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An Episode in the 'Amili Migration to Safavid Iran: Husayn b. 'Abd al-Samad al-'Amili's Travel Account

After emigrating from Ottoman territory to Safavid Iran in the mid-sixteenth century, the Shiite scholar Husayn b. 'Abd al-Samad al-'Amili wrote an eloquent letter-cum-travel account describing his experiences to his teacher Zayn al-Din al-'Amili who had remained in Jabal 'Amil. A manuscript of this fascinating document has now come to light and been edited twice, in 2001 and 2003. An analysis of the undated letter shows that it was written in 961/1554 and describes a journey that occurred earlier that same year. Husayn's statements do not spell out the exact cause of his flight from Ottoman territory but suggest that he was wary of being denounced to the authorities and felt that his academic career was severely limited there. He evidently supported Safavid legitimacy wholeheartedly, though he harbored misgivings about the moral environment in Iran and had sharp criticisms for Persian religious officials.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Shiite scholars from Jabal 'Amil played crucial roles in establishing the legitimacy of the Safavid state, bolstering ideological opposition to the Ottomans and Uzbeks, stewarding the conversion of a large portion of the Iranian populace to Shiite Islam, and fostering the development in Iran of a substantial Shiite literature in both Arabic and Persian.¹ While these results are generally recognized as historical facts, the nature and causes of the migration remain incompletely understood, particularly in its early stages. Several investigators have suggested, on the one hand, that Ottoman discrimination against Shiites was not so pronounced as to force their scholars to seek refuge with the Safavids and, on the other hand, that many 'Amili scholars' rejection of Safavid legitimacy militated against their acceptance of positions or stipends doled out by the government in Iran. A more precise assessment of the motivations of the immigrant scholars has proved difficult because few extant

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¹Ali Muruwah, *al-Tashayyū' bayn Jabal 'Amil wa-Iran* (London, 1987), 51–59; Ja'far al-Muhajir, *al-Hijrah al-'amiliyyah ila Iran fi al-'asr al-safawi: asbabuha al-tarikhyyah wa-nata'ijuba al-thaqafyyah wa'l-siyasiyyah* (Beirut, 1989), 145–51; Andrew Newman, "The Myth of the Clerical Migration to Safawid Iran: Arab Shiite Opposition to 'Ali al-Karaki and Safawid Shiism," *Die Welt des Islams* 33 (1993): 66–112; Devin J. Stewart, "Notes on the Migration of 'Amili Scholars to Safavid Iran," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 55 (1996): 81–103; Mahdi Farhani Munfarid, *Mubajarat-i 'ulama-yi shi'ah az Jabal 'Amil bi-Iran dar 'asr-i safavi* (Tehran, 1998); Rula Jurdi Abisaab, "The 'Ulama of Jabal 'Amil in Safavid Iran: Marginality, Migration and Social Change," *Iranian Studies* 27 (1994): 103–22; *idea, Converting Persia: Religion and Power in the Safavid Empire* (London, 2004).

documents from the period provide the necessary information. The recently discovered travel account of the ‘Amili jurist Husayn b. ‘Abd al-Samad al-‘Amili, which describes his immigration to Iran in the mid-sixteenth century in some detail, throws considerable light on these formerly obscure issues. Composed in the form of a letter to his teacher Zayn al-Din al-‘Amili, the text is undated but may be shown to have been written in 961/1554 and to describe a journey that took place earlier that same year. However stylized, hyperbolic, and at the same time reticent on key points the text is, it provides insight into Husayn’s personal thoughts at this critical juncture in his career, thus shedding some light on the nature of scholarly migration from Jabal ‘Amil to Iran and the attitude of ‘Amili scholars toward the Safavid Shahs.

Husayn b. ‘Abd al-Samad al-Harithi al-Hamdani al-‘Amili was born in 918/1512 the town of Juba, west of Sayda in what is now southern Lebanon. He studied with Shiite teachers in his native region, including Sayyid Hasan b. Ja‘far al-Karaki (d. 936/1530) in the village of Karak Nuh, and in his native town, Zayn al-Din al-‘Amili, who would become known as al-Shahid al-Thani “the Second Martyr” after his execution by the Ottomans in 965/1558. The two studied and taught together for roughly twenty years, in Jabal ‘Amil, Damascus, and Cairo, and they even traveled to Istanbul to petition officials at Ottoman court for teaching positions in 952/1545. In the mid-sixteenth century, Husayn left Lebanon and ended up settling in Safavid Iran, where he quickly rose to a leading position of religious authority, serving as *shaykh al-islam*, or chief jurist, successively in Qazvin, Mashhad, and Herat during the later half of Shah Tahmasb’s long reign (920–84/1524–76). After leaving Iran to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca in 983/1575, he traveled to Bahrain, where he died suddenly in 984/1576.² Husayn played an important role in the history of the Islamic religious sciences in the Shiite tradition, promoting the study of Shiite law, hadith, and hadith criticism in Iran and transmitting, teaching, and commenting on the works of al-Shahid al-Awwal (Muhammad b. Makki al-Jizzini, d. 786/1384) and his teacher Zayn al-Din in particular. Husayn’s accomplishments have been overshadowed by the fame of his son Baha’ al-Din Muhammad (953–1030/1547–1621), who served as the leading legal authority in the Safavid Empire for three decades during the reign of Shah Abbas I (996–1038/1587–1629), but he remains one of the most important Shiite scholars of the sixteenth century.

The date and circumstances of Husayn’s migration to Iran have been subject to considerable attention in scholarship to date because of their relevance to his career in Iran, the life story of his celebrated son Baha’ al-Din, the status of Shiites in the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century, and ‘Amili migration

²On this scholar in general, see Devin J. Stewart, “The First *Shaykh al-Islam* of the Safavid Capital Qazvin,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* cxvi (1996):387–405; Devin J. Stewart, “Husayn b. ‘Abd al-Samad al-‘Amili’s Treatise for Sultan Suleiman and the Shi’i Shafi’i Legal Tradition,” *Islamic Law and Society* iv (1997):156–99, and the sources cited there.

to Iran. Four main statements in the sources impinge on determining the date of his arrival in Iran. Writing in 1025/1616, Iskandar Beg Munshi (d. 1042/1632) reports in his famous chronicle of Shah Abbas I's reign, *Tarikh-i 'alam-ara-yi 'Abbasi*, that Husayn and his son came to Iran after the execution of Zayn al-Din by Ottoman authorities, an event which may be dated to 17 Rajab 965/5 May 1558.³ Iskandar Beg presumably intended to dramatize the flight of these two prominent scholars into Iran as a headlong flight, with executioners close on their heels, from the Ottomans' evil empire to the benevolent watch of the Safavid Shahs. Other statements in the sources contradict this version of events. In his biographical dictionary *Lu'lu'at al-Babrayn*, Yusuf al-Bahrani (d. 1186/1772) reports that Baha' al-Din was seven years old when his father immigrated to Iran with his family.⁴ Given that Baha' al-Din was born on 27 Dhu al-Hijjah 953/18 February 1547, he would have been seven years old between 27 Dhu al-Hijjah 960/4 December 1553 and 26 Dhu al-Hijjah 961/21 November 1554. In a now lost Persian biography of Baha' al-Din, excerpts of which are translated in Mirza 'Abd Allah Efendi al-Isfahani's (d. ca. 1130/1719) biographical dictionary *Riyad al-'ulama'*, which he completed in 1106/1694-95, Muzaffar al-Din 'Ali (fl. 17th c.) provides a brief synopsis of Husayn's career in Iran. He relates that Husayn came to Iran with his family and settled in Isfahan, where he stayed for three years. He was then introduced at court by a fellow 'Amili, al-Shaykh 'Ali Minshar (d. 984/1576), the *shaykh al-islam* of Isfahan, and appointed by Shah Tahmasb as *shaykh al-islam* of the capital, Qazvin, a post which he would hold for the next seven years. He then served as *shaykh al-islam* of Mashhad for "a long while" and *shaykh al-islam* of Herat for eight years, before leaving Iran to perform the pilgrimage in 983/1575.⁵ Finally, in the chronicle *Kbuld-i barin*, Muhammad Yusuf Valah Isfahani (fl. late 17th c.) reports that Husayn arrived at Safavid court in Qazvin in 963 A.H.⁶

Documentary evidence indicates that Husayn was in Qazvin between 966/1558 and 970/1563; a gap of about eight years remains during the particular period when he must have entered Iran and settled there. The beginning of the period under question is set by an *ijazab* he granted for his commentary on the *Alfiyyah*, a thousand-verse poem on ritual prayer by al-Shahid al-Awwal, in Karbala', Iraq, in the year 958/1551.⁷ Eight years later, he records, his son Abu Turab 'Abd

³Iskandar Beg Munshi, *Tarikh-i 'alam-ara-yi 'Abbasi* (1 vol. in 2), ed. Iraj Afshar (Tehran, 2004) 155–56; English translation by Roger M. Savory, *History of Shah 'Abbas the Great* (1 vol. in 2) (Boulder, Colorado, 1978) 247–48. The date of Zayn al-Din's execution is given in Qadi Ahmad b. Sharaf al-Din al-Husayn al-Husayni al-Qummi, *Khulasat al-tawarikh* (Tehran, 1980) 1:398–99.

⁴Yusuf al-Bahrani, *Lu'lu'at al-babrayn* (Najaf, 1966) 23–28; also Muhammad Baqir al-Khwansari, *Rawdat al-jannat fi ahwal al-'ulama' wa 'l-sadat*, 8 vols. (Beirut, 1991) 7:81.

⁵Mirza 'Abd Allah al-Isfahani, *Riyad al-'ulama' wa-biyad al-fudala'*, 6 vols., ed. Ahmad al-Husayni (Qum, 1980), 2:119–21.

⁶Muhammad Yusuf Valah Isfahani, *Kbuld-i barin*, ed. Mir Hashim Muhaddith (Tehran, 1993), 433.

⁷Mirza Abd Allah Isfahani, *Riyad al-'ulama'*, 2:117.

al-Samad was born in Qazvin on 3 Safar 966/15 November 1558.⁸ Shortly after this, one of his daughters gave birth to a son named al-Sayyid Muhammad later that same month, on 28 Safar 966/9 December 1558, also in Qazvin.⁹ Baha' al-Din finished copying his father's treatise *Risalat al-wajibat al-'ilmiyyah wa'l-'amaliyyah* in Qazvin in 966/1558–59.¹⁰ A student finished copying the work *Rijal Ibn Dawud* from Husayn in Qazvin on 17 Shawwal 967/11 July 1560.¹¹ Husayn wrote a response on behalf of Shah Tahmasb to a request from the Ottoman Sultan Suleiman (926–74/1520–66) to relinquish the renegade Ottoman prince Bayezid; this exchange of letters must have occurred in connection with Shah Tahmasb's reception of an Ottoman embassy in Qazvin on 22 Rajab 968/8 April 1561.¹² On 2 Dhu al-Hijjah 968/14 August 1561, presumably at court, Husayn completed a treatise dedicated to Shah Tahmasb on two legal questions, one concerning the purification of mats exposed to urine and the other on the right of *sayyids* to dispose of *kebums* funds.¹³ In 969/1561–62, also in Qazvin, his son Baha' al-Din finished copying *Sharh ashkal al-Ta'asis*, a work on geometry by Qadi-Zadah al-Rumi (d. 815/1412).¹⁴ On 9 Rajab 970/4 March 1563, Husayn completed his work *al-'Iqd al-busayni*, presumably in Qazvin.¹⁵

It has been difficult to reconcile the accounts presented above with the documented evidence available. There is a clear contradiction between Iskandar Beg's account, which would require that Husayn's arrival in Iran date to after 965/1558, and the remaining accounts. The second account would give a date of 960–61/1553–54. The third and fourth accounts, combined, would give a date of ca. 960 A.H., three years before 963 A.H. A number of studies adopted the later date, after the execution of al-Shahid al-Thani, as correct, endorsing Iskandar Beg's version of events.¹⁶ I have argued earlier that the account of Iskandar Beg is demonstrably false and should therefore be disregarded for the solution of this question; Husayn probably came to Iran between 958 and 961 A.H., that is,

⁸Ali b. Muhammad al-'Amili, *al-Durr al-manthur min al-ma'thur wa-ghayr al-ma'thur*, 2 vols. (Qum, 1978), 2: 110.

⁹Ali al-'Amili, *al-Durr al-manthur*, 2:110.

¹⁰Muhammad Mahdi al-Sayyid Hasan al-Kharsan, introduction to Baha' al-Din al-'Amili, *al-Kashkul*, 3 vols., ed. Muhammad Mahdi al-Kharsan (Najaf, 1973), 1:1–132, here 1:17.

¹¹Sa'id Nafisi, *Ahval va-asb'ar-i farsi-yi Shaykh-i Baha'i* (Tehran, 1937), 18; Muhammad Taqi Danishpazhuh, *Fibrst-i kitabkhanah-yi ibda-yi agba-yi Sayyid Muhammad Mishka bi-kitakhanah-yi danishgah-i Tebran*, 6 vols. (Tehran, 1952–57), 5:1751.

¹²The letter is reproduced in part in Sayyid Muhammad Ashraf Isfahani sibt Muhammad Baqir Damad, *Fada'il al-sadat* (Qum, 1960), 421–22. On the embassy, see Hasan Rumlu, *Absan al-tavarikh*, ed. 'Abd al-Husayn Nava'i (Tehran, 1978), 532.

¹³Ahmad Husayni, *Fibrst-i nuskhah-yi kbatti-yi kitabkhanah-yi 'umumi-yi badrat-i Ayat Allah al-'Uzma Mar'ashi Najafi*, 14 vols. (Qum, 1975–87), 2: 345.

¹⁴Kharsan, introduction to *al-Kashkul*, 1:18.

¹⁵Stewart, "The First *Shaykh al-Islam*," 396–402.

¹⁶See the studies cited in Devin J. Stewart, "A Biographical Notice on Baha' al-Din al-'Amili (d. 1030/1621)," *JAOs* cxi (1991):563–71 and also Newman, "Myth," 106–7; al-Muhajir, *al-Hijrah al-'amiliyyah*, 139, 146.

at least four years before Zayn al-Din's execution.¹⁷ It is true that the validity of al-Bahrani's statement is questionable as the source is quite late—*Lu'lu'at al-babrayn* was completed in 1182/1768.¹⁸ Likewise, the author of *Kbuld-i barin*, writing in 1078/1667–68, gives no indication of a source for the information that Husayn arrived at court in Qazvin in 963 A.H. In both cases, the reports date over a century later than the events themselves, and it is difficult to gauge their validity, but it is entirely possible that these pieces of information derive from earlier, reliable sources no longer extant. Husayn's travel account now throws new light on the question and allows it to be settled definitively.

One piece of evidence that has not been taken into account in earlier investigations of the careers of Husayn b. 'Abd al-Samad and his son Baha' al-Din is a letter Husayn wrote from Iran to his teacher Zayn al-Din in Jabal 'Amil. In the Shiite scholarly tradition there was some awareness of this letter prior to its recent discovery in Iran, as well as of a certain travel account, also by Husayn, though it was not clear that the two texts were in fact one and the same. Al-Hurr al-'Amili (d. 1104/1693) lists the work *Risalat riblatihi wa-ma' ttafaqa fi safarib* ("The Treatise of His Travel Account and the Events that Occurred on His Trip") in Husayn's bibliography in *Amal al-amil fi dbikr 'ulama' Jabal 'Amil*.¹⁹ The twentieth-century Shiite biographer Muhsin al-Amin (d. 1952) lists the same title as the twelfth of twenty-seven works by Husayn, adding that it has not been preserved. In a second passage he comments, "If it were extant, it would be among the pleasurable treatises, because, in addition to his knowledge and abundant study, [Husayn] traveled throughout the earth, east and west, so there could not but have happened to him various unusual things."²⁰ Al-Amin evidently understands that the work was devoted to all, or many, of Husayn's travels, and not just a specific trip, as is actually the case. Agha Buzurg al-Tihrani (d. 1970) refers to two relevant texts by Husayn in his voluminous catalogue of Shiite works, *al-Dhari'ah ila tasaniif al-shi'ah*. One is designated as a travel account (*al-Rihlab*), but there is no indication that it is extant. The other is a letter (*maktub*) from Husayn to Zayn al-Din al-'Amili which gives an account of Husayn's trip to Iraq, he claims, and what occurred to him there. He reports that the work is extant in a collection of treatises that 'Ali [b. Muhammad Rida b. Hadi] Kashif al-Ghita' had copied for himself, but he gives no indication where the original is located. In the early twentieth century, Ja'far Al Bahr al-'Ulum, an Iraqi Shiite scholar, must have come across a manuscript copy of Husayn's travel account. In *Tuhfat al-'alim*, a commentary on the work *Ma'alim al-din* by Hasan b. Zayn al-Din al-'Amili

¹⁷Stewart, "A Biographical Notice," 564–67. In subsequent studies, I specified that Husayn had arrived in Iran and traveled to Mashhad by 960/1553. Stewart, "Migration," 95; Stewart, "The First *Shaykh al-Islam*," 390–91.

¹⁸Newman, "Myth," 106–7 n. 89.

¹⁹Muhammad b. al-Hasan al-Hurr al-'Amili, *Amal al-amil fi dbikr 'ulama' Jabal 'Amil*, 2 vols. (Baghdad, 1965–66), 1:74–75

²⁰Muhsin al-Amin, *A'yan al-shi'ah*, 10 vols. (Beirut, 1984), 6:64.

(d. 1011/1602), he quotes a substantial passage from the account, stating that it is extremely eloquent.²¹ Muhammad Mahdi al-Kharsan cites this passage from Bahr al-'Ulum's work in the introduction to his edition of Baha' al-Din al-'Amili's *Kashkul*, and Dalal 'Abbas quotes the passage from al-Kharsan's introduction in her recent biography of Baha' al-Din.²² She comments, similarly, that Husayn wrote a letter from Iran to Zayn al-Din al-'Amili which is exceedingly eloquent. Both al-Kharsan and Dalal 'Abbas cite the existence of this letter as proof that Husayn immigrated to Iran before Zayn al-Din's death. Al-Kharsan concludes in his introduction to *al-Kashkul* that Baha' al-Din and his father immigrated to Iran ca. 960 A.H.²³ Dalal 'Abbas more tentatively sets their arrival in the late 950s, 960, or early 961.²⁴ Rula Jurdi Abisaab reports in her recent work on the 'Amili role in Safavid Iran that Husayn came to Iran ca. 960/1552.²⁵

While conducting research on the migration of 'Amili scholars to Safavid Iran, Mahdi Farhani Munfarid located Husayn's travel account in the Tehran National Library (Majlis al-Shura al-Islami, MS 105/5138) in a large manuscript known as *Jami' Ibn Khatun*, which belonged to Ibn Khatun, a son-in-law of Husayn.²⁶ Drawing on the treatise, one of 153 contained in the large manuscript, Munfarid provides a brief description of Husayn's journey into Iran and concurs that the text proves conclusively that Husayn in fact immigrated before the death of his teacher, Zayn al-Din.²⁷ The Lebanese scholar Yusuf Tabajah discussed the text in an article that appeared in the Lebanese newspaper *al-Safir* in August, 2001.²⁸ That same year, the travel account was edited and published in Iran by

²¹ Ja'far Al Bahr al-'Ulum, *Tuhfat al-'alim fi sharh khatbat al-Ma'alim*, 2 vols. (Najaf, 1935–36) 1:138. The passage cited matches the published text of the *Rihlab*, pages 192–93; it remains unclear whether Al Bahr al-'Ulum had direct access to the entire text or was citing this passage through an intermediary source.

²² al-Kharsan, introduction to *al-Kashkul*, 1:36–37; Dalal 'Abbas, *Baha' al-Din al-'Amili, adiban wa-faqihan wa-'aliman* (Beirut, 1995), 102–3.

²³ al-Kharsan, introduction to *al-Kashkul*, 1:17, 38.

²⁴ Dalal 'Abbas, *Baha' al-Din al-'Amili*, 103–5.

²⁵ Abisaab, *Converting Persia*, 32.

²⁶ Husayn b. 'Abd al-Samad, *al-Rihlab*, 164. This collection of treatises may have been compiled by the seventeenth-century scholar of 'Amili origin Muhammad b. 'Ali b. Khatun al-'Inathi al-'Amili. His father had taught in Mashhad, and there he must have come into contact with Husayn. Muhammad married one of Husayn's daughters, so that he was a brother-in-law of Baha' al-Din. He later went to the court of the Qutbshahi dynasty in Hyderabad in the Deccan, where he became a prominent figure under Shahs Muhammad b. Muhammad-Quli (1020–35/1612–26) and 'Abd Allah (1035–83/1626–72), serving as ambassador to the Safavids in 1027–29/1618–20 and being appointed grand vizier in 1038/1628. His death date is not provided in the sources. He translated Baha' al-Din's famous commentary on forty hadiths into Persian and wrote a completion and commentary of Baha' al-Din's Persian legal compendium, *Jami'-i 'Abbasi*. See Iskandar Beg Munshi, *TAA'A*, 941, 951; Savory, *History of Shah Abbas*, 1161, 1172; al-Hurr al-'Amili, *Amal al-amil*, 1:169; al-Isfahani, *Riyad al-'ulama'*, 5:134–35; Muhsin al-Amin, *A'yan al-shi'ah*, 10:10–11.

²⁷ Munfarid, *Mubajarat-i 'ulama-yi shi'ah*, 84–87, 94, 184.

²⁸ Yusuf al-Tabajah, "Majahil al-tarikh al-'amili fi al-qarn al-sadis 'ashar: Iktishaf makhtutah li-risalat al-Shaykh Husayn al-'Amili al-mafqudah," *al-Safir* (11 August 2001): 2–3. See also Abisaab, *Converting Persia*, 13.

Muhammad Rida Ni'mati and As'ad al-Tayyib, together with Baha' al-Din al-'Amili's exegetical work *al-'Urwah al-wuthqa*.²⁹ In 2003, Tabajah published a second edition, together with copious notes and a substantial discussion, in *al-Minhaj*, a Lebanese academic journal devoted to Islamic studies.³⁰

The two editions differ in several respects. The Iranian editors provide only a very short introduction and sparse notes on the text. Apparently for contemporary political concerns, they decided to omit, without noting that they were doing so, a passage in which Husayn curses Kurds vehemently after having been robbed by Kurdish bandits on the way from Khurramabad to Kashan. Tabajah's edition includes this passage and is thus more complete. It includes a more substantial discussion of the text and is more heavily annotated than the earlier edition, with explanations of references in the text and copious definitions of uncommon Arabic words. However, a number of notes have been omitted from the end of his edition, apparently as the result of a printing error. In the text, 260 notes are numbered, but endnotes 248–260 are missing (195).³¹

Husayn's Journey into Iran

The travel account, about thirty pages in length, is framed as a letter to Husayn's mentor and companion Zayn al-Din al-'Amili. The text is written primarily in artistic rhymed and rhythmic prose, replete with rhetorical figures. Selections of verse occur at key junctures, and ordinary prose occurs in a few passages. The document is clearly meant to display Husayn's literary talents as well as provide information concerning the journey to his teacher and posterity. He composed the account in Isfahan, where he had settled, in response, he claims, to a prior request on the part of Zayn al-Din that he write concerning everything that would occur to him in his absence (168/157). The text, certainly not an autograph, lacks a colophon as well as the original title or heading. As will be seen below, the text includes calendar dates such as 1 Rabi' II without mentioning the year. This suggests that a passage has been omitted either at the beginning of the document or in the colophon that specified the date of composition, including at least the *hijri* year.

Husayn begins the travel account by describing his departure from Syria some time ago, parting with Zayn al-Din (168/157). He stayed for an unspecified period in Iraq, where he visited the shrine of Husayn in Karbala' and the shrine of al-Kazimayn in Baghdad (169–70/159). Relatives, perhaps Husayn's

²⁹Husayn b. 'Abd al-Samad al-'Amili, *al-Rihlab*, published with Baha' al-Din al-'Amili, *al-'Urwah al-wuthqa*, ed. Muhammad Rida al-Ni'mati and As'ad al-Tayyib (Qum, 2001), 163–94.

³⁰Yusuf al-Tabajah, "Risalat al-Shaykh Husayn b. 'Abd al-Samad al-'Amili, walid al-Baha'i, ila ustadhhihi al-Shahid al-Thani (makhtutah): tahqiq wa-dirasah," *al-Minhaj: majallab islamiyyab fikriyyab fasliyyab* xxix (2003): 152–95.

³¹In what follows, parenthetical references will be given for the two editions of Husayn's travel account. Where both texts are cited, the Ni'mati-al-Tayyib pagination appears first, followed by the Tabajah pagination: e.g., (168/157).

brothers or cousins, must have been residing in Iraq, for he remarks that he spent time there visiting relatives in addition to performing acts of worship and pilgrimages to the shrines of the Imams: . . . *fī qurbatin astafīdubā aw qarābatin a'ūdubā aw ziyāratin asta'idubā wa-asta'idubā* “. . . in an act of piety that I would gain as a benefit, or a family relation that I would maintain through visits, or a pilgrimage that I would set up as a store for myself or strive to repeat” (170/159). At first, his time in Iraq was extremely pleasant, but then problems occurred. Unfortunately, he does not specify what the problems were, though he blames an anonymous enemy who had been a close friend. Because of these unnamed problems, he decides to leave Iraq (170–71/160–61).

The journey proper began at Najaf, in southern Iraq (177–80/166–68). Though he does not mention them explicitly in the travel account, Husayn must have been traveling with a party that included his wife, his eldest son Baha' al-Din, his daughter Salma, and his eldest daughter, whose name is not specified in the sources.³² However, he mentions five Persian travel companions, Sayyid Asad Allah, Hasan, Fath Allah, Shams [al-Din], and Sayf [al-Din], on whose names he puns in the text:

As for our fellow travelers from among the Persians, we will praise them till the end of our days, for they were compassionate, delicate of marrow,³³ and determined. Sayyid Asad Allah is a determined lion (*asad*) and a decisive and most perspicacious judge, the master of his peers and the support of his brothers, possessing an ambition so lofty that it would disarm “the Unarmed *Simāk*” [the star *Spica Virginis*] and drag its exalted train across the galaxy. Hasan was good (*ḥasan*) and responsive, clever and friendly. God's victory (*Fath Allāb*) was always close to us. Our Sun (*Shams*) would rise, and our lantern would derive light from him, both night and day.³⁴ Our Sword (*Sayf*) would cut as if with naked blade while still in his sheath, both in secret and in the open. (183/172–73)

Sayyid Asad Allah is probably Asad Allah Khalifah, a well-known *sayyid* and resident of Isfahan, who will be discussed in greater detail below. It has not been possible to identify the others mentioned.

In Baghdad they stopped for five days in order to arrange necessary affairs (180/168–69). From there, they traveled to Ba'quba, northeast of Baghdad, where they stayed as guests of certain notables (*ṣudūr*) for seven days (180/169).³⁵ Then they continued, leaving Iraq and entering what Husayn refers to as

³²*Riyad al-'ulama'*, 2:110. The eldest daughter was born on 3 Safar 950/8 May 1543, and Salma was born on 16 Muharram 955/26 February 1548.

³³Reading *raqīqī al-lubāb* for *raqīqīm al-lubāb* in the text. He means that they are of good humor and pleasant behavior.

³⁴Reading *wa-yastaḍī'u bihi fānūsūnā laylan wa-nabāran* for *wa-tastaḍī'u min fānūsīnā laylan wa-nabāran*.

³⁵Munfarid, *Mubajarat*, 85, reports that they spent twelve days in two towns that Husayn does not mention by name, when he does name al-Zawra'/Baghdad and Ba'quba.

Kurdistan or “the Kurdish kingdom” (*al-mamlakah al-kurdiyyah*), where they stayed with al-Sultan Mahmud, the governor of that province (180/169). This was presumably in Kermanshah, the main city in southern Kurdistan along Husayn’s probable route.³⁶ The renegade Safavid prince Ilqas Mirza had entered Iran along a similar route, from Baghdad through Kermanshah, when he launched incursions into Iran in 955/1548 and attacked Hamadhan, Qum, Kashan, and Isfahan.³⁷ It has not been possible to identify the governor al-Sultan Mahmud with certainty. Munfarid calls him the local ruler of Kurdistan Mahmud II, without identifying him any further.³⁸ The designation Mahmud II is probably based on a misunderstanding of a passage in the text where Husayn refers to him as *thānī dhālika l-yawmi l-mahmūd*, literally, “the second of that praiseworthy day.” Husayn means by this that the governor Mahmud, whose name means praiseworthy, makes a fitting pair with the praiseworthy day of *al-arba’in*, the day of mourning forty days after ‘Ashura’. The term sultan was often used to identify Safavid governors. The Mahmud in question may be Sultan Mahmud Afshar, whom the chronicles identify as the governor of Kuh-Kiluyeh, Luristan in 955/1548 and of Saveh in 984/1576. Members of the Afshar tribe held many of the governorships in the provinces of southwest Iran during this period, but examination of the chronicles has not turned up any direct reference to this particular governorship.³⁹

When Husayn’s party left Kermanshah (?), the governor sent his brother with them as a guide. They arrived in Khorramabad, the capital of Lorestan, on 1 Rabi’ II and stayed with the local governor, Muhammadi Sultan (180–81/169). As in the case above, Husayn uses the title “Sultan” to refer to the governor of a province. Muhammadi belonged to the ‘Abbasi family of *sayyids*, whose rule over Luristan dated back to the eleventh century. His grandfather Shah Rustam had been confirmed as governor when Shah Isma’il I conquered the area in 914/1508. Shah Rustam was succeeded by his eldest son Mir Ughur, but when Ughur joined Shah Tahmasb’s forces in the campaign against the Uzbek ‘Ubayd Allah (d. 946/1540) in Khurasan in 940/1533–34, his younger brother Mir Jahangir, Muhammadi’s father, served as deputy governor. Ughur, returning from the campaign, was attacked and killed by allies of Jahangir near Nahavand,

³⁶Th. Bois, “Kurds, Kurdistan,” *EI*² 5:438–86 states on p. 457 that the only province of Kurdistan which remained under Persian control in the early Safavid period was Kermanshah. In 990/1590, Shah Abbas I ceded it to the Ottomans along with Iran’s other western provinces. Lambton reports that the Safavid governor in the time of Shah Tahmasb was Chiragh Sultan. She remarks that the town of Kermanshah is oddly not mentioned much in the sources of this period, but that there was a Safavid governor in Dinawar. A.K.S. Lambton, “Kirmanshah,” *EI*² 5:167–71.

³⁷Ismail Hami Danismend, *Izabli Osmanli Taribi Kronolojisi*, vol. 2 (Istanbul, 1948), 259.

³⁸Munfarid, *Muhajarat*, 85–86.

³⁹Qadi Ahmad b. Sharaf al-Din Qummi, *Khulasat al-tawarikh* (Tehran, 1980) 316, 319, 328–30, 601; *TAAA* (Savory), 121, 225, 316, Th. Bois, “Kurds, Kurdistan,” 5:460–61, reports that the tribe of Siyah Mansur’s chief was in Shah Tahmasb’s time the *amir al-umara’* of all the Kurds in Persia (over 24 tribes).

and Jahangir became governor in his own right. Jahangir later incurred the wrath of Shah Tahmasb by rebelling and raiding neighboring provinces; he was eventually killed by order of the Shah in 949/1542–43. His eldest son, Shah Rustam II, was imprisoned by the Shah in the fortress of Alamut, while Muhammadi, still very young, remained in hiding. After a time, Tahmasb released Shah Rustam II from Alamut, and the family was restored to favor through the intercession of Shah Qasim, an eminent *sayyid* of Luristan and son-in-law of Jahangir. An accord was reached whereby Shah Rustam II governed two-thirds of Luristan, including Khava and Aleshtar, while Muhammadi governed the remaining third of the province, including Khorramabad and the surrounding region. This arrangement continued until 971/1563–64, when Shah Tahmasb imprisoned Muhammadi in Alamut for rebellious activity and Shah Rustam II was named governor of Luristan in its entirety.⁴⁰ It was thus during this period, that is, between 949/1542–43 and 971/1563–64, that Husayn was hosted by Muhammadi in Khorramabad.

Husayn's party left Khorramabad immediately.⁴¹ Kurdish bandits robbed them on the road, stealing their money, clothes, and other belongings, including a copy of the Qur'an and eleven other books. In this distressed state, they were helped by Mirza 'Abd Allah and Hasan, sons of the *sayyid* Shah Qasim, who treated them with great generosity and gave them a horse and provisions for the journey. Shah Qasim was the son-in-law of Jahangir who had interceded for his brothers-in-law Shah Rustam and Muhammadi after their father's execution in 949/1542–43.⁴² On the day before Noruz, the traveling party was able to reach Kashan, where they recuperated from the ordeal (181–82/170).

Finally, they completed the journey from Kashan to Isfahan, where they settled at last (184–85/172–74). Husayn describes Isfahan as heaven on earth; it is full of God's blessings for him and his party (184–85/173–74). He is now residing in Isfahan and at first stayed with a *sayyid* whom he terms *Asad Allah al-Ghalib* "God's victorious Lion," an epithet of 'Ali b. Abi Talib. This *sayyid*, he reports, had treated him with great generosity (184/173). Asad Allah is presumably the same *sayyid* whom Husayn mentions as the first and most prominent of his Persian traveling companions, and he was evidently Husayn's main patron when he first arrived in Isfahan. The *sayyid* in question must be Mir Asad Allah

⁴⁰Qadi Ahmad Ghaffari Qazvini, *Tarikh-i Jahan-ara*, ed. Hasan Naraqī (Tehran, 1963), 172–74; 'Abdi Beg Shirazi, *Takmilat al-akbar: Tarikh-i Safaviyah az agbah ta 987 hijri qamari*, ed. 'Abd al-Husayn Nava'i (Tehran, 1990), 143–44; Iskandar Beg Munshi, *TAAA*, 141, 469–70; Savory, *History of Shah 'Abbas*, 227, 642–43; Mahmud Afushtah-yi Natanzi, *Naqawat al-atbar fi dbiker al-akhyar*, ed. Ihsan Ishraqi (Tehran, 1971), 485–91; Sharaf Khan Bidlisi, *Sharaf-namah, Tarikh-i mufasssal-i Kurdistan*, ed. Muhammad 'Abbasi (Tehran, 1985–86), 57–83; V. Minorsky, "Lur-i Kuçik," *EI*² 5:828–29.

⁴¹The text reads, *wa-awwala laylatin fāraqnā Khurramābād* "... and on the first night, we departed from Khurramabad" (181/170). This seems to mean that their party arrived in Khurramabad in the morning, stayed for the day, and left that very evening, rather than staying overnight and leaving on a subsequent day.

⁴²Iskandar Beg Munshi, *TAAA*, 470; Savory *History of Shah 'Abbas*, 643.

Khalifah Isfahani (d. 971/1564). Iskandar Beg Munshi reports that the Khalifah family of prominent *sayyids* in Isfahan is descended from Mir Buzurg, a former ruler of Mazandaran who lost his kingdom and sought refuge in Isfahan.⁴³

Husayn wrote the travel account in Isfahan shortly after arriving (184/173–74). As mentioned above, he states that he is writing in answer to a request Zayn al-Din had made before Husayn departed Syria for Iraq (168/157). He had written another letter to his teacher at an earlier date, and a very eloquent one at that, by his own admission (192/180–81). From the text itself, it is not clear what happened to that first letter, which is not extant: he evidently had entrusted it to someone to deliver to Zayn al-Din. One assumes that, had it been lost along with the books stolen by the Kurds, he would have commented on the incident, so he must have sent it before leaving Khurramabad or after arriving in Kashan or Isfahan. In any case, he states that he has all the more reason to write now, when they have reached a safe and idyllic setting (192/181).

The Date of Husayn's Journey

It is not a simple matter to determine the year during which the trip took place. Unfortunately, the text does not include a colophon giving the exact date when it was composed, and the *hijri* year is not mentioned anywhere in the text. Munfarid, who discovered the account, only notes that the author reports that he has now passed the age of forty, which would imply a date of 958 A.H. or later.⁴⁴ In his article about Husayn's travel account in *al-Safir*, Yusuf Tabajah writes that the trip occurred in 960 A.H., before the death of Zayn al-Din and at his suggestion.⁴⁵ The Iranian editors of the *Riblab* remark, "... it appears that he traveled to Iran circa the year 960 A.H., as a certain researcher has stated, and wrote this treatise after his trip to Iran. He indicates in its introduction that his teacher, al-Shahid al-Thani, made him promise and insisted that he write to him what occurred in the course of his trip."⁴⁶ In his edition and study of the work, however, Tabajah revises his earlier statement, arguing that the trip took place in 961 A.H.⁴⁷ My own analysis confirms the date of 961 A.H.

The text provides only three precise dates, without providing the year. Husayn reports that his party left Ba'quba on the day of *ziyarat al-arba'in* (p. 180/169). The twentieth of Safar marks the occasion of mourning forty days after 'Ashura' (=10 Muharram), the date of Husayn's martyrdom, when the chief pilgrimage of the year to Husayn's shrine in Karbala' takes place. Husayn also reports that they entered Khurramabad on 1 Rabi' II (181/169).⁴⁸ This means that it took them

⁴³ Iskandar Beg Munshi, *TAA*, 147–48, 149; Savory *History of Shah 'Abbas*, 236, 238.

⁴⁴ Munfarid, *Muhajarat*, 87.

⁴⁵ Tabajah, "Majahil," 2–3.

⁴⁶ Husayn b. 'Abd al-Samad, *al-Riblab*, 165.

⁴⁷ Tabajah, "Risalah," 154–55.

⁴⁸ Munfarid, *Muhajarat*, 86, erroneously states that they arrived in Khurramabad on 1 Rabi'I.

forty days to travel from Ba'quba in Iraq to Khurramabad in Loristan, through southern Kurdistan. The third date is not given according to the *hijri* calendar: Husayn reports that they arrived in Kashan on the day before Noruz (182/170).

The trip must have occurred between 958 A. H. and 965 A. H. An *ijāzab* places Husayn in Karbala' in 958 A.H.; it would have been just possible for him to give an *ijāzab* in Karbala' at the beginning of the *hijri* year and then travel to Ba'quba via Baghdad and stay there for a week by *ziyarat al-arba'in*, on 20 Safar. He was in Qazvin by Safar 966, so he could not possibly have come from Iraq that same year because he would still have been in Ba'quba in the month of Safar. Another hint about the date is Husayn's statement that he is now over forty years old (175/164). Since he was born on 1 Muharram 918/19 March 1512, this indicates that the travel account was written after 1 Muharram 958/9 January 1551.

Husayn records the date of his arrival in Kashan as the day before Noruz, and since the *hijri* year shifts regularly relative to the solar calendar, this may help determine the exact year of his trip. Husayn arrived in Khurramabad on 1 Rabi' II, left the same day, and reached Kashan the day before Noruz. Comparing the *hijri* dates for Noruz with the date of 1 Rabi'II for each of the years 958/1551 through 965/1558 allows one to determine the number of days it would have taken Husayn to travel from Khurramabad to Kashan if he had indeed traveled during that particular year. Yusuf Tabajah uses this same method to date the treatise, though he makes some miscalculations. He notes that if the trip occurred in either 960 or 961 A.H., the relevant dates would be the following:

- 1 Rabi'II 960/16 March 1553: arrives in Khurramabad
- 5 Rabi'II 960/20 March 1553: arrives in Kashan
- 1 Rabi'II 961/5 March 1554: arrives in Khurramabad
- 16 Rabi'II 961/20 March 1554: arrives in Kashan

He argues that a span of three or four days would be too short for a trip from Khurramabad to Kashan, and a trip of fifteen or sixteen days would be more reasonable.⁴⁹ While he reached the correct conclusion, his argument is somewhat inaccurate because he sets the date of Noruz at 21 March. Noruz occurs on the spring equinox, now generally March 20 or 21, but before the shift to the Gregorian system in 1582, the calendar was about nine days off: Noruz occurred instead on March 11 or 12 during the period in question, and Tabajah did not take this into account. The following analysis takes the Noruz dates from the contemporary Persian chronicle *Khulasat al-tawarikh*.

Noruz Dates Given by Qadi Ahmad Qummi in Khulasat al-tawarikh

- | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 28th year of Tahmasb's reign | Noruz = Thurs., 4 Rabi'I 958 (p. 347) |
| 29th year of Tahmasb's reign | Noruz = Fri. 15 Rabi'I 959 (p. 352) |

⁴⁹Tabajah, "Risalah," 154–55, 184 n. 13.

30th ⁵⁰ year of Tahmasb's reign	Noruz = Sat., 25 Rabi'I 960 (p. 361)
31st year of Tahmasb's reign	Noruz = Sun. 7 Rabi'II 961 (p. 367)
32nd year of Tahmasb's reign	Noruz = Mon. 17 Rabi'II 962 (p. 375)
33rd year of Tahmasb's reign	Noruz = Wed., 28 Rabi'II 963 ⁵¹ (p. 383)
34th year of Tahmasb's reign	Noruz = [Thurs.,] 5 Jumada I 964 (p. 387)
35th year of Tahmasb's reign	Noruz = Fri., 20 Jumada I 965 (p. 393)

Possible Dates of Arrival in Khurramabad

- 1 Rabi'II 958 = Wed., 8 April 1551
- 1 Rabi'II 959 = Sun., 27 March 1552
- 1 Rabi'II 960 = Fri. 17 March 1553
- 1 Rabi'II 961 = Tue., 6 March 1554
- 1 Rabi'II 962 = Sat., 23 February 1555
- 1 Rabi'II 963 = Thurs., 13 February 1556
- 1 Rabi'II 964 = Mon., 1 February 1557
- 1 Rabi'II 965 = Fri., 21 January 1558

Examination of the tables above shows that the trip could not possibly have taken place in 958, 959, or 960 A.H. In these years, Noruz would already have come and gone by 1 Rabi'II, the date Husayn arrived in Khurramabad. The trip from Khurramabad to Kashan would have taken 5–6 days if the journey occurred in 961 A.H., 15–16 days if in 962 A.H., and 26–27 days if in 963 A.H. Any longer would have been extremely slow, and Husayn does not mention a lengthy delay. The possible years are thus 961, 962, and 963 A.H.

Together with this information, Husayn's contact with the Isfahani *sayyid* Mir Asad Allah Khalifah, which Tabajah did not take into account, fixes the date of the trip precisely. Husayn obviously developed a strong relationship with the prominent *sayyid* and native of Isfahan in Iraq, presumably when Asad Allah performed a pilgrimage to the shrines of the Imams, then joined him upon his return trip to Isfahan. It is likely that Mir Asad Allah financed the trip, at least in part, and acted as Husayn's patron when he arrived in Isfahan. Mir Asad Allah was an accomplished scholar in both the religious and rational sciences who belonged to the prominent Khalifah *sayyids* of Isfahan. He served for about a decade as the *mutawalli* or superintendent of the shrine of the Eighth Imam in Mashhad, as well as *shaykh al-islam* or chief jurist of that city. When he died, it appears that Husayn replaced him as *shaykh al-islam* of Mashhad but not as *mutawalli*—a post generally reserved for *sayyids*. Asad Allah was between sixty and seventy when he died, ca. 971/1563, and had no male issue. According to Qadi Ahmad Qummi, Shah Tahmasb appointed Mir Asad Allah the *mutawalli* and *shaykh*

⁵⁰Reading *sium* "thirtieth" for *bistum* "twentieth" in the text.

⁵¹Reading *thalath wa-sittin wa-tis'imī'ab* "nine hundred and sixty-three" for *thalath wa-tis'in wa-tis'imī'ab* "nine hundred and ninety-three" in the text.

al-islam of Mashhad in the thirty-first year of his reign (7 Rabi'II 961–16 Rabi'II 962/12 March 1553–10 March 1554) while at winter camp in Nakhchevan. Given that the court left Nakhchevan on 6 Rajab 961/7 June 1554 and did not return, wintering the next year at Ganjeh instead,⁵² the appointment may be dated between 7 Rabi'II 961/12 March 1554 and 6 Rajab 961/7 June 1554. Mir Asad Allah must have gone to Mashhad to assume his new position in the latter half of 961/1554, and he remained there until his death, which occurred in the fortieth year of Tahmasb's reign (16 Rajab 970–26 Rajab 971/11 March 1563–10 March 1564), most likely late in the fall of 1563.⁵³ Husayn therefore could not have traveled with him from Iraq or stayed in Isfahan as his guest after the first half of 961/1554. Since all earlier years have been ruled out as well, the trip could only have taken place in 961 A.H.

Once the year of Husayn's journey is established, exact dates can be supplied for the calendar dates mentioned in the treatise. Husayn probably began his journey from Najaf shortly after 'Ashura', 10 Muharram 961/16 December 1553. After stays of five days in Baghdad and seven in Ba'quba, he set out again on 20 Safar 961/25 January 1554 and shortly thereafter entered Kurdistan. He stayed with the local governor for some time, probably in Kermanshah, then left for Khurramabad, where he arrived on 1 Rabi'II 961/5 March 1554. He left, as he says, "on the first night," and reached Kashan on 6 Rabi'II 961/11 March 1554. He presumably arrived in Isfahan by Jumada I 961/April 1554. Husayn's travel account thus proves Iskandar Beg Munshi's account wrong and confirms the other accounts that are relevant to the date of his immigration. As Tabajah notes, al-Bahrani's statement that Baha' al-Din al-'Amili came to Iran at the age of seven is correct.⁵⁴ The travel account also corroborates Muzaffar al-Din's statement that Husayn first settled in Isfahan upon immigrating to Iran. If Husayn indeed stayed in Isfahan for three years before appearing at court in Qazvin, as Muzaffar al-Din reports, his move to Qazvin must have occurred in 964/1557, something that is plausible given the other evidence presented above locating him in Qazvin between 966/1558 and 970/1563. This is a slight contradiction of the statement in *Kbuld-i barin* that Husayn came to court in 963/1555–56, a year earlier. It may simply be a case of imprecision or an issue having to do with the calibration of the *hijri* calendar with the *hijri-Turki* regnal years of the Safavid chronicles.

⁵²Qadi Ahmad, *Kbulasat al-tawarikh*, 368.

⁵³Qadi Ahmad, *Kbulasat al-tawarikh*, 373, 438–39, 974, 987. His death date may be narrowed down somewhat. Mir Asad Allah was replaced in his position of *mutawalli* of Imam Rida's shrine by Mir 'Abd al-Wahhab Shushtari. Given that Mir 'Abd al-Wahhab had been appointed that same year to serve as deputy for his brother in mid-Dhu al-Hijjah 970/early August 1563 and that this would not have occurred had he already departed to assume a new position in Mashhad, Mir Asad Allah must have died after this date. In addition, Husayn was already in Mashhad on 9 Jumada I/25 December 1563, when he issued an *ijazab* to his student Rashid al-Din b. Ibrahim al-Isfahani in Mashhad.

⁵⁴Tabajah, "Risalah," 155.

One clear contradiction remains to be addressed. Shortly after arriving in Iran, Husayn completed a work on hadith criticism entitled *Wusul al-akhyar ila usul al-akbhar* "The Path for Clever Scholars to the Sources of Oral Tradition." The introduction to the work mentions his escape from the Ottoman Empire and safe arrival in Safavid territory. It also specifies that he was writing in Mashhad.⁵⁵ Various dates have been reported for the composition of this work, the earliest being 960 A.H. and the latest 969 A.H. Danishpazhuh had claimed that the work was written ca. 969/1561–62, basing this opinion on the fact that Husayn wrote an *ijazab* for a student who had studied the work with him on 10 Jumada I 969/16 January 1562. The manuscript which bears this *ijazab*, however, is found together with a copy of the *Rijal* of Ibn Dawud copied in the same hand in Qazvin on 17 Shawwal 967/11 July 1560, so it is likely that it had been copied already close to that date.⁵⁶ The manuscript used as the basis for the Qum 1981 edition of *Wusul al-akhyar* proves that the work was in existence before 969 A.H. as it includes a similar *ijazab* dated 24 Muharram 968/15 October 1560.⁵⁷ Danishpazhuh and Munzavi later reported that another manuscript of *Wusul al-akhyar ila usul al-akbhar* was copied at Tus, near Mashhad, in early Rabi'I 960/mid-February 1553.⁵⁸ On the strength of this evidence, the present author argued that Husayn had first traveled to Mashhad upon entering Iran, before settling in Isfahan.⁵⁹ Tabajah corrects this statement on the basis of the evidence of the travel account, observing that Husayn went directly to Isfahan without first making a pilgrimage to the shrine of the eighth Imam in Mashhad (156). Husayn could not possibly have been in Mashhad in Rabi'I 960/February 1553, as he had not yet entered Iran. As Newman argues, the year 960 A.H. given by Danishpazhuh and Munzavi must have been misread or corrupted by a copyist.⁶⁰ The correct date could not possibly be 961 A.H., either, for Husayn was still in Kurdistan during the month of Rabi'I. The date 960 given in the MS is most likely a copyist's error for 965, since the numerals zero and five are often confused, yet that would be the date of the copy and not the original composition. The fact that *Wusul al-akhyar* mentions Husayn's escape from the Ottoman Empire suggests that it was written soon after his arrival in Iran. As Tabajah proposes, Husayn likely completed the work between 961/1554 and his appearance at court in 963 or 964 A.H. (156). With its flattering dedication to Shah Tahmasb, the work would have

⁵⁵*Wusul al-akhyar* (Tehran, 1888–89 ed.), 8, 40; *Wusul al-akhyar* (Qum, 1981 ed.), 30–31, 60. See Stewart, "A Biographical Notice," 566–67.

⁵⁶Danishpazhuh, *Fibrst-i kitabkhanab-yi ibda-yi agha-yi Sayyid Muhammad Mishkat*, 5:1751. It is possible that the date 969 A.H. is an error for 967 A.H.; the words seven (*sab'*) and nine (*tis'*) are easily confused in Arabic script.

⁵⁷See the facsimile of the last page of the manuscript on p. 22 of the Qum, 1981 edition.

⁵⁸Muhammad Taqi Danishpazhuh and Ali Naqi Munzavi, *Fibrst-i nuskhah-ba-yi kbatti-yi kitabkhanab-yi markazi-yi danishgab-i Tebran*, 18 vols. (Tehran, 1952–79), 15:4241.

⁵⁹Stewart, "The First *Shaykh al-Islam*," 391 n. 31.

⁶⁰Newman, "Myth," 106 n. 88.

served to introduce the new arrival at court and establish his credentials as he made a plea for a position. Perhaps Husayn accompanied his host and patron Mir Asad Allah Khalifah to Mashhad in mid-late 961/1554, when the latter moved there to assume his new appointments as *shaykh al-islam* of the city and *mutawalli* of the Eighth Imam's shrine, and then completed the work during his sojourn there.

Husayn's Wife

Tabajah claims that Husayn's wife, the mother of Baha' al-Din, had died in Najaf before Husayn set out on the journey to Iran (156, 189 nn. 107, 120). He does not explain his reasoning completely, but finds evidence for this view in the love poetry Husayn inserts in the travel account at the juncture where he leaves Iraq, since it stresses the pain of separation from loved ones. This interpretation is mistaken. Husayn's selections of love poetry are probably not directed toward his wife, but more likely refer to friends and extended family members whom Husayn is leaving behind in Iraq, and perhaps also to the Imams who are buried in Iraqi soil. As Husayn records in a note elsewhere, his wife Khadijah bt. al-Hajj 'Ali died in Herat on 26 Shawwal 976/13 April 1569, and her body was transported to Mashhad for burial.⁶¹ Though Tabajah is aware of this notice, he believes that Khadijah is not Baha' al-Din's mother but another wife instead, both because Husayn does not mention his son explicitly in the note about her death and because Baha' al-Din does not mention his mother in the extant writings from his years in Iran. This argument, however, is weak, given the general reticence of Muslim scholars with regard to the women of their families. Moreover, it would not have been necessary for Husayn to specify that she was the mother of his children, particularly if he had only one wife, as may have in fact been the case. Most importantly, Tabajah's theory is contradicted by two Safavid accounts. Iskandar Beg Munshi reports that Baha' al-Din "... had come to Persia in his youth, with his mother ..."⁶² Muzaffar al-Din 'Ali's now lost biography of Baha' al-Din includes the statement that Husayn entered Iran along with his wife and family: "During the reign of the Safavid king Shah Tahmasb, [Shaykh Husayn] had come from Jabal 'Amil to Isfahan, together with all of his dependents (*tawābi'ih*) and his wife (*abl baytib*)."⁶³ We also know, as mentioned above, that Baha' al-Din's brother 'Abd al-Samad was born in Qazvin in 966/1558, and there is no indication that this was a half-brother. The evidence thus suggests that Baha' al-Din's mother did not die in Iraq, but entered Iran with the rest of the family. She is in all likelihood identical with the above-mentioned Khadijah bt. al-Hajj 'Ali, who died in Herat in 976/1569.

⁶¹*Riyad al-'ulama'*, 2:110.

⁶²*Tarikh-i 'alam-ara-yi 'Abbasi*, 1:156; English translation in Stewart, "A Biographical Notice," 568.

⁶³*Riyad al-'ulama'*, 2:119; English translation in Stewart, "The First *Shaykh al-Islam*," 389.

Zayn al-Din's Instructions

Zayn al-Din, Husayn's addressee, was his most important teacher and in addition his close companion. They had spent nearly twenty years together, and their personal relationship was clearly very important to Husayn. The travel account waxes most verbally ornate at two junctures: at the point when Husayn leaves Syria and parts with Zayn al-Din and at the point where he leaves Iraq, having decided to emigrate to the Safavid Empire. In these passages, the language becomes more ornate and hyperbolic and the author inserts many selections of poetry, a device commonly used in medieval Arabic prosimetric texts to express heightened emotion. Husayn links his departure from Syria with absence from family and companions, especially Zayn al-Din. He mentions prominently Zayn al-Din's house, the site of their study circles in years past: "His house is the abode of good fortune and the circle of excellent qualities" (*dāruhu dāru l-mayāmin wa-dā'iratu l-mahāsīn*). He praises Zayn al-Din's learning highly, terming him "the Master of Islam, the refuge of the elite and the common people, the model for emulation of Islam and the Muslims, the Pillar of Faith and the Faithful." Zayn al-Din "has obtained of God's bounty such select prizes that one's eyes cannot see their edge" (*qad ḥawā min faḍlibi ṭarafā lā yarā ṭarfun lahā ṭarafā*)—cognate paronomasia providing a rhetorical flourish (168/157). Husayn composes several selections of poetry describing the pain of separation from Zayn al-Din (169/158–59). Since Zayn al-Din looms so large in the text, a responsible interpretation must take his presence into account.

Tabajah suggests that in resettling in Iran, Husayn was following his mentor's explicit instructions. In his view, Zayn al-Din had envisaged a project of sweeping reform, including an attempt to bring about the unification of, or reconciliation between, the Twelver Shiite and the four Sunni legal *madhhabs*, and planned to send his students as representatives to various regions in the Shiite world in order to implement the project efficiently. Husayn thus immigrated to Iran expressly in order to spread the influence of Zayn al-Din (154, 185 n. 32, 186 n. 38, 187 n. 58, 194 n. 227). Rula Jurdi Abisaab endorses the claim that Husayn settled in Iran in accordance with the wishes of his teacher.⁶⁴ However, the evidence for this is slim, primarily a passage in the travel account where Husayn states that he is following Zayn al-Din's command. After a lengthy description of a scholar of lofty stature, Husayn specifies that it is Zayn al-Din:

I mean by this the Example to be followed for Islam and the Muslims, the Pillar of Belief and the Believers, the Adornment of the Religion and the Faith (i.e. Zayn al-Din), may God renew the enjoyment of his pleasant company through a future meeting with him, and grant us pleasure through his continued presence. May God grant him pleasure through the learning that has settled

⁶⁴ Abisaab, *Converting Persia*, 32.

upon his shoulders and back and taken over his risings and settings, and may he continue to enjoy the luxury of secret divine attentions and abundant causes for contentment,⁶⁵ preserved by protective divine concern, and under the watchful eye of divine care, as long as his moon radiates and his trees put forth leaves. He—may God adorn creation with his presence, and shower it with blessings from his magnanimity and generosity—had charged me and insistently impressed upon me that I write to him what happened to me in my travels, and the conditions that newly befell me while staying put. But this was out of mere courtesy on his part, for he is the one who made me qualified for this state, and the one who made me keep it in mind, in accordance with his custom both recently and in the past, and following his natural disposition and his merciful compassion. I obeyed his noble command, and continued to follow my customary way in both recent times and past days . . . (168/157).

In this passage, Husayn reports that Zayn al-Din asked him to write to him what occurred to him in his absence, both while traveling and not, and Husayn states that he is fulfilling this request by writing this letter. In the statement, “. . . for he is the one who made me qualified for this state, and the one who made me keep it in mind, in accordance with his custom both recently and in the past . . .” Tabajah sees a reference to Zayn al-Din’s sending Husayn on a sort of religious-intellectual mission to Iran, the goal of which is to extend his own influence, religious authority, and ideological hegemony, and for which he had consciously prepared his student (186 n. 38). I would argue, however, that Husayn refers here instead to the scholarly custom of recording the details of one’s own life. It was Zayn al-Din, Husayn reports, who taught him how to write well and to focus his attention on recording the events that befell him. This is corroborated by what we know of Zayn al-Din’s autobiographical writings, many passages of which were included by his student Baha’ al-Din Ibn al-‘Awdi (fl. 10th/16th c.) in the hagiography *Bughyat al-murid min al-kashf ‘an ahwal al-Shaykh Zayn al-Din al-Shahid*, itself partially preserved in the work *al-Durr al-manthur*, an anthology composed by one of Zayn al-Din’s grandsons, ‘Ali b. Muhammad b. Hasan al-‘Amili (d. 1103/1692).⁶⁶ His autobiographical excerpts include several travel accounts recording the events of his trip to Egypt, where he spent over a year studying, his trip to Istanbul in 952/1545 to obtain employment, and other journeys.⁶⁷ Zayn al-Din had instilled in Husayn the scholarly habit of recording the data of one’s studies, career, and other matters, as he evidently did himself, perhaps as a result of his keen interest in

⁶⁵Tabajah apparently reads this as *masār*, “path” interpreting it as a reference to *al-khaṭṭ al-risāli alladhī huwa al-islām* “the path of messengership, which is Islam” (185 n. 35). It is more probably *masār*, pl. of *masarrab* “cause for joy.”

⁶⁶‘Ali al-‘Amili, *al-Durr al-manthur*, 2:149–99.

⁶⁷See Marco Salati, “Ricerche sullo sciismo nell’Impero ottomano: il viaggio di Zayn al-Din al-Šahid al-Ṭāni a Istanbul al tempo di Solimano il Magnifico (952/1545),” *Oriente Moderno* ix (1990): 81–92.

the lives of earlier scholars in the tradition and his own studies in the sciences of *hadith* criticism. It is this preparation that Husayn is likely referring to, and no other; for this reason, Husayn stresses that his composition of the letter is in accordance with Zayn al-Din's own custom. Tabajah's interpretation of this passage is thus farfetched. He himself notes that both scholars were concerned with recording their travels, and he compares Husayn's travel account with Zayn al-Din's account of their trip to Istanbul in 951–52/1545 (153).

An additional point that speaks against Tabajah's interpretation is the fact that Husayn stayed in Iraq several years before entering Iran. When he left Jabal 'Amil, parting with Zayn al-Din, he presumably intended to settle in Iraq, and cannot have been following supposed instructions to go to Iran. He spent at least three years in Iraq, for he was certainly there in 958/1551 and departed only in 961/1554. This can hardly be characterized as passing through Iraq on the way to Iran. Husayn's travel account demonstrates that he decided to leave Iraq only after some time and as a result of unexpected unpleasant experiences there. The account gives no indication that Zayn al-Din influenced this decision, but rather suggests that he did not know about it and that Husayn had to explain and justify it to him.

Husayn's Motives

Husayn's travel account provides not only a description of his journey but also a justification of his actions, explaining to his master why he has chosen to pursue a career in Iran. He states that he is making the trip for two main reasons: the danger involved in staying in Ottoman territory and the opportunities available in Safavid territory.

The letter stresses the dangers Husayn faced in a number of ways. Particularly prominent is the portrayal of the Prophet's Flight from Mecca in the opening blessing, which reads as follows: "And I bless our Master Muhammad, who took flight from the most noble of hometowns when he sensed from his enemies concealed rancor, after he had been sent with brilliant words made magnificent by profuse blessings.⁶⁸ The current of sin was roaring then, its light-tower was manifest, its sparks were flying, and its abodes were built up (*amirab*). . . ." (167/156). Husayn has phrased the blessing carefully to reflect the letter's content and his own situation, comparing his flight from Syria to Iraq and then Iran with the Flight of the Prophet from Mecca to Medina.⁶⁹ The implications of the comparison are that Husayn, like the Prophet, was forced to undertake a dangerous trek because of the mistreatment he received

⁶⁸The text reads *sawābiḡh al-kalim . . . sawābiḡh al-n'am* "profuse words . . . profuse blessings." It is likely that the repetition is not intended and results from a scribal error or mistake in deciphering the manuscript. I propose the emendation *sawāḡḡ al-kalim* "brilliant words." Equally possible is *sawā'igh al-kalim* "pleasant or palatable words."

⁶⁹Tabajah writes that Husayn sets out to emulate the Messenger, 185 n. 25.

at the hands of enemies who agitated against him in his native region. In addition, the comparison suggests that this enmity resulted from his efforts to teach God's message and spread religious knowledge there. While the text is not explicit, the opponents to whom Husayn alludes here are evidently Sunnis. The exact nature of the difficulties Husayn faced at the time remains unclear; his statements in most cases provide only vague hints.

Husayn also mentions Moses in a way that suggests a similar comparison of his flight with the Biblical Exodus. He specifically equates his own departure from Baghdad with Moses' departure from Egypt: "We left it (Baghdad) before late afternoon, just as Moses exited Egypt (180/168)." In another passage, he argues that it is not unreasonable for a man like himself to have great aspirations, following the example of Moses, for Moses was an ordinary man who was granted extraordinary gifts by God. Moses, "... asked for the rains of mercy but received the robes of sanctity, went to fetch a firebrand but found light, and went seeking a torch for his children but returned one of the exalted prophets" (172/161). The references to Moses parallel quite closely the reference to the Prophet Muhammad's *hijrah*, which was ultimately modeled on the Exodus as well. The comparison suggests that Husayn, driven by religious zeal and pious impulses, was escaping from the forces of evil in Ottoman Iraq and fleeing to safety in Safavid Iran. It also attributes to him a leading role in rescuing his persecuted co-religionists, the Shiites, from oppression under Ottoman rule, though it remains unclear how he could accomplish this.

The comparison with the Prophet's *hijrah* must be seen as an explanatory pattern imposed on the facts at a later date. The narrative of the letter and the allusion to the Prophet's *hijrah* both suggest that the journey from Jabal 'Amil to Iran was actually one, integral process. The truth is that Husayn's flight occurred in two distinct stages, separated by several years. The travel account joins the two, glossing over this separation without actually concealing it. The factors which caused Husayn to leave Jabal 'Amil may not have been the same as those that prompted him to leave Iraq. Problems must have occurred in Jabal 'Amil before 958/1551, when Husayn was already in Karbala'. Husayn may have left Jabal 'Amil in 956/1549, for Zayn al-Din's biography states that he was living in danger and in hiding from his enemies from that time on.⁷⁰

During his sojourn in Iraq, Husayn enjoyed some respite. At first, his stay there was extremely pleasant, but then problems occurred once again (169–70/159–60). In this instance, the text is somewhat more explicit. He refers to a certain enemy of his in Iraq who had been a close friend (170–71/160). This person must have caused Husayn serious difficulty, for he curses him outright in the text: '*alayhi l-la'nab* "may he be damned!" This particular issue was apparently the proximate cause of his departure (171/160). What this unnamed person did is unclear, but he may have denounced Husayn to Ottoman authorities.

⁷⁰Ali al-'Amili, *al-Durr al-manthur*, 2:182–83.

The travel account confirms both that Husayn fled discrimination under Ottoman rule and that he was drawn by the opportunities for patronage provided by the Safavids. Husayn refers to what is undoubtedly the Ottoman government and not simply Sunni enemies in general, contrasting it, as a tyrannical regime, with the just rule of the Safavids. Husayn writes, "I rejoiced at my exit from the Regime of Hypocrites (*dawlat al-munāfiqīn*) and my entrance into the Realm of Believers (*dawlat al-mu'minīn*) as he rejoices who returns to his family in the most prosperous state, and reaches his destination having attained all his desires . . ." (185/174). In another passage, he asks, "How long, and until when, should I remain constantly quaking in terror, with bleeding eyelids, tolerating misery under the Regime of Enemies, and quaffing draughts of harm from those evil men?" (171/160). "The Regime of Enemies" (*dawlat al-a'dā'*) must be understood as a direct reference to the Ottoman government and its oppression of Shiites. In contrast, Iran is presented as a place where opportunities to pursue and attain academic success remain open. He asks, "Is it good to keep away from the Realm of Justice, and to busy oneself with this nonsense and so keep oneself from obtaining merit there?" (171/160). The description of Iran as "the Realm of Justice" (*dawlat al-'adl*), like the phrase *dawlat al-mu'minīn* "the Realm of Believers," implies general acceptance of the legitimacy of Safavid rule.

Husayn connects his immigration directly with scholarly achievement and recognition. He suggests that the problems of life in Ottoman territory prevent him from the pursuit of learning, when he would not be so hampered in Iran. His high ambitions are being stifled in Iraq. He quotes a poem about the pursuit of glory and boasts of his scholarly potential (172–74/162–64). He hedges these statements, though, lest he appear arrogant. He did not want to reach glory when very young, he explains, but now that he is over forty years old, he does not want to give up his aspirations of excellence (175/164). He has been patient long enough.

Husayn is aware that pursuit of a career in Iran will make him a potential target for envy and accusations of being driven by material motives above all. Envious witnesses to his story will jump to the wrong conclusions, he remarks, because they are unaware of his true reasons for leaving (173/161). He states quite directly that an envious reader might think that he was motivated by material considerations alone: "that I left the rule of tyranny only out of covetousness for food, and departed from the Imams (i.e., their shrines in Iraq) only out of love for picking bones clean" (*annī ma kbarajtu min ḥukmi ṭ-ṭiḡhām illā ṭama'an fi ṭ-ṭa'ām wa-nazāḥtu 'an il-a'immati l-'iḏām illā ḥubban li-tajrīdi l-'iḏām*) (172/161). The truth, he insists, is the opposite. He is accustomed to poverty, has little interest in wealth or power, and is content with little (175–77/164–66).

Husayn then provides explicit, legal justification for his actions. It is obligatory, he argues, to flee from the territories of injustice (*bilād al-jawr*) in which it is not possible to uphold the rituals of the faith. It is also obligatory, according to reason, to take measures against harm, even when that harm is only potential. He asks the rhetorical question, "What harm is more noxious than to keep

knowledge away from those who have the aptitude for it, and to neglect, in an era such as this, that for which we were created?" (173/162). In other words, circumstances in Ottoman territories deny Shiite scholars adequate access to learning, a very strong argument, in his view, for emigration to Iran. He adds that Zayn al-Din is of course familiar with this situation and, in fact, an expert in it (173/162). Husayn must have in mind here Zayn al-Din's brief stint as professor of Shafi'i law at the Nuriyah Madrasah in Ba'labakk, in 953–54/1546–48. The circumstances under which Zayn al-Din left this position are not known, but his departure from the post may have had something to do with his sectarian affiliation.

Additional evidence regarding Husayn's motives may be sought in his comments on the non-Arab ethnic groups. Tabajah states that Husayn's account contains the essence of ethnographic study, if it cannot be labeled ethnography itself (153). Husayn comments on two ethnic groups in some detail, Kurds and Persians. As mentioned above, the section describing the Kurds was omitted by the Iranian editors, presumably in an effort to avoid offending contemporary Kurds in Iran. Husayn launches into a diatribe against Kurds after having been robbed by Kurdish bandits in Luristan, on the road between Khurramabad and Kashan. The missing passage reads as follows:

The Kurds stole our belongings—and what will convey to you who the Kurds are?! They are the offspring of sin, the rascals of mankind, baseness embodied, ill fated by the stars. Their stock is meager, and their minds are small. In short, they are more ugly than ghouls, and ruder than extremist heretics.

Islam has shied away (*nafara*)⁷¹ from the gang (*nafar*) of Kurds like a runaway slave.⁷²

They have spent (*anfaqū*) their plunder on hidden unbelief (*al-nifāq*), so that hidden unbelief became well established through their spending.

They seek murder; they lay traps. They are more ill-omened than the crow, and more voracious than flies. They have their sacks full of faults, and their tails full of sins. Nay, they are howling dogs, and ravenous wolves.

A group by whom I passed, and the pupil of my eye did not show me one true human among them.

They left us no silver without emptying it out, nor any gold without making off with it, nor any valuable possession without snatching it,⁷³ nor any grain but that they boiled it, nor any money but that they pounced upon it, nor

⁷¹Reading *nafara* for *nuffira* in the text.

⁷²Reading *nufūra ibāqī* for *nufūran bāqī* in the text.

⁷³Reading 'ilq, 'allaqūbu for 'alaf, 'allafūbu in the text.

any possession but that they accosted it, nor any state but that they leapt upon it, nor any mare but that they preyed on it, nor any goats' hair but that they tyrannized it, nor any cloth but that they pilfered it, nor any robe but that they tore it off, nor any jewelry but that they occupied it, nor any shirt but that they donned it, nor any mantle but that they cut it right out, nor any cloak but that they gulped it down, nor any saddlebag but that they snatched it away.

Oh God! Scorch them with Your thunderbolt epithets, and rend them with your lightning decrees. Make ill fortune their guard, and misery their lot; make their land barren,⁷⁴ and their rest yellow. Wrest from them the clothing of health, and shut before them the gates to dignity. Tear their innards apart with poisons, and burn them with searing winds. Make their souls lost, their ghosts buried, their lives cut short, their dwellings under the darkness of misfortune, marked out by frowning, until Judgment Day Amen. (170–71)

One hesitates to term this ethnography. Husayn reports merely that Kurds are immoral, irreligious, violent bandits, and he asks God to mete out severe punishment for them. The passage is more an expression of anger at being robbed than a profound cultural study of a particular people.

Husayn's description of Persians is more specific and more complex, but nevertheless resembles his diatribe against the Kurds in its rhetorical bombast and expression of emotion. On the one hand, he is grateful for the safety and opportunity he has found in Safavid territory. He thanks a number of Persians who helped him during the journey, including several Isfahanis, Asad Allah Khalifah in particular. He also expresses general thanks for safe arrival in territory under Safavid control:

God has made it possible for me to arrive in a realm with clear streams, lush countryside,⁷⁵ and extensive shade; whose seas are swelling and whose moons are brilliant; possessed of full prosperities and sufficient volitions; which helps one's hopes, and brings good fortune; a kingdom of one who refrains from confiscation, and pays one's debts; who slakes one's thirst, removes one's poverty, and make one's good fortune last; who recognizes rank, and remedies tribulations; the realm of a protecting lion, and pouring rain. . . ." (192/181)

The protecting lion (*layth hām*) must be Shah Tahmasb himself, and the pouring rain (*ghayth hām*) his expected generous largesse to scholars like Husayn. Husayn continues to praise the Shah without, however, specifying his name (192/181).

⁷⁴Reading *qafra'* for *faqra'* in the text.

⁷⁵Reading *madbārī'* for *madārī'* in the text.

His description of Iran is highly laudatory, and there is no indication of doubts or misgivings about the legitimacy of the Safavid state.

At the same time, Husayn makes a number of less-than-flattering statements about Persians, accusing them specifically of ignorance, lack of training in the religious sciences, base character traits, and questionable morals. He comments that he is now associating with Persians (*a'ājim*), trying to get along well with them (185–86/174–75). Even this simple statement seems to reveal some deep-seated prejudice, as if to say that one would expect the association to be problematic. He insists that he is trying to keep to the moral path and has not given in to the foibles of the locals easily (186/176). This reveals even more clearly an anxiety about the moral corruption of Iranian society. In punning verse, he voices the opinion that one has a duty to correct ignorant people who are engaged in errors, even if doing so is difficult or causes oneself problems:

If you are lax with the ignorant one, he will not awake from his stupor
 Confront him with his error that you might benefit him, for you have harmed
 him if you are lax with him [= if he does not awake]. *innamā l-jābilu in
 lāyanta bibi fa-buwa min ghaflatibi lā yantabib kbudbbu bi'l-ghaḥḥati kay tanfa'ahu
 wa-laqaḍ aḍrarta in lā yanta bib [= in lāyantabib].* (186/175)

Here, Husayn expresses a resolve to act as a reformer of social ethics during his time in Iran. Husayn then launches into a fairly detailed and quite damning description of the defects of Persian religious officials, including judges and *muftis* in particular:

There is no defect in Iran other than a tribe which has sat to give effective judgment but instead have fallen into their inescapable fate, or to give legal opinions to the people but have fallen into temptation and error. Say to the one who decides cases and gives legal opinions when he is not fit to fulfill this duty properly, “Have you become a judge (*qāḍī*) or a pruner of trees (*qāḍīb*)? Are you now a jurisconsult (*muftī*) or a trouble-monger (*muftin*)?” Their consciences are evil; their faith is a broken oath. They have nothing except huge bones and colossal bodies; nay, they are a mere name without substance, or a body with nobody in it (*ism bilā jism, aw jasad bilā aḥad*). . . (187/176)

He even compares the Persian judges and religious officials with dogs, but finds that this unfair to dogs, who are innocent, while they have all kinds of sins (p. 188/176). Such blunt insults suggest that Husayn intended his criticism of Iranian religious officials to be quite damning, despite allowances for exaggeration.

Little is known directly concerning Zayn al-Din's own attitude towards Iran and Persian scholars, but there are some indications, beyond the hints in Husayn's travel account, that he was critical of Persian scholars in particular.

Zayn al-Din's *Risalah fi taqlid al-mayyit*, completed in 949/1543, argued that Shiite laymen were obliged to follow the decisions of a living *mujtabid* rather than continuing to follow the opinions of earlier scholars. In the course of a discussion of legal interpretation, he criticizes contemporary scholars of Islamic law for their lack of ambition and perseverance in comparison with jurists of earlier generations. He reserves his harshest criticism, however, for Persian scholars in particular:

An even more heinous problem, a greater disaster, and a more damning sin for those who commit it is what is commonly practiced by many of those who are characterized as scholars among the inhabitants of the land of Persia and others of similar regions, in that they consume their lives and spend all their time acquiring the philosophical sciences (*'ulūm al-ḥikmah*), such as logic, philosophy, and other sciences which are to be considered forbidden, either in and of themselves or because they divert attention from what is obligatory. If these scholars were to expend but a fraction of their time on the acquisition of the religious sciences, regarding which God—glory be to Him!—will ask them insistently on the Day of Resurrection and for the neglect of which He will address them very sternly, they would acquire the religious knowledge that is incumbent upon them.⁷⁶

In this passage, Zayn al-Din blames Persian scholars in particular for paying too much attention to logic and philosophy while ignoring other sciences that are more pressing and important, given that they fulfill crucial religious duties. Could he have been responding to rival authorities in Iran? Or was he merely decrying the sorry state of scholarship in the religious sciences there? In any case, his comments reflect a substantial prejudice against Persian scholars, not unlike that evident in Husayn's treatise.

Husayn's main point against Persian scholars is that they are not fit to serve in positions of religious authority such as those of judge or jurisconsult. Both he and Zayn al-Din appear to agree that Persians' understanding and preparation in the Islamic religious sciences, which they largely ignore, is inadequate. In addition, Husayn portrays them at best as morally lax, and at worst as utterly corrupt. This line of argument obviously serves Husayn's own career goals, for it justifies his being given one of these Islamic legal positions on the grounds that he is much more qualified, both in scholarly competence and in moral character. Indeed, since he is so much more qualified, it would make sense for him to be given a position supervising the other religious officials in the Empire.

Husayn, however, does not simply boast of his moral and academic stature. He is highly critical of himself, suggesting that his abilities are flagging and that he has entered many moral grey areas as a consequence of the locals' bad habits' beginning to wear off on him. He is barely doing the minimum in terms of

⁷⁶Zayn al-Din al-'Amili, *Risalah fi taqlid al-mayyit*, in *Rasa'il al-Shahid al-Thani* (Qum, 2000), 1:25–70, here 1:55.

worship. He is not keeping up with his scholarship; his knowledge has dwindled to a few scraps of learning in law, syntax, morphology, logic, theology, and philosophy. He is a failure in the sciences (189–90/177–79). His abilities have waned and ignorance has overwhelmed him since leaving Zayn al-Din. He engages in falsehood and flattery in order to ingratiate himself in his new environment. Leaving his native land, he laments, has turned him into something of a beast rather than a person, like a green branch that is cut off from the tree. He prays to return to his former state (188/177). He writes of his disappointment, “Earlier, I had hoped that by associating with Persians after Arabs I would come to combine the two virtues, but rather I have gained the evil defects of the two veins. I failed to realize that a syllogism produces only the basest of the two premises. Here I am, like the camel who goes out seeking horns and returns with his ears slit” (189/178). These comments reflect negatively not only on Iran but also on Husayn, who remarks that the reader might wonder that he only excels in insulting himself (191/180). They are glaringly at odds with Husayn’s account of his escape from the land of tyranny to the realm of justice and his description of Isfahan as paradise on earth.

Husayn’s letter is in part a literary exercise, intended to display his talents in composition and the use of rhetorical figures. At many points, he exaggerates for dramatic effect, so that many passages of the text cannot be understood strictly literally. It is equally clear, though, that throughout the document Husayn intends to portray a certain historical reality, including specific details concerning people he encountered, events that befell him, and his own actions and thoughts. Making some allowance for hyperbole, literary topoi, and stylized expressions of emotion, one should nevertheless not ignore the strong views he records. While describing the obvious benefits provided by an officially Shiite state and expressing gratitude for the generosity of those who helped him make the journey to Iran and settle in Isfahan, Husayn calls attention to the negative features of Iranian society and stresses that he is trying to resist their pernicious effects. His harsh criticism of Persians in the text suggests, at least to a certain extent, that Zayn al-Din harbored similarly negative views, particularly of religious scholarship in Iran, and Husayn, despite his own course of action, was intent on showing that he shared these views. Moreover, Husayn’s self-deprecation suggests that he is adopting a humble attitude toward Zayn al-Din and attempting to soften the master’s potential criticism by criticizing himself first. The account may be interpreted in part as an apology, explaining why he did not resist the temptation to seek safety and fortune in Iran, in part as an attempt to obviate envy, by stressing the negative results of his decision, and in part as a sincere expression of emotion and concern for his moral and academic well-being.

What were Husayn’s actual motives for immigration? The text confirms that danger, discrimination, and lack of opportunities for Shiites in the Ottoman Empire were important considerations, as was the safety, support, and the possibility of attaining one’s ambitions in the Safavid Empire. Nevertheless, these compelling reasons are to some extent mitigated by the moral corruption of

Iranian society and lack of a proper environment in which Husayn can continue developing his skills. He expresses no misgivings or doubts about Safavid legitimacy but has harsh words for Persian religious officials. It is as if Husayn is performing a balancing act between expressing gratitude for his safety and employment opportunities and rebuking himself for making a morally damning mistake. In the end, gratitude and the tangible advantages of pursuing a career in Iran take the upper hand. By comparing his flight into Iran to the Biblical Exodus and the Prophet Muhammad's flight from Mecca to Medina, Husayn claims and accepts God's grace in the matter. Nevertheless, the strong reservations he expresses seem designed to address not only his own anxieties about his new environment but also the potential criticisms of colleagues and peers outside Iran.

Criticizing conventional views of the 'Amili migration, Newman has argued that, especially in the first half of the sixteenth century, most Shiite scholars in Arab regions vehemently opposed Safavid Shiism because of its extremist claims concerning the person of the Shah and also that the treatment Shiite scholars received under Ottoman rule was not so harsh that it convinced them to leave Ottoman territory. Nevertheless, other evidence suggests that the attitude of 'Amili scholars to the Safavid government cannot be seen as one of clear rejection.⁷⁷ During the reign of Shah Isma'il I (907–30/1501–24), Husayn's other principal Shiite mentor, Sayyid Hasan b. Ja'far al-Karaki (d. 936/1530), traveled to Iran and saw the Shah in Azerbaijan. Newman takes the fact that this scholar chose not to settle in Iran but to return to Ottoman territory as an indication that he rejected Safavid Shiism as heretical.⁷⁸ The late sixteenth-century Safavid chronicle *Khulasat al-tawarikh* relates al-Karaki's eye-witness account on the authority of Baha' al-Din al-'Amili, from his father Husayn, from Hasan b. Ja'far himself:

In the early years of the reign of Shah Isma'il—may the dust of his grave be fragrant!—I, on my way to perform the pilgrimage to Holy Mashhad, arrived at Tabriz while the Shah was out hunting. On the day he returned from hunting, I went out with the inhabitants of Tabriz to receive him. It so happened that the world-dazzling Shah was mounted on a white camel that day. In order to break the spell of the evil eye, he was wearing a red kerchief tied on his head. The army with him comprised twelve thousand mounted warriors. I then recalled a hadith I had come across several years earlier that states, “We have a treasure in Ardabil, and what a treasure! It is neither gold nor silver, but rather a man from among my descendants. He will enter Tabriz along with twelve thousand men, riding a gray mule and wearing a red turban on his head.”⁷⁹

⁷⁷Newman, “Myth,” 91.

⁷⁸Newman, “Myth,” 92–93, 103. I correct here my earlier, mistaken claim that Hasan b. Ja'far al-Karaki could not be proved to have traveled to Iran and that Newman had inadvertently mistaken him or confused him with another figure. Stewart, “Notes on the Migration,” 88–89.

⁷⁹Qadi Ahmad Qummi, *Khulasat al-tawarikh*, 1:75, 931–32.

This account was probably related late in Shah Isma‘il’s reign (907–36/1501–24), when Husayn was studying under al-Karaki in Karak Nuh, but describes an event that occurred in the first years of his reign, prior to the Battle of Chaldiran in 1514. It not only accepts the demonstrably false Safavid claim of descent from the Shiite Imams as valid, but also legitimates Safavid conquests in the name of Twelver Shiism. Extremely laudatory, it identifies Isma‘il I with a heroic, messianic figure predicted in Shiite hadith to appear in northern Iran. In this case, it appears, the fact that Hasan al-Karaki did not settle in Iran after completing the pilgrimage to Mashhad does not indicate that he disapproved of Safavid Shiism. On the contrary, the account implies that he supported the Safavid cause wholeheartedly.

Husayn’s travel account likewise suggests that he supported Safavid legitimacy with few reservations. He refers to the Safavid state as “the Realm of Justice” (*dawlat al-‘adl*) and “the Realm of Believers” (*dawlat al-mu‘minin*), describes it as an idyllic, safe territory, and implicitly compares it to the Promised Land of the Hebrews and Medina, the haven of the Prophet Muhammad and the early Muslims. His native region, in contrast, is implicitly likened to Pharaoh’s Egypt and to Mecca, where the Prophet suffered tyranny and oppression. Husayn clearly understood that Shiite scholars suffered from regular discrimination and marginalization in the Ottoman system, that they were prevented from studying and teaching in a regular manner, and that it was extremely difficult for them to pursue academic careers. His remark that Zayn al-Din is an expert in such matters implies that his master experienced problems related to this issue in particular. Husayn’s account, though reticent about the particular types of persecution Shiite scholars faced, suggests that they were susceptible to being denounced, most likely by disgruntled co-sectarians and other rivals, to Ottoman authorities. In Husayn’s view, the dangers he faced, even if they were not immediate or imminent, were real enough to persuade him to leave friends and family behind and flee to Iran.

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