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Book Review

‘Alī Akhvān Mahdāvī and Reżā Naqdī (eds.), *Āyīnhā-ye Ḥaram-e Moṭahhar-e Rażāvī* (The Rituals of the Sacred Sanctuary in Emām Reżā Mausoleum), Mashhad: Bonyād-e Paghūshhā-ye Eslāmī, 1396kh.

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In recent years, historical studies on the mausoleum of Emām Reżā (‘Alī b Mūsā al-Riḏā), the eighth Twelver Shiite Imam (d. 818) in Mashhad, a northeastern area of the Islamic Republic of Iran, have experienced significant advancement. The emergence of this trend can be attributed primarily to the systematic cataloging of historical documents in the mausoleum’s collection, the establishment of the Bonyād-e Paghūshhā-ye Eslāmī (Islamic Research Institution; hereafter, the Bonyād)¹ affiliated with the mausoleum, and the vigorous research activities of Iranian scholars. Recently, scholars from this institution have published many papers and books focusing mainly on the management organization of the mausoleum itself, its various ancillary institutions (library, hospital, religious education, orphanage, music band, etc.), vaqf (Islamic religious donation), and visitation to the mausoleum from the latter half of the Safavid period to the end of the Qajar dynasty.² Owing to their research achievements, many aspects of the organizational management and social history related to this mausoleum during the abovementioned period became clearer.

Among the many publications on the history of the mausoleum from the Bonyād, I focus on the book titled *Āyīnhā-ye Ḥaram-e Moṭahhar-e Rażāvī* (The Rituals of the Sacred Sanctuary in Emām Reżā Mausoleum), which was published in 1396kh (2017–18) and deals with the rituals of the mausoleum. While other publications primarily focus on the day-to-day management and operation of the mausoleum and its annexes, this book is unique in its scrutiny of the establishment and historical development of many rituals performed at the mausoleum. As veneration for the

¹ On this institution, see Sugiyama Ryuichi, “Imam Reza byou no kenkyubumon no syuppanbutu wo megutte — Doubyou no rekisi ni kansuru kenkyusho no syoukai (Historical Studies Published by the Research Section of the Imam Reza Mausoleum)”, *Journal of Islamic Area Studies*, No. 10, 2018, pp. 97–107 (in Japanese).

² In Sugiyama 2018, I introduced the publications of the Bonyād until ca. 2016 in Japanese.

Sayyids and the Shiite school gradually prevailed in the Iranian region, the regimes of the day needed to build close ties with the mausoleum, which served as the resting place for the Twelver Shiite Imam. The rulers and ruling elites sometimes offered substantial financial assistance to the mausoleum, while at other times they sought to intervene strongly in its management. One of my research themes is the examination of the intricate relationship between religion and politics in the Iranian region through the lens of Islamic sacred mausoleums. Hence, I consider it important to delve into the establishment and evolution of the rituals of this mausoleum, as well as the regime's involvement in them. Based on these interests, this brief paper introduces the contents of this book and discusses possibilities for studying of the mausoleum rituals.

Āyīnhā-ye Ḥaram-e Moṭahhar-e Raḡavī consists of a brief foreword (moqaddame) and explanations of 35 rituals associated with the mausoleum, chiefly focusing on their establishment, content, and historical evolution. The section on ritual explanations was mainly authored by scholars of the Bonyād. In the foreword, its editors describe that the mausoleum of Emām Reḡā has, since its establishment, transformed into a visitation place with the increase in the number of pilgrims, and the mausoleum rituals have evolved based on the services provided to its pilgrims. They also noted that pilgrims have consistently posed questions about the historical lineage of rituals, the ideological foundations they are rooted in, and the historical changes they have undergone. Therefore, they were tasked with organizing and presenting information on rituals based on previous studies. However, all explanations of the rituals were composed with reference to raw materials such as documents pertaining to the management of the mausoleum, as well as printed books and manuscripts on the local history of the Khorasan district and Islamic law.³

In the section on ritual explanations, the 35 headwords are arranged in Persian alphabetical order (ālefbā) and not by categories with some criteria. The headwords start with *Āstān-būsi* (Kiss to the threshold), and end with *Namāz dar ḥaram* (Prayer in the sacred place). Each headword was accompanied by a 2–19-page commentary. The headwords are as follows:

³ Aḡvān Mahdavi and Reḡā Naqdi (eds.), *Āyīnhā-ye Ḥaram-e Moṭahhar-e Raḡavī*, Mashhad: Bonyād-e Pazhūheshhā-ye Eslāmī, 1396kh., pp. 9–10.

Table : List of the Contents of This Book⁴

<i>No.</i>	<i>Headword</i>	<i>Pages</i>
1.	Āstān-būsī (Kiss to the threshold of this mausoleum)	11–14
2.	Azān va monājāt (Recitation of Islamic call for daily prayer and expression of a wish and gratitude for the God)	15–18
3.	E'tekāf (Devoting oneself to Islamic religious duties for three days)	19–21
4.	'Aṭā-ye ḥokm-e khedmat (Granting a degree to the staff of this mausoleum)	22–27
5.	Bast-neshīnī (Evacuation to sanctuary and barricading oneself there)	28–33
6.	Bastan va goshūdan-e darhā-ye ḥaram (Opening and closing the doors of the sacred space)	34–37
7.	Parcham (Display of the flag of the mausoleum)	38–44
8.	Tāze mosalmānān (Conversion to Islam in the mausoleum)	45–47
9.	Tappe-ye salām (Expressing first salutation to Emām Rezā from the village of Tappe-ye salām ⁵)	48–50
10.	Taḥvīl-e sāl-e now (Rotation to the Persian new year)	51–54
11.	Taḥvīl-e keshīk (Rotation of a keshīk group to a new one)	55–59
12.	Tashrīfāt (Expressing respects for those who come on the pilgrimage)	60–63
13.	Taṭ'hīr-e ḥaram-e motaḥhar (Cleaning of the sacred space with water)	64–65
14.	Ta'fīr-e ḥaram-e motaḥhar (Spraying of rose water)	66–69
15.	Jārū-keshī (Cleaning of the mausoleum)	70–74
16.	Cherāgh-e barāt (Ceremony honoring the memories of the dead held in the month of Sha'bān) ⁶	75–78
17.	Ḥedmat-e fowq (Cleaning the roof of the zarīḥ)	79–81
18.	Khoṭobe-khvānī (Public preaching)	82–87
19.	Khel'at-bakhshī (Granting of Robe of Honor)	88–92
20.	Dakhīl-bastan (Binding a cloth or padlock to the zarīḥ or the sacred spaces)	93–95
21.	Dafn dar ḥaram (Burial in the sacred spaces)	96–100
22.	Rowze-khvānī (Recitation of elegy on martyrdom of Emām Ḥoseyn)	101–103
23.	Ziyārat (Pilgrimage to the mausoleum)	104–122
24.	Ziyārat-nāme-khvānī (Pilgrimage prayer book reading)	123–126

⁴ The numbers in the table are given by the author of this review.

⁵ This village is located approximately 20 kilometers southeast of the mausoleum, near the city of Nīshapūr and is known as the first place where the pilgrims heading to the mausoleum can see its dome. It is believed that greetings extended to Emām Rezā from this locale have the potential to fulfill the wishes of pilgrims (Aḥvān Mahdāvī and Rezā Naqdī (eds.) 1396kh., pp. 48–49).

⁶ The difference between the original and the translation indicates that this ritual is not directly associated with illumination. The author of this entry pointed out that this ceremony traces its origins to ancient times and is now conducted on the 13th, 14th, and 15th nights of the Sha'bān month. A historical document substantiates the performance of this ritual during the reign of Shāh 'Abbās. In the Qajar period, this ceremonial observance extended beyond the confines of the ḥaram, encompassing the cemeteries adjacent to the mausoleum. It evolved in the Qajar period to incorporate acts such as paying homage to the tombs of kin interred within this mausoleum, the recitation of the Qor'ān, and dedication to the tombs (Aḥvān Mahdāvī and Rezā Naqdī (eds.), 1396kh., pp. 76–77).

25.	Saqqā'ī dar ḥaram (Carrying water in the sacred space)	127–130
26.	Shām-e gharībān (Expressing condolences on the days of the martyrdom of Emām Ḥoseyn and Emām Reẓā)	131–134
27.	Sham'-afrūzī (Lighting candles in the sacred space to fulfill wishes)	135–138
28.	Ṣoffe (Recitation of Qor'ān and entreaty to Fourteen Infallibles)	139–142
29.	Ṣalāt-keshī (Announcement of the arrival of the month of Moḥarram)	143–146
30.	Ṭarḥ-e akrām-e Razavī (Evening meal reception after fasting in the month of Ramazān)	147–149
31.	'Aqd-e bālā-sar (Wedding ceremony in the bālā-sar space)	150–153
32.	Ghobār-rūbī (Cleaning the coffin of Emām Reẓā inside the ẓarīḥ)	154–161
33.	Majles-e salām (Gathering to celebrate the religious festivals)	162–168
34.	Noqre-zānī (Music performance at the Naqqāre-khāne)	169–175
35.	Namāz dar ḥaram (Prayer in the sacred space)	176–179

Owing to the assigned page limit for this review, it is difficult to introduce each explanation in detail. The following section selectively introduces and adds some comment on those rituals deemed deserving of the abovementioned ones, in alignment with classifications based on my specific interests.

The rituals observed at the mausoleum of Emām Reẓā appear strongly influenced by Islamic/Turkic-Mongol court culture. For example, the ritual Āstān-būsī, which is first discussed in this book, has its origins in the ancient practice of kissing the threshold of the imperial court or the tomb of a religious saint. According to Shiite Islamic law, Moḥammad ebn-e Makkī (Shahīd al-Avval, d. 1384) defined the act of kissing a door of the building and a ẓarīḥ (a lattice enclosing the coffin) as a part of the Shiite traditions. However, he maintained that this tradition lacks credibility within the context of Shiite law. Instead, he recommends expressing gratitude to God through worshipping on one's knees to receive the blessing of pilgrimage.⁷ On the other hand, a contemporary Shiite Marja' al-taqlīd presented the viewpoint that worship on one's knees is prohibited except for when meant for God, but it is permissible to worship with one's body against the ground for support as long as the object of worship is the Imams.⁸

This book discusses many mausoleum rituals of this kind that may be associated with court practices. Khe'lat-bakhsī is renowned for a custom observed in imperial courts since ancient times,⁹ bestowing a robe of honor upon the king's allegiants as a

⁷ Ahvān Mahdavi and Reẓā Naqdī (eds.), 1396kh., p. 13

⁸ Ahvān Mahdavi and Reẓā Naqdī (eds.), 1396kh., p. 14. The name of Marja' al-taqlīd delivering this legal opinion is not mentioned in the text.

⁹ In the Iranian region, the custom of giving gifts such as robes and jewels dated back to the Achaemenid period (Willem Floor, "KEL'AT", Ehsan Yarshater (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online edition, <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kelat-gifts>, accessed on 27 Dec. 2023).

token of the special favor. The history of this ritual in the mausoleum of Emām Rezā can be traced back to the end of the Timurid dynasty and the ritual itself can be affirmed to have been frequently performed since the reign of the Safavid ruler, Shāh ‘Abbās (r. 1588–1629), based on historical documents. Like the imperial courts, the mausoleum granted the robe of honor to its staff, such as khaṭīb, ṣadr al-ḥoffāz, and pīsh-namāz, and during the Qajar period, the recipients of the robes were expanded to various staff members.¹⁰ This ritual persisted until the compilation of *Asās-nāme* (articles of the management) in 1926–27/1303kh.

Rituals such as ‘Aṭā-ye ḥokm-e khedmat,¹¹ Bast-neshīnī, Parcham, Taḥvīl-e keshīk, and Noqre-zanī can also be classified into this category. Bast-neshīnī was the practice of evacuation performed in both the courts and the holy mausoleums.¹² Keshīk was the group of people guarding the ḥarams in the courts of the Turkic-Mongolian dynasties as well as the Shiite Imam or major Imamzades.¹³ Keshīk group works in shifts 24 hours a day, and this Taḥvīl-e keshīk was a ritual in which one group of the keshīks changed responsibilities to another keshīk group after the 24-hour services. Noqre-zanī was a ritual of a music performance, with the drum and trumpet played at the Naqqāre-khāne of this mausoleum. This Naqqāre-khāne also existed in the royal palaces and major towns of the Islamic dynasties.¹⁴

This book also explores rituals related to Islamic worship and Shiite beliefs. *Azān va monājāt*, *E‘tekāf*, *Khoṭobe-khvānī*, and *Namāz dar ḥaram*, among others, can fall into the former category. Naturally, there were rituals linked to the daily prayer, *Azān va monājāt* and *Namāz dar ḥaram*. It is notable that although the ritual *Khoṭobe*

¹⁰ According to the source “*Dastūr al-Molūk*”, at the end of the Safavid period, the imperial court also sent robes of honor every year to high-ranking staff of the mausoleum; when these arrived, a ceremony involving carrying a flag, a jeweled necklace, and the Imam’s handwritten *Qo’rān* was conducted outside the mausoleum (Mīrzā Mohammad Rafī‘ Anṣārī, *Dastūr al-Molūk*, Nobuaki Kondo (ed.), Tokyo: ILCAA, 2018, pp. 9–10; Aḥvān Mahdāvī and Rezā Naqdī (eds.), 1396kh., pp. 77–78).

¹¹ The origin of this ritual may be the Islamic court custom. However, the explanation of this headword in this book focuses mainly on aspects of the appointment edicts, not on the ritual of appointment in the mausoleum itself.

¹² I previously discussed the Bast practice in this mausoleum during the Afsharid period. See Sugiyama Ryuichi, “Afshar-cho-ki no Emam Reza byo: Alīshāh no makimono kara miru 18seiki Iran ni okeru Imam byo no sosiki to unei (II) (The Mausoleum of Emām Rezā during the Afsharid Period: A Consideration of its Organization and Administration in the 18th Century Based on the Tūmār-e ‘Alīshāhī (Scroll of ‘Alī Shāh) (II))”, *The Memoirs of the Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia*, No. 178, 2021, pp. 415–413 (in Japanese).

¹³ My previous paper suggested similarities of the keshīk existed in both the ḥaram of the imperial courts in Turkic-Mongolian dynasties and that of the mausoleum of Emām Rezā. On this matter, see Sugiyama 2021, p. 407.

¹⁴ On this Naqqāre-khāne, see Ann A. K. S. Lambton, “NAKKĀRA-KHĀNA”, C. E. Bosworth, et al. (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition, Leiden: E. J. Brill, vol. 7, 1993, pp. 927–930.

is usually designated as speeches and sermons about politics or religious matters on Friday and fast-day prayer services, this ritual, held at the mausoleum of Emām Reẓā, was also performed on the night of the martyrdom of the Twelver Shiite third Imam Ḥoseyn, and Emām Reẓā. This ritual occurs in the presence of high-ranking officials and the Sayyid staff of the mausoleum.¹⁵

As examples of rituals with Shiite tendencies, in addition to the Khoṭobe-khvānī on the nights of the martyrdom of the abovementioned Imams, Rowẓe-khvānī, Ziyārat, and Ziyārat-nāme-khvānī can be enumerated. These rituals played a significant role in reinforcing the Shiite tendencies of the mausoleum. In the discussion of the Ziyārat in this book, the importance of pilgrimage to this mausoleum and its historical development are depicted from the writings of intellectuals such as Sheykh Ṣadūq (d. 981), Faẓlollāh ebn-e Rūzbehān Khoṅjī (d. 1519), and Ebn-e Ṭalḥe (d. 1254). Particularly with regard to the examples of the pre-Safavid period pilgrimage, it is evident that the descriptions of Sunni scholars are positive. The author of the entry Ziyārat aimed to emphasize the fact that the mausoleum has been highly evaluated by Sunnis as well.¹⁶

In addition, the Dakhīl-bastan is a ritual in which a pilgrim ties a piece of cloth or a padlock to the ẓarīḥ or other sacred places in the mausoleum to make a petition to the God via the entombed. According to the Shiite jurist, Feyz Kāshānī (d. 1679), this ritual began when some pilgrims gradually began to bind a cloth to a small window installed near the ẓarīḥ, asking for permission to come closer to the ẓarīḥ.¹⁷ This ritual perhaps does not have an origin in Islam and the Shia, and may be an example of how the rituals of this mausoleum have incorporated elements of folk beliefs.

It is imperative to note that several rituals associated with the management of the mausoleum were conducted, including Taṭ‘hīr-e ḥaram-e moṭahhar, Jārū-keshī, Sham‘-afrūzī, and Ghobār-rūbī. Most rituals of this type may have been performed with the intention of consecrating this mausoleum as a sacred place. The light of candles assumes paramount significance in sacred locales, serving as a tool to forge connections between the divine and pilgrims. Jārū-keshī and Ghobār-rūbī constitute rituals wherein the custodial staff undertake the cleaning of the mausoleum and its ẓarīḥ. It should be noted that these cleaning rituals have had a profound historical connection with the consolidation of authority among the rulers and ruling elites since the Safavid dynasty. Notably, the latter practice has restricted the responsibility of cleaning the interior of the ẓarīḥ to the rulers of the dynasties and high-ranking staff

¹⁵ Aḥvān Mahdavi and Reẓā Naqdī (eds.), 1396kh., pp. 85–87.

¹⁶ Aḥvān Mahdavi and Reẓā Naqdī (eds.), 1396kh., pp. 110–117.

¹⁷ Aḥvān Mahdavi and Reẓā Naqdī (eds.), 1396kh., p. 94.

of the mausoleum. This has contributed to the establishment of a social paradigm in which they are perceived as particularly privileged.

So far, the contents of the book have been introduced, and my comments have been incorporated in alignment with my interests and concerns. Finally, I would like to incorporate additional comments into the book. The significance of this study lies in its comprehensive exploration of rituals associated with the mausoleum, a subject that has not been previously examined in depth. It marks one of the important steps toward the research of a social history of the mausoleum of Emām Reżā. While recent studies on this mausoleum, as mentioned above, tend to focus on social aspects, such as pilgrimage, religious education, orphanage, and the involvement of women in its management,¹⁸ this book provides a fresh perspective by illuminating possibilities for researching the history of this mausoleum through the introduction and discussion of its various rituals. Furthermore, this work is noteworthy for its contribution to the exploration of the relationship between politics and religion in the Iranian region by scrutinizing the extent of the regime's involvement in the mausoleum's rituals. This book offers various clues that contribute to research on the social and political history associated with this mausoleum.

However, this study has some limitations. First, the arrangement of entries was the Persian alphabetical, as previously pointed out. Therefore, it may be more suitable to arrange them based on specific criteria. As mentioned above, I classified the entries into categories and provided comments on the book.¹⁹ Alphabetical ordering could hamper a comprehensive understanding of the status and mutual relationships of each ritual and the overall significance of mausoleum rituals. To enhance the comprehension of the nature of the mausoleum and its transformation, a more effective approach would have been to categorize rituals, elucidate their tendencies, and subsequently introduce them.

¹⁸ On studies of the documents about activities of women related to this mausoleum from the Safavid period to the first half of the Pahlavi period, see Elāhe Maḥbūb and Zahrā Ṭalā'ī, (eds.), *Gozīde-ye Asnād-e Hożūr-e Zanān dar Astān-e Qods-e Razāvi az Şafaviye ta Pahlavi-ye Avval*, Mashhad: Sazmān-e Ketābkhānehā, Mūzehā va Markaz-e Asnād-e Astān-e Qods-e Razāvi, 1399kh.

¹⁹ I draw attention to the resemblance between certain rituals observed at the mausoleum and those practiced in courts, as classified earlier. I believe this resemblance derives from the haram, a sacred space that exists both in the large mausoleum and the courts. Christoph Werner also pointed out that this mausoleum granted the robe of honor and lakabs, and issued decrees like the imperial courts during the Qajar period (Christoph Werner, *Vaqf en Iran: Aspects Culturels, Religieux et Sociaux*, Leuven: Peeters Press, 2015, pp. 115–134). This similarity of the mausoleum to the imperial courts may be closely linked with the establishment of the authority of Emām Reżā after his death. I will discuss this matter on another occasion.

Second, some entries appear to have been insufficiently explained as rituals. For instance, the explanation of the entry *Ziyārat* draws upon Persian chronicles and travelogues of foreigners as well as works on Islamic law, but it appears that the author primarily introduced episodes of the pilgrimage, and did not systematically discuss the ritual of visitation and its historical evolution. Even in the case of the entry *Taṭ'hīr-e ḥaram-e moṭahhar*, one of the rituals related to cleaning, there is insufficient explanation of its historical origin and development. Considering the significance of this work as a valuable study of the rituals of the mausoleum, it seems imperative for the authors of every entry to delve into the historical sources and provide comprehensive descriptions.

Despite the abovementioned points, this book undoubtedly provides important insights into not only the social history of the mausoleum of Emām Rezā but also the essence and historical evolution of the relationship between religion and politics in the Iranian region. This book represents the current state of research on this mausoleum, and should be consulted for a more in-depth study of its social history.