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Heir of the Prophets: Veneration of Ḥusayn b. ʻAlī and the Socio-Religious Positioning of Twelver Shiism

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Abstract

This article explores veneration of Ḥusayn b. ʻAlī (d. 61/680) and the place of his ritual visitation (ziyārah) *and pilgrimage to his tomb in Karbala in the construction of Twelver Shīʿī socio-religious identity. Following the theoretical approach of social identity theory, I argue that Twelver Shīʿī veneration of Ḥusayn operates not only vertically, that is, to appeal to the divine, but also horizontally, that is, to secure a prominent socio-religious lineage for Twelver Shīʿīs vis-à-vis the non-Shīʿī Muslim, Jewish, and Christian traditions. Through close reading and analysis of reports* (ḥadīths/akhbār) *compiled by Ibn Qūluwayh (d. 368–9/978–9) in his* Kāmil al-Ziyārāt *(The Complete Visitations), a fourth/tenth-century text devoted entirely to the theme of ritual pilgrimage, I conceptualize three levels of Twelver Shīʿī socio-religious positioning. First, reports in this text encourage veneration of Ḥusayn and pilgrimage to his tomb as an indispensable feature of individual and communal Twelver Shīʿī identity. Second, reports express veneration of Ḥusayn and his burial site as a marker of rivalry vis-à-vis the non-Shīʿī Muslim tradition. Finally, the socio-religious place of Twelver Shīʿīs is further enhanced through reports depicting major figures from the Jewish and Christian traditions as participating in the veneration of Ḥusayn.*

Keywords

Karbala, Ḥusayn b. ʻAlī, *ziyārah*, pilgrimage, Ibn Qūluwayh, social identity theory.

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Introduction

Throughout the year, several million Shīʿī[1] Muslim pilgrims visit the tombs of Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī (d. 61/680), his family members, and his companions in the Iraqi city of Karbala.[2] The pilgrimage to Karbala, especially in the lead up to Arbaʿīn,[3] is often described as one of the largest contemporary religious gatherings in the world.[4] Scholars have studied several interesting angles of Shīʿī veneration of Ḥusayn, ritual commemoration of his martyrdom, and pilgrimage to his tomb.[5] This

[1] This study focuses on Twelver (Ithnā ʿAsharī) Shiism, which forms the largest of the three major divisions of Shiism in the world today (the other two being the Ismāʿīlī and the Zaydī). For this purpose, and to maintain brevity, the terms "Shīʿī" and "Shiism" refer to the Twelvers throughout the article. For a lucid account of how the Ismāʿīlī and Zaydī Shīʿīs venerate Ḥusayn, see Najam Haider, *Shīʿī Islam: An Introduction* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 66–73. For greater details on the various Shīʿī divisions and their doctrines (including the differing numbers and identities of the Imāms), see, for example, Farhad Daftary, *A History of Shiʿi Islam* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013).

[2] Visual footage from Iraq especially during peak commemorative seasons such as 'Āshūrā' and Arbaʿīn shows non-Shīʿīs and non-Muslims also participating in the Karbala pilgrimage and/or other ritual commemorations. As for the number of participants, according to the official website of *al-ʿAtabah al-ʿAbbāsiyyah al-Muqaddasah*, the institution overseeing the affairs of the mausoleum of Ḥusayn's half-brother in Karbala, the number of Arbaʿīn pilgrims on Ṣafar 6–20, 1441 AH (corresponding to October 5–19, 2019) was 15,229,995. See https://alkafeel.net/news/index?id=9424, accessed January 27, 2020. In recent years, the two main institutions overseeing the affairs of the mausoleums in Karbala have created opportunities for those who wish to observe a "proxy pilgrimage," whereby a request is made for a local to perform a customized visitation on behalf of the requester, see https://www.imamhussain.org/english/enaba/, accessed January 27, 2020. Additionally, these institutions have made use of VR technology to allow "virtual visits." See http://app.imamhussain.org/tours/?lang=en, accessed January 27, 2020.

[3] Arbaʿīn (the 20th of the Islamic month of Ṣafar) refers to the fortieth day after 'Āshūrā' (the 10th of the Islamic month of Muḥarram). Arbaʿīn marks the end of the period of mourning for Ḥusayn. See Mahmoud Ayoub, "Arbaʿīn," *Encyclopædia Iranica*, 2:275–76, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/arbain-fortieth-day-after-asura-q, accessed January 27, 2020.

[4] Edith Szanto, "The largest contemporary Muslim pilgrimage isn't the hajj to Mecca, it's the Shiite pilgrimage to Karbala in Iraq," *The Conversation*, September 9, 2020, https://theconversation.com/the-largest-contemporary-muslim-pilgrimage-isnt-the-hajj-to-mecca-its-the-shiite-pilgrimage-to-karbala-in-iraq-144542, accessed September 20, 2020.

[5] Though not exhaustive, the following is a list of some major studies on Shīʿī veneration of Ḥusayn and rituals surrounding the commemoration of his martyrdom: Mahmoud Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering in Islām: A Study of the Devotional Aspects of 'Āshūrā' in Twelver Shīʿism* (The Hague: Mouton, 1978); David Pinault, *The Shiites: Ritual and Popular Piety in a Muslim Community* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992); Yitzhak Nakash, "An

article explores the relationship of this particular ritual to the formation of Shīʿī identity. My point of departure is that Shīʿī veneration of Ḥusayn through his ritual visitation (*ziyārah*) and pilgrimage to his tomb operates not only vertically, that is, to appeal to the divine, but also horizontally, that is, to secure for Shīʿīs a prominent socio-religious lineage vis-à-vis the non-Shīʿī Muslim, Jewish, and Christian traditions. Through close reading and analysis of *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt* (The Complete Visitations), one of the earliest Shīʿī collections of reports (*ḥadīth/akhbār*) compiled by Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad al-Qummī (Ibn Qūluwayh, d. 368–9/978–9) and dedicated entirely to the theme of ritual pilgrimage, I conceptualize three levels of Shīʿī socio-religious positioning. The first level relates to both individual and collective Shīʿī identity formation. I argue that reports encourage pilgrimage as a means of attaining spiritual elevation, material and otherworldly benefits, and, in the process, promoting solidarity and a sense of shared mission with other Shīʿīs. The second level of positioning is vis-à-vis non-Shīʿī Muslims. Here, reports promote the place of Ḥusayn and pilgrimage to his burial site to bolster Shīʿī claims to "orthodoxy" vis-à-vis the non-Shīʿī tradition, i.e., Sunnism, which is often perceived in Shīʿī polemical sources to be at odds with the Prophetic Household (*Ahl al-Bayt*) and responsible for the oppression endured by its representatives and followers. Finally, reports depict major figures from the Jewish and Christian traditions as participating in the veneration of Ḥusayn. In doing so, they further highlight Ḥusayn's outstanding place in the Shīʿī religious worldview and the "universal" support that he and his cause represent and, implicitly, the prominent place of his devotees.

How do Ḥusayn's veneration and visitation operate in shaping Shīʿī identity? Here, social identity theory can be instructive. At its core, social identity theory refers to the idea that social groups "provide their

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Attempt to Trace the Origin of the Rituals of *'Āshūrā'*," *Die Welt des Islams* 33, no. 2 (1993): 161–81; Liyakat Takim, "Charismatic Appeal or Communitas? Visitation to the Shrines of the Imams," *Journal of Ritual Studies* 18, no. 2 (2004): 106–20; Ali J. Hussain, "The Mourning of History and the History of Mourning: The Evolution of Ritual Commemoration of the Battle of Karbalā'," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 25, no. 1 (2005): 78–88; Kamran S. Aghaie, *The Women of Karbalā': Ritual Performance and Symbolic Discourses in Modern Shiʿi Islam* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005); Syed A. Hyder, *Reliving Karbalā': Martyrdom in South Asian Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Najam Haider, "Prayer, Mosque, and Pilgrimage: Mapping Shīʿī Sectarian Identity in 2nd/8th Century Kūfa," *Islamic Law and Society* 16, no. 2 (2009): 151–74; Sabrina Mervin, "'Āshūrā' Rituals, Identity and Politics: A Comparative Approach (Lebanon and India)," in *The Study of Shiʿi Islam: History, Theology and Law*, ed. Farhad Daftary and Gurdofarid Miskinzoda (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 507–28.

members with a shared identity that prescribes and evaluates who they are, what they should believe and how they should behave. Social identities also, very critically, highlight how the in-group is distinct from relevant out-groups in a particular social context."[6] Social identity theory is thus based on the social groups' prescription and evaluation of four elements: (1) the identity of the group, (2) its beliefs, (3) its behaviours, and (4) its in-group/out-group distinctions. But who decides? Who are the actors vis-à-vis the prescription and evaluation of the parameters of this identity? What are the mechanisms through which the prescriptions and evaluations of Shīʿī identity are identified and assessed? It has long been argued that unlike other religious traditions such as Christianity, Islam never developed an official "church" or similar formal institution that instructs its members with "orthodox" teachings. For example, Shahab Ahmed contends, "The fact that there is no Church in Islam means that there is no institution invested with the epistemological authority to affix the imprimatur of religious truth upon a statement and send it forth as such into society. . . . None has the universally recognized, designated, formalized, exclusive function of constituting and certifying the 'religiousness' of a given statement."[7] However, it may be argued that the nonexistence of a central *religious and/or political* authority in Islam does not necessitate the nonexistence of *any* authority to determine "orthodoxy" because Sunni Islam early on developed the concept of consensus (*ijmāʿ*) whose purpose is to authorize certain teachings and practices and to bind them upon Muslims.[8] Be that as it may, the insistence upon the nonexistence of a church or similar formal religious authority in Islam simply overlooks the core basis of Shīʿī Islam. This is because Shīʿī religious discourse formally presents the Imams as holding absolute authority to instruct their followers. Sociologically speaking, the function of the Imam and the institution of the Imamate is precisely to delineate the content and parameters of "orthodoxy" and "orthopraxy." Of course, it must be noted that the *presentation* and *interpretation* of the Imams' injunctions were taken up by the scholarly class (*'ulamā'*). Therefore, the primary mechanism for the instruction and evaluation of the beliefs and practices of the Shīʿīs are the teachings of the Prophet Muḥammad and

[6] Michael A. Hogg, "Social Identity Theory," in *Understanding Peace and Conflict through Social Identity Theory*, ed. Shelley McKeown, Reeshma Haji, and Neil Ferguson (Switzerland: Springer International, 2016), 6.

[7] Shahab Ahmed, *What is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 192–93.

[8] On the place of Consensus in Sunni thought, see Sherman A. Jackson, *Islam and the Problem of Black Suffering* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 9.

the Imams, with the latter providing substantially more details.[9] As we will see shortly, not only would the Imams instruct their followers on what to believe and how to practice, but also on the distinctions between them (in-group) and the non-Shīʿī "other" (out-group). It is further clear that over the course of its history, Shiism has coalesced around several largely agreed upon doctrines and practices. One of these practices is visitation or pilgrimage to the tombs of the Imams, with particular focus on Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī. As Najam Haider has shown, ritual pilgrimage, in particular, contributed to the development of a distinct early second/eighth-century Shīʿī sectarian identity.[10] This ritual is one of the clearest and least controversial practices within Shiism.

My exploration into the socio-religious positioning of Shiism as expressed through Ḥusayn's veneration and ritual visitation proceeds in the following manner: First, I briefly discuss Ḥusayn's place in Shīʿī collective memory, including historical background on who he is, what happened to him, and why it matters to the Shīʿīs. Second, I discuss the place of ritual visitation or pilgrimage as a particular form of Shīʿī veneration of Ḥusayn, including a brief sketch of its origins and development over the course of Shīʿī history. Next, I explore the historical circumstances that prompted the rise and collection of reports about pilgrimage to Ḥusayn's shrine, most notably in the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries. I subsequently examine one particular collection of reports, *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt*, to conceptualize how pilgrimage to Ḥusayn's tomb relates to the socio-religious positioning of Shiism. Finally, I close with some brief concluding remarks.

Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī in Shīʿī Collective Memory

The distinguishing feature of the developed Shīʿī religious identity would centre on the belief in the divine designation (*naṣṣ*) of twelve Imams as the temporal and spiritual successors to the Prophet Muḥammad. The first of these Imams is ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661), followed by his elder son Ḥasan (d. 50/670), then his younger son Ḥusayn, followed by nine of Ḥusayn's successive descendants. However, in contrast to the standard Sunni view that would come to view early Islamic history as having progressed naturally, the Shīʿīs would conceive this early history as

[9] For a brief overview on the role of *ḥadīth* in the development of Shiism, see Etan Kohlberg, "Introduction," in *The Study of Shiʿi Islam: History, Theology and Law*, ed. Farhad Daftary and Gurdofarid Miskinzoda (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 165–79.

[10] See Najam Haider, *The Origins of the Shīʿa: Identity, Ritual, and Sacred Space in Eighth-Century Kūfa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 231–48.

having veered off its divinely intended course. In the words of Maria Dakake,

> The well-known Shi'i view of the events which took place from the death of the Prophet to the establishment of the Umayyad caliphate differs significantly from the version of these same events as found in the standard, extant historical compilations, all of which were composed in the Abbasid period. The era of the Madinan or Rightly Guided caliphate, as it is termed in the official Sunni tradition established in the early Abbasid period, represents for the Shi'is, by contrast, the source and root of much injustice and religious error in the Islamic community.[11]

In the standard Shī'ī view, the community of Muslims, under the leadership of the first three caliphs, betrayed the Prophet and his explicit appointment of 'Alī. The Shī'īs would perceive the injustices towards the Imams and their followers to continue after the Medinan period into that of the Umayyads (40–132/661–750) and Abbasids (132–656/750–1258), culminating in the twelfth and final Imam's occultation (*ghaybah*) in the middle of the third/ninth century. As for the twelfth Imam's predecessors, some Shī'ī scholars would insist that all of them were murdered, especially at the direction of the Umayyad and Abbasid rulers.[12] However, none of the perceived atrocities directed towards the rest of the Imams would match those faced by Ḥusayn, Prophet Muḥammad's younger grandson and third Imam. Shī'ī collective memory views Ḥusayn and his small band of companions as the victims of one of the most tragic events in the history of Islam: their brutal massacre at Karbala on 'Āshūrā' in 61/680 at the hands of a large

[11] Maria M. Dakake, "Writing and Resistance: The Transmission of Early Knowledge in Early Shi'ism," in *The Study of Shi'i Islam: History, Theology and Law*, ed. Farhad Daftary and Gurdofarid Miskinzoda (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2014), 185.

[12] This is evident in widely accepted reports attributed to the Imams themselves: "All of us are killed or poisoned" (*mā minna illa maqtūl aw masmūm*). Another version of the report would substitute the words "poisoned" (*masmūm*) or "killed" (*maqtūl*) with "martyred" (*shahīd*). For these reports, see Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. Bābawayh al-Qummī al-Ṣadūq, *al-Amālī* (Tehran: Mu'assasat al-Bi'thah, 1417 AH), 120; Ibn Bābawayh, *'Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā*, ed. Ḥusayn al-A'lamī (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-A'lamī, 1404/1984), 1:220, 287; Ibn Bābawayh, *Man lā Yaḥḍuruhu al-Faqīh*, ed. 'Alī Akbar al-Ghifārī (Qumm: Jamā'at al-Mudarrisīn, n.d.), 2:585; 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Khazzāz al-Qummī, *Kifāyat al-Athar fī al-Naṣṣ 'alā 'l-A'immat al-Ithnay 'Ashar*, ed. 'Abd al-Laṭīf al-Ḥusaynī (Qumm: Maṭba'at al-Khayyām, 1401 AH), 162. It must be noted that not all Shī'ī scholars accepted the validity of this claim. For example, it appears from some of the writings of the famous theologian and jurist al-Shaykh al-Mufīd (d. 413/1022) that he believed that there is no incontrovertible evidence for the claim that *all* of the Imams were killed. See Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. al-Nu'mān al-Mufīd, *Taṣḥīḥ I'tiqādāt al-Imāmiyyah*, ed. Ḥusayn Dargāhī (Qumm: Dār al-Mufīd, 1414/1993), 131–32.

Umayyad army during the reign of Yazīd (r. 60–64/680–683).[13] As such, Ḥusayn would be the focus of Shīʿī attention. The Shīʿīs would eventually insist that devotion to Ḥusayn stood at the heart of their loyalty not only to the Prophet and his Household but to belief itself, relating the Prophet Muḥammad's pronouncement: "There is a vehemence in the hearts of the believers for the murder of Ḥusayn that never subsides."[14] The pervasive dedication to Ḥusayn may lead one to argue that Ḥusayn stands as the single most important figure in the development of Shiism.

Over the course of their history, the Shīʿīs have expressed veneration of Ḥusayn through several ways. Visitation of and pilgrimage to his tomb would be one of the most enduring and outstanding ways. Pilgrimage to the burial sites of Ḥusayn and Karbala's martyrs seems to have commenced immediately following their deaths in 61/680. Some sources note that immediately after the incident of Karbala, Ḥusayn's surviving family members were taken captive and that, after being taken to Yazīd's court in Damascus, they visited the burial places of their martyrs on their return to Medina.[15] In the first few decades following the incident of Karbala, the pilgrimage to Karbala was still precarious, observed mainly by the subsequent Imams from Ḥusayn's descendants and their families and close companions.[16] In 65/684, the pilgrimage of the "Penitents" (*tawwābūn*) was introduced.[17] Historically, the accessibility of pilgrimage to Karbala and the number of its pilgrims depended mostly on the socio-historical circumstances of the times. In recent years, especially after the fall of the Baath regime in Iraq in 2003, pilgrimage to Karbala has increased in intensity, with millions of pilgrims visiting each year from different parts of the world.

Ibn Qūluwayh and *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt* (The Complete Visitations)

By the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries, Shīʿī scholars and traditionists (*muḥaddithūn*) had compiled various collections of reports that were related on the authority of Prophet Muḥammad and the

[13] For an overview of the account and various narratives of the tragedy of Karbala, see Haider, *Shīʿī Islam*, 66–81.

[14] Al-Mīrzā Ḥusayn al-Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-Wasā'il wa Mustanbaṭ al-Masā'il* (n.p.: Mu'assasat Āl al-Bayt, 1408/1988), 10:318; al-Sayyid Ḥusayn al-Burūjurdī, *Jāmiʿ Aḥādīth al-Shīʿah* (Qumm: al-Maṭbaʿah al-ʿIlmiyyah, n.d.), 12:556.

[15] Hussain, "The Mourning of History," 80.

[16] Nakash, "An Attempt to Trace the Origin of the Rituals of *ʿĀshūrā'*," 167.

[17] Mervin, "'Āshūrā' Rituals," 510. The *tawwābūn* were an early Shīʿī group who arose in response to the martyrdom of Ḥusayn and were remorseful for their inability to come to his aid. For more, see F. M. Denny, "Tawwābūn," in *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, ed. P. J. Bearman et al., 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 10:398.

Imams concerning the great merits of performing pilgrimage to the burial sites of Muḥammad himself, his Household, and especially Ḥusayn. *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt*, produced by the great Shīʿī traditionist and jurist Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad b. Qūluwayh al-Qummī, known as Ibn Qūluwayh (d. 368–9/978–9), is one of the earliest extant sources entirely devoted to such reports.[18]

Ibn Qūluwayh is one of the most reputable Shīʿī scholars of the fourth/tenth century.[19] Early Shīʿī biographers and notable scholars, such as Aḥmad b. ʿAlī al-Najāshī (d. 450/1059 or after 463/1071), Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. al-Nuʿmān al-Mufīd (d. 413/1022), Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067), and their later successors have lauded him with celebratory epithets and commendations.[20] Despite the absence in the biographical literature of detailed information about his life, it appears that Ibn Qūluwayh commenced his religious education in Qumm before moving to Baghdad to teach there until his death. According to some sources, he appears to have travelled as far as Egypt in search of reports.[21] Several prominent scholars are

[18] There is general agreement by Shīʿī scholars that *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt* was compiled by Ibn Qūluwayh himself. There is debate, however, about the authenticity or soundness of the reports in this work based on the trustworthiness or lack thereof of the individuals contained in the chains of narration (*sanad*). My objective in this article is not to contribute to that debate, but rather to approach the work from a phenomenological perspective and analyze the reports that appear in it. This method is especially relevant due to Ibn Qūluwayh's insistence in his introduction to the effect that the reports he has included are transmitted only from those whom he considered "trustworthy" among his companions. See Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad b. Qūluwayh, *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt*, ed. Jawād al-Qayyūmī (Qumm: Muʾassasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī, 1417/1996), 37. For more on the debate on the authenticity of the reports in the work and the reliability of their transmitters, see Amjad Riyāḍ and Nizār Yūsuf, *Buḥūth fī Sharḥ Manāsik al-Ḥajj: Taqrīr li Abḥāth al-Sayyid Muḥammad Riḍā al-Sīstānī* (Beirut: Dār al-Muʾarrikh al-ʿArabī, 1437/2016), 3:66–100 and Ḥusayn al-Qazwīnī, *Durūs fī ʿIlm al-Rijāl* (Karbala: Dār al-Kafīl, 1439/2018), 1:49–73.

[19] For more on Ibn Qūluwayh's life and legacy, see Hadi Qazwini, "Ibn Qūluwayh," in *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, 3rd ed. (forthcoming).

[20] See Aḥmad b. ʿAlī al-Najāshī, *Fihrist Asmāʾ Muṣannifī al-Shīʿah*, ed. Mūsā al-Shabīrī al-Zanjānī (Qumm: Muʾassasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī, 1418/1998), 123–24; Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, *Rijāl al-Ṭūsī*, ed. Jawād al-Qayyūmī al-Iṣfahānī (Qumm: Muʾassasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī, 1415/1995), 418; al-Ṭūsī, *al-Fihrist*, ed. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī (Qumm: Maktabat al-Muḥaqqiq al- Ṭabāṭabāʾī, 1420/2000), 91–92.

[21] See Martin McDermott, "Ebn Qūlawayh, Abu'l-Qāsem Jaʿfar," in *Encyclopædia Iranica*, 8:47, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/ebn-qulawayh, accessed January 27, 2020. Ibn Ḥajar (d. 852/1449), a well-known Sunni scholar and biographer, relates that a certain Muḥammad b. Salīm al-Ṣābūnī related reports from Ibn Qūluwayh in Egypt. See Aḥmad b. ʿAlī b. Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Lisān al-Mīzān*, ed. Salmān ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ (Beirut: Dār al-Bashāʾir al-Islāmiyyah, 1423/2002), 2:470.

listed as his teachers, including the famous traditionist Muḥammad b. Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī (d. 329/941).[22] The aforementioned al-Mufīd, renowned theologian and jurist, is counted among Ibn Qūluwayh's major disciples in Baghdad. Ibn Qūluwayh is buried in the shrine complex of the seventh and ninth Imams, Mūsā b. Jaʿfar al-Kāẓim (d. 183/799) and Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Jawād (d. 220/835), in al-Kāẓimiyyah, a suburb located north of Baghdad. Ibn Qūluwayh also seems to have been a prolific author, with over two dozen works attributed to him in the bio-bibliographical literature.[23] Unfortunately, virtually all of his works are lost. His only surviving work, *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt*, is one of the most important sources of early Shīʿī tradition.[24]

In his introduction, Ibn Qūluwayh states that he produced this work in response to the repeated insistence of an anonymous requester. His declared objective in producing the work is to make clear to its readers the significance of and virtue in performing the pilgrimages to the burial sites of Muḥammad and his Household, with a special focus on Ḥusayn. This is all "to encourage [the believers'] attachment [to "the Masters"] and entice them to visit [their places of burial], in pursuit of God's—glorified and exalted—promise of great rewards and victory."[25]

The vast majority of reports in *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt* emphasize the spiritual benefit and reward for observing pilgrimage to Ḥusayn's tomb specifically, as we will see shortly. However, to contextualize the emphasis on pilgrimage to the tombs of the Imams, and in particular Ḥusayn, we may note the broader historical circumstances in which Ibn Qūluwayh produced this work. Ibn Qūluwayh and his contemporaries lived in the aftermath of what Shīʿī tradition refers to as a period of uncertainty (*ḥayrah*) with the death of the eleventh Imam al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī

[22] Al-Kulaynī is the compiler of *al-Kāfī*, one of the four major Shīʿī books of *ḥadīth* (*al-kutub al-arbaʿah*). The other three compilations were produced by Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Bābawayh al-Ṣadūq (d. 381/991) (*Man lā yaḥḍuruhu al-Faqīh*) and the aforementioned al-Ṭūsī (*al-Tahdhīb* and *al-Istibṣār*).

[23] For a list of some of his works, see al-Najāshī, *Fihrist Asmāʾ Muṣannifī al-Shīʿah*, 123–24 and al-Ṭūsī, *al-Fihrist*, 91–92.

[24] Bio-bibliographers have referred to this work with other titles, including *Jāmiʿ al-Ziyārāt* (The Collection of Visitations) and *Kitāb al-Ziyārāt* (The Book of Visitations). See Al-Najāshī, *Fihrist Asmāʾ Muṣannifī al-Shīʿah*, 123–24 and Al-Ṭūsī, *Fihrist*, 91–92. Ibn Qūluwayh himself, however, titles it *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt* (The Complete Visitations). See Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad b. Qūluwayh, *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt*, ed. Jawād al-Qayyūmī (Qumm: Muʾassasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī, 1417/1996), 37. All references to this work in this article correspond to this edition.

[25] Ibn Qūluwayh, *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt*, 38.

al-ʻAskarī (d. 260/874) in Iraq and a crisis about his succession.[26] This crisis, which led to various internal conflicts and the emergence of several splinter groups, coupled with the continued political repression of the Shīʻīs under the Abbasid regime, provoked Shīʻī scholars to (re)formulate and emphasize the doctrine of the occultation of the twelfth and final Imam.[27] Shīʻīs hold that the twelfth Imam entered into two periods of "hiding," the first considered "minor" (*ṣughrā*), beginning in 260/874 when the twelfth Imam was five years old and continuing until 329/941. The second period is referred to as "major" (*kubrā*), beginning in 329/941 and lasting indefinitely. According to Shīʻī doctrine, the major occultation would only come to an end at an unspecified date before the end of times, when God would permit the twelfth Imam to "reappear" (*ẓuhūr*) along with Jesus, and to introduce an era of peace and justice on earth as the messiah (*al-Mahdī*) with his devout followers.

Interestingly, part of the Shīʻī doctrine of the occultation (and of the Imamate itself) would be the insistence on the constant necessity for a divine "proof" (*ḥujjah*) to be present on earth at all times.[28] This doctrine is in part expressed in the specific ritual salutations (*salām*) that the faithful are encouraged to recite when visiting the burial sites of the Imams, especially Ḥusayn. In addition, Shīʻīs refer to the Imams as the heirs (*warathah*, sing. *wārith*) of the ancient Prophets and one another, a point to which we will return below. Thus, it was in this climate—that is, after a period of uncertainty and extended repression—that Shīʻī scholars who assumed the leadership of the Shīʻī community attempted to maintain its integrity and strengthen the bonds of the faithful with their Imams. However, this period of uncertainty in the middle and latter half of the third/ninth century was followed by the more favourable "Shīʻī century."[29] During this time, the political situation was relatively favourable to the Shīʻīs and lent itself to increased public scholarship and ritual observance, in many ways serving as the

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[26] See Hossein Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation in the Formative Period of Shiʻite Islam* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1993) and Andrew J. Newman, *Twelver Shiism: Unity and Diversity in the Life of Islam, 632 to 1722* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013).

[27] This would not be the first time that Shīʻī divisions would occur, nor the first time that the concept of the "occultation" of the Imam would appear. See N. Haider, *Shīʻī Islam*, Chapter 4 "Fragmentation," especially 90–99.

[28] Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation*, vii.

[29] This era has been referred to as the "Shīʻī century" because the Shīʻī Buyids ruled in Iraq (and especially Baghdad, the seat of the Sunni caliphate) and Iran, while the Shīʻī (Ismāʻīlī) Fatimids ruled in Egypt and Damascus. See Clifford E. Bosworth, *Islamic Dynasties* (Edinburgh: Clark Constable, 1980).

foundation for subsequent theological, legal, and ritual developments up to the present period. Ibn Qūluwayh and his contemporaries were operating in this more favourable climate.

To return to our source of reports, *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt* is composed of 108 chapters consisting of over 800 reports, transmitted on the authority of the Prophet and the Imams. While its reports emphasize pilgrimage to the burial sites of Muḥammad, his daughter Fāṭimah, the Imams, as well as other notable figures, the vast majority (69%) of them focus on the status of Karbala and pilgrimage to the tomb of its martyr Ḥusayn.[30] It is this source and the reports narrated in it that we will now turn to in our exploration of the three levels of Shīʿī socio-religious positioning.

Ḥusayn's Visitation and the Socio-Religious Positioning of Shīʿīs

In the Shīʿī religious tradition, pilgrimage to the burial places of the Prophets, Imams, and other revered figures is a well-established ritual.[31] In observing this ritual, Shīʿīs partake in the construction of the first level of their identity: that of the Shīʿī self and community. Shīʿīs do this by expressing their devotion to these figures and participating in their sanctity. These ritual pilgrimages represent a link between past, present, and future. They form a continuous and recurring renewal of the covenant between figures deemed to be sacred and their devout followers.[32] Devout Shīʿīs long to visit the burial places in hopes of seeking the intercession (*shafāʿah*) of their hosts, the answering of their prayers, and the fulfilment of their needs. These pilgrimages also promote a sense of community and solidarity with other Shīʿīs.[33] Oftentimes, Shīʿīs observe these pilgrimages in groups. While this is all true of pilgrimage to the shrines of Muḥammad and his Household, including the Imams, as noted above, most reports clearly express that the place of Karbala and its martyr Ḥusayn exceeds every other place and figure in significance and merit.

Several reports express the magnificent spiritual merits of the pilgrimage to Ḥusayn's tomb. Among these is that Muḥammad, the Imams, and the angels pray and seek forgiveness for Ḥusayn's visitors.[34] In one report transmitted on the authority of the sixth Imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765), he relates that he heard his father the fifth Imam

[30] Newman, *Twelver Shiism*, 61.
[31] See J. W. Meri et. al., "Ziyāra," in *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, ed. P. J. Bearman et al., 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 11:524–39 and Takim, "Charismatic Appeal," 106–20.
[32] Takim, "Charismatic Appeal," 111.
[33] Ibid., 112.
[34] Ibn Qūluwayh, *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt*, 227–36.

Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. 117/743) enumerate the merits of the pilgrimage to one of his inquiring companions. Al-Bāqir asked his companion: "Whose pleasure do you seek [in visiting Ḥusayn]?" The man replied, "[I seek] God's, the Most Glorified." The Imam is then reported to have listed numerous rewards and merits: the pilgrim will acquire a light beaming from his face on the Day of Judgement that will remove all fear; he will be among the first to be quenched at the Basin (*ḥawḍ*);[35] an angel will accompany him towards Paradise; the Fire will not touch him.[36]

Yet another long and detailed report states that the one who visits Ḥusayn will be guaranteed entrance into Paradise; that if he dies while visiting, throngs of angels will participate in his procession and shrouding, his shroud will be produced from the heavens, a doorway to Paradise will be opened in his grave; that the pilgrim's prayers will be answered while visiting, all of his sins will be forgiven, and he will be rewarded for assisting others to perform the visitation also.[37] Numerous reports emphasize the "worldly" merits of spending bountifully as one performs the pilgrimage: "For every dirham spent, God will compensate [the pilgrim] with 10,000 dirhams."[38] Reports often urge pilgrims to walk towards these sacred sites and suggest that God bestows one reward and forgives one sin for every step one takes while walking to Karbala.[39] Others state that, for every step, God bestows one thousand rewards, forgives one thousand sins, and raises the status of the individual [in Paradise] one thousand stations.[40] In recent years, a noticeable feature of the pilgrimage to the tomb of Ḥusayn includes a host of free services rendered to pilgrims, such as food and lodging. This is especially the case during the largest pilgrimage to Karbala, which occurs during the period known as Arbaʿīn (forty days after 'Āshūrā'). Another prominent feature of the Arbaʿīn pilgrimage is that pilgrims walk towards Karbala from various parts of Iraq, especially from Najaf, located approximately 50 miles south of Karbala.

These and other similar reports encourage devout Shīʿīs to continue to partake in the ritual pilgrimage to Karbala. In doing so, pilgrims express their devotion to God, Muḥammad, the Imams, and particularly

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[35] The Basin (*ḥawḍ*) refers to a place in which Muḥammad will meet his community on the Day of Resurrection. See A. J. Wensinck, "Ḥawḍ," in *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, ed. B. Lewis et al., 2nd ed. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986), 3:286. For more on the Shīʿī conceptualization of the *ḥawḍ*, see Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering*, 197–216.
[36] Ibn Qūluwayh, *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt*, 238–39.
[37] Ibid., 239–41.
[38] Ibid., 236.
[39] Ibid., 253.
[40] Ibid., 255.

Ḥusayn, in hopes of being considered among the righteous and granted forgiveness and admittance into Paradise in the next life. Importantly, these reports reinforce the strength of communal identity. This is especially effective for a beleaguered community that is not only small in numbers but perceives itself as having constantly been oppressed over the course of its history, both during the earlier period of the presence of the Imams and after the occultation of the last Imam.

The second level of positioning is vis-à-vis the non-Shīʿī Muslim tradition(s). Here, the discussion of intergroup relations is instructive. Intergroup relations form a core component of social identity theory. Michael Hogg notes, "When people make comparisons between their own group [in-group] and an out-group they are concerned to ensure that their own group is positively distinctive—clearly differentiated from and more favourably evaluated than relevant out-groups."[41] The construction of boundaries through a process of exclusion and the securing of a privileged position for Shīʿīs among the community of Muslims is clear in *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt*.[42] For example, a prominent feature of the reports in *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt* is that they often compare and contrast the place of Karbala with Mecca as well as the religious and spiritual status of those who revere Ḥusayn with those who do not revere him in the sense the Shīʿīs do.

The most telling reports in the context of the development of a distinctive Shīʿī identity vis-à-vis non-Shīʿīs are those that relate the prior knowledge and grief of the Prophet Muḥammad over his grandson Ḥusayn's future murder. This is because, while non-Shīʿīs generally recognized the special place that Ḥusayn held with his grandfather Muḥammad,[43] Shīʿīs would underscore this relationship to emphasize the severity of what occurred in Karbala and its relation to what would be perceived as the rest of the tragic episodes endured by Muḥammad's Household and subsequent Imams and their followers.[44]

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[41] Hogg, "Social Identity Theory," 7.

[42] For an example of how other religious groups construct similar boundaries, see Simon J. Joseph, "A Social Identity Approach to the Rhetoric Apocalyptic Violence in the Sayings Gospel Q," *History of Religions* 57, no. 1 (2017): 28–49.

[43] Sunni sources have related the famous report on the authority of Muḥammad: "Ḥusayn is of me and I am of Ḥusayn; God loves the one who loves Ḥusayn." For example, see Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Musnad* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, n.d.), 4:172; Muḥammad b. Yazīd b. Mājah, *Sunan*, ed. Muḥammad Fu'ād ʿAbd al-Bāqī (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, n.d.), 1:51; Muḥammad b. ʿĪsā al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān M. ʿUthmān (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1403/1983), 5:324.

[44] For more on Shīʿī perceptions of the sufferings of the Prophet and his Household, see Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering*, 23–52.

In this regard, one lengthy report holds that the angel Gabriel descended upon the Prophet and said, "O Muḥammad, God sends salutations upon you and informs you that your daughter Fāṭimah will give birth to a boy, who will then be killed by your nation after you." Muḥammad replied, "O Gabriel, And may peace be with my Lord. I do not need a boy who will be killed by my nation after me." Gabriel then ascended to the heavens and descended once again, repeating his message. Muḥammad repeated his reply. Gabriel ascended and descended a third time and said, "O Muḥammad, Your Lord sends salutations upon you and gives you good news that God has designated the Imamate and [your] succession in this boy's progeny." Muḥammad replied, "I am pleased." Muḥammad then sent word to Fāṭimah that she would give birth to a boy and that he would be killed by people claiming to be the Prophet's followers. Fāṭimah replied that she was not in need of a boy who would be killed. The Prophet replied to her that succession to the Prophet and the Imamate would be secured in this boy's progeny, whereby Fāṭimah also expressed her satisfaction. The report then states that when Ḥusayn was an infant, he did not feed on his mother or any other woman. Instead, he would be brought to Muḥammad, whereby Muḥammad would place his finger in Ḥusayn's mouth and the latter would suckle from Muḥammad's finger, causing his flesh and blood to be composed of flesh and blood of his grandfather.[45]

Another report states that while Muḥammad was in the home of Fāṭimah and Ḥusayn was sitting on his lap, Muḥammad suddenly began to weep. He then turned to his daughter and informed her that God had just revealed to him that He blessed her son Ḥusayn, that He chose him as the master of all of the martyrs and the master of the youth of Paradise, that His anger, curse, and punishment will be upon those who oppose and kill him, and that he is His chosen symbol of guidance, witness, and vicegerent on earth.[46]

For Shīʿīs, these and similar reports express two important points. On the one hand, they emphasize the continuity between those who would hold Ḥusayn in high regard, including as the rightful successor of the Prophet and the Prophet himself. If the Prophet declared his support for Ḥusayn and acknowledged that his rightful successors would appear from Ḥusayn's descendants, even decades before his murder, this meant that the Shīʿīs, through their support of and loyalty to Ḥusayn, were simply imitating the Prophet himself. On the other hand, these reports

[45] Ibn Qūluwayh, *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt*, 122–25.
[46] Ibid., 147–48.

emphasize the severity of Ḥusayn's murder and the audacity of those who opposed Muḥammad's Household after his death. Thus, these reports attempt to establish an authentic connection with the Prophetic *sunnah* (normative tradition), which all Muslims would recognize as having an important role in the construction of their beliefs and practices. This connection was especially important in maintaining the construction and maintenance of Shīʿī "orthodoxy" in the face of continued accusations of heresy by other non-Shīʿī groups. This point becomes clearer when we consider the reports that emphasize the pilgrimage to Karbala compared to Mecca's, to which we will turn now.

As noted above, most of *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt*'s reports explicitly encourage pilgrimage to Karbala. To express the exemplary status of Karbala and its pilgrimage, the Imams were often shown to have compared it to the Kaʿbah in Mecca, expressing Karbala's equal—or oftentimes superior— status to the Kaʿbah. One report declares that God created the land of Karbala 24,000 years before creating the Kaʿbah and its land and that Karbala was and will remain the most sacred spot on earth. It will also be the most sacred place in the heavens, where the most devout will reside.[47] Some reports encourage the observance of pilgrimage to Karbala by employing the term "obligation" (*farīḍah*).[48] While not taken in the technical sense (i.e., a mandatory act of worship), the use of this term would foreground the significance of pilgrimage to Karbala as a mark of advanced belief in the same way that the emphasis on observing the *ḥajj* would be for all Muslims. Interestingly, these reports often consider a pilgrimage to Karbala a fulfilment of the believer's responsibility towards the Prophet: "If one of you performs the *ḥajj* [every year of] his entire life but does not visit the tomb of Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī, he will neglect one of his duties towards the Messenger of God, because God has mandated the right of [visiting] Ḥusayn upon every Muslim."[49] The significance of this relation becomes clear when we recall reports transmitted on the authority of Muḥammad himself on the incompleteness of the *ḥajj* if one forgoes visiting Muḥammad's future place of burial.[50] In this way, Shīʿī tradition establishes the "true"

[47] Ibid., 450–51.

[48] Ibid., 236–37. It ought to be noted here that the term "obligatory" has not been interpreted by Shīʿī jurists in its technical sense, but rather it has been understood as indicating a strong recommendation.

[49] Ibid, 237–38.

[50] Some Sunni sources have included this report. See ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-Malik al-Muttaqī al-Hindī, *Kanz al-ʿUmmāl*, ed. Ṣafwah al-Saqā (n.p.: n.p., 1409 AH), 5:135. However, Sunni sources have generally considered this report to be "weak" (*ḍaʿīf*) or "fabricated" (*mawḍūʿ*). See Muḥammad Ṭāhir b. ʿAlī al-Hindī al-Fatnī, *Tadhkirat al-Mawḍūʿāt* (n.p.: n.p.,

believer's responsibility towards the Imam, the Prophet, and God together. This is because if the believer venerates Ḥusayn, he is considered to have venerated Muḥammad, and in turn, he has venerated God. On the other hand, if one neglects Ḥusayn, one has neglected Muḥammad, and in turn, one has neglected God.

Furthermore, while reports encourage pilgrimage to Ḥusayn's tomb throughout the entire year, some emphasize the greater significance of pilgrimage on specific occasions. One of these occasions is the day of ʻArafah, the ninth day of the last month of the Islamic calendar, *Dhū al-Ḥijjah*. This is the day in which pilgrims observing the *ḥajj* spend the entire day in devotion and prayer in the plain of ʻArafah, located just outside Mecca. Muslim tradition holds that pilgrims are forgiven their sins after completing this ritual. In some Shīʻī reports, the Imam insists that God considers the devotion of the pilgrims to Karbala before that of the pilgrims to the plain of ʻArafah and that the former is granted the rewards of one thousand *ḥajj* and one thousand *ʻumrah* (lesser *ḥajj*) pilgrimages.[51] Especially in times of sectarian and political strife between Sunnis and Shīʻīs, pilgrimage to Karbala competed with and sometimes took the place of the *ḥajj*.[52] Thus, on this second level, we see the tension between in-group and out-group and Shīʻī insistence on proclaiming their own superior "orthodoxy" in competition with the non-Shīʻī Muslim traditions.

The third and final level of socio-religious positioning relates to the Jewish and Christian traditions. We have already seen how the story of Karbala begins, according to Shīʻī tradition, long before the desert plain was the actual site of the massacre and burial of Ḥusayn and his companions in the first/seventh century. But it was not enough that Karbala and its martyr would compete with non-Shīʻī Muslim tradition. Shīʻīs would directly include prominent Jewish and Christian figures in the formulation of their worldview while placing Ḥusayn front and centre.[53]

In this regard, reports hold that many of the ancient Prophets, long before Muḥammad, were also familiar with Ḥusayn's future martyrdom and the sorrowful events surrounding it.[54] For instance, a report relates that Abraham was the first to curse Ḥusayn's killers and command his

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n.d.), 76. Shīʻī sources for this report include, for example, al-Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-Wasā'il*, 10:181, 186.

[51] Ibn Qūluwayh, *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt*, 316.

[52] Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering*, 182.

[53] Ibid., 216–20, 223–24.

[54] Ibn Qūluwayh, *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt*, 137–39.

progeny and community to do so as well. This practice was imitated by Moses, David, and Jesus. Jesus would pronounce to his community, "O Children of Israel, It is as though I can see that land [Karbala]. No Prophet has come, except that he has visited Karbala, proclaiming 'You are a blessed land, and within you, the Illustrious Moon [Ḥusayn] will be buried.'"[55]

Reports narrated on the authority of the subsequent Imams from Ḥusayn's descendants also expressed how the souls of all of the Prophets and Messengers residing in the heavens, as well as the angels, plead to God to permit them to descend and to visit Karbala. For instance, in a somewhat suspenseful report, a companion of the sixth Imam al-Ṣādiq relates that in one of his visits to Karbala from Kufa (approximately 50 miles south of Karbala) sometime in the earlier part of the second/eighth century, he waited until the middle of the night before proceeding to Ḥusayn's tomb for fear of being caught and persecuted by the agents of the Umayyad caliph. When he proceeded towards the tomb, he was stopped by a figure and told to go back, for he would not be able to access the tomb. He left and returned closer to dawn. The same figure once again stopped him. The pilgrim asked the guard why he would not be able to visit the tomb, requesting permission to visit the tomb and quickly return to Kufa before being caught by the caliph's agents. The figure replied, "Wait a few moments, for Moses had requested permission from God to visit, and he was granted permission and was accompanied by 70,000 angels. They have been here since the beginning of the night and will ascend once again at the end of the night." The man then asked, "And who are you?" The figure replied, "I am one of the angels who has been commissioned to protect the grave of Ḥusayn and to seek forgiveness for his visitors." The man then relates that he was utterly shocked when he witnessed and heard this. Finally, he was able to access Ḥusayn's tomb and return safely back to Kufa.[56] In another report, the sixth Imam is shown to encourage his followers to continuously visit Karbala, "for it hosts the best of the Prophets' sons; Indeed, the angels continued to visit Karbala for one thousand years before my grandfather Ḥusayn resided in it, and [the angels] Gabriel and Michael continue to visit him every single night."[57] The ancient figures familiar to the Jewish and/or Christian traditions are thus shown to participate in the veneration of Ḥusayn. In this way, Ḥusayn is securely linked to his predecessors. Among the various ritual salutations

[55] Ibid., 142–43.
[56] Ibid., 221–22.
[57] Ibid., 453.

prescribed for Shīʿīs to recite when visiting Ḥusayn's tomb is a famous one that is referred to as "The Salutations of the Heir" (*Ziyārat Wārith*). The sixth Imam is said to teach one of his disciples how to salute Ḥusayn with the following greeting:

> Peace be upon you O heir of Adam, God's Chosen One. Peace be upon you O heir of Noah, God's Prophet. Peace be upon you O heir of Abraham, God's Friend. Peace be upon you O heir of Moses, God's Interlocutor. Peace be upon you O heir of Jesus, God's Spirit. Peace be upon you O heir of Muḥammad, God's Beloved. Peace be upon you O heir of ʿAlī, Legatee of God's Messenger. Peace be upon you O heir of Fāṭimah, daughter of God's Messenger. . . . Peace be upon you O Proof of God in His heavens and earth.[58]

Thus, Ḥusayn is conceived of as the heir of major figures who came before him.

There is, however, more to the story. As noted above, while pilgrimage to Karbala was encouraged throughout the year, special occasions warranted greater focus and merit. The middle of Shaʿbān, the eighth month of the Islamic calendar, is a significant time for Shīʿīs as it marks the birth of the twelfth Imam Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan in 255/869, whom, as noted above, Shīʿīs believe to be in occultation and will reappear along with Jesus at the end of times to restore peace and justice to the world as the messiah (*al-Mahdī*). To that end, reports emphasize the significance of performing pilgrimage to Karbala on the day of the twelfth Imam's birth. One report holds that if anyone wishes to meet and greet the souls of all 124,000 Prophets and Messengers in the hereafter, one should observe pilgrimage to Karbala on mid-Shaʿbān, for they all seek permission from God to descend and visit Karbala on that day.[59] Ḥusayn is thus conceived of as the connection point between past and future. On the one hand, he is considered the heir of the previous Prophets and they all look forward to him. On the other hand, the final Imam comes from Ḥusayn's progeny and is his heir and avenger. The Imams who succeeded him are, in turn, his heirs as well. As noted above, part of the Shīʿī doctrines of the Imamate and the occultation of the final Imam entailed an insistence on the constant necessity of a divine guide to serve as God's "proof" (*ḥujjah*) on earth. Shīʿī theologians have maintained that besides being his predecessors' heir, the final and hidden Imam's major role would be to function as the guardian of the divine message after the Prophet and his predecessors and to reappear

[58] Ibid., 374–76.
[59] Ibid., 334.

before the end of times to usher in a period of peace and justice, along with Jesus. In the Shīʿī worldview, Jesus is expected to follow the lead of the twelfth Imam. Part of the Imam's role, however, would entail avenging Ḥusayn's unjust murder.[60] According to one version of Shīʿī eschatology and the doctrine of "the return" (*al-rajʿah*), several figures, including Ḥusayn, his family members, and companions, as well as Ḥusayn's killers, would be resurrected again sometime before the end of the world. During this resurrection, the twelfth Imam is expected to pronounce his judgement upon Ḥusayn's enemies and killers.[61] Those who stood on the wrong side of history would meet their doom, while those who stood on the right side, including Ḥusayn's supporters and devotees, as well as, implicitly, the "genuine" followers of the ancient Prophets, would inherit and partake in the kingdom of peace and justice.

Conclusion

Devotion to and veneration of Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī is arguably one of the most important aspects of the Shīʿī religious worldview. We have recounted some of the earliest systematically compiled reports transmitted on the authority of Prophet Muḥammad and the Imams on the place of Karbala and the significance of pilgrimage to the tomb of its martyr. For a religious group that has remained a minority in various parts of the world throughout most of its history, we can see how reports emphasizing the place of Ḥusayn can be conceived of in the minds of Shīʿī believers to reinforce a sense of strength and hope. These reports reveal that despite the harsh realities of their times, the doctrinal confusions, and the political repression, Shīʿīs secure the most favourable of religious, social, and political positioning for themselves. I

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[60] See Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering*, 227–29. In a popular supplication known as "The Devotional Elegy" (*duʿā' al-nudbah*), believers recite, "Where is the one who shall avenge the Prophets and the children of the Prophets? Where is the one who shall avenge the blood of the one killed at Karbala?" For a recent English translation and commentary of this supplication, see Rizwan Arastu, *Al-Nudbah: A Devotional Elegy for the Prophet Muhammad and His Family* (Dearborn, MI: Islamic Texts Institute, 2009). In part of a lengthy address to Ḥusayn attributed to the twelfth Imam himself, he is reported to have proclaimed, "I will mourn for you [Ḥusayn] day and night, and I will weep blood for you instead of tears." See Muḥammad b. al-Mashhadī, *al-Mazār*, ed. Jawād al-Qayyūmī al-Iṣfahānī (Qumm: Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī, 1419 AH), 501; Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, ed. Muḥammad Mahdī al-Khirsān et al. (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Wafā', 1403/1983), 98:222.

[61] For more on this doctrine and the controversies surrounding it, see Amina Inloes, "Authentication of Hadith on the Raj'ah" (master's thesis, Islamic College, 2009), https://www.al-islam.org/printpdf/book/export/html/97756.

have conceptualized this positioning on three levels. The first level relates to individual Shīʿī piety and collective intra-Shīʿī communal identity. Recalling Hogg's description of social identity theory, as a socio-religious group, Shiism provides its members with "a shared identity that prescribes and evaluates who they are, what they should believe, and how they should behave."[62] Shīʿīs are expected to express utmost loyalty to the Prophet Muḥammad and his successors, the Imams. On this understanding, one of the most important ways of expressing this loyalty is visiting these sacred figures and their burial places. The second level relates to Shīʿī identity vis-à-vis non-Shīʿī Muslims. Intergroup relations and the tension between in-group and out-group are manifested on this level, allowing for a robust and competitive religious doctrine to emerge.[63] For a religious community to flourish, it must draw clear boundaries between itself and the "other," placing itself in a position of prominence in relation to the "other." Finally, the third level relates to Shīʿī identity vis-à-vis non-Muslim tradition, especially its Jewish and Christian variety. The incorporation of major figures and doctrines familiar to the Jewish and Christian (not to mention the Islamic) traditions in the Shīʿī worldview broadens and attempts to make it the centre of religious, social, and political attention. Taken all together, Ḥusayn is thus conceived as the anchor and focus of past, present, and future Shīʿī commitments.

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[62] Hogg, "Social Identity Theory," 6.
[63] Ibid., 7.