aʿṯam and Ibn Qūlawayh examined above, al-Ašnānī's report records Ḥusayn's corpse miraculously retaining the scent of the perfumes of paradise associated with his body. It seems then that the three authors are drawing upon similar traditions that associate Ḥusayn's corpse with musk. However, this association of the tomb with various perfumes is not confined to Šīʿī beliefs but Arabic popular beliefs about the tombs, especially among mortuary cults. In his study of Islamic epitaphs, Schöller notes the Arabic association of the earth of tombs not only with musk, a perfume often put on the corpses of the deceased, but also the metaphorical conception of a tomb as a garden, or more specifically the gardens of paradise.[101] The association of sacred sites with heavenly gardens is a reoccurring motif in the *faḍāʾil* genre[102] and in Šīʿī *faḍāʾil* traditions contained in visitation guides the tomb of Ḥusayn is said to be one of the gardens of paradise:

> God took the earth of Karbalāʾ as a secure, blessed sanctuary (*ḥaram*) 24,000 years before he created the Kaʿba and took it as a sanctuary. And when God will shake the earth and flatten it, it will be elevated as it is, with its pure, luminous light, and put in the best gardens of Paradise (*afḍala rawḍati min riyāḍi al-ǧanna*).[103]

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[101] Schöller, *The Living and the Dead in Islam*, vol. 2, 90-4.

[102] For claims that the grave of the prophet is one of the gardens of paradise, see Mūsā al-Yaḥṣūbī al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ, *Tartīb al-madārik wa-taqrīb al-masālik li-maʿrifat aʿlām maḏhab Mālik* (Rabat: Wizārat al-Awqāf li-l-Šuʾūn al-Islāmiyya, 1965-83), vol. 1, 34; for similar reports about Jerusalem, see Ibn al-Muraǧǧā, *Faḍāʾil bayt al-maqdis*, ed. Ofer Livne-Kafri (Šafā ʿAmr: Dār Al-Mašriq, 1995), 200.

[103] Ibn Qūlawayh, 451.

Al-Ṭabarī, al-Masʿūdī, and al-Iṣbahānī's accounts of al-Mutawakkil's destruction of Ḥusayn's tomb attest to the Šīʿī mortuary cult's appropriation of *faḍāʾil* motifs that are derived from cultural beliefs and poetical associations between tombs, perfume, and gardens of paradise. Furthermore, for the purpose of dating the practice of *ziyāra*, they also attest to the increasing popularity of pilgrimage to Ḥusayn's tomb, the presence of ʿAlid residences in its immediate vicinity, and some sort of structure over the tomb during the reign of al-Mutawakkil. Combined with the attestations of the circulation of the earliest known pilgrimage manuals mentioned above, the destruction of a more elaborate structure over Ḥusayn's tomb in 850 CE, as indicated in the accounts previously examined, strongly suggests that the practice of Šīʿī *ziyāra* originated in the late 8th/early 9th century, and that the earliest structures over Ḥusayn's tomb were constructed in the early 9th century, possibly during the reign of al-Maʾmūn (813-833 CE).

Pilgrimage and Relic Culture in Early Islam

Having established the origins of Šīʿī *ziyāra* in the beginning of the 9th century, I will now discuss how the early Šīʿa of the early ʿAbbāsid era adopted pilgrimage practices and motifs common to the culture of Late Antiquity for their own discursive purposes. The parallels between Christian and Šīʿī relic culture are striking and to my knowledge have not been examined. Although there is no evidence in Šīʿī pilgrimage manuals or the early Šīʿī historical tradition of direct textual borrowings, a comparison of Christian and Šīʿī pilgrimage practices demonstrate that Šīʿī *ziyāra* has pre-Islamic precedents. Furthermore, I maintain that it is important to consider wider early *faḍāʾil* traditions to which early Šīʿa Muslims in Iraq were responding. The Šīʿī *faḍāʿil* traditions, which proliferate in the Šīʿī pilgrimage manuals, participated in an early Muslim contestation of sacred space in which no holy Islamic cities, even Mecca or Medina, had gained primacy in order to encourage pilgrimage to Ḥusayn's tomb at Karbalāʾ and simultaneously construct a discourse that upheld the authority of the Ḥusaynid Imāms and the network of deputies (*wukalāʾ*) and envoys (*sufarāʾ*) who claimed to represent them.

The practice of taking dirt (*ṭīn* or *turba*) from Ḥusayn's tomb at Karbalāʾ and the belief in its curative and talismanic properties are attested in *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt*. Ibn Qūlawayh devotes a section of his work to traditions describing the medicinal benefits of the *ṭīn* of Ḥusayn's grave and the practice of mixing it with water, honey, and saffron and

distributing it to the sick. He relates several traditions on the authority of Ǧaʿfar al-Ṣādiq

saying, "The dirt of the grave of Ḥusayn is a cure for every malady."[104] Moreover, the

belief in the curative qualities of the dirt of sacred places is not limited to Šīʿī traditions

but is found in Sunnī traditions as well. Al-Samhūdī devotes a section of his work *Wafā*

al-Wafāʾ to traditions asserting that that the soil of Medina is a cure for various

diseases.[105]

A significant parallel between the practices of Christian and Islamic saint cults is

devotion to martyrs' final resting places and the collection of relics associated with their

physical bodies. Ranging from clay surrounding the holy man (Syr. *ḥnānā*), cases of oil

collected from their tombs, or their bones, they were all believed to serve as protective

talismans or cures for various illnesses. The association of sites of holy men and biblical

prophets is succinctly stated in Syriac account *The Life of Peter the Iberian* in the

author's description of the discovery of the burial site of Moses of Mount Nebo and the

construction of a temple over it:

> This temple was built in the name of the great prophet and law-giver, publicly and
> indubitably proclaiming to everyone his grace and his power through signs,
> wonders, and healings which from that time have continually been performed in
> this place. For it is a house of healing of souls and of bodies for all the people, and

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[104] Ibn Qūlawayh, 461-2, 465, 466-7.
[105] al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-Wafāʾ*, 153-164.

a place of refuge for all those who arrive here from every place and who are in sorrow within [their] soul and are seized by various sufferings.[106]

The practice of taking dirt from the martyriums of saints and martyrs in also attested in the *Martyrdom of Saint Barbara*. Although the main subject of the *vita* of Saint Barbara is the events leading up to her execution by her father, the author of the text refers to the palace that her father built, describing how she ordered the construction of three windows as a symbol of the trinity. Furthermore, the author narrates how "She drew with her finger the sign of the venerable cross and that sign of the cross on the marble stands today as a wonder for those that see it and glorification to God." (Syr. *w-rešmat b-ṣebʿāh ʿal šišā ṭupseh da-ṣlibā yaqqirā w-qāyem haw rušmeh da-ṣlibā ʿlaw d-šišā ʿdammā l-yawmānā l-tedmurtā d-aylēn d-ḥāzeyn wa-l-tešboḥtā d-ālāhā*). Although the author does explicitly say so, the witnesses to whom he alludes were most likely pilgrims visiting sacred sites associated with St. Barbara's life. Finally, the text also attests to the practice of taking sacred dirt from the sign of St. Barbara's footprint for its curative properties: "Also, upon entering her bathhouse, on that ground the sacred likeness of her heels were imprinted. And from this place all the people take dust for healing and relief. This is like the washing of the Jordan in which the Lord of All, Jesus Christ, inclined his holy head and received his baptism from John, his baptizer and herald. This is the

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[106] John Rufus, *The Lives of Peter the Iberian, Theodosius of Jerusalem, and the Monk Romanus*, Eds. Cornelia B. Horn, Robert R. Phenix (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 179.

baptism that is similar to [that of] the Spring of Shiloh in which the mute man from birth

was washed [and] to the baptism of Bethesda in which the lame man by the Word was

healed."[107] This passage is significant not only because of its attestation of the taking of

relics from holy sites associated with saints and martyrs, but also for the creation of

Christian sacred geography, in which local sacred sites are related through biblical

exegesis to biblical sites and events, Jesus's baptism in the Jordan and the healing of the

lame man at the pool of Bethesda described in the Gospel of John. The linking of local

sites in Karbalāʾ and Kūfa to episodes in Šīʿī salvation history is also a prominent theme

in Šīʿī *faḍāʾil* traditions, as will be addressed below.

One of the most important testaments to the late antique Christian beliefs and uses

of relics is found in the Syriac *Life of Simeon the Stylite* which contains several

attestations of Saint Simeon commanding those possessed by demons and afflicted with

various bodily ailments to collect the combination of dirt and oil surrounding his pillar

(*ḥnānā*, lit. "blessing") and to either rub it over their bodies or mix it with water and

consume it, which subsequently heals them. Other accounts have sailors applying

Simeon's *ḥnānā* to the masts of their ships to protect them from storms.[108] The idea of the

saints' bones bestowing protection upon the surrounding area of their interment is

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[107] Ed. Paulus Bedjan, *Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum Syriace* (Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1890-7), vol. 3, 347.
[108] Trans. Robert Doran, *The Lives of Simeon Stylites* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publishing, 1992), 151-3.

expressed in the account of the discovery of the resting places of Saints Lucas, Phocas, and Romanus in Arca, in which the saints reveal themselves in a dream to the gardener whose garden lies above their bones: "We are your neighbors, those who are dwelling with you and are lodging with you. We are guarding you and your garden."[109] The association of the burial places of saints with gardens and places of sanctuary also has parallels in the Islamic *faḍāʾil* literature.

Another parallel between the Christian and Islamic traditions on the curative qualities of the dirt surrounding the tomb of the saint are the association of the holy man's body with mortuary fragrances. Traditions found in Ibn Qūlawayh incorporate the motif of the fragrance of the saint's body with his *ṭīn*:

> [Muḥammad b. Muslim] said: "I left for Medina in pain and it was said: 'Muḥammad b. Muslim is in pain.' Abū Ǧaʿfar sent a boy to me with a drink covered with a cloth. The boy handed it to me and said, 'Drink it, for he commanded me not to depart until you drink it. So, I took it and the smell of musk came from it, a cold drink of the best taste. When I drank it, the boy said to me, 'My master tells you to come to him after you drink it.' I pondered what he said to me, thinking to myself 'I was unable to walk before, but when the drink settled in my stomach it was if my mind was made active."[110]

In the Christian hagiographical tradition, the emanation of aromatic fragrances is particularly associated with the moment of the saint's martyrdom, as in the case of the martial saint and martyr Mar Qardagh: "And at that hour, the odor of spices filled the air

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[109] John Rufus, *The Lives of Peter the Iberian*, 211.
[110] Ibn Qūlawayh, 463-4.

throughout the entire region in which the blessed one was stoned. And behold, a voice was heard saying, 'You have fought well and bravely conquered, glorious Qardagh. Go joyfully and take up the crown of your victory.'"[111] The *Maqātil al-Ṭālibīyīn* relates an account of how al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ašnānī found during his secret pilgrimage to Ḥusayn's tomb that it still bore the aromatic scent of musk, and parallel accounts in *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt* and *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* also relate how Gabriel handed Ḥusayn's musk scented dirt over to Muḥammad. These stories draw upon a motif also found in the account of Mar Qardagh's death, suggesting a possible Islamic appropriation of this hagiographical motif. In all the above reports, both Christian and Šīʿī, the emission of aromatic fragrance of the body of the saint is associated with martyrdom. Susan Harvey notes the association, in Greek, Roman, Jewish, and Christian literature, of fragrances, whether aromatic spices, wine, or smoke, with sacrifice to deities. Moreover, in Christian hagiography, the motif of the posthumous fragrance of the saint's body, reinforces this association with the sacrificial act.[112]

Despite the shared motifs between the Christian hagiographical tradition and Šīʿī *ziyāra* traditions, the lack of clear textual transmission between the traditions makes the

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[111] Joel Thomas Walker, *The Legend of Mar Qardagh: Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq*, Vol. 40 in The Transformation of the Classical Heritage (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 67.

[112] Susan Harvey, *Scenting Salvation: Ancient Christianity and the Olfactory Imagination,* Vol. 41 in The Transformation of the Classical Heritage (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), 42.

claim of Christian origins of Šīʿī *ziyāra* problematic. Without a clear example of Šīʿī

adoption of Christian hagiographical material or pilgrimage traditions, it is possible that

the early Šīʿa were borrowing it from a wider tradition of pilgrimage shared by Jewish,

Greek, or Roman religions, and not exclusively Christian practices. Future investigations

into the similarities between Šīʿī and other late antique pilgrimage practices would be

useful in testing such a claim. Nevertheless, the early Šīʿī community was clearly

borrowing from pre-Islamic precedents for their beliefs about sacred space and

pilgrimage practices, although the nature of this reception remains unclear. Even so, Šīʿī

traditions also adapted these themes and motifs for their own discursive purposes, a

subject to which I will presently turn.

Imāmī Discourse and Early Islamic Sacred Geography

In addition to the similarities with the pre-Islamic Christian hagiographical traditions examined above, Imāmī Šīʿī *ziyāra* traditions include themes and motifs from the Islamic *faḍāʾil* genre. Traditionally translated as "merits," the genre highlights the spiritual and religious distinction of early Islamic cities, especially Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem, the rewards for prayers made at their most sacred places, and their prophesied role in future apocalyptic events. The contestation of sacred space in early Islam can be seen most clearly in the *faḍāʾil* genre, in which early Islamic cities, particularly Mecca,[113] Medina,[114] and Jerusalem[115] are ranked according to their association with pre-Islamic events, personalities, apocalyptic events, and their containment of the graves of prophets and holy men. Studies of the *faḍāʾil* genre have examined how such traditions reflect competition between sacred cities and pilgrimage sites over status and prestige, internal divisions–social, political, and regional–in the early Islamic community, and polemical traditions against Judaism and Christianity.[116] However, despite prolific scholarship on

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[113] Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh al-Azraqī, *Aḫbār Makka al-Mušarrifa,* Vol. 1, ed. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld (Beirut: Maktaba Ḫayyāṭ, 1857).

[114] ʿAlī b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Samhūdī, *Wafā al-Wafāʾ bi-aḫbār Dār al-Muṣṭafā*, Vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmīya, 2006).

[115] Abu Bakr Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Wāsiṭī, *Faḍāʾil al-Bayt al-Maqdis* (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 2001); Ibn al-Muraǧǧā, Abū al-Muʿālī al-Mušarraf. *Faḍāʾil Bayt al-Maqdis wa l-Ḫalīl wa-Faḍāʾil al-Šām*, ed. Ofer Livne-Kafri (Šafā ʿAmr: Dār Al-Mašriq, 1995).

[116] Kister, M.J, "Sanctity Joint and Divided: On Holy Places in the Islamic Tradition", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 20 (1996); 30-41 and "You Shall Set Out For Only Three Mosques: A Study of an Early Tradition," *Le Muséon* 82 (1969): 188-91.

the *faḍāʾil* genre, most studies concentrate on traditions concerning Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem, and neglect Šīʿī *faḍāʾil* traditions of Kūfa and Karbalāʾ and how they adopted and inverted the motifs of the *faḍāʾil* genre to assert the sacred status of Šīʿī pilgrimage sites to rival the *Ḥağğ* to Mecca, and the merit of visiting Jerusalem.

One of the reoccurring preoccupations of the *faḍāʾil* traditions is to correlate the sanctity of the holy city with the number of prophets and holy men buried in its soil.[117] Here again, the correlation of a city's merit is not limited to Šīʿī traditions, but is also found in Sunni traditions. Al-Samhūdī mentions that Medina was considered more meritorious due to its having the most prophets and Companions of the Prophet buried there.[118]

Another reoccurring theme is the establishment of the relative merits of prayers or visitations made in one city to others, especially relative to Mecca and Medina. al-Wāsiṭī states that a prayer in the mosque of al-Aqṣā and the Prophet's mosque in Medina equal 50,000 regular prayers, whereas a prayer at al-Masğid al-Ḥarām in Mecca equals 100,000 prayers elsewhere.[119] Furthermore, he claims a multiplication of rewards and

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[117] Kister, "Sanctity Joint and Divided," 42.
[118] al-Samhūdī, *Wafā al-Wafāʾ*, 165-6.
[119] al-Wāsiṭī, 18.

punishments in the afterlife for good deeds (*ḥasanāt*) and bad deeds (*sayyiʾāt*) in Jerusalem,[120] and intercession for those who visit it.[121]

Despite prolific scholarship on the *faḍāʾil* genre, most studies concentrate on traditions concerning Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem, and neglect Šīʿī *faḍāʾil* traditions of Kūfa and Karbalāʾ, as well as their relationship to the wider *faḍāʾil* genre. Kister and Livne-Kafri have briefly examined Šīʿī *faḍāʾil* traditions in relation to those of Mecca, Medina, and especially Jerusalem. Livne-Kafri, in a brief article, tentatively suggests that Šīʿī *faḍāʾil* traditions developed as a reaction against Umayyad partisans who circulated traditions elevating the status of Jerusalem and Syria; however, she does not extensively develop this argument.[122] Perhaps the most extensive treatment of Šīʿī *faḍāʾil* traditions is found in studies by Kister who examines a wide variety of *faḍāʾil* traditions of both Sunnī and Šīʿī origins and interprets them primarily as a reflection of the early political and economic competition between early Islamic cities, and, to some degree, the discursive nature of these traditions.[123]

Much attention has been devoted, especially by Israeli scholars, to *faḍāʾil al-Quds*, or the merits of Jerusalem literature, the early importance of Jerusalem in the early

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[120] al-Wāsiṭī, 31-2.
[121] Ibid, 29-31.
[122] Livne-Kafri, Ofer, "The Early Šīʿa and Jerusalem," 115-17.
[123] Kister, M.J, "Sanctity Joint and Divided,"30-41 and "You Shall Set Out For Only Three Mosques,"188-91.

Islamic community, and its competition with Mecca as a sacred site. Several studies have

shed light on the prominence of Jerusalem in early Islamic belief, especially its perceived

importance in the perceived imminent eschaton,[124] as reflected by the Umayyad caliph

ʿAbd al-Malik's construction of the Dome of the Rock.[125] The purpose of ʿAbd al-

Malik's construction of the Dome of the Rock is disputed, with some scholars such as

Goldziher[126] and Elad asserting that his actions must be understood in the context of the

Second Civil War between the Umayyads, with their capital in Damascus, and Ibn al-

Zubayr whose counter-caliphate controlled the holy sites of Mecca and Medina. Elad

supports Goldziher's assertion that ʿAbd al-Malik's construction of the Dome of the Rock

was an attempt to elevate the status of Jerusalem as an alternative pilgrimage destination

to the Kaʿba in Mecca, suggesting that the sacred geography of early Islam was still being

contested.[127] Goitein argued against Goldziher's claim, countering that the construction

of the Dome of the Rock was primarily to assert the political and religious superiority of

Islam over Christianity, with which most of the inhabitants of Syria and Palestine still

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[124] Stephen J. Shoemaker, *The Death of a Prophet: The End of Muhammad's Life and the Beginnings of Islam* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 118-165.
[125] Nasser Rabat, "The Meaning of the Dome of the Rock", *Muqarnas* 6 (1989), 12-21 and "The Dome of the Rock Revisited: Some Remarks of al-Wasiti's Accounts," *Muqarnas* 10 (1993), 66-75; Amikam Elad, "ʿAbd al-Malik and the Dome of the Rock: A Further Examination of the Muslim Sources," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 35 (2008), 167-226.
[126] Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, vol. 2, 44-6.
[127] Elad, "ʿAbd al-Malik and the Dome of the Rock," 191-3.

identified,[128] and that any claim by Umayyad dynasts of the spiritual superiority of Jerusalem and the nullification of the ḥaǧǧ would have been tantamount to unbelief (*kufr*).[129] Moreover, Goitein also discredits the notion of Jerusalem as an alternative pilgrimage site, by identifying the source of such a claim to the Šīʿī chronicle of al-Yaʿqūbī, whom he discredits due to his anti-Umayyad bias.[130] However, Elad points to attestations of ḥaǧǧ rituals being performed at the Dome of the Rock in other non-Šīʿī sources such as the *faḍāʾil al-Quds* literature and the travelogue of Nāṣir-i Ḫusraw, to support al-Yaʿqūbī's credibility. He also cites other Islamic chronicles that attest to the performance of *taʿrīf* rituals in the Muslim garrison cities of Baṣra, Kūfa, and Fusṭāṭ, to refute Gotein's argument that the practice of pilgrimage rites and sanctification of Jerusalem would be considered unbelief by the early Islamic community.[131]

Elad makes persuasive arguments that ʿAbd al-Malik's purpose in ordering the construction of the Dome of the Rock was to divert pilgrimage away from Mecca. Not only was Jerusalem considered sacred by early Muslims, but it was also the site of pilgrimage and a ritual cult in which rites similar to those of the ḥaǧǧ were performed. It

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[128] Goitein, "The Sanctity of Jerusalem and Palestine in Early Islam," in *Studies in Islamic History and Institutions* (Leiden: Brill, 1966), 147.
[129] Goitein, "The Historical Background of the Erection of the Dome of the Rock," in *Palestinian Jewry in Early Islamic and Crusader Times: In The Light of the Geniza Documents* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben Zvi Publications, 1980), 105.
[130] Goitein, "The Sanctity of the Holy Land in Islamic Piety," 25.
[131] Elad, "ʿAbd al-Malik and the Dome of the Rock," 169-79.

will be demonstrated below that Šīʿī traditions also depict the performance of similar rites at Karbalāʾ and Kūfa. In light of Elad's argument, it is also plausible that early Šīʿa traditionists challenged Mecca's traditional supremacy expressed in the *faḍāʾil* genre both to encourage pilgrimage to Ḥusayn's tomb and to construct an authoritative discourse that simultaneously elevated the spiritual authority of Karbalāʾ, the Imāms of the Ḥusaynid line, and the nascent community of scholars, agents, and envoys who claimed the authority to represent them that was developing in the late 8th/9th centuries. Although the sanctity of Mecca and Medina, as the location of the Kaʿba and the tomb of the Prophet, respectively, naturally loomed large in the early Islamic community, the two cities had to compete with the sacred sites of its Jewish and Christian predecessors such as Jerusalem and Mount Sinai. Examinations of the *faḍāʾil* literature and the earliest Islamic chronicles describe an early Islamic sacred geography that was greatly contested and reflected political and social conflicts in the early Islamic community. As described below, though remaining important, Jerusalem was ultimately subordinated to Mecca and Medina, through the Islamization of the holy sites in Palestine, through the reworking of popular traditions about the Holy Land, and relating them to Islamic personalities and events. Finally, I argue that the development of Šīʿī sacred space was strongly influenced by this early contestation of space, in which Šīʿī traditionists also engaged in a reworking of the symbols and motifs of *faḍāʾil* traditions to assert a hegemonic ideology that asserted its own spiritual authority.

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Similar to both proto-Sunnī and Šīʿī *faḍāʾil* traditions of other locales, Šīʿī

traditions in *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* and *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt* encourage pilgrimage to Karbalāʾ and

Kūfa by establishing a hierarchy of holy place and the relative awards of prayers in

Mecca, Medina, Jerusalem, Kūfa, and Karbalāʾ, in addition to pilgrimages made there.

One report in Ibn Aʿtam's *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* is representative of the *faḍāʾil* genre.

Unfortunately, Ibn Aʿtam only provides one transmitter for this report preventing an

adequate comparison of *isnāds*. However, the report contains several themes and motifs

that seem to be taken from a variety of Šīʿī *faḍāʾil* traditions:

> Al-Qāsim b. al-Walīd said: 'I heard my father say, 'One day I was sitting in the Congregational Mosque in Kūfa when I saw a man come to the Commander of the Faithful, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib. He said, 'O Commander of the Faithful, I am alone, without family or children. I have fulfilled the obligatory *Ḥaǧǧ*. I have acquired provisions and bought goods. Should I travel to Jerusalem and stay there until death comes to me, or should I stay in this mosque?' ʿAlī said to him, 'Eat your provisions and sell your goods, for this mosque is incumbent on you, so stay in it [*kul zādaka wa-biʿ rāhilataka wa-ʿalayka bi-hāḏā l-masǧid fa-lzimhu*], for it is one of the four mosques. Two prostrations in it equal ten in mosques aside from it, and the blessings in it [extend] ten miles from it in any direction. The [Banū] Asad have settled a thousand cubits [of it], in its corner the waters of the flood came forth, Ibrāhīm, the friend [of God] prayed at the fifth column, in it was the prayer place of Idrīs and Noah. The staff of Moses, son of ʿImrān, is in it, one thousand prophets and entrustees (*waṣī*) prayed in it, and Yaġūt and Yaʿūq were destroyed in it. It is the decider [between truth and falsehood] (*al-fārūq*), and from it is the paths of the mountains of al-Ahwāz. On the Day of the Resurrection, some thousand people will be gathered there, and the reckoning and punishment will not be on them. In the middle of it is one of the gardens of Paradise, in which there are three springs that will appear to Muslims at the end of time, one of water, milk, and oil. Its right side is male and its left is female. If the people knew the merit that it contained, they would come to it crawling.'[132]

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[132] Ibn Aʿtam, 286-8.

This report seems to a composite of several similar Šīʿī reports in which an individual setting out for either Jerusalem or Mecca for the *Ḥaǧǧ* comes to one of the Imāms who tells him to remain in Kūfa and proceeds to list its merits. Ibn Qūlawayh provides a condensed version of this episode:

> A man came to the Commander of the Faithful when he was in the mosque of Kūfa. He greeted him and he [ʿAlī] returned the greeting. He said: May I be your sacrifice; I have set out for al-Aqsā Mosque and have come to greet you and bid you farewell.' ʿAlī said, 'What are you seeking by [doing] that?' He said, 'Merit (*al-faḍl*), may I be your sacrifice.' ʿAlī said, 'Sell your goods, eat your provisions, and pray in this mosque, for an obligatory prayer in it is one legitimate [*mabrūr*] *ḥaǧǧ* and a supererogatory prayer (*nāfila*) in it is one legitimate *ʿumra*. Blessing from it [extends] ten miles. Its right side is blessing and its left side is wrath (*yamīnuhū yumnun wa-yasāruhū makrun*). In its middle is a spring of oil, milk, and water for the believers to drink, and a spring of water to cleanse the believers. Nasr, Yaġūṯ, and Yaʿūq were in it, and seventy prophets and seventy entrustees (*waṣī*) prayed in it, and I am one of them.'[133]

Although there do not seem to be any common transmitters for their accounts, their similar wording and shared images, such as the comparison between merits of Kūfa with Mecca and Jerusalem, the linking of Qurʾānic figures and personalities to sacred Šīʿī sites, and the motif of springs of water, honey, and oil, suggest that Ibn Aʿṯam and Ibn Qūlawayh were drawing upon the same contemporary Šīʿī *faḍāʾil* traditions on sacred cities. Of course, these traditions are not unique to Šīʿī *ḥadīṯ*, but rather are participating

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[133] Ibn Qūlawayh, 80-1; Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, *Tahḏīb al-Aḥkām*, ed. Muḥammad Ǧaʿfar Šams al-Dīn (Beirut: Dār al-Taʿāruf li-l-Maṭbūʿāt, 1992), vol. 3, 223; Muḥammad b. Ǧaʿfar b. al-Mašhadī, *al-Mazār al-Kabīr*, ed. Ǧawād al-Qayyūmī al-Iṣfahānī (Qum: Muʾassasat al-Našr al-Islāmī, 1998),124-5.

in a wider early Islamic *faḍāʾil* genre in which early Islamic cities, particularly Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem are ranked according to their association with pre-Islamic events and personalities, their containment of graves of prophets and holy men, and eschatological and apocalyptic events.

Most of the reports concerning the merits of prayer in Mecca versus Medina state that one prayer in Mecca is worth one thousand prayers in Medina, and that one prayer in Medina is worth one thousand prayers elsewhere. However, some reports do not mention Mecca at all, merely stating that one prayer in Medina equals one thousand prayers in any other place. Similarly, though most reports about the merits of prayer in Kūfa, maintain the higher value of prayers in Mecca and Medina, one report simply states that two prostrations (*rukʿa*) in Kūfa equals seventy[134] or one hundred elsewhere,[135] or that a prayer in Kūfa equals one thousand prayers,[136] without mentioning Mecca and Medina.

Although Šīʿī traditions draw heavily upon the themes and motifs of the wider *faḍāʾil* genre, they also include claims of the curative qualities of the dirt of Ḥusayn's tomb that are achieved through its ingestion:

> [Muḥammad b. Muslim] said: "I left for Medina in pain and it was said: 'Muḥammad b. Muslim is in pain.' Abū Ğaʿfar sent a boy to me with a drink covered with a cloth. The boy handed it to me and said, 'Drink it, for he commanded me not to depart until you drink it. So, I took it and the smell of musk came from it, a cold drink of the best taste. When I drank it, the boy said to me,

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[134] Ibn Qūlawayh, 77-78.
[135] Ibid, 70-71.
[136] Ibid, 73.

'My master tells you to come to him after you drink it.' I pondered what he said to me, thinking to myself 'I was unable to walk before, but when the drink settled in my stomach it was if my mind was made active.'[137]

After Muḥammad goes to Ǧaʿfar al-Ṣādiq and describes what happened, he reveals to him that the drink contained dirt from Ḥusayn's tomb and compares its curatives qualities to those of the Black Stone at Mecca:

> O Muḥammad, the drink that you drank contains the dirt of Ḥusayn's tomb and is the best of what is sought as a remedy and we equal it to nothing. I give it to our sons and women to drink, and consider it to contain the best. I said to him: May I be your sacrifice, [can I] take from it and seek a cure in it? He said: Every man that takes it and departs with it from al-Ḥāʾir manifestly, and passes by the Ǧinn, having a blight and affliction and no camel, and smells it, it passes and its blessing (*baraka*) transfers to someone else. That which are treated with is not like this. Were it not so, I would not have mentioned to what is rubbed or drunk from it, except that he would recover immediately. It is like the Black Stone that those with defects, unbelief, and ignorance go to. Whenever it was touched by anyone, they recovered. It was white like rubies, but turned black until it appeared as it is today.[138]

Although the intent of the passage is ambiguous, the narrator is clearly giving precedence to Karbalāʾ over the Kaʿba at Mecca, and diminishing the sanctity of the Kaʿba. Polemical discourse is found elsewhere in Šīʿī *faḍāʾil* traditions that similarly seek to elevate the tomb of Ḥusayn over the Kaʿba, using the same motifs of the merits of the physical land of Karbalāʾ over Mecca. Another report from Ibn Qūlawayh disparages

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[137] Ibn Qūlawayh, 463-4.
[138] Ibid, 464.

Mecca more harshly and tells how the land of the Kaʿba was humbled by God for its

arrogance:

> The land of the Kaʿba said: Who is like me, for the Kaʿba was built upon my back. People come to me from every deep mountain ravine, and I was made the sanctuary of God and his safe place. Then God said to it: Desist and be still, for by my might and glory, the merit that has been bestowed on Karbala is like a needle immersed in the sea and lifted out. Were it not for the dirt of Karbala I would not have favored you. Were it not for what the earth of Karbala contains I would not have created you or the house that you have boasted about. Be still and settled, and be lowly, humble, and abased and do not arrogantly scorn the land of Karbala lest the earth swallow you and you fall into the fire of hell.[139]

The theme of the Kaʿba's pride is elaborated upon in another tradition narrated by

Ṣafwān al-Ǧammāl in which the Imām Ǧaʿfar al-Ṣādiq describes its envy of the favor that

God has bestowed upon Karbalāʾ:

> I heard Abū ʿAbd Allāh [Ǧaʿfar al-Ṣādiq], blessings and peace be upon him, say: God, blessed and exalted, has preferred some lands and waters over others, but some of them boasted and acted unjustly [*wa-minhā mā tafāḫarat wa-minhā mā baġat*]. There was no land nor water that was not punished for abandoning their humility before God, so that God gave dominion to the polytheists [*al-mušrikīn*] over the Kaʿba and sent salty water to the well of Zamzam [in Mecca] to corrupt its taste. The earth of Karbalāʾ and the water of the Euphrates were the first earth and the first water that God sanctified and blessed saying to it: Tell how God as preferred you while the [other] earths and waters boast over each other. It replied: I am the sacred, blessed earth of God. Healing is in my soil and water *[al-šifāʾu fī turbatī wa-māʾī]*. I am not boastful but humble and submissive to he who made me thus. I am not boastful over those beside me but thankful to God and most honorable. Then he [Ǧaʿfar al-Ṣādiq] said: "Whoever humbles himself before God, God elevates. But he who is prideful, God humbles.[140]

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[139] Ibn Qūlawayh, 449-50.
[140] Ibid, 455.

Here the assertion of the healing properties of the dirt of Karbalāʾ, along with the corruption of Mecca's earth and water, is a discursive tactic to elevate the sanctity of Karbalāʾ and encourage visitation to Ḥusayn's grave. Bruce Lincoln has written extensively on the discursive nature of both myth and ritual, whose authors create categories and invert them to advocate ideological hegemony.[141] Dina Boero also analyzes the use of ḥnānā by the cult of Simeon the Stylite in terms of discourse. In particular, she highlights how competing discourses over the proper conduct of the ascetic life, as well as regional rivalries, influenced the shaping of his *vita*. On the role of ḥnānā, Boero not only discusses its use in ritual and how its functions changed over time, but connects its development to the rivalry between Tel Nešē, where the saint is believed to have died and the site of his cult, and Antioch where he was buried. In the absence of his actual body, the taking of ḥnānā from the area around his pillar, which was associated with the body and its healing properties, subordinated the importance of Antioch to Tel Neše.[142] Similarly, Šīʿī *faḍāʾil* traditions on Karbalāʾ demonstrate the continuity between pre-Islamic prophets, the Imāms and Šīʿī scholars and traditionists to legitimize their spiritual authority. Šīʿī traditions seek to elevate Karbalāʾ and Kūfa by claiming them as the burial places of pre-Islamic prophets. One tradition describes Noah's transporting of

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[141] See Bruce Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth,* 42-43; 146-50; 192-205; *Discourse and the Construction of Society,* 3-5.
[142] Dina Boero, "Symeon and the Making of the Stylite," 216-28.

Adam's bones from the Kaʿba to Kūfa, in which Ǧaʿfar al-Ṣādiq tells a man making

pilgrimage to ʿAlī's tomb in Kūfa that in doing so he is also visiting the bones of Adam

and the body of Noah. When the man asks how this can be since it is said that his bones

are buried beneath the Kaʿba in Mecca, the Imām informs him that during the Flood, after

Noah sailed around the Kaʿba seven times in the Ark (in imitation of *tawwāf*, the ritual

circumambulation of the Kaʿba during the *Ḥaǧǧ*), he went down and unearthed Adam's

coffin and put it on the Ark. He then sailed to the mosque at Kūfa where God then

commanded the earth in that spot to swallow its water (*iblaʿī māʾaka*) and all the flood

waters were swallowed up in the spot where they originally gushed forth. Noah then

buries Adam's coffin in al-Ġarīy which is a piece of the mountain on which "God spoke

to Moses, sanctified Jesus, took Abraham as a friend, and made Muhammad his

beloved."

Claims of the efficacy of the *ṭīn* of Ḥusayn's tomb and the presence of pre-Islamic

prophets suggest a correlation between presence of the physical bodies of prophets and

holy men and the merits of the city in question, lending it spiritual authority. In another

tradition, when one of the companions of Abū Ǧaʿfar asks which land is more excellent

after the *ḥaram* of God (in Mecca) and the Messenger of God (in Medina), the Imām

replies that Kūfa is, due its being a burial place of the Prophets and the trustees [*awṣiyāʾ*]

and being the land where the Hidden Imām will reappear.[143] Furthermore, rather than merely being an assertion of the superiority of the cities of Kūfa and Karbalāʾ, such traditions symbolically support Šīʿī doctrines of the Imāmate. The Imāmī Šīʿa believe that the Imāms, as members of the Prophet's family, were descendants of the pre-Islamic prophets, from whom they inherited their teachings, knowledge, and qualities.[144] By extension, the Šīʿa transmitters of such traditions, due to their unrivaled knowledge of Imāmī traditions, also inherited this prophetic knowledge. One of the purpose of these reports is to demonstrate the continuity between pre-Islamic prophets, the Imāms and Šīʿī scholars and traditionists to legitimize their spiritual authority. Although no tradition goes as far to explicitly subordinate Mecca to Kūfa, the significance accorded to it as a pilgrimage site and symbol of Imāmī authority, in the spirit of the *faḍāʾil* traditions, indicates Karbalāʾ and Kūfa were clearly vying with Mecca as a destination of Šīʿī pilgrimage.

Other reports implicitly assert the superiority of *ziyāra* over *ḥaǧǧ*, and concomitantly Karbalāʾ and Kūfa over Mecca, yet do not go as far to annul the *ḥaǧǧ* altogether. Numerous reports state that an obligatory prayer (*farīḍa*) and supererogatory

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[143] Ibn Qūlawayh, 76.

[144] See Andrew Newman, *The Formative Period of Twelver Shīʿism*, 71-78 and Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, *The Divine Guide in Early Shiʿism,* 41-3, 75-9.for examination of the Imāms perceived reception of previous prophetic knowledge as central to early Šīʿī beliefs on the Imāmate.

prayer (*nāfila*) in Kūfa equal one *ḥaǧǧ* and *ʿumra,* respectively. Several reports insert

quotes from the Imām that "if only the people knew what was in it [Kūfa] they would

prepare provisions and camels from distance places," or "they would come to it, even

crawling."[145] In other reports, claims of Karbalāʾ's superior spiritual merits and rewards

over the *ḥaǧǧ* leads to some perplexity of the Imām's interlocutors, if not outright

skepticism:

> Ibn Abī Yaʿfūr said: "I heard Abu ʿAbd Allāh say to one of his clients (*mawālī*):
> O, so-and-so (*fulān*) do you visit the grave of Abū ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Ḥusayn? He
> replied: Yes, I visit him once every three years. His face aglow, he said: By the
> one and only God, were you to visit him it would be more meritorious for you
> than what you are doing now [the *ḥaǧǧ*]. He replied: This much merit? He said:
> Yes, for by God were I to tell you of the merit of visiting him and the merit of his
> grave you would abandon the *Ḥaǧǧ* outright, and not one of you would make the
> Ḥaǧǧ…Ibn Abī Yaʿfūr said: God has enjoined the people to *ḥaǧǧ* of the House
> [i.e. the Kaʿba] but did not mention visiting the grave of Ḥusayn. He replied: If
> that is the case, then God has made it such. Did you not hear the saying of ʿAlī b.
> Abī Ṭālib that the bottom of the foot is more worthy of being cleaned than the
> top? But God enjoined this on his servants. Do you not know that were the station
> [*al-mawqif*] in the *ḥaram* [of Mecca] it would be more meritorious because of the
> *ḥaram*? But God placed it outside the *ḥaram*.[146]

This passage is interesting not only for the narrator's implicit challenge of the

Imām's extolling *ziyāra* over *ḥaǧǧ* for the former's lack of scriptural basis, but the

Imām's ambiguous reply. In his quotation of ʿAlī, it is not clear whether *ḥaǧǧ* or *ziyāra* is

analogous to the bottom or top of the foot. One possible interpretation is that Mecca is the

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[145] Ibn Qūlawayh, 70-80.
[146] Ibid, 444-49.

bottom of the foot, and receives special treatment only due to its lowly status, whereas Karbalāʾ is the top of the foot that is clean but receives little attention. Such a reply affirms the primacy of the *ḥaǧǧ*, so as not to offend orthodox Muslim piety, but maintains the spiritual superiority of Karbalāʾ.

Another report reaches a similar compromise between the value of the *ḥaǧǧ* and *ziyāra*. After Imām al-Riḍā states that *ziyāra* to Ḥusayn's grave equals a *ḥaǧǧ*, one of his companions asks if the *ḥaǧǧ* is then annulled [*yuṭraḥu ʿanhu l-ḥaǧǧu*] to which al-Riḍā replies:

> No, it is the *ḥaǧǧ* of the weak until he becomes strong [*ḥiǧǧatu l-ḍaʿīfi ḥattā yaqwā*] and makes the *ḥaǧǧ* to the sacred house of God. Do you not know that the house is circumambulated every day by 70,000 angels until night comes when some of them ascend and others descend, and they circumambulate the house until the morning? But Ḥusayn is more noble in the eyes of God than the house. During the time of every prayer, 70,000 angels with disheveled, dusty hair descend upon him who aren't replaced until the Day of the Resurrection.[147]

Here again, an ambiguous compromise is offered in which al-Riḍā describes *ziyāra* as an alternative pilgrimage for those without the financial means to perform the *ḥaǧǧ*, until they are able to do so. Yet, his assertion of Ḥusayn's superiority to Mecca and the angels' constant presence at his tomb until the Last Day, maintains the privileged position of Karbalāʾ and, implicitly, the primacy of *ziyāra*. The two reports cited above suggest that the increasingly elevated status of Kūfa and the practice of *ziyāra*, led to

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[147] Ibn Qūlawayh, 298.

calling into question the necessity of the *ḥağğ*. The narrators of these traditions, and most

of the Karbalāʾ *fadāʾil* traditions, attempt to resolve this tension with authoritative

explanations attributed to the Imāms that assert the spiritual superiority of Kūfa, the

merits of *ziyāra* to the Imāms' graves, and by implication the spiritual and political

authority of the Šīʿī scholars responsible for leading the Šīʿī community in absence of the

Hidden Imām.

Conclusion

In this study, I have attempted to elucidate the origins and development of Šīʿī *ziyāra* traditions and rituals through examinations of the historical and social environments of the texts in which they appear and how they served the discourse of an emerging Šīʿī network of traditionists, agents, and envoys of the Imāms which was emerging in the early ʿAbbāsid era of the late 8th/early 9th centuries. Admittedly, the identification of the historical figures involved in this process proves difficult since at this stage Imāmī scholarship was still in its infancy and would not fully develop until after the beginning of the Greater Occultation in 874 CE and the rise of the Buyid dynasty (932-1062 CE), who were the first clear patrons of Twelver Šīʿī scholarship, shrines,[148] *ziyāra*, and other Muḥarram rituals, including the first ʿĀšūrāʾ processions in Baghdad in 963 CE.[149] When using sources from the Buyid era, such as Ibn Qūlawayh's *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt*, I have attempted to balance their possible biases and retrospective projections on earlier eras by supplementing them with other less tendentious sources. Although a healthy dose of skepticism is warranted in assessing the usefulness 10th-century sources in elucidating the origins and development of *ziyāra*, I have attempted to push the beginnings of such

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[148] Heinz Halm, *Shiism*, 49.

[149] ʿIzz al-Dīn b. al-Aṯīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīḫ*, (Beirut: Dār Bayrūt li l-Ṭabāʿa wa l-Našr, 1966), vol. 8, 549.

practices earlier than previously acknowledged and to explain how Šīʿī scholars shaped

such traditions in light of their political and social circumstances and discursive agenda.

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