



ŞAHİFA AL-SAJJĀDIYA, AL-

ŞAHİFA AL-SAJJĀDIYA, AL-, celebrated collection of supplicatory prayers (see **DO'Ā**) attributed to Zayn-al-Ābedin 'Ali b. Ḥosayn, also known as Imam Sajjād, the fourth Imam of the Imami Shi'ites. The *Şahifa* is an important source of Shi'ite piety, and its prestige is reflected in its honorific titles, *Zabur āl Moḥammad* (the psalms of the family of Moḥammad) and *Enjil Ahl al-Bayt* (gospel of the prophet's family; Majlesi, *Behār* XXV, p. 305).

Imam Sajjād is universally acknowledged as an enthusiast of worship and prayer, and it is not surprising that an extensive amount of devotional material is associated with his name. According to the account provided in the detailed preface, found in the prevalent narration of the *Şahifa* but apparently absent from other narrations, Imam Sajjād taught a number of *do'ā* to two of his children, Zayd al-Šahid and Moḥammad al-Bāqer; Zayd compiled the supplicatory prayers into a book (*şahifa*) that he bequeathed to his son Yaḥyā, while Moḥammad al-Bāqer dictated them to his own son Ja'far al-Şādeq, the sixth Imam. A certain Motawakkel b. Hārūn Balkī, who has not been authenticated by the scholars of biography (*rejāl*), served as a link between Yaḥyā's and Ja'far's copies. Motawakkel transmitted "sixty-odd" supplications to his son 'Omayr, and from him they were disseminated through four narrators of the 3rd/9th century (Jalili, pp. 18-21).

However, there are internal and external indications that this preface is not altogether reliable as a chronology of the *Şahifa*; rather, in earlier centuries the supplications attributed to Imam Sajjād circulated as separate texts, each containing variant readings, arrangements, and titles. Shaikh Abu Ja'far Ṭusi



(d. 460/1068) and Aḥmad Najāši (d. 450/1058) refer to the material rather unspecifically as the supplication (or supplications) of the *Şahifa* (Shaikh Ṭusi, p. 447; Najāši, p. 426; Jalāli, p. 10). Apparently it was not until the 6th/12th century that *al-Şahifa al-Sajjādiya* was primarily regarded as the proper name of a well-defined body of material, when Ebn Şahrāşub Māzandarāni (d. 588/1192) declared the *Şahifa* as the sixth book in Islam (Ebn Şahrāşub, p. 2). Ebn Şahrāşub was also the first known scholar to call the *Şahifa* by its twin honorifics, *Zabur āl Moḥammad* and *Enjil Ahl al-Bayt*. A third title, *Okt al-Qorʾān* (sister of the Qurʾān), is less frequently encountered and seems to be a modern invention.

The frequently cited statement of some scholars that the *Şahifa* is supported by “thousands upon thousands” chains of transmission of documents (*esnāds*; Majlesi, *Beḥār* XXV, p. 299) refers to its certificate of transmission (*ejāzat al-rewāya*; see [EJĀZA](#)), not to its original transmission, since, technically speaking, it is a weak and solitary [Hadith](#) (Jalāli, pp. 15-17). Despite this, the Shiʿites have never questioned the authorship of the *Şahifa*; rather, based upon its elevated contents, expressive style, and long-established fame, they consider it of assured provenance (*qaṭeʿ al-şoḍur*) in the same manner as the Qurʾān (Majlesi, *Beḥār* XXV, pp. 305, 307; Musawi Borujerdi, pp. 39-44). Although Sunnites hold Zayn-al-ʿĀbedin in high esteem as a pious *tābeʿi* (successor of the companions) and one of the seven jurists (*faqih*) of Medina, his *doʿās* are practically unknown amongst them. The source of emulation (*marjaʿ al-taqlid*) and bibliophile Şehāb-al-Din Marʾaşi Najafī (d. 1990) relates sending a copy of the *Şahifa* to the Egyptian mufti and exegete Jawhar al-Ṭanṭāwī, who replied that it was unfortunate that the Sunnites were unaware of its sublime eloquence and lofty teachings. The Zaydi Shiʿites, on the other hand, accept and venerate the *Şahifa* in much the same way as the Imami Shiʿites (Jalāli, p. 15; Musawi Borujerdi, p. 49, n. 3).

The version of the *Şahifa* in current use is known as *al-Şahifa al-kāmela* and consists of fifty-four supplications; the *doʿās* range in length from a few to well over a hundred lines, but mostly containing ten to twenty lines. It was established by Şams-al-Din Moḥammad b. Makki (also known as Şahid-e Awwal d. 786/1384), in the 8th/14th century based upon a combination of two transmissions (*rewāyāt*). Bahāʾ-al-Din ʿĀmeli (d. 1030/1621) had in his possession a copy of the manuscript of Şahid-e Awwal from his grandfather, and this version soon became the standard version (*omm al-nosaḳ*) in Iran. Before the Safavid era, the *Şahifa* was recognized and respected among



compilers of *do'ā* books (Musawi Borujerdi, p. 44), but it was **Moḥammad-Taqi Majlesi** (d. 1070/1659) who was instrumental in making the work essentially on par with the Four Books of Hadith (see [HADITH ii](#)), and he himself repeatedly boasted of this accomplishment in his writings. Following a “true vision” (*ro'ya ṣaḥiḥa*) of the **Mahdi** that took place in the old congregational mosque (Masjed-e Jāme') of Isfahan, Moḥammad-Taqi Majlesi devoted some fifty years to teaching the work as well as checking manuscripts (Majlesi, *Rawzat* XIV, pp. 419-22; Majlesi, *Behār* XXV, p. 297, 299; Majlesi, *al-Farā'ed*, p. 5). While Majlesi states that before his time the *Şahifa* was practically difficult to obtain in Iran and close to being forgotten (*maṭmus al-aṭar*), by the time of his son Moḥammad-Bāqer (1037-1110/1627-98) “almost every home in Iran, especially in Isfahan, possessed a copy” (Majlesi, *al-Farā'ed*, p. 5); the dramatic increase in manuscripts produced during the **Safavid** era, far outnumbering all known manuscripts from previous centuries, is a testament to Majlesi's success in disseminating the work widely (Jalāli, pp. 35-45).

The popularization of the *Şahifa* spurred the compilation of supplementary works (*mostadrakāt*) containing additional devotional material attributed to Imam Zayn-al-Ābedin, which are referred to as the second, third, fourth, etc. *Şahifa*. In recent times some scholars have collected all of the original and supplementary material into one volume, most notably *al-Şahifa al-Sajjādiya al-jāme'a* of Moḥammad-Bāqer Abṭaḥi. The most important of the supplementary material are fifteen *monājāts* (extemporaneous prayer) and seven *do'ās* specific to each day of the week (*do'ā al-yawm*) that are very popular with the Imamites; these texts are now routinely included as appendices to printed editions of the *Şahifa*. A contemporary phenomenon influenced by the fame of the *Şahifa* has been the compilation of *do'ā* of other of the Twelve **Imams** into one volume, with each collection entitled a *Şahifa*; thus a collection of *do'ās* of 'Alī b. Abi Ṭāleb is called *al-Şahifa al-'alawiya*, the *do'ās* attributed to the Mahdi are collected in a volume titled *al-Şahifa al-mahdawiya*, and so forth. In the last fifty years the *Şahifa* has also been translated into a number of European and Asian languages.

One consequence of the newfound prominence of the *Şahifa* in the Safavid period was the earnest writing of commentary literature. Among the nearly fifty Arabic and Persian commentaries (*şoruḥ*) and glosses (*ḥawāṣi*) listed in **Āqā Bozorg Ṭehrāni's** *al-Dar'ia* (XIII, pp. 345-59) only a few are pre-Safavid, while a considerable number are from Safavid times. The earliest attested commentary is attributed to the *faqih* (jurisprudent) Ebn Edris Ḥelli (d.



598/1202) and consists solely of brief marginalia explaining unclear words. A number of luminaries of the Safavid era, including the eminent polymath Shaikh Bahā'i, the mystical philosopher Mir [Dāmād](#) (d. 1041/1631), and the gnostic traditionalist Fayẓ Kašāni (d. 1090/1679) wrote commentaries or glosses in either Arabic or Persian (Āqā Bozorg Ṭehrāni, XIII, pp. 347, 357, 358). As part of his project to revive the *Şahifa* in Iran, Moḥammad-Taqi Majlesi started two commentaries, one in Arabic and another in Persian, although he did not live to complete them. He enjoined his son Moḥammad-Bāqer to complete all of his unfinished works, but the younger Majlesi reworked glosses he had already started into a full commentary called *al-Farā'ed al-ṭarīfa fī šarḥ al-şahifa al-şarīfa*, although this too was left unfinished (Majlesi, *al-Farā'ed*, pp. 5-6). Two of Moḥammad-Bāqer Majlesi's students, Mirzā Afandi (d. 1130/1718), author of *Riāz al-'olamā'*, and Ne'mat-Allāh Jazā'eri (d. 1112/1701), *şayḡ-al-eslām* of the city of Şuştar, also composed commentaries or glosses (Āqā Bozorg Ṭehrāni, XIII, pp. 353, 258-59). The *Riāz al-sālekin fī šarḥ şahifat sayyed al-sājedīn* of Sayyed 'Ali Khan Şirāzi (d. 1120/1708-09), dedicated to Shah Solţān-Ḥosayn, however, is conventionally cited as the most significant commentary on the *Şahifa*. This work is probably a favorite because, unlike many other commentaries, it covers the entirety of the *Şahifa* and also treats many linguistic, grammatical, theological, and legal issues. It mainly focuses on the views of the lexicographers and *moḥaddetīn* (narrators of traditions) and largely ignores the opinions of the philosophers and mystics.

Overall the *Şahifa* exhibits a simple and direct spirituality that stands in contrast with the elaborate and esoteric imamology that is usually considered a hallmark of Shi'ite piety (see [SHI'ITE DOCTRINE](#)). While there are occasional references to the merits (*faẓā'el*) of the Imam (supplication nos. 46: lines 60-63) and condemnation of his enemies (nos. 48: lines 9-10), the *Şahifa* reflects a minimalist Shi'ite spirituality in which the significance of Imamate is acknowledged but not belabored. Its style and contents are highly reminiscent of the Qur'an, and there are either direct or indirect references to the scripture of Islam in every *do'a*. The constant remembrance of God (*dekr Allāh*) and gratitude for his blessings, the humble seeking of every kind of mundane and spiritual need from God (nos. 7, 13, 15, 18, 19, 20, 22, 29, 30, 49, 50), the enumerating of the virtues of the prophets (no. 2) and angels (no. 3), and prayers for the believers and close relations (nos. 23-25) are its major themes. Also encountered frequently in the *Şahifa* are intense expressions of remorse for sins and admission of wrongdoings that are accompanied by imploring



God for his pardon and forgiveness (nos. 12, 14, 16, 31, 38, 39). This presents the central paradox of Shi'ite imamology, namely, why a *ma'sum* (infallible; see [ĀHĀRDĀH MA'ŞUM](#)) would fervently ask forgiveness for committing sins (Chittick, pp. xxx-xxxv, in Imam Zayna-al-Ābedin).

As is the case with other Shi'ite prayer manuals, the *Şahifa* is rarely read from cover to cover; rather, in practice certain *do'ās* are recited for specific occasions or read upon the relevant circumstances. Popular supplications include the coming of the month of Ramadan (no. 44) and bidding farewell to it (no. 45), completing a reading of the Qur'an (no. 42), and on the day of 'Arafa (Du'l-ḥejja 9; see no. 47). Also frequently recited are *Makārem al-aḳlāq* (no. 20), a detailed and elegant piece concerning the cultivation of noble religio-ethical traits, and the *Ahl-al-ṭoḡur* (no. 27), originally read for the victory of those fighting along the borderlands (*ṭoḡur*) of Islam but in recent times recited whenever the believers are persecuted in any location. This last *do'ā*, however, contains a problematic list of enemies of Islam (line 9) that reflects the geopolitical circumstances of a later time and includes some harsh imprecations against the enemies (lines 6, 12), which sound atypical of Zayn-al-Ābedin's demeanor as well as contrary to the Islamic code of warfare. These issues, and the fact that in what is probably the oldest manuscript of the *Şahifa* this *do'ā* contains an additional verse not found in the present edition (Jalāli, p. 67), raise questions as to its overall integrity.

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