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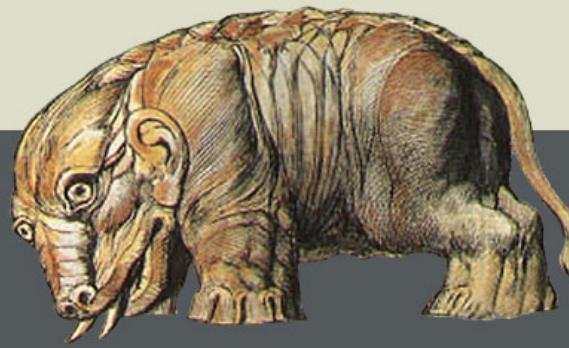
MARTYRDOM AND THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Olmo Gölz

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Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Martyrdom in the Modern Middle East

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Introduction

Martyrdom is for losers. Yet, it is a powerful claim on strength at the same time. For the individual who seeks martyrdom, it is the weapon of last resort and a means of self-defence. For the surviving community that remembers someone as a martyr, it indicates the unjust suffering of an innocent. On one hand, the recourse to martyrdom discourses exposes the self-perceived weakness of those who make use of it. On the other, dying on behalf of a higher cause is a strong signal and a rallying cry for the bereaved. Thus, the concept of martyrdom unites both references to strength and impotence and it is packed with ambiguities.

The story of mixed signals begins with the figure itself: the martyr allegedly dies for a belief system while defying another (Cook 2007, 1f.). Accordingly, martyrdom "is as strong a signal of the strength of a belief as one can get: only those who hold their beliefs very dear can contemplate making the ultimate sacrifice of dying for them" (Gambetta 2005, 266f.). Additionally, in the moment of their death, the martyr radically articulates a particular form of strength: the one who chose death over life withdraws from all submission (Popitz 2017, 59). However, only those who are actually in a vulnerable condition or even in an inferior position in the face of a competing belief system can resort to the whole power of the concept of martyrdom. Dying for an already enforced or generally accepted and by no means threatened position would be regarded either as unjust (when it leads to harming the innocent or suppressed), or it would be put on a pathological scale ranging from senseless stupidity to psychological insanity. In addition, every social structure that asks its members to express allegiance by dint of self-inflicted death without referring to any form of existential threat as justification would lose its credibility and consequently face serious challenges to its legitimacy. Thus, the concept of martyrdom carries the logic of asymmetry in terms of power with it.

From the standpoint of the pious believer, one might argue that assessing the meaning of one's death is a matter of the afterlife, regarding both the intentions that led to it and the transcendental regime which evaluates the reward for the deceased. Following this view, the concept of martyrdom is detached from this-worldly power relations. However, I argue that the hypothesis of martyrdom as an asymmetric phenomenon stands the test of religious parlance: there is no concept of the afterlife which is not oriented on ideas of regulating the believer's behaviour in relation to his or her society's

challenges and needs in the mortal world. Therefore, dying for one's belief can only make sense if the belief system is considered to be in danger. Accordingly, self-inflicted death *without* referring to the supposed needs of one's own society and thus to an urgent threat can, religiously speaking, only lead to either a nihilistic interpretation of the actor's motives[1] or to the mere notion of suicide, regardless of whether the hopes of the actor are oriented towards the afterlife—hopes which will necessarily be disappointed since suicide is morally condemned in the three monotheistic world-religions of Judaism, Christianity[2] and Islam and thus not to be confused with martyrdom (Pannewick 2012, 54).

This said, it is no coincidence that the concept of martyrdom has predominantly been developed in religious communities which, on one hand could provide believers with a seducing idea of the afterlife and on the other, saw themselves as being surrounded by enemies who could claim hegemony on the routines of the mortal world. Situationally appearing modern manifestations of secularist discourses on 'political martyrdom' aside,[3] the concept of martyrdom revealed its whole power in early Christianity, where it was facing persecution in the hegemonic Roman empire and drawing inspiration directly from the example of Jesus Christ himself (Bowersock 2002, 54), as well as during the protestant reformation and the catholic counterreformation in 16ᵗʰ century Europe (Asch 2018, 1f.). Eventually, the concept of martyrdom can be found in an early Islamic context in the prominent hagiographic accounts of the Shi'a Muslim minority. It is the telling of the martyred grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, al-Husyan b. Ali (626–680 CE), where the story of the struggle against alleged oppression and tyranny can be found. According to Shi'ite narratives, al-Husayn is said to have chosen death over life at Karbala while facing a superior enemy representing the political and religious hegemony at the time. The story of the battle of Karbala shaped the notions of the *shahid* (i.e. the martyr) and *shahadat* (martyrdom) in Islamic thought. Al-Husayn represents *the* defining prefiguration for the heroisation of self-inflicted death in Islam that even affect Sunni discourses nowadays (Fuchs, this issue)—a fact which hints to the superiority of the symbolism of martyrdom.

However, notwithstanding this basic assessment of martyrdom as an asymmetric phenomenon, the example of the modern Middle East shows that the concept is of such subversive potential that it even infused secularist discourses on political resistance or self-sacrifice on behalf of a threatened society. For example, it led to a specific kind of valorisation of the guerrillas' self-sacrifice, and rhetorical references to martyrdom were "incorporated into the routines of the PLO leadership" in the 1970s (Khalili 2007, 49) when the Palestinian struggle had a predominantly secularist form. Accordingly, in the Muslim world the question of who has the power to offer a legitimate definition of martyrdom and is thus capable of using the concept for their cause has become a matter of contention. This is probably most paradigmatically showcased by the revolutionary period during the 1970s in Iran, when revolutionary Islamists gained access to the concept in a way that shaped the Iranian Revolution (Cf. Gölz, this issue) and finally lead to its assessment as an *Islamic* Revolution.

As will be discussed in this issue on interdisciplinary perspectives on

[1] Farhad Khosrokhavar (2005, 60) coined the term *martyropaths* for those actors who are mostly fascinated by death and show little interest in this-worldly matters. For him, a martyr has "no fascination with death, no luxuriating in death and no quest for happiness in and through death. Martyropathy begins with a change of meaning: a deadly logic takes over from the logic governing the struggle for life and the pursuit of a frustrated ideal".

[2] Thomas Macho (2017, 7) regards the radical reassessment of suicide as a defining phenomenon for modernity. However, on the construction of suicide as a major sin in Christianity in previous centuries he writes: „Viele Jahrhunderte lang wurde der Suizid als schwere Sünde, sogar als ‚Doppelmord' – nämlich an Seele und Körper –, als Verbrechen, das streng bestraft wurde, nicht allein durch Verstümmelung und Verscharrung der Leichen, sondern beispielsweise auch durch Beschlagnahmung des Familienvermögens, zumindest aber als Effekt des Wahnsinns und als Krankheit bewertet. Während der Suizid noch in der Antike mit Ehre assoziiert werden konnte, erschien er spätestens seit Beginn der Herrschaft der christlichen Religion als Schande und finales Versagen."

[3] See for example the recent study by Guerra (2018) on *Heroes, Martyrs, and Political Messiahs in Revolutionary Cuba.*

martyrdom in the modern Middle East, the discourses on the martyr and the accompanying debates on "legitimate means of dying", as it has been coined by Alp Yenen, have been shaped and rearranged in the Turkish civil war of the 1970s (Yenen, this issue), the Palestinian struggle (Franke 2014; Khalili 2007; Pannewick 2012, 151ff.), the Islamic Revolution in Iran of 1978/79 and the subsequent Iran-Iraq war (1980–1988) (Gölz, this issue) as well as in more recent episodes during and after the Arab spring (Khosrokhavar 2014; Pannewick 2017), in the Syrian war (Beese, this issue; Dick, this issue) or in Pakistan (Fuchs, this issue). In nearly all of these episodes, martyrdom not only represented a powerful discursive concept, but it has had profound effects on the respective conflict itself due to the fact that people actually chose death in order to articulate their beliefs. People died and moral evaluations shifted; regimes were delegitimised through the confrontation with martyrs while others tried to legitimise themselves by dint of using the concept. Hence, the struggle over the legitimate use of the concept reflects the struggle for hegemony in a dialectic way: The power of the concept promises moral superiority while conversely, the cult surrounding the martyr can only be maintained in a discursive surrounding of inferiority or vulnerability. Accordingly, martyrdom appears to be the weapon of first choice and last resort at the same time. The logic of martyrdom asks for an amalgamation of both: discourses on subversion and hegemony.

In these introductory remarks on martyrdom amidst power struggles in the Middle East, I shall briefly define martyrdom with reference to some sociological reflections regarding the construction of a martyr and his or her significance for the respective society. Then, I will determine the implications of the concept of the *shahid* in contemporary Muslim societies before introducing the special issue on interdisciplinary perspectives on martyrdom in the modern Middle East.

The Martyr as a Figure of Boundary Work

For the individual who seeks martyrdom, the effect of their death seems to be crystal clear: the status of a martyr guarantees an "eternal life of happiness" (Khosrokhavar 2017, 86). Certainly, this assumption might be a reductionist perspective since it ignores all earthly motives of the people who are willing to sacrifice their lives on behalf of a greater cause. They may be desperate enough to simply not want to live in this world any longer, they may choose death out of a sense of duty to their families or communities,[4] or they may deem their actions in the mortal world to be a religious obligation, regardless of any assumptions about how the afterlife might be affected by their choices. However, although focussing on the ideologically articulated motives can lead to an evaluation of the power of symbols in the actor's belief system, such a perspective would not help in determining the sociological dimensions of the concept of martyrdom. If we ascertain that the individual can never fully control the evaluation of their death, we must consider the status of the martyr to be not a self-evident fact or the result of an automatic response, but rather the result of social attribution. Accordingly, such a constructivist perspective

[4] See on this topic Gambetta 2005, 270. Interested in the intentions of suicide bombers (who regularly refer to martyrdom discourses), he states: "All agents who intentionally die in an SM [suicide mission] have a major trait in common: although their action can be based on wrong or irrational beliefs, they see themselves, and are often seen by their group, as altruists. All SMs belong to a family of actions in which people go to the extremes of self-sacrifice in the belief that by doing so they will best further the interests of a group or the cause they care about and identify with. This family of self-sacrificial actions has several members, among them religious martyrdom, self-immolation, hunger strikes, and war heroism—actions that humans have carried out since biblical times. While all of these actions involve being prepared to give up one's life, some of them involve at the same time the killing of others. Even though we instinctively think of altruism as doing purely good deeds, altruism and aggression are not antithetical—in warfare you risk your life to help kin, comrades, and country also by killing enemies."

on martyrdom does not ask for the potential rewards in the afterlife but rather scrutinises the effects of martyrdom on their community from a sociological point of view[5] in order to apprehend the persistence and revitalisation of the cult of the martyr in contemporary times.

However, sociologically speaking, death is not the effect of martyrdom. On the contrary: martyrdom is one possible effect of the act of dying, which is followed by the heroisation of this act by dint of martyrdom discourses. Thus, the starting point for the definition of martyrdom is the death of an actor, whereas the path that leads to this death becomes the anchor point for all narratives and constructions surrounding the person's status as a martyr. Quintessentially, the invocation of martyrdom discourses leads to the reinterpretation of a loser as a winner and hero (Pannewick 2007, 310). Their death is no longer a defeat, but a "victory brought into a transcendental space-time structure" (ibid.). In this regard, the construction of a martyr via recourse on martyrdom discourses can be seen as, first and foremost, a narrative process that bestows meaning on the death of an actor.[6]

Accordingly, *martyrdom* is a concept, whereas the posthumous title *martyr* is a reward for those who are considered worthy of that concept by the living, regardless of any attempts by the deceased to control how they will be remembered in advance.[7] A society may bestow the title 'martyr' on someone who is considered to have accepted or even consciously sought out their death in order to bear witness to an overriding truth with their lives. Through this sacrifice, the martyr imparts a transcendental value to the ideal or goal for which he or she is willing to die. However, only when this sacrifice is narrated can it actively have an effect on society (Pannewick 2012, 21). Thus, for "martyrdom to succeed there must be a martyr"—a condition which is usually given reality "through the hagiographical accounts of his or her suffering that allow the audience to relate to this suffering" (Cook 2007, 1). Via these narrations, the martyr becomes the figure they ought to be: They stand at the defining point between two belief systems and are narrated to be the one who offered up the ultimate sacrifice in order to pay tribute to their own belief system and reject the other. He or she thus defines the line "where belief and unbelief meet—however these two categories are constructed in the minds of the martyr, the enemy, the audience and the writer of the historical-hagiographical narrative—and define the relationship between the two" (2).

In other words, from the standpoint of the admirer community, the realm of unbelief begins exactly at the point where the suffering and death of an actor is no longer appreciated as martyrdom, but either damned as a lower act or simply ignored. Accordingly, the martyr is a paradigmatic figure of boundary work that makes blurred boundaries between belief systems visible—or even helps to define them in the first place. Furthermore, with their life, the martyr not only creates boundaries *between* systems; rather, they become an embodied definition of the nature of their own belief system. The martyr is not only located at the frontline facing unbelief and injustice; rather, they become ambassadors of the values and virtues of their own society. It is the notion of the 'victim' which, in the case of martyrdom, accompanies the heroised self-sacrifice and connects the martyr to the moral standards of their

[5] Kraß/Frank 2008, 8: „Wie spricht man angemessen über Märtyrer? Zwei Perspektiven sind denkbar: die weltanschauliche Innensicht und die wissenschaftliche Außensicht. Wer die erste Perspektive wählt, wird aufgrund der Kriterien, die ihm seine religiösen Überzeugungen an die Hand geben, entscheiden, wer ein wahrer Märtyrer ist, und ihm Verehrung zollen. Wer die zweite Perspektive einnimmt, wird hingegen die Diskurse, Praktiken und Institutionen untersuchen, in deren Zusammenspiel ‚Märtyrer' hervorgebracht werden. Die Wahl besteht somit zwischen einer ‚essentialistischen' Position, die nach dem Heiligen Sein und Wesen des Märtyrers fragt, und einer ‚konstruktivistischen' Position, die die Strategien der Herstellung und (Selbst-)Zuweisung der Märtyrerrolle analysiert."

[6] Cf. Juergensmeyer 2000, 165: "Our personal tales of woe gain meaning, then, when linked to these powerful stories [of cosmic dimensions, OG]. Their sagas of oppression and liberation lift the spirits of individuals and make their suffering explicable and noble. In some cases, suffering imparts the nobility of martyrdom. In such instances the images of cosmic war forge failure —even death into victory."

[7] See for the phenomena of suicide bombers' video testimonies see Straub 2015. See also the articles of Yorck Beese and Alexandra Dick in this issue.

society. Although it is an important aspect of martyrdom discourses that the martyr has died willingly and consciously in order to articulate their powerful statement—the notion of sacrifice—, the narrative surrounding them must also state that things *could* have gone differently. The martyr *could* have lived. And most importantly, the martyr also *should* have lived. Thus, once more hinting at the ambiguities of the concept of martyrdom, the martyr is always wrapped in a discourse which alludes to his or her agency and to their status as victim at the same time. In consequence, it is not only *belief* and *unbelief* which are discriminated by martyrdom. The divide has to be about *good* and *evil* since all victimisation assumes the innocence of the victim. "Victims are produced by human action that could have been expected to have taken a different direction", the sociologist Bernhard Giesen states in regard to his construction of ideal types of boundary work. He concludes that the act of calling somebody a victim "implies that the result of this action is considered wrong" and must even be perceived to be avoidable (Giesen 2004, 46). "Thus the discourse about victimization becomes a social construction and is carried by a moral community defining an evil." (ibid.) Consequently, discourses on martyrdom have a polarising effect. They not only define the demarcation between two belief systems but also the terms of *good* and *evil* in a paradigmatic way. Since martyrdom presupposes that the Other is presented as evil, the martyrs themselves have to be constructed in a way that doesn't leave room for doubts about their impunity.

Thus, the martyr *has to* be presented in terms of integrity and innocence, of decency and honesty, he or she *has to* become the manifestation of the highest moral standards of their own community, because only then can the malice of the competing community be portrayed properly and thus the notion of victimhood invoked to support the respective narrative. In this way, the dead, who are heroised and remembered as martyrs, take their place in the middle of a society since they can be seen as liminal figures who communicate to its sacred centre. They are the ideal type representatives of morality. This effect once again unfolds its full power when the system comes under pressure and the martyr allegedly demonstrates "publicly that there is something in the subordinated or persecuted belief system worth dying for", as David Cook (2007, 2) discusses.[8] Thus, irrespective of any tradition or cultural affection for the figure of the martyr, the theoretical dimensions of the concept of martyrdom already refer to the asymmetrical aspect that makes the martyr a weapon in the struggle for power.

The multi-dimensional aspects of the martyr's contribution to boundary work have been determined and vividly explored by Sasha Dehghani and Silvia Horsch in their introduction to *Martyrdom in the Modern Middle East:*

> As paradigmatic examples for others, the place assigned to the martyrs is the very center of their communities; for that however, they also act in the border areas running between different religions and cultures. As such, martyr figures are not only agents of demarcation but at the same time of entanglement and mediation. This mediation occurs not only synchronously between different religious and cultural traditions but also diachronically between different eras which

[8] Cook (2007, 2) states accordingly: "The martyr's defining role is most helpful when that particular belief system is under attack, is in a minority position or is not in a politically or culturally dominant position within a given geographical location. At those times there may be outconversion or dilution of the core values of the belief system (however those are assessed, from the outside or the inside) such that many believers may not see worth in it at all. Attacks on the martyr's belief system can be coordinated and systematic or sustained by the all-encompassing nature of what is commonly perceived to be the superior belief system. [...] The martyr changes that equation."

> are, supposedly at least, to be clearly delimited from one another. The hybrid figure of the martyr calls into question the demarcations between pre-modern and modern as well as those between religion and the secular. (Dehghani/ Horsch 2014a, 7)

It is precisely the culmination of these functions of the martyr which exalts the concept of martyrdom over other forms of heroism, whilst conversely opens up the concept to theologically inspired and philosophically infused adulation. In the end, it is no longer the identifiable martyr that is at the centre of the respective discussions, but merely the cult around the concept of martyrdom itself that is moved into the centre of society and justified with reference to specific traditions. In its present manifestation, this phenomenon can be observed in parts of the contemporary Muslim world (Gölz, this issue; Beese, this issue; Dick, this issue). Against this background, when talking about the nexus between martyrdom and the struggle for power, we refer to two distinguishable forms of contention. First, it is the claim to power by followers of a martyr. Second, it is the claim to legitimacy in using the concept.

The Concept of Martyrdom in Islam

The Shi'a Muslim intellectual and Iranian revolutionary Ayatullah Murtaza Mutahhari (1929–1979) presented a somewhat romanticised version of the concept of *shahadat* and the word *shahid* in Muslim societies. In a lecture in Teheran in 1973, he ascribed it "a sense of grandeur and sanctity" (Mutahhari 1986b, 125). Mutahhari stated that there would be "no doubt that in Islamic terminology *'shahid'* is a sacred word and that for those who use an Islamic vocabulary, it conveys a sense higher than that of any other word" (127). Thus, as early as 1973, long before the contemporary manifestations of martyrdom discourses in suicide attacks, he stressed the semantic power of the word *shahid* and referred to some kind of intrinsic understanding of its divine origins. His glorification of the martyr does not end there, though. He explained:

> The *shahid* can be compared to a candle whose job it is to burn out and get extinguished in order to shed light for the benefit of others. The *shuhada* ['martyrs', OG] are the candles of society. They burn themselves out and illuminate society. If they do not shed their light, no organization can shine. [...] The *shuhada* are the illuminators of society. Had they not shed their light on the darkness of despotism and suppression, humanity would have made no progress. (Mutahhari 1986b, 127)

Here, in this theological-philosophical evaluation on martyrdom in Shi'a Islam, the ambivalent mixture of power and weakness becomes evident once again. It is not only the self-sacrifice of a person as a weapon of last resort which takes centre stage in his statement; rather, it is insinuated that martyrdom represents the *only* weapon against the darkness of despotism and suppression. Thus, the concept of martyrdom at the centre of Shi'a Islamic doctrine matches the theoretical reflections in this paper. It is the threat posed by unbelief and

decadence that dominantly infuses modern discourses on *jihad*—in Shi'a *and* in Sunni belief—, so that the term *jihad* is deliberately interpreted as a defensive concept.**[9]** Admittedly, very few devout Muslims would agree that the Muslim world *per se* is in a weak position in the face of the surrounding world of disbelief. However, in presenting *jihad* as a defensive concept, the entwined discourses on martyrdom can be activated and legitimised in case of need by referring to a continuous threat for the community of believers. Thus, while adhering to the asymmetric core of the concept, for a definition of martyrdom in the contemporary Islamic context, we can again turn to Mutahhari, who stated: *"Shahadat* is the death of a person who, in spite of being fully conscious of the risks involved, willingly faces them for the sake of a sacred cause, or, as the Qur'an says, *fi sabil Allah* (in the way of God). *Shahadat* has two basic elements: (a) the life is sacrificed for a cause; and (b) the sacrifice is made consciously." (Mutahhari 1986b, 128) This quote helps to clarify the phenomena addressed in this paper in a twofold manner. Firstly, it shows how the concept of martyrdom itself has been a matter of contention. Mutahhari distinctively 'Islamised' martyrdom. In his speech, he went on to draw a comparison to the Christian use and understanding of martyrdom, which he deemed to not possess the same power as the 'true' Islamic version of it (138f.). Hence, his Islamisation (and by the same token 'Shi'itisation') of the concept reflects the struggle over its legitimate use. Contrarily, he presents the two defining requirements transported by all notions of the concept, i.e. the death for a cause and the willingness of this sacrifice. From these two factors, the concept draws its apparent strength. Accordingly, concerning its distinct power, Ayatullah Mutahhari is unequivocally accurate when he states on martyrdom: "The distinctive characteristic of a *shahid* is that he charges the atmosphere with courage and zeal. He revives the spirit of valor of fortitude, courage and zeal, especially divine zeal, among the people who have lost it. That is why Islam is always in need of *shuhada*. The revival of courage and zeal is essential for the revival of a nation." (136) Basically, this is the theological representation of the phenomena of boundary work described above as sociological processes.

Such philosophical preoccupations with martyrdom in Shi'a Islam ultimately show that the power of the concept is dependent on a certain *context*. However, it seems that the idea has prevailed (apparently in Western *and* Muslim societies) that the figure of the martyr belongs to the *essence* of Islam—although Laleh Khalili in her *Heroes and Martyrs of Palestine* convincingly argues:

> The telling of heroic narratives of martyrdom is not solely the forte of radical nationalist movements. Blood-sacrifice for the nation is embedded in the patriotic rhetoric of all nations, including European and American countries where historical references to founding moments and contemporary discourses of patriotism include abundant allusions to selfless sacrifice. Though martyrdom is allowed only through venues authorized by the state—such as the military in wars waged by the state—the centrality of the sacrificial discourse is striking. (Khalili 2007, 23)

[9] See on this topic another lecture by Mutahhari (1986a, 103) on *Jihad in the Qur'an* where he tries to unfold the defensive notion of the term *jihad*. In a lecture titled *Defense – the Essence of Jihad* he concludes: *"Jihad* is only for the sake of defense, and in truth it is resistance against some kind of transgression, and certainly it can be lawful. […] [H]owever, it is clear that in the basic definition of *jihad* there is no difference of opinion and all the scholars agreed that *jihad* and war must be for the sake of defense."

However, the above-mentioned process of Islamisation of the concept indicates that in the past decades in some societies it has been possible to harness the strength of the concept for one's own interests in distinctly Islamic terms. I maintain that this perception of martyrdom as an inherently Islamic element is itself an effect of the struggle for power over the concept or to put it more clearly, the perception of martyrdom as a core concept of Islam is the effect of the success of radical Islamist groups and the discourses forged and fostered by them. The clearest sign for this success is found in the fact that people actually chose to die in suicide missions which they themselves regard as martyrdom operations. Herein, we can identify different types of martyrs in modern times who, as Joseph Croitoru argues, differ in their mode of dying: First, the martyr who has been killed for reasons of faith (in fact often due to collateral or accidental causes). Second, the one who kills others in battle and is killed himself, "the battlefield martyr".[10] Third, the one who kills others by killing himself—the suicide bomber.[11] Since 9/11, the Islamist suicide bomber draws the bulk of the attention not only to their stories, but their belief system as a whole, since "whatever the martyr believes in, it is intensely believed by him or her, and thus worthy of attention" (Gambetta 2005, 266).

Introducing to the issue

Recently there has been much discussion on the nature of martyrdom in modern Muslim societies with distinct focus on the use of *the martyr as a weapon* (Croitoru 2006) due to numerous religiously motivated suicide-attacks in conflicts all over the world where the recourse on martyrdom discourses has been made prominent. This process is hardly surprising when one considers the power of the asymmetric concept presented here. Accordingly, in his statement on terrorist tactics, Leo Braudy states that they "in general try to imply that all the high technology in the world cannot stop a determined enemy, even one armed only with primitive weapons, especially if it is psychologically bent on self-sacrifice" (Braudy 2005, 544). This said, it is no wonder that terrorist groups all over the world make use of the concept of martyrdom, presenting it as both weapon of first choice and last resort. Additionally, a vast amount of literature surrounds the topic of martyrdom, suicide missions and radicalism in modern Muslim societies.[12] Thus, the concept of martyrdom has been put into context in these recent studies, digging into the history of the concept in modern times and by the same token, into its prefiguration in early Islam and Islamic doctrines.

Of course, we have to look at the broader Islamic dimensions of martyrdom in the Middle East. However, these dimensions are more or less the "carriers" for distinct discourses which only function in relation to the status quo of the respective society alluding to the mobilising effects of martyrdom, as became evident during the workshop on *Martyrdom in the Modern Islamic World* at the University of Freiburg in December 2017 on which this issue is built. Accordingly, I argue that the theoretical significance of the concept of martyrdom asks for a consequent historicisation of its manifestation in modern Middle Eastern societies. Additionally, scrutinising the topic from the

[10] In regards to radicalisation and the Syrian war, Khosrokhavar (2017, 111) states about the lure of the concept for young French Muslims: "They leave for Syria to redeem themselves in the eyes of Allah and to build a new identity, in which becoming heroes, courting death, and enduring the ordeals of the battlefield confer nobility on their undertaking. Their new sincerity finds a horizon of hope: death on the battlefield is transformed into martyrdom, and the departure from this world opens prospects for happiness in the next." In effect, several thousand jihadists fought "the Syrian army with the ultimate aim of martyrdom" (141).

[11] Croitoru 2008, 59: Es lassen sich „drei verschiedene Märtyrertypen [identifizieren], die sich aufgrund ihrer Sterbensart und ihres Aktionsmodus voneinander unterscheiden. Erstens der Gemarterte und Getötete, der Blutzeuge, der in manchen Fällen aus Glaubensgründen auch selbst den Freitod wählt. Zweitens derjenige, der im Kampf andere tötet und dabei selbst getötet wird, sprich der Krieger- oder Schlachtfeldmärtyrer. Und drittens der, der andere tötet, indem er sich selbst tötet - der Selbstmordattentäter".

[12] Cf. Afsaruddin 2013; Aran/Green 2018; Asad 2007; Bloom 2005; Braudy 2005; Cook 2007; Cook/Allison 2007; Cormack 2002; Davis 2003; Dehghani/Horsch 2014b; Günther/Lawson 2016; Hafez 2007; Hatina 2014; Hatina/Litvak 2016; Juergensmeyer 2000; Khalili 2007; Khosrokhavar 2005, 2017; Khoury 2013; Kitts 2018; Kraß 2008; Kurzman 2011; Pannewick 2012; Pape 2006.

viewpoint of different disciplines might lead to a theoretical understanding of the subject that is not content with a perception that merely refers to some 'essence of Islam.'[13] What kind of essence would that be? Is martyrdom a Shi'a prerogative due to its powerful grounding myth? The debate already begins here and hints at the fact that martyrdom as a concept knows no possessor but is always contested and under contention. To provide an example, Simon Fuchs' article shows, from an Islamic studies perspective, that Sunni groups in Pakistan adapted Shi'ite symbolism on martyrdom, which leads Fuchs to argue that the "prevalent focus on sectarianism in conceptualizing contemporary Sunni-Shi'i relations has blinded us to important processes of intellectual appropriation and mimicry between the two communities" (Fuchs, this issue, 52). On the other hand, in my own contribution to this issue titled *Martyrdom and Masculinity in Warring Iran,* I shall show from a gender perspective how the martyr not only became the centre of contention in the discourses in warring Iran regarding ideal behaviour of men and women, but rather how the perception surrounding the prefiguration of the Shi'a belief system, the martyrdom of al-Husayn b. Ali, itself became the pivotal point of the struggle for power in the revolutionary period (Gölz, this issue). In fact, these discussions are responsible for the perception of Shi'ite dominance in this matter, at least for the 80s and 90s of the twentieth century.

The studies of Alp Yenen, Yorck Beese and Alexandra Dick show how differently martyrdom has been conceptualised before and after these decades and how its various formulations are context-bound to specific settings. In the case of Turkey in the 1970s, terms of Islamic origin which refer to martyrdom have been used in the struggle of the state against the political far-left and far-right. In his article *Legitimate Means of Dying,* Yenen offers an evaluation of the "contentious politics of martyrdom" from the perspective of a historical-comparative sociology "of state conventions and non-state contentions in defining political cultures of martyrdom during the Turkish civil war of [the] 1970s" (Yenen, this issue, 14). Furthermore, Yenen indicates a logic within the discourses of martyrdom that has fateful effects for the competing communities within society which he calls, following Tarrow, "cycles of contention" (21). Hence, due to the logics of the clear distinction between good and evil, martyrdom has some polarising ramifications which almost inevitably lead to a vicious cycle surrounding the competing social groups that is difficult to break—a logic which I have called the "radicalisation of boundary work" (Gölz, this issue, 48f.).

Although until today the Shi'a branch claims to, at least theologically-philosophically hold the power over the concept of martyrdom in Islam, it is not only the Pakistani context which shows that this perception has become contentious during the last two decades. Since the attacks on the World Trade Center, martyrdom discourses in the Islamic context have predominantly been articulated by Sunni groups—most prominently by the Islamic State. The articles by Yorck Beese and Alexandra Dick focus on the Islamic State's media strategies and the role that martyrdom discourses play in it. In his contribution *The Structure and Visual Rhetoric of the Martyrdom Video,* Beese offers an analysis of the visual rhetoric to be found in the genre of

[13] For a discussion on the literature about this topic see the review by Jonatan Marx (this issue).

martyrdom videos from the perspective of media studies. His starting point builds on the fact that footage "of martyrdom attacks has cropped up in various types of video since [its origins in the 1980s], but especially in jihadist propaganda" (Beese, this issue, 70). Accordingly, the struggle for power over the concept is carried out on new battlegrounds, and martyrdom as a means of the claim for power finds new ways of propagation. By the same token, the concept comes in the guise of distinctively *old* and therefore supposedly authentic and essentialistic ways, as is shown by Alexandra Dick in her article *The Sounds of the Shuhadā': Chants and Chanting in IS Martyrdom Videos* where the various functions of a specific type of musical accompaniment in the context of jihadi martyrdom are addressed.

The many viewpoints that inform the contributions in this issue on martyrdom in the modern Middle East illustrate that there is no fixed and immutable concept of martyrdom in the Islamic context. Rather, ideas on martyrdom can always be rearranged or formulated innovatively. They may refer to personal or collective experiences made by the respective social groups (as is predominant in secularist notions of martyrdom) or to an established prefiguration taken from the group's belief system by making use of its founding myth, as has been done repeatedly, but also dynamically, in the Shi'ite context. However, the concept of martyrdom has not only proven to be a powerful, if not always successful, tool in the struggle for political power and ideological hegemony, it has also been contested continuously. Throughout history, there have been arguments about the essence of the concept reflecting the dynamics of power that shaped the specific place and time.

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Legitimate Means of Dying:
Contentious Politics of Martyrdom in the Turkish Civil War (1968–1982)

Alp Yenen

Abstract

Until today, commitment to the 'martyrs' of the Turkish civil war of the 1970s continues to be a crucial part of Turkey's political culture. This paper will offer a historical-comparative sociology of state conventions and non-state contentions in defining political cultures of martyrdom during the Turkish civil war of 1970s. First, by outlining the historical semantics and political sociology of the state's culture of martyrdom, I will argue that the state came to claim a monopoly over legitimate means of dying in the name of the state-nation-religion triad and explain how official martyrdom manifested itself during the civil war. In the second part, this paper will discuss cultures of martyrdom in processes of social mobilisation, collective identification and moral legitimisation in contentious politics, and how the radical-revolutionary left and the ultra-nationalist far-right in Turkey constructed their own cultures of martyrdom. Non-state claims to political martyrdom from the left and right emulated the state's martyrdom discourse without rejecting its legitimacy. By (de-)legitimising lethal political violence, cultures of martyrdom establish lasting solidarities across people, times and spaces—and in seclusion against 'others'.

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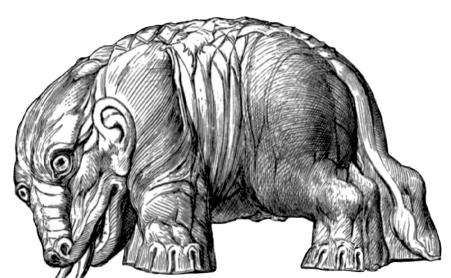
Introduction

The student protests of 1968 in Turkey turned into a civil strife between the radical-revolutionary left and the ultra-nationalist far-right that was interrupted by the military intervention of 1971. Yet, clashes between the left and right escalated into a low-intensity civil war after 1976 that ended in the military intervention of 1980 and was formally resolved in the constitutional referendum of 1982. Although the Turkish 'civil war' did not constitute 'warfare' in the militarised sense of the word, according to estimates at least 5,000 people (Hale 1994, 224; Sayari 2010, 201) were killed in the events and episodes of political violence. The violence came in the form of urban mob violence, clandestine political violence, rural paramilitary violence, and extra-legal state violence (Apaydın 1978; Bozarslan 2004; Ergil 1980; Gourisse 2014). For the entire political spectrum of Turkey, these years have been especially crucial in the formation and consolidation of new politicised identities. In fact, most of Turkey's current leaders politically came of age in these turbulent years. Therefore, there is still a vivid legacy of the political violence of Turkey's 'long 1970s'.

Commemoration of 'martyrs' of the Turkish civil war of the 1970s is a shared but divided cultural practice across Turkey's polarised political spectrum (Değirmencioğlu 2014). For example, in the case of two radical movements that were both founded in the late 1970s and are still involved in political violence, namely the PKK (Worker's Party of Kurdistan) and the DHKP-C (Revolutionary People's Liberation Party-Front), it remains a public taboo to refer to their casualties as "martyrs". However, both militant organisations, although Marxist and secular in their discourse, cultivate crypto-Islamic symbols and scripts of martyrdom in their vernacular communication. Meanwhile, the secular state establishment determines that soldiers, police officers and gendarmes who were killed by "the enemies of the state" are only to be referred to as "martyrs" (Kaya 2015). Even today, iconographies and hagiographies of "martyrs" of the radical-revolutionary left of the 1970s, such as Deniz Gezmiş whose pictures decorated walls during the Gezi Park protests of 2013, are part and parcel of Turkey's mainstream leftism, yet such posters and books can still be considered as criminal evidence by state surveillance.[1] Then again, one of the major violent groups of the era, the ultra-nationalists, popularly called *Ülkücüler* (Idealists) or "Grey Wolves" *(Bozkurtlar),*[2] have a public monument dedicated to their "martyrs" of the Turkish civil war.[3] Since 1970s, martyrdom is a contentious matter in Turkish politics.

"Is all of politics contentious?" Not according to scholars of contentious politics (McAdam et al. 2001, 5), because conventional politics "consists of ceremony, consultation, bureaucratic process, collection of information, registration of events, and the like" and "usually involve little if any collective contention". In contrast, contentious politics is "episodic rather than continuous, occurs in public, involves interaction between makers of claims and others, is recognized by those others as bearing on their interests, and brings in government as mediator, target, or claimant". When approaching martyrdom from the perspective of contentious politics, I refer to this transdisciplinary

[1] "Deniz Gezmiş Posteri Taşımak da Suç Sayılacak!" T24, 25.11.2014. https://t24.com.tr/haber/deniz-gezmis-posteri-tasimak-da-suc-sayilacak,278226 (08/04/2019).

[2] Although the term *Ülkücü* (Idealist) is more commonly used in Turkish, in English "Grey Wolf" is the more established description of Turkish ultra-nationalists, hence I use both interchangeably despite their slightly different connotations in Turkish.

[4] "Bahçeli Ülkücü Şehitler Anıtı'nı Açtı." Hürriyet, 27.05.2011. http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/bahceli-ulkucu-sehitler-anitini-acti-17892329 (08/04/2019).

research agenda (Tilly/Tarrow 2007).

There is a duality in cultures of martyrdom because martyrs can represent both coercion and subversion of sovereignty. Shi'ite cultures of martyrdom have been more influential in effecting political activism in the modern Muslim world by providing symbols and scripts of subversion, as discussed by Olmo Gölz (this issue) and Simon Fuchs (this issue). Nevertheless, as this paper will illustrate, Turkey offers a distinct trajectory of how state sovereignty defines the culture of martyrdom. Yet, coercion and subversion complement and condition each other (Tilly 2006). Therefore, this paper will offer a historical-comparative sociology of state conventions and non-state contentions in defining political cultures of martyrdom during the Turkish civil war of the 1970s.

In the first part, this paper will discuss how far martyrdom in the name of the country, the nation and the faith is a matter of *raison d'état* in Turkey. On the one hand, historical semantics of dying and surviving from the Ottoman Empire to the Kemalist Republic will demonstrate how the Turkish state developed what I call a 'monopoly over legitimate means of dying'. On the other hand, I will highlight the commonly overlooked crypto-Islamic foundations of Turkey's state nationalism in order to illustrate the exceptional trajectory of the state's culture of martyrdom and how it manifested itself during the civil war in the 1970s. The second part will discuss cultures of martyrdom in processes of social mobilisation, collective identification and moral legitimisation in contentious politics, and how the radical-revolutionary left and the ultra-nationalist far-right in Turkey developed their own cultures of martyrdom that still bore the mark of the state monopoly. The radical-revolutionary left developed a concept of "revolutionary martyrdom", which drew back on Kemalist-revolutionary notions of patriotic self-sacrifice and cultivated a para-religious cult of martyrdom inspired by Sunni and Alevite symbols and scripts. Conversely, the ultra-nationalist far-right directly imitated and emulated the state's culture of martyrdom and considered its fallen members as warrior and guardian heroes killed for the sacred cause *(dava*, from Arabic-Islamic *da'wa* for "mission")*, if not treacherously murdered in peace. In the conclusion, I will briefly discuss the societal consequences of the persistence of cultures of martyrdom in Turkey today.

Raison d'état of Martyrdom

Following Weber's fundamental formula (1922, 29) that states claim "monopoly over legitimate means of violence", neo-Weberian historical sociologists underlined the role of violence and war in the making of modern statehood. In this 'bellicose' sense, states are matters of life and death. Following Foucauldian logic, dying and surviving is a matter of *raison d'état* (Foucault 2009), as modern states ended up establishing many other monopolies for the purpose of monitoring and disciplining the lives of their citizens. Modern states define the quality and quantity of their citizens through birth and death certificates as well as population records, statistics and censuses (Kertzer/Arel 2001). States traditionally certify the legitimacy of the death of a distinguished subject by granting official recognition, calling for public mourning, conveying

burial ceremonies and institutionalising commemoration in order to create shared beliefs on behalf of a 'state of existence'.

Ultimately, states define and distribute the status of martyrdom. Although patriotic reinvention of martyrdom dates back to at least Medieval kingdoms (Kantorowicz 1951), its bureaucratisation, routinisation and monopolisation by state apparatus is a modern phenomenon. It is the result of the recent "governmentalisation" of statehood (Foucault 2009, 109). This is what I shall call 'state's monopoly over legitimate means of dying'. Certifying formal martyrdom is a distribution of social good into a market of beliefs, which in return, legitimises the symbolic currency of state's sovereignty. Beyond means of social disciplining, which certainly accompany cultures of martyrdom, the state's call to its population to collectively participate in cultural practices of official martyrdom manifests the means of "governmentality" (Foucault 2009). Acknowledging Foucauldian bio-powers yet remaining in the neo-Weberian political sociology, 'statisation' of martyrdom (in the sense of *Verstaatlichung)* is understood within a reciprocal process with the 'nationalisation' of martyrdom by society (in the sense of *Vergesellschaftung);* where official martyrdom offers both "revelation" and "redemption" in state-society relations (Migdal 2001, 18f., 25).

Semantics of Dying and Surviving

From the Ottoman Empire to the Kemalist Republic, the state developed a monopoly over Islamic concepts of martyrdom. The historical semantics (Koselleck 2004) of dying and surviving in the political language of modern Turkey illustrates a trajectory of the state's discursive agency and cultural hegemony in defining martyrdom in ever statist and nationalist terms. In Ottoman times, the Turkish word for martyr, *şehit* (derived from the Arabic-Islamic concept of *shahīd)*, progressively gained an extra-religious and statist meaning. It became the honorific title for a post-mortem heroisation of fallen soldiers and assassinated statesmen. Although the religious connotation of şehit was certainly ubiquitous in the ears of Ottomans, a semantic shift towards a more secular meaning of the word has manifested itself since the nineteenth century. The word şehit was applied to war casualties 'killed in action' in the military sense, replacing other descriptive Ottoman words such as *maḳtūl* for "killed" and *ġāʿyib* for the war-demographic "losses". Military losses increasingly came to define nationalist sacrifice at the turn of the century. In his poem *Soldier's prayer*, Ziya Gökalp (1876–1924), chief ideologue of Turkish nationalism and Professor of Sociology at the Imperial University of Istanbul, wrote: "How many strong young men have become martyrs for the religion and the homeland on the battlefields" (quoted in Hess 2007, 258).

Martyrdom was semantically reformulated by the Ottoman and Republican state in more secular, national and military terms by designating the fallen soldiers and statesmen beyond ostensible religious motivations. Besides the other-wordly understanding of "martyrdom" (Arabic *shahāda* or Turkish *şehadet),* the other Turkified variation *şehitlik* developed a distinct this-worldly and spatial meaning in the sense of a "place of the martyrs". Ottoman war

memorials and cemeteries dedicated to the commemoration of fallen soldiers have been commonly named *şehitlik*. This idea of a "place of martyrs" connected notions of martyrdom with territorial nationalism, most prominently expressed in the Turkish national anthem (1921):

> See not the soil you tread on as mere earth,
> But think about the thousands beneath you that lie without even shrouds.
> You're the noble son of a martyr, take shame, hurt not your ancestor!
> Unhand not, even when you're promised worlds, this paradise of a homeland.
> What man would not die for this heavenly piece of land?
> Martyrs would gush out if you just squeeze the soil! Martyrs![4]

Achille Mbembe (2003, 35) notes that "the logic of martyrdom" and "the logic of survival" are intrinsically linked to one another, whilst the term *şehit* usually comes with its conceptual pair *gazi*. Like *şehit, gazi* is also an Arabic term *(ghāzī)* originating from Islamic jurisprudence on war, referring to a warrior who has participated in military expeditions *(ghazw)*. Founders of the Ottoman state carried the title of *gazi* in their names and it later became an Ottoman honorific title for the official heroisation of triumphant war commanders. The underlying Muslim nationalism during the Turkish War of Independence (Zürcher 1999) entitled all Anatolian Muslims who fought in the "national struggle" *(millî mücadele)* the *gazi* status. This collective heroisation of the population functioned to erase the devastating trauma of imperial collapse and violent nation-state formation by imagining a new heroic community of warriors and survivors in an epic 'land of martyrs'. Soon in daily practice, *gazi* became the modern Turkish term for "war veterans" that fully replaced the more descriptive Ottoman terms of *muhārib* for "battle-tried" soldiers and *ma'lūl* for soldiers "invalided" in action. In modern Turkish semantics, therefore, *şehit* refers to "those who die in war" and *gazi* to "those who survive wars".

If we take the popular saying in Turkey, "every Turk is born a soldier" *(her Türk asker doğar)*, at face value, every Turk would ideally grow up to be a *gazi* and might die as a şehit—unless they choose to live and die as traitors. The state's culture of martyrdom is enhanced by Turkey's distinct culture of militarist nationalism (Altınay 2004). Semantics of dying and surviving contribute to Turkey's "banal nationalism" (Billig 1995) where symbols and scripts of sacrifice in the name of the state are inconspicuously repeated and reproduced in everyday life (Kaya/Copeaux 2013).

State of Exception

Although subscribing to 'Turkish exceptionalism' is methodologically problematic, Turkey does offer a distinct trajectory of state formation due its unique transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic. Contrary to a radical rupture, however, imperial continuities explain Turkey's political

[4] Quoted from the English translation in http://umich.edu/~turkish/links/manuscripts/anthem/english.htm (08/04/2019).

sociology as a nation-state. Sociologist Şerif Mardin (2005, 147) argued for a "Turkish Islamic exceptionalism" based on a "very special dialectic" which cultivated a shared belief "that the state was a life-form through which channels all authorities, whether secular or religious, operated to achievement and success". The Ottoman Empire's modernisation reforms in the nineteenth century resulted in the popularisation of state-nationalism and the politicisation of Islam (Karpat 2001). Under the secular-progressive elites, from Young Turks to Kemalists, who marked the cataclysmic transition from empire to republic, Muslim nationalism and state cult remained dominant features of identity politics (Zürcher 2010). The Kemalist version of *laïcité (laiklik)* was not anti-religious either (Toprak 1981), but rather subordinated the "religious field" (Bourdieu 1991) under the state's hegemony, while crypto-Sunni identity politics targeted non-Muslim citizens with discriminatory measures (Çağaptay 2006). With the transition to a democracy after 1950, Turkish society developed in diverse and divergent ways according to global currents and increasingly autonomous from state control and direction. Nevertheless, state-centric, militaristic, crypto-Muslim and Kemalist-modernist notions of nationalism continued to be dominant, albeit diversified and redefined (Keyman 2011).

The state monopoly over legitimate means of martyrdom in Turkey comes with the formal limitation that only representatives of the state are entitled to martyrdom. Hence, theoretically only statesmen, diplomats, bureaucrats, civil servants, military officers, soldiers, policemen, gendarmerie and firemen can become martyrs in Turkey in the case of an unnatural death (excluding suicide, due to crypto-religious reasons). The use of the official title of "martyr" for non-military state officials became more popular after the first assassination of Turkish diplomats abroad by Armenian avengers after 1973, in which "victims were immediately considered martyrs" (Göçek 2015, 429). They were commonly referred to as "our martyred diplomats" *(şehit diplomatlarımız)* in the contemporary press.[5] Following the Islamic conception that also awards martyrdom in case of accidental deaths while travelling, for example, Turkish Air Force pilots killed in flight accidents outside battles were commonly called "air martyrs" *(hava şehitleri)*.

Independent from the political violence of the civil war of the 1970s, the state discourse of martyrdom was boosted during the military intervention against Cyprus in 1974. The military operation had resulted in ca. 500 casualties for the Turkish Armed Forces, who were immediately called "Cyprus martyrs" *(Kıbrıs şehitleri)*. Casualties of Turkish-Cypriot partisans (commonly called *mücahit* from the Arabic *mujahid)* were also referred as *Kıbrıs şehitleri,* indicating that irredentist ethic-religious nationalism could also define parameters of martyrdom outside the state's civic categories of belonging.[6] Hence, sacrifice was framed both in nationalist and moral notions of redemption. "Hail the homeland", said one father of a "martyred colonel" in an interview, for instance, and added that his son was "martyred for the sake of humanity".[7] The popularisation of martyrdom was clear as a mother whose three sons were all "martyred" in Cyprus was elected "mother of the year" in 1976.[8] The banal reality of state martyrdom's Islamic background became clear as it was reported from Cairo that "in all Muslim capitals" the

[5] "Bir Şehit Diplomat Daha." Cumhuri-yet, 18.12.1980.

[6] "Yalnız Lefkoşa'da 80 Mücahit Şehit Oldu." Milliyet, 29.07.1974.

Qu'ran was recited in the honour of the "Cyprus martyrs".[9]

The Turkish state not only certifies individual sacrifice and heroism in the name of the nation and state, but also distributes monetary allowances to veterans and relatives of "martyrs". It was during the political violence of student groups in the early 1970s that relatives of "martyred" gendarmerie *(Jandarma)* personnel were allowed to receive a dependent's pension similar to relatives of military personnel.[10] "It is the police that is providing the most martyrs" said Minister of Interior Hasan Fehmi Güneş (*1934).[11] Indeed, police forces were on the front line of urban guerrilla warfare. Yet, it was still bureaucratically very complicated for relatives of a "martyred" police officer to apply for a dependant's pension (Dikici 2017, 100).

The secularised, nationalised and militarised state discourse of martyrdom became increasingly banal-religious in government language in the 1970s. One of the most prominent politicians of time, the Justice Party's Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel (1924–2015), proudly declared: "Our struggle against communism will continue. If necessary, we will reach the rank of martyrdom in this struggle."[12] After an act of political violence in which police officers were killed in the city of Gaziantep, the Minister of Interior, Oğuzhan Asiltürk (*1935), of the National Salvation Party *(Millî Selamet Partisi)* said in a public speech: "As martyrs, they [the police] have reached the highest level that even prophets long for. With gratitude we commemorate those martyrs who defended the republic, the homeland and free democracy."[13] After an incident in which Palestinian guerrillas stormed the Embassy of Egypt in Ankara where one police officer was killed, a police director made a press release where he said that the killed policeman "reached the honorary status of martyrdom […] through the relentless shots of international [Palestinian] terrorists when in duty he opened his benevolent arms to the well-being of humanity regardless of religion, race and creed".[14]

Contentious Politics of Martyrdom

Although dying is, in the words of Hannah Arendt (1969, 67), "perhaps the most antipolitical experience there is", she did not fail to indicate that death can empower the political struggles of survivors. It remains, however, understudied how political violence in contentious politics (Della Porta 2006; Tilly 2003) is translated into a culture of martyrdom and vice versa. A collective action that demands voluntary human self-sacrifice is not necessarily inviting from a rational point of view (Olson 1965). "For many, martyrdom is its own reward", however as Jasper (1997, 38, 83) noted, because culture "provides the context and criteria for recognizing and judging rationality, which cannot exist in a pure form outside of social contexts". Yet, the culture of martyrdom is also mostly insufficient for voluntary self-sacrifice (Kurzman 2011). Therefore, the martyrdom of victims of targeted or collateral political violence needs attention in the study of contentious politics. Culture of martyrdom provide political opportunity, social cohesion and moral legitimacy in contentious politics.

First, cultures of martyrdom create opportunities for political mobilisation in

[7] "Şehit Albayın Babası: 'Vatan Sağ Olsun…'." Milliyet, 23.07.1974.

[8] "Kıbrıs'ta 3 Şehit Anası 'Yılın Annesi' Seçildi." Milliyet, 12.05.1976.

[9] "Kıbrıs Şehitleri İçin Bütün İslam Başkentlerinde Hatim İndirildi." Milliyet, 24.04.1975.

[10] "Şehit Erin Ailesine Maaş Bağlanıyor." Milliyet, 01.10.1971.

[11] "Bu Savaşta En Çok Şehit Veren Polistir." Milliyet, 05.05.1979.

[12] "Şehit Olmanın Da Bir Zamanı Var." Milliyet, 05.08.1976.

[13] "Asiltürk: Şehitler Cumhuiyete Sahip Çıkmıştır'." Milliyet, 11.06.1976.

[14] "Gerillaların Öldürdüğü Polis Toprağa Verildi." Milliyet, 17.07.1979.

social movements. Funerals and commemorative rallies constitute the collective actions of claim making on behalf of the "martyred". Reciprocal perception and vindictive mobilisation of violence between the radical-revolutionary left and the ultra-nationalist far-right was, for instance, a major feature of the Turkish civil war (Uğur Çınar 2014). As Sayari (2010, 204) noted on the Turkish civil war of 1970s, "the number of the 'martyrs' on each side grew at an accelerated pace, thereby perpetuating the vicious cycles of violence". These "cycles of contention" (Tarrow 2011, 195–214) underline the interactive contention across groups, spaces and times. In the Turkish case, Sayari (2010, 203f.) describes the cycles as follows:

> The attacks and counterattacks between the revolutionary left and the ultranationalist right followed a predictable pattern of escalation: The murder of a leftist terrorist—who was immediately declared a "martyr" by his comrades and given a political funeral—triggered the revenge killing of a right-wing terrorist. This, in turn, prompted the rightists to respond in a similar fashion: A political funeral for their "martyr" was followed by the assassination of a leftist militant.

Second, cultures of martyrdom contribute to the construction and conservation of collective identities in social movements. The violent death of a political activist calls for extreme "emotional investment" from the community of survivors and forces them to engage in "active relationships" with each other—factors which, according to Alberto Melucci (1995, 45), are crucial for the construction process of collective identities in social movements. Through boundary work between the in-group and out-groups, cultures of martyrdom construct collective identities (Eisenstadt/Giesen 1995; Flesher Fominaya 2010). While ultra-nationalists idealised notions of martyrdom for the survival of the nation, they simultaneously excluded the leftists from belonging to the "nation" (Burris 2007). The culture of martyrdom contributed to a strong *"esprit de corps"* among the radical-revolutionary left (Özkaya Lassalle 2015). The religious connotations of culture of martyrdom utilised by the Turkish ultra-nationalists against the left created distinct spheres of belonging and identity (Uğur Çınar 2014, 4).

Third, cultures of martyrdom empower moral legitimisation of social movements. Martyrdom is contentious because it makes claims of morality of lethal victimhood in the face of illegitimate political violence. Shared beliefs can claim and disclaim the legitimacy of political violence against legal and extra-legal confines. Collins (2001, 33) is right to assume that "[t]here is a good Durkheimian reason for the connection between martyrdom and moral power" that causes strong emotional reactions. For believers, martyrdom is a zero-sum game. Only one (namely one's own) group can claim the right of martyrdom. Hence, the legitimisation of martyrdom is fiercely contested.

After the transition to a multi-party system in Turkey in 1950, the state's hegemony over society started to decrease (Ahmad 1977). The 'liberal' constitution that was established after the 1960 military coup enabled the development of an active civil society and a vibrant public sphere in which the state had to

share ground and compete with non-state actors. The rapid socio-economic processes of urbanisation and migration (Karpat 1976) affected the political scene by creating new forms of provincial conservatism, labour solidarity and poverty in urban spaces. With the eruption of political violence after 1968, the state started to lose its grip on the monopoly over violence. In the subsequent turbulent episodes, lethal victimisation and the political self-sacrifice of civilians found popular legitimisation without the symbolic certification of the state. Although political cultures of martyrdom were irreversibly democratised and popularised beyond the state's monopoly, they continued to resemble the state's familiar culture of martyrdom.

Claiming Revolutionary Martyrdom

The radical-revolutionary left's culture of martyrdom competed with the Kemalist state over 'revolutionary martyrdom'. As the Kemalist ideology was defined as subscribing to "revolutionism" *(inkılâpçılık)*, those who were killed in the name of the Kemalist Revolution have been popularly called "revolutionary martyrs" *(inkilâp şehidi* or *devrim şehidi)*. The first "revolutionary martyr" was Kubilay, a twenty-two year old teacher and army lieutenant who was beheaded by Islamist reactionaries in the Menemen incident in late December 1930. In the words of the Minister of Interior of the time, this crime was "committed against the martyrs, the Revolution and the fatherland" (quoted in Azak 2010, 32). Public and popular commemoration of Kubilay continued throughout Republican history and was strongly embedded in patriotic-revolutionary phraseology. The cult of Kubilay's revolutionary martyrdom was still a part of the public discourse during the 1970s, in which "Kubilay's revolutionary persona was recounted".[15]

An early episode of a leftist claim over martyrdom took place during a student protest against the government of the Democrat Party in the prelude to Turkey's first military intervention on 27 May 1960. On 28 April 1960 at the Beyazıt Square in Istanbul, a twenty year old student, Turan Emeksiz (1940–1960), was killed by police fire during a protest rally. After the coup, the military junta declared Emeksiz a "martyr of freedom" *(hürriyet şehidi)* and buried him at Atatürk's mausoleum in Ankara (Gülpınar 2012). The martyrdom of Emeksiz was celebrated by Turkey's left. Communist poet Nazım Hikmet (1902–1963) wrote from his Moscow exile:

> A dead is lying
> Textbook in one hand
> In the other his dream that was over before starting
> in the April of Nineteen Sixty
> In Istanbul, at Beyazıt Square.
>
> […]
>
> A dead will lie
> His blood will drain drop by drop on soil
> Until my armed nation comes with the folk songs of liberty
> To capture
> The Great Square.

[15] "Devrim Şehidi Kubilay Anıldı." Milliyet, 24.12.1978.

The global cycle of protest in the summer of 1968 also mobilised Turkey's student movements (Alper 2016). At the occasion of the arrival of the US Navy's 6th Fleet to Istanbul, sporadic acts of harassments against US military personnel developed into a major protest march in July 1968 where protesting students threw US sailors into the Marmara Sea; a symbolic act that in leftist imaginations resembled the victory of the Turkish troops in Izmir in 1922, when Greek soldiers (and the non-Muslim population of the city) had thrown themselves into the sea whilst trying to escape the onslaught. While the leftist students were still preparing demonstrations, the police executed a wave of arrests. The "first revolutionary martyr" of the Turkish left was Vedat Demircioğlu (1943–1968), a law student who was thrown out of a window during a police raid at a student dormitory. His funeral turned into a political rally and created a pattern for future political funerals. Since the government offices refused to give the body of Demircioğlu to his friends, the protesters filled a symbolic coffin with stones and carried it on their shoulders (Dündar 2016, 133). Posters and flyers with Demircioğlu's face were distributed. Banners during his funeral used tropes of patriotism and anti-imperialism, while his 'martyrdom' discourse referred to notions of immortality and afterlife: "He was a patriot / He was an anti-imperialist / He was against the 6th Fleet / He was killed / He will live on". The aftermath of the 6th Fleet demonstrations took place in 16 February 1969 when far-right groups under the leadership of the conservative National Union of Turkish Students *(Millî Türk Talebe Birliği)* organised a counter-rally after the Friday prayers against the "communists" with slogans such as "Muslim Turkey" (Ahmad 1977, 381). Two leftist students were stabbed to death by the violent mob in front of impassive police officers.

Yet only after the death of its two charismatic guerrilla leaders, Mahir Çayan (1946–1972) and Deniz Gezmiş (1947–1972), did the revolutionary left's culture of martyrdom turn into personality cult (Ulus 2011, 131). The "martyr no. 1" of Turkey's left is Mahir Çayan (Kozaklı 2007, 500). Çayan, a student at the Faculty of Political Science at the University of Ankara, was active in the circles around the Labour Party of Turkey *(Türkiye İşçi Partisi)*. In the ideological division among the left between those who favoured military coup by revolutionary officers and those who favoured a guerrilla revolution of the people (Lipovsky 1991, 103), Çayan sided with the latter group that formed the Revolutionary Youth Federation of Turkey (commonly referred as *Dev-Genç)*. Adopting the urban guerrilla method, Çayan was one of the founding members of the People's Liberation Party-Front *(Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Partisi-Cephesi)* in 1970. Arrested and imprisoned, Çayan managed to escape from prison. He and his friends kidnapped several NATO personnel on the run from the law. During the siege of the security forces, Çayan famously shouted: "We didn't come here to return, we came here to die!" *(biz buraya dönmeye değil, ölmeye geldik!)*. After Çayan and his friends were killed, they were instantly commemorated as "revolutionary martyrs". Before turning into a "revolutionary martyr", Mahir Çayan was himself cherishing a culture of revolutionary martyrdom. In a poem, he described the funeral procession of fallen comrades as follows:

> Vedat [Demircioğlu], Taylan [Özgür], Battal [Mehetoğlu],
> Mehmet [Cantekin],
> Necmi
> They died for the revolution
> Walking through the streets of the capital,
> The revolutionary martyr going ahead.[16]

Even more than Mahir Çayan, Deniz Gezmiş became the Che Guevara-like iconographic face of revolutionary martyrdom that still exists today. A law student at the University of Istanbul, Gezmiş was an active member of the Labour Party of Turkey. Tall and charismatic, he soon became the ringleader of revolutionary-leftist student actions. Like many fellow Marxists and socialists, Gezmiş remained a Kemalist. In November 1968, he organised the Mustafa Kemal Student March from Samsun to Ankara. After being arrested several times, he went to Syria to receive training in guerrilla warfare from the Palestinian *al-Fatah* (Dündar 2016, 167f.). Upon his return, he and his friends at the Middle East Technical University founded the People's Liberation Army of Turkey *(Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Ordusu).* Involved in acts of clandestine political violence, Gezmiş and his friends were captured after the 1971 military intervention. In his defence in court, Gezmiş framed the socialist struggle as Turkey's second war of independence: "In our fight for the independence of our country, we declare that we are determined to protect the dignity of those who are martyred in the War of Independence and the fate of our nation." (quoted in Behram 1998). Gezmiş received the death penalty and was executed by hanging. In a poem that commemorated the martyrdom of Gezmiş and his friends, poet Mahzuni Şerif (1939–2002) described the homeland in similar anti-capitalist patriotic terms as "watered with blood of martyrs / parcelled with palaces and warehouses" (Beki 2006, 13).

Beyond Kemalist legacies of revolutionary martyrdom, global frames of decolonisation of the Third World provided the Turkish leftist movements further sources of emulation. One source of revolutionary martyrdom was of Palestinian origin where the cult of martyrdom played a significant role (Khalili 2007). Many Turkish revolutionary leftists went to Jordan and Syria to train with Palestinian resistance organisations. One famous Turkish guerrilla, Cengiz Çandar (2000, 69), later recalled the cultural affinity of the Palestinian cult of self-sacrifice and martyrdom:

> For Turkey's growing leftist student movement, the Palestinian Fedayeen movement that emerged in the wake of the 1967 war had particular appeal as a model of resistance to neo-imperial domination. The word "fedai", meaning he who sacrifices himself, is the same in Turkish and Arabic; in both languages it is a term of deep respect. So not only were there cultural and religious bonds, but the "anti-imperialist struggle", far from being an abstraction as in Latin America or Vietnam, was in Turkey's own backyard.

Turkish guerrillas killed in action in Palestine were considered "martyred" even in mainstream (centre-left) newspapers.[17] The return of Turkish guerrillas fighting in Palestine changed the culture and repertoire of Turkish contentious

[16] This poem is titled *Bu Adam Kurşunların Değil Kahredici Okların Hedefi.*

politics (Olson 1973, 198f.).

Another source for the revolutionary left's para-religious cult of martyrdom came from Anatolian Alevism. Alevism belongs to the heterodox denominations of Shi'ism and hence subscribes to the "Kerbela paradigm" (Gölz 2018, this issue; Zırh 2014). Therefore, the culture of revolutionary martyrdom has generally been more profound among Alevites (Özkaya Lassalle 2015). In Alevi leftist circles, pictures of Deniz Gezmiş, İbrahim Kaypakkaya (1943–1973) and Che Guavara were collaged side by side with iconography of the twelve Shi'ite Imams, as well as saints of Anatolian Alevism such as Pir Sultan Abdal and Hacı Bektaş Veli as well as Kurdish-Alevite "martyr" Seyit Rıza (1863–1937) of the Dersim revolt (Küçük 2007, 911). "In their lyrics [...] and in their discussions", writes anthropologist Peter J. Bumke (1979, 544) of Alevi folk culture, "the martyrs of Karbala are identified with the left-wing victims of militant conflicts in the cities and the guerrillas hanged or shot after 1971, who defined themselves as Marxist-Leninist [...]." Although himself not an Alevite, leftist singer and author Zülfü Livaneli (*1946) explicitly used Alevi symbolism in honouring the "revolutionary martyrs" (Küçük 2007, 910).

Martyrdom was still understood as the honourable price of a patriotic struggle for the liberation of the people, but at the same time martyrdom at the hands of the "fascist" state was represented as the ultimate culmination of social injustice. The cult of self-sacrifice, martyrdom and heroism was most strongly emphasised in the *Devrimci Sol* (Revolutionary Left), founded in 1978 and later renamed as the Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front *(Devrimci Halk Kurtuluş Partisi-Cephesi*, DHKP-C) in 1994. Death was defined as a "a part of ideological existence", because it countered the "bourgeoisie"'s existential "cult of safety" (Sarıoğlu 2007, 1020). In the vernacular communication platforms of the journal *Revolutionary Path*, fallen comrades were commonly dubbed as "martyred", even in cases where they were not killed in action but died of accidents or disease (Özdemir Taşdan 2011, 151). In public posters, however, the radical-revolutionary left tried to avoid the term "martyr" due to its conservative-religious connotations. Instead political death was framed in moral-legal notions of being murdered and killed by the "fascists".[18] Despite its secular and progressive outlook, the culture of revolutionary martyrdom celebrated ideals of moral impeccability and the 'healthy' masculinity of their "revolutionary martyrs" (Lüküslü 2015, 100–113). While state security and far-right activists involved in political violence were labelled as "fascists", "cowards" and "rowdies", the radical-revolutionary left depicted their own martyrs and comrades in idealised cultural norms of young manhood *(yiğit)* (Özdemir Taşdan 2011, 146–153). Para-religious notions of immortality or a post-mortem afterlife of the revolutionary martyrs was repeated again and again in their publications.

While Kemalist-patriotic framing was still very dominant, especially during the first cycle of political violence from 1968 to 1972, revolutionary martyrdom was mostly a reformulation of the patriotic pathos of the Kemalist state in Third Worldist framing (Ulus 2011, 21–42). Moreover, the radical-revolutionary left's culture of martyrdom created its own para-religious cult of 'opiate' rituals and values under the veil of Marxism and secularism. While subscription to

[17] Yılmaz Çetiner, "El Feth'de Türk Gerillaları: Şehit Ali'nin Cesedi Bile Emperyalistlere Ölüm Saçmış." Milliyet, 04.05.1970.

[18] See a collection of these posters in http://www.devrimciyol.org/Devrimci%20Yol/afisler/afislerindex.htm (08/04/2019).

Kemalist nationalism declined throughout the second half of the 1970s, the radical-revolutionary left became more indulged in para-religious subcultures.

Martyrdom as a Patriotic Raison d'être

For Turkish ultra-nationalists, martyrdom is a birth right and even a desirable *raison d'être*. The far-right's political culture of martyrdom directly copied and co-opted the state's claim on the monopoly over legitimate means of martyrdom. Political martyrdom was conceptualised by the ultra-nationalist far-right as a civic-patriotic sacrifice defending the survival of the state and the honour of the nation. The far-right discourse expressed martyrdom in ultra-nationalist, hyper-religious and folkloric-mythological symbols and scripts.

Turkish ethnic and Sunni-Muslim nationalism play a dual role in the culture of martyrdom among the far-right. Turkish ultra-nationalism also gave rise to secular-racist variants that had opposed both the civic-nationalism of Kemalism and supra-nationalism of Islamism (Aytürk 2011). However, during of the Adana Congress of the Nationalist Movement Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*, MHP) in 1969, the Islamisation of Turkish ultra-nationalism was finalised and adopted as party policy (Aytürk 2014). Although the Islamist spectrum of the far-right was associated with the National Salvation Party, Turkish ultra-nationalism based on the idea of a "Turkish-Islamic synthesis" was mostly represented by the MHP. The MHP and its youth organisation *Ülkü Ocakları* (Idealist Hearts), their members popularly called *Ülkücüler* (Idealists) or Grey Wolves *(Bozkurtlar)*, constituted a strong and unified political youth movement of the era. It was possible for the MHP's martyrdom discourse to unite and utilise symbolic capital associated with notions of state, nation and religion without any restraints, because the far-right claimed indigenous ownership over the Turkish state-nation-faith triad. In an anthology of poems dedicated to the 22 "Idealist martyrs" *(Ülkücü şehitler)*, the editor's definition of martyrdom as an Islamic norm rather echoed the Turkish state's semantical re-invention of the concept (Öner 1975, 5f.):

> According to the Islamic belief; Those who die while fighting for holy concepts such as Allah, religion, state, nation, homeland and flag are *şehit* and those who survive are *gazi*. […] Our ideal must be to take this sacred homeland and the noble Turkish people who live in it from this point of departure and bring them to an advanced and higher stage. For this ideal *[ülkü]*, giving blood and life is a duty that will be carried out with pleasure by every Turkish ülkücü today as before.

The MHP and its youth organisation unified the far-right under a single political party and was able to represent it in the parliament—two things that was lacking among the factionalised leftist parties. With access to state bureaucracy, the MHP pursued a policy of infiltration of the state security services (Gourisse 2011), allowing them to influence the mentality of the state's coercive apparatus. In combination with the existing anti-communist attitude of the Justice Party, the strongest party of the era, the Turkish state apparatus

became ever more hostile towards leftist movements. In addition, Turkey's NATO membership also enabled US covert action in supporting anti-communist and 'neo-fascist' groups in Turkey as part of stay-behind contingency plans in case of a Soviet invasion or a communist take-over (Ganser 2005, 224–244). As part of this support, several "commando camps" for the Grey Wolf students were organised in the late 1960s to indoctrinate the youth in anti-communist ideologies and train them in paramilitary drills and hand-to-hand combat under the supervision of retired Turkish special forces officers (Landau 1974, 214–217; Soylu 1975; *Ülkücü Komando Kampları* 1997). These relations that were formed between the Turkish state's security-intelligence-military complex and the ultra-nationalist organisations constitute in many ways the origins of the Turkish 'deep state' (Gingeras 2014, 218f.). The popular ultra-nationalist slogan, "Oh my country, it does not matter whether I take your bread and food or a bullet on your behalf" *(vatanım, ha ekmeğini aşını ha uğruna bir kurşun yemişim)*, which was formulated by the MHP leader Alparslan Türkeş and used in Grey Wolf graffities, framed martyrdom as an honourable price in the service of the patriarchal state. The crisis of masculinity in face of political violence was also a common theme in the martyrdom cult of the far-right—very much similar to that of the revolutionary left (Günay-Erkol 2016). A martyr's poem (Beki 2006, 18), quoted:

> We've been broken, but never bent
> We've died like men, we've died bravely *[yiğitçesine]*
> We didn't betray our loved ones when walking to the gal-
> lons,
> We've upheld the flags of the crescent and lived by the
> code of the Grey Wolf

The first "Idealist martyr" *(Ülkücü şehit)* was Ruhi Kılıçkıran. He was shot down by revolutionary-leftist students during a fight that started because of the Ramadan fast-breaking at a student dormitory's cafeteria in January 1968. His gravestone commemorates him as a "mujahid student" *(mücahid öğrenci)*. The backside of his gravestone quotes the Qur'anic verse (3:169), "Do not call those, who were killed in the path of God, dead; on the contrary, they are still alive" and continues: "Oh, you martyr son of a martyr, do not demand a grave from me, the Prophet stands with open arms to meet you."

While Kılıçkıran's murder was certainly an emotional shock for the far-right students, the popularisation of a martyrdom cult was a cumulative process that took place partly as a reaction to the "leftist versions of solidarity and martyrdom" in the aftermath of 1971 military intervention. Only thereafter, for instance, did authors of the far-right start writing novels to honour their very own "martyrs" (Günay-Erkol 2013, 122f.). In a poem by Grey Wolf poet Ozan Arif (1949–2019) dedicated to the "Idealist martyrs" (Beki 2006, 17), he names Kılıçkıran and others who were killed in the first cycle of political violence (1968–1971) such as Süleyman Özmen (1948–1970), Yusuf İmamoğlu (1945–1970) and Ertuğrul Önkuzu (1948–1970): "These are the ones that fell at the beginning, but that was only the beginning / Not only with those we could escape the fire / Young and old, we gave martyrs of all generations

/ I cannot forget them […].” The increasing number of "Grey Wolf martyrs" created a shock for the ultra-nationalists who perceived the world in chaos, the nation disoriented and the state inept to react. Faruk Akkülah (1927–1991), a founding member of the MHP, in a radio speech during an election rally, called on both the state and the nation to appreciate the sacrifices of the Grey Wolves:

> Suffering a great ordeal, we come from the core of the nation and we want the totality of State services!…
> In every period of history, those states that could remain great and those nations that were not worn down by history were nations that gave martyrs for the sake of freedom and for the sake of the truth…
>
> […]
>
> My honourable Nation…
> Listen!
> Only yesterday, you could not avenge the 22 Grey Wolf martyrs who spread their blood in the prime of their lives in face of a handful of anarchists for the sake of religion and for the sake of the state!
> Shame on you!… (quoted in Soylu 1975, 78ff.)

After 1975, the MHP was even part of government coalitions which, on occasion, enabled governmental protection of ultra-nationalist violence. For instance, a parliamentary report, prepared by the MHP in 1977, publicly announced that there were 68 "martyred" MHP members by the attacks of "leftist assassination bands".[19] Back in opposition in 1979, the MHP's leader Alparslan Türkeş told the press: "The guilt of the increasing martyrdom of our party members in Istanbul rest on the shoulders of the governor and the police director."[20] On other occasions, he could easily blame the prime minister and his government for the "martyrdom" of his fellow MHP and Grey Wolves members:

> Thanks to the government of [Bülent] Ecevit, bandits patrol the cities, anarchy continues with the utmost rapidity, the security of life and property of our citizens is gone with the wind. Yesterday MHP supporter Mustafa Eryiğit became a martyr, today our party members Mehmet Güllü and Mehmet Çolak Fakıoğlu were martyred in Gaziantep […] by machine gun fire. In Ankara too, a house where young Grey Wolves live in the district Etlik was attacked by armed militants. [Two] members of our youth organisation […] became martyrs.[21]

After giving his condolences to relatives of "martyred" Grey Wolves in Adana and Nizip, Türkeş said to the press: "They are not only martyrs of the MHP, but of the whole Turkish nation."[22] This conservative formula, that in times of chaos and crisis—which was certainly the case in late 1970s—one should align on behalf of the commonwealth of the nation and obey the orders of state officials, was simultaneously propagated by the state apparatus. In 1980, the official journal of the Directorate of Religious Affairs, *Diyanet Gazetesi*,

[19] Örsan Öymen, "MHP'nin Barış Gönüllüleri." Milliyet, 18.11.1977.

[20] Milliyet, 21.11.1979.

announced in a cautionary article against the temptations of civil war (quoted in Kenar/Gürpınar 2013, 29):

> Our prophet prescribes us to obey the legitimate state forces who are prescribed the responsibility of governing society. He foresees that some Muslims will rebel against the state forces, and in those times he orders Muslims to keep their patience and silence, avoid strife and fighting, and prevent the spread of *fitna* [Islamic concept of "civil war"]... In times of *fitna*, every Muslim is obliged to side with the legitimate state forces and help the security forces. Every Muslim who dies in the service of the state forces achieves the status of martyrdom...

Conclusion

The 1980 military coup that brought an end to the civil war was a watershed event for Turkey that created its own traumas and tragedies—as well as numerous new "martyrs" from left and right—for generations to come (Bora/Can 1991; Karacan 2016). Commitment to the "martyrs" of the 1970s and their cause continues to be a matter of contention in Turkish politics today. Hagiographic albums (Küçükizsiz 1990; Partizan 2002) and countless internet pages continue to serve as a reminder of the "martyrs". The persistence of cultures of martyrdom go beyond a simple reasoning of collective identification, as it is the commitment to a notion of legitimisation and delegitimisation of lethal political violence that establishes solidarity and mobilises collective action across people, times and spaces—and against 'others'.

Looking back at the Turkish civil war of the 1970s, the state's monopoly over legitimate means of dying in the name of the state, nation and faith was not categorically denied by either the radical-revolutionary left or the ultra-nationalist far-right, but criticised and challenged in order to include one's own victims to the patriotic pantheon of martyrdom. Therefore, challenging the state's monopoly over martyrdom by non-state actors did not, for the most part, deny the Turkish Republic's normativity and reality. Contentious claims to political martyrdom by the radical-revolutionary left and the ultra-nationalist far-right tended to copy or co-opt the Turkish state's moral and symbolic capital in para-state terms without rejecting the Turkish state's right of existence, because state-nationalism, popular patriotism and crypto-Islamic norms were still the common denominators of Turkey's wider political spectrum, especially in the early 1970s. In the second cycle of political violence after 1976, however, the state increasingly lost its grip on its monopoly over legitimate means of violence. Along with the popularisation of the leftist slogans "killer state" *(katil devlet)* and "fascist state" *(faşist devlet)* towards the end of 1970s, the revolutionary left became more antagonistic towards the Turkish state's ontological existence. The victimisation experience of the Grey Wolves at the hands of the state officials during the 1980 military coup traumatised the far-right's idealised notions of the state's eternal impeccability and pushed them furthermore to establish a state within a state that would

[21] "Türkeş MHP'lilere Yapılan Saldırıları Kınadı." Milliyet, 17.05.1979.

[22] Milliyet, 04.05.1979.

support the righteous cause of Turkish nation regardless of the façade of everyday politics. Emerging movements of Kurdish separatism and Islamist radicalism in late 1970s developed their own notions of political martyrdom that were essentially counter-hegemonic against the Turkish state's existential legitimacy.

"Show me your martyr, I'll tell you who you are", once joked a wise friend about Turkish political culture. Only recently, the Bosporus Bridge between Europe and Asia was renamed the *15 July Martyrs Bridge* after the failed coup attempt of 2016 whilst the state denied the coup plotters that were killed during clashes the legally mandatory religious burial ceremony.[23] In the greed-versus-grievance scale of civil wars (Kalyvas 2006, 64ff.), cultures of martyrdom pushes conflicts towards grievance. Commitment to martyrdom make reconciliation equal to a betrayal. Those who gave an oath to the martyrs are cursed if they make peace with the perpetrators. There is no sportsmanship when it comes to martyrs. As long as cultures of martyrdom prevail and compete with each other, there can be no imaginable ecumenical heaven or bipartisan utopia in which enemy martyrs can rest in peace and in equal terms—at least not without establishing a shared culture of legitimate means of co-existing

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Martyrdom and Masculinity in Warring Iran

The Karbala Paradigm, the Heroic, and the Personal Dimensions of War

Olmo Gölz

Abstract

During the Islamic Revolution (1978/79) and the subsequent Iran-Iraq war (1980–1988) the cult of the martyr in Iran has had a lasting impact on the dynamics of revolution and war. As a powerful mode of boundary construction, the figure of the martyr represented a culturally idealised catalogue of norms and thus contributed crucial elements to the establishment and maintenance of the Islamic Republic's political system. In this article martyrdom is conceptualised as a radicalisation of these modes of boundary construction, and thus as an extreme form of heroism, since the underlying discourses not only determine the sacred centre of the martyr's society, but rather define opposing entities and 'wrong behaviour' in polar terms. Furthermore, I argue that martyrdom is to be determined as a dominant discourse influencing hegemonic masculinity in Iran in the late 70s and 80s. Accordingly, the cult of the martyr is to be understood to affect all aspects of gender relations in warring Iran. In his paper I shall show how the Islamist discourse on martyrdom has been forged and fostered through references to the Karbala narrative of early Islam and its modern reinterpretation as a heroic narrative which distinctively calls for the self-sacrifice of the true believer when facing tyranny and injustice. In effect, via the exaltation of martyrdom as a radicalised mode of boundary construction, everyone's contribution to the war became a personal obligation.

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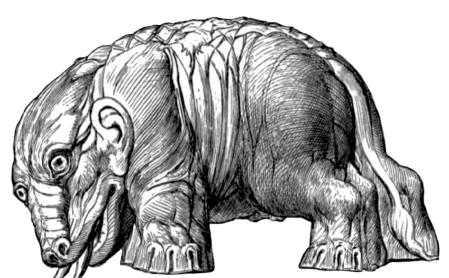
Introduction

We must sacrifice ourselves! This was the central message Ayatollah Khomeini sent from exile in Neauphle-le-Château near Paris to the Iranian people in November 1978. In reference to the teaching example of the martyred grandson of the Prophet and third Imam of Shi'a Islam, Hosayn b. Ali (d. 680), Khomeini stated:

> The leader of the Muslims taught us that if a tyrant rules despotically over the Muslims in any age, we must rise up against him and denounce him, however unequal our forces may be, and that if we see the very existence of Islam in danger, we must sacrifice ourselves and be prepared to shed our blood. (Khomeini 1981b, 242)

This statement served as a prelude to some of the largest demonstrations in Iran during the revolutionary process of 1978/79 (Axworthy 2013, 121), as well as the return of the Ayatollah to Iran on February 1, 1979, which in many aspects marked the dramaturgic climax of the Islamic Revolution. In addition, the statement also indicates the completion of a discursive transformation regarding notions of martyrdom in Shi'a Islam. Specifically, Khomeini's speech marks the culmination of a process, which shifted a primarily soteriological understanding of the founding narratives of the Shi'a belief system into an explicit call for action. Accordingly, the pivotal martyrdom of Hosayn b. Ali during the Battle of Karbala in 680 CE is not only presented as an episode of the time-transcending struggle of *good* against *evil*, *righteousness* against *injustice,* or *believers* against *infidels*, it is also exalted to become a sacred act, which obligates the descendants of the early Muslim community to emulate the Imam's example, if not to re-enact his martyrdom in modern times. Thus, Khomeini's call decisively asks the devout Muslim to stand up against tyranny and oppression, just as the "leader of the Muslims taught us" by the example of his own self-sacrifice.

The fact that in the person of Ayatollah Khomeini the leading revolutionary personally praises and advertises the cult of the martyr in Iran, is certainly sufficient to ascertain the significance of martyrdom during the Islamic Revolution and the subsequent Iran-Iraq War, as has been shown by Haggay Ram in his seminal monograph *Myth and Mobilization in Revolutionary Iran* (Ram 1994) and in his essay on the *Mythology of Rage* (Ram 1996) as well as by Saskia Gieling in her study on the sacralisation of the war in Iran (Gieling 1998). However, the topic of martyrdom is also of tremendous theoretical importance beyond the Iranian case because the concept of the (here *male)* martyr connects the individual with his community, its values and virtues, and its sacred centre in a unique way. Through the alleged willingness to suffer and ultimately to die for his belief system, the construction of a martyr demonstrates utter devotion to the community. By the same token, he represents the culturally idealised catalogue of norms in a reciprocal way. Thus, in relation to the modes of the society's boundary construction, the martyr fulfils the same functions as the charismatic hero, who has been identified by the sociologist Bernhard Giesen on the one hand as the "mediator between the

realm of the sacred and the mundane field of human action" (Giesen 2004, 2), whereas on the other hand "the hero results from the projection of the ideal self that is in the mind of the individual persons who admire the hero" (22). What is more, martyrdom can also be seen as a radicalisation of these modes of boundary construction, and thus as an extreme form of heroism, since the underlying discourses not only determine the sacred centre of the martyr's society, but rather define opposing entities and 'wrong behaviour' in polar terms. Through his alleged preparedness to die for his own belief system while facing the competing system, the martyr defines both, *good* and *evil*, i.e. the own community and the other, respectively. Therefore, the martyr is a heroised figure that creates massive boundaries between two belief systems (Cook 2007, 2) which are almost impossible to overcome.

Transferred to the case of warring Iran, the conceptualisation of martyrdom as an extreme form of heroism had a deep impact on the dynamics of mobilisation during the Iran-Iraq War. Here, I am not referring to the allegedly obvious fact that the lure of the sacred may have mass mobilising effects; I rather state that the central aspect in the propagation of the lessons of the 'Karbala paradigm' lies in the affirmation of martyrdom as an idealised configuration of masculinity. In anticipation of the discussion on the gender dimensions of martyrdom in this paper, I comprehend the Ayatollah's declaration as an appeal to the *ideal man* in particular.[1] Therefore, the ideal man—how he had been conceptualised by Khomeini and other leading intellectuals of the revolution—*has to* seek martyrdom when his community is threatened; he *has to* sacrifice himself and *has to* be prepared to shed his blood. Consequently, I argue that the cult of the martyr in the period of warring Iran from 1978 to 1988 (which extends the Islamic Revolution of 1978/79 to the subsequent Iran-Iraq War from 1980–1988[2]) is seminal to the construction of the Iranian hegemonic masculinity at the time.

In Raewyn Connells understanding, 'masculinity' is "simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture" (Connell 2005, 71). By contrast, 'hegemonic masculinity' is to be understood as "the culturally idealized form of masculinity in a given historical and social setting", which is honoured and glorified (Messerschmidt 2005, 198; Cf. Connell 2005; Cf. Connell/Messerschmidt 2005). As will be shown in this paper, in the case of revolutionary Iran seeking martyrdom was propagated by the revolutionaries as part of a protest masculinity that after the revolution claimed hegemonic status. Accordingly, if we determine martyrdom as a dominant discourse influencing hegemonic masculinity in Iran in the late 70s and 80s, the cult of the martyr is to be understood to affect all aspects of gender relations.[3] Thus, in the period investigated here (which expands only on revolution and war so that developments of the post-war period are beyond the scope of this paper), discourses on martyrdom must have had a profound impact on the living, i.e. on the men and women who, at the time, had not yet become martyrs, or never would. As will be shown in this paper, the connection of martyrdom and masculinity had an apparently anachronistic effect on modern warfare: Since the war against Iraq

[1] For Khomeini's search for the meaning of human perfection see Moin (1994, 64): "Khomeini's world view is […] coloured by his mystical vision of the 'Perfect Man' and his missionary zeal seems to have been influenced by seeing himself as the 'Perfector of Man'." Here, Moin refers to Khomeini's remarks on the ensan kamel, thus, the ideal person. Insofar one might argue that no gendered meaning is transported in the term 'Perfector of Man'. Although this might be linguistically correct, I'd like to propose a different reading: Khomeini saw himself as the 'perfector of both genders', men and women. He repeatedly took an unequivocal stand on the ideal behaviour of the devote Muslim and his or her obligations regarding one's gender role.

[2] Note: In the Iranian perspective the War against Iraq (1980–1988) is presented as part of the revolution itself. I follow this understanding of the historical processes and define the years from 1978 to 1988 as the revolutionary decade in Iran. Cf. Takeyh (2010, 367): "In the clerical cosmology, the defense of the nation and the propagation of the revolution were seen as part of the same continuum. Again, Iran in this conception was transformed from a mere country into an agent of revolutionary zeal. […] The Iranian narrative of the war clearly identified Saddam as an aggressor, but suggested that his aggression was on behalf of a larger imperial conspiracy. For Khomeini the most important task was the spread of the Islamic revolution - the downfall of the Shah was the first step in a longer journey."

[3] See Torab (2007, 139) for a different approach on the gendered aspects of martyrdom. He is interested in "how in various contexts of death and martyrdom, men assert their maleness as procreators and regenerators of life through procreative metaphors, in particular the trope of blood, as a key marker of gender and power. The trope of blood is an alternative to the conceptions of societal regeneration that women promote."

is presented to the individual as an opportunity to stand up against injustice and tyranny, to seek martyrdom, and consequentially as the only thinkable way to become an *ideal man*, the war itself—seen from the standpoint of the individual—expands to become a form of "personal vengeance of men for their honor", a phrase that has been coined by Shahin Gerami (2003, 267). Thus, discourses on martyrdom in warring Iran and their impact on notions of masculinity in that context helped to galvanise the people's commitment to the war, since the invocation of the underlying myth's gendered aspects alluded to the personal dimensions of war, i.e. to the perceptions of war duties as obligation for the individual beyond discourses on excellent contributions to the service for community. Via the exaltation of martyrdom as a radicalised mode of boundary construction, *everyone's*—men and women, young and old—contribution to the war became a personal obligation beyond issues of conscription, draft systems, the organisation of the home front, or other technical questions consistently raised in warring societies.

Martyrdom as a Culture: The Karbala Paradigm and the Heroic

Notwithstanding the fact that the conjunction of martyrdom, masculinity and the personal dimensions of war presented here might also be applicable to comparable cases in world history (an important and doubtlessly fruitful comparative perspective could focus on Iraq during the same war [4]), Iran provides a paradigmatic example for determining the corresponding processes. Compared to other historic examples where the call for martyrdom might have been a reaction to the course of war, the cult of the martyr in Iran is unique since it had been formulated and emplaced beforehand. Admittedly, wars are first and foremost fought for interests, in this case the regimes consolidation and survival. However, since the regime itself built its foundation and legitimation significantly on the myth of martyrdom, it is the same myth that had to be kept alive in the formative period of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Thus, although initially imposed by Iraq, the length of the war can also be seen as an effect of the underlying discursive transformations regarding notions of martyrdom—at least after the summer of 1982, when the fortunes of war turned towards Iran, and her regime deliberately decided to prolong the war and later to attack Iraq.

As early as the late 1960s, pre-revolutionary Iran witnessed a radical transformation of a predominantly soteriological understanding of the Shi'a founding myth on the martyred heroes of early Islam towards a perception of martyrdom as the defining element of Iranian culture. Actually, according to Ali Shariati (1933–1977), the leading Islamic intellectual in Iran at the time, martyrdom *became a culture.* In his lecture *Shahadat* ("Martyrdom") on February 24, 1972,[5] Shariati claims:

> Martyrdom, in one word, is not an incident, it is an involve-
> ment. It is an imposed death on a hero, it is a tragedy, and in
> our culture it is life, it is a medal of honor. It is not a means,
> it is an end. It is genuine and elevating. It is a bridge to new

[4] In her analysis of martyrdom in Iraq, Dina Khoury (2013, 9) states for example: "The war experience and its meaning became the cornerstone of the Iraqi state's attempts to transform the Iraqi self, particularly the male self. Attempts at shaping the public culture of heroism and manliness and of death and mourning were regulated by incorporating war celebrations with commemoration rituals under the purview of neighborhood party officials."

[5] The speech *Shahadat* from 5 *Esfand* 1350 [February 24, 1972] is available online as an audio file: http://www.shariati.com/audio/shahadat.html (16/04/2019). The English translation used here follows the translation of Manochehr Dorraj.

> heights. It is a great responsibility, it is a short-cut to elevate
> oneself above mankind. And it is a culture. (Shariati 1972,
> quoted in Dorraj 1997, 513)

Seen in this light, as Manochehr Dorraj states, martyrdom is "a sacred end; it is the most dramatic statement about the power of faith" (512). Similarly, it can be seen as a form of "self-aggrandizement that enables individuals to transcend time and be placed on the highest summit of history" (ibid.). However, these perceptions on martyrdom as a self-elevating force and even a sacred end itself raise questions on the specificity of the Iranian case and how it became possible that in the years that followed Ali Shariati's lecture in 1972, the cult of the martyr helped to shape Iran's society on her way to the Islamic Revolution. Moreover, we have to determine how the same cult became seminal in mobilising the people during the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s. In other words, how could it become possible to build up a perception of martyrdom *as a culture* in modern Iran?

In order to answer this question, we once again turn to the declaration of Ayatollah Khomeini in which he claims "we must sacrifice ourselves". Khomeini issued his declaration on November 23, 1978, one week before the month of *Muharram* according to the Islamic calendar. He explains:

> With the approach of Muharram, we are about to begin the month of epic heroism and self-sacrifice—the month in which blood triumphed over the sword, the month in which truth condemned falsehood for all eternity and branded the mark of disgrace upon the forehead of all oppressors and satanic governments; the month that has taught successive generations throughout history the path of victory over the bayonet; the month that proves the superpowers may be defeated by the word of truth; the month in which the leader of the Muslims taught us how to struggle against all the tyrants of history, showed us how the clenched fists of those who seek freedom, desire independence, and proclaim the truth may triumph over tanks, machine guns, and the armies of Satan, how the word of truth may obliterate falsehood. (Khomeini 1981b, 242)

Here, Ayatollah Khomeini refers to the Battle of Karbala during the month of *Muharram,* 61 AH (680 CE), in the course of which the third Imam of the Shi'a faith, Hosayn b. Ali (626–680), and his entire retinue suffered a crushing defeat and were killed by the superior force of his rival. Stories about the battle focus on the heroic deeds and subsequent martyrdom of each individual member of Hosayn's retinue, the demonizing depiction of their opponents' atrocities, and the suffering of the children and women in Hosayn's circle who are portrayed as innocent victims. By invoking the references to this event of early Islam in his declaration in November 1978, Ayatollah Khomeini made use of the symbolic powers of a phenomenon in Shi'a Islam which has been termed the 'Karbala paradigm'.

The anthropologist Michael Fischer in his 1983 monograph *Iran: From Religious Dispute to Revolution* coined the term 'Karbala paradigm' (Fischer 2003, 13ff.). There he noted that the story of Hosayn b. Ali's martyrdom was

not only a subject and a point of reference for the most emotional sermons delivered in the context of Shi'a Islam, but that, thanks to its detailed account of the historical circumstances, the individuals involved and the political situation, it also has great power in contemporary politics. In particular, the narrative's focus on Hosayn's hopeless but steadfast fight against corrupt and oppressive tyranny and his devoted advocacy for morality and decency offer a latent, reliable projection field for political disobedience in all historical contexts. According to Fischer, the Karbala paradigm's authoritative reference to the battle's heroised protagonists provides Shi'ites with life models and norms of behaviour (21). He contends that the commemoration of the Battle of Karbala must be seen as a paradigm, since the view of history that it conveys claims to provide a self-contained cosmology applicable to all aspects of life. In addition, the contrastive portrayal of the values and norms exemplified in the paradigm serves to differentiate Shi'a Islam from other religious groups. Another factor that should be taken into consideration is that the narrative demands a high emotional investment, (27) both in the daily religious ritual of the individual believer and in moments of collective remembrance and ritualised re-enactment of the drama in annual passion plays during *Muharram*. (Gölz 2018a, 2)

The genesis of Shi'a Islam is rooted in the idea that the charismatic and politico-religious authority possessed by the prophet Muhammad was transferred to his biological descendants after his death in 632 CE (Dabashi 2011, 43f.). The resulting claim to the rightful leadership of the Muslim community (the *ummah)* was thus supposed to pass, in the form of the *Imamate*, to the descendants of Muhammad's daughter Fatima (606–632) and her husband Ali b. Abi Talib (600–661). Yet the political reality in the decades after the Prophet's death diverged from that vision. In Damascus, Muawiya b. Abi Sufyan of the Umayyad family built up considerable power and ultimately took the title of caliph (that is "representative"—in competition with the concept of the imam, who must descend from the Prophet). Rather than on the basis of genealogical descent, he justified his claim to leadership with his services to Islam as well as with the reality of the political and military situation. At the time of the Battle of Karbala, the hopes of the Alid (proto-Shi'a) faction lay with the third imam and grandson of the Prophet, Hosayn b. Ali, who lived in Medina and later in Mecca, whereas in Damascus Yazid b. Muawiya laid claim to the title of caliph after his father's death in 680 CE (Gölz 2018a, 3).

In the Shi'a tradition, the political dispute between Hosayn and Yazid is depicted as follows: In 680 CE, the grandson of the Prophet responded to an appeal from Kufa, a city that had once been a military camp and that served as the nucleus of the Alid resistance to the caliphate in Damascus. Leaving his home in Mecca, Hosayn headed to Kufa with 72 faithful followers and his family to lead the resistance movement there. The army of the caliph Yazid, however, intercepted the group and pushed them north into the desert not far from the Euphrates River. On October 1 (1 *Muharram* 61 AH), Hosayn reached the desert region around Karbala, where he and his followers were cut off from access to water by the caliph's army. However, Hosayn remained steadfast and refused to negotiate an oath of allegiance to Yazid (Halm 1988,

19; Fischer 2003, 19). The story of the ten days until the final confrontation between the adversaries on 10 *Muharram* is part of the cultural memory of Shi'a communities. There are reports of various clashes, attempts to break out in order to get water, failed negotiations and fateful decisions and meetings between prominent individuals on both sides (Gölz 2018a, 4). In the final act of the battle, after the subsequent martyrdoms of almost all male members of his retinue, the Prophet's grandson himself is killed and his body defiled: "The body of Husayn was trampled in the mud and his head was taken to Damascus, where the caliph Yazid is said to have beaten it with a stick in a vain attempt to keep it from reciting the Qur'an." (Fischer 2003, 20)

Accordingly, nearly the entire Alid line (and thus the line of the Prophet) met with death during the Battle of Karbala, with the unwavering Hosayn b. Ali finally undergoing martyrdom in the dramaturgical denouement—the source of his epithet 'Prince of Martyrs' *(sayyed al-shohada)* (Aghaie 2004,92). The details of this soteriologically infused battle make up the conceptual world of a defining story of suffering that is told in the Shi'a context (Fischer 2003, 19). In this regard, the Karbala paradigm becomes a living reality "believed to have once happened in primeval times (the dawn of Islam), and continuing ever since to influence the Shi'a and its human destinies" (Ram 1996, 70).

Thus, the Battle of Karbala is *the* central historical event to which the collective identities of Shi'a Muslim communities refer (Nakash 1993, 161), and the Karbala paradigm provides a reservoir of model figures presented as ideal types. This includes not only archetypal heroes but also perpetrator and victim types, as well as tragic protagonists and ambiguous figures. Thus, the notion of perceiving the Battle of Karbala as a paradigm is compatible with what the sociologist Bernhard Giesen says about the heroic functions in the construction of collective identity (Giesen 2004, 18). In addition to the ideal type of the victorious hero, he identifies the tragic hero, the perpetrator and the victim as liminal figures of the same kind. This results in a typological field of the heroic in which the various historical individuals are positioned and receive a specific place in memory (Gölz 2018b, 1).**[6]**

Accordingly, the Karbala paradigm defines the typological field of the heroic within Shi'a Islam (Gölz 2018a, 2) in which the heroic narrative focuses on the stories of Hosayn and his half-brother Abbas b. Ali (647–680): "[They] are the archetypal heroes and martyrs of the narrative. They are portrayed as brave, noble, and willing to sacrifice everything in the struggle against injustice and oppression" (Halverson et al. 2011, 87). All of the members of the group are honoured as martyrs, but since each act of martyrdom takes place at the hand of an individual opponent, the Karbala paradigm's catalogue of demons is as full as that of its heroes (Gölz 2018a, 5). Nevertheless, Hosayn's martyrdom is described in especially heroic terms.**[7]**

In short, the Karbala paradigm operates by means of reference to prominent individuals in early Islamic history, deploying them as ideal types to exemplify *good* and *evil* as well as *justice* and *injustice*. In this way, the battle commemorated in the Karbala paradigm becomes more than a politically formative moment of the Shi'a faith within Islam. It also defines the theological origin of the Shi'a martyr ethos, and it provides members of the denomination with a catalogue

[6] Giesen (2004, 7): „The distinction between the archetypes of victorious heroes and tragic heroes, perpetrators and victims, can be considered as an ideal typological field. The positions of historical persons within this field are not fixed and immutable—triumphant heroes can become tragic ones, heroes can be turned into perpetrators, and victims can, later on, get the sacral aura that before was the mark of heroes."

[7] The embellishment of Ḥusayn's martyrdom increases in succeeding versions of the story over time. Whereas the death of the "Prince of Martyrs" is simply related in detail by Abū Miḥnaf (d. 774) in his *Kitāb maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, later depictions include symbolic embellishment of the events. See Halverson et al. (2011, 87): "With all the male members of Husayn's party killed, except for his son 'Ali Zayn al-Abidin (who was too ill to fight), he rode out to make his heroic last stand in the climactic event of the master narrative. According to the richly detailed and dramatic account of Kashefi, Husayn wore the turban of the Prophet Muhammad, carried the shield of Hamza, wielded the famous two-pointed sword of his father 'Ali (Dhul-Fiqar), and rode atop the legendary white horse, Dhul-Janah. The horse Dhul-Janah is commonly depicted in Shi'ite iconography, often bloodied and mourning for Husayn. According to tradition, the horse was originally owned by the Prophet Muhammad, but that would make the horse *at least* forty-nine years old by the time of the Battle of Karbala (horses usually live for around twenty years). Amidst the ensuing battle, Husayn faced the entire army alone and killed hundreds of soldiers in one-by-one combat. The treacherous Umayyads finally resorted to dishonorable tactics and stormed him from all sides. After sustaining numerous bloody wounds, Husayn was finally decapitated by Shimr, the commander of Yazid's army."

of heroic norms whose impact is still felt today. In this regard, martyrdom not only theoretically "affirms the time-honored tradition of the community" (Dorraj 1997, 490) as a radical act of boundary work, but it explicitly quotes the founding myth of Shi'a Islam in which the topic of martyrdom itself is discussed and exalted as a commendable way of living—so to say, of staying alive in the collective memory of the community as a result of self-sacrifice. Therefore, the demand for loyalty and the willingness to sacrifice is at the centre of the directives on action exemplified in the Karbala paradigm. The underlying assumption here is that, from the Shi'a Muslims point of view, the events at Karbala were divinely ordained, and that Hosayn b. Ali as an infallible Imam was perfectly aware of his imminent martyrdom. He knowingly and willingly met his death, sacrificing himself on the moral plane of the struggle between justice and injustice (Halverson et al. 2011, 87). Thus he serves both as an example of the willingness to self-sacrifice and as a call to individual courage in the face of immorality and tyranny.

Against this background, Ayatollah Khomeini's declaration a week before *Muharram* in 1978, "the month of epic heroism and self-sacrifice" (Khomeini 1981b, 242), can be seen as a defining moment. Here, Khomeini precisely defines a set of norms as exemplary, which has a profound effect on the place of masculinities in gender relations: In addition to ostensibly gender-neutral topics defining the ideal behavior of a Muslim in terms of loyalty, moral lifestyle, and devotion, the Karbala paradigm also explicitly covers gender-specific attributes, since "leadership, fighting, and martyrdom are specifically male activities", whereas the women at Karbala are associated with the act of mourning and are presented as the "supporters of men and children and subservient to the authority of men" (Aghaie 2004, 118). Additionally, the fact that nearly all the men in Hosayn's entourage met with death at Karbala means that the women in the paradigm are presented as witnesses to the battle and its martyrs. In this context, special significance is ascribed to Zaynab bint Ali (625–682), the sister of the 'Prince of Martyrs', who according to the Shi'ite tradition, initiated the mourning observances of weeping, chanting, self-flagellation, reciting martyrdom stories and passion plays after the events of Karbala (Hegland 1995, 66). Thus, Zaynab serves as an example of ideal behaviour for all those who are not allowed to prove their loyalty through self-sacrifice (as is the case for all women) or who do not have the opportunity to do so. According to this interpretation, it is especially the principle of gender segregation itself that is inscribed in the Karbala paradigm and is presented as ideal and morally appropriate.[8] In effect, "men were actors in the story, while women were mostly acted upon. Throughout these narratives, both space and activities were characterized by gender difference or gender segregation" (Aghaie 2004, 118).

Following Khomeini's argumentation amidst the historical processes of the revolutionary period, while facing tyranny and oppression, the devout Muslim man has the opportunity and the obligation to imitate the example of the glorious hero of Shi'a Islam, the martyred Imam Hosayn b. Ali, *right now*. What is more, in the historical process and during the performative spectacles of the *Muharram* rituals and demonstrations in December 1978, it is

[8] In the historical dynamics leading up to the Islamic Revolution of 1979, for example, one can see how specific symbolic functions were ascribed to early Islamic female figures as oppositional discourses were shaping the Islamisation of Iranian society. On the one side was the state-propagated image of the emancipated woman, which was presented as a symbol of modernity by the Pahlavi regime's modernising development programme. The opposition responded with the ideal of a woman who vouched for morality and decency, and who, in addition, could take on symbolic value in the struggle against foreign interference—precisely as the representative of the struggle against un-Islamic conceptions of morality. The Karbala paradigm provided the central background for conveying the virtue, piety, and decency of the 'true' Iranian woman.

possible to trace the actual practices through which men and women engaged in these idealised forms of masculinity. Here, it is not only of importance that men are the actors of the underlying stories on martyrdom, it must also be noted that Hosayn sacrificed himself for the Prophet's patriline. As Azam Torab rightly observed, the whole Shi'a idea of the *Imamate* is "essentially about the patrilineal descent on which the doctrine is founded" (Torab 2007, 141). Consequently, referring to the yearly recurring *Muharram* rituals, Torab persuasively argues that their significance cannot be reduced to political sideshows for or against the respective government. "Rather, the rituals deliberately cultivate an ideology of masculinity through the imagery of sacrificial blood as the prized source for patrilineal order on which the Shi'a doctrine is founded." (143)

In other words, and in line with the theoretical reflections of Raewyn Connell, the invocation of the Karbala paradigm (and the culture of martyrdom conveyed through it) permeates the hegemonic masculinity in the revolutionary context because it extols self-sacrifice as an ideal form of behaviour. Conversely, it defines the place of masculinities in gender relations because it culturally idealises the patriarchal logic of the founding doctrines and narratives of Shi'a Islam.

However, these observations on the significance of the Karbala paradigm in the revolutionary moment in Iran must be put in context in order to avoid an Orientalist perception of Shi'a Islam, which would present the belief system as a monolithic cultural entity, hermetically sealed off from all aspects of change or progress. The revolutionary power of Shi'a symbolism does not indicate an atemporal understanding of these categories, and thus an essentialist perception of Islam, but can rather signify the opposite. In accordance with the theoretical reflections of the ideal typological field of the heroic, the Karbala paradigm can be seen as a highly flexible cultural reservoir for Shi'ite believers, capable of adaptation to the needs of different periods, eras, and modernity[9]—as explicitly proven by the emergence of the perceptions of martyrdom as a core concept of Iranian hegemonic masculinity in the late 70s and 80s.

Martyrdom and the Ideal Man: Shifting Paradigms

The flexibility of the cultural reservoir might best be shown by the juxtaposition of the notions of the ideal man in warring Iran in opposition to respective configurations in earlier years. Referring to the war against Iraq, Shahin Gerami rightly observed that martyrdom as a hyper-masculine symbol was a by-product of the war (Gerami 2003, 267). In addition to this, the ethos of the martyr dominantly permeated hegemonic masculinity since those propagated ideas of Iranian collective identity which have specifically been articulated in Islamic terms saw the realisation of an 'Iranian Self' as the modern embodiment of Imam Hosayn (Ram 1996, 76), as will be discussed later. Thus, the emergence and importance of this hyper-masculine by-product can only be determined against the background of the here depicted narrative of the Battle of Karbala. However, the Karbala paradigm by no means automatically calls for action and henceforth the self-sacrifice of the devote believer. On

[9] On the aspects of modernity and martyrdom, see Ram (1996, 82): "Indeed, the fluidity of the Karbala paradigm, shaped and reshaped by the Shi'ite community in response to changing historical circumstances and emerging as a dramatic catalyst for revolutionary action—in stark contrast to past, passive-accommodative Shi'ite practices—illuminates the very modernity of Islamic 'fundamentalism' in Iran and elsewhere, and not its 'archaic' nature."

the contrary, the battle and the messages conveyed in it can also be seen as a relatively adaptable 'set of symbols' whose interpretation changes with shifting political trends (Aghaie 2004, 112). Thus, interpretations of the paradigm over time include differing narratives of heroisation and claims to heroism that give insight into the needs of the specific collective identities that have created them—again in accordance with Giesen's theoretical reflections on the heroic.[10]

In fact, *there is* a monolithic core meaning of the Karbala paradigm which defines the Shi'ite cosmology: "Indeed, all human history is pictured as a continuous struggle between the forces of evil and the forces of good" (Ram 1996, 70).[11] Interpretations of what to do with this lesson, however, differ. For many centuries, this did not mean that the invocation of the paradigm in religious discourses asked the pious believer for martyrdom, notwithstanding the fact that the centrepiece of the Battle of Karbala is built up by the exaltation of self-sacrifice. In the decades preluding the transformation of the paradigm into a distinct call for action, the martyrdom of Imam Hosayn was interpreted differently, alluding primarily to the soteriological dimensions of the Battle of Karbala.

In this interpretation, Hosayn b. Ali is depicted as an intercessor who mediates between God and man and who is capable of granting people a place in paradise (Gieling 1998, 119). According to this perception, the main obligation of the pious believer is to be seen in the participation of commemoration services at *Muharram*—and what is more: in stark contrast to the later revolutionary appeal of the 'Prince of Martyrs', the interpretation of his role as an intercessor calls for *obedience* and quietism since his example is transferred to the realms of ordinary life (120). Seen in this light, the Karbala paradigm does not automatically call for political *dis*obedience, but can also be used to legitimise rulers and ruling elites. Against this background, the respective narrative "stresses the inappropriateness of active political mobilization in the face of political injustice: it is the role of the *mahdī* and not of ordinary believers to avenge Ḥusayn's unjust death" (Aghaie 2001, 157). This soteriological understanding of the Karbala paradigm does not conflict with Hosayn's status as the ultimate hero of Shi'a Islam. His heroism is rather interpreted as a divine, though tragic act, and the example of his failure calls for patience and perseverance. It is not martyrdom that the ideal man has to seek, but the "preservation of Ḥusayn's message in a purely esoteric sense" (157). Haggay Ram notes accordingly:

> Husayn's heroic conduct notwithstanding, his ultimate defeat continually exemplified to his partisans the futility of immediate and concrete action to overcome their predicament. Disillusioned and, as a result of Husayn's failure, invariably acted upon by the (Sunni) authorities, the Shi'ite Self became submerged in an all-encompassing passivity, directing its hopes for salvation to the miraculous intervention of the twelfth Hidden Imam—the Mahdi—who would reappear at an indeterminate point in the future to redeem his tormented believers. (Ram 1996, 71)

[10] Giesen (2004, 18): "Heroes are, in fact, social constructions of particular communities, cultural imaginations of supreme individuality, collective projections of sovereign subjectivity, of the sacred on particular persons and their lives. In constructing the hero, a community overcomes not only profane and mundane contingencies, but also, most importantly, the threat of death. Thus, the construction of heroes creates a social bond that transcends the confines of individual life and the limits of strategic reasoning. For the community of followers, the hero who defies pain and disregards death achieves immortality that was the mark of Gods before."

[11] See also Fischer (2003, 19f.): "Husayn's martyrdom occurred at noon on Friday the tenth of Muharram. The details heighten the significance of Yazid's tyranny and desecration of the sacred and proper order of life and Islam. Not only had Yazid usurped the caliphate and not only was he using that office tyrannically, but he had attempted to desecrate the hajj, he had desecrated the time of communal prayer (Friday noon), and he had destroyed one by one the elements of civilized life: water, an elementary human need that by the desert code of honor is never refused to thirsty individuals, was denied not only to warrior opponents but to women and children; three sons of Husayn were slain: the infant 'Ali Asghar, the five-year-old child Ja'far, and the twenty-five-year-old youth, 'Ali Akbar. Destruction of family, community, government, and humanity are all themes of the Karbala story, retold and relived today in every religious gathering and reaching dramatic and emotional crescendo during the month of Muharram when the events of A.H. 61 are re-enacted, day by day."

This esoteric reading of the Battle of Karbala—and thus the resulting question of what constitutes the ideal man—dramatically changed due to two major intellectual interventions in the late 60s and early 70s in Iran. First, in 1968 the religious scholar Nematollah Salihi Najafabadi published his revisionist version of the myth, *Shahid-e Javid* ("The Immortal Martyr"), (Salehi Najafabadi 1382 [2004]) in which he reinterpreted the Karbala paradigm in an obviously activist light (Aghaie 2001, 157), and transformed it into a worldly oriented drama (Ram 1996, 73). In his demystification of the paradigm, Salehi Najafabadi viewed Imam Hosayn "plainly as an exemplary hero who combined readiness for self-sacrifice with political wisdom. He thus sought to establish that Imam Husayn's defeat was far less important than his heroism, whichthough unique—was nevertheless not above the capacity of ordinary mortals" (Ram 1996, 73).

Second, the transformation of the Twelver Shi'a narrative of the Battle of Karbala into a revolutionary manifesto can again largely be traced back to Ali Shariati (Szanto 2013, 78). It was his works, which distinctively called for an active imitation of Imam Hosayn and his fight against injustice and corrupt tyranny, that endowed the Karbala paradigm with the inherent potential to mobilise the masses. In November 1971, two months before he declared martyrdom to be a culture, Shariati gave his famous speech "On the Responsibility of Being a Shi'ite" *(Masuliyatha-ye shi'eh budan)*, in which he enumerated the duties of the 'true' Shi'a Muslim: to stand up to and fight against injustice; to protest oppression, exploitation, and despotism; to overcome one's own ignorance and all of one's fears in order to ensure, at the cost of one's own life, that the community is led by an honest and just ruler. In the same speech, Ali Shariati made effective use of the story of the Battle of Karbala, noting that Imam Hosayn, when faced with the superior numbers of his opponent and the hopelessness of the situation, actively decided to sacrifice his life in order to oppose Yazid's rule, which embodied the reign of evil and injustice.[12] Through such analogies, as well as through his famous revolutionary slogan, *"har mah moharram, har ruz ashura, har jah kerbala"* ("every month is Muharram, every day is Ashura, every place is Karbala") (Rahnema 1994, 236), Ali Shariati became responsible for the Battle of Karbala's discursive transformation. This transition "from a religio-historical account, central to mainly soteriological practices, into an ongoing moral and political obligation to revolt against injustice" (Szanto 2013, 78) also portrayed the heroised martyrdoms of Hosayn b. Ali and his followers as models for revolutionary action. Thus, in a radical break with the past, the figure of Hosayn were transformed into a heroic warrior and role model to be emulated in all aspects, be it his commendable attitude towards justice, his steadfastness, or his willingness to sacrifice himself—a willingness certifiable only by martyrdom.

Leading up to the Islamic Revolution, the Karbala paradigm thus became *the* most powerful tool for rousing and mobilising the opposition to Mohammed Reza Shah. Here, the narration of the Battle of Karbala as a symbolic representation of the sacred had not just been presented in texts and images, but had also been enacted in particular social practices while its myth was mimetically

reproduced in rituals, as it is required for the affirmation of a typological field of the heroic (Giesen 2004, 10f.). Thus, the *Muharram* rituals gained tremendous importance as stages where the theoretical reflections of Salehi Najafabadi, Shariati and other intellectuals could be translated into practice. This is especially epitomised by the rhetoric of Ayatollah Khomeini, who did not just ask the ideal man to sacrifice himself in the light of tyranny, but who rather made distinct references to the mimetic reproduction of the underlying myth of the Battle of Karbala during the month of *Muharram*:

> Now, with the month of Muharram here like a divine sword in the hands of the soldiers of Islam, our great religious leaders and respected preachers, and all the followers of the Lord of the Martyrs (peace and blessings be upon him), they must make the maximum use of it. Trusting in the power of God, they must tear out the remaining roots of this tree of oppression and treachery, for the month of Muharram is the month in which the forces of Yazid and the stratagems of Satan are defeated. (Khomeini 1981b, 243)

Here, Khomeini rhetorically tore down the walls of history by equating Mohammed Reza Shah with the antagonist of the 'Prince of Martyrs,' branding him repeatedly as the 'Yazid of our time.'[13] However, in contrast to the Battle of Karbala, it is suggested that if the faction of the faithful stands together, the struggle against tyranny and injustice will not just be a hopeless endeavour but could actually result in victory 'this time.' Accordingly, right *after* the events of *Muharram* 1978, when many protesters indeed gave their lives, Khomeini issued another statement in his French exile on January 15, 1979:

> It is as if the blood of our martyrs were the continuation of the blood of the martyrs of Karbala, and as if the commemoration of our brothers were the echo of the commemoration of those brave ones who fell at Karbala. Just as their pure blood brought to an end the tyrannical rule of Yazid, the blood of our martyrs has shattered the tyrannical monarchy of the Pahlavis. (Khomeini 1981a, 249)

Thus, the conception of the ideal man who has to sacrifice himself was enforced by the Islamic revolutionary movement and, as Hamid Dabashi suggests, "the enormous arsenal of Shi'i rebellious symbolism was put to effective political use. [...] Shi'ism was in full insurrectionary posture—back in its originary form, substance, essence, and attributes" (Dabashi 2011, 314).

Martyrdom in Warring Iran: The Personal Dimensions of War

The transformation of the Karbala paradigm was also of tremendous value for the new Islamist regime during the Iran-Iraq war (1980–1988), which followed the Islamic revolution. After Iraqi troops marched into southern Iran and occupied large parts of Khuzestan Province on September 22, 1980, the war was presented discursively on the Iranian side as *jang-e tahmili*, the 'imposed war', and as *defa'-e moqaddas*, the 'holy defense'. In this way, the

[13] Beginning in 1963, Ayatollah Khomeini made regular reference to the dualism between Ḥosayn and Yazid and characterised the Shah as the 'Yazid of our time'. The appeal to the Karbala paradigm and the related dualism between *good* and *evil* is clear, e.g. in a speech marking the anniversary of the riots during the Ashura ceremonies of 1963, in which he says: "That day [Ashura 61] Yazid and his men digged [sic!] their own graves by their criminal hands and forever registered their own perish and buried their cruel, criminal regime. On the 15th of Khordad, 1342 (June 5, 1963) the Pahlavis and their criminal supporters dug their own graves by the hands of cruel monarchy and left behind their eternal shame and fell on account of which the brave Iranian nation, thanks be to God, with power and victory curses their damned graves." (Imam Khomeini 2000, 42)

conflict was interpreted, in analogy with the revolution, as a struggle of the oppressed against corrupt and immoral tyranny. Since the Iraqi opponents could be presented by the regime as the henchmen of Western imperialism, the story of the Battle of Karbala provided the perfect foil to "re-create the heroism and the Islamic revolutionary identity of Imam Husayn" (Ram 1996, 76). The prominent members of the regime made use of the paradigm by noting that the war against Iraq was in defense not only of the country, but also of the values for which Hosayn had given his life at Karbala (Wellman 2015, 3; Szanto 2013, 76). Accordingly, the war had been applicated to an Islamist understanding of the Iranian Self, which was to emerge as the modern embodiment of Imam Hosayn and his retinue (Ram 1996, 76).[14]

The fact that Karbala is located in modern-day Iraq added a geographical dimension during the war to what had hitherto been the Karbala paradigm's purely symbolic function (Gieling 1998, 120). The proximity of the holy site, which is said to be a piece of heaven where angels alighted and never left (Halverson et al. 2011, 86), intensified the paradigm's efficacy and its potential to mobilise the people. "Time and space barriers were pulled down at last. The Iran-Iraq War was not to be a 'second Karbala,'—but Karbala itself—the same battle that took place thirteen centuries ago." (Ram 1994, 80) In this regard, on the one hand the attack by Iraq helped to galvanise the 'Iranian Self', which had been treated by the West just like the third Imam had been treated by Yazid. On the other hand, however, the same paradigm also contributed to the personal dimension, specifically the fact that discourses on martyrdom prominently shaped the hegemonic masculinity in warring Iran.

Ultimately, the regime never answered the question whether the events of the Battle of Karbala were supposed to be restaged (or continued) with a victorious end—that is, whether the struggle of the oppressed against the oppressors (Cf. Gieling 1998, 100ff.) was actually supposed to be won, or if the appeal to the Karbala paradigm via reference to the proximity of the city's geographical location was only meant to provide an intrinsic motivation for Shi'a believers. Nevertheless, the discourse commemorating the war dead is unmistakable: participation in the 'holy defense' would be *rewarded* with martyr status (Takeyh 2010, 366). Very early on, then, the war itself was presented as an *opportunity* to sacrifice one's own life for Hosayn's cause. Thus, the erection of a hegemonic masculinity which idealises martyrdom as a promising way of proving one's manhood was now juxtaposed with a supposedly unique opportunity: First, every man had the chance to prove his devotion and his masculinity; second, this could allegedly be done in *the* actual Battle of Karbala—and only by becoming a martyr. In this way, the problem of each individual believer's historical and geographical distance to the events of Karbala was discursively resolved. Each man was now able to take the just path and follow the model of the 'Prince of Martyrs'.

Certainly, the 'imposed war' helped to consolidate the new regime's policies in all aspects, including the implementation of new modes of gender relations (Afary 2009, 265). However, the war had also clearly been fuelled by the gender-related discourses of the preceding decade in which perceptions of the ideal man centred around notions of activism and which thus made the

[14] Ram (1996, 76): "Repeatedly harassed by 'the West', the Islamic government was quick to invoke the Karbala paradigm in its attempt to arouse the public to re-create the heroism and the Islamic revolutionary identity of Imam Husayn. In this collective remembrance of things past as things present, in this extension of the reconstructed 'sacred history' into contemporary realities, the Iranian Self was obliged to maintain its battle against the Other, the 'neo-Yazid(s)'. If the Iranian Self was to reassert and revitalize its identity it was also to persist in its endeavour to take vengeance against 'the West' by re-creating the heroism, sacrifice and activist commitment which Imam Husayn had displayed thirteen centuries ago in Karbala. In short, the Iranian Self was to emerge as the modern embodiment of Imam Husayn par excellence."

war relevant for the personal dimensions of life. In effect, the propaganda of the Islamic Republic could present the war as a gift and an "opportunity to confirm their faith through deed" (Takeyh 2010, 366). Hence, the regime specifically encouraged Iranian men to relive the struggle of Hosayn and to experience martyrdom. Accordingly, the whole country celebrated the cult of the martyr and the memory of the dead who became immortalised in street names and other public places (Afary 2009, 300).[15] In every corner of the country, the martyred warriors were being extolled, and by dint of this extolment, the regime created the impression that the war belonged to the people and pointed to its personal dimension. This also fits very well with Islamic perceptions of *jihad* (Gerami 2005, 452), in which the intrinsic, personal devotion to the cause is an important factor.

Conclusion: The Radicalisation of Boundary Work

In conclusion, the symbolic power of martyrdom over the personal dimensions of war and gender relations might best be described by references to ideal-type images of martyrs in warring Iran. Shahin Gerami describes the typical depiction as follows:

> In the visual culture that flourished after the revolution, a new genre appeared devoted to the war efforts and the martyrs. The martyr is a young, unmarried (virgin, innocent) man, fearless and strong. He is depicted with eyes cast forward to jihad and the blessed state of martyrdom. His hair is dark and held back with a bandana with Qur'anic inscriptions. If depicted in full figure, he wears white, the color of a coffin, while holding a gun. Sometimes he is depicted in the foreground, leading a group of women and older male martyrs, or he is depicted in the foreground of fully veiled women and young girls, protecting them and the country's honor. (Gerami 2003, 267)

This ideal-type image shows that in the discourses on martyrdom, the dimension transported is not an 'all-male' one. On the contrary, it has been used to constantly remind women of their obligation to provide for their male relatives and kinsmen. In this regard, the cult of the martyr had disciplining effects on all members of society, urging them to honour the innocent martyrs through their self-restraint. Women in particular were "singled out to honor martyrs' blood by their adherence to the strictest codes. As official slogans and graffiti everywhere read, 'My sister, your hijab is your martyrdom'" (268). Here again, the Karbala paradigm provided the central background for conveying the virtue, piety, and decency of the 'true' Iranian woman (Aghaie 2004, 114f.). Therefore, whereas the image of the pure martyr lured many men to seek martyrdom and to volunteer for military service, the same discourses also had consequences for women, who had to show their individual commitment by offering their children for the cause. Hence, the greatest contribution of women was to provide martyrs for the war, though Khomeini reminded them that, as women, they were not themselves required to volunteer for death (Afary 2009, 297). Consequently, if we ask for the significance of discourses

[15] See also Razoux (2015, 314): "Meanwhile, the Iranian regime relied on the cult of the martyr. A 'fountain of blood' was erected on Tehran's central square to remind everyone of the sacrifice of the combatants fallen on the front. Streets, squares, and schools were renamed for the martyrs who died heroes' deaths and whose photos decorated walls. Newspapers overflowed with tales of their sacrifices. The general tone was aimed at making people feel guilty in order to incite as many combatants as possible to emulate the fallen. Iranian television constantly broadcast news pieces showing valiant Iranian fighters posing before the bodies of Iraqi soldiers. Processions of bearded Pasdaran stamped on huge American and Israeli flags draped over the capital's main avenues. Illustrated booklets narrating the exploits of martyrs fallen at the front were given away in schools and public buildings. The universities were closed and the students enrolled in the armed forces."

on martyrdom for the gender order, we have to provide a twofold answer: First, since martyrdom dominantly alluded to hegemonic masculinity in Iran, and by the same token women are exempted from becoming martyrs, the sublimated place of men in gender relations is affirmed. Second, because the ideal man is presented as the innocent martyr, the ordinary man—stigmatised due to the fact that he is alive—has to either seek martyrdom, or live his life in self-restraint to honour the role model of the martyred ideal man.

To close, the hypothesis of martyrdom as a radicalisation of boundary work, as presented in this article, is not only evident in relation to the external enemy but also in relation to the structure of society itself. In this regard, the symbolic power of martyrdom has radicalising effects on all layers of meanings and levels of society. It shapes the friend-foe dichotomy, defines *good* and *evil*, and separates *justice* from *injustice*. Consequently, the cult of the martyr, mediated through the narration of the Battle of Karbala and triggered by the fact that Karbala played an actual and geographic role in the war, solidified the boundary between the conflict parties. However, beyond the effects on the friend-foe dichotomy, the cult of the martyr also had radicalising effects on the gender order and on the individual itself: Farhad Khosrokhavar observed that the constant reaffirmation of the discourses on martyrdom produces a deeply pessimistic version of it. In effect, the discourse generates 'martyropaths' who are—in contrast to the theoretical and symbolic power of discourses on martyrdom—explicitly *not* interested in the community and who "are no longer concerned with life on earth. To be more accurate, they want to die and to take with them as many as possible of those they see as the enemy" (Khosrokhavar 2005, 49). Here, the notion of the 'radicalisation of boundary work' takes on a different significance. Khosrokhavor regards Shi'i radicalisation and its articulation through means of martyrdom as an effect of the war between Iran and Iraq. Thus, he differentiates between the martyrs of the Islamic Revolution and the 'martyropaths' who were radicalised through the discourses on martyrdom in the Iran-Iraq War (49f.). In his fundamental statement on radicalisation, he argues:

> Martyrdom, just like heroism, means sacrificing one's life for an ideal that is more important than life. To that extent, martyrdom is no more irrational than other types of devotion and, in the eyes of its actors, the martyr's demands cannot be described as pathological. Martyropathy is the result of an inversion born of ressentiment. The goal is no longer to realise an ideal, but to take leave of life by destroying the enemy in an apocalyptic vision that will put an end to life. Acceptance of the logic of martyrdom subordinates the death of both martyr and enemy to the realisation of a goal that will put an end to injustice, establish fairness and bring happiness to the whole world (or community). There is no fascination with death, no luxuriating in death and no quest for happiness in and through death. Martyropathy begins with a change of meaning: a deadly logic takes over from the logic governing the struggle for life and the pursuit of a frustrated ideal. (60)

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Von Schiiten lernen:
Der Reiz des Martyriums für sunnitische Gruppen in Pakistan und Afghanistan

Learning from Shiites:
How Conceptions of Martyrdom Appeal to Sunni Groups in Pakistan and Afghanistan

Simon Wolfgang Fuchs

Abstract

In this article, I argue that a prevalent focus on sectarianism in conceptualizing contemporary Sunni-Shiʻi relations has blinded us to important processes of intellectual appropriation and mimicry between the two communities. In the context of Pakistan and Afghanistan, I focus on the anti-Shiʻi group of the *Sipah-i Sahabah-i Pakistan* ("Army of the Companions of the Prophet", SSP) as well as Islamist Sunni groups active in the Afghan *jihad* against the Soviets during the 1980s in order to make the case that Shiʻism in general and Iran in particular remain important fixtures for the Sunni imagination. This rings especially true as far as the issue of martyrdom is concerned. In Pakistan, the SSP tried to actively counter the symbolic power of Shiʻi symbols and concepts, styling itself as producing superior Sunni martyrs. In Afghanistan, Sunni groups made sense of the *jihad* by applying Iranian lenses of martyrdom to their battlefield experiences.

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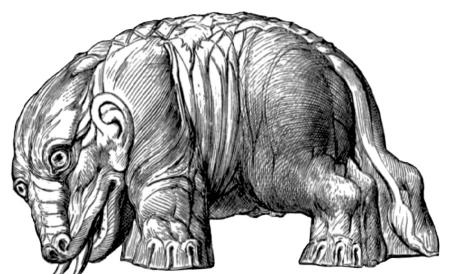
Syrien, der Irak, der derzeitige Konflikt im Jemen – die heutige Sichtweise auf das sunnitisch-schiitische Verhältnis in Forschung und öffentlicher Wahrnehmung ist in erster Linie von aktuellen und blutigen konfessionellen Konflikten geprägt. Dieser Gegensatz wird durch konfessionelle „identity entrepreneurs" und insbesondere durch die ausgeprägte geopolitischen Rivalität zwischen Saudi-Arabien und dem Iran noch verstärkt (Matthiesen 2014, 16ff.; Al-Rasheed 2017; Sadeghi-Boroujerdi 2017). Das Ziel meines Aufsatzes ist es nicht, diese schlüssige Lesart abzutun. Ich möchte vielmehr ihre Gültigkeit beziehungsweise ihre Implikationen für das moderne islamische Denken hinterfragen. Meines Erachtens hat der Fokus auf Rivalität oder gar aktive Bekämpfung des jeweils Anderen uns die Sicht verstellt für weitreichende Aspekte der Mimikry und Übernahme von wirkmächtigen schiitischen Symbolen durch sunnitische Gruppen im Laufe der letzten Jahrzehnte. Mein Verständnis für solche „mimetic processes" von Organisationen, die sich andere Organisationen zum Vorbild nehmen, ist dabei von Paul J. DiMaggio und Walter W. Powell (1983, 151) sowie von Homi Bhabha geprägt, der Mimikry vergleicht mit „camouflage, not a harmonization or repression of difference, but a form of resemblance that differs/defends presence by displaying it in part, metonymically" (1984, 131). Im Folgenden möchte ich zeigen, dass insbesondere schiitische Konzeptionen von religiöser Autorität und Martyrium einen großen Einfluss auf sunnitische Gruppen ausgeübt und diese stark fasziniert haben. Den Akteuren war es daran gelegen, das Martyrium als Distinktionsmerkmal und -diskurs sowie als „Erfolgsrezept" der Schiiten aufzugreifen, umzuformen und im sunnitischen Kontext fruchtbar zu machen. Dabei sehen wir durchaus Spannungen zwischen Formen der Appropriation, welche die schiitische Herkunft der Ideen ausblenden, um sie dennoch wortwörtlich zu übernehmen, sowie weitergehenden Versuchen, die Schiiten mit ihren „eigenen Waffen" zu schlagen, sunnitische Gegenentwürfe zu entwickelnd und so konzeptionelles Neuland zu betreten. Erstaunlicherweise sind es gerade die Gruppen und Vordenker, die sich die Bekämpfung der Schiiten auf die Fahne geschrieben haben, welche besonders empfänglich für derartig komplexe Formen der Aneignung und Übernahme scheinen.

Um den Reiz schiitischer Martyriumsvorstellungen und deren symbolischer Ausgestaltung für sunnitische Gruppen in Pakistan und Afghanistan nachweisen zu können, bedarf es einer gewissen Vorarbeit. Diese will ich zunächst liefern und in einem ersten Schritt aufzeigen, wie sich das schiitisch-sunnitische Verhältnis in der zweiten Hälfte des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts entwickelt hat, sowohl im globalen Rahmen als auch im spezifischen Kontext von Pakistan und Afghanistan. In diesem Zusammenhang begreife ich die iranische Revolution von 1978/79 als wichtige Epochenschwelle, die eindeutig zu einer Politisierung von antischiitischen Diskursen geführt hat. Ich habe dies bereits andernorts in detaillierterer Art und Weise ausgeführt (Fuchs 2019). Von Bedeutung für diesen Aufsatz und die sunnitische Übernahme von einzelnen Aspekten der schiitischen Symbolik ist insbesondere, dass es im vorrevolutionären Iran zu einer diskursiven Umformung des sogenannten „Karbalaparadigmas" kam. Dieses bezieht sich auf die Schlacht von Karbala, die im Jahr 680 n. Chr. auf dem Gebiet des heutigen Irak als innermuslimische

Auseinandersetzung stattfand. Schiiten beklagten und betrauerten über Jahrhunderte den Märtyrertod, den der dritte schiitische Imam und Enkel des Propheten Muhammad, Husayn b. ʿAli (626–680), dabei an ʿAschura, dem zehnten Tag des islamischen Monats Muharram, gegen eine militärische Übermacht erlittet hat. Maßgeblich geprägt durch die Umformulierungen des iranischen Intellektuellen ʿAli Schariʿati (1933–1977) stand nun aber seit den frühen 1970er Jahren nicht mehr allein das emotional aufgeladene Gedenken im Vordergrund. Vielmehr betonte Schariʿati die Verpflichtung, als Schiit stets gegen jedwede Formen von Ungerechtigkeit Stellung zu beziehen: Für ihn bedeutete Karbala nicht weniger als ein revolutionäres Handlungsmodell. Ayatollah Khomeini verstand es, diese Sichtweise gegen den iranischen Herrscher Schah Muhammad Reza Pahlavi (1919–1980) und seine „illegitime" Herrschaft zu wenden (Gölz 2018). In einem zweiten Schritt werde ich das generelle Phänomen der Nachahmung schiitischer Praktiken beleuchten, bevor wir drittens zum Kern des Aufsatzes kommen, der sunnitischen Faszination für schiitische Martyriumskonzeptionen im Kontext Pakistans und Afghanistans.

Die gescheiterte Annäherung: Salafisten und die Politisierung der konfessionellen Kritik

Rainer Brunner hat in einer grundlegenden Studie die Bemühungen um schiitisch-sunnitische Einheit im 20. Jahrhundert herausgearbeitet. Diese fand ihren bisherigen Höhepunkt 1959 mit einem Zeitungsinterview und späteren Rechtsgutachten *(fatwa)* des Rektors der renommierten al-Azhar Universität in Kairo, Mahmud Schaltut (1893–1963). Schaltut war es insbesondere daran gelegen, die Schia als eine weitere Rechtsschule *(madhhab, pl. madhahib)* zu akzeptieren. Er betonte, dass Muslime frei darin seien, sich einer der fünf muslimischen *madhahib* anzuschließen und schloss damit die jaʿfaritische, also schiitische, Schule explizit mit ein (Brunner 1996, 219f.).[1] Ein derartig ökumenischer Ansatz klammerte indes die wichtigsten Differenzen zwischen Sunniten und Schiiten aus, die im Feld der Theologie und eben weniger im Bereich des islamischen Rechts liegen. Insbesondere die Rolle der schiitischen Imame wurde im Interesse der angestrebten konfessionellen Harmonie beiseitegelassen. Schiitische Gläubige sprechen diesen herausgehobenen Nachkommen des Propheten eine umfassende und weitreichende politisch-religiöse Führerschaft über die muslimische Gemeinschaft zu. Laut schiitischem Verständnis verfügen die Imame über besondere esoterische und offenbarungsähnliche Einsichten, haben übermenschliche Fähigkeiten und spielen sogar eine kosmologische Rolle in der Erhaltung des Universums (Amirpur 2015, 48–125; Amir-Moezzi 2011). Sunniten hingegen sind der Überzeugung, dass der Prophet Muhammad es nach seinem Tod seinen engen Vertrauten, den Prophetengenossen *(sahaba)*, anheimgestellt hat, die muslimische Gemeinschaft zu führen. Den *sahaba* fehlen vergleichbare übermenschliche Qualitäten. Sie zeichnen sich in erster Linie durch ihren frommen Lebenswandel und das Privileg, Muhammads Verhalten aus nächster Nähe beobachtet zu haben, aus. Die Aussparung dieser substantiellen

[1] Jaʿfaritisch bezieht sich dabei auf den sechsten schiitischen Imam Jaʿfar al-Sadiq (gest. 765), der gemeinhin als der „Begründer" der schiitischen Rechtstradition gilt (al-Muzaffar 2000). Bei den übrigen sunnitischen Rechtsschulen handelt es sich um die hanafitische, malikitische, hanbalitische beziehungsweise schafiʿitische Richtung (Weiss 2006, 113-144).

theologischen Differenz im Interesse der Wahrung innerislamischer Harmonie stellte eine Schwachstelle der Annäherungsbemühungen dar. Diese machten sich in den 1960er und 1970er Jahren die Salafisten zu Nutze, für die insbesondere die Reinheit der Glaubenslehre im Vordergrund steht (Lohlker 2017). Sie liefen Sturm gegen die ökumenische Bewegung und betonten, dass (sunnitische) Muslime mit Schiiten nicht einmal den gleichen Korantext teilten. Angeblich respektierten die Schiiten nicht jenen Text, den Muslime weltweit als Grundlage ihres Glaubens erachteten. Vielmehr betrachteten Schiiten, so die polemische Argumentation, den Koran als von ihren Gegner verfälscht, da er keine explizite Erwähnung der Imame enthalte (Zahir 2008, 5–20; Brunner 2001, 71; Ismail 2016, 54–95; al-Khatib 1982). Mit der iranischen Revolution von 1979 änderte sich diese Gemengelage und argumentative Stoßrichtung grundlegend. Im Kontext von Pakistan waren es nun nicht länger „unpolitische" Salafis mit ihrem vorrangigen Interesse an „unverfälschten" islamischen Glaubensvorstellungen *('aqa'id, sg. 'aqida)*, die gegen die Schiiten im Allgemeinen und gegen Iran im Besonderen mobilmachten. Vielmehr traten nun sunnitische Akteure auf, die aus der Tradition des 1866 in Nordindien gegründeten muslimischen Seminars von Deoband kamen (Metcalf 1982; Ingram 2018), und welche den schiitischen Islam vor allem als politische Bedrohung begriffen. Der Iran unter der Führerschaft von Ayatollah Khomeini betrieb ihrer Ansicht nach eine aggressive und expansive Außenpolitik, die insbesondere auf die Verbreitung schiitischer Ideen und politischer Konzepte abzielte. Pakistan, das 1947 als große islamische Vision und als Heimstatt für die Muslime des Subkontinents gegründet worden war, war angeblich akut gefährdet (Tariq 2001, 456ff.). Das Land drohte seiner Rolle als modernes „Labor des Islams", gekennzeichnet durch eine offene („striving") Beziehung zur Religion und versehen mit einer globalen Mission, verlustig zu gehen (Khan 2012; Devji 2014). Der Sturz des Schahs, der eines der mächtigsten Regime im Nahen Osten regiert hatte, überraschte sowohl politische Beobachter wie enge Verbündete (Kurzman 2004). Die Etablierung einer islamischen Republik im Iran unter der Herrschaft eines charismatischen Rechtsgelehrten war ein Weckruf speziell für die weitere islamische Welt. Pakistanische Sunniten standen mit dieser Sichtweise keineswegs allein. Zwar findet sich eine Vielzahl an Äußerungen gerade islamistischer Akteure, die sich begeistert von der Revolution zeigten und auf iranische Angebote zur Zusammenarbeit eingingen, um gemeinsam den „Imperialismus" und „Materialismus" zu bekämpfen (Buchta 1997; Wolf 2017, 48f.; Dot-Pouillard 2008). Generell verschob sich aber Anfang der 1980er Jahre das positive Bild in relativ kurzer Zeit: Die Revolution wurde nicht länger als eine „islamische", sondern als eine rein „schiitische" wahrgenommen, die noch dazu exportiert werden sollte (Machhour/Roussillon 1982; Esposito 1990).

Pakistans Armee der Prophetengefährten und die Versuchung schiitischer Symbolik

Zur Bekämpfung der schiitischen Gefahr gründete sich in den frühen 1980er Jahren auf Initiative von Haqq Navaz Jhangvi (1952–1990) die Gruppe „Pakistans

Armee der Prophetengenossen" *(Sipah-i Sahabah-i Pakistan, SSP)* (Balakoti o.J.). Unter Jhangvis Führung verehrte die Organisation die Prophetengenossen, also enge Vertraute des Propheten Muhammads, in einer Art und Weise, die nur als sunnitische Antwort auf die schiitische Herausforderung und die besondere Stellung der schiitischen Imame verstanden werden kann. Hierbei begegnet uns also ein erster Aspekt von Nachahmung und Mimikry, den ich im Folgenden noch näher ausführen werde. Wichtig für die *Sipah-i Sahaba* wurde ein spezieller Ausspruch des Propheten: „Meine Gefährten sind wie Sterne; wer unter euch sie zur Orientierung verwendet, der wird recht geleitet werden." (*ashabi ka-l-nujum bi-ayyihim iqtadaytum ihtadaytum*) (Zaman 1998, 702f.). Dieses Zitat erhielt einen prominenten Platz auf der Flagge der Bewegung. Aktivisten der SPP setzten zur Verteidigung der *sahaba* an, deren Ehre angeblich durch immer neue polemische Publikationen aus dem Iran angegriffen werden würde. Ziel dieser hinterhältigen Strategie sei es, den Rückhalt unter Sunniten für das politische Modell des Kalifats zu schwächen. Denn wenn die sunnitische Bevölkerung Pakistans den Glauben an die Aufrichtigkeit der Prophetengenossen verlöre, dann wäre sie wohl in einem zweiten Schritt auch eher empfänglich für schiitische Interpretationen der frühen islamischen Geschichte und folglich auch für schiitische Vorstellungen zu islamischer religiöser Autorität (Faruqi o.J., 16ff.; Nomani 1988).

Als Teil der Verteidigungsstrategie strukturierte Haqq Navaz Jhangvi seine Vorträge analog zu schiitischen Trauerzeremonien, sogenannten *majalis (sg. majlis)*. Schiitische Redner beginnen diese wichtigen und regelmäßig stattfindenden Versammlungen zumeist mit einer Aufzählung der besonderen Vorzüge und Leistungen *(fada'il)* eines spezifischen Imams, bevor sie dann ihre Zuhörerschaft in die Trauerphase führen. Dieser emotional sehr aufgeladene Abschnitt zielt darauf ab, die Anwesenden dazu zu bewegen, ihrem Mitleiden mit dem Imam hörbar Ausdruck zu verleihen. Der Redner weist auf sämtliche Formen von Verfolgung und Anfeindung *(masa'ib)* hin, welche dem Imam widerfahren sind (Howarth 2011). In Ihrer Trauer bekennt die versammelte schiitische Gemeinde dabei auch öffentlich ihr in der Vergangenheit liegendes Unvermögen, ihren Führern in ausreichendem Maße beizustehen. Haqq Navaz Jhangvi ließ eine solche programmatische Zweiteilung in mimetischer Absicht nun auch den Prophetengenossen zuteilwerden (Faruqi o.J., 15). Darüber hinaus forderte er, dass Pakistan in einen explizit *sunnitischen* Staat verwandelt werden sollte, analog zum Iran, der angeblich allein nach einer solchen schiitischen Logik operiere.[2] SSP-Aktivisten warfen ihrem Nachbarland nichts Geringeres vor, als systematisch seine sunnitische Minderheit zu verfolgen. Angeblich seien bereits im ersten Jahr nach der Revolution 20.000 Sunniten hingerichtet worden, ohne je einen fairen Gerichtsprozess erhalten zu haben; der Vorwurf, Anhänger des abgesetzten Schahs zu sein, hätte für die Vollziehung der Todesstrafe ausgereicht (Faruqi 1984, 88). Sunniten sei es zudem explizit verboten, sich für ihre Rechte einzusetzen. Sie seien nicht in der Armee, der Justiz oder im Parlament der Islamischen Republik vertreten, obwohl sie angeblich bis zu vierzig Prozent der Bevölkerung ausmachten (Qasim 1998, 278f.).[3] Als erster Schritt zum geforderten sunnitischen Staat, in welchem derlei Diskriminierung nach iranischem Vorbild vergolten werden

[2] Nach dem derzeitigen Stand der Forschung ist es nicht möglich zu beurteilen, ob bei Haqq Navaz Jhangvi die Revolution ursprünglich als rein „islamisches" Ereignis auf eine positive Resonanz stieß, diese Hoffnung aber durch das Überhandnehmen schiitischer Symbolik „enttäuscht" wurde. In diesem Zusammenhang beschäftige ich mich derzeit im Rahmen eines weiteren Forschungsprojekts damit, auch weiterführende Reaktionen von Deobandi-Gelehrten zur Iranischen Revolution zu untersuchen.

[3] Unabhängig verifizierbare Zahlen für den Anteil der sunnitischen Bevölkerung liegen für den Iran aufgrund ihrer politischen Sensibilität nicht vor. Plausibler erscheint allerdings, von einem sunnitischen Bevölkerungsanteil zwischen fünf und zehn Prozent der iranischen Gesamtbevölkerung auszugehen.

sollte, gelte es bereits jetzt, jegliche Beleidigung der Prophetengefährten als ein Kapitalverbrechen zu werten. Die bestehenden Blasphemiegesetze in Pakistan, welche bisher nur die Herabsetzung Gottes und des Propheten unter Strafe stellten, sollten diesbezüglich ergänzt[4] und nicht-sunnitische gottesdienstliche Handlungen sollten verboten werden. Die *Sipah-i Sahaba* verlangten auch die Anpassung sämtlicher Lehrpläne in Pakistan, so dass diese nur noch exklusiv die sunnitische Deutung der frühislamischen Geschichte widerspiegelten. Konsequenterweise sollten Schiiten dann auch zu einer nicht-muslimischen Minderheit erklärt werden, analog zu den Maßnahmen, die der pakistanische Staat bereits gegenüber der Religionsgemeinschaft der *Ahmadis* ergriffen hatte (Balakoti o.J., 56-69).[5]

Nach der Ermordung Jhangvis im Jahre 1990 setzen seine Nachfolger diesen Kurs der polemischen Spiegelung und Appropriation schiitischer Aspekte nicht nur fort, sondern vertieften die Strategie gar noch. Der SSP-Führer und Deobandi-Gelehrte Ziya al-Rahman Faruqi (1953–1997), der selbst wiederum 1997 einem Attentat zum Opfer fiel, hob die Prophetengefährten in noch erhabenere Höhen als Jhangvi dies jemals getan hatte. Zuerst freilich war es ihm daran gelegen, deren Anzahl signifikant zu vergrößern. Laut seiner Zählung ließen sich 144.000 frühe Muslime zu den Prophetengenossen zählen; eine Schätzung, die noch die weitreichendsten Angaben in der islamischen Geschichte überstieg (Faruqi 2001a, 2:388).[6] Für Faruqi war die Zahl entscheidend, demonstrierte sie doch, wie erfolgreich der Prophet seine Botschaft in die Welt gebracht hatte. Gleichzeitig war das Ziel dieser Argumentationslinie, den Schiiten jegliche Deutungshoheit über die Nachfolge Muhammads abzusprechen. Für Faruqi galt eine solche Vielzahl an Gefährten als die ultimative Bestätigung der sunnitischen Orthodoxie – die Richtigkeit einer Lehrmeinung an der schieren Mehrzahl ihrer Vertreter abzulesen, bleibt jedoch autoreferentiell. Somit ist es nicht verwunderlich, dass *sawad-i a'zam* („die große Mehrheit") eine der Selbstbezeichnungen von Sunniten in Pakistan darstellt. Zugleich bestand Faruqi darauf, dass die *sahaba* einen essentiellen Teil des Korans darstellten. Nicht nur in dieser Hinsicht seien sie den schiitischen Imamen überlegen, die dort keine Erwähnung fänden. Faruqi traf damit allerdings eine Aussage, die selbst seine gelehrten Kollegen verwunderte. Laut seiner Deutung hatten mehr als 700 Verse die Prophetengenossen zum Inhalt. Im Vergleich bezögen sich lediglich 27 Verse auf Jesus, 19 auf Mose und gerade einmal neun auf Abraham. Als er diese Thesen während eines Besuchs in Bangladesch vortrug, erhoben sich die religiösen Gelehrten *('ulama)*, die mit ihm auf dem Podium saßen, und verliehen ihrem großen Erstaunen laut Ausdruck: „Uns wurde niemals zuvor der Koran in so einer Art und Weise gelehrt, dass Gott die gesamte Gemeinschaft der *sahaba* als derart vollkommen *(kamyab)* in ihrer Position als Gruppe bezeichnet hat!" (Faruqi 2001b, 2:356) Faruqi ging in seiner polemischen Aufladung des Konzepts der *sahaba* und der Betonung ihrer Überlegenheit gegenüber den schiitischen Imamen noch weiter und argumentierte, dass Gott selbst sich dazu gezwungen gesehen habe, die Ehre der Prophetengenossen zu verteidigen. Um dies zu untermauern, offerierte der Gelehrte eine Neuinterpretation eines Vorfalls, der sich zwischen dem Propheten und einem Mann namens Ibn Umm Maktum zugetragen haben

[4] Die Blasphemiegesetze, die unlängst wieder durch den Fall Asia Bibis für internationales Aufsehen gesorgt haben, stammen in ihrer Grundstruktur noch aus der britischen Kolonialzeit, wurden aber gerade zur Regierungszeit des Militärdiktators Zia ul-Haq (1977–1988) signifikant verschärft (Siddique/Hayat 2008).

[5] Die *Ahmadis* betrachten sich selbst als Muslime. Allerdings besteht eine Spannung zwischen ihrem Glauben an das Prophetentum ihres Gemeinschaftsgründer Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835–1908) sowie der muslimischen Überzeugung, dass Muhammad der letzte von Gott an die Menschheit gesandte Prophet sei (Qasmi 2015).

[6] Für einen Überblick über muslimische Konzeptionen der Prophetengefährten, siehe Jabali 2003 und Osman 2013.

soll. Letzterer war nicht nur blind, sondern verfügte auch über eine unklare Herkunft. Sein Name bedeutet in Übersetzung „Sohn der Mutter Maktum". Sein Vater war demnach unbekannt und er war nur über den Namen seiner Mutter identifiziert – ein großes Manko im tribalen Kontext von Medina. Der Prophet übertrug Ibn Umm Maktum gerade wegen seiner Unbedeutendheit oftmals die Aufgabe, an seiner Statt das Gebet zu leiten, wenn er auf Feldzüge ging und die Stadt verlassen musste (Landau-Tasseron 1998, 69). Obgleich Ibn Umm Maktum also ein enger Gefährte Muhammads war, konnte dieser Mann dem Propheten keinesfalls gefährlich werden. Er verfügte schlicht über keine Hausmacht oder Einfluss. Die muslimische Auslegungstradition bringt nun die ersten Verse der achtzigsten Sura mit Ibn Umm Maktum in Verbindung. Dort wird der Prophet von Gott dafür gescholten, seinen blinden Gefährten zurückgewiesen zu haben. Dieser hatte ein Treffen unterbrochen, das Muhammad mit Führern seines Stammes der Quraysch abgehalten hatte. Die Delegation der Männer war aus Mekka eingetroffen und der Prophet hoffte, sie von der Annahme des Islams überzeugen zu können. Nach Auffassung klassischer Exegeten verhielt sich Muhammad insofern falsch, als er die unpassenden weltlichen Kriterien der Allokation von Status und Wichtigkeit anwandte und nicht die eigentliche Unterscheidung zwischen Muslimen und Ungläubigen berücksichtigte (Thanavi 1978, 12:76ff.). Ziya al-Rahman Faruqi interpretierte die Szene jedoch von einer gänzlich anderen Warte. Für ihn lag der wahre Grund für die direkte Intervention Gottes – in Form einer koranischen Offenbarung – darin, dass Muhammad einem *seiner Gefährten* mangelnden Respekt erwiesen hatte:

> Gott vermochte es nicht zu ertragen, dass ein blinder Gefährte aus der Versammlung des Propheten entfernt wurde. Aber heute behauptet Khomeini – er sei vielfach verflucht – dass sie [die *sahaba*, SWF] alle Ungläubige seien *(khuda to nabine (sic) sahabi ko nabi ki mahfil se utha hu'a nahin dekh sakt... aur aj Khumayni kah keh ye sare kafir the ... (la'nat be shumar).* (Faruqi 2001b, 358f.)

Gott selbst sei also nicht in der Lage, sich zurückzuhalten, sobald es um die Ehre der Gefährten gehe. Faruqi schlussfolgerte, dass daher auch sunnitische Muslime heutzutage nicht passiv bleiben dürften. Wenn er selbst nicht seine Stimme erhebe, bedeute dies, dass er sich gegen die Gepflogenheiten Gottes richte. Der SSP-Führer richtete folgenden Appell an seine Mitstreiter in der Organisation und darüber hinaus:

> Ihr seid verpflichtet, die Zunge dessen herauszureißen, der sich abschätzig über Abu Bakr [der erste Kalif (Regierungszeit 632–634), SWF] äußert, und den Stift zu zerbrechen, der derartiges über ihn schreibt *(to jo zaban siddiq ko bhaunkegi un ko khincna tumhara farz he, jo qalam likhega use torna tumhara farz he).* (ebd., 363)

Heutzutage ist die SSP aufgrund ihrer radikalen konfessionellen Haltung in Pakistan verboten, hat sich aber mehrfach mit neuer Bezeichnung wieder gegründet. Ihre derzeitige Manifestation unter dem Namen *Ahl-i Sunnat wa-l-Jama'at* („Leute des Prophetischen Exempels und der Gemeinschaft",

ASWJ)**[7]** eignet sich weiterhin schiitische und iranisch-revolutionäre Konzepte und Symbole für ihre eigenen Zwecke an und deutet diese von einem sunnitischen Blickwinkel aus um. Dies geschieht mit dem klaren Ziel, diese zu neutralisieren und zu transzendieren. Dazu möchte ich zwei Beispiele anführen: Im Iran hatte es sich nach der Revolution eingebürgert, die überzeugten Anhänger Khomeinis und seines revolutionären Programms als Gefolgsleute der „Linie des Imams" *(khatt-i imam)* zu bezeichnen (Reda 2014). Die ASWJ übernahm diese Sprachregelung und ermutigt ihre Anhänger, sich an nichts anderem als der „Linie von Haqq Navaz Jhangvi" zu orientieren (Ludhiyanvi 2007a, 113; Ludhiyanvi 2007b, 76). Darüber hinaus preist die Organisation diejenigen ihrer Aktivisten in besonderem Maße, welche bereit sind, ein Drittel ihres Einkommens in den Dienst der ASWJ zu stellen (Kalyanavi 2014). Die Signifikanz dieser Verlautbarungen wird deutlich, wenn wir uns vergegenwärtigen, dass Schiiten verpflichtet sind, zwanzig Prozent ihres Einkommens *(khums)* an denjenigen Großayatollah abzugeben, dem sie in Rechtsfragen folgen *(taqlid)* (Sachedina 1980). Die ASWJ ist also auch in dieser Hinsicht bestrebt, die religiöse Hingabe der Schiiten durch ein rivalisierendes Konzept noch zu überbieten. Die betriebene Mimikry zielt also nicht darauf ab, die Unterschiede einzuebnen und schiitische Konzepte allzu offensichtlich zu übernehmen. Sunnitische Akteure setzen vielmehr bewusst „camouflage" im Sinne von Bhabha ein, um die intellektuelle Herkunft und Inspiration ihrer Konzepte einerseits zu verschleiern, für sie wirkmächtige Aspekte aber andererseits in ihr Gedankengebäude zu integrieren.

Das Problem des Martyriums

Nachdem ich einige Beispiele sunnitischer Mimikry von schiitischen Glaubensgrundsätzen und Praktiken aufgezeigt habe, möchte ich nun darlegen, welche Formen diese Übernahme im Bereich von Martyriumskonzeptionen annimmt. In ihrem Bemühen, die schiitische Symbolik zu übertrumpfen, machte sich die ASWJ daran, ihren eigenen Märtyrern in sehr spezieller Art und Weise zu huldigen. Dies ist insofern von Belang, da der schiitische Iran in der historischen Rahmung von Revolution und Krieg einen nachhaltigen Märtyrerkult entwickelt hat, der einerseits die religiöse Öffentlichkeit und „islamische Rede" prägt, andererseits aber auch einen sublimen Mobilisierungsdiskurs anbietet, den der sunnitische Islam in dieser Signifikanz nicht aufweist.**[8]** Auf einem Video, das anlässlich eines extra ausgerufenen „Märtyrertages" veröffentlicht wurde, ist beispielsweise ein Zitat dieser mimetisch adaptierten schiitischen Märtyrerverehrung zu sehen: Anführer der Organisation nehmen sich in geradezu zärtlicher Art und Weise der Söhne und Brüder von getöteten ASWJ Mitgliedern an. Die religiösen Gelehrten helfen den Kindern dabei in den Swimmingpool eines eigens angemieteten Ferienresorts in der Nähe von Karatschi. Sie schubsen die Kleinen auf der Schaukel an und verteilen Süßigkeiten. Diese friedlichen Szenen werden unterbrochen von dem Bemühen, den Kindern konfessionelle Slogans zu entlocken, sowie durch antischiitische Reden der *ʿulama* aus dem Leitungskreise der ASWJ (Ahl-e Sunnat Media Cell 2016a).**[9]**

[7] Der derzeitige Name ist eine durchaus perfide Wahl, da hierbei die gängige Eigenbezeichnung der Sunniten als Organisationsname verwendet wird. Auf diese Art und Weise versucht die ASWJ zu suggerieren, dass sie als Organisation mitsamt ihrer dezidiert anti-schiitischen Haltung auf dem festen Boden der gesamten sunnitischen Tradition steht.

[8] Die Beschränkungen dieses Artikels erlauben es mir leider nicht, hier eine ausführlichere Untersuchung der Bedeutung des Martyriumskonzepts für die iranische Gesellschaft zu unternehmen. Sowohl der Mythos von Karbala als auch die Betrachtung des Iran-Irak Krieges durch die Linse des Martyriums ist aber bis heute von essentieller Bedeutung in der Islamische Republik und dabei auch einer beständigen Uminterpretation unterworfen. Vergleiche hierzu den Beitrag von Olmo Gölz im selben Band, siehe auch Kamran 2004 und Devictor 2015.

Ein eindrückliches Beispiel stellt auch die orchestrierte Erinnerung an eine gewalttätige Auseinandersetzung dar, die sich im Juli 2007 in Pakistans Hauptstadt Islamabad zugetragen hat. Damals standen sich die pakistanische Regierung inklusive dem Militär und militante Islamisten, die sich in der berüchtigten Roten Moschee *(Lal Masjid)* verschanzt hatten, gegenüber. Der Zugriff der Sicherheitskräfte am 10. und 11. Juli hatte mindestens einhundert Todesopfer zur Folge. Der finalen Konfrontation vorausgegangen war ein lange schwelender Konflikt zwischen der Moschee, die sich als traditionalistische Enklave inmitten der Urbanität von Islamabad verstand, gewissermaßen als ein „surrogate space to the decadent city". Ein Dozent des angegliederten religiösen Seminars, der *Jamia Faridia*, drückte es folgendermaßen aus: „The declared objective of our *madrasa* is to safeguard the Islamic heritage of the Muslims and to become a point of reference for a region subjugated to western influence and dedicated to unchaste pleasures: Islamabad needs such a *madrasa*." (Blom 2011, 155). In den 18 Monaten vor dem Angriff des Militärs auf den Komplex hatten sich die Auseinandersetzungen noch einmal verschärft: Studenten der Moscheeschule hatten in deren Umfeld eine Kampagne gegen „Amoral" gestartet. Dabei hatten sie angebliche Prostituierte entführt, DVDs verbrannt, ein eigenes Gerichtssystem etabliert und waren nicht davor zurückgeschreckt, zum Sturz der pakistanischen Regierung aufzurufen (Abbas 2014).

Die ASWJ hatte keinerlei Schwierigkeiten damit, das Seminar und seine religiösen Führerpersönlichkeiten, die stets durch antischiitische Positionen von sich reden gemacht hatten, für sich zu reklamieren. In öffentlichkeitswirksamen Veranstaltungen gedachte die Organisation der blutigen bewaffneten Auseinandersetzung. ASWJ-Führer 'Ali Sher Haydari (1963–2009) ging so weit zu behaupten, dass das Massaker von Karbala im Jahre 680, nichts weniger als der Gründungsmythos des schiitischen Islams, hinter den Ereignissen in Islamabad zurückstehen müsse. In der pakistanischen Hauptstadt seien signifikant mehr Frauen und Kinder zu Tode gekommen als durch den Angriff umayyadischer Truppen auf al-Husayn und seine Getreuen bei Karbala. In der Schlacht im heutigen Irak des Jahres 680 hatten die umzingelten Kämpfer über genügend Proviant verfügt. Den in der Roten Moschee für eine Woche Eingeschlossenen hätte es hingegen an allem gemangelt, so dass ihnen nichts anderes übriggeblieben sei, als Guavenblätter zu essen (Ludhiyanvi 2007c, 282). In Karbala waren al-Husayn und seine Mitstreiter für die Dauer von drei Tagen von der Wasserversorgung abgeschnitten, während in Islamabad die Seminaristen und ihre Familien schon am ersten Tag der Belagerung über kein Trinkwasser mehr verfügt hätten. Anders als im Falle al-Husayns gab es für die in der Roten Moschee verschanzten Islamisten keine Möglichkeit, vor ihrem eigenen Martyrium eine rituelle Waschung *(ghusl)* vorzunehmen. Zudem wäre die Schlacht bei Karbala im offenen Gelände und also in einem religiös neutralen Rahmen geführt worden, wohingegen in Pakistan Menschen, die in einer Moschee Zuflucht gesucht hätten, angegriffen worden seien (Haydari 2010, 264). Zusammenfassend lässt sich also laut 'Ali Sher Haydari sagen, dass die Belagerung der Roten Moschee von einer ganz anderen Qualität gewesen sei, was die Grausamkeit *(sakhti)*, das Leid *(dukh)*, die Sorgen der Betroffenen

[9] Vergleiche auch den Auftritt eines Sohnes des 2003 ermordeten SSP-Anführers Tariq Azam (Ahl-e Sunnat Media Cell 2016b).

(parishani), die Komponenten des Opfers *(qurbani)* und die Unterdrückung *(zulm ō sitam)* angeht (ebd., 265).[10] Mit seiner Argumentation unterstrich 'Ali Sher Haydari nicht nur seine Forderung nach radikalem politischem Wandel in Pakistan. Er stilisierte vielmehr auch Sunniten zu überlegenen Märtyrern und versuchte, das schiitische Gedankengebäude fundamental anzugreifen bzw. mit seinen eigenen Waffen zu schlagen.

Martyriumskonzeptionen auf der anderen Seite des Hindukusch

Der starke Einfluss schiitischer Symboliken und Bilderwelten war nicht auf Pakistan beschränkt. Er wird auch sichtbar im Kontext des *Jihads* gegen die Sowjetunion, die 1979 in Afghanistan einmarschiert war, um dem dortigen kommunistischen Regime Unterstützung zu leisten (Kalinovsky 2009). Auch hier wird deutlich, dass sunnitische Denker und Gruppen in substantieller Art und Weise von der iranischen Revolution beeinflusst waren. Entgegen landläufiger Meinungen gab es kaum offene anti-schiitische Rhetorik unter den sieben von Pakistan als „offizielle" Vertreter anerkannten afghanischen Parteien, die mit bewaffneten Flügeln im *Jihad* kämpften.[11] Burhan al-Din Rabbani (1940–2011), Führer der islamistischen *Jam'iyyat-i Islami* („Islamische Gemeinschaft"), tat sich beispielsweise mit der Forderung hervor, dass die „schiitischen Brüder" in eine Übergangsregierung nach dem Abzug der Sowjetunion einbezogen werden sollten (Rabbani 1990a, 43). Dazu kam es freilich aus vielerlei Gründen nicht (Rubin 1995, 248–255; Rieck 1999). Eine dezidiert anti-schiitische Haltung hatte nur der religiöse Gelehrte und Führer der „Gesellschaft für das Predigen des Korans und der Sunna in Afghanistan" *(Jama'at al-Da'wa ila al-Qur'an wa-l-Sunna)*, Mawlawi Muhammad Husayn (a.k.a. Jamil al-Rahman, 1939–1991). Ihm gelang es, im Jahre 1991 ein flüchtiges salafistisches Emirat in Kunar zu etablieren. Er erreichte aber nie das Ziel, mit seiner Gruppierung als eine weitere offizielle afghanische Partei anerkannt zu werden (Dorronsoro 2005, 230ff.; Bell 2016). Wie wir zu Beginn dieses Artikels schon gesehen haben, stehen für Salafisten vor allem die Unterschiede in der Glaubenslehre im Vordergrund. Auch für Jamil al-Rahman war die Frage nach der „unverfälschten" Überzeugung *('aqida)* entscheidend und stellte eine analytische Kategorie in der Bewertung der Schiiten dar. Er betonte die weitreichenden und tiefgehenden Differenzen zwischen den beiden Konfessionen *(khilafatna ma'hum [...] fi-l-usul)*. Schiiten hätten stets die „wahre islamische Religion" *(din)* gehasst. Sie hätten in ihren Herzen den Verrat genährt und darauf hingearbeitet, dem Glauben an Gottes Einheit *(tauhid)* Schaden zuzufügen (Rahman 1989, 18). Politische Macht mit den Schiiten zu teilen, obwohl diese die Gefährten des Propheten hassten, diese verfluchten und stets Muslime irreführen wollten, würde bedeuten, dass eine solche Regierung niemals als islamisch *(hukuma islamiyya)* gelten könne (al-Mujahid 1989, 17). Meiner Ansicht nach stellt die relative Marginalität solcher Aussagen den oftmals behaupteten saudischen Einfluss auf den *Jihad* in Afghanistan insgesamt in Frage (Li 2012, 30).

Stattdessen wird deutlich, dass auch hier verschiedene sunnitische

[10] Die Schiiten hoben ihrerseits die besondere Grausamkeit von Husayns Gegner Yazid hervor: Er habe für den Angriff bewusst den Zeitpunkt des freitäglichen Gemeinschaftsgebet gewählt, er habe das in der Wüste lebensnotwendige Element des Wassers seinen Feinden verweigert und er sei auch nicht davor zurückgeschreckt, Kinder zu töten (Fischer 1980, 19f.).

[11] Eine nähere Beschreibung der einzelnen Parteien und den Versuch einer Einordnung gemäß ihrer Ziele und islamischer Ausrichtung bieten Dorronsoro (2005, 149–169) und Rubin (1995, 203–223).

Gruppen, die in Afghanistan kämpften, sich bestimmte schiitische Symbole aneigneten. Diese Symbole waren oftmals durch die iranische Revolution gespiegelt. Solch eine Appropriation wird anhand eines anonymen Artikels in der Zeitschrift *Schafaq* deutlich, die der *Hizb-i Islami* („Islamischen Partei") von Gulbuddin Hikmatyar (*1949) zuzurechnen ist. Die *Hizb-i Islami* war dabei nicht irgendeine Partei: Obgleich ihre Bedeutung später schwand, gilt sie als die einflussreichste islamistische Gruppierung vor und nach der sowjetischen Invasion. Mitsamt ihrem straffen hierarchischen Aufbau schuf sie ein Organisationsmodell, das andere Parteien des afghanischen Widerstandes nachzuahmen suchten (Edwards 2002, 178). Besagter Artikel in *Schafaq* verortete nun die vielen Opfer der afghanischen Nation im Kontext von *'Aschura* und griff direkt einen Slogan der iranischen Revolution auf. Laut *Schafaq* ereignete sich nämlich *'Aschura* nicht nur am 10. *Muharram*, dem Jahrestag der Schlacht von Karbala, sondern an jedem einzelnen Tag aufs Neue. Dies bedeute auch, dass ganz Afghanistan sich ständig in den Ort des Martyriums von al-Husayn verwandle *(dar Afghanistan har ruz ruz-i 'Ashura ast war har zamin sar-i zamin-i Karbala)* (Hizb-i Islami Hikmatyar 1985, 35). Eine andere Ausgabe der Zeitschrift enthält einen Artikel in Dari, der die Bedeutung des Martyriums im islamischen Kontext näher beleuchtet. Der Autor betont, dass das angemessene Gedenken Husayns mehr ist als das bloße Abhalten von Trauerzeremonien und ritueller Selbstkasteiung. Das Exempel von Karbala erfordere es vielmehr, dass alle Afghanen al-Husayn auf dem Pfad der Selbstopferung nachfolgten:

> Heute ist das Blut des hoch erhabenen Imam Husayns und seiner *mujahidin*-Freunde einmal mehr und an einem anderen Karbala zum Kochen gebracht worden, nämlich im Märtyrer-geprüften Afghanistan. Die Angehörigen der kämpfenden afghanischen Nation *(millat-i mujahid-i Afghan)* sind die wahren Erben al-Husayns *(warisan-i bar haqq-i Husayn)* […]. Sie haben einen Aufstand initiiert gegen die vom Glauben Abgefallenen der heutigen Zeit und haben auf al-Husayns Ruf „Gibt es jemanden, der uns zu Hilfe eilt?" *(hal min nasir yansurna)* geantwortet mit „Wir sind hier" *(labbayk)*! Sie erwirken die Rettung des Islams und der Muslime aus den blutigen Klauen der Feinde der Menschheit *(dushmanan-i bashariyyat)*. (Puya 1987)

Die angeführten Belege aus sunnitisch-islamistischen Zeitschriften Afghanistans der 1980er Jahre unterstreichen also die Wirkmacht schiitischer Revolutionsrhetorik über enge konfessionelle Grenzen hinaus. Bemerkenswert ist, dass hierbei das mimetische Aufgreifen durch sunnitische Autoren eine signifikant andere Qualität aufweist als in den vorher genannten pakistanischen Beispielen. Im Kontext des afghanischen *Jihads* wird die iranische Rhetorik nahezu ohne Abwandlung oder weitere Umformung wortwörtlich übernommen, ohne freilich deren schiitische Provenienz näher zu benennen.

Wir stoßen zudem auf das Phänomen, dass sunnitische Kommandeure des *Jihads* sich schiitisch klingende Namen wie „Freund von Husayn" *(Husayn Yar)* zulegten, um ihre Hingabe zur Mission des Prophetenenkels auszudrücken (A'zami 1987, 307). Autoren in den *Mujahidin*-Magazinen argumentierten

zudem, dass Afghanistan derzeit einen anderen „Großen Satan" bekämpfe als Khomeinis islamische Republik, die diese Bezeichnung für die Vereinigten Staaten verwendete (Beeman 2008). Der „große Satan" Afghanistans sei die Sowjetunion (Sayyaf 1987, 14). Diese unternehme alles in ihrer Macht stehende, um die Errichtungen einer rein islamischen Regierung in Kabul – und folglich die Etablierung eines „zweiten Iran" – zu verhindern *(ta ke us khite men dusra Iran na ban ja'e)* (Sami'ullah 1989, 27).

Inmitten dieser Stimmen muss auch noch einmal auf Burhan al-Din Rabbani von der *Jam'iyyat-i Islami* verwiesen werden. Er war sicherlich derjenige sunnitische Kriegsherr und Milizenführer, der das engste Verhältnis zum Iran pflegte. Die *Jam'iyyat-i Islami* unterhielt während der gesamten *Jihad*-Periode Büros in Teheran (Rubin 1995, 218ff.). Michael Pohly sieht gar eine starke Affinität zwischen jener Spielart des Islamismus, wie sie von der Islamischen Republik gepflegt wird, und derjenigen der *Jam'iyyat-i Islami*. Seiner Ansicht nach waren es vor allem materielle Vorteile, die Rabbani sich von dieser Allianz erhoffte, wie Pohly 1992 formuliert: Sollte „Teheran von seiner bisherigen Bevorzugung der *Schi'iten* Abstand nehmen und *ǧam-ʿīat* materiell unter die Arme greifen (wozu es allerdings kaum noch in der Lage sein dürfte), dann würde *ǧam -īat* womöglich zu den Iranern überlaufen" (Pohly 1992, 162). Rabbani drückte offen seine Bewunderung dafür aus, dass Iran eine Gesellschaft geschaffen habe, die ihren Mitgliedern einen Geist der Revolution *(inqilab)* einpräge; vor allem trotz des Drucks von ausländischen Mächten, ökonomischen Problemen und des Kriegs gegen den Irak. Rabbani verlieh seiner Hoffnung Ausdruck, dass der zukünftige islamische Staat in Afghanistan ein weiterer „Zufluchtsort" für das Modell des islamischen Erwachens, wie es von der Islamischen Republik Iran propagiert wurde, werden könne *(yiki az panagahha wa payagahayi-yi nahzatha-yi Islami dar pahluyi-yi jumhuri-yi Islami-yi Iran qarar girad)* (Rabbani 1990b, 12). Afghanistan füllte diese Rolle schon in gewisser Weise aus, fungierte es doch damals als eine „revolutionäre Universität" für alle anderen islamischen Aufstände in der Islamischen Welt (Rabbani 1990c, 81).

Zusammenfassung

Das Momentum der innerislamischen Ökumene ist zum Erliegen bekommen. Während eines Forschungsaufenthalts in Kairo im Jahre 2016 konnte ich mich selbst im Umfeld der *al-Azhar* Universität davon überzeugen, dass von dem Erbe Mahmud Schaltuts nahezu nichts mehr übrig ist. Fast alle Buchläden im Umfeld der Universität haben anti-schiitische und anti-iranische Literatur prominent im Programm. Die einzige Ausnahme bilden solche Händler, die sich auf mystische Literatur spezialisieren. Noch trüber sieht die Situation online und bei den vielen konfessionellen Satellitenstationen aus (Siegel 2015; Abdo 2017). Im vorliegenden Artikel habe ich argumentiert, dass diese düstere Bestandsaufnahme uns allerdings oft davon abhält, der gegenseitigen Wahrnehmung und Beeinflussung zwischen den islamischen Konfessionen die Beachtung zu schenken, die sie verdient. Ich bin der Auffassung, dass die elaborierte schiitische Symbolik, welche nach der iranischen Revolution von

1979 mit großer Macht auf die Weltbühne drängte, für sunnitische Gruppen weltweit eine Herausforderung darstellte. Dies trifft insbesondere für die starke Sogwirkung und die Anziehungskraft des schiitischen Martyriums als politischem Mobilisierungskurs zu, wie ich im Laufe dieses Beitrags gezeigt habe. Die weitaus nüchternere, weniger emotional aufgeladene Form des sunnitischen Islams hatte dem wenig entgegenzusetzen – zumindest in ihrer islamistischen Version oder Deobandi Spielart.[12] Aus diesem Grund versuchten die in diesem Aufsatz untersuchten Gruppen in Pakistan und Afghanistan, bestimmte schiitische Konzeptionen, insbesondere im Bereich der Martyriumsvorstellungen, zu übernehmen und sunnitisch umzuformen. In Pakistan ging dies mit einer Überhöhung der Prophetengefährten einher, die so mit den schiitischen Imamen konzeptionell konkurrieren sollten. Darüber hinaus sollten sunnitische Martyriumserlebnisse den schiitischen Karbalamythos marginalisieren und seiner Faszination berauben. In Afghanistan hingegen zeigten sich eine Vielzahl von islamistischen Gruppen offen dafür, schiitische Rhetorik in ihren *Jihad* zu integrieren, um so bei der Bevölkerung und ihren Anhängern Durchhaltevermögen und Akzeptanz für eine Weiterführung des Konfliktes zu schaffen. Die bestehende Forschung hat derlei Formen von Mimikry und Appropriation – der kreativen Übernahme und Anpassung – nicht die Bedeutung zugemessen, die sie verdient. Es steht zu vermuten, dass Einzelstudien zu weiteren geographischen und thematischen Aspekten des sunnitisch-schiitischen Verhältnisses noch eine Vielzahl weiterer Manifestationen solch eines Transfers zutage fördern würden. Es bleibt zu hoffen, dass in Zukunft noch mehr Kolleginnen und Kollegen diese Anregung mit ihrer jeweiligen sprachlichen und lokalen Expertise aufgreifen, sodass wir ein besseres Verständnis derartig komplexer Aushandlungsprozesse im Islam der Gegenwart gewinnen.

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[12] Im sufischen Milieu ließen sich eventuell noch ganz andere Dynamiken beobachten. Der Umgang sunnitischer Akteuren mit diesem Hintergrund stellt ein weiteres vielversprechendes Forschungsfeld dar, das für die Moderne noch viel zu wenig erforscht ist.

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The Structure and Visual Rhetoric of the Martyrdom Video:

An Enquiry into the Martyrdom Video Genre

Yorck Beese

Abstract

Since its inception in the 1980s, the genre of vehicular martyrdom videos has served to promote radical Islam. Its history has been generally unsystematic but it has led to the development of several story elements and formal requirements whose occurrence in martyrdom videos has become a contingency. In going beyond the structure of the martyrdom attack genre, this article provides an exemplary analysis of the visual rhetoric of the martyrdom video based on an adapted reading of Roland Barthes' *Rhetoric of the Image*, adapted for the analysis of audiovisual content. The effectiveness of the genre in matters of recruitment is found in the genre's use of pathos: the genre suggests that a martyr goes to the beyond and, from that place, sends a message to this world. This is most evident in the visual language of the genre which is ideologically informed on the level of connotation.

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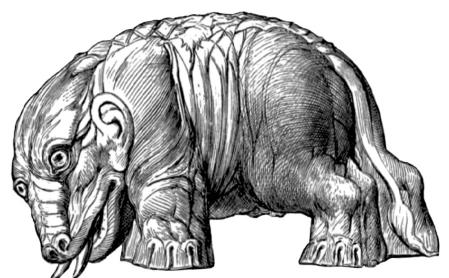
With its origins in the 1980s, the martyrdom video started off as a rare and generally unsystematic genre. Footage of martyrdom attacks has cropped up in various types of video since, but especially in jihadist propaganda. While numbers of martyrdom deeds are difficult to compile, a few regional statistics are available. Notably, Mohammed M. Hafez (2007) writes that suicide attacks in Iraq between 2003 and 2006 totalled more than 300 with 70% being vehicle based. Charlie Winter's 2015 to 2016 study of Islamic State suicide attacks came to a similar result, concluding that 70% of the 923 suicide attacks recorded were vehicle based. As time progressed, not only have martyrdom operations increased in jihadist circles, the recording of martyrdom events and especially vehicle-based suicide attacks has become noticeably more frequent. By 2017 it has become clear that the known number of martyrdom media items must have increased well into the four digits, with videos being at least in the three digits. A majority of the latter was produced by various jihadist groups and, most noticeably, the Islamic State (IS) since 2014. Of all jihadi video propagandists, the Islamic State is the first to lay claim to being at least a quasi-professional and systematic video producer. Many of its productions, especially those produced between 2015 and 2017, give the impression of a sophisticated production process. More important, however, is to take note of the Islamic State's ability to code ideology into its audiovisual rhetoric in order to attract soldiers for its cause.

The jihadist and martyrdom ideology, by which I understand a jihadist's or martyr's way of thinking about and recognising the world, also determines the jihadist's or martyr's practices. By extension then, these practices include ideas of how to handle a camera, how to record sound, and how to edit video. This may not apply to all types of martyrdom videos (since not all of the known videos were produced by jihadists) but many practices apply to virtually all known martyrdom videos. The producers of such videos seem to have relatively congruent notions of what plot points and episodes a video may or may not consist of and also of the ways in which to portray martyrs and their respective deeds. The development of the "vehicular martyrdom" video genre, i.e. the type of video that documents martyrdom by a vehicle laden with explosives, is of particular interest. As a genre it has produced the vast majority of martyrdom videos, especially since the Islamic State has begun exploiting it for purposes of recruitment via social networks with other present day groups following suit (such as *Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham*, for example). This begs the question how a genre that basically seems to consist only of brief biographic depictions, final words, and footage of explosions—all of which usually amount to only a few minutes of video—can reflect the aforementioned jihadist or martyr ideology, respectively.

To answer this question, this paper will first look at the history of the martyrdom video genre, specifically the vehicular suicide attack subgenre, and gather a catalogue of its structural and formal elements. In a second step it will dig into the semantic lining of a present day vehicular martyrdom video produced by the Islamic State, the most prolific producer of jihadist media. The study will culminate in an analysis of the visual rhetoric of a "martyr shot": the piece of footage of every martyr video that shows the deed itself

and usually the most function-bearing take in the context of any martyrdom video. Not only does it serve as the rhetorical climax of any video of the genre, it is very likely the most persuasive piece of footage in terms of attracting willing jihadists or willing martyrs respectively.

Uncovering the semantic layers of martyrdom genre videos and shot of the deed in particular is crucial in understanding the shot's function and, by extension, the genre's function: on the one hand the genre is actively used to intimidate the opposition, on the other hand it serves to support jihad and even persuade potential recruits to seek martyrdom. While the rhetoric of film lies, perhaps more than anything, in movement (cf. for example Kanzog 2001), this enquiry will employ a trimmed down rhetorical approach in order to get at the core semantics of the genre. Focussing on the visual, auditive, and textual/linguistic components of the Islamic State video, this enquiry will pick apart levels of denotation and connotation in particular. Taking a series of paradigmatic screenshots from the deed shot as its object of study, the method applied will consider said screenshots a progression of rhetorical (i.e. semantic) states through which the video proceeds. As such, this study will necessarily resemble an analysis using Roland Barthes' *Rhetoric of the Image* (1977), yet go beyond it by accounting for the auditive components of the video as well as some of its narratological specifics.

A Brief History of Martyrdom Videos

As the martyrdom video genre developed over time, various producers have tried their hand at documenting martyrs. There is little to no systematic development to be observed until the mid to late 2000s, but martyrdom video producers develop very similar ideas about the episodic contents of their videos. Footage of the suicide attack itself (usually a car taking off followed by an explosion in the distance) is obviously the centrepiece of each video. But all other episodes—from family photos of the martyr-to-be to his or her final goodbyes—have remained generally contingent until recently. The same observation has to be made for the way in which the martyr's deed itself is recorded on video, changing from an eye level shot to a top down view of the deed. Developments like this are a footprint of the Islamic State media workers in the genre. But in keeping with the subject matter: the following pages are dedicated to identifying the elements of the martyr video as well as pinpointing particularly what appears to be the desired representation of martyrdom videos informed by jihadist ideology throughout the genre's history.

Interestingly, many of the staples of martyrdom videos produced by the Islamic State were present at the genre's inception in the 1980s when a video titled Sana'a was circulated. The Sana'a video, published in 1985 and produced by the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP), marks the earliest vehicular martyrdom operation captured on video and edited for propaganda purposes known today. Despite the facts that 1. the majority (if not all) martyrdom videos come from radical islamist groups and 2. those same islamist groups treat martyrdom similarly to the way the Sana'a video does, Sana'a is not technically a jihadist video. Its protagonist, a young woman by the name of

Sana'a Mehaidli (1968–1985), was a member of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party who gave her life using an explosive-laden vehicle while attacking Israeli forces in South Lebanon. The video was shown on television on the day of Mehaidli's martyrdom and marked the "medial islamisation of suicide terrorism" (according Croitoru 2015)—however it is disputed whether or not this was Mehaidli's or the SSNP's intention respectively since Mehaidli may in fact have been a Christian.

The 17 minute video surprisingly features a wealth of elements that were lost on many martyrdom video producers in subsequent years.[1] Besides a reading of the martyr's ultimate message, the video features spoken words of explanation, footage of tanks to symbolise Israeli occupation and aggression for backdrop, the martyr-to-be driving her (supposed) vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (V.B.I.E.D.), vignetted photographs of Mehaidli, and footage of Mehaidli in a wedding gown (more on this further below). Quite virtuously composed for a martyrdom video, these episodes are organised as the strands of parallel syntagmas. Montage freely intercuts between these, which suggests some mythopoetic savvy on the part of the director. However, the video is missing footage of the actual martyrdom deed which perforce it replaces with stock footage of an explosion in what seems to be an empty space or possibly fireworks in a night sky (sadly, this can't be fully discerned since the video has been digitalised in a relatively low quality). Obviously, an omission of the deed was not acceptable to the producers, even if it meant using alternative footage. This notion is present in virtually all subsequent productions although none preferred alternative footage. Yet, they often meet the additional formal requirements set by SANA'A, too, such as the use of music on the extradiegetic level to frame the visual and using soft dissolves for punctuation.

Scenes of Mehaidli in a wedding gown represent the first instance of the martyr genre using visual tropes. Organising itself as an intercutting of parallel syntagmas, the martyr Mehaidli is thus allegorised as being or becoming a bride—but to whom? Neuwirth (2008) has presented some work on the relation between marriage and martyrdom, pointing out that there are hagiographic and spiritual interpretations. The former locates an erotic dimension in the afterlife while the latter considers the martyr's death as meaningful for his or her community and society. The application of these subject matters to the SANA'A video and the martyr video genre in general seems somewhat limited though, as martyrdom videos do not normally stress the provision of virgins or other marital partners in the afterlife. Much rather they emphasise the ontological transformation of the martyr that leads to his or her newfound dwelling beside Allah and/or his or her fulfilling the role of a protector of his society.[2] (In the case of the Islamic State this will extend to portraying the martyr as a protector of the Caliphate, *Muslims,* and 'true Islam'.) In terms of visual language this transformation is what SANA'A plays with and it seems to explain Sana'a Mehaidli's nickname: 'the bride of the south'.

[1] Technically speaking this is not surprising either since jihadist propaganda has started more or less as a home video genre and since developed coextensively with the technology on the home retail market: Osama bin Laden's video speeches from the 1980s and 1990s were likely recorded on retail camcorders. In the new millennium, jihadist group Jundallah Studio seemingly makes use of early digital cameras. And while the Islamic State may have produced thousands of slick-looking HD videos and photo reports, it, too, has only used products available on the retail market. In fact, a look at the Islamic State's recent releases like INSIDE THE KHILAFAH 8 (al-Hayat Media Office, 30 October 2018) confirms that the Islamic State's means of production include DSLR cameras with wide-angle lenses as well as head-mounted GoPro cameras (both standardised to produce images in 720p or 1080p quality) and also Adobe Premiere for editing.

[2] As Kalisch (2013) explains, the martyr gives his life not only for God but for his community in order to defend it. However, defending society is just the factual act while the relation between God and the martyr is of theological meaning.

Left: The Sana'a *video constructs the mental object of the protagonist for the viewer by superimposing vignette images—the genre is protagonist-driven and therefore underscores his or her motivations; Right: Sana'a Mehaidli as the 'Bride of the South' allegory; Bottom: The ontological transformation of the martyr is signified by a vignette image of the martyr superimposed onto a picture of the sky, taken from* The Expedition of Shaykh Umar Hadid *(at-Tibyan Publications, 2006).*

A final point of interest with the Sana'a video is found in its visual language that, again, was lost on many martyrdom video producers in the following years. Shots of Mehaidli in a wedding gown were filmed as rear figures *(Rückenfigur)*, and shots of her driving were made over the shoulder. In both cases the camera locates its view and the viewer's position behind the protagonist. Positioning the view behind the martyr heading for her or his final deed will become a staple of the genre over the following decades, especially with serial productions. The function of the rear figure has been well-researched in the past. As an image type it implies its own rule of play, namely subjectification, i.e. of the protagonist's inner life: Since the narrative is driven by a subject (the protagonist), the rear figure image activates the viewer and lets him or her focalise the subject's perception, emotions, and objects. The video thus draws on the backdrops it has painted in previous episodes (in this case, military occupation and the object of freeing people from it), allowing for conclusions to be drawn from the material itself. Sana'a even makes these references explicit through circular inserts to signify mental concepts present in the protagonist.[3]

Most, if not all, known videos produced between 1985 and 2014 show some or even several of the rudiments first laid out by Sana'a but fall behind it with respect to the structure of the narrative. While no other vehicular martyrdom videos from the 1980s are available for study, it is nonetheless noteworthy

[3] An early counterdraft to the vehicular martyrdom structure described here is offered by Martyrs of Bosnia (2000). It goes noticeably further than the comparatively tame Sana'a video by showing the corpses of people declared martyrs, some of which are harshly disfigured. Yet, the persons shown in the video may not necessarily have been active martyrdom seekers but soldiers in the way of jihad or even civilians. The Islamic State would later employ similar storytelling in its battlefield videos, first showing its *mujahidin* fighting and later showing their corpses as they were found on the battlefield.

that the 1980s mark the period in which the "forefather of transnational jihadism", 'Abdallāh 'Azzām, publishes writings on the *sahāba* (the companions of the Prophet Mohammed) in Afghanistan. These would inspire martyrdom operations and in the 1990s they would be spread via the internet (Lohlker 2015, 95). Given the habit of documenting their actions, jihadists and especially al-Qaida may have produced footage of early vehicular martyrdom missions that is now lost. What can be said with certainty, however, is that the genre only produces videos only sporadically until the proclamation of the Islamic State in 2014, yet with increasing quantity during the war in Iraq starting in 2003.

Two other early instances of the genre are THE SHATOY AMBUSH (1996) and USHĀQ ASH-SHAHADAH (Black Banners Studios, 1994). These two videos do not deal exclusively with martyrs but integrate them into various narratives presented within the same video. This has remained common practice since. AMERICAN HELL IN IRAQ (as-Sahab Media, 2003,) is the first to show male martyrs *inside* their vehicles. The video employs a shameless glorification strategy by vignetting a martyr in bright light, triggering various connotations of the beyond, paradise, and the afterlife, to name just the three most obvious ones.

The vignette of the martyr is a favourite of the genre and serves as a strong rhetorical device. It signals that the deed has been performed and that the deceased has reached his or her place beside Allah. Left: Vignetted image of Sana'a Mehaidli; Right: A martyr has reached heaven, taken from FURSAN ASH-SHAHADA 5[4]*; Bottom: A martyr in seemingly pure light, taken from* AMERICAN HELL IN IRAQ.

The producers of AMERICAN HELL IN IRAQ also managed to record panoramic shots of the deed itself which marks a development of the martyr narrative in terms of camera technique. The wide-angle shot would receive more attention

[4] As Günther (2011) writes, martyrs are being portrayed a loving jihad more than life, thus enabling them to fulfill their personal devotion to God. The visual rhetoric of the vignette image very much reflects this line of thought.

in future productions. It likely marks a rhetorical edge for the producers of this video when compared with Sana'a. Interestingly, the notion of marriage or at least some vague romanticism does not seem too distant for male martyrs in this video, since the producers employ heart wipes to transition between takes. But this element of pathos will generally remain an exception in the visual rhetoric of the genre.

Badr ar-Riyadh (as-Sahab Media, 2004) is notable for two reasons. First, after presenting two martyrdom seekers outside of their prepared car, the video employs rough-pixeled footage that must have been recorded on a mobile phone of the time. This marks a coming technological change in the jihadist video genre as a whole which has developed with the technology available on the retail market since the first camcorders were released in the 1980s (see footnote 2). Second, the recitation of hadiths or Koranic verses as a combination of on-screen text and voiceover is of note in Badr ar-Riyadh. These two techniques have become a standard in all jihadist video propaganda, appearing not only in the opening motto *(basmala)* of most contemporary productions but also as a reference that enables the author to 1. place the martyrdom shown in the video in a religious context, 2. parallelise the martyr's deed with religious narratives, thereby lending religious meaning to the event, and 3. lend religious authority to the video's producer (who normally is indicated by an identifier at the beginning of the video).

Turkish *mujahid* video Sözünde Duranlar (2005) goes beyond using historic pictures of the martyr by introducing moving images of the protagonist in happier times. Here, one martyr-to-be is shown relaxing at the beach and swimming in the sea. Lifetime footage of martyrs has since more or less become a staple of the genre. The Expedition of Shaykh Umar Hadid (at-Tibyan Publications, 2006) is notable for several reasons. First, it shows various vehicular attacks in sequence which makes it one of the more direct spiritual precursors of the video formats later developed by the Islamic State (which in some instances provide conveyor belt edits of martyrdom deeds). Second, the martyr-to-be gives a speech the moment before entering his vehicle.[5] In subsequent years, some martyrdom videos will put more emphasis on this speech by repeating it during the panoramic shot of the deed, often with the face of the martyr composited into the shot. Finally, and most importantly, The Expedition of Shaykh Umar Hadid employs computer animations of a jail or prison cell. While computer animated environments remain a rarity in jihadi video propaganda, they nonetheless are ideologically functional as they reflect the ideologeme of Muslim victimhood. But their significance does not stop there as they mark a coming paradigm shift.

A few years later some footage would be published that shows a computer simulation of the martyr attack itself. This type of visual representation would be used in vehicular suicide videos published by the *al-Furqan Foundation for Media Production*, the longest serving media office of the Islamic State and its predecessors. Throughout 2008 and 2009 it released a video series titled Fursan ash-Shahada ("Knights of Martyrdom") which, besides introducing the story-step of "saying goodbye to friends", made further use of virtual environments. The computer animations used by *al-Furqan* in 2008 mark

[5] As Joseph Croitoru (2015) correctly notes, this is one story-step that is already present in films of Japanese kamikaze pilots. Interestingly, Croitoru also considers the kamikaze pilots as somewhat of a spiritual predecessor of jihadist martyrs, particularly via the events of the 1972 attack on Tel Aviv airport (which were committed by the Japanese Red Army and thus may have served as an inspiration to radical islamists), the 1974 massacre in Kiryat Shmona (which is said to have included suicide bombings), and ultimately the 1974 suicide bombing in a Tel Aviv cinema (which Croitoru argues has become a foil for suicide vest attacks).

a coming change to how the martyr shot is conceptualised. While virtual trucks are shown at eye level, the deed itself is shown from above. But why would computer graphics be used at all? This question aims at the practices of the genre. On the one hand, producing the martyr shot (i.e. footage of the suicide attack) is not without its pragmatic dimensions. Filming a suicide attack requires the camera operator to remain behind the line of fighting or at least remain invisible to the eventual martyr's target and, in any case, keep a safe distance. Therefore, martyrdom operations are filmed necessarily as a more or less wide angle shot. Limitations are set only by distance and picture format which remained rather small until HD technology was introduced and wide-angle lenses became more accessible. Virtual landscapes, on the other hand, offer one distinct advantage over real life footage: the director has control over the design of the environment, the way the virtual camera moves, and what it captures as well as how it captures it. The preference of a computer simulation with a top down shot indicates not only a desire for visual completion *(all* of the explosion is captured) and visual impact (the deed must look impressive), the practice of filming from above seems to be very positively assessed in jihadist ideology (i.e. jihadist practice).
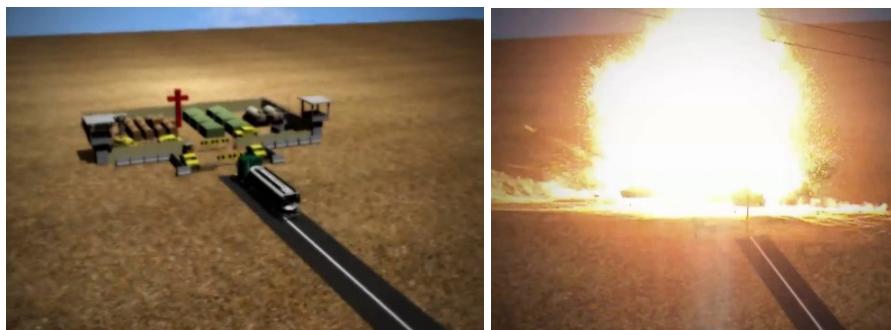
FURSAN ASH-SHAHADA 5 *shows the deed from above. The video marks a development in the filming of a martyr attack as it is shown from above for the first using computer technology.*

What then are the advantages of the top down martyr shot when compared to the eye level or from below shot? As mentioned above, technical limitations may play the biggest part: While filming an explosion and the resulting column of smoke from below will make the results appear visually huge, users of retail equipment may struggle to capture a panorama of the explosion from ground level. What is perhaps even more crucial in choosing a top down shot over a shot from below is the fact that the view of the camera may be obstructed and the attacker as well as his victims cannot be seen. This means a loss of visual and rhetorical impact and also of "proof" of the deed. The top down shot offers more possibilities regarding the explosion and the depiction of enemies. Filming them from above makes enemy environments and soldiers seem small, miniaturized even, while the explosion of the martyr vehicle produces a massive column of smoke and fire that commands the centre of the visual. This practice allows for a rhetorical epification of the deed itself despite it being filmed from above.
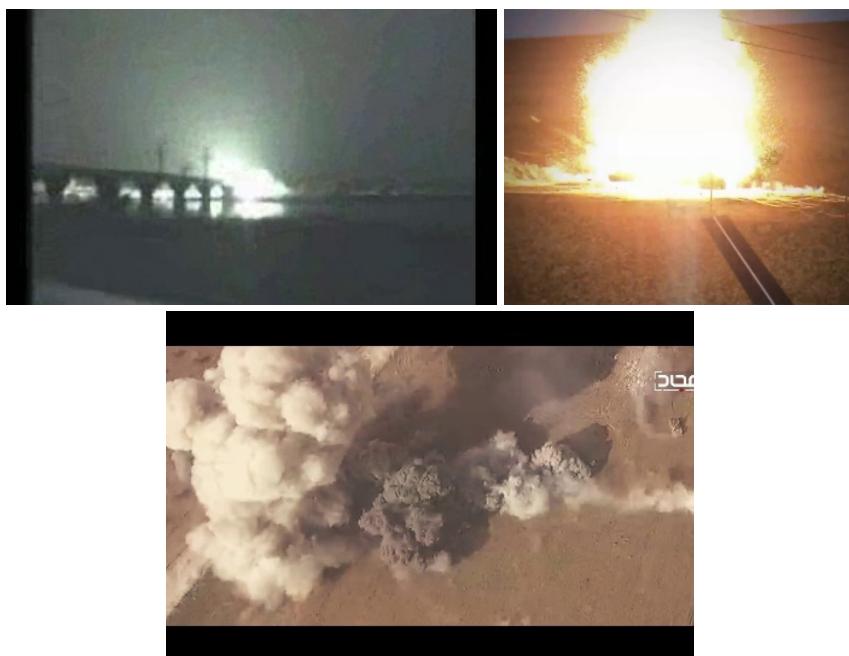
The martyr shot develops over time: as indicated by a computer animation, the ideal representation of the suicide attack in the eye of jihadist video producers is a top down wide angle shot. Left: An explosion in the distance, taken from AMERICAN HELL IN IRAQ *(2003); Right: the aforementioned* FURSAN ASH-SHAHADA 5*; Bottom: A top down panorama from* A WAY OF LIFE *(Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, 17 October 2018)*

Filming the deed at eye level and from below remained the standard even until 2013 when *Jundallah Studio* in Uzbekistan released THE MARTYRDOM OF SISTER UMM USMAN (7 September 2013), only the second video with a female martyr in the history of the genre (interestingly, neither this video nor SANA'A omit showing the martyr driving her car in an over-the-shoulder shot from the inside of the vehicle). Around 2014, the latest videos would be published which feature the preparation of the vehicle itself. BLESSED MARTYRDOM by *Jabhat al-Nusrah* (22 February 2014) is one such instance, showing large gas canisters being loaded onto a truck and also showing the wiring of the explosion mechanism.

Upon its inception, the Islamic State would invest heavily into its media wing. Soon the IS would not only produce martyrdom videos in HD but it would acquire the means to produce martyr shots from above as drones made their way onto the retail market. Thereby it would accomplish the ideal representation of the martyr shot as projected by the *al-Furqan Media Foundation*. The new type of shot would become paradigmatic in Islamic State productions, appearing, it seems, whenever a drone was available. Outside the Islamic State, other jihadist media producers have adopted this method of filming the deed, too. Especially *al-Muhājirūn* (2015–2017) and later *Hay'at Taḥrīr al-Shām* (HTS), whose media wings may be a home to former *al-Muhājirūn* media workers as well as defectors of the Islamic State, have demonstrated that they acquired the visual language of the martyr shot. The *al-Muhājirūn* production TIME FOR THIS, TIME FOR THAT (2016) already uses it and so does HTS's recent release titled A WAY OF LIFE (17 October 2017)

which uses a personal interest story to convey an invitation to martyrdom. While by 2018 many jihadi groups strived to record top down deed shots, it remains to be seen if and when the media work by groups close to al-Qaida will follow suit.

Martyrs before their death: Suggesting a happy lifetime drives the pathos of the genre. Screenshots taken from Sözünde Duranlar *and the quite concisely produced* The Seekers of Life *(Wilayat Halab, 19 October 2016)*

Further additions to the genre by the Islamic State include using amputees, wheel chair-bound soldiers, and children as protagonists. One video by the Islamic State called The Seekers of Life (Wilayat Halab, 19 October 2016) even elaborates on the selection process for martyrdom in the Islamic State. The voice over explains that martyrdom seekers may register in an "*istishhādī* house" where they will spend time until being called into battle. A later episode in the video even shows a spontaneous selection process during battle with two willing *mujahidin* drawing straws to decide who would be allowed to drive the explosive vehicle. Whereas previous martyrdom video productions may rely on a protagonist that will not bow down to power and oppression, the Islamic State uses the martyr's heroism to conversely frame the Islamic State as powerful and possessing military savvy, even going as far as to suggest the Islamic State's invincibility. But it also uses martyrs to market martyrdom: The attempt to attract jihadists is made possible by offering the social role of

the *mujahid* and connecting it to the ideologemes of the *umma*, the Muslim community which requires protection, and Muslim victimhood, which connects to factors like the loss of the caliphate and imperialism.[6] A number of martyrdom videos which have met the internal quality standards of the IS have therefore been translated and used for recruitment on the internet.[7]

One final item of note that has been mentioned briefly is that martyrdom narratives may or may not appear as part of videos that generally set a very different focus. The aforementioned Badr ar-Riyadh is one such instance, presenting the martyrdom deed only as one of various narratives (the video also includes speeches by chief ideologues like Osama bin Laden and scenes of military training). Another noteworthy exception is the aforementioned Time for This, Time for That (al-Muhajirun Media Office, 29 April 2016). Starting off as a wedding video, it makes no initial attempt to suggest it might be of the martyrdom genre despite being a vehicle for the producer to invite jihadists from Yemen to Syria (the authors even mention the Sana'a region in a possible attempt to play at historic martyrdom videos).[8] However, the final three minutes of the 13 minute video are dedicated to a martyrdom operation. It does not become explicit but the operation (which is not performed by the groom) may or may not be in honour of the wedding. Barring further finds, this particular video is the first and so far only known martyrdom video since Sana'a that at least loosely connects martyrdom to an actual wedding.

The episodic structure of the vehicular martyrdom video genre can be summarised as follows:

Historic backdrop (e.g. scenes of oppression of Muslims, scenes of war)

Reading of a statement by the martyr-to-be explaining his or her actions

Preparations (e.g. preparing the vehicle, a V.B.I.E.D.)

Reading of Qur'an verses or hadiths (usually a wall of text, often with a voice over)

Time before martyrdom mission (e.g. waiting while performing everyday tasks, *istishhādī* house, selection for mission)

Saying goodbye to family and/or friends (may also be part of the martyr taking off for his or her deed, see below)

Documents of the martyr's life (e.g. photos, videos of everyday activity; these may be given a slow-motion treatment in order stress the connotation of past happiness)

Final words before mounting the vehicle (may include final goodbyes from acquaintances; final words while standing by the vehicle may be omitted if final words have been recorded separately)

Setting off (usually a rear figure of the car leaving, played for pathos)

Driving (some footage shot from another car focussing on the martyr's vehicle or even footage from presumably inside the martyr's vehicle or from a section of the actual drive may be provided)

[6] The aforementioned article by Charlie Winter would even go so far as to speak of the Islamic State's martyrdom industry.

[7] Said internal quality standards have recently been cast light on by Daniel Milton (2018) who has published, translated, and analysed some corresponding internal documents.

[8] The producer of the video, al-Muhajirun, was located in Syria and did not subordinate to the Islamic State at any point in time. All indications are that al-Muhajirun joined Jaish al-Fath in 2017.

The suicide attack (the mandatory shot serving as the rhetorical climax; shifts to top-down wide angle after 2014, may today feature multiple wide angles)

The vignetted image of the martyr

Looking at the known corpus of martyrdom videos, it seems apparent that of these scenes only the following are rarely omitted: historic backdrop, reading of the will *or* a speech by the martyr-to-be, setting off, and the deed itself. The deed shot is virtually never omitted and in the case of Sana'a, which is a rare exception where actual footage of the deed is not available, it is represented by stock footage. A considerable contingent of martyrdom videos also present images from the martyr's private life. The rule of thumb here is, the more serial the production, the less extensive the insight into the martyr's private life. The scenes of the martyr video may appear in any order in any given video, although relative chronology is usually preserved. Generally speaking, the genre prefers male protagonists but takes its origins in a comparatively strong presentation of a female protagonist.

As for the application of film language, the genre may be treated to parallel syntagmas (which overall remains a rarity, however), voice over, soft dissolves for interpunction, metaphors of light, the use of music to frame the narrative, and the ever-present vignette image. All of these elements run the threat of losing their function for the narrative if the suicide attack cannot be *seen*. The martyr shot is the culmination of the striving of a martyr-to-be, the climax of his or her narrative, and it logically connects to all other episodes. It is part of a chronological sequence of events, it takes its causality from the protagonist words, it becomes meaningful against its historic (and ideological) backdrop, and the images of the martyr while happy and alive would not unfold the same pathos without visual confirmation of the martyr's death.

The Visual Rhetoric of the Top Down Wide Angle Shot in Martyrdom Videos

For an analysis of the martyr shot, I have chosen a video by the Islamic State. Fursān al-Daqāwin (Wilayat Ninawa, 24 January 2017) is a video that features a series of martyrdom attacks. At the time of its production the Iraqi offense against the Islamic State had already begun but the Islamic State's propaganda apparatus was still strong. Within a month of the beginning of the Manbij Offense in the summer of 2016, the Islamic State attempted to ramp up media production and tried to keep its visuals at the highest level of quality possible by Jihadi standards. Yet soon after, the video production would have to take small steps backwards with many of the short biographic martyr episodes in this video already lacking several of the aforementioned elements. However, there is one episode that maintains structural completeness and adds a variation on the vignetted image that breaks new ground for the genre. This development will require explanation, however: jihadist propaganda may be perceived as being effective in terms of persuasion but what is often overseen is the fact that jihadist propaganda implies background knowledge

on the teleology and metaphysics, or, in short, the belief of jihadist ideology. It therefore commonly provides only the tip of the ideological iceberg and requires the ideologically interested viewer to enter a hermeneutic circle of jihadist documents. All necessary information will be provided for this article.

FURSĀN AL-DAQĀWIN features the martyrdom of a boy soldier who, no older than 15 or 16 years, is stylised as a young man. A three-minute sequence is dedicated to his personal story, a duration that is more or less in tune with the majority of martyr portrayals in Islamic State propaganda. This segment of FURSĀN AL-DAQĀWIN meets almost all the elements of the genre. The boy is shown patrolling and relaxing in the countryside, having a shooting exercise, eating, laughing, and studying martyrdom videos. (To some attentive viewers, seeing him admire the glorifying film images of previous IS-martyrs may not be without religious or ideological irony). Then he gives his speech, enters a V.B.I.E.D. with a bystander bidding adieu as he leaves in a rear figure shot, performs his suicide mission (in one of the most soundly produced top down deed shots in HD quality to date), and his image appears one final time in a vignetted piece of footage.

A subject-driven narrative: The martyr-to-be speaks final words of resolve.

Before turning to the deed shot, some context is required that derives from the take of the martyr-to-be speaking words of determination. The linguistic message of this image is located in the spoken words of the boy soldier and it is run-of-the-mill Islamic State propaganda. After going through the education provided by the IS, he went into battle and took part in raids. He claims that he has made a career within the Islamic State and finally decided to become a martyr for the cause of Allah. The young man's speech allows for the assumption that the Islamic State invites martyrdom seekers. These, in turn, make up the social role that the Islamic State willingly offers to its recruits. The protagonist thus leads by example, implying the possibility of martyrdom in the Islamic State for those willing.

The visual denotative level here is centred on the image of the young man. Buildings and trees in the background are recognisable but do not bear on the semantics of the scene since they remain largely in soft focus. The camera

operator applies a shallow depth of field in order to accentuate the young man in front of the camera. In turn, this suppresses the background and the possibilities of denotation it might provide beyond two trees, some brushes, and high grass. Visual denotation stresses the young *mujahid*, giving further weight to the notion of the narrative being subject-driven. As for further visible objects, the boy wears a functional vest and carries a rifle. His tone of voice, posture, lack of gestures, and somewhat stern facial expression mark him as a determined representative of the Islamic State's cause. This is further put into perspective when considering the producer's logo in the top right corner which includes the black banner of the Islamic State for ideological context. The boy soldier is without doubt constructed as a model soldier of the caliphate.

An audio-visual composition like this controls various connotations of warfare, personal determination, and resolve. In considering the notion that the semantics of the image are first and foremost informed by the ideology of the producer, they must be interpreted as follows. This "young man" is a fighter in the way of 'true Islam', a *mujahid* willing to give his life in order to protect the society of Muslims *(umma)* and spread the word of Allah. This also makes him one willing to leave this world *(dunya)* in order to head to paradise *(janna)*. He is one who draws the line between belief and disbelief by his martyrdom and thereby proves his own belief. Protecting Islam, the society of Muslims, and even the expansion of the caliphate is his ultimate goal. He is a personification of determination and resolve in the sense of jihadism.

However, since the young man appears to be reading lines lying before him (possibly a note on a desk in front of him) some unintentional connotations sneak into the semantic lining of the shot as well. It remains unclear whether the young *mujahid* could not or would not memorise the text (which is conceivable considering what his frame of mind must have been before the attack), is made to read the text (which is less likely although IS media workers *were* and *are* required to support the military), or whether there was precious little time in filming the video (which is possible considering the Islamic State's military situation at the time the video was produced). Considering that his words appear to be very standardised in the sense that they reflect the Islamic State's ideology practically word for word and lack personal notions, the young man was probably offered to read a text provided by the media office. The field of hypotheses remains open but ultimately seems to expose the practices in making the video.
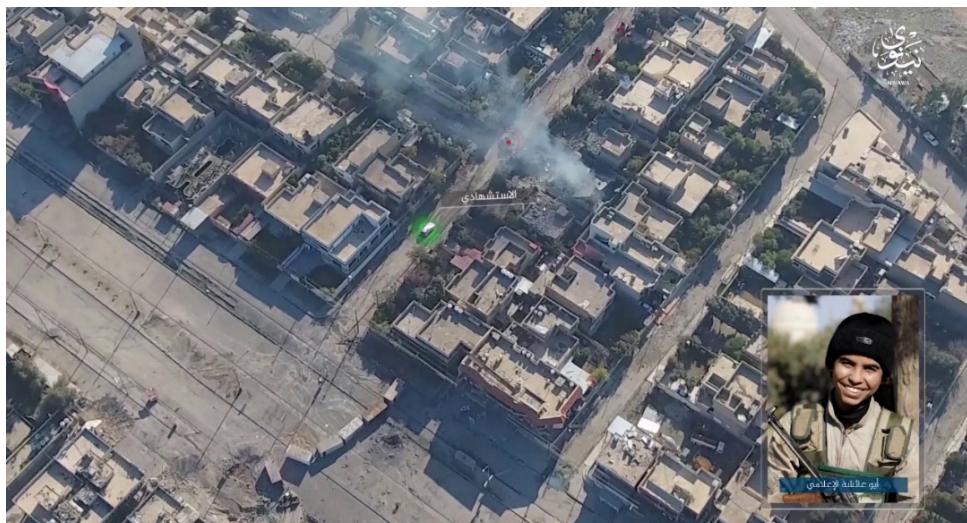
The first segment of the martyr shot: the drive up to the place of martyrdom.

In the drive-up to the place of martyrdom, there is a textual linguistic level present and it denotes the driver, identifying him (in the superimposed picture) and by function (in the top down shot via tracking mattes). Via a superimposed image of the driver, the editor opens a direct denotation, noting that this deed is that of the young man in the picture. The same image bears a connotation of joy which is derived from the broad smile of the martyr-to-be. At the same time the logo of the producer, the media office of *Wilayat Ninawa* ("Ninawa Province"), remains in the upper third, alternating between the calligraphy logo of the regional media office and the black banner of the Islamic State. The producers bring their ideological background and the identity of the martyr to the attention of the viewer and thereby label both the Islamic State and the boy as the originators of the unfolding scene.

On the visual denotative level of the video the martyr's V.B.I.E.D. is entering a residential area. The scene is shown from above which is very much in tune with the style sheet of the Islamic State. Enemy forces are preferably filmed from above and the wide angle shot ensures that the carnage that is about to unfold is captured in full. The deictic elements of the picture, namely the combination of the producer's logo with footage of a residential area, indicate that this is a residential area in Wilayat Ninawa, a cradle region of the Islamic State that once extended across the border of Syria and Iraq. White puffs of air from the roofs and a nearby window indicate there is gunfire in an attempt the stop the armoured vehicle. This residential area certainly has been required to house the advancing military opposition to the Islamic State. Several vehicles are parked in the street, all of them are seemingly armoured and therefore a serious threat to Islamic State fighters. As soon as the defenders realise the danger of the situation, the gunmen on the roof start retreating and at least two bystanders race for safety across the yard of their building. The situation is becoming one of life and death as the military forces in the residential area must be well aware of what it means when an armoured vehicle pulls into their street.

By constructing a point of view from above, the video opens to various connotations. The camera position suggests a viewpoint that is "above things"

and "above the enemy". (Islamic State videos have put this philosophy to use since at least 2014 while, conversely, filming its own forces and institutions from below to make them seem bigger.) Probably the most dominant connotation in this image is military prowess as indicated by the symmetry of the scene from above. This perspective used to be reserved for satellite images and cartography resources like Google Earth before drones made their way onto the retail market. The Islamic State very much welcomes the notion of having military grade drones and the matching tracking devices at its disposal in their visual language. (This is even played at in another segment of Fursān al-Daqāwin that deals with the Islamic State's drones which, technically, are refurbished retail items). Its media tactic demands for portrayal of the Islamic State as being an invincible superpower.[9] Thus, suggesting that the Islamic State has a clear idea of which targets to attack by marking three possible targets with red dots is congruent with this strategy. (To be clear, these marks were necessarily added during post-production using a retail editing programme like Adobe Premiere.) Connected to this is another possible connotation that the martyr has been precisely instructed where to go, what possible targets to hit and when to set off the explosion. With the fighters on the ground taking to their heels, the connotative level suggests notions of dominance, terror, and successful warfare on the part of the Islamic State. These notions all connect to the position of the protagonist who is an identification figure to the willingly indoctrinated.

The V.B.I.E.D. approaches what appears to be a tank. The driver may not be tasked with damaging buildings in the vicinity since the building to his right has already been destroyed and the housing across the street have spacious yards. This operation appears to be solely about destroying the tanks, yet it would not be uncommon for the Islamic State's V.B.I.E.D. attackers to partially fail their mission as on the ground soldiers run for safety.

The centrepiece and rhetorical climax of the martyr shot: the explosion.

Linguistic messages are scarce now as only the logo of the video producer remains a visible textual element. The editors place all possible emphasis on the act of martyrdom without going against their visual stylesheet. The denotative core of the martyr shot, its own rhetorical climax, is the explosion

[9] This is, of course, a bold claim considering it does not have actual satellites, an air force, or a navy. Effectively this has forced the Islamic State to provoke ground combat as is further evidenced by two releases titled No Respite (al-Hayat Media Center, 24 November 2015) and The Dabiq Appointment (Wilayat Ninawa, 11 December 2015).

of the V.B.I.E.D. as the driver reaches his target. With a loud bang a shock wave that is as sudden as it is forceful is emitted through the neighbourhood. The sound of the explosion may have been added in post-production as the Islamic State's media workers often have. (Also, depending on the drone model, mounting a microphone to a retail drone in addition to a camera may make the device too heavy for flight.) The explosion creates a bright light destroying the nearby target vehicle, damaging buildings, and likely killing or injuring a number of people on the ground. Numerous pieces of debris are sent flying through the vicinity.

The tangible connotations in this image encompass concepts of warfare, destructiveness and, given the ideologic context, the determination of the *mujahid*. The ideologemic subtext of 'defending true Islam against attackers and disbelievers' is very much present across virtually all Islamic State media and therefore remains inferable in this instance. Thus, the martyr and the Islamic State are making their metaphysical claim of jihad in the way of Allah. The light of the explosion has a yellow and golden shine, a colour that alludes to the metaphor of light which has been played on before in this particular video (the producers employ virtually generated lens flares for dissolves between scenes). It is presumable that the directors have applied colour auto-correction to the footage during post-production or, at the least, adjusted the colour temperature. Light is an often-used metaphor in martyrdom videos and here it suggests that the beyond is transcending this world for a brief moment. Of course, the jihadist's mind is ultimately not accessible but in a jihadist reading of the connotative level the martyr shot may be focussed on this very type of semantics which encodes the martyr's transformation in the visual of the explosion.

Segment 3 of the martyr shot: the moments after the explosion.

Musing on the event, the visual conveys denotations of size and destruction which become dominant in the semantic lining of the scene. While not necessarily crossing the line to hyperbole, this martyr shot effortlessly manages to epify the event of martyrdom by contrasting the size of the explosion and the resulting column of smoke with the smallness of the scene. While spoken and

written linguistic messages are repressed for the moment, there is a jihadist chant *(nashīd)* playing on the extradiegetic level throughout the martyr shot. The language barrier prohibits a better understanding, yet the chant carries some connotative character nonetheless. Sung exclusively by a male voice, the song is performed virtually without counterpoints. It very much gives the impression of sacral chanting, thus placing the unfolding scene of martyrdom in a uniformly religious (i.e. ideologically informed) context. Meanwhile, visual denotation focusses on the column of smoke that has resulted from the explosion. As the drone (not the lens) pulls out in order to capture as much of the growing column of smoke as possible, the column itself quickly seems to exceed 100 metres in height. (Also, it becomes quite obvious that the camera is mounted to a retail drone. The nature of the slight and sudden movements of camera performs betrays this.)

After an immediate replay (another footprint of the Islamic State in the genre), the video's discourse returns to the footage of the attack and applies new features to it. First, playback speed shifts to about half the footage's original speed (i.e. slow motion). This moves the visual discourse to the present participle, thus extending the temporal presence of martyrdom attack and intensifying the savour of the moment.

Second, the video makes use of a vignette ("dark corners") which serves, possibly, a double function. The cognitive function it fulfils with certainty relates to the viewer whose attention is guided to the centre of the image. But also, there is a possible attempt by the Islamic State to bring its brand into play. The image now displays an outward semblance to the black banner of the Islamic State ("white centre on black ground"), turning the image into a simile of the flag.

Third, and most importantly, the martyr's face is embedded *into the martyr shot*, letting the martyr's face appear in the explosion (another Islamic State novelty).[10] Technically, the footage of the boy soldier is in itself vignetted and layered onto the footage of the attack with a degree of transparency. This montage signals a coincidence of realms with the martyrs words and his attack now occupying the same moment. This point is further driven by

[10] Interestingly, the Islamic State's visual lexicon may invite a reading of the boy's face placed in the explosion. Boy soldiers were deemed the "cubs of the caliphate" in various Islamic State videos and here this metaphor may be implied in the connotative material of the visual. The visual level constructs the explosion sort of like a "lion's mane", possibly suggesting that the cub of the caliphate has "grown up". While the video was not designed as a coming of age narrative it may invite or consolidate such a reading to the ideologically indoctrinated viewer.

the auditive level: the words chosen by the editor to be in the vignette are not merely a repetition of the words spoken earlier but a different segment of the previously recorded speech. Here the martyr speaks the *shahāda* (his confession of faith) and further proclaims that he is fighting for Allah and the Islamic State, which "commands good and forbids evil". (Both of these phrases are taken directly from the Islamic State's textbook which further underscores the Islamic State's attempt to brand this martyrdom.) With the words of the boy soldier and his deed made co-present by means of montage, this segment of the footage exposes its rhetorical form. The boy soldier's words and his martyrdom are *alike* in that they both represent the expression of his belief. This constellation may be read as a simile (one is like the other, meaning "the *mujahed's* words are like his deed") or, perhaps more precisely, a metaphor (with the "expression of faith" serving as the *tertium comparationis*). In combination with the participle form of the narrative discourse (see above), this rhetorical trope is placed syntactically as the climax of the sequence and serves to suggest that the boy soldier's message is *lasting* by letting him "speak through his deed".

It is here that the appeal of the vehicular martyrdom video in times of the Islamic State must be located. The rhetorical climax of martyrdom video has been further developed by the Islamic State. Using replays and additional montage, the "deed shot" has been extended into a symbolic representation of the Islamic State's ideology which provides for martyrdom seekers *as well as* individual martyrdom seekers who are allowed to provide a supposed proof of their belief by putting their martyrdom on display. The martyr is thus proven to have defended the *umma* and 'true Islam' with their life by the Islamic State's media. The ideologeme of "verifying one's *shahāda*" seems to be very much captured in the semantic lining of the Islamic State's deed shot which, under the Islamic State's influence, has almost transformed into an emblem: there is an icon (image of the mujahid), an epigram (spoken by the mujahid), and also some hint at a *lemma* (the image is framed as being an Islamic State product). It is currently assumed that this strategy of *conflating the spoken word with the deed in film language* is a direct appeal to willing jihadists who seek to verify their *shahāda*.

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The Sounds of the Shuhadāʾ:
## Chants and Chanting in IS Martyrdom Videos

Alexandra Dick

Abstract

This article addresses the various functions of chants and chanting in the context of jihadi martyrdom. Through the examples of IS martyrdom videos, I will identify three different categories: first, live chanting performed by a collective *(ḥudā),* second, live chanting performed by a professional nashīd singer *(inshād)* and third, recorded and post-produced chants *(anāshīd).* In IS martyrdom videos, these sounds convey ritualistic meanings: Ḥudāʾ serves as a rite of separation that often takes place at martyrdom ceremonies to mark the transition from a collective of mujahidin to an individual martyrdom seeker *(istishhādī)*, who will soon carry out a martyrdom operation. To complement this rite of passage, anāshīd serve as posthumous rites of incorporation to integrate the deceased in the hereafter through references to Qurʾanic verses and hadith excerpts mentioning paradise and the rewards for martyrs therein. Sounds thus help to perpetuate the cycle of jihadi martyrdom by promoting this theologically framed concept.

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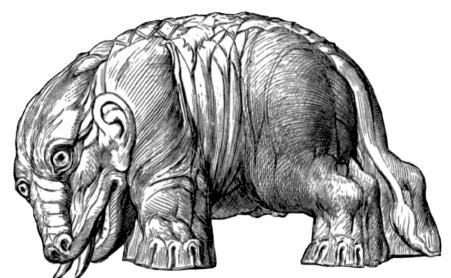
Why Sounds Matter

> Muslims need to be inspired to practice Jihad. In the time of Rasulullah [the prophet Muhammad] (saaws[1]) he had poets who would use their poetry to inspire the Muslims and demoralize the disbelievers. Today nasheed can play that role. A good nasheed can spread so widely it can reach to an audience that you could not reach through a lecture or a book. Nasheeds are especially inspiring to the youth, who are the foundation of Jihad in every age and time. [...] (al-Awlaki: *44 Ways to Support Jihad*, number 40)

This chapter, which is entitled *Nasheeds,*[2] is taken from *44 Ways to Support Jihad,* written by Anwar al-Awlaki, who was a leading figure within al-Qaʿida up until his death, brought about by a US airstrike in Yemen in 2011.[3] It shows the significance of sounds within jihadism. Here, al-Awlaki sums up the key strategic function of specific chants, so-called *anāshīd* (singular: *nashīd),* in the view of jihadi groups: They serve as a powerful source of inspiration for jihad, since they can convey jihadi messages to broad audiences, crossing language barriers and speaking to adolescents in particular. Al-Awlaki later suggests several topics that can form the main subject-material of anāshīd. Interestingly, the topic he lists first is not jihad but martyrdom. This nexus between anāshīd and martyrdom becomes apparent when studying the titles of anāshīd produced by jihadi groups such as the Islamic State (IS). One example of this is the IS nashīd *Yā Fawz Man Nāl al-Shahāda Ṣādiqan (Muʾassasat Ajnād li-l-Intāj al-Iʿlāmī* 2014), which translates as *What a Victory for the One Who Truly Receives Martyrdom.* It explicitly addresses the concept of jihadi martyrdom. This is why it is commonly used in IS martyrdom videos which, for the purposes of this article, I will define as a range of different videos that are produced to celebrate and commemorate deceased *mujahidin* (singular: *mujahid*[4]) as martyrs or *shuhadāʾ* (singular: *shahīd).* IS martyrdom videos often cover martyrdom operations,[5] including farewell ceremonies or martyrdom ceremonies that mark the transition from a mujahid towards the liminal phase of being an *istishhādī,* an "active seeker [...] of martyrdom" (Aran 2018, 13), with the ultimate goal of becoming a shahīd. The use of explosives in martyrdom operations, in particular, leaves neither the possibility for the person carrying it out to survive nor for this person to be buried. Therefore, martyrdom ceremonies serve as rites of passage in lieu of funerals. However, IS martyrdom videos are not limited to martyrdom operations, as I will show through the following three examples that cover a broad range of jihadi martyrdom:

Fursān al-Shahāda 5, the fifth episode of a whole series called *Fursān al-Shahāda*, which *Muʾassasat al-Furqān li-l-Intāj al-Iʿlāmī* released in 2008[6]

Bal Aḥyāʾ ʿInda Rabbihim, released by *al-Maktab al-Iʿlāmī li-l-Wilāyat al-Raqqa*, also known as *ar Raqqah*, in 2016

[1] *Saaws*, also abbreviated as *saws*, stands for *ṣallā Allāh ʿalayhi wa-sallam,* which translates as *may God bless him and give him peace.*

[2] *Nasheed* is often used as the English equivalent of anāshīd.

[3] The Gregorian calendar is used throughout the article.

[4] A *mujahid or mujāhid* (plural: *mujahidin, mujāhidūn or mujāhidīn)* is a person fighting for jihad.

[5] In accordance with the Arabic expression *ʾamaliyyāt istishhādiyya* used in the IS videos analysed, I will use the emic term *martyrdom operations* instead of the etic term *suicide attacks* throughout the article to highlight the "differentiation between suicide *(al-intiḥār)* and self-imposed martyrdom *(al-istishhād)"* (Pannewick 2004, 6).

[6] *Fursān al-Shahāda* was produced at the time of the IS predecessor Islamic State of Iraq, which existed from 2006 until 2013. Yet, I also apply the term IS martyrdom video for this video for reasons of simplification.

Al-Ghuraba – The Chosen Few of Different Lands, released by *al-Ḥayāt Media Center* in 2014

These videos also showcase the breadth of the musical range associated with this genre and with IS videos in general. In addition to anāshīd, ḥudāʾ play an important role in IS martyrdom videos. Ḥudāʾ describes a live chanting performance at a martyrdom ceremony which serves as a rite of separation to accompany a process of social transformation, wherein an individual istishhādī is separated from a collective of mujahidin. This can, for example, be seen in *Fursān al-Shahāda 5*. While ḥudāʾ can, in principle, be practiced by anyone, anāshīd are recorded chants performed by professional nashīd singers, called *munshidūn* (singular: *munshid)*. When highlighting the "act of performing" a nashīd, the term *inshād*, which is derived from the same roots as nashīd, is used in Arabic (Lahoud 2017, 43). A nashīd consequently represents the "product" of the "process" of inshād (Said 2016, 24). One of the few examples for inshād in IS martyrdom videos can be seen and, more importantly, heard in *Bal Aḥyāʾ ʿInda Rabbihim*. Both ḥudāʾ and inshād therefore generally represent intradiegetic sounds of IS martyrdom videos whose source can be located—or at least presumed—within the scene portrayed. Its recording therefore coincides with the recording of the visual footage. Anāshīd, on the other hand, are extradiegetic sounds that serve similar functions to film music. One major difference to film music is, however, that anāshīd in IS martyrdom videos religiously frame and sacralise the concept of jihadi martyrdom by referring to a long-established religious practice and by establishing religious legitimacy through references to the Qurʾan and the hadith.[7] References mentioning paradise and the rewards for martyrs play an especially important role, as will be shown through the example of *Al-Ghuraba – The Chosen Few of Different Lands*. In this regard, anāshīd, as parts of IS martyrdom videos, also represent mediated rites of incorporation that not only integrate the deceased in the hereafter, but also help to perpetuate the cycle of jihadi martyrdom by promoting this concept.

Jihadi Martyrdom

The concept of martyrdom is not just used in jihadism, but in a range of different temporal, spatial, political, religious and secular contexts. However, the focus varies significantly between these contexts. Jihadi martyrdom focusses on its active pursuit, for example through actions such as martyrdom operations. In contrast to this, martyrs in Islam in general are described as "those who die (generally at the hands of others) for their faith. In a Sunnī Islamic context, martyrs are primarily those who fight unbelievers for the advancement of Islam, and sacrifice their lives for this" (Raven 2003, 281). This notion is, however, not directly anchored in the Qurʾan. Indeed, the term shahīd in its Qurʾanic usage first and foremost describes a witness or confessor, and only under the influence of Christianity did it become synonymous with a martyr (282). This concept of martyrdom was initially widely used within Sunni Islam for the Muslims who died in the fights against the polytheists

[7] "In Islam ḥadīth is the term applied to specific reports of the prophet Muḥammad's words and deeds as well as those of many of the early Muslims; the word is used both in a collective and in a singular sense." (Speight 2019)

from Mecca, referred to as *martyrs of the battlefield* or *shuhadāʾ al-maʿraka* (Horsch 2011, 66). Here, the Battle of Uhud in the year 625 is central, since the defeat of the Muslim fighters and the heavy losses in this battle required some sort of interpretation or compensation (ibid.). The concept of martyrdom, which promises eternal life and the prospect of rewards in the hereafter, filled this gap and made death retrospectively meaningful. Initially, martyrdom thus served as a compensation strategy for the potentially fatal outcome of a battle (Horsch-Al Saad 2011, 246). In contrast to this, the carrying out of a martyrdom operation allows for no other possibility but death (ibid.). The Islamic Studies scholar Silvia Horsch-Al Saad (245f.) therefore argues that in jihadism, the role of martyrdom shifts away from the interpretation of death towards the practice of death. Yet, from an emic perspective, not death but eternal life in the hereafter is sought through jihadi martyrdom. Horsch-Al Saad's differentiation between the generally 'passive' acceptance of martyrdom through death in battle and the 'active' search for martyrdom within jihadism is still applicable. In Arabic, it is reflected in the terms *shahāda* on the one hand and *istishhād* on the other. While shahāda is used both for martyrdom and the Islamic creed, istishhād means "self-imposed martyrdom" (Pannewick 2004, 6) and "refers to the vanguard who sacrifice themselves intentionally" (Aran 2018, 13). Within jihadism, the notion of martyrdom, shahāda, is almost completely absorbed by its active pursuit, istishhād, as the high number of martyrdom operations, called *ʿamaliyyāt istishhādiyya* in Arabic, an expression referring to the concept of istishhād, demonstrates. Istishhād is thus seen as a central means for shahāda, which suggests a certain chronology of self-imposed jihadi martyrdom: Once a mujahid has made the decision to execute a martyrdom operation, he[8] enters the liminal phase of being an istishhādī, who, in turn, is believed to become a shahīd through death.

IS Martyrdom Videos

In order for a deceased mujahid to be commemorated as a shahīd and thereby become part of the collective memory of the respective jihadi group, it is first and foremost necessary that his death be documented as a proof of martyrdom. Therefore, martyrdom videos play an essential role in preserving the remembrance of the deceased as shuhadāʾ. In this regard, they also have ritualistic meaning and can be regarded as rites of incorporation such as those found at the heart of funeral rites (van Gennep 2005, 142). I will apply the term martyrdom videos to all videos produced to commemorate deceased mujahidin who are celebrated as martyrs. They serve various functions, which are "publicizing the martyrs' last wishes, celebrating their actions, informing the martyrs' family and friends of their deaths, and—especially—inspiring others by depicting the martyrs as heroes who should be emulated" (Stalinsky et al. 2017). They thereby help to perpetuate the cycle of jihadi martyrdom. Among IS martyrdom videos, three different categories can be differentiated within the concept of istishhād: First, a substantial proportion of IS martyrdom videos cover the intentional pursuit of martyrdom through the carrying out of martyrdom operations. One example for this category is *Fursān al-Shahāda*

[8] Women do not appear in the selected IS martyrdom videos. However, they also play active roles within jihadism. According to Charlie Winter (2018), "al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) – the antecedent to ISIS – [...] was a trailblazer when it came to mobilising women for terrorist attacks. Indeed, during the second half of the 2000s alone, it dispatched dozens of female supporters on suicide missions". Furthermore, IS "first celebrated its purported deployment of women on the battlefield in early 2018".

5, which portrays three men, each introduced as an istishhādī, steering trucks laden with explosives towards different targets belonging to their perceived enemy. In contrast, the second category encompasses videos that are not necessarily recognisable and were potentially not even designed as martyrdom videos. They celebrate mujahidin who died unexpectedly in battle as shuhadāʾ. *Al-Ghuraba – The Chosen Few of Different Lands*, which is dedicated to a mujahid who died in a battle over a military airport, serves as an example for this category. The third category includes IS martyrdom videos that also portray mujahidin who died in battle, but who actively sought this goal. In this regard, the third category represents a combination of the first two categories, uniting the intention of istishhād with the environment of the battlefield. One example of this is the video *Bal Aḥyāʾ ʿInda Rabbihim* that portrays an IS mujahid who, during his lifetime, longed to die as a martyr and indeed, died in an airstrike during a battle against Kurdish fighters.

Fursān al-Shahāda 5

Fursān al-Shahāda 5 is immediately identifiable as a martyrdom video. It shows three men—who, according to their names, come from Saudi Arabia—[9] carrying out martyrdom operations. Right from the beginning, the theme of martyrdom is introduced to the spectator through a 30-second computer animation of a martyrdom operation, and this remains the leading theme throughout the video. The introduction also includes a sequence symbolising the transformation from an istishhādī to a shahīd by placing images of the preparations for the martyrdom operations and images of explosions next to each other on a split screen, foreshadowing later sequences of the video. The introductory part ends with a recitation of sura 4, verses 74–75:[10]

> Let them fight in the way of God, those who would sell the life of this world for the Hereafter. And whosoever fights in the way of God—whether he is slain or victorious—We shall grant him a great reward. And what ails you that you fight not in the way of God and for the weak and oppressed [...]

These verses not only serve as a theological basis for jihad. They also present martyrdom as a reward for those who die 'for God's cause'. The main part of *Fursān al-Shahāda 5* consists of three sections, each dedicated to one person introduced as an istishhādī**.** Although the sequence of the second section differs slightly from the rest, a general pattern is identifiable: Each section first provides biographical data for the istishhādī, before showing him reading out his testament, and, finally, carrying out the martyrdom operation, steering a truck with explosives into strongholds of the perceived enemy in Iraq. Among these targets are Iraqi police headquarters, barracks belonging to the US army and a school used by 'apostates', *murtaddūn* or *murtaddīn* in Arabic, a term used for those who are perceived to have left Islam and are not considered to be 'real' Muslims in the view of IS. These situations are contextualised through texts such as "the istishhādī [...] on his way towards the target" *(Fursān al-Shahāda 5*, TC: 00:14:13). All explosions are shown several

[9] All of their names include a geographical indication, the so-called *nisba*, referring to cities and regions in Saudi Arabia.

[10] In this article, I will generally use the English Qurʾan translation *The Study Quran. A New Translation and Commentary* by Seyyed Hossein Nasr et al. (2015).

times, also in slow motion, mostly followed by flashbacks to the istishhādī to symbolise the transition from an istishhādī to a shahīd. The concept of istishhād is religiously framed through references to the hadith or Qurʾanic verses such as: "Among the believers are men who have been true to that which they pledged unto God […]" (sura 33, verse 23).[11] The ending of the video resembles the introduction in reverse order, again placing images of the preparations for the martyrdom operations and images of explosions next to each other. To summarise, all video footage is centred on portraying the martyrdom operation and istishhād as a means to receive shahāda.

Al-Ghuraba – The Chosen Few of Different Lands

In contrast to this, *Al-Ghuraba – The Chosen Few of Different Lands* does not appear as a martyrdom video at first sight, but rather allows for various interpretations. The video is in English, since it is dedicated to a mujahid from Canada who converted to Islam, joined IS and died in the battle over the military airport of Minnigh, Syria. In this regard, *Al-Ghuraba – The Chosen Few of Different Lands* is not typical for IS martyrdom videos, which usually portray martyrdom operations. This example is more closely linked to the initial concept of martyrdom used for the martyrs of the battlefield: "He moved during the battle like a man who did not know death. Rather, he knew that true life awaited him." *(Al-Ghuraba – The Chosen Few of Different Lands*, TC: 00:07:27–00:07:36) This video, too, fulfils the main functions of a martyrdom video, "celebrating their actions, informing the martyrs' family and friends of their deaths, and—especially—inspiring others by depicting the martyrs as heroes who should be emulated" (Stalinsky et al. 2017). Yet, it lacks the function of "publicizing the martyrs' last wishes" (ibid.), which can be explained by the fact that dying in battle is possible or even probable, but not certain, as is the case for martyrdom operations including explosives shown in *Fursān al-Shahāda 5*. In general, the theme of martyrdom in *Al-Ghuraba – The Chosen Few of Different Lands* is not as dominant as in *Fursān al-Shahāda 5*. Only the last four minutes out of this eleven-minute video address death and martyrdom, which is theologically framed through a hadith that includes the following excerpt: "Whoever does this [perform jihad] of them and then dies or is killed or drowns or is stomped upon to death by his riding animal, it is then incumbent upon Allah to enter him into jannah (paradise)." *(Al-Ghuraba – The Chosen Few of Different Lands*, TC: 00:10:46–00:10:54) The same hadith and some screenshots from the video *Al-Ghuraba – The Chosen Few of Different Lands*, including an image of the corpse, can also be found in an issue of the Islamic State's *DABIQ* magazine published in 2014 *(DABIQ*, Issue 2, Ramadan 1435 [2014], 19).[12] The reference to martyrdom here becomes more apparent than in the video, since the overall narration of *Al-Ghuraba – The Chosen Few of Different Lands* is much broader. It encompasses the mujahid's former life in Canada, his conversion to Islam, his *hijra* or emigration to the Islamic State, his new life within IS and his calling on others to also make hijra and support IS. This suggests that the video footage used in *Al-Ghuraba – The*

[11] This is only an excerpt. The Qurʾanic recitation in the video encompasses sura 33, verses 23–24. As these verses show, jihad constitutes a defensive act to "relieve the oppressed", which provides "a legitimate basis for religious warfare" (Nasr et al. 2015, 224). Putting these verses into their historical context, they "relate specifically to those Muslims residing in Makkah who were oppressed and mistreated by their relatives and prevented from migrating to Madinah" (ibid.). In jihadism, however, warfare is legitimised per se, since the *Global War on Islam* is continuously perceived as a legitimate basis for jihad.

[12] According to the issue of the *DABIQ* magazine, the hadith is taken from the *Musnad Aḥmad*, also known as *al-Musnad*, a hadith collection written by Ahmad ibn Hanbal, a Sunni scholar and founder of the Hanbali School of Law. Unfortunately, this source could not be ratified.

Chosen Few of Different Lands was initially intended for other purposes, for instance to propagate the utopia of the Islamic State and call on others to follow the mujahid's example and support IS. While *Fursān al-Shahāda 5* was intentionally designed as a martyrdom video, *Al-Ghuraba – The Chosen Few of Different Lands* instead seems to have posthumously and retrospectively become one.

Bal Aḥyā ʾ ʿInda Rabbihim

In contrast to this, *Bal Aḥyā ʾ ʿInda Rabbihim* is easily identifiable as a martyrdom video—at least for audiences with knowledge of the Arabic language. This is already indicated by the title, which translates as *Rather, They Are Alive with Their Lord*. The title refers to a verse from the Qurʾan: "And deem not those slain in the way of God to be dead. Rather, they are alive with their Lord, provided for." (sura 3, verse 169) The video is dedicated to a munshid from Saudi Arabia who joined IS, became a famous IS munshid—probably the most prominent example—and died in an airstrike of the Global Coalition during a battle against Kurdish fighters. In contrast to *Fursān al-Shahāda 5* and *Al-Ghuraba – The Chosen Few of Different Lands*, the video *Bal Aḥyā ʾ ʿInda Rabbihim* appears as a detailed biography, including video footage from the munshid's former life in Saudi Arabia. This is probably due to his fame both within IS and prior to joining IS. However, working as a munshid in Saudi Arabia did not fulfil him. Following the narration of the video, he only found true happiness and fulfilment as a mujahid. According to one of his friends, he always wanted to participate in attacks and even considered carrying out a martyrdom operation. *Bal Aḥyā ʾ ʿInda Rabbihim* thus blurs the boundaries between the first two categories of IS martyrdom videos. The mujahid portrayed combines the intention of istishhād with the environment of the battlefield, as the statements "I want martyrdom in His [God's] way." *(Bal Aḥyā ʾ ʿInda Rabbihim*, TC: 00:07:43–00:07:45) and "I wished to fight in the way of God and be killed, then to fight and be killed, then to fight and be killed." demonstrate *(Bal Aḥyā ʾ ʿInda Rabbihim*, TC: 00:01:43–00:01:52), the latter referring to a hadith reported by Muslim and al-Bukhari (Khoury 2009, 3964). This conception that a martyr wishes "to return to earthly life [as a mujahid] in order to die [as a shahīd] in the way of God again" is a "frequent motif" within jihadism (Szyska 2004, 36). It reflects the entirely positive connotation of martyrdom within jihadism. As is the case in *Fursān al-Shahāda 5*, martyrdom is the dominant theme throughout the video.

Conceptualising the Sounds of IS Martyrdom Videos

The theme of martyrdom is not only narrated and visually represented in IS martyrdom videos, it is also conveyed through sounds. In *Fursān al-Shahāda 5, Bal Aḥyā ʾ ʿInda Rabbihim* and *Al-Ghuraba – The Chosen Few of Different Lands*, three different types of sounds can be identified: first ḥudāʾ, which describes a live chanting performance by a collective of mujahidin, second inshād, a performance of a professional nashīd singer, called munshid in

Arabic, and third anāshīd, which are recorded chants. The Islamic Studies scholar Behnam Said (2016, 24) defines ḥudāʾ as a musically less complex live performance amongst a group of mujahidin in contrast to anāshīd that are characterised by their studio quality. A nashīd, in turn, is the "product" of the "process" of inshād (ibid.). From a musicological perspective, this distinction can be challenged, for example through Christopher Small's (1998, 2) notion of *musicking*: "There is no such thing as music. Music is not a thing at all but an activity, something that people do." Small's notion thus challenges the conception of anāshīd and inshād, since a nashīd simultaneously evolves through the activity of inshād. While this criticism is to some degree justified, the differentiation between chanting performances in the form of inshād, on the one hand, and chants in the form of anāshīd, on the other, is still applicable to IS martyrdom videos, since they serve different functions. While inshād is performed by a munshid for a certain audience at a particular time and place, anāshīd are recorded, in order to be reused. The key element of anāshīd is not the performance in a recording studio but rather the reusability in other contexts—in the case of IS anāshīd in IS videos. The main difference between inshād and ḥudāʾ is, in turn, that ḥudāʾ can, in principle, be performed by anyone, whereas inshād is performed by a professional munshid. The use of these terminologies within jihadism, however, blurs these boundaries. The Islamic Studies scholar Philipp Holtmann (2013, 226) describes ḥudāʾ as an "uplifting battle chant" that "has become a sub-genre" of anāshīd within jihadism. He illustrates his argument through an advertisement for a video produced by the Islamic State in Iraq. The video has the title *Ḥudāʾ al-Shuhadāʾ*, which translates as *Ḥudāʾ of the Martyrs*, whereas the advertisement claims that the video shows one of the "most beautiful *inshad*-sessions" (ibid.). This synonymous use of the two terms inshād and ḥudāʾ in jihadi contexts can also be seen in the IS martyrdom video *Fursān al-Shahāda 5*. It includes a sequence of a musical live performance in which the istishhādī, who is not, to my knowledge, a professional munshid, acts as a cantor for a chanting group of mujahidin. The term ḥudāʾ would be applicable for this situation. The accompanying description, however, labels this situation as an "inshād session": "the istishhādī […] at an inshād session with his brothers" *(Fursān al-Shahāda 5*, TC: 00:32:56). This raises the question of whether common parlance makes the differentiation between inshād and ḥudāʾ obsolete. In this article, I still adhere to the distinction between anāshīd, inshād and ḥudāʾ, since they are used as distinct musical forms in IS martyrdom videos, referring to different etymologies.

Etymologies: Anāshīd, Inshād and Ḥudāʾ

The origins of anāshīd and inshād as musical forms lie in "*inshād al-shiʿr*, a protracted poetical recitation delivered in a loud voice", referring to the term "*inshād*, which originally meant raising the voice" (Shiloah 1995, 4). The term nashīd initially "also referred to the raising of the voice; its extended musical connotation probably derived from the melodious reciting of poetry in public as practised in pre- and post-Islamic times" (5). This development of

musical forms can be explained through the metrical arrangement of poetry, which suggests a certain intonation. Anāshīd therefore gradually became synonymous with hymns, chants or pieces of oratory (Shiloah 1993, 975). For centuries, religious chants with a "sacred nature" were predominant in Sufism[13] (Sellheim 1995, 1018). Within Sufism, the term *samāʿ* is used for these chants. As samāʿ covers all sorts of sacred or religious chants and music (Shiloah 1995, 59), anāshīd can be categorised as part of samāʿ, although this is nowhere explicitly formulated (Said 2016, 91). A possible explanation for this is the fact that anāshīd have, in recent decades, increasingly been used for political and jihadi purposes, which are rivals to Sufi interpretations of Islam. Islamist and jihadi groups might therefore avoid the usage of a Sufi term to theologically categorise anāshīd. Islamist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood began to use anāshīd in the 1970s and 1980s, as part of a religious revival and a general rise of Islamism (45). However, they developed a rather pragmatic view of anāshīd and regarded them as a tool for mobilisation (Said 2016, 78; Lahoud 2017, 46). This is what motivated jihadi groups and movements in the 1990s to also use anāshīd (Said 2016, 78). In the view of these groups, jihadi anāshīd represent sacred chants as opposed to worldly music. To mark this difference, jihadi anāshīd are generally sung a cappella, influenced by Salafi[14]-Wahhabi[15] doctrine that forbids the use of musical instruments and heavily restricts the use of rhythm instruments (ibid.). This is also true for IS anāshīd that have certain characteristics: They are performed only by men and have a limited dynamic and melodic range. Furthermore, pitch correction, digital reverb and, at times, delay are applied to make the voice sound uniform and powerful, evoking the sacralising impression of large religious buildings such as mosques.

As is the case with the term nashīd, the meaning of ḥudāʾ has changed over time. It originally described a form of "old Bedouin camel song" (Shiloah 1995, 31) or "caravan […] song [that] became identified with the *nawḥ* (lamentation or elegy). It is said that the *ghināʾ* (lit. song) was derived from this rudimentary form of singing; in the Muslim era, *ghināʾ* became the generic term for art music" (5). Ghināʾ, in turn, "is associated with secular art music yet is compatible, to a large extent, with folk music" (31). The presumption that ghināʾ is derived from ḥudāʾ is especially interesting, since jihadi groups such as IS that practice ḥudāʾ generally reject ghināʾ due to its secular connotation. This is demonstrated by a *Statement Concerning the Prohibition on Music, Singing and Photos on Shops,*[16] issued by the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham, short ISIS,[17] in Raqqa in January 2014: "Know […] that stringed instruments and song [ghināʾ] are forbidden in Islam because they detract from mention of God and the Qurʾan, and they are a source of strife and corruption for the heart." (translation by Al-Tamimi 2015) Yet, as IS still uses ḥudāʾ, this means that IS theologically approves of it. The fact that ḥudāʾ have become synonymous with lamentations over time is of particular importance in the context of IS martyrdom videos, since ḥudāʾ serves as a rite of separation prior to martyrdom operations. Lamentations over a person's death likewise serve as rites of separation in a lot of cultures and societies, also in Muslim ones. Since death only marks the transition from this world

[13] *Sufism* describes various ascetic and mystic orders within Islam.

[14] *Salafism* describes a religious movement within Sunni Islam that aims to return to the roots of Islam, but at the same time absorbs modern political developments (Biene 2015).

[15] *Wahhabism* describes a form of political Salafism that is particularly prevalent in Saudi-Arabia.

[16] I hereby deeply thank Scott Havener for drawing my attention to this document.

[17] The *Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham* is the predecessor of the Islamic State. This name was used from April 2013 until the proclamation of the caliphate in June 2014. Alternative translations of the Arabic name are *Islamic State of Iraq and Syria* or *Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant*, abbreviated as *ISIL*.

to the hereafter in Islam, loud lamentations were and are often regarded as inappropriate based on various examples from the hadith expressing the prophet Muhammad's disapproval of intensive mourning (Horsch 2011, 76). Yet, numerous mourning rituals continue to exist within Muslim societies today (ibid.), so that Islamic funerals generally fulfil the social function of "bring[ing] a community of mourners together" (Halevi 2007, 234).

Ḥudāʾ in *Fursān al-Shahāda 5*

In contrast to this, mourning plays a minor role at IS martyrdom ceremonies. This can be explained through the perception of death in jihad as a means to directly enter paradise, which therefore represents a joyful event in jihadism. Yet, the absence of a proper burial according to Islamic rites requires some sort of compensation. Martyrdom ceremonies thus act as rites of passage compensating for this exceptional situation. As the example of *Fursān al-Shahāda 5* demonstrates, ḥudāʾ is practiced at martyrdom ceremonies as a rite of separation to mark the transition from a mujahid, who belongs to a collective of mujahidin, towards an istishhādī, who will soon carry out a martyrdom operation as an individual. In *Fursān al-Shahāda 5*, ḥudāʾ is used in two sequences, once as a rite of separation. In the first sequence, the practice of live chanting represents a collective practice without any obvious special occasion. The istishhādī fulfils the role of a cantor. He shows the other mujahidin, who cannot be seen, but whose voices can be heard, when to join in. Although this sequence is part of a martyrdom video, it does not seem to be part of a martyrdom ceremony. The lyrics instead create a link to jihad and warfare, since the dominant themes are destroying Israel, condemning Jews and Christians as well as praying for Usama bin Ladin's victory over US troops *(Fursān al-Shahāda 5*, TC: 00:32:52–00:35:01).[18] Ḥudāʾ is indeed also performed prior to battles. Yet, the occasion for this ḥudāʾ does not become apparent from the video. The textual description "inshād session", the casual outfit of the istishhādī and the setting rather suggest that this ḥudāʾ session—I adhere to this term, as it is a performance of a collective of mujahidin and not of a professional munshid—fulfils the social function of community building through collective chanting. The second sequence of ḥudāʾ, on the other hand, takes place at a martyrdom ceremony on the occasion of the upcoming martyrdom operation *(Fursān al-Shahāda 5*, TC: 00:12:10–00:13:56). It shows an individual mujahid, who through this rite of separation becomes an istishhādī, standing in front of the black IS banner, with weapons hanging on the walls. One by one, mujahidin walk up to the istishhādī to embrace him. Two of them carry weapons. During this sequence, a ḥudāʾ can be heard, yet without anyone shown chanting. It still presumably is an intradiegetic element of the video based on the quality of the sound. One person again acts as a cantor, then others join in repeating the part of the ḥudāʾ the cantor has just performed. This ḥudāʾ serves as a rite of separation, as the lyrics demonstrate:

I bid you farewell with tears in my eyes.
I bid you farewell, and you are my precious ones [lite-
rally: my eyes] for me.
I bid you farewell and in my heart is a flame
that increases my grief because of my love for you [lite-
*rally: your love].***[19]**

This is the only sequence in *Fursān al-Shahāda 5* that leaves the possibility of verbalising personal grief. It enables both the istishhādī and his fellow mujahidin to bid farewell to each other and to express their grief. This ritualistic dimension of ḥudāʾ provides stability in a process of social transformation, in which an individual istishhādī is separated from a collective of mujahidin.

Inshād in *Bal Aḥyāʾ ʿInda Rabbihim*

While ḥudāʾ constitutes a collective chanting practice performed *by* mujahidin, inshād describes a chanting performance of an IS munshid *for* mujahidin. These live performances are rare among IS. Indeed, the video *Bal Aḥyāʾ ʿInda Rabbihim* is one of the few accounts of inshād among IS *(Bal Aḥyāʾ ʿInda Rabbihim*, TC: 00:09:48–00:09:59). The lyrics resemble those of the first ḥudāʾ used in *Fursān al-Shahāda 5*, again referring to jihad and warfare and constructing Jews as the enemy Other.**[20]** The setting, a cave, which might serve as a hideout for the armed mujahidin, further suggests that this sequence is actually shot prior to a battle. This example shows that the description of ḥudāʾ as "encouraging battle songs" as opposed to anāshīd as "praiseful hymns" (Holtmann 2013, 225) is somewhat misleading, since inshād and anāshīd also address the theme of warfare. The distinction between ḥudāʾ on the one hand and inshād and anāshīd on the other thus lies, instead, in their performers. While ḥudāʾ represents a highly inclusive practice that develops through a chanting collective, which, in principal, anybody can be part of, inshād describes a performance of a professional munshid, in which audiences are not expected to actively chant. In *Bal Aḥyāʾ ʿInda Rabbihim*, no mujahid joins the munshid in chanting. Audiences can, theoretically, sing along, however the munshid remains the most important person within inshād, whereas ḥudāʾ develops through a chanting collective. Interestingly, the munshid is shown chanting the 'same' piece twice in *Bal Aḥyāʾ ʿInda Rabbihim:* first among a group of mujahidin, then in a provisional recording area that serves as a recording studio. Both versions sound quite different, because digital reverb and pitch correction are applied in the studio version *(Bal Aḥyāʾ ʿInda Rabbihim*, TC: 00:09:59–00:10:25). Due to this post-production, the sonic and the visual dimension of this sequence do not overlap. While it visually represents the *recording* of a nashīd, it sonically expresses a *recorded* nashīd that already has all the general characteristics of IS anāshīd: It is an a cappella chant that went through post-production, applying processing tools such as pitch correction and digital reverb, which is here rather used as a stylistic element than as a regular mixing tool (Marius Botzenhart 2019, personal communication). This sequence reveals the main difference between inshād and anāshīd: While inshād first and foremost

[19] The Arabic lyrics were provided by Majd Alkatreeb.

[20] I again want to thank Majd Alkatreeb for summarising these lyrics.

means chanting for a certain audience at a particular time and place, anāshīd describe chants that are recorded for the sake of reusability, independent of time and place.

Anāshīd in *Al-Ghuraba – The Chosen Few of Different Lands*

The nashīd *Yā Fawz Man Nāl al-Shahāda Ṣādiqan*, which was recorded by the IS munshid portrayed in *Bal Aḥyāʾ ʿInda Rabbihim* and released by *Muʾassasat Ajnād li-l-Intāj al-Iʿlāmī* (=*Ajnād Foundation for Media Production)* in 2014, is (re-)used in IS martyrdom videos particularly often, since it addresses and sacralises the concept of jihadi martyrdom. In addition to this sacralisation of jihadi contents, anāshīd used in IS videos, including martyrdom videos, generally serve similar functions as extradiegetic film music: Anāshīd are added to affectively involve the audiences and to provide additional information by categorising a specific genre, syntactically organising the plot or providing a hermeneutical foundation for interpretations (Weindl 2013, 62). This shows, for instance, *Al-Ghuraba – The Chosen Few of Different Lands*, which does not necessarily appear, on a purely visual level, to be a martyrdom video. However, there is one particular sonic characteristic that clearly refers to martyrdom. Throughout the video, the nashīd *Yā Fawz Man Nāl al-Shahāda Ṣādiqan* can be heard, which translates as *What a Victory for the One Who Truly Receives Martyrdom*. The fact that just this nashīd is used throughout the video is not coincidental. Indeed, *Al-Ghuraba – The Chosen Few of Different Lands* is one of the few IS videos—if not the only one—in which only one nashīd is used.[21] The nashīd must thus carry importance. It provides unambiguous hermeneutical information to the otherwise ambiguous narration of *Al-Ghuraba – The Chosen Few of Different Lands* and thereby categorises this video as an IS martyrdom video. One major difference to film music, however, is that the anāshīd used in IS martyrdom videos frame and sacralise their contents in a religious manner. In this regard, they are comparable to Qurʾanic recitations, hadith excerpts and poetic recitations used in martyrdom videos, which mostly represent mediated and posthumously added rites of incorporation, in order to integrate the deceased in the hereafter. This sacralisation encompasses two dimensions: First, anāshīd refer to a long-established religious practice that conveys "a sense of legitimacy, authenticity and historical precedent" (Kendall 2016, 241) in itself.[22] Second, their lyrics include theological references to the Qurʾan and the hadith that frame martyrdom as a religious concept. Conceptions of paradise and the rewards for martyrs therein are of particular importance, as the lyrics of *Yā Fawz Man Nāl al-Shahāda Ṣādiqan* demonstrate:

> *What a victory for the one who truly receives martyrdom.*
> *The sins are removed, when the blood drips. [...]*
> *His wounds distribute [the scent of] musk and are perfumed.*
> *[The martyrs] live comfortably in the crops of birds.*
> *Their souls live within them and they live forever.*
> *They have houses and companions in paradise [...].*
> *They get so many beautiful virgins of paradise that they*

[21] This applies for videos that are not explicitly designed to illustrate anāshīd, as is the case for video anāshīd which can be understood as 'IS music videos'.

[22] This argument is based on Elisabeth Kendall's (2016, 241) analysis of the jihadi use of classical Arabic poetry: "Classical poetry therefore deftly skips the step of logical argument to convey succinctly and powerfully a sense of legitimacy, authenticity and historical precedent to modern jihadist messages and deeds."

are satisfied.
They will intercede on behalf of their families, when they
are held back [...].
Neither death nor temptation befell them.
In the grave, they are never questioned or subjugated.

As these lyrics show, blood is the ultimate proof of martyrdom, which is remarkable, since blood is perceived to impair one's ritual purity and therefore generally requires ritual purification according to Islamic law (Horsch-Al Saad 2011, 187). To ensure the ritual purity of the deceased, the corpse is usually washed prior to the burial (ibid.). This does not, however, apply to martyrs. Their purity is either ensured through angels that "take over the task" of washing their corpses (Szyska 2004, 35) or through the scent of musk that God awards to them (Horsch-Al Saad 2011, 189). Musk is therefore directly associated with paradise (ibid.). According to a hadith reported by Muslim and al-Bukhari, the wounds of those injured in the way of God will appear at the day of resurrection, having the colour of blood but the scent of musk (Khoury 2009, 3964). Through blood, all "sins are removed", so that the questioning and torment of the grave at the final judgment become obsolete. However, the martyrs' families are not spared from this. Following a hadith reported by al-Tirmidhi, martyrs can therefore intercede on behalf of 70 relatives (3986). Martyrs themselves are believed to enter directly into paradise. In Islamic tradition, the idea is widespread that the souls of martyrs continue to live in "birds", "green birds" or "in the crops [...] of green birds" that "eat [...] from the fruits of paradise" (Raven 2003, 284). "According to some traditions, the spirits of the martyrs will ascend directly to Paradise, there to reside in the craws of green birds near God's throne. During the Resurrection these spirits will be returned to the martyr's earthly bodies and the martyrs will then be given their abode in Paradise." (Kohlberg 1997, 204) Another common conception is that a martyr is given 72 virgins or maidens of paradise as wives. This conception is anchored in a hadith reported by al-Tirmidhi (Khoury 2009, 3986) as well as in sura 52, verse 20: "We shall wed them to wide-eyed maidens." Yet, this sura does not explicitly address martyrs, but includes "the reverent" in general (sura 52, verse 17). The difference, however, lies in the notion that the martyr's wedding coincides with the moment of his death, since martyrs are directly admitted to paradise (Horsch-Al Saad 2011, 220). All these religious references and conceptions can be found in the lyrics of *Yā Fawz Man Nāl al-Shahāda Ṣādiqan*. They are used to theologically frame jihad, which is carried out in this world, by linking it to the hereafter. The musical expression of *Yā Fawz Man Nāl al-Shahāda Ṣādiqan* intensifies this impression of a sonic arch between this world and the hereafter. It has a flowing movement that appears rather calm, creating the impression of a mantra. Both syllabic and melismatic articulation are used, the latter especially towards the end of the nashīd, which creates the atmosphere of a lamentation that sonically hints at martyrdom. The nashīd *Yā Fawz Man Nāl al-Shahāda Ṣādiqan* thus represents a rite of incorporation that is inscribed to and mediated through the martyrdom video *Al-Ghuraba – The Chosen Few of Different Lands*. In fact, the making of a martyrdom video itself can be

regarded as a rite of incorporation. These rites, rather than rites of separation, are usually at the heart of funerals, in order to integrate the deceased into the realm of the dead (van Gennep 2005, 142). Martyrdom videos, including anāshīd, thereby not only preserve the commemoration of the shuhadāʾ. They also help to promote the concept of jihadi martyrdom. As the example of *Fursān al-Shahāda 5* shows, this is of particular importance with regard to martyrdom operations: "After being issued on the Internet, martyr songs are supposed to transport this feeling directly to the Jihadi target audience, which is supposed to re-experience the excitement of self-sacrifice, and finally re-enact it." (Holtmann 2013, 225) Anāshīd thereby help to perpetuate the cycle of jihadi martyrdom.

Conclusion

As has been shown through the examples of *Fursān al-Shahāda 5*, *Bal Aḥyāʾ ʿInda Rabbihim* and *Al-Ghuraba – The Chosen Few of Different Lands*, sounds in the form of chants and chanting are crucial elements of IS martyrdom videos. While inshād performances are rather rare, anāshīd and ḥudāʾ are commonly used. They not only represent musical elements, but also bear ritualistic meanings. Ḥudāʾ as a rite of separation accompanies the process of separation of an individual istishhādī from a collective of mujahidin, which is marked through a martyrdom ceremony. Anāshīd as rites of incorporation, on the other hand, posthumously preserve the commemoration of the deceased as shuhadāʾ. They thus "play a central role in the ritualistic glorification of martyrs" (Holtmann 2013, 225) and help to promote the concept of jihadi martyrdom by framing death in jihad, including martyrdom operations, as religious acts. Qurʾan verses and hadith excerpts referring to paradise and the rewards for martyrs therein are of particular importance, as the lyrics of the analysed IS nashīd *Yā Fawz Man Nāl al-Shahāda Ṣādiqan* demonstrate.

This analysis of the use of anāshīd, inshād and ḥudāʾ in IS martyrdom videos has revealed a general confusion of these terminologies, each of which have their own distinct etymology. In jihadi contexts, the expressions inshād and ḥudāʾ seem to be used interchangeably in common parlance. This raises the question of whether the differentiation between inshād and ḥudāʾ is altogether obsolete, a question which further research will need to address. The distinction between anāshīd and inshād can be challenged further from a musicological perspective which highlights musicking as an activity, since a nashīd evolves through the activity of inshād. It is therefore necessary to include (ethno-)musicological perspectives in further academic research, in order to examine the validity of existing musical categories such as ḥudāʾ as a collective live chanting performance, inshād as a live version of a nashīd performed by a professional munshid and anāshīd as recorded and post-produced chants. A deeper understanding of the role of anāshīd, inshād and ḥudāʾ will contribute to our overall understanding of jihadism, by highlighting specific socio-cultural practices that help to explain the mechanisms that attract certain individuals to jihadism.

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Rezension
Review

Olivier Roy: *Ihr liebt das Leben, wir lieben den Tod. Der Dschihad und die Wurzeln des Terrors*
München: Siedler Verlag 2017

Olivier Roy beschäftigt sich in seinem Buch mit Dschihadismus und islamistischem Terrorismus in deren aktuellen Erscheinungsformen. Das Buch reiht sich in eine kontrovers geführte Debatte zwischen ihm und seinem Kollegen, dem ebenfalls französischen Politikwissenschaftler Gilles Kepel, ein (Kepel/Rougier 2016). Das Werk versteht sich somit als recht ausführliche Replik, in der Roy seine Kernthesen von Grund auf darlegt und vertieft.

Infolge eines von Roy publizierten Artikels, in dem er erstmals von seiner These der „Islamisierung der Radikalität" im Zusammenhang mit suizidalem Terrorismus spricht, nimmt die Debatte zwischen Roy und Kepel 2008 Fahrt auf. Die These besagt, dass „gewalttätige Radikalisierung keineswegs eine Folge religiöser Radikalisierung ist, auch wenn sich erstere häufig die Wege und Vorbilder der letzteren zu eigen macht" (20).[1] Kepel zufolge vernachlässigte Roy die kausale Verbindung zwischen fundamentalistischen Auslegungen des Islam, hauptsächlich des Salafismus, und der Radikalisierung von Personen bis hin zur Gewaltbereitschaft. Ein weiterer Einwand zu Roys These seitens des Politikwissenschaftlers und Arabisten François Burgat war die Vernachlässigung sozio-politischer Ursachen der Radikalisierung, wie beispielsweise das Erbe der Kolonialzeit oder die Ausgrenzung muslimischer Immigranten in westlichen Gesellschaften (21). In der vorliegenden Übersetzung des französischen Originals *Le Djihad et la mort* (2016) greift Roy die Kritik auf, sieht jedoch in keinem dieser Ansätze eine hinreichende Erklärung für die Form des zeitgenössischen Terrorismus. Er vertieft und erweitert seine Thesen vielmehr anhand der Kritikpunkte. Das Buch entstand im Anschluss an die Debatte; es gewinnt somit an Relevanz und wird greifbar im Kontext des bestehenden Streits.

Roys Hauptthese besagt, die rezenten Formen des islamistischen Terrors seien keine Folge von radikalem Islamismus, sondern als bloße Radikalität um ihrer selbst willen in einen sorgsam ausgestalteten islamischen Bezugsrahmen eingebettet. Der Untermauerung und Erläuterung dieser These widmet Roy drei Kapitel seines Buches.

Im ersten Kapitel geht es um die Zusammenführung der Einzelphänome des gewalttätigen Dschihadismus und des Terrorismus. Deren Schnittstelle identifiziert Roy in der Todesabsicht der Akteure. Er sieht ab der Mitte der 1990er Jahre eine neue Generation von Terroristen in islamistisch motivierten Terrorakten am Werk, die häufig aus westlichen Staaten stammen oder zumindest

[1] Seitenverweise ohne Angabe von Autor oder Publikationsjahr beziehen sich auf das besprochene Buch.

‚verwestlicht' sind, und unter denen sich zudem mehr Konvertiten finden als zuvor. Die Todesabsicht unterscheidet sie für Roy von ihren Vorgängern, die „ihre Flucht sorgfältig planten" (12). Der gewollte Tod spielt somit als ein neues und systematisiertes Merkmal dschihadistischer und terroristischer Gewaltakte die zentrale Rolle in Roys Betrachtung. Der Tod als Märtyrer ist im Islam positiv besetzt, das Streben nach dem eigenen Tod jedoch ist sündhaft. Bereits hier besteht ein Widerspruch zwischen fundamentalistischen Strömungen, wie dem Salafismus, und den todsuchenden Attentätern. Wie lässt sich also diese neue Todessehnsucht im islamischen Gewand erklären?

Die Todessehnsucht, so Roy, lässt sich weder nur auf eine politische Strategie noch auf militärstrategische Aspekte zurückführen. Eine Person, die den Tod sucht, ist in keiner Form an Verhandlungen jeglicher Art interessiert, somit kann es sich auch nicht um eine extreme Form des politischen Aufstands handeln. Auch ist der einmalige Einsatz eines ausgebildeten Kämpfers strategisch betrachtet nicht unbedingt rational.

Ein weiteres, zentrales Merkmal besteht für Roy darin, dass es sich bei der Dschihadbewegung in der westlichen Welt vornehmlich um eine Jugendbewegung handelt (12). Roy sieht eine Kontinuität der generationsbezogenen Revolten, ausgehend von den 1960er Jahren, wo sie unter dem Banner des Linksextremismus stattfanden, hin zum radikalen Islamismus, der das Feld ab den 1990er Jahren für sich beansprucht. Generationsspezifische Revolten sind „angetrieben von dem Willen, Tabula rasa zu machen, das Gedächtnis auszulöschen, im Verhältnis zu den Eltern die Meister der Wahrheit zu werden" (106).

Im zweiten Kapitel zeigt Roy in verschiedenen Betrachtungen die Hintergründe der Radikalen auf, klassifiziert sie in verschiedene Kategorien und erarbeitet ein für sie typisches Profil. Er stützt sich hierzu auf eine eigens angelegte Datensammlung über circa 100 Personen, die in Frankreich oder Belgien Attentate verübten oder planten, beziehungsweise von dort aus zum sog. Islamischen Staat (IS) ausgereist sind. Dabei handelt es sich um junge Männer der zweiten Einwanderungsgeneration, die kurz vor dem Aufbruch oder dem Attentat eine religiöse ‚Wiedergeburt' erleben oder Konvertiten sind, wobei beide Gruppen keine guten religiösen Kenntnisse haben (53). Ein weiteres Merkmal ist die häufige Verstrickung in kleinere Straftaten. Die religiöse ‚Erweckung' findet typischerweise im Rahmen des Freundeskreises oder über das Internet statt. Das Bekenntnis zum Islam, in der Form wie ihn der sog. IS propagiert, stellt bei den Radikalen einen drastischen Bruch mit quasi allen anders Gesinnten dar, auch mit Muslimen, die nicht in gleicher Sache aktiv sind wie etwa die Elterngeneration, die einen, nach Sicht der Radikalen, falschen Islam lebt. Roy stellt zudem fest: Die Radikalisierung der Einzelpersonen oder Gruppen geschieht zeitlich *vor* der Verbindung mit einer radikalen Organisation wie dem sog. IS. Der Kontakt zur Organisation muss nicht einmal dem Attentat vorausgehen. Organisationen wie der sog. IS schöpfen demnach aus einem Bestand bereits radikalisierter Personen oder Gruppen. Diese Feststellung leitet Roy zur Untersuchung der inneren Beweggründe der Radikalen, derer er sich im dritten Kapitel des Buches, *Das dschihadistische Imaginäre: Islamisierung der Radikalität*, annimmt.

Wie anfangs geschildert, stellt die Todesabsicht das Hauptmotiv dar. Weitere

typische Motive der mittlerweile recht eingegrenzten Kategorie des radikalen Attentäters sind geprägt von Ignoranz oder Entsagung gegenüber räumlichen, chronologischen oder historischen Aspekten. Diese Aspekte kategorisiert Roy als Bestandteile des „dschihadistischen Imaginären" (67). Eine häufig genannte Motivation stellt beispielsweise die Rolle des Attentäters als Rächer der leidenden Gesamtheit aller Muslime der Welt dar. Diese zu rächenden Personen sind jedoch fast nie konkret benannt und somit mehr Sinnbilder als tatsächliche Menschen. Ein Bezug zu tatsächlichen zeitgenössischen Konflikten wird nicht hergestellt. Das Gleiche gilt für die zu attackierende Seite: Als Beispiel führt Roy hier den Angriff von Bangladeschis auf Menschen mit vornehmlich italienischer Staatsbürgerschaft in Dhaka im Jahr 2016 an, die „prahlten, sie hätten zweiundzwanzig ‚Kreuzfahrer' getötet" (75). Der religiös-ideologische Rahmen, den der sog. IS anbietet, ist ein künstliches Konstrukt, zusammengesetzt aus Fragmenten, die aus ihrem historischen und gesellschaftlichen Kontext herausgerissen sind und dadurch ein möglichst flexibel anwendbares Ganzes ergeben sollen. Roy findet im Fall des sog. IS ein zuträgliches Beispiel für seine vorig genannte synchrone Betrachtungsweise von Gewaltphänomenen aus verschiedenen Räumen. Der eine Raum ist hier religiös, der andere einer bestimmten Jugendkultur verhaftet. Dies zeigt sich etwa in einer Ästhetisierung der Gewalt. Der sog. IS betreibt diese über Videos und die sozialen Medien massiv, was Roy als wirkungsvoll für die Attraktivität, die der sog. IS auf manche ausstrahlt, bewertet. Die Muster der Gewaltästhetik des sog. IS reihen sich in Darstellungen von Gewalt in Videos mexikanischer Narcos, im Film *Scarface* oder auch in Videospielen ein, wie Roy als Ergebnis der synchronen Betrachtung der jeweiligen Gewaltinszenierungen feststellt.

Das vierte Kapitel behandelt die Entstehungsgeschichte des sog. IS im Nahen Osten und seine Entwicklung seit der Gründung Mitte der 2000er Jahre bis zur Proklamation des ‚Kalifats' im Jahre 2014. Ferner geht Roy auf die in vielerlei Hinsicht komplexe Lage in der Region ein und schildert wie der sog. IS in diesem Gefüge verortet werden kann.

Der Beitrag Olivier Roys zu einem nach wie vor hochaktuellen Thema, wenn auch die Präsenz und Anziehungskraft des sog. IS schwindet, ist meiner Ansicht nach gelungen. Roy geht perspektivenreich auf ein sonst eher im Sinne seiner oben genannten Kritiker beleuchtetes Thema ein, und zieht wertvolle Erkenntnisse aus dieser Arbeit. Im Zentrum steht dabei, dass er die Phänomene des islamistischen Terrorismus und des Dschihadismus auf neue Weise hinterfragt ohne dabei den religiösen Rahmen zu vernachlässigen. Er stellt fest, indem er die zahlreichen weiteren Erklärungsansätze heranzieht, dass der Salafismus als fundamentalistische Lesart des Islam schlicht nicht die Mobilisierungsfähigkeit innehat, die ihm Gilles Kepel zuschreibt. Im Bereich der Berichterstattung – und des Medienraums generell – herrscht meines Erachtens aktuell vermehrt die Sichtweise von Roys Kritikern wie Kepel vor, auch in Anbetracht dessen stellt Roys Buch einen wertvollen Alternativansatz dar. Der Debatte mit Kepel setzt er gewissermaßen einen Endpunkt durch das Buch. Er greift die Hauptkritikpunkte auf, untermauert jedoch seine bestehenden Argumente und Thesen. Eine Parallele zu Roys Betrachtungen sehe ich im folgenden Zitat von Thomas Macho (2017, 295): „Kann es sein,

dass sich nicht nur Finanzmärkte, Praktiken des medialen Austauschs, des Verkehrs und des Stoffwechsels globalisieren, sondern eben auch die Kulturen der radikalen Verweigerung und des Suizids?" Der sog. IS versteht es, so Roy, den zumeist jungen Radikalisierten ein Narrativ anzubieten, in welchem sie ihr individuelles Streben nach dem Tod, was er als Todesabsicht bezeichnet, in einen größeren Sinnzusammenhang setzen können. Das Narrativ ist als Franchise-System ein unermüdlicher R+++ekrutierapparat für Radikale aus aller Welt (120). Einfach gesagt gelingt es Organisationen wie dem sog. IS die Radikalität zu ‚islamisieren'. Sie stellen ein Paradigma zur Revolte und zur Radikalität zur Verfügung, in das sich Radikale stellen können. Roy zeigt in seinem Buch die Schnittstellen des Paradigmas mit den Radikalen.

Jonatan Marx

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Rezension
Review

Lorenz Graitl: *Sterben als Spektakel: Zur kommunikativen Dimension des politisch motivierten Suizids* Wiesbaden: Springer VS 2012

Der politisch motivierte Suizid in all seinen Facetten ist ein die Moderne prägendes Phänomen, das auch in der Forschung große Beachtung findet. Einschneidende Ereignisse mit enormer medialer Wirksamkeit waren unter anderem die Selbstverbrennung Jan Pallachs 1969 in Prag sowie die Anschläge auf das World Trade Center 2001 in New York. Dass das Phänomen an Aktualität kaum eingebüßt hat, zeigte sich jüngst an der Selbstverbrennung eines tunesischen Journalisten in Kassèrine am 24.12.2018, der in einem Abschiedsvideo auf die schlechte wirtschaftliche Lage in Tunesien aufmerksam machte und seinen Tod damit explizit in einen Protestzusammenhang stellte.

Lorenz Graitl sieht den politisch motivierten Suizid als ein kommunikatives Mittel, mit dem säkulare und religiöse Akteure Forderungen verschiedenster Art kommunizieren. Er widmet sich in seiner bereits 2012 erschienen Dissertationsschrift dem politisch motivierten Suizid und den ihm zugrundeliegenden kommunikativen Dimensionen. Dabei setzt er sich in acht Kapiteln mit der Leitfrage seiner Arbeit auseinander: „unter welchen gesellschaftlichen Bedingungen ein Suizid zur politischen Waffe wird und welche Rolle Abschiedsnachrichten hierfür spielen" (15). Die Arbeit hat dabei den Anspruch, das Phänomen aus der Sichtweise einer verstehenden Soziologie zu analysieren. Graitl betont, dass psychologische oder suizidale Ansätze nicht Teil seiner Arbeit seien, vielmehr soll die Arbeit – inklusive der empirischen Analyse von sieben Abschiedsnachrichten – über den sozialen Sinn und die strategische und kommunikative Logik der Taten Aufschluss geben. Er beginnt zunächst in Kapitel zwei mit der Darstellung theoretischer Grundlagen der Forschung zum Begriff des politisch motivierten Suizids. Dabei rekurriert Graitl auf die Unterscheidung zwischen *egoistischen* und *altruistischen* Suiziden. Diese wird im Diskurs über Protestsuizide oft genannt und geht auf Émile Durkheim und – in dessen Erweiterung – auf Maurice Halbwachs zurück. Graitls Hauptkritikpunkt an Durkheim bezieht sich auf dessen Annahme, der altruistische Suizid würde in modernen Gesellschaften nicht mehr vorkommen, da das Phänomen lediglich in tribalen nicht-modernen Gesellschaften auftrete. Darauffolgend definiert Graitl drei verschiedene Ausprägungen des politisch motivierten Suizids: den Protestsuizid mit seiner prominenten Erscheinung der Selbstverbrennung, das Todesfasten und die Suizidattentate. Durch die chronologische Erarbeitung der jeweiligen Formen und durch ihre statistischen Darstellungen gelingt es Graitl, die drei Formen klar zu definieren. Er schafft

eine fundierte theoretische Grundlage für den weiteren Verlauf seiner Arbeit und macht deutlich, welche politisch motivierten Suizide er für seine Analyse heranzieht. Das folgende Kapitel widmet sich dem aktuellen Forschungsdiskurs in Bezug auf Erklärungsmodelle des politisch motivierten Suizids. Dabei distanziert er sich, wie schon zu Beginn seiner Arbeit, von psychologischen Erklärungen des Phänomens, da ihm der aktuelle Forschungsstand auf Grund von geringer empirischer Forschung als wenig haltbar erscheint. Ebenfalls kritisiert er prominente politologische Deutungsmodelle, die die Besetzung eines Landes durch demokratische Länder mit differierenden Religionen oder eine islamistische Ideologie als Hauptursache von Suizidattentaten sehen (Pape 2005; Gambetta 2005). Graitl schließt sich bei der Auseinandersetzung mit diesen Erklärungsversuchen der Theorie von Thomas Hegghammer (2009) an, nach der eine bestimmte Ideologie und Besatzung niemals allein, sondern nur im Zusammenspiel eine Erklärung für das Stattfinden von Selbstmordattentaten darstellen. Dabei unterscheidet sich dieser Ansatz jedoch nur gering von Gambettas Argumentation, so dass die Trennlinien zwischen den Theorien hier unscharf bleiben.

Im folgenden fünften Kapitel, dem Hauptteil der Arbeit, beschäftigt sich Graitl mit der kommunikativen Dimension von politischen Suiziden. Dabei sind Medien jeglicher Art das ausschlaggebende Mittel, um die Forderungen der Suizidenten einer breiten Öffentlichkeit zugänglich zu machen. Dass dies durch das Internet deutlich vereinfacht wurde, trägt nach Graitl jedoch nicht zum Erfolg der Suizide in Bezug auf ihre Forderungen bei. Die empirische Auswertung von sieben Abschiedsbriefen soll die Wichtigkeit der bisher vernachlässigten kommunikativen Gattung der Abschiedsnachricht verdeutlichen. Mit der Methode der objektiven Hermeneutik analysiert Graitl die Nachrichten jeweils als Ganzes, unter anderem hinsichtlich ihrer Absender, Adressaten, Forderung und sprachlichen Besonderheiten, wie beispielsweise das Nutzen bestimmter Symbole und Motive wie der „brennenden Fackel" (229f.). Außerdem analysiert er übergreifende Strategien bei der Bewältigung des Kommunikationsproblems, den eigenen Tod in der Abschiedsnachricht als sinnvoll darzustellen. Als Resultat seiner Analyse unterscheidet Graitl sechs verschieden Typen von Suiziden, die sich entweder einer defensiven („das Opferlamm", 245f.) oder einer offensiven Kategorie („der verzweifelte Altruist", ebd.) zuordnen lassen.

Im anschließenden Kapitel setzt sich Graitl mit den gesellschaftlichen Bedingungen eines Selbstopfers auseinander. Er betont, dass der Suizident mit seinem Tod die Deutungshoheit über sein Sterben verliert und somit von der Deutung der Gesellschaft abhängig ist. Denn ein politischer Suizid unterliege immer einem Rechtfertigungszwang, was sich auch in der vorherigen Analyse der Abschiedsnachrichten zeige. Graitl stellt außerdem ausführlich den Forschungsdiskurs um die Rechtfertigung von Selbstmordattentaten dar. Er widerlegt überzeugend jene Thesen, die auf eine ,dem Islam' inhärente Gewaltbereitschaft und historische Kontinuität von Selbstmordattentaten in islamischen Ländern aufbauen, indem er den vielseitigen Legitimationsdiskurs über Selbstmordmissionen verschiedener geistlicher Gelehrter und religiöser sowie säkularer Gruppen darstellt. Dies zeigt, dass differenziert betrachten

werden muss, warum bestimmte Gruppen diese Art des politischen Suizids in ihr Repertoire aufnehmen.

Dem von Graitl bearbeiteten Themenfeld widmen sich speziell seit 2001 zahlreiche Publikationen, da den Selbstmordattentaten nach 9/11 ein besonders hohes Medieninteresse gilt. Durch die Modifizierung und Erweiterung bestehender Thesen, wie beispielsweise Durkheims Überlegungen zum altruistischen Suizid, sowie klar differenzierten Definitionen schafft Graitl Ordnung im Diskurs. Im Laufe seiner Arbeit kritisiert er häufig prominente Werke zur Thematik und deren Thesen, wie beispielsweise Robert Papes Werk *Dying to Win* (2005). Graitl bemängelt hier zu Recht eine wenig differenzierte Darstellung politisch motivierter Suizide und einen oftmals kulturalistischen Erklärungsansatz. Er hebt sich von vielen anderen Autoren dahingehend ab, dass er sich in seinem Werk umfassender mit der Thematik beschäftigt. Dabei werden auch Ereignisse wie mehrere politisch motivierte Suizidwellen in Indien betrachtet, die bisher in vielen anderen Publikationen wenig Beachtung finden. Auch seine empirische Analyse der Abschiedsnachrichten stellt eine Neuheit in der Forschung dar, da diese bisher nicht als voll- und eigenständige Dokumente analysiert wurden. Graitl kann durch diese Herangehensweise eine kommunikative Gattung und eine nachvollziehbare Kategorisierung von Protestsuiziden ausarbeiten.

Das Werk bietet einen umfassenden Überblick über alle Bereiche des politisch motivierten Suizids. Durch klare Definitionen sind seine Argumentationen stets nachvollziehbar, außerdem knüpft es ergänzend an den Forschungsdiskurs an und bietet neue Zugänge zum Thema.

Rebecca Schmid

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Sammelrezension
Review essay

Social Resentment: Die *white working class* im Fokus der Erklärung rechter Bewegungen

Die Erfolge zahlreicher rechter Bewegungen und Parteien in fast allen westlichen Ländern haben viele überrascht und sind auch soziologisch erklärungsbedürftig: Wie kommt es, dass Menschen, die in demokratischen Strukturen aufgewachsen sind und leben, gerade jetzt verstärkt zu anti-demokratischen und exklusiven Haltungen tendieren? Dieser Frage gingen drei große, vor allem ethnographische Studien der letzten Jahre nach, die im US-amerikanischen Kontext die Gefühlswelten und Identitäten von Wähler*innen in peripheren, ökonomisch abgehängten Gegenden beschreiben: *The New Minority* von Justin Gest (2016), *Politics of Resentment* von Katherine Cramer (2016) und *Strangers in Their Own Land* von Arlie Russell Hochschild (2016). Alle drei Studien arbeiten die Bedeutung von lokalen Kontexten und der sozialen Umwelt für die Konzeption und Wahrnehmung von Identität, Politik und gesellschaftlichen Konflikten heraus. Sie beschreiben eine daraus resultierende politische Haltung, die von der eigenen Positionierung in Verteilungskämpfen und von Ressentiment geprägt ist. Die Gleichzeitigkeit recht ähnlicher Studien mit unterschiedlichen lokalen und thematischen Schwerpunkten zeigt einen allgemeinen medialen und sozialwissenschaftlichen Fokus auf die Figur der „Abgehängten" und auf die Rolle von Identitäten und Affekten in der Politik, die für die neuen Erfolge rechter Bewegungen immer wieder als Erklärung dienen.

Gests Studie über die politischen Aktivitäten der *white working class* in Youngstown, Ohio und East London fragt, welche Veränderungen dazu führen, dass sich eine dominante gesellschaftliche Gruppe selbst als Minderheit bezeichnet (vgl. 2016, 1). Gest erklärt die Radikalisierung eines Teils der Bevölkerung mit der Spannung zwischen den Überresten einer alten „white working class power" (ebd.) und des wahrgenommenen Verlusts dieser Macht. Entsprechend dieser Hypothese wählt Gest zwei Städte als Forschungsfeld, die nach einer Phase des ökonomischen Erfolgs, der Stabilität und Zentralität einen Abstieg erlebt haben. Ein synchroner ökonomischer, sozialer und politischer Kollaps führt laut Gest zu einer wirkmächtigen Nostalgie und einem Ressentiment zum einen gegen die Firmen, welche die Städte verlassen haben, zum zweiten gegen die Politik, die dagegen nichts unternehmen konnte, und zum dritten gegen Einwanderer*innen, die zeitgleich merklich das Stadtbild verändert haben (vgl. ebd., 7–11). Gest betont dabei, dass das Gefühl von verlorener Macht und Entbehrung („deprivation", ebd., 16) nicht bloß auf Rassismus reduzierbar sei. Er beschreibt die Positionierung der *white working class* in sozialer, ökonomischer und politischer Hinsicht als marginalisiert, auch wenn

sie keine Minderheit ist (vgl. ebd., 21ff.): In den Elite-dominierten Demokratien in den USA und Großbritannien beobachtet er eine Abgrenzung sowohl nach oben als auch, durch „welfare chauvinism" (ebd., 24), nach unten. Auf der psychologischen Ebene macht der Autor Widersprüche zwischen den Ansprüchen an sich selbst und an ehemals geltende soziale Hierarchien und der Realität aus. Wo soziale Hierarchien symbolisch vor allem meritokratisch erklärt werden, müssen weiße Arbeiter*innen ihr eigenes Scheitern, das mit dem immer noch zentralen Wert harter Arbeit unvereinbar ist, selbst legitimieren (vgl. ebd., 150–155). Auf politischer Ebene konstatiert er, dass sich die Parteien zu wenig um weiße Arbeiter*innen kümmern und damit die Wahl von extremen Parteien begünstigen. Diese Argumentation kulminiert in der Erklärung, es gebe eine „invisibility" der weißen Arbeiter*innenklasse, die ihr die Möglichkeit nehme, ihre Position zu artikulieren und sich als Klasse zu identifizieren wie zu organisieren:

> While stigma against them may be less intense, it is more socially accepted in light of the other advantages white people enjoy. And while white people remain a numerical majority nationally, they are constrained from forming organizations based on a sense of group consciousness. (ebd., 28)

Gests Hauptthese ist, dass sich verschiedene Formen politischer Aktivität aus dem Gefühl von „relative social deprivation" (ebd., 150) erklären lassen, also der Wahrnehmung des Verlusts von sozialem Satus *im Vergleich* zu anderen sozialen Gruppen. Die soziale Positionierung wird in der Studie anhand eines Kreismodells erfragt, in dem die Befragten ihre eigene Zentralität in der Gesellschaft im Vergleich zu anderen Gruppen verorten sollen (vgl. ebd., 159–168). Verschiedene Arten der eigenen sozialen Positionierung und der gefühlten Deprivation bringt er mit entweder antidemokratischen oder institutionalisiert-demokratischen Formen des politischen Ausdrucks in Verbindung (vgl. ebd., 169).

Katherine Cramer legt den Fokus in ihrer ethnographischen Studie im ländlichen Wisconsin auf die Rolle, die Orte für die Identität und das Gefühl, abgehängt zu sein, spielen. Durch zahlreiche Gespräche mit verschiedenen Gruppen, z.B. beim morgendlichen Kaffee an der Tankstelle, versucht sie zu erklären, wie die Identität der Menschen ihr Politikverständnis beeinflusst. Die Tatsache, dass Menschen, die von wohlfahrtsstaatlichen Programmen profitieren könnten, gegen diese stimmen, behandelt sie nicht als Zeichen eines falschen Bewusstseins. Vielmehr sieht sie die Ablehnung staatlicher Eingriffe als logische Konsequenz daraus, wie Menschen auf dem Land ihre Identität und ihre Position in politischen Konflikten konstituieren (vgl. Cramer 2016, 4ff.). Cramer hält Identität und Gruppenzugehörigkeit gerade bei Verteilungsfragen für entscheidender als ideologische Prinzipien oder Einstellungen zu einzelnen Policy-Fragen (ebd., 5–8). Sie extrahiert aus den Gruppengesprächen eine „rural consciousness" (ebd., 12), ein Gruppenbewusstsein, das mit einem Gefühl von Verteilungsungleichheit und „resentment" (ebd.) gegenüber Stadtbewohner*innen und Arbeiter*innen des öffentlichen Dienstes einhergeht.

Für Cramer ist die Bedeutung des Ortes stark mit Vorstellungen von Gerechtigkeit, Fairness und Ungleichheit verknüpft, weil diese auch auf *race* und Klassenunterschiede verweist (vgl. ebd., 14). *Rural consciousness* beinhalte also:

> (1) a belief that rural areas are ignored by decision makers, including policy makers, (2) a perception that rural areas do not get their fair share of resources, and (3) a sense that rural folks have fundamentally distinct values and lifestyles, which are misunderstood and disrespected by city folks. (ebd., 12)

Staatliche Wohlfahrtsprogramme werden deshalb abgelehnt, weil sie angeblich denen nützen, die sie nicht verdienen (vgl. ebd., 55–77), beispielsweise weil Steuergelder überproportional die Städte begünstigen, obwohl das Leben auf dem Land mehr kostet und vom Wert harter Arbeit – der in der Stadt nicht gelte – geprägt ist (vgl. ebd., 77ff.). Dabei sind in den USA Begriffe wie „urban" und „inner cities" rassistisch aufgeladen und stehen als Codes für Afroamerikaner*innen, die in dieser Vorstellung weniger wohlfahrtsstaatliche Hilfe als Weiße verdienen (vgl. ebd., 85f.). Rassismus ist also Teil der *rural consciousness* wie auch der Verteilungskonflikte, um die sich selbige dreht; zugleich beschreibt der Begriff für Cramer aber noch mehr: „identities with place, a sense of oneself as a person of a particular place in the class hierarchy, identities as people with particular values, and sometimes ideology" (ebd., 87). *Rural consciousness* nährt für Cramer damit die „politics of resentment" (ebd.), die eine Erklärung der Welt durch klare Grenzen zwischen einem Wir und Anderen sowie ein fundamentales Verständnis von Fairness, Gerechtigkeit usw. bietet (ebd.). Cramer beschreibt weiter, wie diese Einstellungen eine starke Basis für das Ressentiment gegen Angestellte im öffentlichen Dienst liefern, das im Wahlkampf des republikanischen Gouverneurs von Wisconsin eine große Rolle spielte: Sie würden als urban und damit als Outgroup vorgestellt, die als Nutznießer*innen von Steuergeldern Macht und Einfluss auch auf dem Land haben (ebd., 143f.).

Die Einstellung vieler Befragter gegen staatliche Eingriffe wertet Cramer folglich nicht als Ignoranz, sondern als logische Folge aus der Perspektive, welche die Befragten aufgrund ihrer ländlichen Identität einnehmen (vgl. ebd., 145). Die Identifikation als Landbevölkerung spielt damit eine mindestens ebenso wichtige Rolle für politische Entscheidungen wie ideologische Haltungen, Prinzipien oder Parteipräferenzen (vgl. ebd., 209–217). Cramer malt damit ein eher dunkles Bild von einem Politikverständnis, das von Ressentiments gegen andere Bürger*innen getrieben ist:

> We have a politics of resentment when political actors mobilize support for cutting back government by tapping into resentment toward certain groups in society. I have laid out in some detail how a place- and class-based identity like rural consciousness provides fertile ground for resentment-based arguments to flourish. (ebd., 203f.)

Arlie Russell Hochschild versucht in ihrem Buch *Strangers in Their Own Land* (2016) die Motivationen der politischen Rechten zu verstehen. Sie fragt „how life *feels* to people on the right" (ebd., ix) und sucht dabei nach einer Erklärung für das Paradox, dass die Wähler*innen in Louisiana, die am stärksten von Umweltverschmutzung betroffen sind, mehr Regulationen der Wirtschaft ablehnen. Sie widerspricht dabei einer gängigen Interpretation, nach der Menschen lediglich durch Fragestellungen wie Abtreibung, die gleichgeschlechtliche Ehe oder Waffengesetze dazu gebracht werden, gegen ihre eigenen ökonomischen Interessen und für weniger Regulationen zu stimmen. Stattdessen untersucht sie die „emotion that underlies politics" (ebd.), die „deep story" (ebd., 16) der Menschen: Was ist das Narrativ, das sich für Leute wahr anfühlt und auf dem ihre Gefühle und politischen Einstellungen basieren (vgl. ebd., 11–15)? Diese vor allem symbolische Geschichte soll die Gefühle und Lebenswelt der Befragten metaphorisch darstellen (vgl. ebd., 135).

Hochschild beschreibt die Lebensgeschichten und die politische Argumentation mehrerer Befragter, die sie über längere Zeit besucht und begleitet hat. Einige von ihnen sind von Umweltkatastrophen betroffen oder bedroht, die von Unternehmen ausgelöst wurden, trotzdem wollen sie als *Tea-Party-*Anhänger*innen lieber einen freien, unregulierten Markt als Eingriffe durch staatliche Instanzen. Das wird für Hochschild durch drei Elemente verständlich:

> Indeed, Tea Party adherents seemed to arrive at their dislike of the federal government via three routes - through their religious faith (the government curtailed the church, they felt), through hatred of taxes (which they saw as too high and too progressive), and through its impact on their loss of honor, as we shall see. (ebd., 35)

Ähnlich wie Gest und Cramer die politischen Einstellungen von Arbeiter*innen bzw. der Landbevölkerung beschreiben, nennt auch Hochschild als prägendes Gefühl ihrer Befragten einen dreifachen Verlust: „their cultural home, their place in the world, and their honor" (ebd., 48). Zentral für die *deep story* der Befragten ist der Wert harter Arbeit, der in der Wirtschaft repräsentiert wird und dem staatliche Eingriffe wie die *affirmative action* widersprechen (vgl. ebd., 93).

Hochschild beschreibt als *deep story* das Anstehen für den American Dream (vgl. ebd., 136–140): Man steht in der Warteschlange und hält sich an alle Regeln und Werte, auch wenn es manchmal schwer ist. Aber manche Menschen drängeln sich vor, und man selbst muss zurücktreten; das alles läuft unfair ab. Hochschild beschreibt aus der Perspektive weißer Arbeiter, dass Schwarze, Frauen, öffentlich Angestellte und Immigrant*innen alle vorgelassen werden, während die Medien und ein Präsident wie Obama auch noch denen, die sich vordrängeln, helfen und Mitleid mit ihnen verlangen. Das widerspricht den eigenen Wertevorstellungen von harter Arbeit und (Verteilungs-)Gerechtigkeit grundlegend. Man fühlt sich wie ein Fremder im eigenen Land, weil immer mehr Leute, die den eigenen Werten und Vorstellungen von Stolz widersprechen, weiter vorne in der Schlange stehen dürfen. Hochschild sieht hier auch rassistische Motive: Afroamerikaner*innen werden nie als Menschen

vorgestellt, die mit einem geduldig in der Schlange anstehen, und so wird der Abstand zu ihnen ein wichtiges Element des eigenen Status. Insgesamt zeigt sich hier eine Art Klassenkonflikt, der nicht zwischen oben und unten stattfindet, sondern von der *working class* aus nach unten gerichtet ist: Die Regierung stehe auf der Seite derjenigen, die nur nehmen und (ungerechtfertigt) staatliche Hilfen empfangen. Der freie Markt und die Unternehmen werden im gemeinsamen Kampf gegen diese unfaire Regierung zu Verbündeten derjenigen, die für diese staatlichen Leistungen aufkommen und bezahlen müssen (vgl. ebd., 146–151). Die Quellen des eigenen Stolzes – Arbeit, Familie, Kirche – werden nicht mehr anerkannt und sehen sich Angriffen durch Liberale und durch staatliche Maßnahmen ausgesetzt (vgl. ebd., 212–217). Hochschild schließt daraus auf die Attraktivität des Identifikationsangebots von Donald Trump und folgert, dass politische Entscheidungen eher durch Emotionen denn ökonomische Interessen motiviert sind (vgl. ebd., 221–228).

Alle diese Studien gehen über die Erkenntnismöglichkeiten standardisierter Umfragen deutlich hinaus, indem sie die Rolle von Identitäten und damit verbundenen Werten betrachten, die wiederum politische Haltungen und Einstellungen prägen. Dabei spielt das Gefühl fehlender Anerkennung eine große Rolle. Alle Studien stellen eine soziale (und geographische) Positionierung in den Vordergrund, die das Denken über Politik und die Wahrnehmung von Ungerechtigkeiten strukturieren. Damit rücken die Selbstverortung in Verteilungskonflikten und die affektiven Bindungen in der Politik in den Vordergrund. Die Studien leisten damit einen Beitrag zu einem besseren Verständnis für die politische Realität der *white working class* in den USA, indem sie scheinbare Interessensgegensätze und -widersprüche nicht als falsches Bewusstsein und Täuschung der Wähler*innen abtun, sondern diese Diskrepanzen durch die Betonung der Bedeutung von Emotionen in der Politik erklären. Was sie hier ausmachen, könnte man als *social resentment* bezeichnen: Ausgehend von einer Identität, die stark auf den Ort und die eigene wahrgenommene soziale Position bezogen ist, hegen die Befragten Ressentiments gegen bestimmte Gruppen, die ihre eigenen Werte nicht teilen. Die Autor*innen geben zwar zu, dass Rassismus bei der untersuchten *white working class* eine Rolle für die Konzeption von Politik spielt, aber sie bestehen auch darauf, dass das, was sie beobachten, sich nicht nur auf Rassismus reduzieren lässt.

Genau hier sind die Darstellungen aber in mancherlei Hinsicht auch problematisch. Abgesehen von Gest, der noch verschiedene Möglichkeiten politischer Aktivitäten betrachtet (vgl. z.B. Gest 2016, 169, 173–178), wird die weiße Arbeiter*innenschaft homogenisiert und ihr eine mehr oder weniger uniforme politische Haltung zugeschrieben. Studien zur Frage, inwiefern die *white working class* tatsächlich mehrheitlich für Trump gestimmt hat und wie wahlentscheidend dies war, kommen zu verschiedenen Ergebnissen, wobei die Definition der *white working class,* die Analyseeinheit (Individuen vs. Wahlbezirke) sowie der Vergleichsrahmen (alle Wähler*innen oder nur Republikaner*innen, Wechselwähler*innen etc.) entscheiden, inwiefern überhaupt eine eindeutige politische Tendenz der *white working class* konstatiert werden kann.[1] Ta-Nehisi Coates kritisiert in seiner Sammlung journalistischer Texte zur Obama-Ära, *We Were Eight Years in Power* (2017),

[1] Für eine Übersicht über Beiträge zur Debatte vgl. Morgan/Lee 2018, 235. Die beiden stellen fest, dass Wechselwähler*innen und vormalige Nichtwähler*innen, die 2016 Trump gewählt haben, überproportional der *white working class* zuzuordnen seien und dass Trump Zugewinne gegenüber Romney 2012 vor allem in Counties mit hohem Anteil der *white working class* verzeichnen konnte (ebd., 240).

quantitative Analysen, die eine ökonomische und soziale Benachteiligung der weißen Arbeiter*innenschaft als Grund für die Wahl Trumps in den Vordergrund stellen. Er hält ihnen entgegen, dass Trump unter Weißen entlang jeder sozioökonomischen Schicht mehr Stimmen erhielt (vgl. ebd., 346ff.). Zudem ignoriere diese Sicht die Benachteiligung der schwarzen Bevölkerung, die unter den Krisen mindestens genauso leiden würden, aber deren politische Reaktion in diesen Erklärungen nicht vorkomme (vgl. ebd., 356). Die Identifikation, die Coates als Grund für die Wahl anführt, hat eher mit Rassismus als mit Klasse zu tun.

Offen bleibt beim Lesen der Studien an manchen Stellen in jedem Fall, ob hier wirklich Erklärungen für die Entstehung von politischen Haltungen beschrieben werden oder nur deren Legitimation im Gespräch mit den Forscher*innen reproduziert werden. Alle drei Autor*innen neigen in ihren Beschreibungen mehr oder weniger stark dazu, die Opferrolle der Befragten wiederzugeben. So sind Aussagen darüber, dass der liberale Diskurs so vorherrschend sei, dass sich Angehörige der Mehrheit wie „strangers in their own land" (Hochschild 2016, 140) fühlen müssen, oder dass die *white working class* jeglicher Möglichkeit der Zugehörigkeit beraubt sei (Gest 2016, 28), doch zumindest bestreitbar. Gerade die Diskussionen darum, wer hart arbeitet und wer was „verdient", können enorm rassistisch aufgeladen sein, wobei die Identität(en), welche die Autor*innen beschreiben, eine sozial akzeptierte Weise sein könnte(n), diese Differenzen zu artikulieren. *Social resentment* basiert zudem nicht nur auf rassistischen Denkstrukturen, sondern deckt sich zum Teil auch mit autoritär-konformistischen, sexistischen, anti-elitären und sozialchauvinistischen Haltungen. Die Studien untersuchen kaum, wie das von ihnen beobachtete *resentment* in Verbindung mit diesen schon gut erforschten Dispositionen steht.[2]

Insgesamt bleibt den Studien trotz dieser Zweifel der Verdienst, Identitäten im Spannungsverhältnis zwischen *race* und *class* zu beschreiben und zu unterstreichen, dass Wahlentscheidungen und politische Einstellungen keineswegs nur aus einer Reihe rationaler Entscheidungen bestehen. Die Studien zeigen demgegenüber auf, worauf Menschen ihre Identität und ihren Stolz aufbauen und machen darauf aufmerksam, dass die gegenwärtigen politischen Erdbeben auf politischen Identifikationen und Wahrnehmungen eines bestimmten Milieus beruhen und nicht nur auf deren Unvermögen, eine rationale Wahl zu treffen. Das macht auch die Unzulänglichkeiten quantitativer Wahlforschung deutlich, die versucht, Haltungen, Präferenzen und ideologische Grundeinstellungen zu erheben, ohne dabei die Frage nach ihrer Entstehung zu stellen. Die Überlegung, wie die hier erläuterte Denkweise politischer Konflikte quantitativ erfasst werden kann, könnte dennoch spannende Impulse für die quantitative Forschung geben.

Helene Thaa

[2] In einer vorläufigen Analyse der Wahldaten der *American National Election Studies* (ANES) von 2016 habe ich verschiedene Komponenten des *social resentment* operationalisiert, um in einer Regressionsanalyse ihren Beitrag zur Erklärung der Wahl Trumps mit dem einiger der genannten Dispositionen zu vergleichen. Dabei deuteten die Ergebnisse darauf hin, dass rassistische Ressentiments, Vorurteile, autoritäre Haltungen und eine Abgrenzung von demokratischen Akteur*innen und nach unten viel stärker die Wahl beeinflusst haben als ökonomische Deprivation und Gefühle, in der „Warteschlange" von anderen überholt zu werden. Untersuchungen mit Items, die an diese Fragestellung besser angepasst sind, wären spannend, um den Zusammenhang zwischen *politics of resentment* mit z.B. autoritären oder rassistischen Einstellungen zu erfassen, und um zu prüfen, inwiefern *social resentment* unabhängig von solchen Einstellungen besteht und das politische Verhalten beeinflusst.

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Doppelrezension
Review essay

Henning Laux/Anna Henkel (Hg.): *Die Erde, der Mensch und das Soziale. Zur Transformation gesellschaftlicher Naturverhältnisse im Anthropozän*
Bielefeld: transcript 2018

Benjamin Bühler: *Ökologische Gouvernementalität. Zur Geschichte einer Regierungsform*
Bielefeld: transcript 2018

Als der Atmosphärenchemiker Paul Crutzen sich im Jahre 2000 während einer Tagung zu Wort meldete, um in kritischer Absicht das gegenwärtige Erdzeitalter mit dem Begriff *Anthropozän* zu versehen, ahnte er wahrscheinlich nicht, dass sich der Begriff binnen kurzer Zeit auch außerhalb der Geowissenschaften ausbreiten sollte. Allein die beunruhigende Nachricht, dass sich *homo sapiens* nun auch in den Gesteinsschichten des Planeten abgelagert hat, schien dann doch den ökologisch sensibilisierten Nerv der Zeit zu treffen. Binnen kürzester Zeit breitete sich der Ausdruck Anthropozän auf den Titelseiten der Tagespresse, populärkultureller Magazine und wissenschaftlicher Zeitschriften aus und entfachte schließlich auch eine lebhafte Diskussion in den Sozial- und Kulturwissenschaften.

Allerdings hat sich die deutschsprachige Soziologie an dieser Debatte bis dato kaum beteiligt. Insofern ist es unbedingt begrüßenswert, dass Henning Laux und Anna Henkel nun für die hiesige Leserschaft einen Sammelband zum Thema zusammengestellt haben. Dieser versammelt 13 explorative Studien zur Transformation gesellschaftlicher Naturverhältnisse im Anthropozän, die sich mit der transdisziplinären Zusammenarbeit zwischen Sozial- und Naturwissenschaften beschäftigen (Tanja Bogusz, Nico Lüdtke), die Kritik an den Gestaltungsfantasien der Anthropozäniker*innen (Katharina Block, Stefan Lorenz) oder die Frage nach der Gestaltbarkeit widerständiger technischer Großsysteme thematisieren (Cordula Kropp). Leider fehlen dem Band jedoch sowohl eine übergreifende thematische Fokussierung als auch eine theoretisch-konzeptionell gehaltvolle Einführung in das Thema. Die (namenlose) Einleitung beschränkt sich mit der Ausnahme von zweieinhalb Seiten lediglich auf die Zusammenfassung der nachfolgenden Beiträge, ein Defizit, dass auch Henning Laux anschließende „Leseanleitung" nicht zu beseitigen

vermag. Tatsächlich erweckt die Einleitung den Eindruck, dass man sich hier nicht entscheiden konnte zwischen einer systematischen Aufarbeitung der Anthropozändebatte einerseits und deren Übersetzung in das Forschungsprogramm einer soziologischen Nachhaltigkeitsforschung andererseits. So steht beides unverbunden nebeneinander, und dem Ganzen fehlt der rote Faden.

Die einzelnen Beiträge sind wiederum besser als ihre Präambel und laden immer wieder zum Weiterdenken ein: Karl-Werner Brandt bettet das Anthropozän in eine längere Geschichte gesellschaftlicher Naturverhältnisse ein, Rondald Lippuners entwickelt an Deleuze und Latour eine neo-kybernetische Ökologie und Anna Henkels diagnostiziert eine Kontrollkrise der modernen Gesellschaft, auch wenn sie dabei alles andere als subtil versucht, der Leser*in ihr eigenes Programm einer Soziologie der Nachhaltigkeit schmackhaft zu machen. Anregend ist auch Joachim Fischers Beitrag, der mit Nachdruck den „vital turn" in der Soziologie einfordert – freilich wie immer begleitet von der Forderung, dass auch bei dieser Drehung eine Lebenssoziologie im Anschluss an Helmuth Plessner herauskommt. Aber auch für diejenigen Leser*innen, die weniger an einer sozialtheoretischen Umschrift, sondern an den Konsequenzen der sozialen Adaption des Anthropozänkonzepts interessiert sind, hat der Band hier und da etwas zu bieten. So zeigt Andreas Folkers, wie sich seit dem 21. Jahrhundert ein neuer, durch das Leitkonzept der Resilienz geprägter Nomos der Erde aufspannt. Jeremias Herberg und Gregor Schmieg interessieren sich für den „technoökologischen Habitus" des Menschen, der sich im Zuge der Verselbstständigung der Technosphäre herausbildet. Was beide Beiträge verbindet, ist ihre Kritik an den technokratischen Epistemologien und Politiken, die mit dem Anthropozän einhergehen. Wo die Sicherung der Beständigkeit planetarischer „life support systems" oder lebenswichtiger technischer Systeme den Status einer Letztbegründung erhält, wird politische Auseinandersetzung durch „planetarisches Management" (Folkers) und den „Habitus einer unterwürfigen, biomimetischen Sorge um technologische Apparate" (Herberg/Schmieg) ersetzt.

Es gilt also, das ist mehreren Beiträgen zu entnehmen, der politischen Adaption der Anthropozändiagnose eine gesunde Portion Skepsis entgegenzubringen, insbesondere dann, wenn Autor*innen die gegenwärtige ökologische Krise mit maximaler Dringlichkeitsrethorik als schmittianische Entscheidungssituation präsentieren, in der zwischen einer Transformation „by design" oder „by disaster" zu wählen sei (Arno Bammé). Angesichts solcher politischen Zuspitzungen scheint es lohnenswert, auch das implizite Regierungswissen zu untersuchen, das sich in das Konzept des Anthropozäns einschreibt.

Eben das versucht der Kulturwissenschaftler Benjamin Bühler in seiner Studie zur ökologischen Gouvernementalität. Folgt man Bühlers Argumentation, ließe sich das Anthropozän als eine spezifische Ausprägung einer allgemeineren ökologischen Regierungsrationalität begreifen, deren Wurzeln bis in das 18. Jahrhundert zurückreichen. Bühler zufolge wird die Etablierung der von Michel Foucault beschriebenen liberalen Gouvernementalität von Beginn an von einem Gegendiskurs flankiert, der das liberale Treiben nicht nur kritisiert, sondern ihm eine völlig andere Form des Regierens entgegensetzt. Inspiriert durch eine sich im 19. Jahrhundert herausbildende neue Wissenschaft der

Ökologie – und später durch die Kybernetik und Ökosystemwissenschaft –, versteht diese alternative Gouvernementalität unter gutem Regieren weniger die Einrichtung der Möglichkeit der Freiheit als die angemessene Regulation vernetzter Populationen und die Erhaltung des Gleichgewichts komplexer (Öko-)Systeme. Bühler interessiert sich neben der Genese dieser ökologischen Regierungsform vor allem für ihre politischen Konsequenzen, denn die ökologische Gouvernementalität steht den politischen Prinzipien ihrer liberalen Schwester äußerst skeptisch gegenüber. Diese Skepsis richtet sich zunächst gegen die Apologie der grenzenlosen Freiheit des Marktes und der Menschen, da sich eine solche Regierungsrationalität nicht mit den empfindlichen Grenzen komplexer Ökosysteme zur Deckung bringen lässt. Sie richtet sich aber auch gegen die liberale Tendenz, auf ökologisch dringliche Probleme mit dem langsamen Bohren dicker politischer Bretter zu reagieren. Man könnte auch sagen, für die ökologische Gouvernementalität wird immer zu wenig und zu langsam regiert. Entsprechend tendiere die ökologische Gouvernementalität insbesondere in Zeiten ökologischer Krisen vermehrt dazu, wie Bühler im Anschluss an Claude Lefort und Chantal Mouffe hervorhebt, zeitintensiven politischen Streit durch eine beschleunigte Politik des Faktischen bzw. Politik durch Polizei zu ersetzen.

Diese post-fundamentalistische Kritik an ökologischen Diskursen bildet den theoretischen Rahmen von Bühlers Studie und wird im letzten Kapitel des Buches noch weiter ausgearbeitet. Der Hauptteil des Buches widmet sich hingegen der angesprochenen historischen Rekonstruktion der ökologischen Gouvernementalität. Bühler durchkämmt dafür eine ganze Reihe literarischer, philosophischer, politischer und wissenschaftlicher Texte aus verschiedenen Themenfeldern, wie Nationalökonomie und Agrarchemie, Energiewirtschaft, globale Ressourcenkonflikte, Recycling, Umweltsicherheit, die literarischen Genres des Politthrillers und der Ökodystopie, Resilienzdenken, Kybernetik, (Landschafts-)Architektur und Design, Terraforming, Anthropozän u.v.m. Damit erweist sich Bühlers Studie einerseits als Fundgrube für Thesen und Forschungsfelder, bei denen es sich lohnte, sie weiterzuverfolgen. Andererseits geht diese enorme Breite auf Kosten analytischer Tiefe. Zwar kann Bühler durch seine oft gelungenen Collagen die Varianz an Wissensfeldern aufzeigen, aus denen sich die ökologische Gouvernementalität speist, allerdings bleibt die Darstellung auch immer wieder unsystematisch und oberflächlich, was dazu führt, dass sich das Material letztlich nicht so recht zu der im Untertitel angekündigten „Geschichte einer Regierungsform" zusammenfügen will.

Dieses nonchalante Hinweggleiten über die aufgeworfenen Problemkomplexe erzeugt schließlich auch einen neuralgischen Punkt in der Gesamtargumentation. Weil Bühler darauf verzichtet zu erläutern, welcher (Neo-) Liberalismus eigentlich die Kontrastfolie zum ökologischen Denken bildet, entsteht der Eindruck einer recht schematischen Gegenüberstellung des zurückhaltend-liberalen Regierens auf der einen und des intervenierend-ökologischen Regulierens auf der anderen Seite. Während es sicherlich zunächst plausibel ist, die Laisser-faire Mentalität der liberalen Gouvernementalität des 18. Jahrhunderts mit dem ausgeprägten Regulierungsinteresse einiger

Ökolog*innen zu kontrastieren, lässt sich jedoch gerade mit Foucaults Gouvernementalitätsvorlesungen argumentieren, dass zentrale ökologische Denkfiguren wie Gleichgewicht oder Milieu ebenfalls das liberale Regierungshandeln informieren. Schon deshalb wäre eine stärkere historische Differenzierung des Liberalismusbegriffs aufschlussreich oder gar notwendig gewesen. Darüber hinaus wäre Bühler im Zuge einer solchen Auseinandersetzung zum einen auf Varianten des Liberalismus gestoßen, die dem „Regieren als Regulieren" keineswegs ablehnend gegenüberstehen – dies gilt etwa für den Freiburger Ordoliberalismus. Zum anderen hätte er auch die immer wieder aufblitzenden antidemokratischen Tendenzen im ökologischen Denken mit den illiberalen Facetten liberaler Sicherheitsdispositive kontrastieren können. Inwiefern unterscheidet sich die ökologische Dringlichkeitsrhetorik von anderen Krisennarrativen, etwa im Bereich des globalen Finanzwesens oder im Kontext der Migrationspolitik? Das weist aber schon über Bühlers Buch hinaus: Die Verwicklungen von liberaler und ökologischer Gouvernementalität genauer zu untersuchen, wäre eine weitere Aufgabe. Bühlers Verdienst bleibt es, einen ersten Schritt in diese Richtung unternommen zu haben – ein Großteil der Arbeit ist allerdings noch zu tun.

Leon Wolff