

## Three Thematic Encyclopedic Dictionaries on "Ashura": Problems, Prospects, and Translatability

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Ashura (the tenth day of the Islamic month of Muharram) has marked one of the most heart-rending tragedies happened throughout the Islamic history. The tragedy took place as the huge army of the unjust Umayyad ruler Yazid tried to force Imam al-Husayn sign a treaty of alliance with him. In defiance to this unjustifiable compromise with an unqualified and arrogant ruler, Imam Husayn decided to migrate to Kufa, Iraq, where its inhabitants sent him letters of invitation to establish the Islamic state. Yazid's forces, under the commandership of Ubayd Allah b. Ziyad blocked Imam al-Husayn's way to Kufa at a place where is commonly called, inter alia, Karbala. The ruler's forces imposed an unparalleled war on Imam al-Husayn, who was accompanied by his close associates, family members, wives, and children. The war ended in a very fierce battle at which Imam al-Husayn's front resisted valorously and chose martyrdom over obeying the tyrant ruler's whims. The event took place on the plain of Karbala, Iraq, on 10 Muharram 61 AH/10 October 680 AC. Since then it has been regarded as an outstanding symbol of martyrdom and liberality. It symbolizes, inter alia, the struggle of true religious thought against forged and false worldly-desires as well as the triumph of blood over sword. The battle of Karbala, which took place on Ashura, coupled with the exceptionally praiseworthy personality of Imam al-Husayn hale inspired a countless number of scholars, Muslim and non-Muslim, to write books or monographs on the Ashura tragedy, Imam al-Husayn, and/or his associates. The figures, places, and main episodes of Ashura have also been represented in alphabetical order to suit a dictionary format. There are three such dictionaries, viz. Modhaddethi (2006a and 2006b), and Vahidi-Sadr (2005) which exclusively deal with the Ashura tragedy. These dictionaries feature the following (cited here in English translation for the general reader's readability): key terms, e.g. water, martyrdom, and ziarat; important phrases, e.g. the blood-revenge of God, the Prince of Martyrs; place names, e.g. Karbala, Mecca, Kufa, Damascus; people's names, e.g. Imam al-Husayn, Ali Akbar, Zaynab; and ritual institutions and practices, e.g. giving reception on vow, mourning and lamentation, flagellation; and some classic works on the topic, e.g. *Al-khasa'is al-husayniyya*. Although designed for different age groups, these books resemble lexicographical representation of the tragedy of Ashura and its long-lasting impact. An important feature of such books is that they make references to, and quote, keynote Arabic phrases to document what they intend to convey.

The present paper aims to study if translation of such dictionaries, with or without modifications, would help readers with more accurate information regarding this great historical incident.

### Bibliography

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