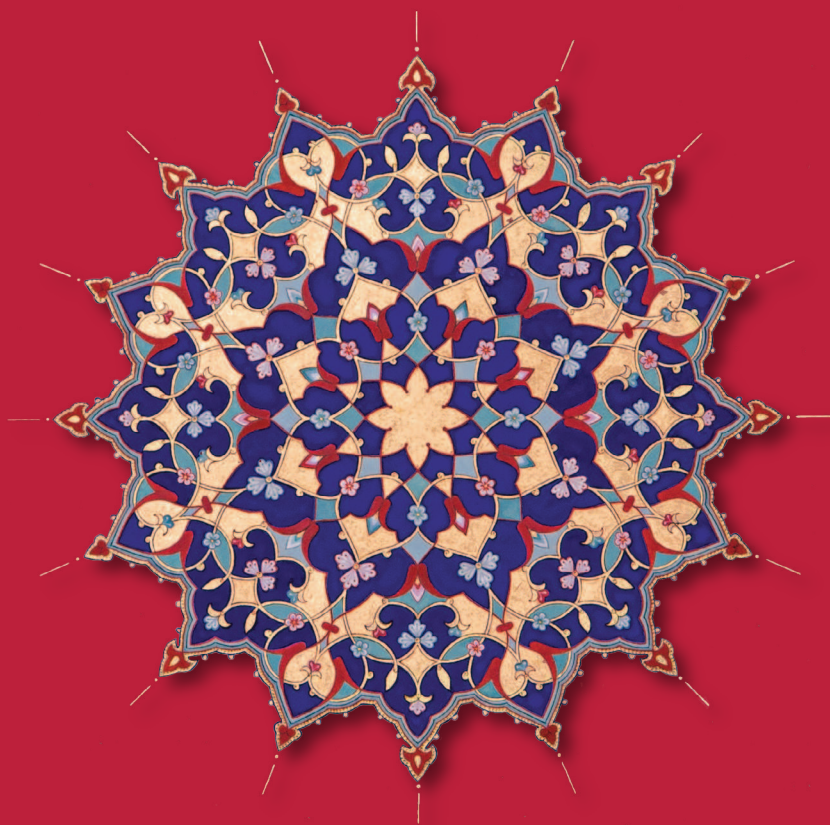


Islamic Thought and the Art of Translation

*Texts and Studies in Honor of
William C. Chittick and Sachiko Murata*



EDITED BY
MOHAMMED RUSTOM

BRILL

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A Supplication for God's Mercy on the Day of 'Arafa by the Fatimid Chief *Dā'ī* al-Mu'ayyad al-Shīrāzī

Tahera Qutbuddin

Pilgrims stand up to supplicate you in this hour at 'Arafāt. They have congregated to your door from every deep valley, speaking different languages and with different forms and ways, covered in dust and earth as though resurrected on judgment day, wrapped in white sheets as though wearing the shrouds of the people of the grave. They pray to you, O lord of the worlds, in fear and in hope, for earthly desires and religious aspirations. They beseech your mercy, O most merciful lord. God, we too are your servants! Even though we are absent from that holy place in body, yet we are present there in soul and faith. God, shower blessings on Muhammad and his descendants, and regard us with the same merciful gaze with which you regard your chosen ones who are present in that holy place.

Excerpt from AL-MU'AYYAD AL-SHĪRĀZĪ'S 'Arafa supplication



After a few lines of reverent address to the Almighty, so begins the impassioned supplication of the Fatimid Chief *Dā'ī* al-Mu'ayyad al-Shīrāzī (d. 470/1078) on the day of 'Arafa (also: 'Arafāt). 'Arafa, 9 Dhū l-Ḥijja, is the most important day of the *hajj* pilgrimage just before the Great Eid, a day of repentance and renewal when pilgrims stand from morning to night in supplication on Mount 'Arafāt near Mecca, entreating God's forgiveness and mercy.¹ Mu'ayyad's 'Arafa supplication comes within a tradition of devotional and literary supplication. Two lines of 'Arafa prayer are attributed to the Prophet Muhammad

1 For more on the *hajj* and the standing at 'Arafāt, see Tagliacozzo, Eric and Shawkat M. Toorawa (eds.), *The hajj: Pilgrimage in Islam*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016; Wensinck, Arent J., Jacques Jomier and Bernard Lewis, "Ḥadjdj," in *EI*²; Rubin, Uri, "'Arafāt," in *EI*³.

(d. 11/632) himself,² but perhaps the earliest long supplication is attributed to the Prophet's grandson Imam al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī (d. 61/680), followed by the equally famous supplication by al-Ḥusayn's son and successor, Imam 'Alī Zayn al-Ābidīn, also known as al-Imām al-Sajjād (d. 95/714). Professor William Chittick has translated both these supplications with his characteristic flair, the first in 'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī's *A Shi'ite anthology*, and the second within *The psalms of Islam*, Chittick's translation of Zayn al-Ābidīn's compiled supplications titled *al-Ṣaḥīfa al-Sajjādiyya*.³ In the present article for Chittick and Murata's *Fests-*

- 2 "The best supplication is made on the Day of 'Arafa, and the best invocation that I and the Prophets before me have made is, 'There is no god but God. He is one, and has no partner'" (Mālik b. Anas, *al-Muwatta'*, ed. Muḥammad Fu'ād 'Abd al-Bāqī, 2 vols., i, Cairo: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1985, 215, part 15; *Qur'ān*, ch. 8: *Du'ā'*, *ḥadīth* #32). The prophet is also said to have declared that "The most sinful pilgrim on 'Arafāt is the man who leaves thinking he has not been forgiven" (al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān, *The pillars of Islam*, trans. Asaf A.A. Fyzee, rev. Ismail K. Poonawala, i, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002, 320), and in this compendium, which is the major Fatimid legal compendium, it is narrated on the authority of the Family of the Prophet that no particular prayer is mandated for 'Arafa, but the pilgrim should "supplicate abundantly and ask God for his favors in this world and the next" (al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān, *The pillars* i, 320).
- 3 Al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī, "Du'ā' al-Ḥusayn yawm 'Arafa," in al-Qummī, 'Abbās, *Mafāṭīḥ al-jinān*, Kuwait: Maktabat al-Faqīh, 2004, 363–379; trans. Chittick as "Prayer for the Day of 'Arafa," in Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Muḥammad Ḥusayn, *A Shi'ite anthology*, trans. William C. Chittick, Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1981, 93–112. Chittick also mentioned this supplication in his very first English article, "A Shādhilī presence in Shi'ite Islam," in *Sophia Perennis* 1.1 (1975), 97–100; repr. in Chittick, William C., *In search of the lost heart: Explorations in Islamic thought*, ed. Mohammed Rustom, Atif Khalil, and Kazuyo Murata, Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2012, 39–42. Zayn al-Ābidīn, 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Sajjād, *al-Ṣaḥīfa al-Sajjādiyya al-kāmila*, Beirut: Mu'assasat al-'Alamī, 1992, 207–229; trans. Chittick as "His supplication on the Day of 'Arafa," in Zayn al-Ābidīn, 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Sajjād, *The psalms of Islam*, trans. William C. Chittick, London: Muhammadi Trust, 1988, 339–362. These two supplications are recited by the Shi'a annually on 'Arafa day. Zayn al-Ābidīn's supplications also include lengthy prayers in times of human need, such as his prayer for rain during drought, or more generally to praise God and ask for forgiveness of sins. See also further supplications by the Prophet Muhammad in al-Quḍā'ī, al-Qāḍī Muḥammad b. Salāma, *Light in the heavens: Sayings of the Prophet Muḥammad*, ed. and trans. Tahera Qutbuddin, New York: New York University Press, 2016, 170–173 (ch. 17: Final chapter containing the Prophet's supplications). See also supplications by Imam 'Alī (d. 40/661) in al-Quḍā'ī, al-Qāḍī Muḥammad b. Salāma, *A treasury of virtues: Sayings, sermons and teachings of 'Alī*, ed. and trans. Tahera Qutbuddin, New York: New York University Press, 2013, 176–197 (ch. 8: Prayers and supplications); and Chittick's translation of 'Alī's supplications in 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, *Supplications (du'ā')*, trans. William C. Chittick, London: Muhammadi Trust, 1982, *passim*. The Quran itself contains several short supplications to God made by prophets and believers. In the Fatimid tradition, the Imam-Caliph al-Mu'izz (r. 341–365/953–975) also composed lengthy supplications. See one such supplication by al-Mu'izz in Guyard, M. Stanislas, *Fragments relatifs à la doctrine des Ismā'īlīs*, Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1874, 48–53, 168–182; Massignon, Louis, *Recueil de textes inédits concernant l'histoire de la mystique en pays*

chrift, I am pleased to offer the text, translation, contextualization, and commentary of another exquisite gem from the treasury of *hajj* supplications—the 'Arafa supplication by al-Mu'ayyad al-Shirāzī.



1 The Fatimids, al-Mu'ayyad al-Shirāzī, and His Supplications

The Fatimids were an Isma'īli Shi'a dynasty who ruled a large part of the Muslim world from the 4th/10th through 6th/12th centuries, with their caliphal seat first in North Africa and then Egypt.⁴ They claimed descent from the Prophet Muhammad through his daughter Fāṭima Zahrā' and her husband 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, hence their dynastic title. Challenging the 'Abbasids of Baghdad, they also claimed to be the sole rightful Caliphs and Imams of the Muslim community, who had inherited Muhammad's temporal and spiritual authority. They referred to their religio-political mission as the *da'wa* (lit. call or invitation), referring to the Quranic verse, "The true *da'wa* belongs to God" (*lahū da'wat al-ḥaqq*; Q 13:14). Their *da'wa* was conducted by the Imam as the highest authority, and under his spiritual aegis, by agents of his *da'wa*, each called a *dā'ī*.

Al-Mu'ayyad al-Shirāzī was chief *dā'ī* and "chief gate" under the Fatimid Imam-Caliph al-Mustanṣir (r. 427–487/1036–1094).⁵ He was born in Shiraz,

d'Islam, Paris: Geuthner, 1929, 217. For more on the genre of supplication in Islam, see Padwick, Constance E., *Muslim devotions: A Study of prayer-manuals in common use*, London: SPCK, 1961; Gardet, L., "Du'ā," in *ET*²; Katz, Marion H., *Prayer in Islamic thought and practice*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013, 29–43; Ali, Mukhtar H., "The power of the spoken word: Prayer, invocation, and supplication in Islam," in David McPherson (ed.), *Spirituality and the good life: Philosophical approaches*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017, 136–154.

4 On Fatimid history, see Walker, Paul E., *Exploring an Islamic empire: Fatimid history and its sources*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2002; Halm, Heinz, *The empire of the Mahdi: The rise of the Fatimids*, trans. Michael Bonner, Leiden: Brill, 1996; Daftary, Farhad, *The Isma'ilis: Their history and doctrines*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007; Brett, Michael, *The Fatimid Empire*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017; and Jiwa, Shainool, *The Fatimids*. 1. *The rise of a Muslim empire*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2018. For a summary of their philosophy, see Walker, Paul E., "The Ismā'īlis," in Peter Adamson and Richard Taylor (eds.), *The Cambridge companion to Arabic philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, 72–91. On their civilizational contributions, see Qutbuddin, Tahera, "Fatimids," in Edward Ramsamy (ed.), *Cultural sociology of the Middle East, Asia, and Africa*, ii, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2011, 37–40.

5 "Chief gate" (*bāb al-abwāb*) was the highest rank following the Imam in the Fatimid spiritual hierarchy. For al-Mu'ayyad's biography, see Qutbuddin, Tahera, "al-Mu'ayyad al-Shirāzī,"

where he lived till the age of fifty and served as *Dāʿī* of Fars, then he migrated to Cairo, where he spent the rest of his life in the direct service of his Imam. Muʾayyad's 800 weekly lectures for the Fatimid congregation—called “assemblies of wisdom” (*majālis al-ḥikma*)—were collected into his magnum opus, the 8-volume *al-Majālis al-Muʾayyadiyya*. A profound scholar and prolific author with a strong individual style, al-Muʾayyad wrote eleven works in several fields: symbolic exegesis of the Quran, Hadith, and *sharʿa*, metaphysics or “supreme truths,” autobiography, poetry (which also includes six poetry supplications, *munājāt*),⁶ translation, and the subject of the present study—supplications (*adʿiyya*, sing. *duʿāʾ*).⁷

Al-Muʾayyad's prose supplications have been compiled—likely by his Yemeni student, al-Qāḍī Lamak b. Mālik al-Ḥammādī (d. ca. 491/1098), who also probably compiled his *Majālis* and his poetry *Dīwān*—in a volume titled *al-Adʿiyya al-Muʾayyadiyya* (*al-Muʾayyad's supplications*).⁸ The compilation con-

in *EI*³; Qutbuddin, Tahera, *al-Muʾayyad al-Shīrāzī and Fatimid daʿwa poetry: A case of commitment in classical Arabic literature*, Leiden: Brill, 2005, 15–100; and Ḥusayn, “Ḥayāt al-Muʾayyad,” in the introduction to his edition of al-Muʾayyad al-Shīrāzī, *Dīwān*, ed. Muḥammad Kāmil Ḥusayn, Cairo: Dār al-Kātib al-Miṣrī, 1949, 17–50. For a personal narrative, see al-Muʾayyad's autobiography, *al-Sīra al-Muʾayyadiyya*, ed. Muḥammad Kāmil Ḥusayn, Cairo: Dār al-Kātib al-Miṣrī, 1949. On al-Muʾayyad's Persian period, see Klemm, Verena, *Memoirs of a mission: The Ismailī scholar, statesman and poet al-Muʾayyad fi'l-Dīn al-Shīrāzī*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2003; Howes, Rachel T., “The Qadi, the wazir and the *daʿi*: Religious and ethnic relations in Buyid Shiraz in the eleventh century,” in *IrS* 44.6 (2011), 875–894; and Alexandrin, Elizabeth R., “Studying Ismaʿili texts in eleventh-century Shiraz: Al-Muʾayyad and the ‘conversion’ of the Buyid Amir Abu Kalijar,” in *IrS* 44.1 (2011), 99–115.

6 On al-Muʾayyad's *munājāt* poetry, see Qutbuddin, *al-Muʾayyad al-Shīrāzī* 220–235.

7 On al-Muʾayyad's works, see Qutbuddin, “al-Muʾayyad al-Shīrāzī” 124–127; Qutbuddin, *al-Muʾayyad al-Shīrāzī* 358–368; Ḥusayn in the introduction to his edition of al-Muʾayyad, *Dīwān* 58–65; Poonawala, Ismail K., *Biobibliography of Ismaʿili literature*, Malibu, CA: Undena Publications, 1977, 103–109; al-Majdūʿ, *Fahrasat al-kutub wa-l-rasāʾil wa-li-man hiya min al-ʿulamāʾ wa-l-aʾimma wa-l-ḥudūd al-afāqīl*, ed. ʿAlī Naqī Munzavī, Tehran: Chāpkhānah-i Dānishgāh, 1966, 41–44, 88, 173–175, 202–204 (with summaries); Ivanow, Vladimir, *Ismailī literature: A bibliographical survey*, Tehran: Asadi, 1963, 45–47.

8 On Lamak's 5-year sojourn and study with al-Muʾayyad in Cairo, and his probable compilation of his master's works, see Qutbuddin, *al-Muʾayyad al-Shīrāzī* 12–13. Some supplications in *al-Adʿiyya al-Muʾayyadiyya*, including the ʿArafa supplication, are of al-Muʾayyad's authorship, while others are from the pen of earlier savants; they are included in *al-Adʿiyya al-Muʾayyadiyya* because al-Muʾayyad cites them at various places in his *Majālis*, where he attributes them to anonymous *daʿwa* authors: cf., al-Muʾayyad al-Shīrāzī, *al-Adʿiyya al-Muʾayyadiyya*, facs. ed. Khuzayma Qutb al-Dīn, [Mumbai] [1961]; ed. Ḥusām Khaddūr and Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Ḥasan, comp. al-Dāʿī Ṭāhir Sayf al-Dīn, *al-Ṣaḥīfa al-Muʾayyadiyya: al-Adʿiyya al-mubāraka*, Salamiyya: Dār al-Ghadīr, 2011, supplication #1 cited in al-Muʾayyad al-Shīrāzī, *al-Majālis al-*

tains twenty-nine supplications to God, varying between one and twenty-three (smaller sized) pages in the facsimile edition, grounded either explicitly or implicitly in Fatimid metaphysics. They praise God and implore intercession from Muhammad and his descendants for forgiveness of sins. They entreat God's succor and describe the supplicant's desperate straits. Several beseech God's aid for his religion, which is described as having become "a ball tossed around by the hands of God's enemies."⁹ Some supplications are highly esoteric with heavy use of cosmic symbolism. In contrast, the 'Arafa supplication is deeply personal. While it is framed in the metaphysics of God's transcendence and underpinned by Fatimid doctrines, it turns philosophical musings regarding human frailty and powerlessness into a moving plea to the Almighty for mercy and succor.

2 Al-Mu'ayyad al-Shīrāzī's 'Arafa Supplication: Text and Translation

The following is the text and translation of al-Mu'ayyad's 'Arafa supplication. The text is transcribed from the facsimile volume edited and inscribed in 1380/1960 by my late revered father, the 53rd Ṭayyibī Dā'ī Sayyidna Khuzaima Qutbuddin (d. 2016), for liturgical use in the Ṭayyibī Dā'ūdī Bohra community.¹⁰ The compilation serves as a prayerbook from which they recite a supplication every day in the last ten days of Ramadan following the noon prayer. Within it, they recite al-Mu'ayyad's 'Arafa supplication—along with Imam Zayn al-Ābidīn's 'Arafa supplication—annually during 'Arafa.

We can tentatively position the composition of al-Mu'ayyad's 'Arafa supplication in Cairo soon after 451/1059, based on internal evidence: Al-Mu'ayyad went to Mecca for the *hajj* pilgrimage in 446/1054, an obvious setting for such a prayer, but the supplication specifically says, "Our bodies are absent from that

Mu'ayyadiyya, 8 vols., i–iv, ed. Ḥatīm Ḥamīd al-Dīn (sole critical edition), Bombay and Oxford: Oxford Printers, 1975–2011. Vols. 1–8 ed. Ḥusām Khaddūr, Salamiyya and Damascus: Dār al-Ghadīr, 2008–2017. Vols. 1–3, ed. Muṣṭafā Ghālīb, Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1974–1984, iv, *majlis* 25; supplication #6 cited in al-Mu'ayyad, *al-Majālis* vi, *majlis* 12; supplication #10 cited in al-Mu'ayyad, *al-Majālis* iv, *majlis* 43; supplication #18 cited in al-Mu'ayyad, *al-Majālis* iv, *majlis* 14; supplication #19 cited in al-Mu'ayyad, *al-Majālis* iv, *majlis* 24; supplication #20 cited in al-Mu'ayyad, *al-Majālis* iv, *majlis* 22.

9 Al-Mu'ayyad, *al-Ad'īya* 179, supplication #18.

10 Al-Mu'ayyad, *al-Ad'īya* 207–214, supplication #24. The *basmala* (initial invocation of God's name) and the opening lines of the first supplication are inscribed in the hand of the 51st Ṭayyibī Dā'ī Sayyidna Taher Saifuddin (d. 1965).

holy place,” so that was not the place or date of composition. Toward the end, al-Mu’ayyad says, “God, you know that we have left our homeland to perform *jihād* in your path,” and we know from the historical record that al-Mu’ayyad fled Shiraz in 433/1042, arriving in Cairo in 436–437/1045–1046, so the supplication must be composed after those events. He then mentions having fought oppressors who have “rent the sanctity of Islam,” such that “the lands of the Muslims burn with their killings and incarcerations,” and these lines also appear to refer to specific historical events. Al-Mu’ayyad had put together a coalition that fought and defeated the ‘Abbasids in 450/1058, and a year later, the Seljuqs retook Baghdad and reinstated the ‘Abbasid caliph. It seems likely that he composed the present supplication in Cairo sometime after the reversal, probably soon afterward, in the wake of bloody reprisals against Fatimid supporters in those lands.

The historical context is important, but the message is timeless, and the supplication is one in which all Muslim devotees, Shi’a and Sunni, can find personal meaning. It is also one that all scholars of Islam and Arabic literature can read as an exemplary text of Muslim devotion, Arabic erudition, and Fatimid piety.

The text has never before been published in Western academia, and my translation attempts to capture in lucid English some of the literary brilliance, powerful emotion, and nuanced theological themes of Mu’ayyad’s devotional Arabic.

In the name of God,
most compassionate, most merciful

بِسْمِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

God, you have placed a seal on even the most intelligent heart such that it cannot truly comprehend you. You have hobbled even the most outpacing tongue such that it cannot fully express your greatness. If a man attempts to rise to the heights of your reality, he is betrayed by the wings of his heart and tongue, no matter how hard they beat and flutter.

اَللّٰهُمَّ يَا مَنْ خَتَمَ دُوْنَ تَحْقِيْقِ مَعْرِفَتِهِ عَلٰى ذِكْرِ الْجَنَانِ. وَعَقَلَ دُوْنَ الْاِبَانَةِ عَنْ كُنْهِ عَظَمَتِهِ جَرِيَّ اللِّسَانِ. فَلَمَرُّهُ اِذَا رَامَ الْاِرْتِقَاءَ اِلَيْهِ بِاَحَدِهِمَا خَانَهُ جَنَاحَا لِسَانِهِ وَقَلْبُهُ الْخَافِقَانِ.

(cont.)

Pilgrims stand up to supplicate you in this hour at 'Arafāt. They have congregated to your door from every deep valley,¹¹ speaking different languages and with different forms and ways, covered in dust and earth as though resurrected on judgment day, wrapped in white sheets as though wearing the shrouds of the people of the grave. They pray to you, O lord of all the worlds, in fear and in hope,¹² for earthly desires and religious aspirations. They beseech your mercy, O most merciful lord.

God, we too are your servants! Even though we are absent from that holy place in body, yet we are present there in soul and faith.

God, shower blessings on Muhammad and his descendants, and regard us with the same merciful gaze with which you regard your chosen ones who are present in that holy place. Grant us an abundant share of the pious supplications they offer to you.

God, clothe us in garments of wellbeing in life, and in robes of piety in death.¹³ Grant us the sustenance of good deeds whose benefit will remain.¹⁴

أنت الذي وقف لك في هذه الساعة الواقفون
بَعْرَفَاتٍ. محشورين إلى بابك من كلِّ فجٍّ عميق
على اختلاف اللغات والصفات. شعثاً غبراً
كأنما أنشروا ليوم النُّشور. مُلتَمِّين في أطمارٍ
كأنها أكفانُ أصحاب القبور. يدعونك يا
ربِّ العالمين. خوفاً وطمعاً للدنيا والدين.
ويسترحونك يا أرحم الراحمين.

اللَّهُمَّ ونحن عبيدك وإن كُنَّا غيباً عن ذلك
المقام بأبداننا. فنحن حُضورٌ بأنفسنا وأدياننا.

اللَّهُمَّ فَصِّلْ على مُحَمَّدٍ وآلِهِ وَالْحَفْظْنَا بِعَيْنِ
رحمتك التي تَلَحَّظُ بها أصفياءك من حاضري
ذلك المقام. وأجعل لنا من صالح ما يدعون
به أَجْزَلَ الأقسام.

اللَّهُمَّ الْبَسْنَا لِبَاسَ الْعَافِيَةِ لِلْحَيَاةِ. وَلِبَاسَ
التَّقْوَى لِلْمَمَاتِ. وَارْزُقْنَا مِنَ الْبَاقِيَّاتِ
الصَّالِحَاتِ.

11 Reference to Q 22:27.

12 Reference to Q 7:56.

13 Reference to Q 7:26.

14 Reference to Q 18:46.

(cont.)

God, place us among those whom you have freed from the stranglehold of worldly aspirations and earthly calamities. Record our names in the register of those whom you have prompted to love faith, and in whose hearts you have made it beautiful.¹⁵ Have us draw near to people of discernment “who remember God standing and sitting and when they lay on their sides” [Q 3:191].

God, make the occupations of this world the least of our occupations, and knowledge of the hereafter the entirety of our yearnings. “Endow us in our affairs with right guidance” [Q 18:10] by helping us perform good deeds.

God, have mercy on the destitution of one who is dependent on a stalk of vegetation produced by the earth. Have mercy on the captivity of one who is imprisoned by the calamitous hand of the days and the nights. Have mercy on the feebleness of one who is truly weak and powerless facing the sovereignty of death.

God, when this is my lowly condition—a mosquito can pain and hurt me and a gulp can choke and kill me—it is all the more fitting that you look at me with compassion and mercy. Let not the paths of your mercy narrow to exclude me. Let not the bounties of your benevolence pass me by. Let not the pools of your wisdom become muddied as I drink.

اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْنَا مِمَّنْ نَفَسْتَهُمْ عَنْ خِنَاقِ هُمُومِهِمْ
لِلدُّنْيَا وَكُرُوبِهِمْ. وَاثْبَتْنَا فِي صَحِيفَةٍ مِّنْ حَبِيبَتِ
إِلَهِهِمُ الْإِيمَانَ وَزِينَتِهِ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ. وَالْحَقْنَا بِأُولَى
الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا
وَعَلَى جُنُوبِهِمْ﴾.

اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْ شُغْلَ الدُّنْيَا أَقْلَ أَشْغَالِنَا. وَعِلْمَ
الْآخِرَةِ مَجْمُوعَ آمَالِنَا. ﴿وَهَيِّئْ لَنَا مِنْ أَمْرِنَا
رَشَدًا﴾ بِصَلَاحِ أَعْمَالِنَا.

اللَّهُمَّ ارْحَمْ أَرَحِمَ فَقْرٍ مِّنْ هُوٍ إِلَى نَبْتَةٍ تُغْذِيهِ
مِنْ نَبَاتِ الْأَرْضِ فَقِيرٍ. وَأَسْرٍ مِّنْ هُوٍ بِدِ
تَصَارِيفِ الْأَيَّامِ وَاللَّيَالِي أَسِيرٍ. وَضَعْفٍ مِّنْ
هُوَ عِنْدَ سُلْطَانِ الْمَوْتِ ضَعِيفٌ حَقِيرٍ.

اللَّهُمَّ وَإِنَّ مَن كَانَتْ هَذِهِ حَالُهُ تَوَلَّاهُ الْبَقَّةُ.
وَتَقَتَّلَهُ الشَّرْقَةُ. فَحَقِيقُ أَنْ تَنَالَهُ مِنْكَ الرَّحْمَةُ
وَالرِّقَّةُ. فَلَا يَضِيقُ بِهِ مِنْ مَرَامِكَ مَذْهَبُ.
وَلَا يَفُوتُهُ مِنْ عَوَاطِفِكَ مَطْلَبُ. وَلَا يَتَكَدَّرُ
عَلَيْهِ مِنْ مَشَارِبِ حِكْمِكَ مَشْرَبُ.

¹⁵ Reference to Q 49:7.

(cont.)

God, house us in your shade in a home that is free from troubles and exempt from suffering. Gift us life secured with the rope of eternity, against which the sharp blades of catastrophe are forever sheathed.

اللَّهُمَّ فَأَسْكِنَا مِنْ جِوَارِكَ دَارًا سَلِيمَةً مِنَ
الْآفَاتِ. بَرِيئَةً مِنَ الْعَاهَاتِ. وَأَوَّلِنَا مِنْكَ
حَيَاةً تَجْعَلُهَا بِعُقْدَةِ الْخُلُودِ مَعْقُودَةً. وَقَوَاطِعَ
سَيُوفِ الْحِدَاثِ دُونَهَا مَغْمُودَةً.

God, cover us in robes of your protection for as long as you have us live. Guard us in the fortress of your safety and security for as long as you have us remain on earth.

اللَّهُمَّ جَلِّلْنَا جِلَالَ صَوْنِكَ مَا أَحْيَيْتَنَا. وَآحَيْنَا
بِحِجَى أَمَانِكَ وَأَنْتَ مَا أَبْقَيْتَنَا.

God, you know that we have left our homeland to perform *jihād* in your path and please you.¹⁶ You know that we have borne great hardships and tribulations in heart and body. We fight oppressors who have unsheathed the sword of treachery and unfurled banners of error. They have committed great crimes. They have rent the sanctity of Islam. The lands of the Muslims burn with their killings and incarcerations. Muslim women are in the vicious grasp of their immoralities and indecencies.

اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّكَ تَعْلَمُ أَنَّنَا خَرَجْنَا مُجَاهِدِينَ فِي سَبِيلِكَ
أَتْبَاءَ مَرْضَاتِكَ عَنْ أَوْطَانِنَا. وَحَمَلْنَا عَظِيمَ
الْكُلْفِ وَالْمَشَاقِّ فِي نَفُوسِنَا وَأَبْدَانِنَا. نَجَاهِدُ
الظَّالِمِينَ الَّذِينَ شَهَرُوا سَيُوفَ الْبَغْيِ. وَنَشْرُوا
أَعْلَامَ الْغِيِّ. وَتَجَرَّءُوا عَلَى عَظِيمِ الْأَجْرَامِ.
وَهَتَكُوا حُرْمَةَ الْإِسْلَامِ. فَدَيَارِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ فِي
حَرِيقِ قَتْلِهِمْ وَأَسْرِهِمْ. وَحَرِيمِهِمْ فِي هَتَكَةِ
حُشْنِهِمْ وَنُكْرِهِمْ.

God, shower blessings on Muhammad and his descendants, and let your mighty aid give our hands strength over these oppressors. Let your potency and power help us to strike at their potency and power. Fortify the pillars of the righteous rule of the Prophet's descendants by obliterating the oppressors' unrighteousness. Crush the sinews of

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَطَوِّلْ لَنَا
بِنَصْرِكَ الْعَزِيزِ عَلَيْهِمْ يَدًا. وَأَجْعَلْ لَنَا مِنْ
حَوْلِكَ وَقُوَّتِكَ عَلَى إِيْهَانِ حَوْلِهِمْ وَقُوَّتِهِمْ
مَدَدًا. وَأَقِمْ لِحَقِّ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَعَلَى
آلِهِ بِزَهْقِ بَاطِلِهِمْ عَمَدًا. وَفُتَّ يَا رَبِّ فِي عَضُدِ
الْمُتَخَذِينَ لِلْمُضِلِّينَ مِنْهُمْ عَضُدًا.

16 Reference to Q 2:207.

(cont.)

those who take error-mongers as their sinews.¹⁷

God, belief has sallied forth to face unbelief, and unbelief has sallied forth to challenge belief. Lord, strike down Satan's banner. Let him run on his heels when the two armies meet. Protect your sacred sanctuary, God, from the might of the cursed elephant.¹⁸ Destroy it and destroy its army, the brethren of devils and demons. Let their bodies receive the blows of death. Let their blood be drunk by thirsty swords. Have mercy on hearts¹⁹ that burn from their oppression, on eyes that stream from their harm, on the blood of Muslims painting their swords, on spirits snatched out of bodies, on women, veils torn, their honor in the grip of the enemy's hand.

God, faces are covered in dust prostrating before your greatness. We place our trust in you, and our faces are covered in dust prostrating before you. Have mercy on our wretched state and answer our prayer that you grant strength to Islam. Grant us your powerful aid, such that we obtain our desires, desires held by people of discernment and conviction who have faith that

اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّ الْإِيمَانَ بَرَزَ إِلَى الْكُفْرِ وَالْكَفَرُ بَرَزَ إِلَى الْإِيمَانِ. فَنَكِّسْ يَا رَبِّ رَايَةَ الشَّيْطَانِ. لِيَنْكُصَ عَلَى عَقْبِيهِ إِذَا تَرَاءَتِ الْفِئَتَانِ. وَأَحْفَظِ اللَّهُمَّ حَرَمَكَ الْأَمِينِ. مِنْ بَأْسِ الْفِيلِ اللَّعِينِ. وَدَمِّرْ عَلَيْهِ وَعَلَى حَشَدَتِهِ إِخْوَانَ الشَّيَاطِينِ. وَأَجْعَلْ يَا رَبِّ أَجْسَادَهُمْ مَوَاقِعَ الْحَتُوفِ. وَدِمَاءَهُمْ مَنَاهِلَ السُّيُوفِ. وَأَرْحَمْ أَكْبَادًا مِنْ ظَلَمِهِمْ حُرًى. وَعَيُونًا مِنْ إِذَاهُمْ عَبْرًى. وَدِمَاءَ لِلْمُسْلِمِينَ بِسُيُوفِهِمْ مَطْلُوعَةً. وَأَرْوَاحًا مِنْ أَجْسَادِهِمْ مَسْلُوعَةً. وَحَرِيْمًا كُشِفَتْ عَنْهَا بِأَيْدِيهِمْ أَسْتَارُهَا. وَأَحَاطَ بِهَا فِي قَبْضَتِهِمْ عَوَارُهَا.

اللَّهُمَّ يَا مَنْ تَعَفَّرَتْ بِالسُّجُودِ لِعَظَمَتِهِ الْخُلُودُ. تَوَكَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ. وَهَذِهِ خُدُودُنَا مُتَعَفِّرَةٌ بِالسُّجُودِ بَيْنَ يَدَيْكَ. فَارْحَمْ مِنَّا ذِلَّةَ الْمَقَامِ. وَأَجِبْ سَوَالَنَا فِي عَزِّ الْإِسْلَامِ. وَأَيِّدْنَا مِنْ نَصْرِكَ الْعَزِيزِ بِمَا نَنَالُ بِهِ مَنَالَةَ ذَوِي الْبَصَائِرِ الْمَوْقِنِينَ. الَّذِينَ يَقْنُؤْنَ أَنَّ ﴿وَعَدَكَ الْحَقُّ﴾ حَيْثُ قَلْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ ﴿وَكَانَ حَقًّا عَلَيْنَا نَصْرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ﴾.

17 Reference to Q 18:51.

18 Reference to Q 105.

19 Lit. "livers." The liver was deemed the seat of emotions in pre-modern medicine and psychological theory.

(cont.)

"your promise is true" [Q 11:45]. For you have said, "In truth, we shall aid believers" [Q 30:47].

All praise and favors belong to God. May he bestow blessings on our master Muhammad and his descendants who are the best community. May he bless them all.

وَلِلّٰهِ الْحَمْدُ وَالْمِنَّةُ. وَصَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ
وَأَلِّهِ خَيْرَ الْأُمَّةِ. وَسَلَّمْ عَلَيْهِمْ أَجْمَعِينَ.

3 Commentary: Prayer, Aesthetics, and Theology

Al-Mu'ayyad's 'Arafa supplication is a *tour de force* of heartfelt prayer and aesthetic brilliance, underpinned by an Islamic theological base with some specifically Fatimid nuances. The entire text is an entreaty for God's mercy (*rahma*), and as part of God's mercy, for his aid. The word *rahma* and its derivatives are explicitly used and implicitly evoked throughout the text. In the following sequential commentary on the supplication, I point out aspects of this framing theme, alongside facets of form, style and theology that structurally, aesthetically, and doctrinally underscore the leitmotif of mercy.²⁰

The full supplication is a plea addressed directly to God. Each new section begins with a vocative address to the Creator for a total of 15 usages, and the repeated call to God, set up as a frame for the content, emphasizes the supplicant's singular focus on the Deity; the term used is "*Allāhumma*," (O God!), a special Arabic phrase traditionally reserved to address God in prayer, with the unique suffix "*-umma*" appended to the word *Allāh*. Within the sections, the presence of the second-person pronoun of address, "*anta*" (you) is persistent, and alongside the use of the first-person singular and plural for the supplicant, it further emphasizes the personal nature of the supplication, pairing the supplicant with the supplicated lord. Two other common phrases in Islamic

20 In this supplication, al-Mu'ayyad does not explicitly mention forgiveness of sins, a key aspect of the 'Arafa rite in Fatimid religiosity, but presumably it is implicit in his pleas for mercy. He does speak of it in the *Majālis* where he writes that "the heedless who fail to obtain God's forgiveness in Ramadan will not be eligible to receive it until the following Ramadan, unless they stand upon 'Arafa." Al-Mu'ayyad, *al-Majālis* i, *majlis* 36.

supplication are used once within the lines of entreaty: “*Yā arḥama l-rāḥimīn*” (O most merciful lord), and “*Yā rabba l-‘ālamīn*” (O lord of all the worlds), where the word “*rabb*” (lord) also has the semantic sense of “nurturer,” and again signals God’s mercy.

The address to God is grounded in Fatimid theology which understands God as beyond the grasp of intellect and imagination.²¹ The metaphors al-Mu’ayyad uses to express the inability of the created to articulate the Creator’s transcendent oneness are paradoxically erudite:

God, you have placed a seal on even the most intelligent heart such that it cannot truly comprehend you. You have hobbled even the most out-pacing tongue such that it cannot fully express your greatness. If a man attempts to rise to the heights of your reality, he is betrayed by the wings of his heart and tongue, no matter how hard they beat and flutter.

The Arabic verb *‘arafa* means literally “to recognize,” and it is interesting that a supplication for recitation on the day of ‘Arafa, where pilgrims strive to achieve greater awareness of the Creator, begins by stating that we can never really comprehend God, we can never truly recognize him; al-Mu’ayyad uses the word *ma’rifa* (recognition) which has the same three-letter root as *‘arafa*: ‘-R-F. Based on direct statements elsewhere, al-Mu’ayyad’s subtext appears to be that the declaration of inability to recognize is itself true recognition of God; that, in fact, understanding that one can never understand is the only true way to understand God.

Following the address which establishes the supplicant as a believer—and thus, presumably, deserving of God’s mercy—the supplication opens with *ḥajj* and ‘Arafa themes that implicitly yet unambiguously invoke God’s mercy: “Pilgrims stand up to supplicate you in this hour at ‘Arafāt.” The “standing” at ‘Arafa which is an essential component of *ḥajj* rites—*waqafa laka l-wāqifūna bi-‘Arafāt* (lit. standers stand before you at ‘Arafāt)—is emphasized; and the place is named right at the onset: ‘Arafāt. For Muslims, the very name ‘Arafāt evokes associations of prayer for God’s mercy, of the Prophet Muhammad’s standing on the Mount of Mercy (*jabal al-raḥma*) on ‘Arafa and lifting his hands in prayer, of the clamor of pilgrims year after year, through the ages, all standing and calling out to God. The land and the day of ‘Arafa, believed by Muslims to be the ultimate place and time in which prayers are certain to be heard, provide

21 See more on this concept in, e.g., al-Mu’ayyad, *al-Majālis* i, *majlis* 37; ii, *majlis* 99; iii, *majlis* 2; iv, *majlis* 84.

the *raison d'être* of the supplication, and are therefore foregrounded. The picture painted of the pilgrims with vivid descriptions of their white unstitched garments and their dusty mien, their cacophony of languages and features and customs, is graphic and moving:

They have congregated to your door from every deep valley, speaking different languages and with different forms and ways, covered in dust and earth as though resurrected on judgment day, wrapped in white sheets as though wearing the shrouds of the people of the grave.

Evocative and palpable, the simile of pilgrims standing on the plain likened to the dead resurrected for the accounting on Judgment Day is one that al-Mu'ayyad uses often. He paints the same somber image in his *Majālis*, where he explicitly connects the rising from the graves to the standing before the Great Judge, saying, "on the day that they emerge from their graves, beseeching the mercies of ... the one who is worshipped, and to whom all affairs return."²² Why do they stand in this pitiful state? They implore God's mercy. I have already mentioned the earlier explicit address as "O most merciful lord," and the implicit recall of the Prophet's standing on the Mount of Mercy. Here, the sights and sounds evoked by the pilgrims' description are immediately followed by a declaration of the purpose of their standing, of their objective in coming to 'Arafa: "They pray to you, O lord of all the worlds, in fear and in hope, for earthly desires and religious aspirations. They beseech your mercy, O most merciful lord." What the pilgrims beseech, first and foremost, is God's mercy. The word will be used again at the onset of the personal prayer coming next and emphasized yet again at the very end.

The mention of the pilgrims and their prayers segues into the supplicant's personal invocation, with a masterful line of transition that transposes the pilgrims present on 'Arafa with his own self, for though he is not standing on the physical mount of 'Arafa, he is standing there in spirit: "God, we too are your servants! Even though we are absent from that holy place in body, yet we are present there in soul and faith." Physical attendance at 'Arafa garners God's benevolent eye, but for those who want to attend but are unable to do so, they are still present in spirit if they hold true belief. What counts is sincere intention.

On a deeper level, the line embodies the heart of the Fatimid belief system in which the holy places of Islam and the worship acts of the *sharī'a*, though

22 Al-Mu'ayyad, *al-Majālis* i, *majlis* 94; the last phrase is a reference to Q 11:123.

most holy in their physical aspects, serve as symbols for the living guides, the Imams and their appointed rankholders in each age. In this Fatimid belief system of symbolic interpretation (*ta'wīl*),²³ the spiritual counterpart for the Ka'ba, the House of God, is the Imam of the Age. He is the “living, speaking” (*ḥayy, nāṭiq*) House of God. As mentioned earlier, *ʿarafa* means “to recognize.” Performing the *ḥajj* and standing on ʿArafa, the major rite of the pilgrimage, symbolizes recognition of and allegiance for the true Imam of the Age. Those who recognize the Imam stand truly on Mount ʿArafāt. In tandem with the physical rites, it is even more important to believe with your heart and to recognize the deeper meanings of the *ḥajj* rites.²⁴ Furthermore, and connecting ʿArafa with God’s mercy, it is notable that in Fatimid symbolic interpretation, Prophet Muhammad is the embodiment of God’s mercy, as certified by the Quranic verse, “We have not sent you but as mercy for all the worlds” (Q 21:107). Al-Muʿayyad affirms this doctrine in his *Majālis* and declares further that like Muhammad, a living embodiment of God’s mercy is present for people of every age, namely, Muhammad’s legatee ʿAlī and the Imams in their line.²⁵

23 On the Fatimid system of symbolic interpretation (*ta'wīl*), see Qutbuddin, Tahera, “Principles of Fatimid symbolic interpretation (*ta'wīl*): An analysis based on the *Majālis Muʿayy-adiyya* of al-Muʿayyad al-Shirāzī (d. 470/1078),” in Rodrigo Adem and Edmund Hayes (eds.), *Reason, esotericism and authority in Shiʿi Islam*, Leiden: Brill, 2021, 151–189, *passim*.

24 The same concept—of being present in spirit, though absent in body—is articulated by al-Muʿayyad in *al-Majālis*, following on from the *Majālis* segment quoted above in which he speaks of the pilgrims being dressed in shrouds; and here he adds an enigmatic line, “O how many who are present there are in truth absent, and how many who are far away from it are actually very close.” Al-Muʿayyad, *al-Majālis* i, *majlis* 94; the part about being present in spirit though absent in body is also reiterated in al-Muʿayyad, *al-Majālis* iv, *majlis* 37. Al-Muʿayyad clarifies this doctrine in the *Majālis* (i, *majlis* 95; ii, *majlis* 54 and 90), where—connecting ʿArafa to the Quranic “people of the peaks” (*aṣḥāb al-aʿrāf*) (Q 7:48) [N.B.: *aʿrāf* and ʿArafa are also derived from the same root: ʿ-R-F]—he declares that ʿArafa symbolizes the Imams. This point is made directly in the ʿArafa poem composed by “the younger Muʿayyad,” the Indian Ṭayyibī *Dāʿī* Sayyidna Taher Saifuddin (d. 1385/1965), who declares in his opening line, “Imam of the Age, the man who truly recognizes you (*ʿarafa*) is the man who stands regarding you as the meaning of ʿArafa” (يا امام العصر يا من عرفه—واقف منه), Sayf al-Dīn, Sayyidnā Ṭāhir, *Dīwān: Jawāhīr al-balāgha al-laduniyya*, 2 vols., ii, Dubai: Ṭayyibī Daʿwa Publications, 1993, 78. In the same poem, he says further, “Whosoever stands upon the ʿArafāt of [the Imam’s] knowledge has learned its sublime truth” (من يقف من عرفات من معارفه لطفاً عليها وقته), Sayf al-Dīn, *Dīwān* ii, 79. Full poem, translation, and recitation at <https://www.fatimidawat.com/prayers/qasidas-marsiyas-and-salaams/%E2%80%998ya-imam-al-asri-ya-man-arafa%E2%80%999-composed-by-syedna-taher-saifuddi-n-%E2%80%998ya-imam-al-asri-ya-man-arafa> (last accessed: 17 May 2022).

25 Al-Muʿayyad, *al-Majālis* ii, *majlis* 70; see also al-Muʿayyad, *al-Majālis* ii, *majlis* 17 & 37, and *passim*. In the lines that I have cited in my previous paragraph (al-Muʿayyad, *al-Majālis* i,

Next, the personal prayer begins, moving from the *hajj*-specific to the general. Taking a page from the supplications of Imam 'Alī Zayn al-Ābidīn, who frequently prefaced entreaties within his supplications with blessings (*ṣalawāt*), it begins with the invocation, "God, shower blessings on Muhammad and his descendants." In Fatimid belief, entreaties to God to shower blessings on Muhammad and his descendants are always heard and answered. Not only do they provide the theological bedrock for all other pleas, being the essential mode of salvation—for whoever invokes these benedictions on the Prophet and his descendants becomes himself linked with them, and, through their intercession, attains an angelic station in the afterlife—but they also ensure that all other pleas are heard and answered.²⁶ The Fatimids are not mentioned by name, but the invocation of blessings on Muhammad and his descendants clearly refers to them. The transition from the pilgrims to the supplicant continues: "and regard us with the same merciful gaze"—note the plea again for mercy—"with which you regard your chosen ones who are present in that holy place. Grant us an abundant share of the pious supplications they offer to you." Those who know and profess allegiance to the true Imam are the ones who truly stand on 'Arafa, and they are thus partners with the supplicants who physically stand on the holy site.

Now, al-Mu'ayyad begins his litany of profound petitions: "God, clothe us in garments of wellbeing in life, and in robes of piety in death." God is the one who grants us health and happiness in our earthly lives, and he is the one who guides us to piety. The antithesis of life and death in these lines underscores the power of God over both, and the human need for his aid in both. Asking for wellbeing (*āfiya*), more specifically, good health, for life, and of piety (*taqwā*) for death is a common binary in Muslim prayer. The two appeals together are an application for God's benevolence always, now and in the hereafter, with the two

majlis 94), the "mercies (*marāḥim*)" beseeched by 'Arafa supplicants are entreated from "the one whose sanctified and unsanctified places all speak with the tongue of wisdom"—these ritual places, *ḥaram* and *ḥill*, also symbolize God's messengers and Imams. By following their guidance, believers attain God's ultimate mercy, which is the return to the heavenly abode.

- 26 On the deep meaning of the *ṣalawāt* benediction in Fatimid theology, see explanation in Qutbuddin, Tahera, "Karbala mourning among the Fāṭimid-Ṭayyibī-Shī'a of India: Doctrinal and performative aspects of Sayyidnā Ṭāhir Sayf al-Dīn's Arabic lament, 'O King of martyrs' (*Yā Sayyida l-shuhadā'ī*)," in *Shī'i Studies Review* 5 (2021), 3–46, 28–29; Qutbuddin, Aziz, *Tahmīd: A literary genre? A study of the Arabic laudatory preamble with a focus on the Fatimid-Ṭayyibī tradition*, London (PhD Diss.): School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 2009, 174–181; and in the primary sources al-Mu'ayyad, *al-Majālis* ii, *majlis* 63; iv, *majlis* 73; al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān, *Ta'wīl al-da'ā'im*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥasan al-A'zamī, 2 vols., i, Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1982, 303–304.

things that matter most, and that generate all other good things. It is a prayer for aid to piety in this world, such that following the path of godliness, the supplicant arrives at a good end in the hereafter. Al-Mu'ayyad follows this prayer with a line that directly connects this world and the hereafter: "Grant us the sustenance of good deeds whose benefit will remain." Good deeds are the best sustenance, they are the true wealth, for they are the only treasures that we will carry with us into the hereafter. He continues, underscoring the line just voiced with another that says the same thing from the opposite side: "God, place us among those whom you have freed from the stranglehold of worldly aspirations and earthly calamities." We should aspire to good deeds, for their benefit will remain, while shunning the headlong pursuit of worldly aspirations, for worldly benefits, when pursued with no mind to religion and the hereafter, and which have many in their grip, will, by inference, perish with a person's earthly life. Al-Mu'ayyad also asks for deliverance from earthly calamities, and with the juxtaposition of earthly calamities with worldly aspirations, it is almost implied that the one causes the other, or, at the very least, that the absence of the one ensures that a person will not be overly affected by the other; he will be able to endure worldly troubles because he knows they are temporary. The focus in all this is squarely on the eternal hereafter. Al-Mu'ayyad continues, "Record our names in the register of those whom you have prompted to love faith, and in whose hearts you have made it beautiful."²⁷ Belief too is a gift from God, and God will grant direction to those who ask him for it. In the next line, he says, "Have us draw near to people of discernment (*ūlū l-albāb*) who"—and this is a verse from the Quran—"remember God standing and sitting and when they lay on their sides" (Q 3:191). In other words, the focus and goal of worldly acts should center on attaining the hereafter. Discernment, reason, intelligence—

27 This line alludes to Q 49:7: "Allah has prompted you to love faith, and made it beautiful in your hearts." The Fatimids' conception of free will and predestination states that, on the one hand, humans are born in this world with a predestined fate, and their destiny is a direct result of their actions in the world of first creation. But, once born, they have complete freedom to make choices, whether for good or for evil, and these choices will determine their path in the afterlife. For an allusive statement to this effect, citing the words of Imam Ja'far al-Šādiq (d. 148/765), see al-Rāzī, Abū Ḥātim, *The proofs of prophecy*, trans. Tarif Khalidi, Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2011, 30–32. See also several declarations of free choice in the sense I have outlined in al-Mu'ayyad, *al-Majālis* ii, *majlis* 28 & 29; iv, *majlis* 18, 21 & 49. For a succinct presentation of the Fatimid-Ṭayyibī position, see the *majlis* of the 54th Ṭayyibī *Dā'ir* Sayyidna Taher Fakhruddin, "Do we have free will? *Majālis al-ḥikma* Series": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qOMKZp-rgOI&list=PLoYKjIUtm6peAezs6wWpfyHnAUQv1cbs&index=41> (last accessed: 7 November 2021).

all these are essential themes in al-Mu'ayyad's theology that underpin all his prayers, poems and teachings;²⁸ the most intelligent thing a person of reason can do is to remember God, for believing in God, and supplicating him ensure a person's eternal bliss in God's shade. Following in this same vein of magnifying the hereafter and insisting on the low worth of this world, al-Mu'ayyad supplicates, "God, make the occupations of this world the least of our occupations, and knowledge of the hereafter the entirety of our yearnings." He ends this general segment of his supplication by citing a verse from the Quran to make the umbrella plea, "Endow us in our affairs with right guidance by helping us perform good deeds." (Q 18:10). The repetition of the plea for help to perform good deeds accentuates this crucial proposition.

The next segment highlights the petitioner's utter and total powerlessness in supporting his own life and wellbeing, and al-Mu'ayyad relies on this pitiful image to solicit—again, and over and over in these next lines—God's mercy:

God, have mercy on the destitution of one who is dependent on a stalk of vegetation produced by the earth. Have mercy on the captivity of one who is imprisoned by the calamitous hand of the days and the nights. Have mercy on the feebleness of one who is truly weak and powerless facing the sovereignty of death.

The philosophical aspect of human frailty and dependance is masterfully turned into a very personal plea. These lines, and the next, position the supplicant in a manner of utmost and entire dependence on God's mercy: "God, when this is my lowly condition—a mosquito can pain and hurt me and a gulp can choke and kill me—it is all the more fitting that you look at me with compassion and mercy." The very tangible mention of a mosquito and a gulp of water brings the abstract into the realm of the mundane, the metaphysical into the purview of everyday human travails, in an image that is immediately relatable for most people. The word mercy, and its near synonym, benevolence (*'atf*), is again invoked: "Let not the paths of your mercy narrow to exclude me. Let not the bounties of your benevolence pass me by." And, for al-Mu'ayyad, knowledge, learning, rationality, wisdom—all these are never far from the lexical setting of God's mercy, visible here when he juxtaposes the plea for mercy with a plea for a drink from the pools of God's wisdom, particularly notable because of the Fatimid symbolic interpretation of water as divine knowledge, "Let not

28 See, e.g., al-Mu'ayyad, *al-Majālis* i, *majlis* 1–2; al-Mu'ayyad, *Dīwān* 202, poem 2, v. 63; al-Mu'ayyad, *Dīwān* 321, poem 62, vv. 121–122.

the pools of your wisdom become muddied as I drink.” The real manifestation of God’s mercy, then, is his bestowal of heavenly wisdom that flows from the celestial realm.

The next two pleas deepen the earlier petition for liberation from earthly calamities. Building on the declaration of the supplicant’s own inability to deflect any kind of harm from himself, al-Mu’ayyad first asks God for eternal life, which he characterizes as a state in which he will be forever safe from catastrophe and suffering: “God, house us in your shade in a home that is free from troubles and exempt from suffering. Gift us life secured with the rope of eternity, against which the sharp blades of catastrophe are forever sheathed.” The metaphor of rope and blade gives a physical presentation to an abstract concept, that of eternity and catastrophe, where the ultimate catastrophe is death. The second plea comes back to the petitioner’s earthly life and pleads for God’s protection at all times in the here and now: “God, cover us in robes of your protection for as long as you have us live. Guard us in the fortress of your safety and security for as long as you have us remain on earth.” As in the earlier pleas for garments of wellbeing and piety in life and death, the supplication asks for “robes of protection,” and it adds a further image of a “fortress of safety”—presumably petitioning for both physical protection and spiritual safety.

Now, the supplication moves to a very particular theme, one that is pervasive not only in al-Mu’ayyad’s supplications, but also in his poetry and his autobiography, that of his performance of *jihād* in God’s path. Likely, he refers to the establishment of the Fatimid *da’wa* in often hostile territory, and of the sufferings he has endured in this endeavor. Al-Mu’ayyad presses home these points here—as he does in those other genres of his writing—to highlight the urgent need for God’s aid against God’s enemies. The theme is presented in three segments, each prefaced with the direct address, “God!” The first of the three segments begins with a statement to the effect that the supplicant has faced exile in the path of God, “God, you know that we have left our homeland to perform *jihād* in your path and please you,” and this refers specifically, as mentioned earlier, to al-Mu’ayyad’s own poignant situation where he was forced out of his homeland, Shiraz, because of his efforts in the land of Fars to establish the Fatimid cause—both religious and political—through pressure exerted on the Buyid king Abū Kālījār (r. 415–440/1024–1048) by the rival ‘Abbasid forces, and compelled to leave behind home and friends and family and flock.²⁹ It goes on to detail the suffering rained down on believers by God’s enemies. The first few lines most likely echo al-Mu’ayyad’s own tribulations, in

29 See details and further references in Qutbuddin, *al-Mu’ayyad al-Shirāzī* 48–56.

addition to their general import: "You know that we have borne great hardships and tribulations in heart and body. We fight oppressors who have unsheathed the sword of treachery and unfurled banners of error." The next lines are condemnatory in an overarching denunciation that signals the 'Abbasids' atrocities in more universal terms: "They have committed great crimes. They have rent the sanctity of Islam. The lands of the Muslims burn with their killings and incarcerations. Muslim women are in the vicious grasp of their immoralities and indecencies." The language is potent and highlights both the suffering and anguish of the believers and the cruelty and dominance of the enemy. Potentially, as also mentioned earlier, this could be a reference to the Seljuq retake of the 'Abbasid realm, following the year of Fatimid dominance in 450/1058 achieved at al-Mu'ayyad's hand.³⁰ In these lines, although the Fatimid Imam-Caliphs are not mentioned by name, al-Mu'ayyad evokes their fight for Islam implicitly and his own with them.

The second of the three segments regarding *jihād* and God's enemies builds on the desperate straits just outlined to transition to a heartfelt plea for God's aid. For a second time in the supplication, again prefacing this new and specific plea, al-Mu'ayyad frames his entreaty with a prayer for blessings to be bestowed on the Prophet and the Imams in his line, "God, shower blessings on Muhammad and his descendants," before going on to plead, "and let your mighty aid give our hands strength over these oppressors. Let your potency and power help us to strike at their potency and power." He again mentions the Prophet's descendants, and although he does not name them, he most certainly refers to the Fatimid Caliph-Imams whom he serves: "Fortify the pillars of the righteous rule of the Prophet's descendants by obliterating the oppressors' unrighteousness. Crush the sinews of those who take error-mongers as their sinews." As is his custom, al-Mu'ayyad's language is stylized, and he makes use of tacitly persuasive instruments from the Arabic rhetorical toolbox to achieve his goal. Particularly here he employs the metaphors "fortify the pillars ..." and "crush the sinews ...,"³¹ combined with poetic repetition of the word "sinews," one a literal usage for the body part that carries weapons, itself figurative in its denotation of strength, and the other a directly metaphorical use signaling supporters. These aesthetic techniques aid in crafting a powerful plea to God to grant victory to the righteous Fatimid Imams and destroy their evil enemies.

30 See details and further references in Qutbuddin, *al-Mu'ayyad al-Shirāzī* 68–77.

31 Reference to Q 18:51.

The final and third segment regarding *jihād* begins with a declaration, “God, belief has sallied forth to face unbelief, and unbelief has sallied forth to challenge belief,” that echoes the Prophet Muhammad’s prayer in the Battle of the Trench (*khandaq*) when—as narrated by al-Mu’ayyad himself—the young ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib had sallied forth to fight against the famed pagan warrior ‘Amr b. ‘Abd Wadd (d. 5/626), thereby saving the Muslims and Islam from an existential threat.³² Al-Mu’ayyad’s single-lined but immensely forceful pronouncement in his supplication aligns the Fatimid Imam-Caliphs with true belief, and with Muhammad and ‘Alī, and it links their opponents (primarily the ‘Abbasids and the Spanish Umayyads, both dynasties with a Quraysh pedigree) with the pagan Meccan Quraysh who embody unbelief who had fought against the Prophet. The statement also subtly alludes to al-Mu’ayyad’s earlier phrase of prayer for God to record his name among those God has prompted to love belief, in other words, to love ‘Alī and the Fatimid Imams in his line. Al-Mu’ayyad builds on this declaration to put forth a litany of entreaties that evoke yet another early Quranic theme:

Lord, strike down Satan’s banner. Let him run on his heels when the two armies meet. Protect your sacred sanctuary, God, from the might of the cursed elephant. Destroy it and destroy its army, the brethren of devils and demons. Let their bodies receive the blows of death. Let their blood be drunk by thirsty swords.

The reference to the Quranic Sūra of the Elephant is unmistakable,³³ an allusion to the historical episode of the Ethiopian-Yemeni general Abraha who brought an army of elephants to demolish the sacred Ka’ba in Mecca in 570 CE, the same year that the Prophet Muhammad would be born. The Quran, as is well known, vaunts God’s destruction of those who would destroy the sacred sanctuary of God’s House, by sending an army of Abābīl birds who rained down stones of brimstone and fire. The elephant—here possibly the ‘Abbasid-Seljuq ruler—may be mighty in size and strength, but God—whose side the Fatimid Imams represent—is powerful over all. Al-Mu’ayyad’s prayer shifts yet again from a tone of reckoning to a timbre of pleading, that echoes the earlier lines of fraught suffering:

Have mercy on hearts that burn from their oppression, on eyes that stream from their harm, on the blood of Muslims painting their swords,

³² Al-Mu’ayyad, *al-Majālis* iv, *majlis* 13 & 15.

³³ Q 105.

on spirits snatched out of bodies, on women, veils torn, their honor in the grip of the enemy's hand.

As already demonstrated briefly earlier, al-Mu'ayyad's 'Arafā supplication is a masterpiece of Arabic belle-lettres, with powerful rhyme and parallelism constituting a pulsing cadence, and vivid imagery. Rhythm is a major driver of the prose, and the lines just cited, like most sets of lines before them in the supplication, are rhythmic and parallel, and each structurally parallel line deepens the sense of despairing need. The main clause addresses God with the imperative verb "have mercy [on]" (*irḥam*)—note again the recurrence of this key lexeme of mercy, as the supplicant's pleas crescendo in the approach to the finale—and the four words, hearts, eyes, blood, and spirit, occupy the identical grammatical slot of direct object in each of the subordinate clauses. The conjunction "and" and the preposition "from" are repeated in each, and the repetition, perhaps ironically, makes them fade away and the substantives pop out. Moreover—and here I refer the reader to the Arabic text provided earlier—the first two words rhyme in R (*ḥarrā*, *abrā*), and the second set, the third and fourth words, rhyme in L (*maṭlūla*, *maslūla*), and each of the two pairs is also morphologically equivalent. All this, parallel structure (*izdiwāj*), morphological equivalence (*tawāzun*), and rhyme (*saj'*), produces a strong rhythmic cadence. Throughout the text, consecutive groups of two or three or four lines possess near-identical grammatical structure. The text is fully rhymed, and like the parallel structure, the rhyme too changes after every few phrases, as is customary in medieval Arabic chancery prose. Parallelism combined with rhyme is highly prized in stylized prose, and the theorists laud it with the technical literary term, "studying with gems" (*tarṣīf*).³⁴

The supplication is also rich in literal and metaphorical imagery. The picture painted of the pilgrims at the outset of the text, with stark descriptions of their white wrappers likened to shrouds of the dead, is graphic. The picture painted of the wretchedness of the human condition, with mention of the supplicant's dependance for his very life on a piece of vegetation, and his helplessness against an insect as tiny as a mosquito, is moving. The metaphor in the supplication's opening segment of a high-flying bird unable to reach the heights evoked in the phrase "the fluttering wings of his heart and tongue" gives physical shape to the abstract concept of human inability to comprehend the divine reality.

34 Al-Qalqashandī, Aḥmad b. 'Alī, *Ṣubḥ al-a'shā fī šinā'at al-inshā'*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Zakkār, 14 vols., ii, Damascus: Wizārat al-Thaqāfa wa-l-Irshād al-Qawmī, 1981, 282.

Repetition of key words, especially the word mercy, and repetition of key phrases, especially the benediction on the Prophet Muhammad and his progeny who are the embodiment of God's mercy, drive home the key messages of the supplication.

Profuse citation of the Quran, directly, or by invoking its themes and vocabulary—flagged in my commentary and notes—infuses an Islamic flavor into the entirety of the supplication, as well as injecting an air of doctrinal and perhaps also temporal authority.

Toward the end of the supplication, al-Mu'ayyad verbalizes his submission to God, and his trust in God, in abject humbleness, "God, faces are covered in dust prostrating before your greatness. We place our trust in you, and [note the emphatic near repetition] our faces are covered in dust prostrating before you." He also reiterates his plea of mercy, conjoined with a repeated plea for God's aid and victory, "Have mercy on our wretched state and answer our prayer that you grant strength to Islam. Grant us your powerful aid, such that we obtain our desires, desires held by people of discernment and conviction who have faith that 'your promise is true' (Q 11:45). For you have said"—and al-Mu'ayyad ends his entreaties with citation of God's words of promise in the Quran—"In truth, we shall aid believers'(Q 30:47)."

The supplication ends with praise of God and, once more, blessings on Muhammad and his descendants: "All praise and favors belong to God. May he bestow blessings on our master Muhammad and his descendants who are the best community. May he bless them all."

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