

**Fatima as a Motif of Contention and Suffering in Islamic Sources**

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Fatima as a Motif of Contention and Suffering in the Early Islamic Sources  
Vinay Khetia

Abstract

The death of the Prophet Muhammad in 10/632 left a vacuum of authority in the early Muslim community. Ever since, Muslims of various sectarian persuasions have produced conflicting versions of the events which took place in the wake of Muhammad's death and the behaviour of certain prominent personalities. This dissertation examines the role played by the surviving daughter of the Prophet, Fatima, during this early, tumultuous period. The objective is not to present a 'historical' reconstruction of events, but rather to explore how the formative Islamic histories (2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries) and Shiite hadith (2<sup>nd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries) creatively shaped the image of Fatima in her conflict with the first caliph and successor to Muhammad, Abu Bakr, and his allies. For Sunnites, Abu Bakr was a wise leader who aimed to safeguard the unity of the Muslim community even if that entailed Fatima's dissatisfaction. For Shiites, on the other hand, Abu Bakr and Umar (the second caliph and a key advocate of Abu Bakr's leadership) were usurpers who marginalized and even viciously assaulted the daughter of the Prophet. In the making of both images, gender is at play. For the Shiites, Abu Bakr and above all Umar betray ideals of maleness by bullying a defenceless woman who is portrayed, somewhat against conventional views of the feminine, as sagacious and strong. The Shiite image of Fatima also draws on the idea of women as emotional to make her into a righteous sufferer and mourner on a cosmic scale. In the Sunnite-leaning histories, on the other hand, Fatima conforms to stereotypes of femininity by exhibiting excessive emotion and irrationality, while Abu Bakr plays the role of a wise, indulgent, paternal male. Western scholars have tended to view Fatima as a marginal figure; but an examination of the early sources shows her image to be key to the development of sectarian views and competing Sunnite and Shiite appraisals of the companions of Muhammad.

## Acknowledgements

This project began some years ago in the form of an independent reading project while I was a fourth year undergraduate at the University of Toronto. At that time I had the indispensable help of Adam Ali who helped me navigate through the nuances of classical Arabic historiography and hadith literature. To him I extend my gracious appreciation. I would also like to convey my appreciation to my teacher and mentor, Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi of Toronto for selflessly sharing numerous resources with me and contributing his encyclopedic comprehension of classical Arabic texts and Islamic thought throughout my period of research on the life of Fatima and her representation in Sunnite and Shiite literature. Lastly, this project would not be what it became without the seeming tireless hours of supervision and intellectually constructive criticism offered by my M.A. supervisor, Dr. Lynda Clarke. The mere typing of words cannot do justice to the mentorship and support she has lent to this project and my academic progress as a whole while at the department of religion at Concordia University. I would also like to thank the following individuals whose assistance should not go unnoticed: Ammar Badj for his continual insights into Islamic historiography, Shaykh Hasanayn Kassamali for his timely advice, and lastly Taymaz Garadjalou for his diligent observations and line editing. In closing I cannot end but by acknowledging the continuous support, love, and commitment of my wife, Farzana Jagani who spent many lonely evenings patiently waiting for the completion of this project. In light of what has been mentioned above, any errors in this dissertation are mine alone.

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## 1.1 Note Regarding Transliteration

All Arabic names and terms have been transliterated according to the guidelines of the Library of Congress. Only common names and terms have not been transliterated such as the following: Qur'an, hadith, Madina, Muhammad, Khadija Fatima, Ali, Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Aisha. These terms or names have been transliterated fully when apart of a larger name or Arabic phrase/sentence.

Example: 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib

## 1.2

EI2= *Encyclopedia of Islam*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Brill Online, 2012.

## Introduction

Numerous women of the Rāshidūn period (the period of the rightly guided caliphs) have important stature in the primary Arabic sources of Islamic thought. The women who figure prominently in these sources tend to have either been married to the prophet Muhammad or related biologically to him. These women include Khadījah bint al-Khuwaylid (first wife of Muhammad, d. circa 619 C.E.), ‘Āishah bint Abī Bakr (teenage wife of Muhammad in Madina and daughter of Abu Bakr, d.678 C.E.), Ḥafsa bint ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (wife of Muhammad and the daughter of Umar, d. 666 C.E.), Umm Salamah (wife of Muhammad, d.680 C.E.), Māriyā the Copt (slave wife of Muhammad, d. 671 or 681 C.E.) and lastly Fatima, the daughter of Muhammad ( d.632 C.E.).<sup>1</sup>

Amongst these prominent early Muslim women, Aisha and Fatima have been given extraordinary attention in the sources. One reason for this is that both of these women have been the focus of immense sectarian strife and debate amongst scholars. The figure of Aisha as a motif of contention has been dealt with extensively by scholars such as Denise Spellberg.<sup>2</sup> Little work, however, exists on the contentious and divisive figure of Fatima. Notwithstanding, there are two notable studies on Fatima. The first is Mahmoud Ayoub’s classic *Redemptive Suffering*, in which he briefly treats the suffering of Fatima on the basis of a limited number of later Shiite sources, and largely in a descriptive manner. The second is a brief book chapter dealing with Fatima in Sunnite and Shiite sources by Verena Klemm which is largely limited to analysis of one or two

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<sup>1</sup> This list is by no means exhaustive but is a sample of women who figure prominently in the Islamicate sources. *Bint* = “the daughter of”.

<sup>2</sup> DA Spellberg, *Politics, Gender, and the Islamic Past: The legacy of ‘Aisha bint Abi Bakr* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

excerpts from the works of the proto-Sunnite prophetic biographer and traditionist, Muḥammad ibn Sa'd (d.230/845) and the Twelver Shiite traditionist (*muḥaddith*), al-Shaykh al-Ṣaḍūq (d.381/991). Lastly, Christopher Clohessy's recent monograph, *Fatima, Daughter of Muhammad*, devotes a chapter to Fatima's suffering, but lacks any substantial contextual or literary analysis.

It is the intention of this study to examine the figure of Fatima as a motif of contention and suffering. This will be accomplished through an analysis of a representative sample of early Islamic sources in which Fatima became a figure of profound sectarian strife due to her conflict with the revered Prophetic companions Abu Bakr (d.634 C.E.), 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (d.644 C.E.) and, according to some sources, much of the early Muslim community of Madina following the death of her father the Prophet Muhammad in 632 C.E. Mainstream Sunnite tradition describes Fatima as a pious, exemplary Muslim woman, in a manner similar to the description of Muhammad's wives. At the same time, Fatima was for many Shiites not only a pious woman, but one of the *ma'sūmūn* (those immune from sin), in addition to being a physiologically exceptional female of heavenly substance not subject to the impurity (*najāsah*) of menstrual cycles. This basic discrepancy (crystallized between the 3-4<sup>th</sup>/9-10<sup>th</sup> centuries) between Sunnite and Shiite traditional perceptions of Fatima's spiritual and existential being cannot be overstated. For Shī'īs Fatima is the universal model of womanhood and an existentially exceptional being, while for Sunnis she is simply one renowned female among others.

At this juncture, I must pause to note that I often use the term "proto-Sunnite" or "proto-Shiite" to express my discomfort with identifying a particular compilation,



tradition, or author as being explicitly Sunnite or Shiite despite lack of information regarding their precise religious tendencies. Furthermore, some sources consulted such as Ibn Sa'd's *Ṭabaqāt* predate the crystallization of Sunnism; although they do in hindsight appear to be very Sunnite-friendly and could thus be correctly characterized as a part of the Sunnite-influenced historical tradition or what would become full-fledged Sunnism by the fourth century A.H (tenth century C.E.).<sup>3</sup>

In any case, in view of the very different views of Fatima described above, any conflict between her and prominent *aṣḥāb* (companions) of Muhammad would be a potential subject of Shiite-Sunnite polemics. The conflict also caused Sunnite scholars who refused to judge between Fatima and the early companions to engage in apologetics and other negotiation, for instance by characterising the conflict as a misunderstanding in an effort to save the reputation of all parties concerned. This study aims to examine how diverse intellectual and sectarian persuasions shaped the Islamic literature in which the Fatima-Rāshidūn conflict was presented, resulting in a spectrum of responses ranging from Sunnite apologetics to Shiite malediction of the first two caliphs, which continues well into the contemporary period.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, while the subject of this study is an examination of Fatima as a motif of contention and suffering, my intention is not to simply trace and reproduce this image through presenting English translations of texts, as has been largely done in the past, but to

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<sup>3</sup> The development of Sunnism and Shī'ism as sectarian movements has been discussed at length by Montgomery Watt. See: Montgomery Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1998), 251-315.

<sup>4</sup> Abu Bakr and Umar are considered by Sunnites to be the first two of the four "rightly-guided" caliphs following the death of Muhammad. In this study, I employ the term Fatima-Rāshidūn or "F-R" conflict to refer to Abu Bakr and Umar, and not the third and fourth caliphs, Uthman and Ali. Uthman ruled only after the death of Fatima, and Ali, of course, had earlier been Fatima's husband and is regarded as the first Imam of the Shiites.

delineate the various sectarian and intellectual currents at work which constructed and gave shape to this motif in the sources.

It is also my objective to demonstrate the fluidity and rich heterogeneity of the ways the conflict has been presented. Consequently, I shall not treat the various accounts as historical truths, but rather reflections of an eclectic Muslim religious imagination in which various myths are produced, interpreted and contested within the milieu of Islamic intellectual history.<sup>5</sup> I focus principally on two aspects of the image of Fatima and controversy related to her as case studies: the saga of her dispute with the newly-elected caliph, Abu Bakr, over her claim to the garden of Fadak and her father's estate; and the presentations, carefully crafted by all sides, of Fatima's altercation with Abu Bakr and Umar following the incident of the Saqīfah or "Portico" in which Abu Bakr rather than Ali was chosen first caliph after the death of the Prophet. Treated thus, the Fatima motif reveals competing soteriologies and visions of the past.

### Outline and Sources

The first chapter deals with the highly contentious figure of Fatima in the Muslim historical sources. John Walbridge describes the historical works originating in the second to third centuries of the Islamic era (8-9<sup>th</sup> century C.E.) as comprising "the largest sustained biographical enterprise in human history."<sup>6</sup> Fatima is included in this

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<sup>5</sup> I am using the term myth as reflective my etic or 'outsider's' approach to the primary Arabic-Islamic texts consulted in this dissertation. Furthermore, by describing the representations of Fatima as myth I am merely indicating that these are stories reflect in many cases (for those insiders who subscribe to them as truths) as sacred realities which (to borrow an expression from Bronislaw Malinowski) at times form the "dogmatic backbone" of Shiite devotional life. See: Bronislaw Malinowski, "Myth in Primitive Psychology" in *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion* ed. Micheal Lambek 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Malden: Blackwell Publications, 2008), 170.

<sup>6</sup> John Walbridge, *God and Logic in Islam the Caliphate of Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 42.

“enterprise” of historical data collection and writing (*tārīkh*) due to her relation to the Prophet and the political role she played in the crisis of succession after Muhammad. This political role unfolded in the “public eye” before the Muslim community, prompting the early Muslim historians or reporters to record it. I say “reporters” because the material of the Islamic histories begins or is represented as beginning in oral reports in which each report is attributed to a specific authority, and these authorities often had competing views, many of which were preserved in the major chronicles such as the universal history compiled by al-Ṭabarī. These various reporters included mention of Fatima in their accounts.<sup>7</sup> The first chapter will explore how Muslims historians have constructed an image of Fatima as historians while grappling with their proto-Sunnite or moderate Shiite dispositions.

Laura Veccia Vaglieri in her Encyclopedia of Islam entry describes Fatima as a figure of minimal importance in Islamic history; according to Veccia Vaglieri, her biographical details and life exist on the fringes of the historical sources. Put differently, the various reports and historical anecdotes involving Fatima pale in comparison to the legendary figure of Aisha, for the primary reason that Fatima, at least in Veccia Vaglieri's estimation, played little or no role in the major events of Islamic history aside from minor instances to be found in the biography of the Prophet Muhammad and a minimal function in the events following Muhammad's death. This supposed ‘minimal’ role may also be due to Fatima's unexpected death in her late teens or early twenties just weeks following the death of Muhammad in 10. A.H./632 C.E. Historians differ even over Fatima's date of birth. For instance, al-Ṭabarī places her

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<sup>7</sup> Maria Dakake's work has been key for me here; see *The Charismatic Community* (New York: SUNY Press, 2007), 4.

birth in the year 605 C.E., five years prior to the first revelations, while other historians claim she was born in the year 611 or 615, following Muhammad's first revelation.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, there is disagreement as to where Fatima fits in the birth sequence of Muhammad's four daughters or if any other siblings survived her father's death.<sup>9</sup>

Despite the perception of Veccia Vaglieri and others that Fatima stands on the 'periphery' of the historical sources, it is agreed that the following are the three highlights in her life:

- 1) Her marriage to Ali and the circumstances surrounding it.
- 2) Her presence at the *mubāhalah* (mutual malediction) in which Muhammad faced off with the Christians of Najran, as alluded to in Qur'an 3:64.
- 3) Her confrontation with Abu Bakr and Umar following the death of Muhammad.

It is this third and final flashpoint in the historical career of Fatima with which Chapter One is concerned. It will be demonstrated that the image of Fatima crafted and presented by the formative historians is that of a divisive and polarizing female figure at the very onset of a formative political landscape in the post-Muhammadan era. Thus, contrary to Veccia Vaglieri's assessment of Fatima as being of little note in Islamic history, we see that she is, in fact, of great importance in marking a crucial sectarian divide, and we can learn much about that development through the roles she is made to play and the ways in which her image is developed. For instance, we see that proto-Sunni historians were compelled to negotiate between respect for the daughter of the

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<sup>8</sup> Christopher Paul Clohessy, agreeing with Veccia Vaglieri, states that 605 C.E. seems to be the commonly accepted date of birth amongst the early historians *Fatima, Daughter of Muhammad* (New Jersey: Georgia Press, 2009), 12-20. Also see L. Veccia Vaglieri, "Fatima," *EI2*. For instance, Ibn Sa'd states the following: "She (Khadija) gave birth to her and [at the same time] the Quraysh were rebuilding the house (the *Ka'ba*)", which was five years prior to the Muhammad's prophethood. See: Muhammad ibn Sa'd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā* ed. Muḥammad ibn Qārī al-'Aṭā (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 1997), 8:16.

<sup>9</sup> Vaglieri, *EI2*.

Prophet and reverence for Abu Bakr and Umar, resulting in far from idealized portrayals of the two caliphs. Also, in the historical sources Fatima is gendered as an emotionally unstable and weak woman who is unable to contend with Abu Bakr's 'superior' wisdom and intellectual prowess. Gender themes are clearly present in proto-Sunni historical sources such as Ibn Sa'd's *Ṭabaqāt* which depicts Fatima as being unable to convince Abu Bakr of the validity of her claim to the land of Fadak which she believed had been left as an inheritance to her by her father. The overarching proto-Sunni image of Fatima in her conflict with the Rāshidūn is that of an ordinary woman who is constantly being reminded of Islamic norms by the elder and intellectually superior male, Abu Bakr.

The second chapter is the lengthiest of this dissertation. In this section, I focus on the Shiite hadith tradition. The voluminous literature of the hadith is the reflection of a Shiite cultural memory which was finally set down in the form of sacred statements believed to have originated from the Imams. Shiite hadith material is highly dogmatic and doctrinal in tone, so much so that in the view of Amir Moezzi, anyone accustomed to Sunni hadith literature would find themselves "disoriented" by it.<sup>10</sup> In Moezzi's view as well as my own, "disorientation" of the uninitiated is precisely what gives Shi'ism (both Twelver and Isma'ili) its distinctive flair, through a highly esoteric, electionist and one has to say bumptious dogmatic tenor *vis-à-vis* the "general and ordinary body" (*al-āmmah*) of Muslims who are non-Shiites.<sup>11</sup> In contrast to the "public eye" of the historical sources utilized in Chapter One, Shiite hadith is concerned with the "private eye" in which scathing criticisms and condemnations of

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<sup>10</sup> Amir Moezzi, *The Divine Guide in Early Shi'ism: The Sources of Esotericism in Islam*, tr. David Streight (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), 23.

<sup>11</sup> See: Moezzi, 21-24.

Muhammad's companions were produced with a very specific sectarian audience in mind. As a result, the Shiite presentation of the F-R conflict must be read in the context of the theology of the Imamate and Shiite identity as it developed in the 2-3/8-9<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Shiite reports do not attempt to rehabilitate both parties in the manner of Sunnism or proto-Sunnism. Rather, they present a radically dualistic scenario which depicts Abu Bakr and his supporters as cowards and villains opposite a righteous and charismatic Fatima. Also, in direct contrast to the proto-Sunnite historical sources, Shiite tradition genders Fatima as a highly intelligent, eloquent woman with a charismatic presence to which Abu Bakr is forced to yield. The commanding presence of Fatima is especially emphasized in her scathing speech to Abu Bakr and the residents of Madinah. In stark opposition to the proto-Sunnite sources, according to Shiite tradition, Abu Bakr eventually succumbs to Fatima and acquiesces to her demands regarding her father's estate. The Shiite tradition presents Fatima as a courageous woman standing against the unrighteous majority even at the cost of her life. Fatima occupies a paramount role in the development of an internal and "private" Shiite cultural memory of disenfranchisement and suffering.

## Chapter 1- The Figure of Fatima in History and Sunni Tradition

*History is our way of giving what we are and what we believe in the present a significance that will endure into the future, by relating it to what has happened in the past.- Fred Donner, Narratives of Islamic Origins, 114.*

### 1.1 Sources for the History of Early Islam and Biography of Fatima: Theoretical Considerations

Much literature has been produced over the past twenty years on the topic of early Islamic historiography, including its authenticity. The primary sources used in this chapter originated in the third century A.H., about one hundred and fifty to two hundred years following the death of Muhammad in 10/632. These sources relied on a pool of information handed down to the chroniclers from their *akhbārī* (oral historian) predecessors, who were active as early as the second century A.H. These include the likes of Abū Mikhnaf (d.157/773), Sayf ibn ‘Umar (d.180/796) and Muḥammad ibn ‘Amr al-Wāqidī (d.207/823), all of whom belonged to the Iraqi school of historians who composed monographs covering events of early Islam such as al-Ḥusayn’s death at Karbalā’ as reported by the pro-Alid Kūfan, Abū Mikhnaf.<sup>12</sup> It should be noted that there seems to be a tension between the early historians such as Abū Mikhnaf and Sayf ibn ‘Umar as being producers or composers of history or merely relaters of reports they are said to have transmitted from others. Whatever the case may be, the fact remains that they along with their interlocutors in the third century were steeped in an environment of traditionalism, piety and sectarianism which influenced their presentation of events, leading to numerous contradictory reports influenced by various ideological convictions.

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<sup>12</sup> A.A. al-Duri, *The Rise of Historical Writing among the Arabs*, trans. Lawrence Conrad (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 149.

By the third century, great compendiums were being produced which presented Islamic history as a unified movement beginning either with the pre-Islamic prophets or Muhammad's prophethood and continuing on to the Umayyad and 'Abbāsid dynasties. As A.A. al-Duri points out, an important aspect of these third century works is concern with the Muslim "*ummah*" or community. That is to say, by the third century a new cast of scholars, including the great al-Balādhurī (d.279/892), al-Ya'qūbī (d.284/897) and al-Ṭabarī (d.310/923), was at work producing histories that were not limited to a specific incident and took the *ummah* as a foundational concept on the basis of which they set out to provide a grand, integrated narrative of Islam and Muslims. This venture included the construction of multiple and often conflicting narratives documenting the life of Muhammad and the political life of their pious forefathers who formed Muhammad's circle of companions (*ashāb*).<sup>13</sup> To be more precise, these historians set out to compose a history of the *ummah* while also inheriting the material and methods of the older oral historians, which resulted in preservation of conflicting accounts. On the subject of the documentation of past events, Fred Donner aptly maintains that the universal histories and prosopographies (*ṭabaqāt* works) of the third century A.H. (9<sup>th</sup> century C.E.) were partly an exercise in legitimization.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, when historians such as al-Balādhurī or al-Ṭabarī wrote about the caliphate of Abu Bakr, they were also engaged in legitimizing his rule and authority.

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<sup>13</sup> Similar to al-Duri, Fred Donner characterizes al-Ṭabarī's history as the manifestation of a master narrative animated by "organic historical explanation" indicative of God's guidance of the Muslim community. See Fred Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1998), 130. These ninth and tenth century histories documenting the life of Muhammad and the early caliphate cover primarily political or *ummah*-related events and actions of the companions such as battles, civil wars, economic policy, and matters of caliphal succession.

<sup>14</sup> Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins*, 119.



Among the partly undigested material preserved by the third century historians and biographers are controversial reports indicative of a disorderly atmosphere in which Abu Bakr became caliph following the Saqīfah meeting and objections of Ali, Zubayr and Abū Sufyān. Whether these events actually occurred in the way they have been presented is not the concern of this study. Their transmission alone is indicative of the creation of a historical record or the historical plausibility of such events occurring for those Muslim historiographers responsible for giving shape to it. This historical record is indicative of a continued negotiation with contradictory and varied accounts prior to a time in which Shiite-Sunni sectarian lines had been fully solidified and the companions had become beyond reproach in Sunni Islam. This record in turn is precisely what later Shiites would use to advance their doctrinal claims and justify the *delegitimization* of Sunni beliefs regarding the upright behavior of the *ṣaḥābah*.

These early rivalries amongst Prophetic companions would come, in fact, to function as an arché for both communities. An arché, according to Charles H. Long, is a point designated by a religious tradition as its “putative beginnings.”<sup>15</sup> The conflict and questions regarding the qualities of the various personalities and who was right or wrong thus became extremely important for both Sunnites and Shiites. Inevitably, views became homogenised and polarized on both sides. Nevertheless, fourth century (A.H.) Shiite theologians such as al-Shaykh al-Ṭūsī and al-Sayyid al-Murtaḍā were able to mine the early, still heterogeneous sources of Islamic history treated in this chapter to place prominent prophetic companions such as Abu Bakr and Umar in an unfavourable light. For instance, al-Ṭūsī draws on al-Balādhurī’s *Ansāb al-ashrāf* for his

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<sup>15</sup> See Charles H. Long as cited in Donner, 122.

claim that Umar and others participated in a plan to burn the house of Fatima.<sup>16</sup> While al-Balādhurī, al-Ṭabarī and the reporters they relied on may not have interpreted these events in the same light, the very presence of such accounts allowed an otherwise gnostic and electionist Shīʿī doctrine to ground and anchor itself in Islamic historiography, thus furnishing the Shiite critique of the *ṣaḥābah* with “putative beginnings” based on ‘Sunni’ historical sources. Abdelkader Tayob shows in his analysis of al-Ṭabarī’s chronicle how careful analysis of an event and its presentation in an Islamic historical work can disclose the strategies of the author or compiler. These strategies are often influenced by the scholastic-theological debates of the author’s time. Tayob discusses how in the case of al-Ṭabarī, his Sunnite tendencies led him to neutralize or minimize the blame placed on Aisha for opposing Ali at the Battle of the Camel.<sup>17</sup>

In light of the above, I would again like to underscore that my concern is not to determine whether these voices actually existed in historical reality. Rather, my aim is to analyze the portrayal of a highly contentious and disputed past, the products of Muslim memory as recounted and preserved by the historians.

## 1.2 Fadak in History and the Test of a Caliph

The ancient settlement of Fadak, located in a fertile area in the northern Hijāz close to the Jewish settlement of Khaybar, has a complicated history subject to

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<sup>16</sup> Al-Ṭūsī states the following after mentioning the conflict between Fatima and Umar and the threat of burning her home: “And it is not for anyone to reject the report regarding that [the burning of her home] because we have demonstrated that this report is transmitted from a Sunnite perspective [a Sunnite chain of transmission and text] by means of al-Balādhurī and others.” *Talkhīṣ al-shāfiʿī* ed. al-Sayyid al-Ḥusayn Baḥr al-ʿUlūm (Qum: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, 1974), 3: 156.

<sup>17</sup> Abdelkader Tayob, “Ṭabarī on The Companions of the Prophet: Moral and Political Contours in Islamic Historical Writing,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 119 no.2 (1999), 203-210.

contradictory statements which would become the subject of theological and legal debate in the centuries following the death of Muhammad in 10/632. Historians from the period of Ibn Sa'd (d.230/845) and perhaps even earlier gave much attention to the history of this rather small piece of land.<sup>18</sup> It is reported that in the year five A.H. (627 C.E.) the Jewish tribe of Banū Qurayzah was expelled from Madina due to their violation of a treaty with Muhammad. Consequently, the Jews of Khaybar formed an alliance to defend themselves against an anticipated onslaught of the Muslims.<sup>19</sup> By the year 7 A.H., the Muslims attacked Khaybar, and after prolonged battle, the fortified town fell to Muhammad's small army. In the wake of this disturbing news, the Jews of Fadak quickly agreed to conclude an agreement with Muhammad dividing the land and its crops. Al-Balādhurī (d.279/892) in his *Futūḥ al-buldān* states the following: "...half of Fadak was allocated to the messenger of God (*niṣf fadak khālīṣan li-rasūlillāh*)."<sup>20</sup> According to these accounts and others, Fadak unlike Khaybar was obtained by means of a treaty and not warfare; therefore it was not to be treated as *ghanīmah* (war booty) but rather as *fay'*, (a property acquired without recourse to warfare) and thus was considered to be the Prophet's personal property.<sup>21</sup>

Muslim historians, however, paid little attention to Fadak in the Muhammadan era. It was only after Muhammad's death that Fadak became a focus of attention, and the source material is mainly concerned with how the first generation of Prophetic companions, including Muhammad's own family, were to handle his estate. I will

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<sup>18</sup> See the article of Veccia Vaglieri in *EI2*, which takes full account of the primary sources.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān* (Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Hilāl, 1988), 39. For a similar, corroborating report see: 'Abd al-Malik ibn Hishām, *al-Sīrah al-nabawīyah* (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bānī, 1936), 2:353.

<sup>21</sup> The description of *fay'* can be found in Qur'an 59:6.

demonstrate how various ‘Abbāsīd-era historians and their informants (*ruwāt*) negotiated the presentation of this contentious and divisive conflict between those who formed Muhammad’s inner circle of confidants and followers.

### Muhammad ibn Sa’d and his al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā

The first and chief source to be examined regarding the controversy of Fadak is the extensive prosopographical work of Ibn Sa’d. Ibn Sa’d was born in Baṣrah in the year 168/784 and sometime during his career, he is said to have moved his intellectual activities to Baghdad where he served as a scribe to the famous Prophetic biographer, al-Wāqidī. The fruits of his intellectual endeavours are summed up in his massive historical compendium which includes a biography of the Prophet, the companions and prominent reporters of hadith, in addition to having a separate volume dedicated to the wives, daughters and female companions. It is by far the earliest surviving work of its kind - produced over a century before al-Ṭabarī’s (d.310/923) multi-volume history.<sup>22</sup>

Debate remains as to whether Ibn Sa’d can be classified primarily as an *akhbārī* (historian) or a *muḥaddith* (traditionist or hadith scholar). According to Ahmad Attasi, Ibn Sa’d was recalled by later scholars to be a historian and not a *muḥaddith*, thus placing him in the company of prominent *akhbārīs* such as Hishām al-Kalbī, al-Haytham ibn ‘Adiyy, and al-Madā’inī, as well as his own student, the renowned

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<sup>22</sup>According to al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Sa’d was among the first seven judges and scholars summoned to the court of the caliph al-Ma’mūn in 218 /833 to be interrogated as a part of the *Miḥnah*, which is indicative of Ibn Sa’d’s prominent scholarly credentials and importance within Islamic intellectual history. See al-Ṭabarī, *al-Tārīkh*, 5:188 as cited in Ahmad Nazir Attasi, “A History of Ibn Sa’d’s Biographical Dictionary Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kabīr,” unpub. PhD diss., University of California Santa Barbara, 2009, p.65. The *Miḥnah* or trial organized at the behest of al-Ma’mūn was in actual fact an inquisition of sorts where various traditionists and theologians were interrogated regarding the nature of the Qur’an as the created or uncreated word of God.

historian and genealogist, al-Balādhurī.<sup>23</sup> Ibn Sa’d’s sectarian allegiances are clearly proto-Sunni, as seen in his positive view of the companions of the Prophet and hadith folk such as Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal.<sup>24</sup> These sectarian tendencies are crucial in allowing us to situate his biographical compendium within the development of Islamic historiography and the spectrum of proto-Sunni imagination of the formative period of early Islamic history.

Ibn Sa’d concludes his substantial biography (*sīrah*) of Muhammad with the following subheading: “Mention of the estate (*mīrāth*) of the Messenger of God and what he left behind (*mā tarak*)”. In this section, Ibn Sa’d presents a number of reports detailing the disputed ownership and rightful dispensation of Fadak in addition to other disputed properties such as Khaybar. The sheer length of this section is indicative of the historical-religious importance of this subject due to the issues that it symbolized in the scholarly circles of Baghdad in which Ibn Sa’d participated.

The first of the traditions indicative of a brewing conflict between Fatima and Abu Bakr has been attributed to Umm Hānī, the sister of Ali, a relative latecomer to Islam but nevertheless someone in a close relationship to the Prophet as his cousin and potential spouse, thus making her a trustworthy source of information and placing her

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<sup>23</sup> See: Attasi, 65–69. Despite his prominence as a transmitter of traditions, he has been sparsely quoted in any of canonical Sunni hadith works. Rather, it was his *akhbārī* successors, al-Balādhurī and al-Ṭabarī who made use of his traditions in their respective works. Therefore, for the intention of this chapter I will be treating Ibn Sa’d’s *Ṭabaqāt* as a work of history. For an extensive discussion see: Ibid, pp.65–77, and Michael Cooperson, “Ibn Sa’d” in *Arabic Literary Culture, 500–925*, ed. Michael Cooperson and Shawkat M. Toorawa (Detroit: Gale, 2005).  
[http://go.galegroup.com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CH1200012446&v=2.1&u=utoronto\\_main&it=r&p=LitRC&sw=w](http://go.galegroup.com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CH1200012446&v=2.1&u=utoronto_main&it=r&p=LitRC&sw=w) last accessed 12 June 2012. Note : This text was only available to me as an electronic resource and therefore I am only able to provide the html for this entry instead of specific page numbers.

<sup>24</sup> Note, however, that it was not Ibn Sa’d himself who praised Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal, but his students, since he predeceased Ahmad. See: Attasi, 68 and also Cooperson,  
[http://go.galegroup.com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CH1200012446&v=2.1&u=utoronto\\_main&it=r&p=LitRC&sw=w](http://go.galegroup.com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CH1200012446&v=2.1&u=utoronto_main&it=r&p=LitRC&sw=w).

in an ideal position to have witnessed these conversations.<sup>25</sup> The use of specific transmitters alleged to have heard or seen certain contentious events is of great rhetorical value and is indicative of the public nature of such disputes. Umm Hānī relates the following: “Fatima approached Abu Bakr and asked him the following question: “Who shall inherit from you when you die?” Abu Bakr responds: “My son and my progeny!”<sup>26</sup> It can be reasonably assumed that Fatima is being portrayed as asking a leading question of Abu Bakr, in turn desiring that specific answer so that she could assert her right to inherit from her own father. Although punctuation did not exist in classical Arabic, the editor of the Arabic text has added an exclamation mark, perhaps to indicate the surprise of Abu Bakr at such an obvious question. It becomes clear that Fatima had come to Abu Bakr with a caustic line of questioning.

Fatima then responds: “So, how is it that you can inherit from the Prophet instead of us?” Abu Bakr replies: “O daughter of the Messenger of God, I have not inherited from your father a [single] piece of land, or gold, or silver, or a slave boy, or wealth [money]<sup>27</sup> Fatima once again counters, exclaiming: “So the portion (*sahm*) of God [previously possessed by the Prophet] which He [God] has made for us and placed in our possession and those items left to us (*ṣāfiyatunā*), are now in your hand (*bi-yadik*) ?”

<sup>25</sup> Debate remains as to whether the Prophet ever married his cousin, Umm Hānī, the daughter of Abū Ṭālib and the sister of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib. Some reports indicate that the Prophet proposed to her in marriage in Mecca but Abū Ṭālib wed her to another man, or that the Prophet proposed to her a second time in Madīnah. Therefore, the exact nature of the relationship between the two is dubious according to the sources. See: Muhammad b. Sa’d, 8:120-121. Also see: Nabil ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Zayn, *al-Nisā’ ḥawl al-nabī* (‘Ammān: Dār Usāmah, 1998), 50-53. The third century A.H. Twelver Shiite traditionist, al-Barqī, in his biographical dictionary describes Umm Hānī as *zawjat al-nabī* (wife of the Prophet). See: Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Barqī (d.274 A.H.), *Rijāl al-Barqī* (Tehran: Tehran University, 1963), 61.

<sup>26</sup> Ibn Sa’d, 2:240. This report from Umm Hānī is also found in: al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashraf* ed. Suhayl Zakār and Riyād al-Zirkalī (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1994), 1:519, and al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 40. Also see: Abū Bakr al-Jawharī’s (d. 323 A.H.) *Kitāb al-saqīfah* as preserved by Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd al-Mu’tazilī, *Sharḥ nahj al-balāghah* ed. al-Shaykh al-Ḥusayn al-A’lamī (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-A’lamī lil-Maṭbū’āt, 2004), 16:350.

<sup>27</sup> Ibn Sa’d, 2:240. The Arabic is as follows: “*ya bint rasūlillāh innī wallāhi mā warathtu abāki arḍan wa-lā dhahaban wa-lā fiḍḍatan wa-lā ghulāman wa-lā-mālan.*”

The report then ends with Abu Bakr quoting the Prophet: “I heard the Messenger of God say: ‘Verily it is a source of food [livelihood] bestowed upon me by God, and when I die, it shall be at the disposal of the Muslims.’”

The above passage and other similar ones yield several lines of inquiry. Firstly, Fatima began her questioning by comparing her situation with that of Abu Bakr and his heirs with a perceived logic which stipulated that if Abu Bakr’s children could inherit from him, then why should the daughter of Muhammad not inherit from her father? Consequently, with regard to inheritance and its accompanying laws, Fatima, (as illustrated in the Umm Hānī report) saw no distinction between the case of Muhammad as a Prophet and Muhammad as a father. Furthermore, it demonstrates that early Muslim historiography depicted Fatima as desiring to enjoy the same rights accorded to the children of Abu Bakr; thus by attempting to construct an analogy between Abu Bakr and Muhammad, she was implying that despite Muhammad being a prophet, the laws of inheritance must be universally applied. This comes across more clearly in another report included by Ibn Sa’d in which Fatima upon being asked to specify her claims to her father’s belongings states the following: “Fadak and Khaybar and his [Muhammad’s] contributions (*ṣadāqātuḥu*) in Madīnah - I shall inherit these (*arathuhā*) just as your daughters shall inherit from you when you die<sup>28</sup>”

Another possible implication of Fatima’s argument is a vital theological and legal motif (as per the above statement) dictating that Muhammad and his children are neither above the law nor excluded from the rights accorded to Muslims outlined in the Qur’an and established by Prophetic practice (*sunnah*). While this seems to be the

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<sup>28</sup> Ibn Sa’d, 2: 241.

assumption in Fatima's initial inquiry, it was not unusual for Muhammad as lawmaker and Prophet to have been exempted from certain Qur'anic injunctions or customary rules applied to the community. One example can be seen in Qur'an 33:50-52, in which God allows Muhammad to have more than four wives whereas others are limited to four. However, in this case, the exception regarding Muhammad's license to marry more than four wives emanates from the Qur'an itself, and not from the hadith as in the case of inheritance disputed here. To be more precise, it is this exception to the Qur'anic norm (allegedly originating from a hadith) which is at the heart of the dispute over Fadak. Therefore the implied logic behind the account presented by Ibn Sa'd is that Fatima in her dispute with Abu Bakr did not question Muhammad's authority to exempt himself from certain legal norms; rather, the question is if Abu Bakr can exempt Muhammad from a Qur'anic injunction on the sole basis of his (Abu Bakr's) transmission of a prophetic hadith. Ironically, while Fatima retains the honour and privilege of being the Prophet's daughter, it was this very exceptional relationship which prevented her, according to the sources, from enjoying the same rights to inherit that Aisha, the daughter of Abu Bakr, would enjoy.

The report states that Fatima rather assumed that the portion of God (*sahm allāh*) referred to in the Quran was wealth and/or property granted exclusively to the Prophet. Therefore, this personal property was now to be transferred to Fatima and her household, as made clear by the statement: "*ja'alahū lanā* (He [God] made it for our possession) *wa-ṣāfiyatunā* (the possessions left to us)"<sup>29</sup> These items granted by God to

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid. The term *ṣāfiyah* is the singular of *al-ṣawāfi* which refers to the possessions of an individual which are normally transferred to the eldest son, which in this case is claimed by Fatima in light of her being the only surviving child after her father's death, or at least the most prominent amongst the surviving daughters.



Fatima are now, in her words, “in the hands” of Abu Bakr (*allatī bi-yadik*), an expression seeming to imply usurpation. The telling or re-telling of Ibn Sa’d, however, reduces this usurpation of the rights of God and the Prophet in the eyes of Fatima to a misunderstanding. This Ibn Sa’d does by having Abu Bakr introduce another line of reasoning, which is found and in fact highlighted in every report he presents concerning the dispute over Muhammad’s estate except the one attached to Umm Hānī previously mentioned.<sup>30</sup>

Prior to presenting the Fadak saga, Ibn Sa’d strategically opens his chapter on the Prophet’s inheritance with three traditions. He quotes one tradition in which Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d.124/742), the prominent hadith collector and early legal scholar from the Umayyad period, quotes Abu Bakr as stating: “I heard the messenger of God say: ‘We do not bequeath; whatever we leave is *ṣadaqah* (alms destined for the public treasury).’”<sup>31</sup> In a nearly identical report, Ibn Sa’d further makes evident his traditional Sunnite-historical position regarding the Prophet’s estate. In this report, he cites two *isnāds* (chains of transmission) on the authority of Muhammad’s wife, Aisha, and numerous prominent companions such as ‘Umar ibn Khaṭṭāb, ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān, ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭalīb, al-Zubayr ibn ‘Awwām, Sa’d ibn Abī Waqqāṣ, and ‘Abbās ibn ‘Abd al-

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<sup>30</sup> There is no way to know for certain why the Umm Hānī report is the exception in this case. Perhaps Umm Hānī has been ascribed pro-Fatima tendencies which gave shape to her report; however this explanation is tentative at best.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 2:239. Micheal Lecker describes al-Zuhrī as one of the founders of the Islamic tradition and source of prophetic hadith. There remains a heated debate as to whether much of the material attributed to al-Zuhrī in-fact originated from him or has he been used as a convenient connection between first generation of Muslims and the authorities of the late Umayyad and early ‘Abbāsīd periods. These details are significant so to contextualize the usage of al-Zuhrī as a figure of prominence and authority (at least in some historical and hadith circles), in Ibn Sa’d’s chain of transmission. See: M. Lecker, “al-Zuhrī” *EI2*. Also see the extensive article dealing with al-Zuhrī as a source of early Islamic jurisprudence: Harold Motzki, “the Jurisprudence of Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī A Source Critical Study” in *Analysing Muslim Tradition: Studies in Legal Exegetical and Maghāzi Hadith* by Harold Motzki with Nicolet Boekhoff-Van der Vort and Sean W. Anthony (Leiden: Brill Publications, 2010), 1-46.

Muṭṭalib, all of whom allegedly said (*qālū*) : The messenger of God said: “We do not bequeath; we do not leave anything except that it is *ṣadaqah* ”. For Ibn Sa’d’s second *isnād*, Mālik ibn ‘Aws ibn Ḥadathān (d. 92 A.H.) is the sole narrator claiming to have heard this hadith from the aforementioned companions. He was apparently a companion of Muhammad; although there is dispute in the primary sources regarding this. Nevertheless, he is said to have reported numerous traditions from ‘Umar, ‘Abbās, and other Madinan emigrants (*muhājirūn*); thus for Ibn Sa’d the aforementioned relation would put him in an ideal position to transmit this report. Either Ibn Sa’d or one of his many sources then inserted the following interpretive clause: “and he [Muhammad] intended that for himself”<sup>32</sup>

Before venturing into the *matn* (text of the report), the *isnād* in this case is of paramount importance in light of the array of authorities cited. Historical value aside, the rhetorical and dogmatic value of an *isnād* citing the most prominent men of early Islam, who for the Sunnite tradition constitute the inner circle of Muhammad’s trusted and God-fearing companions, cannot be overstated. By citing such an impressive *isnād*, Ibn Sa’d and/or his source(s) aimed to remove any doubts about the veracity of the claim that Muhammad in fact did not leave behind an inheritance to be claimed by anyone, including his family members, wives or friends. There can be no greater legitimation of an historical account for Sunnite Muslims than the agreement of such prominent personalities, especially on such controversial issues. In this case,

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<sup>32</sup> See: Ibn Sa’d, *ibid*. For a brief biographical sketch of Mālik ibn ‘Aws see: Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *al-Istī‘āb fī ma’rifat al-aṣḥāb* (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1992), 3: 1346-1347. The interpretive phrase reads: “*yurīdu bi-dhālīka naḥṣahu*” There seems to be uncertainty as to whether this statement was added by Ibn Sa’d himself or is meant to belong to the numerous transmitters of the hadith. However, al-Jawharī (a Sunnite fourth century A.H. historian) has included a report from Aisha on the authority of Mālik ibn ‘Aws quoting the very same hadith followed by the above statement. Thus it could very well be Mālik ibn ‘Aws ibn Ḥadathān or others of the transmitters or scribes who added these words. See: Ibn Abī al-Hādīd, 16:353.

Ibn Sa'd (and/or his sources) even included prominent Hāshimites in the *isnād* such as Ali and al-'Abbās to function as authorities verifying a tradition which they themselves (in addition to Fatima) are said in other reports to have vehemently disputed. Despite this incongruity, traditions guaranteed by prominent *aṣḥāb* have the potential power to quell or nullify charges of usurpation levelled at Abu Bakr. However, this portrait of a sound and religiously legitimate caliphal decree regarding the Prophet's inheritance is dubious at best. Thus the Fadak saga is replete with layers of conflicting and contested truths.

In spite of this, the accounts of Ibn Sa'd are multi-vocal and to an extent multivalent in their sectarian sentiment. Thus at this juncture, Ibn Sa'd brings in another character. Ja'far, the brother of Ali and intimate companion of Muhammad, states in a report that in addition to Fatima initiating a claim for her inheritance to Abu Bakr, her great (paternal) uncle al-'Abbās ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib did so as well.<sup>33</sup> The report says that Ali accompanied Fatima and al-'Abbās in their audience with Abu Bakr, thereby setting the stage for a conflict between several prominent Hāshimites and the non-Hāshimite caliph (Abu Bakr).<sup>34</sup>

Why did Ibn Sa'd include this report, even though it is much at variance with his general goal of vindicating Abu Bakr? He may have included it, as historians of his kind did, because it was circulating in connection with a controversy involving the 'Abbāsīd caliph al-Ma'mūn, a contemporary of Ibn Sa'd who in the year 210/825

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<sup>33</sup> Ibn Sa'd, 2:241. Al-Ṭabarī and al-Jawharī both include a similar report on the authority of Aisha; see 3:207 and al-Jawharī as cited in Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, 16:350. Similar to Ali and Fatima, al-'Abbās ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib is said to have had strained relations with the first three caliphs; see Andreas Gorke, "al-'Abbās b. Abd al-Muṭṭalib" *EI2*.

<sup>34</sup> Ibn Sa'd, 2:241.

convened a hearing regarding the disputed ownership of Fadak.<sup>35</sup> Both ‘Abbāsīd-era historiographers, al-Balādhurī and al-Ya‘qūbī, describe in an almost panegyric manner al-Ma‘mūn’s investigation as being motivated by utter sincerity and a desire to be near to God (*taqarruban ilā allāh*) and the Prophet, not to mention an unadulterated quest for justice (*al-‘adl*). Therefore in an apparent move of appeasement towards the descendants of Fatima, al-Ma‘mūn pronounced Fatima’s claim to inheritance trustworthy and ruled that it was to be given priority on the grounds that she would have been the ideal individual to be aware of her father’s intentions regarding the utilisation and ownership of Fadak. Having explained his reasons, al-Ma‘mūn signed a caliphal decree returning Fadak to the descendents of Fatima, and in doing so, passed an implicit negative judgement on Abu Bakr.<sup>36</sup> The sources detailing al-Ma‘mūn’s return

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<sup>35</sup>See: Aḥmad ibn Abī Ya‘qūb Wādiḥ al-Ya‘qūbī, *Tārīkh al-Yā‘qūbī* (Beirut: Dār Sādir, n.d.), 2:469, and al-Balādhurī, 41. It should be noted that al-Ma‘mūn was not the first to reopen the matter, but rather his Umayyad predecessor, ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (Umar II) who according to al-Balādhurī re-acquired the entire land of Fadak at great expense from his brothers in the Umayyad clan who happened to be part owners of the property. Upon his purchase of their shares, he returned it to its original owners (the children of Fatima). It is almost unanimously agreed by historians that Umar II in his brief caliphate attempted to institute a greater degree of religiosity. According to Marshall Hodgson, Umar II had close ties with various “piety minded” groups who desired to implement their understandings of the ethos of the Prophetic tradition and Qur’an. Despite being a Marwānid (known adversaries of the Shiites), ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz was able to put an end to the imprecation of Ali from the pulpits of the empire. His returning Fadak to Fatima’s descendents appears to be one manifestation of this policy of ‘pious’ appeasement. Further yet, the caliph was able to take this action in spite of being a direct maternal descendent of Umar I, who is depicted in the sources as having an acrimonious relationship with Fatima in addition to supporting Abu Bakr’s refusal to grant her the land of Fadak. See: Marshall G.S. Hodgson, *Venture of Islam v.1*. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1974), 268-269. Also see: P.M. Cobb. “Umar (II) b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz” *EI2*.

<sup>36</sup> According to al-Balādhurī, there were multiple recipients amongst the descendents of Fatima, two of them being; Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā from the family of Fatima’s grandson, ‘Alī Zayn al-‘Ābidīn, as well as Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā’s half brother, Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdullāh. See: al-Balādhurī, 41. Historians are unsure of al-Ma‘mūn’s precise motives for his various pro-Alid policies. Wilfred Madelung and Van Ess believe al-Ma‘mūn’s appointment of the eighth Shī‘ī Imām, ‘Alī ibn Mūsā al-Ridā, to have been motivated by an apocalyptic notion that his (al-Ma‘mūn’s) caliphate would mark the end of the ‘Abbāsīd caliphate; thus he wished, in preparation for that event, to ‘righteously’ appoint ‘Alī ibn Mūsā as his successor to demonstrate his recognition of the injustice perpetrated on the descendents of Ali and Fatima. Other historians are of the view that al-Ma‘mūn’s pro-Alid policies were merely meant to appease a growing Alid opposition; thus the appointment of ‘Alī ibn Mūsā in 203 A.H. as heir apparent and return of Fadak in 210 A.H. was a part of an overarching political strategy to maintain his own hold on power. For an in-depth discussion regarding the pro-Alid policies of al-Ma‘mūn see: Michael Cooperson, *Classical Arabic*

of Fadak do not mention the case of al-‘Abbās. However, by legitimating the claim of the descendants of Fatima, the caliph was also conveniently legitimating the inheritance claim of his ancestor and source of legitimacy for the ‘Abbāsīd dynasty, namely al-‘Abbās ibn ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, the uncle of the Prophet. By placing al-‘Abbās in the role of plaintiff, Ibn Sa‘d and/or his source make explicit what was implicit in al-Ma‘mūn’s decree.

According to Ja‘far’s report, Fatima, al-‘Abbās, and Ali were told that there was no inheritance for them to claim as the Prophet did not leave anything behind which did not now belong to the public treasury. In a further bid by Ibn Sa‘d to secure legitimacy for Abu Bakr and bolster his caliphal authority, he alleges that after Abu Bakr, as is usually recounted, added the remark “and he intended that for himself”, he exclaimed: “Whatever the Prophet relied on for sustenance [to take care of himself and his dependents] is now upon me [to provide for].”<sup>37</sup> Here Abu Bakr asserts his authority by comparing himself to the Prophet, declaring that having ascended to the leadership role, he is now in charge of all of Muhammad’s assets and consequently solely responsible (“it is now upon me”) for its rightful dispensation exclusively for the welfare of the Muslim community. In another report, Abu Bakr vehemently reiterates his commitment to faithfully upholding the legacy of the Prophet by referring to the “Prophets do not bequeath” hadith and emphasizing that he is not altering the usage and dispensation of any of Muhammad’s personal wealth and Madinan investments, that he is not administering Muhammad’s assets in any way that Muhammad did not do

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*Biography: The Heirs of the Prophets in the Age of al-Ma‘mūn* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 26-37.

<sup>37</sup> Ibn Sa‘d, 2:240. The Arabic reads: *mā kāna al-nabī yu‘ilu fa-‘alayy.*

so himself.<sup>38</sup> In attributing such passionate commitment to the memory of Muhammad to Abu Bakr, the historical reports are able to defend him against if not absolve him altogether of the charge of dishonouring the prophetic legacy and *sunnah*.

The Abu Bakr narratives also seem to be aimed at asserting the patriarchal authority of Abu Bakr over Fatima. This is expressed in an unambiguous manner in an alternative report cited by Ibn Sa‘d in which Fatima demands her share of her father’s estate. However, despite Fatima’s passive-aggressive language, Abu Bakr not only justifies denying her claim by citing the “Prophets do not bequeath” hadith, but also attempts to calm and subdue her in a paternal manner by stating: “Your father, by God, was better than me, and by God you are better than my daughters ( *anti wallāhi khayrun min banātī*).<sup>39</sup>” In fact, Abu Bakr in this narrative goes so far as to assure Fatima (though only after citing Muhammad’s injunction, “Prophets do not bequeath”) that if she truly recalls her father giving her Fadak, he is ready to accept and trust her statement.<sup>40</sup> Reports such as these are an attempt to demonstrate piety and good-natured negotiation on the part of Abu Bakr, as well as to counter claims that Abu Bakr did not trust the testimony of Fatima and questioned her credibility.<sup>41</sup>

Fatima’s claim is entirely undermined at this point, for her only response to Abu Bakr is that the elderly Umm Ayman informed her that Muhammad had given her

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid. The Arabic reads: *la a‘mmalanna fihā bi-mā ‘amila fihā rasūlallāh*

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. This can also be understood as a concession to the Shiite view that gives precedence to Fatima over Aisha, the daughter of Abu Bakr and wife of Muhammad.

<sup>40</sup> For Sunnite apologists, this statement would be understood to be an attempt at compromise on the part of Abu Bakr, whereas for Shiites, it would be deemed patronizing and insincere.

<sup>41</sup> The tone of the report is emphatic as it has Abu Bakr state: *la-in qulti na‘m-* if you say yes ( to your confirmation of the Prophet designating you as the recipient of the lands of Khaybar, Fadak and his wealth in Madina), *la-aqbalanna qawlaki wa-aşddaqaqqannaki-* I shall surely accept your statement and believe you..”

Fadak.<sup>42</sup> This reply of Fatima makes her seem submissive and unaware of the importance of this matter. It is implied that, despite being the daughter of Muhammad, she was not aware of her own father's will and estate but rather needed to be informed by Umm Ayman. Abu Bakr, however, is portrayed as tolerantly entertaining Fatima's rather feeble claim by once again stating: "If you say you heard him [the Prophet bequeath you Fadak] then it is yours and I shall believe you and accept your statement." Fatima again responds rather meekly by telling Abu Bakr that she has given him all the information she has.

The motif of a pious yet firm caliphal authority is more evident in this report than in any other included by Ibn Sa'd. Abu Bakr plays the typically male roles of *qāḍī* (judge) and leader (*imām*), while Fatima is presented as a simple-minded female plaintiff in need of paternal guidance. Fatima's femaleness becomes a negative factor in her negotiations with the wiser and older Abu Bakr, so that she is spoken to more like a child than fellow companion endowed with knowledge of the Qur'an and awareness of Muhammad's final wishes, even though Muhammad was her own father. Put differently, despite Fatima being the daughter of Muhammad, her claim to knowledge of her father's final wishes is dismissed by depicting her as a young, emotional, and forgetful female treated lightly though indulgently by a wise male elder.

The trope of a pious, mild mannered caliph also appears in reports in the work of Ibn Sa'd's student, al-Balādhurī. Here Fatima is described as pre-empting Abu Bakr's request for a *bayyinah* (a piece of clear or decisive evidence) by having her husband Ali

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<sup>42</sup> The Arabic reads as: "jā'atnī Umm Ayman fa-akhbaratnī annahu 'aṭānī fadak" Umm Ayman was a female servant (*khādimah*) of Muhammad whom he inherited from his father. She was also the wife of the prominent companion Zayd ibn Hārith and mother of Usāmah ibn Zayd. See: Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, 4:1965. She is also described as a thoroughly pious and Godfearing woman, see: Ibn Sa'd, 8:181.

testify in support of her claim.<sup>43</sup> Abu Bakr, cast once again in the role of the righteous adjudicator, asks Fatima to produce an additional witness. It becomes clear that a situation is rapidly unfolding that will undermine and embarrass both Fatima and Ali. Fatima brings Umm Ayman as her witness. Abu Bakr then immediately places another obstacle before Fatima by declaring: “You must surely know, O daughter of the Messenger of God, that it [witness] is not [legally] permissible except with the testimony of two men or one man and two women.” Fatima, according to this report, “then went away.”<sup>44</sup>

This dramatic telling poses several complications. Firstly, assuming the compilers and/or writers of these reports were learned Muslims, why would they construct reports presenting Fatima and Ali embarking on this petition knowing full well that the laws of Qur’anic testimony were not in their favour?<sup>45</sup> It seems unlikely that they were asserting that Fatima and Ali had a low level of Qur’anic knowledge and had to be educated by Abu Bakr regarding due legal process. More plausibly, Ibn Sa’d or his sources are implying that Ali and Fatima assumed that their *qarābah* (kinship and closeness) to the Prophet would not require them to bring forth the same proofs required of lay Muslims.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, upon Umm Ayman’s testimony being rejected,

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<sup>43</sup> See: al-Balādhuri, 40.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. Fred Donner aptly describes this incident as an instance of legitimating the notion that the testimony of a woman is worth half that of man’s. Therefore, in Donner’s estimation as well as my own, it is entirely possible that the episode of Fadak was used by al-Balādhurī and/or the authorities he relied upon to give a concrete context to a legal principle, which even the Prophet’s daughter was forced to succumb to. See: Donner, 212.

<sup>45</sup> There remains disagreement amongst scholars of ‘Abbāsīd-era historiography as to what extent later compilers such as Ibn Sa’d, al-Balādhurī, and al-Ṭabarī created their own independent narratives. According to Fred Donner, by the early third century A.H. (9<sup>th</sup> century C.E.) the conflicting historical records were basically in place, leaving later compilers such as al-Ṭabarī with the task of creatively selecting, editing, and arranging the mass of reports in their possession. See: Donner, 115.

<sup>46</sup> Al-Sayyid al-Murtaḍā has an extensive discussion on this subject in which he insists that the fourteen infallibles, unlike lay Muslims, are not required to produce *bayyināt* in order to support their claims or settle a dispute. See: al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *al-Intiṣār* (Najaf: al-Maktabah al-Ḥaydarīyah, 1971), 237-239.



she is politely scolded by Abu Bakr for not following due process despite being aware of the rules. Once again we come across the portrayal of a feeble-minded or “typically feminine” Fatima in the historical sources.<sup>47</sup>

I cannot overemphasize the powerful and contentious nature of the gendering of Fatima in the *akhbārī* circles of the late second and early third century (A.H.). Fatima is characterized in the Fadak reports as unsure of herself or even intellectually deficient, having to rely on the words of Umm Ayman and others and thus implicitly admitting that she is uninformed or ignorant of the Qur’anic laws of testimony. Furthermore, by having Fatima rely on Umm Ayman to inform her of her right to Fadak rather than citing words spoken to her directly by the Prophet, the reports give the impression she had minimal political and religious value in the eyes of her father.<sup>48</sup>

The proto-Shiite histories of al-Mas‘ūdī and al-Ya‘qūbī record that in addition to Umm Ayman and Ali, Fatima brought her children (al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn) as witnesses, only to have their testimony rejected by Abu Bakr as well.<sup>49</sup> This seems

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<sup>47</sup> In another report, Fatima apparently makes the mistake of bringing two women (Umm Ayman and Rabāh, the client of her father) as witnesses only to be told by Abu Bakr that she requires one male in order to make their testimony legally viable. See al-Balādhuri *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, 1:79. Therefore, Fatima’s femaleness lent her a two-fold deficiency insofar as she is not only depicted as an intellectually weak female, but her testimony on its own as a female is not accepted.

<sup>48</sup> Wilfred Madelung in his work on the early caliphate describes the actions of Abu Bakr (as presented in the historical material) as a “front of meticulously following the practice and precedents set by the Prophet in every respect...”; he goes on to use strong language in describing the actions of Abu Bakr as disinherit and demoting the Prophet’s family from their previously held position of religious purity and reverence. I would concur with Madelung’s brief analysis of the sources dealing with Fadak from a literary and historiographical perspective. However, the purpose of this study (unlike that of Madelung) is not to discover a historical probability or truth, but to study the intellectual history of the Fatima-Rāshidūn conflict. See: Wilfred Madelung. *The Succession to Muhammad: A study of the early caliphate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 50-51. For a similar literary analysis of the sources, see: Tayeb El-Hibri, *Parable and Politics in Early Islamic History: The Rashidun Caliphs* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 58-61.

<sup>49</sup> See: ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab wa ma‘ādin al-jawhar* ed. Asad Dāghir (Qum : Dār al-Hijrah, 1989), 3 :237. Al-Ya‘qūb, relates that a group of descendants of al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn in their effort to retrieve the oasis of Fadak informed al-Ma’mūn that (according to them) their grandmother, Fatima brought forward four witnesses: Ali, al-Ḥasan, al-Ḥusayn, and lastly, Umm Ayman. See: al-Ya‘qūbī, 2:469. This report seems rather far-fetched since Ali and Fatima’s two sons would have been children at

designed to further emphasize the religious devaluation of the Prophet's household. The implications of these historical accusations are of great dogmatic import, further portraying a perception of a brewing political conflict between the Hāshimites and Abu Bakr and his supporters in which the Hāshimites accuse Abu Bakr of usurpation while he as the caliph of the Prophet (*khalīfat rasūlillāh*) finds every possible means to undermine their claims and testimony. Unlike most *akhbār* which give Abu Bakr the last word, Ja'far's report, which is found only in Ibn Sa'd's multivocal prosopography, includes a rebuttal by Ali on behalf of his wife. In the Ja'far report, Ali is made to cite Qur'an, 27:16 which states that Solomon inherited (*waritha*) from David, as well as Qur'an 19:6 in which Zakariah asks God for a son who will inherit from him and the family of Jacob.<sup>50</sup> Abu Bakr then responds, rather ineffectively: "It is this way [i.e. as I have said], and you by God know what you know best [i.e. you are aware that the Quranic verses you have cited do not really apply]." Upon Abu Bakr's attempt to end the conversation, Ali continues to push the issue, exclaiming: "This is the book of God speaking (*yanṭiq*)". The assembled party, according to the narrative, remained quiet and finally dispersed."<sup>51</sup> Ibn Sa'd's inclusion of this report is clearly not in tune with his chief sentiments which seem to emphasize that the "Prophets do not bequeath" tradition is authoritative and an appropriate justification for Abu Bakr to deny

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the time. However, al-Ya'qūbī relates that al-Ma'mūn upon hearing this testimony summoned the jurists and enquired about the matter. The implications of the above Alid claim is that Abu Bakr not only rejected Fatima's testimony, but summarily rejected the entire *ahl al-bayt* (prophetic household), which would only serve to vilify him further in Shiite circles. See: al-Ya'qūbī, 2:469.

<sup>50</sup> The report is introduced above on page 21, note, 32. This is the only historical report I have come across in which Ali supports the cause of Fatima using the Qur'an. As I shall demonstrate in chapter two, the Shiites and a few Sunnite authorities have located some of these Qur'anic arguments in Fatima's famous speech known as, *Khuṭbat al-Zahrā'*. See: Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, 16:354-348.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

Fatima's claim to Fadak.<sup>52</sup> In this case, the issue is the evidentiary value of the instances in the Quran in which the children of prophets (who happened to be prophets themselves) inherited from their fathers.<sup>53</sup> It becomes apparent that Fatima's demand for her inheritance as portrayed in Ibn Sa'd's *Ṭabaqāt* is tied up with other doctrinal matters. It is no surprise that this report attributed to Ja'far portrays Ali in a positive manner. Ali is shown drawing upon his Qur'anic knowledge, confident in the belief that revelation must take precedence over hadith. There is an implicit accusation here of hadith forgery by Abu Bakr which would have had vast implications for the evolving doctrine of *'adālat al-ṣaḥābah* or the irreproachable character of the companions which is of great importance for guaranteeing the integrity of Sunni texts and doctrines. I read the report in this way since the only possible implications are either that the Prophet was mistaken in his telling Abu Bakr that prophets do not bequeath to their families; or Abu Bakr misunderstood the Prophet; or lastly, that Abu Bakr invented the hadith as a justification for disinheriting Muhammad's kin. Ali's logic (as constructed in this report) is that since the Qur'an 'clearly' demonstrates that Prophets do in fact bequeath, then it is impossible for Muhammad to have contradicted the Qur'an and thus the hadith has been falsely attributed to him. The latter is most likely to be what the version of the narrative that includes Ali's rebuttal means to imply.

Here, however, we must ask why a historian such as Ibn Sa'd with his proto-Sunnite commitments would include reports that seem to undermine the nascent belief in *'adālat al-ṣaḥābah*, which would have given the Shiites of his day justification for their

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<sup>52</sup> This narrative can be situated within the development of the hadith tradition as a competing source of knowledge to the Qur'an. I cannot be certain if Ibn Sa'd believed that a hadith could trump a Qur'anic injunction, but it is clear that these debates were certainly occurring in his time, and he and his colleagues must have been aware of them.

<sup>53</sup> This assumes that inheritance refers to material inheritance and not just knowledge.

repudiation of Abu Bakr. The answer to this question is unclear since we do not know exactly what the theological personality of Ibn Sa'd was; although his proto-Sunni sentiments are evident in his multi-volume compilation of the biographies of the companions and their traditionist successors. It is conceivable that, in the matter of Fadak at least, the *Ṭabaqāt* had not completely succumbed to the influence of Sunnite apologetics and censorship aimed at elevating Muhammad's companions.<sup>54</sup>

To conclude, Mahmoud Ayoub and Tayeb El-Hibri have connected the saga of Fadak with the disputed succession to Muhammad. For El-Hibri, it is inconceivable that these dramatic scenes are aimed at a mere financial dispute.<sup>55</sup> Rather, the saga of Fadak is to be understood as a metaphor for the lands of the Muslim polity which Abu Bakr governed. Fatima's demand for her inheritance was a test and challenge of Abu Bakr's caliphal authority, and it is for this reason that the crafters of the abundant Fadak reports with their different layers of meaning produced multiple moral and legal justifications for the denial of Fatima's inheritance. These justifications include Abu Bakr's fervent desire to follow the practice of the Prophet without compromise and his paternal solicitude for the financial security of Muhammad's family during his reign. For Sunnites, this event in its early 'Abbāsid literary forms reflects the memory of a leader who strove to maintain the consensus and unity (*jamā'ah*) of the nascent Muslim community and thus wisely countered the precarious claims of a confused woman who had not yet pledged allegiance to the new caliph and refused to do so for the rest of her

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<sup>54</sup> Tayeb El-Hibri describes the stripping of political responsibility from the companions as a part of a sweeping Sunnite apologetic or, quoting Humphrey's description of Sayf ibn 'Umar's account of the caliphate of Uthman, "Sunday school history." See: Tayeb El-Hibri, 9.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 60-61. Also see: Mahmoud Ayoub, *The Crisis of Muslim History: Religion and Politics in Early Islam* (Oxford: One World, 2003), 21-22. Also see: Madelung, 49-51.

short life.<sup>56</sup> For the Shiites, the Fadak trope is of paramount importance, functioning, as I have suggested, as an *arché* by giving “putative beginnings” to very strong anti-establishment sentiments.<sup>57</sup>

### 1.3 The Meeting at Saqīfa and its Aftermath

Immediately following the death of Muhammad in 623 C.E., the Madinan Helpers (Anṣār), that is the native population of the town as opposed to the Emigrants (Muhājirūn) from Mecca, gathered at the Saqīfat Banī Sa‘īdah under the leadership of prominent companions and the chief of the Khazraj, Sa‘d b. ‘Ubādah, to nominate a successor to Muhammad from among themselves. In the aftermath of this meeting, the various *muhājirūn* led by Abu Bakr and Umar decided to approach the Anṣār to settle the matter of the succession. Umar at this juncture was informed that the Anṣār had already attempted to ‘pre-empt’ the Muhājirūn by selecting a successor of their own. Abu Bakr and Umar proceeded in a hurried manner to confront the Anṣār and demand the right of the Quraysh to lead the new Muslim polity.<sup>58</sup> After some persuasive words from Abu Bakr and insistence by Umar, the Anṣār agreed to pledge allegiance to Abu Bakr at the Saqīfah.

However, one barrier remained to the *jamā‘ah* (unity) of the Muslims so ardently desired by Abu Bakr and Umar.<sup>59</sup> This obstacle consisted of a group of Muhājirūn,

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<sup>56</sup> Thus some reports in the works of early ‘Abbāsīd historians and hadith scholars describe Fatima’s reaction to Abu Bakr as “*hajarathu*”, i.e. she abandoned him or renounced his leadership. See: Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī. *Fath al-bārī bi-sharḥ saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Riyad: Dār al-Ṭayyibah, 2005), 7:344, hadith 3093.

<sup>57</sup> One such example of Fadak as a trope for anti-establishment sentiments can be seen in an episode in which the seventh Shī‘ī Imām, Mūsā al-Kāẓim responds to Hārūn al-Rashīd’s offer to return Fadak by stipulating that its boundaries include Samarqand, Armenia, North Africa, and Aden. In other words, Fadak came to represent the lands of virtually the entire Muslim empire, and its loss became a metaphor for the usurpation of the rights of the Imams to the caliphate. See: El-Hibri, 357.

<sup>58</sup> See al-Balādhurī as cited in Madeling, 30.

<sup>59</sup> Umar is said to have justified the hurried and aggressive manner in which he procured the Anṣār’s allegiance for Abu Bakr in the following way: “By God, we did not find any case stronger than for the oath

including the likes of Ali and Zubayr, who were not present at the Saqīfah but rather gathered in the house of Fatima and refused to pledge allegiance to Abu Bakr.<sup>60</sup> Umar, according to the account, did not tolerate Ali's obstinacy. He proceeded to the house of Fatima and Ali in a threatening manner with a wick (*fatīla*) in hand.<sup>61</sup> Upon arriving at the door, he was intercepted by Fatima, who berated him: "O son of al-Khaṭṭāb, are you going to burn my door down?" Umar is portrayed as responding in a confident manner, saying: "Yes, this is the strongest of what your father has brought (*dhālika aqwā fi-mā jā'a bihi abūki*)"<sup>62</sup> As a result of the commotion, Ali came out and pledged allegiance to Abu Bakr.<sup>63</sup> Once again, prophetic precedent is introduced to subdue Fatima's anger and

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of allegiance to Abu Bakr. We feared that if we left the people without a pledge of allegiance they might after our departure suddenly make a pledge. We would then have had either to follow them in [a choice] with which we were not pleased or not oppose them, and evil (*fasād*) would have resulted See: Madelung, 31. For the original Arabic, see: al-Ṭabarī, 3:206. Mahmoud Ayoub cites the same passage from al-Ṭabarī, but translates *fasād* as "dissension", which in this case would be more appropriate than Wilfred Madelung's translation. This is because, in the context of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> century (A.H.) proto-Sunnite apologetics and polemics, the justification for Umar and Abu Bakr's seemingly impetuous handling of the Anṣār was precisely to 'maintain' a consensus of the community, which was the key (in their view) to ensuring the salvation and prosperity of the young Muslim community following Muhammad's death. See: Ayoub, 16.

<sup>60</sup> The report describes Ali as delaying in giving the pledge of allegiance- "*qa'ada bay'at abī bakr.*" See: Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashraf* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1987), 585-589. The report is transmitted by Abū Naḍra who passed away during the reign of the second caliph, Umar and, is described as reliable (*thiqah*) by al-Balādhurī's teacher, Ibn Sa'd See: Ibn Sa'd, 7:156. The reliability Abū Naḍra as confirmed by an authority such as Ibn Sa'd would have lent the report a degree of credibility for al-Balādhurī and those who considered Ibn Sa'd to be a historical authority on lives of the prophetic companions.

<sup>61</sup> al-Balādhurī, 585-589.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. Note: According to a similar version found in *al-Imāmah wa-al-siyāsah* of pseudo- Ibn Qutaybah, despite the threat to burn down the house, everyone came out to pledge allegiance except Ali. Ali's excuse was that he would not leave the house until he had compiled the Qur'an (*ajma'a al-qur'an*). See: pseudo- Ibn Qutaybah. *al-Imāmah wa-al-siyāsah* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-A'lamī lil-Maṭbū'āt, 2006), 22-24. The attribution of this work to Ibn Qutaybah has been contested by scholars of Islamic historiography. Shākir Muṣṭafā in his extensive work on Muslim historiography asserts that *al-Imāmah wa al-siyāsah* has been wrongly attributed to the famous 'Abbāsīd-era Sunnite historian and theology, Ibn Qutaybah al-Dīnawarī (d. 270A.H./883 C.E.). He maintains that the text contains information regarding the conquest of Spain and other information which the known authorities (*mashāyikh*) of Ibn Qutaybah have not mentioned nor has Ibn Qutaybah mentioned or alluded to in any of his other historical works. Also, the author seems to be a Mālikī whereas Ibn Qutaybah was a Ḥanafī. Furthermore, there is mention of the city of Marakesh, which was not built until the year 454 A.H., nearly two centuries after Ibn Qutaybah's death. There remains debate as to the dating of this work, as Margoliouth was of the view that it is from the *third* century A.H., while Shākir Muṣṭafā dates it to the mid-fourth century A.H. See: Shākir Muṣṭafā. *al-Tārīkh wa al-mu'arrikhūn* (Beirut: Dār al-'Ilm lil-Malāyīn, 1978), 1: 242. The debate surrounding the

frustration. In this case, Umar defends his actions by invoking the mission of the Prophet, insofar as the fire that he, Umar, was about to light was even stronger and of greater import than the message (I assume regarding hellfire) communicated by Muhammad *via* the Qur'an. Put differently, Umar is comparing the fire which he is about to light with that of the fire of hell which would engulf Fatima and Ali and those gathered with him as a result of their refusal to pledge allegiance and prevent dissent (*fasād*) amongst the Muslims.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, instead of using the term *nabī* (prophet), the reporter intensifies the personal nature of the confrontation by stating: *jā'a bihi abūki* (what your father has brought) instead of *jā'a bihi al-nabī* (what the Prophet has brought).

According to al-Ya'qūbī, the confrontation was not limited to threats. Umar is further said to have conspired with Abu Bakr and a group of other like-minded individuals to attack (*hajamū*) the house of Fatima. According to al-Ya'qūbī's account, Ali decided to come out of the house to confront the mob charging at his door. Umar met him in front of the door, wrestling him to the ground, at which point the mob forcefully enters the house (*dakhalū al-dār*). In the midst of all this commotion, Fatima hurries out, shouting: "By God you will get out, or I will uncover my hair, and I will certainly protest to God."<sup>65</sup> The inclusion of these rather extraordinary details by al-Ya'qūbī should not be surprising in view of his well known Shī'ī sympathies.<sup>66</sup>

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authorship of *al-Imāmah wa-al-siyāsah* is crucial to this discussion for the reason that if an attack on the home of Fatima is included in the work of a prominent proto-Sunnite scholar such as Ibn Qūṭaybah, this would lend the report an important degree of credibility in Sunnite circles as well as further polemical value for Shiites wishing to mine Sunnite sources.

<sup>64</sup> My advisor, Lynda Clarke disagrees with my reading of the text.

<sup>65</sup> Al-Ya'qūbī, 2: 126. The Arabic reads : "wallahi la-takhrājanna aw la-akshifunna shi'rī la-'ajjinna ilā allāh".

<sup>66</sup> See, however, Elton L. Daniel, "al-Ya'qūbī and Shi'ism Reconsidered" in *'Abbasid Studies* ed. James E. Montgomery (Louvain: Peeters Publishers and Department of Oriental Studies, 2004), 209-231. Elton Daniel argues that although al-Ya'qūbī undoubtedly had some Shiite inclinations, Orientalists should not

Thus pseudo-Ibn Qutaḡbah in his version of post-Saqīfah F-R tensions constructs a report which includes pro-Shiite details of an attack on the home of Fatima, while also attempting to present the material in a way that does not cast events in terms of good and evil, but rather conflicting modes of early Islamic piety. The version of pseudo-Ibn Qutaḡbah can be characterized as attempting to effect a compromise between the anti-companion Shiite view and an outright Sunnite-like polemic presentation. In this lengthy account by pseudo-Ibn Qutaḡbah, it is recounted that after repeated attempts to summon Ali to the ‘caliph of the messenger of God’ (Abu Bakr), Umar eventually decided to send a mob to the home of Fatima.<sup>67</sup> Upon hearing their clamouring voices, she began to shout: “O my father, O the messenger of God, what is this that has befallen us after you at the hands of the son of al-Khaṡṡāb (Umar) and son of Abī Quḡḡāfah (Abu Bakr).” The mob outside the door heard the screams and tears of Fatima, which prompted them to disperse with their hearts on the verge of breaking and their livers split [i.e. extremely emotional and sorrowful].<sup>68</sup>

The author of *al-Imāmah wa al-siyāsah* has taken the literary license to paint a picture of a pious first generation of Muslims placed in a very unfortunate situation, in which they find themselves enemies despite sharing a deep seated reverence and spiritual allegiance to their deceased Prophet. Chase Robinson in his lucid work on Islamic historiography describes the writing of Muslim history as taking place in a thoroughly traditionalist culture in which the past was held as a model of Islamic

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dismiss the entire work as a Shiite history of little academic value, for most of the information contained in his history has been judged to be reliable when compared to other sources. In addition to this, al-Ya‘qūbī was not known to have worked in Shiite circles. Even if he did so, to what extent could we describe these circles as being Shiite and according to which reliable academic standard can we define and characterize Shi‘ism of the early third century A.H.?

<sup>67</sup> The reports tend to alternate between *bayt fātimah* and *bayt ‘alī*. While both refer to the same home, it can be deduced that the use of *bayt fātimah* puts emphasis on the role of Fatima in this conflict.

<sup>68</sup> Pseudo-Ibn Qutaḡbah, 23.



piety.<sup>69</sup> Consequently, the motif of mutual sadness, piety and sincerity between Fatima and her foes tells us more about third and fourth century (A.H.) Sunnite religious-historical apologia than the past.<sup>70</sup> To be more specific, reports such as this are reflective of a Sunnite apologetic discourse, that is, by depicting the quarrelling companions as stricken with a mutual sense of grief and regret, the Sunnite historian is able to absolve all parties of direct blame. Notwithstanding the tears shed on both sides, pseudo-Ibn Qutaybah continues his rich literary account describing how Ali was eventually pulled out of his home and threatened with death.<sup>71</sup> However, these threats were to no avail and Ali refused to pledge allegiance.

Following this failed attempt to coerce Ali, Umar and Abu Bakr decide to go to Fatima with the intention of mending the tense situation, recognizing (so the text implies) that they had upset or angered her. After being refused entry by Fatima, they eventually convince Ali to give them an audience with Fatima. Once again, this pious attempt in seeming good faith is met with rejection in the most theatrical manner. It is said that when Umar and Abu Bakr finally entered upon Fatima, she turned her face from them and even neglected to return their greeting of *salām* (peace). Abu Bakr,

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<sup>69</sup> Chase F. Robinson, *Islamic Historiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 92-93.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. Some poignant examples of Sunnite apologia can be discerned from al-Wāqidī's description of all the *ṣahābah* as being Imāms (leaders) in addition to al-Bukhārī's and Ibn Abī Shayba's *faḍā'il* (merits) chapters on the *ṣahābah*. Despite the close to seven *intra-ṣahābah* conflicts which plagued the early Muslim community, al-Bukhārī and other later tradionists were able to mend many otherwise damaged reputations of Prophetic companions by transmitting Prophetic traditions in their praise. It is through this incredible emphasis on *faḍā'il al-ṣahābah* that warring parties are rehabilitated in the eyes of the later Sunnite Muslim community who look to them as beacons of moral and ethical guidance. See: Scott C. Lucas, *Constructive Critics, Hadith Literature and the Formation of Sunnī Islam* (Leiden: Brill Publications, 2004), 255-284. Therefore, the *faḍā'il* tradition amongst the Sunnites can be understood to be a form of apologetics designed to counter any appearance of misdeeds on the part of the *ṣahābah*.

<sup>71</sup> An interesting conversation takes place between Umar and Ali in which Ali rhetorically asks Umar and those gathered with him: "Will you kill the servant of God and brother of the messenger of God ( *akh rasūlallāh*)" to which Umar responds: "As for [ you] being the servant God, yes [in spite of that we shall kill you]; as for you [claiming to be] the brother of the messenger of God, no." In other words, Umar took Ali by surprise in his denial of Ali's brotherhood with Muhammad. See: Pseudo-Ibn Qutaybah, 23.

depicted here as wise and mild-mannered man, begins to plead with Fatima, explaining to her that she is more beloved to him than his own daughter, Aisha, and that he never intended to withhold her rights to the inheritance of her father. Rather, he says, he was compelled to do so due to his unflinching pious commitment to follow the commands of the Prophet stipulating that whatever is left behind of Muhammad's estate is to go to the public treasury. Once again in a fashion similar to the Fadak reports, we are presented with a paternal and sensitive Abu Bakr who is ceaselessly trying to reason with a young and vengeful Fatima. The motif of a sensitive and wise Abu Bakr might have helped to lend this otherwise pro-Shiite report a degree of acceptability in Sunnite circles.

However, it seems that nothing could change the heart of Fatima, for she then goes on to 'emotionally blackmail' Abu Bakr and Umar by demanding that they accept her traditions from the Prophet to be trustworthy.<sup>72</sup> She then quotes the Prophet as saying:

Fatima's satisfaction is my satisfaction, and the anger of Fatima is my anger; whoever loves Fatima, loves me, and whoever pleases Fatima has pleased me, and whoever angers Fatima has angered me.<sup>73</sup>

Abu Bakr and Umar duly confirm the veracity of the Prophetic statement. However, the aggrieved Fatima does not stop at that; she now goes on a tirade, condemning both of them and vowing to complain and testify to God and the Prophet regarding the manner in which they upset her. Abu Bakr then humbly beseeches God to be protected from His anger and the anger of Fatima. This account seems to give credence to both Shiite and

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<sup>72</sup> I have used the expression, 'emotional blackmail' to express what I take to be the intention implied by Fatima's leading question, though for Shiites, Fatima's questioning is likely to be interpreted as astute and politically expedient, considering the difficult situation she was put in.

<sup>73</sup> Pseudo-Ibn Qutaybah, 23.

Sunnite views; Abu Bakr and Umar acknowledge the words of the Prophet, and in doing so treat Fatima with certain degree of reverence. However, Abu Bakr's prayer for protection should not be misconstrued as indicating acquiescence to Fatima's demands; rather, the narrative aims to demonstrate his humility and sobriety as her wise elder. His supplication for protection rhetorically neutralizes Fatima's citation of the "Fatima's satisfaction" hadith.

Thus we see that the narrative has been treated by pseudo-Ibn Qutaybah in a subtle manner to make it more digestible for both proto-Sunnites and proto-Shiites. The account is strategically conditioned by depicting Abu Bakr as speaking wise and conciliatory words, while the crowd is made to express their regret over the unfortunate altercation. Fatima, on the other hand, is not depicted as being malicious (which would be unacceptable for the daughter of the Prophet), but a slightly stubborn and spoiled woman.

The question remains as to how a Sunnite such as pseudo-Ibn Qutaybah could include a damning report of this kind and maintain his Sunnite scholarly credentials. Firstly, by demonstrating the obvious grief of Abu Bakr, the author is able to provide an image of a leader who implemented policies not for his own personal interest, but with the intention of serving God and honouring the memory of the Prophet. Thus, the effort of Abu Bakr is commendable despite the opposition he faced from Fatima and Ali. Secondly, there were at this time degrees of reverence among Sunnis for the companions. Therefore, the Sunnism of pseudo-Ibn Qutaybah would not have been adversely affected by the writing of this kind of history. Thirdly and perhaps most importantly, pseudo-Ibn Qutaybah most certainly did not interpret this conflict with

Fatima to indicate the everlasting damnation of Abu Bakr, but rather, a dispute between two sincere believers where the mild mannered Abu Bakr was forced to contend with angry and rancorous Fatima, and in the midst of this anger she lashed out.<sup>74</sup> Sunnites such as pseudo-Ibn Qutaybah by the late third and fourth century A.H. had numerous Prophetic traditions in praise of Abu Bakr and Umar which could not be discredited by a single ‘misunderstanding’ with Fatima.<sup>75</sup> Both al-Ṭabarī and al-Mas‘ūdī include a report indicating that Abu Bakr regretted the unfortunate course of events following his election at Saqīfah even unto his death. Al-Ṭabarī includes a report on the authority of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf in which Abu Bakr makes the following deathbed confession:

Indeed I do not grieve for anything in this world, except for three things which I did that I wish I had left aside, three things I left aside [yet] wished I had done, and three about which I wished I had asked God’s messenger. As for the things I wish I had left aside, *I wish I had not thrown open the house of Fatima to reveal something, even though they had locked it with hostile intent.*<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> The reason for this is that, the text goes on to laud the accomplishments of Abu Bakr’s caliphate while also giving him the epithet of *al-ṣiddīq*. See: Pseudo-Ibn Qutaybah, 24-28.

<sup>75</sup> Ibn Qutaybah expresses the traditional Sunnī position by describing Fatima’s attitude towards Abu Bakr as the product of a misunderstanding between the two. In this case it was Fatima who was mistaken in *munāzara* (dispute) with Abu Bakr. See: Ibn Qutaybah al-Dinawarī, *Ta’wīl mukhtalaf al-ḥadīth* (‘Ammān: Dār al-Bashīr, 2004), 567.

<sup>76</sup> The Arabic is as follows: “*wadadtu annī lam akshif bayt fātimah ‘an shay’in, wa-in kānū ghallaqūhu ‘alā al-ḥarb.*” The translator of this volume of al-Ṭabarī’s history indicates in a footnote that that there is more to this specific confession of Abu Bakr which seems to be concealed from the reader. The translator does not expand upon what exactly is being concealed, but I would assume that he referring to a conscientious lack of details and censorship on the part of al-Ṭabarī (a Sunnite) regarding Ali’s refusal to pledge allegiance to Abu Bakr that led up to the event of “throwing open the house of Fatima.” See: al-Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī: The Challenge to the Empires tr. by Khalid Yahya Blankinship* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993), 149. For the original Arabic edition see: al-Ṭabarī, 3:430, also see: Abū al-Qāsim Sulaymān ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭabarānī . *al-Mu’jam al-kabīr* (Baghdad: al-Jumhūrīyah al-‘Irāqīyah, Wizārat al-Awqāf, 1984),1:62, and Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih, *al-‘Iqd al-farīd*. (Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Hilāl, 1986), 4:93. For a censored version of the report see: Abu ‘Ubayd al-Salām. *Kitāb al-amwāl*. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Kullīyat al-Azhariyah, 1986), 193-194. The author of *Kitāb al-amwāl* replaces the entire confession regarding the home of Fatima with: “*la urīdu dhikrahā.*” Al-Mas‘ūdī includes a similar report albeit without any chain of transmission since the *Murūj al-dhahab* is a universal history (akin to *Tārīkh al-ya’qūbī*) composed as literature (*adab*). The account reads as: *wadadtu annī lam akun fatashtu bayt fātima wa- dhakara fi dhalika kalāman kathīran- I wish I did not search the house of Fatima, and he (Abu Bakr) recalled that [event] in many words [at length].* See al-Mas‘ūdī, 2:301.

It is apparent from this report that the conflict between Fatima and the companions was a subject of immense importance, to the extent that al-Ṭabarī, al-Mas‘ūdī and other historians include it in the very personal and intimate matters surrounding Abu Bakr’s last moments. It is evident that in the view of several early ‘Abbāsīd-era historians as well as some *muḥaddithūn* (traditionists), the caliphate of Abu Bakr was a period of great test and trial or *fitnah* (my own words) in which the conflict with Fatima figured prominently to the extent that it was at the very top of the dying caliph’s list of regrets. Despite Sunnite efforts to neutralize the “persecution of Fatima” incident and fold it into the tradition, it continued to be extremely sensitive. The incident became the subject of extensive sectarian polemics by the Imāmīyah on the one hand, and the object of actual censorship in some Sunnite and even Shiite scholarly circles on the other. For example, al-Sayyid al-Murtaḍā uses the report cited above as a justification from ‘Sunnite sources’ for his *inkār* (rejection) of Abu Bakr’s moral uprightness.<sup>77</sup> On the Sunnite side, the prominent proto-Sunnite jurist and belletrist Abū ‘Ubayd al-Salām (d. 224/837) removes this confession altogether, simply stating: “*la urīdu dhikrahā*- I do not wish to mention it.”<sup>78</sup> On the other hand, the Shiite historian al-Mas‘ūdī (d. 345/956) relates the entire confession, but not Abu Bakr’s supposed frustration with the opposition he faced from Fatima and Ali, which is replaced with a statement to the effect that Abu Bakr went on to recall the issue at length.<sup>79</sup> There is no

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<sup>77</sup> See al-Sayyid al-Murtaḍā, *al-Shāfi fi al-imāmah* ed. al-Sayyid Fāḍil al-Mīlānī (Tehran: Mu’assasat al-Ṣādiq, 2005), 59-113.

<sup>78</sup> Abū ‘Ubayd al-Salām, *Kitāb al-amwāl*. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Kullīyat al-Azharīyah, 1986), 193-194

<sup>79</sup> There has been much discussion amongst scholars of Islamic historiography regarding how al-Mas‘ūdī’s history should be approached in light of his alleged Shīte sympathies and overall outlook on the writing of history. These concerns have been largely dismissed since al-Mas‘ūdī’s Shīte leanings were mild and a comprehensive reading of his contribution to Islamic history would reveal that his work is not exceedingly sensational in terms of its sectarian rhetoric. For excellent scholarship on the above see: A Azfar Moin. “Partisan Dreams and Prophetic Visions: Shī‘ī Critique in al-Mas‘ūdī’s History of

way to know for certain why al-Mas'ūdī chose to shorten his account; however, being aware of its sensitive nature and that his history is not an atomistic work consisting of disparate *akhbār* but a composite piece of literature, he had the liberty to document events on his own terms without being accused of unfaithfully transmitting historical reports. One reason for this ambiguous rendition of events may have been that al-Mas'ūdī in his function as a historian of the 'Abbāsīd era would have been attached to the notion of a broader Muslim community, and thus may have had, despite his proto-Shiite sympathies, a catholic outlook which caused him to provide a more appeasing account.

To conclude my analysis of historical material pertaining to the Saqīfah, the confrontational demeanour of Umar and to an extent Abu Bakr are justified by their pious and sincere desire to prevent dissension and disunity in the ranks of the Muslims, even if that entailed an attack on the house of Fatima and Ali. Put differently, for Sunnite historians who chose to document and include this first *fitnah* of sorts, the ends had to justify the means. It is for this reason that the report describing Abu Bakr's regret over invading the home of Fatima is followed by a narrative that highlights the unreasonable insistence of Ali, Fatima and their partisans on withholding the pledge of allegiance and thus stoking dissent in the community.

### Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to shed light on the place of Fatima in early Muslim historiography. I have not treated the primary sources as repositories of historical facts, but as the product of a highly contested Muslim memory. I demonstrate

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The 'Abbāsīds" *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 127.4 (2007), 415-427, and Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic Historical thought in the classical period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 131-136.

certain literary features and rhetorical tropes by analysing the various texts. Ibn Sa'd's *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, the earliest surviving source of Islamic history which deals with the F-R conflict, clearly portrays it as a serious test of Abu Bakr's political and religious wisdom. Although Ibn Sa'd may be described as a proto-Sunnite, the proto-Shiite character of the account is intact, as if sectarian conflict had not yet made nuanced depictions of the personalities very problematic. The majority of the reports, aside from that of Ja'far, portray Abu Bakr as a wise leader whose only intention was to preserve the memory and *sunnah* of Muhammad. However, numerous other reports by Ibn Sa'd along with those of his student al-Balādhurī betray their Sunnite commitments in the poor way they reflect upon Fatima and Ali. The negative portrayal is, necessarily, very subtle and artful, and a careful reading of the texts is required to see its mechanisms and suggestions. One key "mechanism" is a highly gendered treatment of Fatima as a weak female who seems unsure of her own claims. We will see in the next chapter how femaleness is turned to quite a different purpose by Shiites.

It becomes readily apparent that early Muslim historiographers present the events of Fadak and Saqīfah as key turning points in Hāshimite-caliphal relations. In the case of Saqīfah and its dramatic aftermath, it is clear that the vast majority of second and third century A.H. Muslim historians and belletrists were of the belief that a conflict of some sort unfolded in and around the home of Fatima and Ali. However, these historical materials can be used to justify either Shiite rejection of prominent *ṣahābah* or Sunnite praise of Abu Bakr as a courageous and steadfast leader who guided the Muslims through a tumultuous time. Contrary to the assertion of Veccia Vaglieri, the preservation of this early 'Abbāsīd-era memory is indicative of Fatima's immense

political-religious importance in the chaotic succession to Muhammad and turbulent caliphate of Abu Bakr.



## Ch.2 Fatima as a Motif of Suffering and Contention in Shiite Tradition

*In launching the venture of Islam, the events of the first generation after Muhammad were almost as formative as those of Muhammad's own time. It is not accidental that later Muslims have identified themselves in terms of these events and of the factions that grew out of them. They have interpreted the whole of history in symbolism derived from them, and have made the interpretation of those events and of the leading personalities in them the very test of religious allegiance.-Marshall Hodgson*

### 2.1 Sectarianism in Shiite Hadith and the Fatima-Rāshidūn Conflict

This chapter continues with the theme of the previous chapter, that is depictions of the F-R conflict in early Islamic thought. However, in this case the source material is largely limited to Shiite hadith texts.<sup>80</sup> In contrast to the accounts of *akhbārī* historians, the picture given of the F-R conflict in this literature is unambivalent. The reporters and compilers of the disparate texts that comprise the hadith had no concern whatsoever for the 'righteous' character of the prophetic companions and certainly did not attempt to defend them. In fact, the hadith reports preserved in the Shiite texts make Fatima, her husband Ali and their children manifestations of celestial light (*nūr*), with Abu Bakr, Umar and their supporters symbolizing infernal darkness (*ẓulm*).<sup>81</sup> The F-R conflict becomes part of a cosmic battle between good and evil.

The Shiites (especially Ismailis and Twelvers) believe that a manifest betrayal of the divine covenant occurred at the Saqīfah, fuelling Shiite distrust of the Companions and, in their view, invalidating the Prophetic knowledge transmitted by them that became crucial to the Sunni tradition. The implications of this sweeping denunciation of prominent companions, including some wives of the Prophet such as Aisha, the

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<sup>80</sup> Most sources used in this chapter are of Twelver-Imāmī provenance. I will, however, be making some use of Ismaili hadith attributed to al-Bāqir and al-Ṣādiq that are commonly accepted by both sects. Throughout this chapter when I use the terms Shī'ī, Shiite or Imāmī, unless otherwise noted, I will be referring to the Twelver Shiites also known as the Imāmīyah.

<sup>81</sup> Amir Moezzi in his article on electionism in early Shī'ī hadith describes this stark dualistic attitude as reflective of a "mystical anthropology" in which God created human beings either from a celestial or infernal substance, so that good and evil are ontologically different. See Amir Moezzi, "Only the Man of God is Human" in *Shi'ism* ed. Etan Kohlberg (Burlington: Asghate, 2003), 17-39.

daughter of Abu Bakr, and Hafsa, the daughter of ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, are very large. It indicates rejection of Sunni scholarly consensus (*ijmā’*) regarding the piety and moral uprightness of the first two caliphs and their supporters, and therefore of Sunnite Islam altogether since the Sunnites rely on the precedent set by the companions and especially Abu Bakr and Umar.<sup>82</sup> It is this very rejection of the companions which is said by heresiographers and Sunnite scholars alike to constitute “rejection (*rafḍ*)”, with those who take part in it called “rejectors (*rawāfiḍ*)”.<sup>83</sup> This pejorative name was given to numerous prominent associates of the fifth and sixth Shī‘ī Imams, Muḥammad al-Bāqir and Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq.<sup>84</sup> Reporters (*ruwāt*) and then compilers of the later Shiite hadith works were influenced by a growing Shī‘ī “sectarian particularism”<sup>85</sup> of the second *hijrī* century (8<sup>th</sup> century C.E.), which resulted in the circulation of hadith reports detailing fantastic, quasi-divine attributes of the Imāms and the grave faults of (the Prophet’s) companions. The vilification of companions became commonplace amongst Shiite

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<sup>82</sup> The inspiration for this line of analysis was found in Denise Spellberg’s excellent analysis of the legacy of Aisha in Sunni and Shiite literature. See: D.A. Spellberg, *Politics, Gender, and the Islamic Past: The Legacy of ‘Aisha bint Abi Bakr* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 11. Etan Kohlberg describes this virulent attitude towards the companions as “hallmark of radical Imāmī Shi‘ism” See: Etan Kohlberg, “Some Imāmī Shī‘ī Views on the Ṣahāba” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 5, 1984. 143-175.

<sup>83</sup> Watt translated the term “desertion”, that is, the desertion of the prophetic practice and precedent as ‘preserved’ by the companions. See: W Montgomery Watt, “The Rafidites: A Preliminary Study,” *Oriens* 16 (1963):116-119.

<sup>84</sup> E. Kohlberg, “al- Rāfiḍa or al- Rawāfiḍ” *EI*. Note that, while the term *rāfiḍah* tended to be understood in a pejorative fashion, the Shiites took ownership of it to signify their embattled minority status, as the few possessing faith in the midst of widespread disbelief (*kufḥ*). Some Shiite traditions trace the ‘original’ and praiseworthy meaning of this term to the Prophet Noah. See: Ibid, and Etan Kohlberg, “The Term Rāfiḍa in Imāmī Shī‘ī Usage,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 4 (1979), pp. 677-679.

<sup>85</sup> I have made use of the term “sectarian particularism” employed by Maria Dakake. Dakake argues that by the late Umayyad period, the Shiites had already developed the notion of *walāyah* as constituting uncompromising allegiance to the infallible Imam, and it was this *walāyah* which determined an individual’s membership in the Shiite religious community in addition to their eternal salvation. She describes this tendency as a strand of “sectarian particularism.” which differentiated the Shiites from their Kūfan- Murji‘ite and Sunnite counterparts. See: *The Charismatic Community: Shi‘ite Identity in Early Islam* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2007), 137-139. Also see: Hossein Modarressi, *Tradition and Survival v.1.* (Oxford: Oneworld Press, 2003), 39-41.

groups known as *ghulāt* (extremists) originating during the Imamates of al-Bāqir and al-Ṣādiq.

I will analyze the F-R conflict as presented in hadith literature within the context of the various strands of sectarianism developing in the second and third *hijrī* centuries (8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries C.E.). I will also analyze the various chains of transmission attached to the hadith reports from the perspective of the internal Shīʿī hadith discourse, that is with a view to understanding how the tradition in which the F-R conflict is addressed may have been received or contested by Imāmī scholars. Through this approach, I hope to gain understanding of the multiple ways in which the Imāmīyah viewed the F-R conflict as a part of their religious tradition.<sup>86</sup> I will also as in the previous chapter examine the gendering of Fatima in her conflict with the companions, where she appears as a powerful yet downtrodden woman.

This chapter addresses three “flashpoints” in the F-R conflict recounted in Shiite hadith tradition: the aftermath of Saqīfah, Fatima’s speech regarding Fadak, and the circumstances surrounding her last moments and burial. I would like to note again at this juncture that my purpose is not to discover a “kernel of truth” in the midst of these conflicting reports, but rather to articulate a nuanced understanding of a web of often contradictory narratives, and through this throw light on the evolution of Shiite religious identity.

To this date, there have been few substantial works devoted to Shiite hadith and its reception.<sup>87</sup> Etan Kohlberg contends in his study on early Shiite hadith that by the time of al-Bāqir (d.114/733) and al-Ṣādiq (d.148/765), the Shiites began recording

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<sup>86</sup> My methodology is partly informed by Maria Dakake; see for example Dakake, 111, 173-174.

<sup>87</sup> For instance, no monograph has been devoted to al-Kulaynī’s *al-Kāfī* or the books of tradition compiled by al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq (Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī).

traditions on pieces of parchment or notebooks termed “basics” or *uṣūl*.<sup>88</sup> By the late ninth century C.E. and continuing until the time of al-Shaykh al-Ṭūsī (d.460/1067), they felt compelled to codify their hadith traditions, often in the form of multi-volume works, due to the occultation of their Twelfth Imam, since in his absence, they were faced with the need to cement a developing orthodoxy and orthopraxy while no longer having a living reference and source of absolute authority

I wish to argue that the hadith literature as found in most Shiite compendiums is concerned with the private eye, in contrast to the writings of the historians, which reflect the public eye. The private eye of Shiite hadith constitutes individual and communally-influenced notions of piety circulating exclusively within the community and meant to build and reinforce its own worldview. The hadiths are reflective of a rich and eclectic cultural memory of “original myths” aimed at constructing and defining an elite religious identity *vis-à-vis* ‘the other’.<sup>89</sup> This tradition, along with its militantly pious religious electionism, gave Shiites hope and confidence and constituted a potent weapon in the face of Sunnite state sponsored repression.<sup>90</sup>

## 2.2 Fatima as a Politician and Leader: The Saga of Fadak

The Shiite hadith sources contain numerous details of the F-R drama, but do not offer a consistent or cohesive presentation. Nevertheless, a general picture of the events and the characters of the chief personalities come out clearly. The caricature of

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<sup>88</sup> The prominent 10<sup>th</sup> century theologian and jurist al-Shaykh al-Mufīd declared that from the time of Ali to the 11<sup>th</sup> Imam, al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī, the Imāmīs produced four hundred *uṣūl* works. This cannot be an exact number, but it does indicate that early Shiite compilers of hadith such as al-Kulaynī (d.329/941) relied at least partially on such notebooks for their compilations. For an in-depth discussion, see: Etan Kohlberg, “Al-uṣūl al-arba‘umī‘a.” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 10 (1987):128-166.

<sup>89</sup> See: Rainer Brunner, “The Role of Ḥadīth as Cultural Memory in Shī‘ī History” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 30 (2005), 326.

<sup>90</sup> This was particularly the case for those formative traditionists (*muḥaddithūn*) based in Qum who experienced an immense amount of external polemical pressure. See: Dakake, 173.

Fatima and the saga of Fadak in Shiite tradition has little in common with that of the largely Sunnite-inspired histories treated in chapter one. As discussed there, the early Muslim histories and other contemporary Sunnite sources such as the *Ṣaḥīḥ* hadith collection of al-Bukhārī (d.256/870) depict Fatima as weak, emotionally unstable and simple-minded. These traits were skillfully linked to her femaleness, as demonstrated in chapter one. In the story of Fadak as presented in the Shiite hadith, Fatima is depicted, in stark contrast, as a brilliant, eloquent Muslim woman who does not hesitate to confront powerful males and demand her rights in the most forceful and compelling manner. It would appear that the Sunnite and Shiite imaginations are, in the words of Scott C. Lucas, “irreconcilable historiographies.”<sup>91</sup>

The Shiite version of Fadak follows lines similar to those of the Sunnite version, insofar as Abu Bakr denies Fatima her inheritance based on his belief that he had heard Muhammad state that prophets do not leave behind inheritance, but rather their wealth is to be transferred to the public treasury. However, the hadith contains an emphatic protest by Fatima, known as *Khuṭbat al-Zahrā’* (the speech of al-Zahrā’) or *Kalām Fāṭimah* (the words of Fatima) not found in the histories.<sup>92</sup>

There are at least four different versions of this speech, of varying lengths. The earliest known rendition is in Ibn Abī Ṭayfūr’s (d.279/893) *Balāghāt al-nisā’* (Eloquent Sayings of Women).<sup>93</sup> The text provided by Ibn Abī Ṭayfūr is made up, he says, of two narratives, the first reported by Zayd ibn ‘Alī, a companion of the tenth Shiite Imam al-

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<sup>91</sup> Scott C. Lucas, *Constructive Critics*, 221.

<sup>92</sup> The one historian to have included it is the little known Abū Bakr al-Jawharī in his lost *Kitāb al-saqīfah* as found in Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, 16:344-346.

<sup>93</sup> Ibn Abī Ṭayfūr was a prolific belletrist and historian. He does not seem to have been linked with the caliphs in Baghdad where he largely worked, and it is difficult to determine his sectarian orientation. See: Shawkat Toowara, *Ibn Abī Ṭayfūr and Arabic Writerly Culture* (Oxford: Routledge Curzon, 2005), 1-6.

Hādī (d. 254/868), and the second, more elaborate version received through an Alid chain of transmission from Fatima’s daughter, Zaynab bint ‘Alī. The second source is the *Shāfi fi al-imāmah*, a work of dialectic theology by the famous 5<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century Imāmī scholar al-Sayyid al-Murtaḍā. This version is very short and has a complete Sunnite chain of transmission affixed to it; although it should be noted that al-Murtaḍā makes mention of a much longer and “trustworthy” version transmitted by “Ibn Abī Ṭāhir”, also known as Ibn Abī Ṭayfūr.<sup>94</sup> The third source for the speech of Fatima is Abū Bakr al-Jawharī’s (d.323 A.H.) *Kitāb al-saqīfah* as found in the 7<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> century commentary on the *Nahj al-balāghah* by Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd (d. 656/1258).<sup>95</sup> Lastly, the lengthiest and most elaborate version can be found, with a Ḥasanid chain of transmission, in the 6<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century Shiite hadith text, *al-Iḥtijāj*.<sup>96</sup>

Thus the speech was well known among Shiites by at least the late second or early third century of the Hijrah, that is eighth to ninth centuries C.E. Ibn Abī Ṭayfūr includes a preamble to the oration in which he states that disagreement exists amongst Alids and others (presumably Sunnites) regarding the attribution of this “*kalām*” to the daughter of the Prophet; he also says that Sunnites allege that it was the invented composition (*maṣnū‘*) of the traditionist and belletrist Abū ‘Aynā’ (d.282/896).<sup>97</sup> Despite this attribution, the Alid Abū al-Ḥusayn Zayd ibn ‘Alī insists in his conversation with

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<sup>94</sup> Al-Murtaḍā, *al-Shāfi fi al-imāmah*, 4:76.

<sup>95</sup> For biographical details regarding al-Jawharī, see: chapter one, footnote 25, and 31.

<sup>96</sup> This version is reported by a son of al-Ḥasan al-Muthannā , ‘Abdullāh ibn al-Ḥasan ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Abī Ṭālib. Al-Kashshī lists him among the prominent companions of al-Bāqir and al-Ṣādiq, and the Imāmīyah describe him as a direct descendent and son of Fatima in order to emphasize his Alid credentials. See: Abū al-Qāsim al-Khū‘ī, *Mu‘jam rijāl al-ḥadīth* (Beirut: Dār al-Zahrā’, 1983) 10: 159.

<sup>97</sup> A rather praiseworthy accusation leveled at Abū ‘Aynā’ where Ibn Abī Ṭayfūr explains that the attribution was due to the speech’s impeccable eloquence and structure (which Abū ‘Aynā’ was known for); see Ibn Abī Ṭayfūr, *Balāghāt al-nisā’* (Qum: Sharīf al-Raḍī Publications, n.d), 23. Abū ‘Aynā’ has been described as a prolific poet, writer, and traditionist by his contemporaries. For extensive biographical details on this individual, see: Toowara, 112-117.

Ibn Abī Ṭayfūr that this speech of Fatima is well known amongst the descendants of Ali, to the extent that it is commonly known, in the view of Abū al-Ḥusayn, to have been transmitted orally from generation to generation. Therefore, it can be concluded that the speech of Fatima was an important part of Shiite memory that was commonly transmitted amongst the various Alids, including in one version with a chain of transmission originating from al-Bāqir himself.<sup>98</sup>

### The Speech of Fatima

Abū al-Ḥusayn as well as ‘Abdullāh ibn al-Ḥasan (with their transmitters) say that when news reached Fatima that Abu Bakr had determined that he would not grant her Fadak, she (immediately) draped her *khimār* (a kind of scarf referred to in the Quran) over her head and went with a group of her female servants and family members to the mosque of Madina, striding in her typical way which was said to resemble that of the Prophet, and with her long robe dragging.<sup>99</sup> She came upon Abu Bakr whilst the mosque was filled with Meccan Emigrants and Madinan Helpers and proceeded behind a white curtain which served as a barrier of sorts between the ladies

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<sup>98</sup> Abū al-Ḥusayn Zayd ibn ‘Alī not only insists that the oration is well known amongst the learned (*mashāyikh*) of the family of Abū Ṭālib, but he also asserts (according to Ibn Abī Ṭayfūr) that it would have been included in Sunnite collections “had it not been for their enmity towards us. In this case, Abū al-Ḥusayn points to Sunnite scholars who report the words of ‘Ā’ishah at the death of her father, yet make no mention of Fāṭimah’s oration, despite her words being “most marvellous” (*a ‘jab*), see: Ibn Abī Ṭayfūr, 24. For the chain of transmission ending with al-Bāqir see: Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, 16:347. One wonders why al-Jawharī and Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, both Sunnite scholars, included this highly controversial speech. Perhaps they adhered to a liberal form of proto-Sunnism that would be able to accommodate known Shiite transmitters or at least those with questionable proto-Sunnite credentials such as Jābir al-Ju‘fī. See: *ibid*.

<sup>99</sup> I will be citing primarily from Ibn Abī Ṭayfūr and al-Jawharhī’s versions, which are nearly identical. However, I will also make use of the edition found in *al-Iḥtijāj*. See: Ibn Abī Ṭayfūr, 24; Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, 16:347 and Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī al-Ṭabrisī, *al-Iḥtijāj* ed. Muḥammad Mahdī Khirsān (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-‘lamī lil-Maṭbū‘āt, 2000), 1: 97.

and men.<sup>100</sup> Fatima now begins to cry and moan, making the people in the mosque cry as well; she then waits for the crowd to settle down before beginning her speech.<sup>101</sup>

This dramatic, emotional prelude to Fatima's address is clearly aimed at conveying the seriousness of the matter at hand. The reporter attempts to endow Fatima with a Prophetic aura by vividly describing her as walking in a manner reminiscent of Muhammad. Furthermore, the report does not describe her gait as resembling that of "her father" but uses the expression "the walking of the messenger of God". The motif is of grace and authority akin to the manner of the Prophet. One imagines the crowd of men as being admiring and awe-struck before a powerful and authoritative woman who, according to this report, also manifests her exceptional piety as a female by protecting herself from the gaze of her male audience. The scene is further intensified when the 'powerful' Fatima begins to cry and moan, moving grown men - most of whom were much senior to her - to tears. The tears of Fatima in this case are not to be regarded as the 'ordinary' weeping or moaning of an average woman in Madina, but rather infused with 'pious authenticity'. It is this pious authenticity which allows the men to recognize Fatima's tears as exceptional and requiring acknowledgement.

The speech then begins. Fatima praises God and the Prophet, bringing the crowd to tears once again. The version from Abū al-Ḥusayn goes on to describe Fatima accusing the Muslims of reverting to the pre-Islamic period of ignorance (*al-jāhiliyah*) and insisting that her right to inherit from her father is found in the Book (the Qur'an). Those who deny this right of hers, she says, should remember that their leader is

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<sup>100</sup> See: Ibn Abī Ṭayfūr, 24. Only Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, 16:345 and al-Ṭabrisī, 1:98 mention the curtain.

<sup>101</sup> See: Ibn Abī Ṭayfūr, 24, and al-Jawharī, 16:345. Note: I am paraphrasing and summarizing the original Arabic text unless otherwise indicated by the use of quotation marks.



Muhammad; obedience is due to him and the resurrection is a promise. Fatima is in effect warning the people that they will regret the denial of her rights when they are faced with the punishment of God in the hereafter.<sup>102</sup>

I will now turn to the much lengthier versions attributed to Zaynab bint ‘Alī and ‘Abdullāh ibn al-Ḥasan. These versions begin much in the same manner, although with much more extensive praise of God and the Prophet in which Fatima elucidates the nature of God’s attributes and function of prophethood. Put differently, the preamble consists of a brief but detailed exposition of certain elements of Islamic theology and ritual practice.<sup>103</sup> Fatima is depicted as appealing to the common religiosity of the early Muslims; and she also establishes intellectual authority before claiming her inheritance. Once again, we see a confident, eloquent and powerful woman. We understand that these attributes are not those of an ordinary woman, but rather derive from her intimate relationship with her father and resemblance to him.

Towards the end of Fatima’s exposition, just prior to her protest over the inheritance, she refers to the ontological status of her family, declaring: “Obedience to us constitutes order, and our Imamate is a protection from division, and love of us is a pride for Islam...”<sup>104</sup> This statement of Imāmī theology is the most explicitly Shiite element of the speech. The pronoun “we” as expressed in *ṭā’atunā* (our obedience) functions in such a way as to include Fatima as person to whom Muslims should also obey and follow. Therefore according to this statement, Fatima is a part of the

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<sup>102</sup> Ibn Abi Ṭayfūr, 24, and al-Jawharī, 16:345.

<sup>103</sup> For instance, she explains the testimony of faith (there is no god but God) to be a phrase the *ta’wīl* (interpretation and understanding) of which is encapsulated in the act of sincerity before God (*al-ikhḷāṣ*), this formula being sure to reach (penetrate) hearts and minds. See: Ibn Abī al-Ṭayfūr, 27.

<sup>104</sup> The Arabic reads as follows: *ṭā’atunā niẓāman wa imāmatunā amnan min al-firqaḥ wa ḥubbunā ‘izzan lil-islām.*”, Ibid., 28. This is one of the few statements not found in al-Jawharī’s text.

Imamate. For historians of Islamic thought, the statement is an obvious retrojection of second and third century A.H. (8/9<sup>th</sup> century C.E.) Shiite conceptions of the Imamate. It would have been an ideal theological *arché*, braiding as it does the essential elements of obedience (*tā'ah*), religious-political leadership (*imāmah*), and love (*ḥubb*) in one formula. The formula and its attribution to Fatima are of great significance. Firstly, by using the word “obedience”, it is alleged that Fatima explicitly denied the caliphal authority of Abu Bakr, using a Qur’anic term that has great resonance.<sup>105</sup> Accordingly, any hesitation or refusal to heed Fatima’s demands would constitute an act of disobedience and disunity, as well as enmity towards the family of the Prophet, obedience and love of whom constitutes salvation. In the context of third-century Baghdad, a statement such as this is an outright denunciation of the Sunnite consensus. The speech of Fatima included in this version of the saga of Fadak becomes a platform not only for polemics, but expression of the doctrine of the Imamate.

Fatima then goes on to introduce herself as Fatima and Muhammad as her father, and states: “Whatever I say, its first and last are the same (i.e. there is no contradiction); whatever I say, I do not say mistakenly, and I do not do what I do while exceeding the proper limits.”<sup>106</sup> She then supports her claim to the inheritance with a number of verses from the Qur’an, such as 27:16, which states that Solomon inherited from David.<sup>107</sup> Once again, Fatima uses scripture as a structural support for her argument, rather than in an allusive or “paraphrastic fashion” which according to John

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<sup>105</sup> The Qur’an uses the term “obedience” or lack thereof with reference to God and /or Prophet nearly thirty times as a marker of belief and or unbelief. For example see: Qur’an, 4:13, 24:25, 3:32, and 8:46.

<sup>106</sup> The Arabic reads as follows: “*aqūlu ‘awdan wa badwan, wa lā aqūlu mā aqūlu ghalāṭan wa-lā afa’alu mā af’alu shaṭaṭan.*” Ibn Abī Ṭayfūr’s version ends at “*badwan*” (Ibn Abī al-Ṭayfūr, 29); however, al-Jawharī’s and al-Ṭabrisī’s versions include the entire statement. See: Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, 16:346, and al-Ṭabrisī, 1:100.

<sup>107</sup> As discussed in chapter one, Ibn Sa’d includes a report in which Ali uses the same Qur’anic references in his defence of Fatima’s claim. See: chapter one, footnote 41. Fatima also cites 19:6, 8:75, and 33:6.

Wansbrough has a subdued rhetorical effect.<sup>108</sup> The selective use of scripture here, as suggested by Wansbrough, has the effect of “*elevatio/anagoge*” in which there is a transfer of action from “human agency” to “divine agency.”<sup>109</sup>

Fatima then chastises Abu Bakr and his supporters for denying her right (*ḥaqq*) and inheritance in violation of the Qur’an and Prophetic precedent, unless it can be asserted (she says) that she and her father were of two different religions, in which case she would not inherit from him since a non-Muslim woman cannot inherit from a Muslim male. This rhetorical question is aimed at belittling Abu Bakr. In fact, Fatima goes so far as to sarcastically accuse her opponents of claiming that God has bestowed upon them evidence (regarding the denial of her inheritance) withheld even from the Prophet and implying that they believe their knowledge of the specific and general verses of the Qur’an to be greater than his.<sup>110</sup> Fatima concludes by stating the following: “Shall my inheritance be wrested from me in a tyrannical and oppressive manner? For soon, those who commit injustice will find out what they return to!”<sup>111</sup> Thus she accuses Abu Bakr, Umar, and others among the Meccan Emigrants of committing one the greatest acts of disobedience towards God, namely injustice (*ẓulm*). It is also remarkable how the text applies hostile Qur’anic verses to Fatima’s Muslim opponents that were originally directed at the polytheists of Mecca. It appears that in the view of those Alids

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<sup>108</sup> I have made use of John Wansborough’s typology regarding the midrashic style of Islamic salvation history and tradition. John Wansborough, *The Sectarian Milieu* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2006), 3.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> Ibn Abī Ṭayfūr, 29. The Arabic is as follows: “*la ‘lakum a‘lamu bi-khuṣūs al-qur’ān wa- ‘umūmihi min al-nabī...*” The version preserved by al-Ṭabrisī states: *min al-nabī wa ibn ‘ammī* (my cousin), that is her husband Ali and the first Imam of the Shiites. It is not surprising to see this crucial addition in a highly dogmatic Shiite text such as *al-Iḥtijāj*. In the report transmitted by Abū al-Ḥusayn, Fatima follows up her citation of the Qur’anic verses by exclaiming: “O Ibn Abī Quhāfa (Abu Bakr), you have brought forth a great falsehood (*qad ji’ta bi-shay’in farīyan*), have you intentionally left the book of God and thrown it behind your backs?” See: Ibn Abī Ṭayfūr, 25 and al-Ṭabrisī, 2:102.

<sup>111</sup> Ibn Abī Ṭayfūr, 29. The last phrase beginning with “...and soon those who commit injustice...” is a direct reference to Qur’an, 26:227.

who transmitted or constructed this speech, the tyranny of the Meccan polytheists had been simply replaced with the injustice and tyranny of Abu Bakr and his supporters. One senses the Shiite motif of a sacred history beset with betrayal and despotism at every turn.

Fatima now turns her attention to the Madinan helpers (the Anṣār). She begins by extolling their position in the nascent Muslim community by describing them as “the people of pride and support for the faith and the fortress of Islam...”<sup>112</sup> She then goes on to chastise them, exclaiming: “What is this shortcoming concerning my right and slumber (lack of action) in the face of injustice done to me?”<sup>113</sup> By extending a certain amount of praise towards the Anṣār, she is attempting to assure them of her gratitude and that there remains a window of hope regarding their salvation. However, by extending her criticisms beyond the Meccan Emigrants (Muhājirūn), she also implicates the entire Madinan community in a betrayal of cosmic proportions. She further emphasizes this trope by quoting the Prophet as saying that “an individual is safeguarded in his offspring (*al-mar’ yuḥfiẓu fi wuldihi*)”, then on the heels of this Prophetic exhortation, she accuses them of quick failure (in fulfilment of their covenant with the Prophet).<sup>114</sup> Once again, the recurring theme of disloyalty and authority is employed. By not rising up to assist her, the Anṣār have failed to honour the memory of the Prophet by respecting his daughter’s wishes. As a result, they have

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<sup>112</sup> See: Ibn Abī Ṭayfūr, 29.

<sup>113</sup> Arabic is reads as follows: “*mā hadhihi al-ghamīza fi ḥaqqī wa al-sinnat ‘an ẓalāmati*” See: Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid. Note: al-Ṭabrisī’s version translation as the following: “So soon you have deviated and so fast you have ignored while you have the power [to help] in what I am trying and strength for what I am seeking...” See: al-Ṭabrisī, 1:103. The crucial difference in comparison to the Ibn Abī Ṭayfūr version (transmitted from Zaynab bint ‘Alī) is that Fatima according to this much later Shiite report pleads in a seemingly convincing manner for the assistance of the Anṣār against Abu Bakr and those supporting his leadership.

profaned the sacred memory of the Prophet which lives on in through his daughter. She then quotes another ominous verse from the Qur'an:

Muhammad is but a messenger; messengers have passed before him. So if he dies or is slain, will you turn back (*in qalabtum alā a'qābikum*)? Anyone who turns back on his heels will not harm God in the least and soon God will reward the grateful.<sup>115</sup>

Quotation of this verse not only implies that the Anṣār are cowards, but clearly says that by ignoring her demands for justice, (which seemingly include Fadak and the caliphate) they have committed an act of treason and apostasy as well as having 'turned their backs' on the Prophet. The theme of cowardice is continued as Fatima taunts the Anṣār by describing them as powerful men who have been divinely chosen by God to be the helpers of Muhammad and the *ahl al-bayt* while possessing the weapons, numbers and means to physically come to her aide. The version of the speech transmitted by Abū al-Ḥusayn (companion of the tenth Shi'i Imam and contemporary of Ibn Abī Ṭayfūr) as found in *Balāghāt al-Nisā'* does not provide further details pertinent to the objective of this study. However, I shall continue with the lengthier version in *al-Ihtijāj* (an early 6<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> century source) attributed to the great grandson ('Abdullāh ibn Ḥasan) of the second Shiite Imam, al-Ḥasan, the son of Ali and Fatima.

In this alternate version, Fatima continues to taunt the Anṣār by posing a series of rhetorical questions such as: "(Have) you committed polytheism after (having) faith?" or "Do you fear them, for God is most deserving for you to fear if you are believers?"<sup>116</sup> As the speech progresses, it seems that Fatima's statements grow starker and more pointed. Rather than alluding to the sin of polytheism, she accuses them of

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<sup>115</sup> Ibn Abī Ṭayfūr, 30; Qur'an, 3:144.

<sup>116</sup> "wa ashraktum ba'da al-īmān?...atakshūnahum fallāhu aḥaqqā an takshūhu in kuntum mu'minīn..." See: al-Ṭabriṣī, 1:103.

apostasy and treason, in a way that does not require them to read between the lines. She then accuses them of cowardice in the hope they will resist the bullying of the Muhājirūn - referring to the manner in which they were compelled by Umar to pledge allegiance to Abu Bakr at Saqīfah. The statement draws on the ill feelings held by the Anṣār towards the Muhājirūn. Consistent with the unmistakable Shiite polemical tenor of the speech (as found in *al-Iḥtijāj*), Fatima does not 'request' the Anṣār to come to her aid, but declares in no uncertain terms that fulfilling the right (*ḥaqq*) of God entails submitting to her demands. Therefore from a Shiite point of view, it is implied that since God has bestowed this right upon them *via* the Prophet, they (her household) are in every position to dictate the terms and conditions of surrender. Furthermore, immediately prior to the series of rhetorical inquiries, she tells the Anṣār: "We order you, yet you conspire (*na'marukum fa-ta'tamirūn*)."<sup>117</sup> While the Shiites do not believe Fatima held the office of the Imamate, in this text she clearly possesses enough authority to speak on behalf of her husband and her household. Her infallibility (*iṣmah*) may be a factor here.

Abu Bakr then responds to Fatima by first praising her, as is commonly related in the historical sources, but ending emphatically, with the famous Prophetic statement, "Prophets do not bequeath..."<sup>118</sup> However, there are peculiar details contained in Abu Bakr's reply which are not found in the historical sources. Firstly he claims that the Muslims have a consensus on this matter (*ijmā' min al-muslimīn*) and that he is not alone in believing that prophets do not bequeath. He even goes on to say that he is not being high-handed in his viewpoint and pledges to put his personal wealth at

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<sup>117</sup> al-Ṭabrisī, 1:103.

<sup>118</sup> al-Ṭabrisī, 1:104.

her disposal because she is the leader of the women (*sayyidat al-nisā'*) in her father's community (*ummah*).<sup>119</sup> Therefore, to paraphrase Abu Bakr's reply; 'Our decision to not grant you Fadak is not to be misconstrued as a rejection of your status in the community.'<sup>120</sup>

Fatima responds again by quoting the relevant Qur'anic verses, declaring that by Abu Bakr insisting on the veracity of the claim that prophets do not bequeath, he is implying that Muhammad abandoned and opposed (*mukhālifan*) the dictates of revelation. In Fatima's view, to even imply such a thing is an act of treason (*ghadr*).<sup>121</sup> Once again, this dramatic exchange of words is reflective of a much later intellectual tension which arose between the functionality and application of consensus (*ijmā'*) both amongst the various proto-Sunnite groups and the Shiites themselves. The overt Shiite sectarianism expressed in al-Ṭabrisī's *al-Iḥtijāj* can be summed up in the following manner: the only interpretation worthy of consideration is that which originated from Fatima, which in this case entailed usage of the Qur'an. The implication is that Abu Bakr and the companions could claim to have heard any number of traditions from the Prophet, but every single one would have been rendered null and void if it conflicted with the divinely inspired knowledge of Fatima and her household.

Abu Bakr now apologetically responds, using traditional Shiite language, to Fatima by describing her as a "repository of wisdom" (*ma'din al-ḥikmah*), "pillar of religion", and "epitome of proof" (*ayn al-ḥujjah*), i.e. for the existence of God. He finally concedes her Qur'anic arguments and insists that he has been compelled by the Muslims to take a position of leadership. The motive behind the construction of this

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

report is to portray the caliph as weak and speechless when confronted with Fatima's overwhelming eloquence and knowledge of the Qur'an. As demonstrated in chapter one, the proto-Sunnite historical sources attempt to rehabilitate Abu Bakr by portraying him as regretting his confrontation with Fatima and maintaining his innocence. In al-Ṭabrisī's *al-Ihtijāj*, however, Abu Bakr's expression of regret confirms his guilt as well as Fatima's superior knowledge. Fatima concludes her speech by urging the audience to contemplate the Qur'an as God has asked them to do so. She then invokes the memory and presence of the Prophet by going to his grave and reciting poetry in which she bemoans events that have transpired following his death which would have rendered him speechless had he witnessed them (*law kunta shahadtahā lam tukthir al-khaṭab*).<sup>122</sup>

It is evident from this passage and others that Fatima is cast as a sagacious woman with clear political ambitions. Fatima places herself in the role of a military commander of sorts urging her potential conscripts to live up to their moral obligations and manhood. In doing so, these passages overtly subvert the proto-Sunnite-historical conception of Fatima as being a weak and overly emotional woman. As mentioned in the introduction of this dissertation, overt female leadership and an attempted (albeit failed) overthrow of the caliphate would appear some years later in the figure of the Prophet Muhammad's wife Aisha who stood against Ali at the Battle of the Camel with the blood-stained shirt of Uthman as her inspiration.<sup>123</sup> The Shiites would go on to ascribe a very similar scripturally-infused eloquence and courageous masculine-like demeanour to Zaynab, the daughter of Fatima, as portrayed in her

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid, 106.

<sup>123</sup> For details on the Battle of the Camel and Aisha's involvement see: Spellberg, 104-149, and Hodgson, 1:212-215.



legendary verbal confrontation with Ibn Ziyād in Kūfa and Yazīd ibn Mu‘awīyah in Damascus.<sup>124</sup>

These women campaigned for different causes; however there remain two common dominators between the three of them. Firstly, Fatima, Aisha, and Zaynab have all become the object of veneration and subjects of immense contention throughout Islamic intellectual history. Secondly and perhaps most importantly, all three female figures were imbued with political-religious charisma *via* their biological connection as being either the daughter, wife, or granddaughter of the Prophet, which provided the essential ingredients for them to become female heroines.<sup>125</sup>

### 2.3 The Aftermath of Saqīfah and Fatima the Downtrodden Martyr

In this section I shall shift from a focus upon Fatima as a strong and intelligent woman to one who endured immense pain and tribulation in the days following the death of the Prophet. I shall also demonstrate that the depiction of Fatima as a battered and downtrodden woman is very common in early Shiite hadith sources dating back to the late Umayyad period. It is also my contention that, while the ethic of suffering and divine trial has been expressed clearly in the Karbalā’ saga, for Shiites it was al-Ḥusayn’s mother Fatima who was the first to experience psychological and physical

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<sup>124</sup> For the speech of Zaynab see: Ibn Abī Ṭayfūr, 34-36. The masculine or manly demeanour does not refer to the physical appearance of Zaynab or the tone of her voice, but the eloquence of her speech according to some reports contained in the *Amālī* of al-Mufīd her speech was compared to her father Ali or described as if her words were coming from the “tounge of Amīr al-Mu‘minīn- The Commander of the Faithful” For the various references and the speech see: Muḥammad Ja‘far Ṭabsī, *Ma‘al- rakab al-Ḥusaynī min al-madīnah ilā al-madīnah: waqā’i al-ṭarīq min al-Karbalā’ ilā al-Shām*. (Qum: Markaz al-Dirāsāt al-Islāmīya, Qum), 98.

<sup>125</sup> For some Sunnite or Shiite believers, Aisha, Fatima and Zaynab may not be described as undergoing a process of ‘masculinisation’ but it was their exceptional femaleness and identification with the religious charisma of the Prophet (either through marriage, biological descent, or extraordinary religious commitment-or any combination of these) which allowed them to transcend the traditional norms or expectation of Muslim women. Therefore it would be said due to their exceptional femaleness they took on roles which were traditionally reserved for men such as giving public speeches or overt political activism and only in this sense did they adopt or manifest certain masculine qualities and the texts consulted in this study do not provide any indication otherwise.

abuse at the hands of the prophetic companions who are the pride of Sunnite-inspired memory. For that reason, the Shiite depiction of a battered Fatima (and a helpless and oppressed Ali) shatters a proto-Sunnite/Sunnite self-image as spiritual successors to a group of pious Muslim heroes. In what follows, I shall analyze the formative Shiite hadith tradition in which the post-Saqīfah events have been treated. My objective is not to present a single coherent narrative (which in my view, does not exist), but to demonstrate the rhetorical and literary potency of Fatima's suffering in Shiite tradition.

### The Book of Sulaym ibn Qays al-Hilālī and post-Sulaym texts

The text known as *Kitāb Sulaym ibn Qays* is one of the most contested works of early Shiite hadith. It is in this text that we find the earliest and most detailed Shiite account of an attack upon the house of Fatima and Ali. Therefore, I shall briefly explore the history and dispute surrounding this text and its compiler. Before venturing into the profile of Sulaym in the books of Shiite biographical dictionaries (*rijāl*), it should be noted that he has been listed as a hadith reporter in many formative hadith works.<sup>126</sup> Despite controversy over the Sulaym ibn Qays text, he was apparently considered a well-known reporter and transmitter of hadith by as early as the late 3rd/9<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>126</sup> Sulaym ibn Qays can be found in the following formative compendiums : al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī's (d. late 3<sup>rd</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century), *Baṣā'ir al-darajāt* (3 separate *isnāds*-chains of transmission), al-Furāt al-Kūfī's, *Tafsīr al-furāt* (3 *isnāds*), al-Kulaynī's, *Uṣūl al-kāfī* (14 *isnād*'s), in al-Sadūq's *Man lā yaḥduruhu al-faqīh* (1 *isnād*), and in al-Ṭūsī's *Tahdhīb al-aḥkām* (1 *isnād*) These three texts constitute three of the four most authoritative works of Shiite hadith literature. For the various chains of transmission see: Mūḥammad ibn al-Ḥassan al-Saffār, *Baṣā'ir al-darajāt*, (Qum: Ayatullah Mar'ashī Library, 1984), 27,83, 198; Furāt ibn Ibrāhīm al-Kūfī, *Tafsīr al-furāt* (Tehran: Chap va Nashr Institute, 1989), 67, 169, 357; Muhammad ibn Ya'qūb al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī* (Beirut: Dār al-Ta'arūf, 1981), 1:297, 529, 2:323, 2:391, 2:414, 8:57,8:353; Ibn Babwayh al-Qummī (al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq), *Man la yaḥduruhu al-faqīh* (Beirut, Mua'sasa al-'Ālimi al-Maṭbū'āt,1986), 4:189; Abī Ja'far Muhammad ibn al-Ḥassan al-Ṭūsī, *Tahdhīb al-aḥkām* (Qum: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyya, 1988), 4:126, 6:328, and 9:176. Sulaym ibn Qays has also been listed in numerous chains of transmission in al-Sadūq's hadith text on the subject of the messiah in Twelver Shī'ism. See: al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-dīn wa itmām al-ni'mah* (Tehran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, 1975), 1:240, 262, 270, 274, 2:413.

Sulaym is alleged to have transmitted directly from Ali, his son, al-Ḥasan, or *via* the prophetic companion and partisan of Ali, Salmān al-Fārisī. According to one of the earliest Shiite *rijāl* texts (3<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> century), he is also described as a servant of Salmān al-Fārisī and listed amongst the distinguished (*khawāṣṣ*) companions of Ali.<sup>127</sup> More details are provided by al-Kashshī, who describes Sulaym ibn Qays by means of a hadith in which Sulaym claims to have been informed by Salmān, Abu Dharr, and Miqdād regarding Ali’s views on the Qur’an and its exegesis, in addition to enjoying the opportunity to confirm this information with Ali himself.<sup>128</sup> Sulaym’s confidant Abān ibn Abī ‘Ayyāsh goes on to state that following the death of ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn (the fourth Shiite Imam), he (Abān) managed to perform the annual pilgrimage to Mecca where he met Muḥammad al-Bāqir. During this meeting, he mentioned word for word the entire conversation Sulaym is purported to have had with the first Imam (as communicated to him by Sulaym). Muḥammad al-Bāqir’s eyes then flooded with tears and he exclaimed to Abān: “Sulaym was truthful [correct in what he transmitted].”<sup>129</sup>

Rich dramatic and literary reports such as these no doubt had a tremendous legitimating effect for those tradionists who chose to rely upon Sulaym ibn Qays as a transmitter of hadith. It seems that the early Shiite hadith scholars and compilers believed that an individual by this name existed and he was a companion of the first Imam. However, al-Kashshī makes no mention of a book of traditions attributed to Sulaym. The earliest reference to this text can be found in al-Nu‘mānī’s (4<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> al-Barqī, *Rijāl al-Barqī*, 4.

<sup>128</sup> Sulaym then purportedly goes on to inquire with the Imam as to why their understanding of the Qur’an is opposed to that which is understood by the general Muslims, at which point Sulaym goes on to finish the rest of the narration. See: Muḥammad ibn ‘Umar al-Kashshī (d. 3<sup>rd</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century), *Rijāl al-Kashshī* (Mashhad: Publication of Mashhad University, 1969), 104-105.

<sup>129</sup> Al-Bāqir goes on to inform Abān that his father, ‘Alī ibn Husayn had also confirmed the veracity of this hadith, in addition to al-Ḥassan, al-Ḥusayn having personally confirmed its veracity with their father, the first Imam, ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib. See: *Ibid*, 105.

century) *Kitāb al-ghaybah* (book on the occultation of the twelfth Imam) in which he describes the book of Sulaym as amongst the largest and oldest *uṣūl* works containing the traditions of the *ahl al-bayt* going back to the Prophet himself.<sup>130</sup> In stark opposition to the position of al-Nu'mānī, al-Shaykh al-Mufīd (d.413/1022) describes the book of Sulaym as unreliable (*ghayr mawthūqun bihi*) and impermissible to act upon most of its contents (*la yajūz al-'amal 'alā aktharihi*).<sup>131</sup> However it should be noted, that al-Mufīd did not describe Sulaym to be an unreliable hadith reporter. Keeping this in mind, it may be deduced that al-Mufīd differentiated between Sulaym as a historical personality and the contents of the text that has been attributed to him.<sup>132</sup> Nevertheless, there remains disagreement amongst the scholars of Imāmī hadith and theology regarding the usefulness of this text.<sup>133</sup>

Hossein Modarressi in his incisive analysis of the text and its alleged compiler describes the book as filled with anachronisms such as a prediction of black banners arriving from the East which would mark the downfall of the Umayyad dynasty.<sup>134</sup>

<sup>130</sup> See: Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Nu'mānī, *Al-Ghaybah* (Tehran: Maktabat al-Ṣadūq, 1977), 101-102.

<sup>131</sup> See: Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Nu'mān (al-Shaykh al-Mufīd), *Taṣhīḥ al-'itiqād* (Qum: Manshūrāt al-Riḍā, 1985), 149. Al-Mufīd's criticism of *Kitāb Sulaym b. Qays* is within the context of his emanation to Ṣadūq's epistle on Shiite creed. See: al-Ṣadūq, *Itiqād al-Imāmīyah* (Beirut: Dār al-Jawād, 2011), 379. Ibn al-Ghaḍā'irī, while admitting that the book of Sulaym is popular (*mashhūr*), mentions similar reservations and even goes so far to state that Sulaym as a historical personality is unknown amongst some of the Imāmīyah. However, he himself has found certain traditions of Sulaym outside of the book which is attributed to him. Therefore, Ibn al-Ghaḍā'irī does not repudiate the person of Sulaym, but rather the text itself which he claims contains several glaring historical errors. For example, there is a tradition in the text claiming that Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr gave moral exhortations to his father, Abu Bakr, at the moment of death.

<sup>132</sup> For an extensive but apologetic discussion regarding the critiques (*munāqashāt*) of *Kitāb Sulaym* See: Sulaym ibn Qays al-Hilālī, *Kitāb Sulaym ibn Qays*, ed. and annotated by Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ānṣārī (Qum: Dalīl Mā, 2005), 156-200.

<sup>133</sup> Al-'Allāmah al-Ḥillī (d.726/1326), after citing the various opinions of the scholars (including that of Ibn al-Ghaḍā'irī) regarding Sulaym and the text itself, he comes to the conclusion that despite certain reservations, he refrains from rejecting the usefulness and the questionable origins of the text. See: Ibn Muṭahḥar al-Ḥillī, *Rijal al-'Allāmah al-Ḥillī* (Qum: al-Raḍī Publications, 1982), 73.

<sup>134</sup> Modarressi, 84. It should be noted that what is interpreted as anachronism by Modarressi as a historian of Islamic intellectual thought within the academy would have been interpreted as something divinely inspired foreshadowing a prophecy on the part of the Prophet and the infallibles (*ma'sūmīn*) of

Furthermore, Modarressi asserts that the text contains theological conceptions of the Imamate which were only formulated much later.<sup>135</sup> Despite these inconsistencies, after close analysis of the language and various manuscripts, Modarressi is of the view that the core of the text has been preserved and can be dated back to at least 138 A.H., coinciding with the late Umayyad caliphate.<sup>136</sup> With this in mind, it may be reasonably concluded that the book of Sulaym is the earliest surviving work of Shiite hadith literature and thus of immense importance to the study at hand in light of great detail regarding the F-R conflict and the attack on the home of Ali and Fatima.

The text begins with Sulaym ibn Qays narrating from Salmān al-Fārisī, who remains the sole narrator for the entire episode of Saqīfah and the events following it. It is imperative to point out that the employment of Salmān as the chief eyewitness to ‘the grand betrayal of the family of Muhammad’ is a part of the larger Shiite appropriation of Salmān as one of the few ‘saved’ companions and supporters of the Hashimites. Therefore, aside from having Fatima or one of the children of Ali as the principal narrators, there would have been few contemporaries of Ali who would have been as trusted and revered by the Shiites as Salmān, thus endowing the account with a substantial degree of authority.<sup>137</sup> The account begins with the traditional Shiite view

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his household. For this reason, Imāmī critics of *Kitāb sulaym* such as al-Mufīd, and Ibn al-Ghaḍā’iri did not base their critiques on the presence of anachronistic details. Here is an illustration of the difference between a dispassionate reading of hadith literature which is not influenced and or limited by a set of preconceived theological tenets such as the doctrine of infallibility, as opposed to an insider or believer’s analysis (such as the medieval scholar, al-Mufīd or the contemporary editor of *Kitāb sulaym*, al-Anṣārī) of the same text which may often be influenced and constructed around doctrinal tenets. For a brief discussion regarding hadith analysis from an insider’s versus an outsider’s perspective see: Walbridge, 34-43.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> The reasoning behind this lies in the clearly Kūfān influenced sectarian language of the text and the numerous references to the Umayyad caliphate. See: Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Salmān has been described as having a special brotherhood with the Prophet, and counted among the few who is able to bear the truth (the true interpretation of Islam as taught by the Imams) as well as

regarding the chaotic scene of Saqīfah and the open opposition put forward towards Abu Bakr (that is following his election at Saqīfah) by Ali. Upon Ali being unable to convince the Muslims to support him over Abu Bakr, he set out upon a donkey with Fatima and his two children, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, in an effort to garner support for their cause.<sup>138</sup> Not a single person from among the Muhājirūn or Anṣār who partook in the battle of Badr would respond to their call for help. The report goes so far as to relate that the four of them went to the homes of these men to remind them of his (Ali's) right and called them to come to his aid. This passage encapsulates the Shiite vision of history as being replete with treacherous and cowardly Muslims who abandon God's chosen saints.

The content and tenor of this report is echoed in numerous Shiite traditions depicting the days and months following the death of the Prophet. For instance, the prolific transmitter of hadith 'Abdullāh ibn Sinān is said to have transmitted from al-Bāqir that following the denial of Fadak to Fatima, Ali mounted her upon a she-donkey draped with a mantle (cloak) and took her for forty mornings to the homes of the Muhājirūn and Anṣār. Al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn accompanied her as well as she attempted to rally support for her cause. However, it was to no avail; al-Bāqir describes the situation in the following manner: "No one came to her aid, nor responded to her [call], nor helped her."<sup>139</sup>

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being counted amongst the few true scholars (*'ulamā'*), and lastly as being counted amongst the *ahl al-bayt*. See: al-Kulaynī, 1:401.

<sup>138</sup> Sulaym ibn Qays, 2: 580.

<sup>139</sup> 'Abdullāh ibn Sinān is considered by Shiite hadith scholars to be a prominent transmitters and scholar in his own right with multiple books dealing with Islamic law and theology attributed to him. See: al-Modarressi, 157-161. For the hadith report: al-Mufīd, *al-Ikhtisāṣ* (Beirut: Dār al-Mufīd, 1993), 184. It should be noted that there remain questions surrounding the attribution of this work of hadith to al-Mufīd, the text itself can either be dated back to al-Mufīd or slightly earlier. See the extensive discussion by the prominent editor of classical Shiite manuscripts, Muḥammad Mahdī Khirsān in al-Mufīd, *al-Ikhtisāṣ*, ed.

At this juncture there are several points to be raised. First, these reports are set in two different contexts. The Salmān report describes the campaigning of Ali and Fatima following the pledge of allegiance to Abu Bakr, and not the denial of Fadak as it is portrayed in the report attributed to al-Bāqir. However, the objective of this work, as I have said, is not to sift through supposed historical details, but identify crucial themes and literary tropes. Second, in the Salmān report, Fatima is not the principal campaigner; her presence is more symbolic than functional. Put differently, in the Salmān report, it is Ali who is his own advocate, with his wife and children serve to present a united family front. Despite Ali's apparent advocacy, according to the speech attributed to Fatima she herself did not hesitate to emphasize her family's right to the caliphate. Al-Bāqir's report, on the other hand, casts Ali in the rather passive role of transporting his wife from home to home while she speaks on her own behalf. Reports such as this represent Fatima as a politically active woman. A third and vital theme of these reports is the abandonment and estrangement. The motif of abandonment and estrangement relates to the notion of suffering as a mark of belief in Shiite Islam. Reports such as these may very well also have been 'constructed' with the theme in mind of the abandoned prophet who continuously warns his community, only to have his exhortations fall upon deaf ears.<sup>140</sup> Estrangement is particularly attributed to

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Muḥammad Mahdī Khirsān (Najaf: al-Maktabah al-Ḥaydarīyah, 1971), 3-17. I thank Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi for alerting me to this earlier Najaf edition of the text in which the disputed authorship is discussed.

<sup>140</sup> One example is the parable of Noah and the suffering and estrangement he endured by incessantly preaching to his community only to have very few or no one heed his call. See: Qur'an, 71: 1-11. For the 'dispassionate' religionist whose methodology is not faith based- the presence of prophetic parables and overarching Qur'anic or Biblical themes is not a coincidence and certain elements of the report have been strategically emphasized with a sacred past in mind. Furthermore, the term "construction" throughout this dissertation does not necessarily imply that reports were outrightly invented and attributed to al-Bāqir ( although this cannot be dismissed when dealing with dogmatic literature) but it is indicative that these events were not written by the actors involved or the Imams themselves but by

Fatima's son, al-Ḥusayn, whose final cries for help at Karbalā' were of no avail.<sup>141</sup> Also, hadith reports such as these should be understood within the common Shiite conception of what is known as, "the damnation of the many and the praise of the few" (*dhamm al-kathrah wa madḥ al-qillah*).<sup>142</sup> Therefore within the context of the F-R conflict, the apparent failure by Fatima to garner any significant support would not be viewed as a failure by most Shiite scholars, but rather as part of a self-fulfilling divine mandate springing from the fact that the majority of prominent companions and early Muslims were not committed believers. Lastly, an ominous outlook such as this functions to not only justify but extol (from an intra-Shī'ī perspective) the minority status of the Shiites.<sup>143</sup>

The Salmān report goes on to describe the chaotic scene in which Ali and his family refused to pledge allegiance to Abu Bakr. Much of this account is similar to the

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those who recorded, compiled or composed these histories and traditions centuries after the event in question. For the Shiite who believes such traditions to have originated from the Imam Muḥammad al-Bāqir (or any other Imam), in this case the Imam's infallible understanding and comprehension past events is not deemed to be a historical viewpoint or opinion among other possible viewpoints, but rather, it is the elucidation of a reality beyond doubt. Furthermore for the Shiite believer, the reflection of certain prophetic themes of abandonment is neither a coincidence nor an invention but apart of a divine plan for the family of the Prophet who would be disappointed by the lack of religious commitment among their coreligionists much in the same way certain Biblical and Qur'anic Prophets were abandoned by fellow believers. One example is the parable of Noah and the suffering and estrangement he endured by incessantly preaching to his community only to have very few or no one heed his call. See: Qur'an, 71: 1-11.

<sup>141</sup> Al-Ḥusayn is depicted as consistently trying to deter the Umayyad army from fighting; this pleading grows in desperation as al-Ḥusayn realizes he is now the only able bodied male left to defend his children and womenfolk. See: al-Shaykh 'Izzat Allāh al-Mawlātī and al-Shaykh Muḥammad Ja'far al-Ṭabasī, *Ma'al-rakab al-ḥusaynī min al-madīnah ilā al-madīnah :al-imām al-Ḥusayn fī al-Karbalā'* (Qum: Markaz al-Dirāsāt al-Islāmīyah, 2003), 4:405-434.

<sup>142</sup> The Shiite hadith compendiums have included this statement as a part of a larger conversation which took place between the seventh Imam, Mūsā al-Kāzīm and Ḥishām ibn al-Ḥakam. The above expression can be found in numerous forms throughout the Shiite hadith literature. See: Etan Kohlberg, "In praise of the few" in *Studies in Islamic and Middle Eastern Tradition in memory of Norman Calder ed.G.R. Hawting, J.A. Mojaddedi, and A Samely* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 155.

<sup>143</sup> This damnation of the majority of the prominent members the early Muslim community is not limited to Shiite hadith literature. A-Mufīd in his history of the Battle of The Camel outrightly places blame on Abu Bakr, Umar and their followers for the intra-Muslim strife which took place during Ali's caliphate. In fact, he describes these individuals as accursed (*mal'ūn*). Naturally, the implications of such a view are congruent with the Imāmī conception of *dhamm al-kathrah* (most are blameworthy). See: al-Mufīd, *Kitāb al-jamal* (Qum: Shaykh al-Mufīd's Millennium World Conference, 1993), 56-57.



details found in the historical sources covered in chapter one. However, the Salmān report contains explicit details of the alleged attack upon the house of Fatima, an elaboration that differentiates the Shiite hadith-based accounts from the historical sources and Sunnite hadith. Like the histories, this account relates that it was Umar who lost his patience with Ali's refusal to pledge allegiance, and it was Abu Bakr who was the more pliant of the two. The Shiite hadith, however, adds that as Umar's impatience and anger towards Ali and his handful of supporters intensified, Umar, as the primary instigator, began to taunt Abu Bakr as to why he had not yet demanded Ali's pledge of allegiance. At this point, a very tough and "short-tempered" (*fazz ghalīz*) individual by the name of Qunfudh was apparently dispatched by Umar to bully Ali into accepting Abu Bakr's leadership. Ali refuses Qunfudh entry into his home, at which point Qunfudh returns to Umar to inform him of what had transpired. Umar then tells Qunfudh that if Ali does not grant him and his band permission to enter the house, they shall enter without permission. During the final standoff, Fatima herself enters the scene in order to refuse them entry.<sup>144</sup> Once again they return to Umar, waiting for further orders. Umar then says: "What do we have to do with women (*mā lanā lil-nisā*)?"<sup>145</sup> meaning that women have no role in such affairs and real men do not stoop to consider them.

Like other Shiite versions, the Salmān account casts Umar in the role of chief plotter and aggressor.<sup>146</sup> He is as an angry, outrightly misogynistic individual who feels threatened by the courageous and confident Fatima. Umar is disturbed by what he

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<sup>144</sup> The Arabic reads as: "qālat fātima: "uḥarriju 'alaykum an tadkhalū 'alā baytī bighayri idhn" See: Sulaym ibn Qays, 2: 585.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid, 2:586.

<sup>146</sup> For instance see: Ibid and al-Mufīd, 185.

views as a violation of accepted gender roles. It seems to be Fatima's insolence and violation of traditional gender roles that finally prompt him to set fire to her home. Fatima engages in a verbal confrontation with Umar, demanding that fear God and not barge into her home. Umar, however, dismisses Fatima's pleadings, asks for the fire (a burning piece of wood or torch), and sets the door of the house on fire, pushing his way in only to be confronted by the screaming Fatima calling upon her father.<sup>147</sup> Umar then lifts his sword, still in its sheath, and strikes Fatima on her side. The violence does not end, for as Fatima continues to scream, Umar, according to this account, whips her arm (*fa-ḍaraba b-ihī dhirā'ahā*).

Fatima's husband, Ali, now rushes towards her, intent on killing Umar. However, he restrains himself upon recalling the Prophet urging him to preserve the religion of Islam, i.e. by not shedding blood. Thus the traditional Shiite justification for Ali not exacting revenge upon Umar for the assault upon Fatima is that if Ali had killed Umar that day, the Muslim community would have been imperilled. Fatima would also have been exposed to further violence as Abu Bakr sent Qunfudh to force Ali out. Ali is eventually arrested with a rope tied around his neck (*fa-'alaqū fī 'unqihī ḥablan*) and the courageous Fatima positions herself (as a barrier of sorts) between her helpless husband and the aggressors. Qunfudh then proceeds to whip Fatima; according to Salmān, when she died the bruise from the assault remained on her shoulder.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Sulaym ibn Qays, 2, 585. An early Shiite source contains a similar version ascribed to Ḥaraz al-'Ajalī, father of 'Umar ibn Abī al-Miqdam, the prominent Kūfan companion of the fourth, fifth and sixth Imams; see Muḥammad ibn Mas'ūd al-'Ayyāshī (d.320/ 932), *Tafsīr al-'Ayyāshī* (Tehran: 'Ilmīyah Printing House Publication, 1960), 2: 67. According to Ibn 'Asākir, Ḥaraz al-'Ajalī was a client (*mawlā*) of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭalib, giving the family pro-Alid credentials dating back to Ali. In this report attributed to Ḥaraz al-'Ajalī, there is no mention of any physical violence perpetrated against Fatima. For details on the 'Ajalī family in Ibn 'Asākir, see Muḥammad ibn Ṣā'il al-Salamī's notes as found in the fifth edition of Muḥammad ibn Sa'd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā* (Beirut: Maktabat al-Ṣādīq, 1993), 1:502.

<sup>148</sup> Sulaym ibn Qays, 2:586.

This violent intrusion into Fatima's sacred private space would have been deemed by Shiites to be an unforgivable transgression. The tragedy for Shiites is of cosmic proportions. Not only was the private space of Fatima and Ali violated, but the 'helpless' female body of the daughter of the Prophet and "leader of women" (*sayyidat al-nisā*) assaulted. The bruises inflicted on Fatima's body would demonstrate for Shiites that the tragedy which befell the family of the Prophet was not only emotional, but physical. The body of the daughter of the Prophet, with vivid marks of oppression and helplessness inscribed upon it, became the site for elaborate, emotional Shiite discourse.

In the late Umayyad context in which the text of Sulaym was composed, the details related above can be situated within a growing exclusivist Shiite theology and perception of the past. Keeping this in mind, it would not be farfetched to draw a connection between those Shiite groups which were known for cursing the companions and promotion of the motif of a battered and beaten Fatima at the hands of Umar. In other words, the groups who report and transmit material that speaks of the abuse of Fatima would have knowingly provoked and supported the formal condemnation of Umar in the form of the ritual known as, "imprecation (*la'nah*)" and "disassociation (*barā'ah*)".<sup>149</sup> The highly contentious nature of this report originating from the late Umayyad period would have served two important agendas. Firstly, the proliferation of this report (and those with similar content) would function to exclude from the larger community those "pietist" Shiites who believed the vast majority of Muslims to be

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<sup>149</sup> One such group was known as the *ṣabāḥīyah*, a group of Zaydīs who practiced ritual imprecation and religious dissociation (*al-barā'ah*), involving complete repudiation of all those who partook in or knowingly supported the supposed usurpation of the caliphate. See: S'ad ibn 'Abdullah al-Ash'arī al-Qummī, *Kitāb al-maqālāt wa-al-firaq* (Tehran: Maṭba'at Ḥaydarī, 1963), 71.

treacherous adversaries of the family of the Prophet. Secondly, reports such as these would have contributed immensely to the proto-Sunnite accusation of *rafḍ* (rejection) towards the Shiites.

While they share many details, the early post-Sulaym ibn Qays Shiite hadith texts are by no means consistent regarding the details of the encounter at the home of Fatima and Ali. For instance, the only allusion to the assault endured by Fatima in the most authoritative Imāmī hadith work, namely, *al-Kāfi*, is a cryptic description attributed to the 7<sup>th</sup> Shiite Imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim, who describes Fatima as a “*shahīdah*” (female martyr). Nevertheless, the authority of this report has been ascribed to the brother of the seventh Imam, ‘Alī ibn Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq, who is described as a prolific and ‘trustworthy’ companion of the seventh Imam.<sup>150</sup> The import of this detail lies in the fact that, as per Shiite hadith analysis, the chain of transmission is complete and thus not deemed spurious by those Shiite scholars who invested significance in the biographies of hadith reporters and analysis of the chains of transmission.<sup>151</sup> As a result, reports such as this become authoritative testaments to the theme of the martyrdom of Fatima and would be perfectly acceptable in traditional Shiite scholarly circles. Also, according to the early Shiite biographers of hadith transmitters, ‘Alī ibn Ja‘far was a mainstream Shiite.<sup>152</sup> As a result, this report, in addition to appearing in the canonical *al-Kāfi*, supported by a non-extremist and complete chain of transmission, thus making

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<sup>150</sup> His full name is ‘Alī ibn Ja‘far al-‘Arīḍī. In addition to being the son of Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq, he is praised and described as ‘trustworthy’ by al-Kashshī and al-Shaykh al-Ṭūsī. See: al-Kashshī, 430, and al-Ṭūsī, *Rijāl al-Ṭūsī* (Qum: Islamic Publications Institute, 1994), 359.

<sup>151</sup> For details see: Liyakat Takim, *The Heirs of the Prophet: Charisma and Religious Authority in Shi‘ite Islam* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2006), 109-180.

<sup>152</sup> He is described as *ṣaḥīḥ al-madhhab al-zāhir*- an individual with clearly acceptable religious beliefs. Terms such as these when used in Shiite hadith parlance are used in juxtaposition to “*fāsīd al-madhhab*”, that is a companion with unacceptable beliefs, which are often due to a perceived *ghuluw* or extremism concerning the fantastical attributes of the Imam and/or alleged anthropomorphic descriptions of God. See: al-Ṭūsī, *Rijāl*, 359.

it acceptable to most Imāmīs. While there is little mention of the ‘assault’ in *al-Kāfī*, later Shiite sources are replete with references to the incident.

Ibn Qawlawayh al-Qummī (d. 368/977), a prominent traditionist and near contemporary of al-Kulaynī, includes a peculiar rendition of the F-R conflict in his *Kāmil al-ziyārāt*, connected with Muhammad’s night journey (*isrā’*). In this well-crafted meta-historical tradition, God informs Muhammad of the future tests (*ikhtibār*) he will undergo, to which Muhammad responds in a positive and submissive manner.<sup>153</sup> God then forewarns Muhammad of the betrayal and suffering his family will endure after his death.<sup>154</sup> Having described Ali’s death at the hands of his own community, God goes on to inform Muhammad of what will befall his daughter:

“As for your daughter, she shall be oppressed, treated dishonourably, -that [right] which you had given to her shall be usurped, and she shall be struck (*ḍaribat*) (while) she is pregnant. She, the female members of her family, and her home shall be entered upon without consent, she shall be handled with disgrace and humiliation. [At this point] she will then not find any obstruction [between her and her attackers], and what is in her stomach [womb] shall be torn [or punctured] as a result of the strike [upon her]. And she shall die from that.” Muhammad then responds to God by saying: “From him [God] we come and to Him [God] we return, Oh my Lord I accept and submit [to your decree], from you [comes] success and patience.”<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Ibn Qawlawayh al-Qummī, *Kāmil al-ziyārāt* (Najaf: al-Murtaḍawīyah Publications, 1978), 332. Ibn Qawlawayh has been considered a distinguished compiler of hadith traditions regarding the supernatural attributes of the Imams and extraordinary reward for those who perform pilgrimage (*ziyārah*) to their grave. In addition to being a junior contemporary of al-Kulaynī, he transmitted traditions from the father of al-Ṣadūq, Muḥammad ibn Ṣaffār al-Qummī, in addition to other prominent Imāmī traditionists of the formative post-occlusion period. For a concise biography see: Āghā Buzurg Tihrānī, *al-Dharīrah ilā taṣānif al-shī’a* (Tehran: al-Maktaba al-Islāmīyah, 1987), 17:255. For an extensive biography see: Sayyid Abū al-Qāsim al-Khū’ī, *Mu’jam rijāl al-ḥadīth* (Qum: Markaz Āthār al-Shī’ah, 1990), 1:50, and 23: 16.

<sup>154</sup> See: Ibn Qawlawayh al-Qummī, 332.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.* There is a similar hadith found in the lectures attributed to al-Ṣadūq (d. 381/991) in which the Prophet instead of God (as found in the Ibn Qawlawayh report) informs the community of what will befall Fatima after his death. This report is also slightly more specific in so far as it states that she will be denied her inheritance (*muni’at irthahā*), her side will be broken (*kusira janbahā*), and she shall miscarry an unborn child (*asqaṭat janīnāhā*) and she shall die while distressed and weeping. See Ibn Babawayh al-Qummī’s *al-Amālī*, as included in *Tartīb al-Amālī* compiled by Muḥammad Jawād Maḥmūdī (Qum: Mu’assasat al-Ma’ārif al-Islāmīyah, 2000), 5:54 and for the chain of transmission see: 5: 15. This multi-volume work has put together the Amālī works of al-Ṣadūq, al-Mufīd, and al-Ṭūsī and arranged their contents by subject matter. In an alternative report (contemporary to al-Ṣadūq), al-Bāqir is said to have

The above report has been attributed to al-Ṣādiq through a well-known Kūfan associate, Ḥammād ibn ‘Uthmān (d.190 A.H./late 7<sup>th</sup> or early 8<sup>th</sup> century C.E.), who, similar to ‘Alī ibn Ja‘far, is been accused of unorthodox beliefs in any Shiite *rijāl* work.<sup>156</sup> Therefore, once again, this chain of transmission is complete and could be deemed ‘authentic’ according to Shiite hadith analysis, lending it much authority. As for the text of the tradition, its contents are more theologically oriented than the Sulaym report. The conversation between God and Muhammad is said to have taken place during Muhammad’s night journey, giving a meta-historical context in which time and space is irrelevant, elevating it from a historical event transmitted by Salmān al-Farīsī (as found in the book of Sulaym) to the word of God Fatima’s fate becomes intertwined with a divinely ordained trial to be experienced by Muhammad and his household. In this same report, Muhammad is also told of the divine decree regarding al-Ḥusayn’s violent and miserable death. Consequently for Shiites, the F-R conflict reflects the very beginning of the post-Muhammadan trope of suffering and communal betrayal. While the assault and death of Fatima may not be on a par with the martyrdom of her son, al-Ḥusayn and his followers, it certainly functions as an important theological support of the motif of darkness, suffering, and abuse.

This report, unlike the Salmān report, describes Fatima as being pregnant at the time of the assault and miscarrying a child as a result. *Kāmil al-ziyārāt* is the earliest

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to transmitted a hadith from his forefathers (the previous Imams) in which the Prophet informs Fatima directly of the suffering she shall endure from “the people (*al-qawm*)”, as a result of which she will be bedridden and have her flesh wither away until she becomes a skeleton, that is very thin. She shall then die in this state. See: al-Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān (d.369/974), *Dā‘im al-islām* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1965), 1:232-233.

<sup>156</sup> For instance see: al-Kashshī, 372, and Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī al-Najāshī (d.450/1058), *Rijāl al-Najāshī* (Qum: Islamic Publications Institute, 1987), 144. For details on Ḥammād ibn ‘Uthmān see: al-Khū‘ī, 6:212.

known Shiite reference to the loss of an unborn child. In-fact, Ibn Qawlawayh has included a second tradition from al-Ṣādiq, in which he mentions the murder perpetrated by the ‘tyrants’ of the past such as Nimrod and the Pharaoh and then goes on to condemn the killers of Fatima and the unborn child, known to Shiites as Muḥsin.<sup>157</sup> He then goes on to mention the deaths of Ali, al-Ḥasan, and al-Ḥusayn, indicating a birth-order that makes Muḥsin the first child of Fatima and Ali to be killed. Naturally, the inclusion of this sensitive detail when combined with the contents of the Sulaym report further amplifies the motif of physical abuse and suffering. The existence or identity of this child is referred to in some non-Shiite pre-Ibn Qawlawayh sources, as well as in post-Ibn Qawlawayh Shiite and Sunnite sources. The historians al-Balādhurī, al-Ya‘qūbī and al-Mas‘ūdī, for instance, list Muḥsin among the children of Fatima, though without mention of a miscarriage, with al-Balādhuri mentioning that he died young.<sup>158</sup> Therefore, according to numerous early historical sources, there existed the belief that Fatima had a son named Muḥsin, and that this child was born but died at a young age. However, according to some Shiite hadith sources, this child was not born but was miscarried as a result of the assault endured by Fatima. For example, al-Ṣadūq relates a tradition in which the Prophet tells Ali that he shall be rewarded with a treasure in paradise; al-Ṣadūq goes on to state that he heard from some scholars (*mashāyikh*) that this treasure is Ali’s son, Muḥsin, and this son of Ali was miscarried by

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<sup>157</sup> Ibn Qawlawayh, 367. This tradition is also found in *al-Ikhtisāṣ*, see: al-Mufīd, 343.

<sup>158</sup> al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, 2:213; al-Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab*, 3:63; al-Ya‘qūbī, 2:213. For more historical and non-Shiite hadith sources listing Muḥsin amongst the children of Fatima, see: Ibn Qutaybah, *al-Ma‘ārif* (Cairo: al-Hay‘a al-Miṣrīyah al-‘Āmma lil-Kuttāb, 1992), 210; ‘Izz al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd al-ghāba fī ma‘rifat al-ṣaḥābah* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1989), 299 and Ibn Ḥazm, *Jamharat ansāb al-‘arab* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘ilmīyah, 1983), 37.

Fatima when she was squeezed between the two doors.<sup>159</sup> Furthermore, this child (according to Ṣadūq) will be full of anger at the door of heaven (*jannah*). This report requires an explanation. First, the name of the child has not been transmitted in the form of a hadith, but rather al-Ṣadūq claims to have been given this information from his teachers (or those authorities from whom he transmitted hadith). This admission on the part of al-Ṣadūq would reduce the evidentiary value of the report within Shiite circles from a formal hadith report to popular belief allegedly originating as a hadith. Secondly, the child Muḥsin is given an eschatological role as a gatekeeper of paradise.<sup>160</sup>

In addition to the eschatological motif surrounding the death of Muḥsin, we come across a graphic eschatological tradition in the controversial hadith compendium of the Nusayrī, al-Khaṣībī (d. 334 or 358/10<sup>th</sup> century), in which it is related that Ali while speaking to ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb said that he and another individual (most likely Abu Bakr or Qunfudh) shall be exhumed from their graves and be given life again. Upon their resurrection, they shall be “crucified on tall trees” (*taṣalabā ‘alā al-dawḥāt*) and set on fire using the very same fire they used to burn the home of Ali, Fatima and their children, after which they shall be consigned to hell.<sup>161</sup> In an alternative report attributed to al-Ṣādiq *via* Mufaḍḍal ibn ‘Umar, the 12<sup>th</sup> Shiite Imam shall reappear and have the two bodies (a reference to Abu Bakr and Umar) exhumed and brought back to life. He shall then proceed to gather creation (*khalq*) together (a reference to all living things or all human beings) and inform them regarding the fire set to the door of Ali

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<sup>159</sup> al-Ṣadūq, *Ma‘ānī al-akḥbār* (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-A‘lamī lil-Maṭbū‘āt, 1990), 205-206.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid. There is a similar tradition ascribed to al-Ṣādiq which prophesizes that Muḥsin shall act as a judge determining the fate (*yaḥkum*) of his killer (*qātiluhu*) Qunfudh on the Day of Judgment. See: Ibn Qawlawayh, 334.

<sup>161</sup> Huṣayn ibn Hamadān al-Khaṣībī, *al-Hidāyat al-kubrā* (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Balāgh, 1968), 138-139. Al-Khaṣībī has been described by both al-Najāshī and al-Ṭūsī as having unorthodox and heretical beliefs. Al-Khaṣībī has been described as a leading figure among the Nusayrī’s and the ghūlāt (extremists) See: Muḥsin al-Amīn, *A’yān al-shī‘ah* (Beirut: Dār al-Ta‘āraf lil-Maṭbū‘āt, 1986), 5:490-491.



and Fatima and the whipping of Fatima which led to the loss of her unborn child, Muḥsin.<sup>162</sup> Reports such as these, infused as they are with eschatological and apocalyptic motifs, serve Khaṣībī to give Fatima’s suffering a sense of purpose. Put differently, the apocalyptic revenge exacted upon Abu Bakr and Umar ( as presented by al-Khaṣībī) is a reflection of a key messianic motif of Nusayrī-Shiite triumph in which a history of betrayal shall come to a final violent and climactic end. I should, however, note that graphic reports of cosmic revenge exacted upon Abu Bakr and Umar as a response to the oppression of Fatima originate from extremist Shiite tradition. Fatima’s suffering and at times the extremely negative depiction of her assailants may be situated along a spectrum in which al-Khaṣībī as a known extremist and Nusayrī lies at the far end, thus, not included within ranks of Twelver Shiite orthodoxy.

Lastly, al-Mufīd (d.413/1022), the prominent Shiite theologian and student of Ibn Qawlawayh and al-Ṣadūq, has included mention of Muḥsin in the report attributed to Ja’far al-Ṣādiq via ‘Abdullah ibn Sinān.<sup>163</sup> According to al-Ṣādiq, Fatima’s miscarriage was a direct result of her altercation with Umar in which he violently confiscated the deed to Fadak granted to her by his associate, Abu Bakr.<sup>164</sup> Belief in the existence of the

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<sup>162</sup> Al-Khaṣībī, 408. In addition to al-Khaṣībī being classified as extremist, the ‘reliability’ of Mufaḍḍal ibn ‘Umar as a hadith reporter has been the subject of dispute amongst Shiite scholars. For instance, both al-Kashshī and al-Najāshī have reported many traditions describing Mufaḍḍal as having extremist and unorthodox theological views. However, later scholars such as al-Khūṭī have “rehabilitated” Mufaḍḍal and dismissed these accusations of extremism which state that Mufaḍḍal divinised the Imams. For a discussion regarding the above see: Takim, 160-161.

<sup>163</sup> This lengthy report has already been mentioned in regards to Fatima’s political activism. See: footnote 62.

<sup>164</sup> In this alternate version of events, Abu Bakr consented to Fatima’s protests and granted Fadak in the form of a written decree. However, as Fatima left Abu Bakr’s presence she was confronted by Umar who demanded that she hand over the document, Fatima then refused to do so, at which point Umar responded by kicking her (*fa-rafasahā birijlihi*) and slapped her (*laṭamahā*). The impact of this kick caused her to miscarry her son, Muḥsin, from her womb. Al-Ṣādiq then adds the following: “It is as if I see the earring in her ear when it broke (as a result of the strike).” The editor of the manuscript, adds that *nuqifat* is the passive tense which is synonymous with the passive verb *kusira* (it was broken) from Umar’s slap (*min laṭmi ‘umar*). See: Al-Mufīd, 185. Also according to this report, Abu Bakr is described by Ali as

miscarried child is further attested in al-Mufīd's authoritative Shiite (hadith-based) historical work entitled *Kitāb al-irshād*. Al-Mufīd explains that there exists a belief amongst a group of "the Shī'ah" that Fatima miscarried a male child by the name of Muḥsin.<sup>165</sup> However, al-Mufīd does not shed any further light on the matter; nor does he transmit any tradition describing a violent altercation between the companions and Fatima. Al-Mufīd's reference in the *Irshād* is also ambivalent since he does attribute this view to himself or any specific group except "the Shi'ah," which could imply any number of sub-sects. In addition, al-Mufīd does not transmit any hadith report as a means of supporting this claim, as he does with other information throughout the *Irshād*. The absence of any mention of violence or the cause of the miscarriage may not necessarily indicate that al-Mufīd rejected its plausibility. We may speculate that the objective of the book was to communicate a general history of the Imams which would be accessible to most Twelver Shiites without provoking the ire of Sunnites or stirring further Ḥanbalī-Shiite riots in Baghdad.<sup>166</sup> Due to the social-political exigencies and the general audience for whom the *Irshād* was written, one should be cautious in describing al-Mufīd as mild towards Fatima's opponents.

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having a softer heard in comparison to "the other (Umar) *fa-innahu arriqu min al-akhir*." In most Shiite reports Abu Bakr and Umar are both cast as villains, in this case, Abu Bakr consented to the return of Fadak, demonstrating a certain degree of sincerity and kindness towards Fatima and Ali whereas Umar is cast as a stone hearted and ruthless individual. See: al-Mufīd, 185.

<sup>165</sup> Al-Mufīd, *Al-Irshād* (Qum: Shaykh Mufid's Millenium World Congress, 1993), 1:354.

<sup>166</sup> See: Ja'far Murtaḍā al-'Āmilī, *Ma'sāt al-zahrā'* (Beirut: Dār al-Sīrah, 1997), 169-173. My inclination is to concur with the analysis of Ja'far Murtaḍā insofar as the language which al-Mufīd uses in the *Irshād* is very mild and lacks many esoteric details regarding the status of the Imams. For example, his treatment of the wife of the Prophet, Aisha and the companions in the *Irshād* is very different from the harsh language he uses towards the companions and Aisha in his work on The Battle of the Camel. As mentioned previously, he describes those who rejected Ali's leadership both after the death of the Prophet and during his caliphate as "accursed." A complete comparative analysis of the treatment of the companions in *Irshād* and *Kitāb al-jamal* would yield important results in this regard.

Lastly, al-Ṭūṣī's contemporary Ibn Rustam al-Ṭabarī (4/11<sup>th</sup> century) includes a report on the authority of Abū Baṣīr from al-Ṣādiq which is very similar in content to the Salmān report found in the book of Sulaym, except it adds that Fatima lost Muḥsin after Qunfudh (the client of Umar) rather than Umar himself struck Fatima with the sheath of a sword.<sup>167</sup> This report as found in a relatively early (by Imāmī standards) source has been fitted with a complete chain of transmission including some of the most prominent Shiite hadith reporters, ending with al-Ṣādiq's famous blind student, Abū Baṣīr.<sup>168</sup> Within Shiite scholarly circles, a tradition with a chain of transmission of this kind could be deemed to be an authentic and acceptable vision of the past.

Thus from the late Umayyad period onwards, there existed a recognized Shiite belief that Fatima was the victim of a violent encounter either perpetrated or instigated by Muhammad's well known associate and companion, 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. Post-Sulaym ibn Qays Shiite compilations originating from the 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> centuries A.H. (10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> C.E.) may have used the Sulaym text as a source while furnishing additional details with traditions supplied with complete chains of transmission. These post-Sulaym sources describe Fatima as a martyr who died from wounds inflicted as a result of that attack, with some including mention of the murder of her unborn son, Muḥsin. This graphic vision of the past may have originated with either al-Bāqir and or al-Ṣādiq, or

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<sup>167</sup> Ibn Rustam al-Ṭabarī, *Dalā'il al-imāmah* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-A'lamī lil-Maṭbū'āt, 1988), 46.

<sup>168</sup> For instance, in this case- Ibn Rustam's source is Ibn Hārūn al-Ṭal'akbarī (d.375 /10<sup>th</sup> century) who is considered to be a well known Imāmī jurist and source of hadith material for numerous Shiite traditionists. See: al-Amīn, 2:314. Al-Ṭūṣī describes him as having a great status, vast in his reporting of traditions (*wās'i al-riwāyah*), and he is said to have transmitted or reported all of the Shiite *uṣūl* works and works of tradition from the period of the Imams (*jamī al-uṣūl wa al-muṣannafāt*). See: al-Ṭūṣī, *al-Rijāl*, 449. The chain of transmission continues citing the likes of Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Barqī, the compiler of *al-Maḥāsin*, ending with Ibn Muskān and Abū Baṣīr al-Murādī. Both of these transmitters are said to have been a prolific reporters of hadith in addition to being amongst the most loyal of al-Ṣādiq's students and supporters. In the case of Abū Baṣīr, he is listed as an authority in three thousand hadith traditions. See: Modarressi, 150-155 and 395.

at least with a group Shiites who claimed to be their students and followers. In light of the fact that the motif of physical trauma has been transmitted and dramatized in various forms in a number of formative Shiite hadith, it seems quite certain that in the view of numerous prominent Shiite authorities such as, Ibn Qawlawayh, al-Ṣadūq, Ibn Rustam al-Ṭabarī and perhaps al-Mufīd, Umar not only aided the usurpation of Ali's right to the caliphate but was also guilty of the murder of Muhammad's only surviving daughter, Fatima, and her unborn child, Muḥsin.

#### 2.4 Fatima's Last Moments and Burial

The Shiite tradition includes a number of reports describing Fatima's emotional and physical state during the last days of her life. It is during these final ominous days that the motif and ethic of suffering is most pronounced in the sources. Mahmoud Ayoub describes suffering as synonymous with "non-being" in Islamic thought, that is to say, the causes of suffering and destruction cannot be attributed to God as God is conceived to be "true being" and the origin of all that is Good.<sup>169</sup> Consequently, in Twelver Shi'ism tragedy and suffering in essence is not attributed to God; however, patience or forbearance (*ṣabr*) in the face of suffering and tragedy is uniquely meritorious. The 'God-given' potential to patiently bear the brunt of tragedy and oppression allows believers to transform their affliction into a vehicle of salvation. Therefore, Fatima as the infallible daughter of Muhammad, wife of Ali, and mother of al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn appears in Shiite literature as a sober and pious woman who patiently bore the the loss of her father and violation of her own sanctity.

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<sup>169</sup> Mahmoud Ayoub, 24.

This motif of suffering is particularly evident in a report attributed to Jafar al-Şādiq in which he says there are five weepers.<sup>170</sup> These five weepers are Adam, Jacob, Joseph, Fatima, and ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn.<sup>171</sup> As for Fatima, al-Şādiq describes her as weeping over the death of “the messenger of God” so incessantly that the residents of Madina became irritated. She then left her home to continue crying at the graveyard of the martyrs “until she was sated”.<sup>172</sup> This report uses Fatima’s female capacity or propensity for weeping to rank her with and give her prominence over three revered prophets and her grandson, the fourth Shiite Imam. In the company of these prominent males, copious tears and emotion become heroic strengths rather than female weaknesses; they become, indeed, marks of eminence. Fatima becomes the fourth member of a group of pious weepers who wept over the death of Muhammad, pointing to the Shiite notion that Muhammad’s own daughter was among the few who truly apprehended the catastrophic nature of the loss.<sup>173</sup> While the rest of Madina’s inhabitants moved on with their lives, it was Fatima who continued to cry and remember. The report says “She cried over the messenger of God” rather than “her father” to signify that Fatima’s tears were not an expression of a mere loss of a family member, but rather a manifestation of her sincere zeal for God’s messenger. Furthermore, it was these sincere tears which allowed her prayers to be answered, demonstrating the miraculous potential of incessant mourning over God’s martyrs.

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<sup>170</sup> See: the Amālī of al-Şadūq as found in Maḥmūdī, 5:55-56. Also see: al-Şadūq, *al-Khiṣāl* (Qum: Islamic Publications Institute, 1983), 1:272-273.

<sup>171</sup> This list of “the five criers” is also found in al-‘Ayyāshī, 2:188.

<sup>172</sup> The contents of Fatima’s prayer and request has not been included in the report. Perhaps mention of it is simply meant to imply that she was given peace to cope with the loss of her father. See: Ibid, and Maḥmūdī, 5:55-56.

<sup>173</sup> Fatima is also described as never smiling after the death of Muhammad. See the multiple references in al-Kulaynī’s *al-Kāfī* as cited in Clohessy, 152. These reports contribute to the Shiite construction of a Fatima who is serious and sober, an aspect that might also be seen as a play on gender.

The relation between shedding of tears and spiritual charisma is also emphasized in early Islamic mysticism, to the extent that legendary early mystics such as al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728), were given the name “the weepers”.<sup>174</sup> What distinguishes the Sufi “weepers” from Fatima is that her tears are a direct reaction to the loss of Muhammad. While it cannot be determined if Shiites appropriated the concept of weeping from the Sufis or vice versa, Fatima’s suffering and tears at the loss of Muhammad also indicate the transformation of suffering into tears of supplication which receive reward.<sup>175</sup>

Shiite sources also provide vivid details describing Fatima’s final days and hours as spent in solitude at peace with her impending death. The Ismaili jurist, Al-Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān (d. 363/974), a contemporary of al-Ṣadūq, transmits a report attributed to al-Bāqir in which he states that “whatever had been done to her by the people” caused her to become bedridden, while her body wasted until it became like a spectre (*ka-al-khayāl*).<sup>176</sup> This report is one of the few which provides a description of the physical suffering of Fatima following the physical trauma she purportedly experienced. The report is mysterious as it does not attribute the trauma to any specific incident; however, it may be understood in the general context of the Shiite tradition to refer to the violence following Abu Bakr’s ascension to the caliphate at Saqīfah and Fatima’s protest regarding Fadak.

Shiite tradition, similarly to proto-Sunnite-authored historiography, mentions that it was also during this period that Fatima initially refused Abu Bakr and Umar entry into her presence. In the Shiite version, she eventually consenting she allows

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<sup>174</sup> Alexander Kynsh, *Islamic Mysticism a Short History* (Boston: Brill Publications, 2000), 13-14.

<sup>175</sup> The Arabic reads as: “*fa-tabkī ḥattā tuqḍī ḥājatuhā...*” See: al-Ṣadūq, 1:273, and Maḥmūdī, 5:56.

<sup>176</sup> al-Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān, 1:222.

them to enter her room while shunning them. It should be noted that in this version of events attributed to al-Ṣādiq, Abu Bakr does not ask for forgiveness or mercy; rather the tradition ends with al-Ṣādiq recounting: “As the two left her, she was furious (*sākhtah*) with them.”<sup>177</sup> Fatima is depicted as a woman full of righteous anger, and unprepared to forgive her adversaries even in her last days. It should be noted that this anger is characterized in the Shiite hadith as springing from a militant zeal for the safeguarding of the Muhammadan legacy, as opposed to the obstinacy of an emotional female suggested in the proto-Sunnite histories.<sup>178</sup>

The Shiite hadith sources thus provide us with a bleak description of Fatima spending her final days not only in solitude, but physical and emotional agony both at the loss of her father and usurpation of the caliphate by Muhammad’s trusted friends, Abu Bakr and Umar. The literary trope of Fatima’s physical and emotional distress so clearly communicated in the sources is fundamental to a Shiite theology of suffering in which the Shiite Imams descended from her were subjected to profound acts of betrayal, brutal torture, poisoning, and imprisonment. Shiite tradition casts Fatima as a charismatic female figure who underwent her own trial of physical and emotional suffering, in addition to being a mother profoundly aggrieved at hearing of the savage death her young son would meet in the future on the plains of Karbalā’.<sup>179</sup> Her swift burial then became an episode of shared suffering in which her husband Ali was forced to part with his eighteen-year old wife and the daughter of Muhammad in the most dramatic way.

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<sup>177</sup> Ibn Rustam al-Ṭabarī, 46.

<sup>178</sup> This depiction of Fatima has been attributed to ‘Umar in the Salmān tradition as found in Kitāb Sulaym ibn Qays. See discussion above in chapter 1, page 25.

<sup>179</sup> For the details on Fatima’s grief at the impending death of her son see: Clohessy, 135-162.

Al-Shaykh al-Ṭūsī includes a lengthy report describing the final moments in which the third Imam al-Ḥusayn reports that when his mother Fatima fell ill, she requested that Ali hide the matter and not inform anyone of her illness.<sup>180</sup> It is significant that the chain of transmission ends with al-Ḥusayn, as he then becomes not only an eyewitness, but infallible observer. Further yet, it emphasizes the private nature of these emotionally trying moments, as for the Shiites, al-Ḥusayn would have been in an ideal position not only to observe but also share in these intimate yet trying final moments of his mother's life. Returning to the text of the report, al-Ḥusayn goes on to describes his father, Ali, as nursing Fatima (*yumarrīḍuhā*) with some help from their client, Asmā' bint 'Umayy.<sup>181</sup> Then as death approached, she entrusted him to fulfill her wish to keep any information regarding her illness from the Muslims, and in order to do so, she requested that he bury her at night and cover up her burial plot.<sup>182</sup>

This report is rather strange when read outside its context in the Shiite tradition, since it was believed to be common Muslim practice to have at least fellow male believers present during one's funeral services; infact, that was deemed to be

<sup>180</sup> See the Amālī of al-Ṭūsī and al-Mufīd in Maḥmūdī, 5:67.

<sup>181</sup> The early sources list Asmā' bint 'Umayy amongst an elect group of Meccan converts who sought refuge in Abyssinia. According to the reports found in Ibn Sa'ad's *Ṭabaqāt*, she was initially married to Ali's brother, Ja'far ibn Abī Ṭālib. Following his death and her migration to Mecca with the Prophet, she married Abu Bakr and they had a son by the name of, Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr. Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr was raised by Ali (after his father's death) and in-turn became a staunch ally and supporter of the Ali's and an opponent of 'Uthmān, his half-sister Aisha and later on, Mu'āwīyah. After the death of Abu Bakr, Asmā' bint 'Umayy married Ali. All the while, she remained a servant to Fatima and Ali since her early days as a resident in Madina all the while she was married to Abu Bakr. See: Ibn Sa'd, 8:220-223, for a confirmation of these details according to the various Shiite sources see: al-Khū'ī, 23:171-172. Also see: G.R. Hawting, "Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr" in *EHJ*. All of the above mentioned biographical details are of importance for the reason that it would be a monumental task for Shiites to reconcile Asmā' bint 'Umayy's loyalty as Abu Bakr's wife with being Fatima and Ali's confidant and supporter. As per the requirements of the Shiite imagination of the past, Fatima had prayed for Abu Bakr's eternal damnation; with this in mind, how was it possible for Asmā' bint 'Umayy to show love, affection and support for Fatima while being the wife of her sworn enemy? Perhaps from the Shiite perspective, Asmā' bint 'Umayy was only a wife to Abu Bakr while her loyalty was to Fatima.

<sup>182</sup> I should note here that according to Leor Halevi's extensive research on early Islamic burial rituals, it was not unusual for a Muslim to be buried at night since the custom and law emphasized an expedient burial. See: Leor Halevi, *Muhammad's Grave* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 143, 158.



honourable for the deceased.<sup>183</sup> Evidently, the motivation behind the account is to indicate Fatima's disassociation with the Muslim community by not granting them the privilege of participating in her burial. Shiite scholars of both past and present believe that Fatima's secret burial was a sign of her displeasure with the majority of Muslims who failed to support her in her opposition towards Abu Bakr and Umar.<sup>184</sup>

Al-Ḥusayn continues by describing his father as breaking into tears and being overcome with sadness as he shook the dust off his hands from his wife's newly completed, unmarked grave.<sup>185</sup> Ali then turns to the grave of the Prophet and begins a prolonged, grief-filled monologue in which he sends his greetings to the Prophet while exclaiming: "Your chosen one's [referring to himself] patience has waned due to the departure of your daughter, and my strength has faded."<sup>186</sup> The rhetoric of this piece is particularly important because it once again points to the grave of the Prophet as a site at which the wronged and downtrodden may lodge their complaints and shed tears of disappointment. A passage such as this must be read in the context of the developing Shiite shrine culture in which the ardent supporters of the Imams would flock to their

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<sup>183</sup> For details regarding the history of Muslim funerals and burial practices see: Leor Halevi, chapters, 5 and 6. For an example of a Shiite legal discussion on the importance of funeral prayers and last rites see: al-Shaykh al-Ṭūsī, *A Concise Description of Islamic Law and Legal Opinions* trans. A. Ezzati (London: ICAS Press), 109-112. In this case, as with the entire work at hand, I am reading the text from the perspective that it provides us more information regarding the time in which it was compiled or written as opposed to the time period these reports claim to document.

<sup>184</sup> The secret burial of Fatima was a key rallying point for al-Sayyid al-Murtaḍā in asserting that Fatima died in a state of displeasure and hatred towards Abu Bakr and Umar. See: al-Sayyid al-Murtaḍā, *al-Shāfi fī al-Imāmah*, 113-115. A very similar view is expressed by the late, Ayatullah Mirzā Jawad al-Tabrīzī (d.2006) where he states: "It is sufficient (*yakfī*) to confirm the oppression and soundness of what is transmitted regarding her [Fatima's] tragedy and what occurred to her through the hiding of her grave and her will to be buried at night is an obvious indication of her being the object of oppression (*izhāran lilmaẓlūmīyah*)..." as quoted in al-Sayyid Hāshim al-Hāshimī, *Ḥiwār ma' Faḍlallāh ḥawl al-Zahrā'* (Beirut: Dār Zaynab lil-Tibā'a wa-al-Nashr wa-al-Tawzī, 1998), 310.

<sup>185</sup> Maḥmūdī, 5:67.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.* From this point onwards a nearly identical version of this report with the same chain of transmission can be found in al-Kulaynī, 1:458-459.

graves to recite their salutations and often express their disappointment with the status quo, making the grave site into a venue for political protest.<sup>187</sup>

Ali (facing the grave of the Prophet) goes on to express his dismay at Muhammad's death, informing him that he has now returned the trust (*al-wadī'ah*) given to him, that his sadness is endless, and he shall henceforth spend sleepless nights.<sup>188</sup> At this juncture in the report, it is crucial to point out the Shiite symbolism of the loss of the spiritual companions of Ali's life, namely Muhammad and Fatima. The report seems to be modeled on Muhammad's Meccan biography, which was well established by the late 2<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> century. In the biography, the loss of two trusted confidants, Muhammad's uncle Abū Ṭālib and his wife of twenty five years, Khadija, becomes a cause of tremendous grief.<sup>189</sup> Furthermore, the vivid emotional details indicate that Fatima's suffering was something for her husband to partake in and experience; thus it may be described as contagious grief in which Fatima's personal trauma is shared (in spirit) by her husband and her father, on whose grave Ali's tears fall. Phrased differently, the bravest of warriors according to Shiite tradition has his unshakably chivoultous composure and physical power crumble when confronted with laying his wife to rest.<sup>190</sup> These passages may be described as among the most dramatic

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<sup>187</sup> The *ziyārāt* or shrine visitation is a highly understudied component of Shiite religious culture and practice. Many of the more official salutations have been attributed to the Imams themselves of which their contents are highly polemical, emotional, and politically charged. For example refer to what is known as *ziyārat 'ashūrā* in which the Shiites express their dedication to the Imams and express their profound sadness at al-Ḥusayn's death. See: al-Ṭūsī, *Miṣbāh al-mutahajjad* ed. al-Shaykh Ḥusayn al-A'lamī (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-A'lamī al-Maṭbū'āt, 2004), 543-547.

<sup>188</sup> See Maḥmūdī, 5:67 and al-Kulaynī, 1:459.

<sup>189</sup> The biographical literature refers to this year as "the year of sadness" for Muhammad since Abū Ṭālib and Khadija were the most important supporters in his personal and prophetic life. See: W. Watt, *Muhammad Prophet and Statesman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 79. Also see: Fred Donner, *Muhammad and The Believers at the Origins of Islam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 43-44.

<sup>190</sup> According to Sunnite and Shiite tradition, pain and death was something Ali was accustomed to dealing with whether it be as a result of the numerous battles he fought alongside Muhammad or the executions of enemy combatants that he was commanded to carry out. One example of Ali in the role of

examples of Fatima as a motif of suffering in Shiite tradition. Furthermore, the canonical hadith works of al-Ṣadūq and al-Ṭūsī urge believers to recollect and spiritually partake in Fatima’s pain and sorrow upon their visit to Madina by reciting the following salutation: “...Peace be upon you O oppressed one (*mazlūmah*) usurped one (*al-maghṣūbah*); peace be upon you, O subjugated one (*al-muḍṭahadah*) and tormented one (*al-maqhūrah*) one...”<sup>191</sup>

Ali then goes on to appeal to the deceased Prophet, saying: “Your daughter shall soon inform you how your community conspired against me and usurped her [Fatima’s] right, for soon you will seek to be informed by her...”<sup>192</sup> The monologue ends with Ali swearing by God to the Prophet at his grave that he buried his [Muhammad’s] daughter in secret and that “her rights were usurped and her inheritance forcibly taken away.”<sup>193</sup> As emotionally exhausting as the whole affair was for Ali, he is depicted as faithfully partaking in Fatima’s suffering by shouldering the responsibility for

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an executioner is when he was ordered to sever the heads of hundreds of Jews from the tribe of Banū Qurayzah. For details regarding Ali’s role in this mass execution, see: M.J. Kister, “The Massacre of the Banū Qurayza” *Jersualem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 8 (1986), 62.

<sup>191</sup> Al-Ṣadūq states that he himself recited this *ziyārah* when he visited Madina; however, he mentions no chain of transmission or attribution to any of the Imams. See: al-Ṣadūq, *Man lā yaḥḍuruḥu al-faqīh*, 2: 572-573. Whereas, al-Ṭūsī states that he found this salutation mentioned by his co-religionist (*aṣḥāb*). This is indicative of the notion that the content of this salutation according to al-Ṭūsī was commonly known amongst Twelver Shiites and a part of their devotional practice when visiting Madinah. See: al-Ṭūsī, *Tahdhīb al-aḥkām*, 6:10-11. Al-Mufīd has included a similar devotional text which includes an explicit damnation of Fatima’s adversaries. The following is an excerpt: “...Oh the great purified martyr, may God curse (remove his mercy) from he who denied you your inheritance and pushed away your right, and rejected your statement, may God curse (remove his mercy) from those like them and their followers and May God put them in darkest and lowest part of hell...” See: al-Mufīd, *Kitāb al-mazār* (Qum: Sheikh Mufid’s Millennium World Congress, 1993), 179 and for a similar version also see the *fiqh* work al-Mufīd, *al-Muqni’ah* (Qum: Sheikh Mufid’s Millennium World Congress, 1993), 459. The above examples indicate that Fatima’s suffering was an important part of popular Shiite devotional practice and not limited to the books of history and theology.

<sup>192</sup> See: Maḥmūdī, 5:68, and al-Kulaynī, 1: 459.

<sup>193</sup> Maḥmūdī, 5:69. Identical phrasing can be found in the version included in al-Kāfī, see: al-Kulaynī, 1:459.

carrying out her clandestine burial without support from the Madinan Muslim community.<sup>194</sup>

The problematic nature of this secret burial is further emphasized in al-Mufīd's *Ikhtiṣāṣ*.<sup>195</sup> According to this tradition (attributed to al-Ṣādiq), the next morning, news of Fatima's death reached the Muslims in Madina. Immediately, Abu Bakr and Umar berated Ali for not including them in the funeral rites; Ali informed them that this was done according to Fatima's wish. However, Umar hotheadedly (in the common Shiite view) refused to accept Ali's justification and threatened to exhume her body and perform the prescribed prayer over it,<sup>196</sup> to which Ali forcefully responded by declaring: "By God, as long as my heart is between my sides [in my body] and *dhū al-fiqār* (Ali's sword) in my hand, you will not reach close enough to exhume her, and you know best [not to do it]."<sup>197</sup>

This is the first instance, according to Shiite tradition, in which Ali threatens Umar with an act of violence; even during the attack on the home, he forced himself to be patient and not resort to violence. However, the loss of Fatima was, it seems, so

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<sup>194</sup> There is disagreement within the Shiite hadith tradition as to whether Ali was accompanied by his children; al-Ḥasan, al-Ḥusayn, Zaynab, Umm Kulthūm and/or his uncle al-'Abbās. Nevertheless, the traditions emphasize the solitude in which Ali buried his wife, which would not be much affected by the presence of two or three trusted companions or family members.. See: Ibn Rustam al-Ṭabarī, 47.

<sup>195</sup> al-Mufīd, *al-Ikhtiṣāṣ*, 175. The excerpts referred to above is a part of longer report of which its chain of transmission and attribution to al-Ṣādiq has already been discussed in some detail. See discussion above, chapter 2, p. 23, footnote 62.

<sup>196</sup> Umar's statement to Ali is as follows: "By God I will exhume her body and pray over it..." See: al-Mufīd, 175. According to an alternative version, Ali dug 40 decoy graves so to disguise Fatima's burial site. After the news of this spread, the leaders amongst the Madinans (*wulāt al-amr*), possibly referring to Abu Bakr and Umar went to al-Baqī' (the large graveyard in Madina) only to discover that Fatima had been buried and none of them had the opportunity to be present during her funeral rites. This apparently caused a stir amongst the Muslims who felt that the Prophet had not left anything behind but a single daughter who has now died and been buried without the Muslims being able to pay their final respects. At this point the leaders (Abu Bakr and Umar) request Muslim women to come forth and begin exhuming the graves so to find Fatima's body so they may correct the 'travesty' of this secret burial. See: Ibn Rustam al-Ṭabarī, 47.

<sup>197</sup> Umar and Abu Bakr then leave the scene with Abu Bakr telling Umar that Ali has more right to her than us, see: Al-Mufīd, *al-Ikhtiṣāṣ* 175.

traumatizing that Ali's patience had waned and he was no longer willing to tolerate Umar's aggression.<sup>198</sup> These reports as found in the formative sources of Shiite tradition testify that Fatima was a polarizing figure who both suffered grief during her life and caused great sadness following her death.

### Conclusion

The object of this chapter has been to analyze examples of Fatima as a motif of contention and suffering in Shiite hadith sources. Numerous excerpts from compendiums of Shiite hadith in the formative period point to use of the Fatima motifs to condemn the edifice of Sunnite Islam. From the late Umayyad period onward, we see a far-reaching program aimed at denouncing Abu Bakr, Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, and a number of prophetic companions. Oral and later literary features of the F-R conflict in the Shiite sources (beginning with Sulaym) are part of the development of a highly exclusivist sectarian posture, possibly originating in the circle of the associates of the fifth and sixth Shiite Imams and perhaps the Imams themselves, that is the very heart of Shiism.

The repudiation by Shiism of a vast swath companions was first explored through what is known as the "Speech of Fatima", in which the daughter of the Prophet is cast by the Shiites as an empowered female political leader opposing Abu Bakr's 'illegitimate' caliphate. The "Speech of Fatima" in its various recensions reflects a Shiite desire to counter the Sunnite-influenced caricature of Fatima as a weak and dim-

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<sup>198</sup> According to another more explicit version of events attributed to al-Ṣādiq *via* Abū Baṣīr, Ali responded to the threat of exhumation by vowing before God that "if a single stone was to be turned from these ( 40 graves) he will bury his sword in the necks of the leaders See: Ibn Rustam al-Ṭabarī, 47. For a similar threat of violence on the part of Ali see: al-Mufīd, *al-Ikhtisās*, 175.

witted woman overwhelmed by Abu Bakr's superior male intellect and maturity. The Shiite ascription of 'masculine characteristics' to Fatima should not be misconstrued to indicate a general Shiite outlook regarding all women; rather, it is a feature in the construction of Fatima's exceptional and divinely-inspired character as the daughter of Muhammad. Shiite tradition states that Fatima would pay a great price, both literally and figuratively, at the hands of the leading prophetic companions for her role as an extraordinary female political activist.<sup>199</sup> The Shiite legend of Fatima portrays a courageous and emboldened woman ready to suffer for her religious and political position, much as her sons would do after her death. At the same time, the pathos of her sorrow and outrageousness of the abuse she suffered is heightened by her being a defenceless woman; while Abu Bakr and Umar lose their 'chivalry' and 'manhood' by violating gender norms through their lack of respect for female private space and body.

Also importantly, the Shiite hadith tradition attributes a multivalent grief to Fatima as she mourns for the impending slaughter of her son al-Ḥusayn in addition to becoming the object of tyranny and physical abuse herself. The most provocative aspect of this rich Shiite imagination are the reports detailing Fatima's final moments and secret burial. In these final hours, we see a woman beset with anger at the betrayal of her father's prophetic mission by those who claimed to be his most trusted confidants. Fatima, according to Shiite tradition, had none at her bedside except for her loving husband, her client Asmā' bint 'Umayy and her two sons. The Muslim community was by the order of Fatima herself, denied the privilege of attending to her

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<sup>199</sup> I must emphasize here that for Shiites, Fatima transcends traditional conceptions of femaleness and maleness- hence her political activism or leadership qualities would not make her less of a woman in Shiite eyes but rather exceptional infallible religious leader.

during her last hours and funeral services. The tale of a clandestine funeral is designed to transform Fatima's death into an enduring political statement; it is indicative of her utter contempt for those who denied her right to her inheritance as well as her husband's right to be the rightful successor to Muhammad.

The literary motif of suffering and estrangement surrounding Fatima's last hours and burial is also extended to her otherwise forbearing and battle-hardened husband, Ali. This is pictured as taking place at the grave of the Prophet, thus allowing Fatima's father to partake in this suffering. Finally, for Shiites, Fatima's downtrodden person is a part of a far-reaching history of suffering, betrayal, and murder perpetrated by those who neglected the religious and political authority of her children, the infallible Imams. As a result, Shiite recitation and engagement with hadith literature related to Fatima - including the devotional *ziyārāt* or pilgrimage texts - allows Fatima's devotees to partake in a ritual recollection of not only her suffering, but that of her household.

The Fatima themes thus always lead to the imamate, the central concern of Shiism. They also serve to form or reinforce the self-image of the Shiite community as a band of righteous believers in a world plagued by treachery, in which the majority of Muslims - that is non-Shiites - continue to love and admire Fatima's enemies and persecutors.

## Conclusion

In this dissertation, I have attempted bring to light the legacy of the Fatima-Rāshidūn conflict as depicted in the formative Muslim historiographical and Shiite hadith sources. As demonstrated in chapter one, historians such as Ibn Sa'd, al-Balādhurī, and al-Ṭabari, as well as the moderate Shiite al-Mas'ūdī, were primarily concerned with presenting an organic narrative of the Muslim community. Thus they focused primarily on events related to Muslim political life which unfolded in the public sphere. In the historical texts, Fatima plays the role of a contentious, controversial woman at the centre of the turmoil that resulted from the power vacuum following Muhammad's death. Sunnite-influenced historians attempted to portray events in ways that suggested that those who rejected Fatima's claims did so unwillingly, acting only because they were compelled to protect a fragile Muslim community reeling after the death of its Prophet and founder, Muhammad.

Moreover, the historians and their informants crafted their presentations of the F-R conflict so as to avoid repudiating either Fatima or Abu Bakr and his supporters. While some historians such as Pseudo-Ibn Quṭaybah did include dramatic details of an attack on the home of Fatima, such reports were counteracted by placing emphasis on the regret and sense of helplessness felt by the caliph. Therefore, while Pseudo-Ibn Quṭaybah may be described as having Sunnite tendencies, those were moderate enough to allow him to chronicle the F-R conflict in a somewhat neutral fashion. Thus a careful study of the F-R conflict in the historical sources allows us to trace the development of sectarian positions regarding various personalities. The histories also make use of Fatima's femaleness by highlighting Abu Bakr's wisdom and forbearance – outstanding



characteristics of the masculinity of the time - and Fatima's lack of wisdom and immaturity. Portrayal of Fatima as emotional and irrational - in short, an ordinary woman - is used to suggest that the conflict is a mere misunderstanding largely occasioned by Fatima's emotional state. The historical reports as presented by Ibn Sa'd also portray Abu Bakr as a paternal figure who responds to Fatima's emotional harangues with calm, measured words.

Shiite tradition - the pietistic texts of the hadiths - cast Fatima, her family, and their small band of supporters as heroes facing hypocrisy and corruption. This dualistic approach to the F-R conflict is a product of the "private eye" which developed intensely dogmatic views of the companions in the context of the rise of Shiite sectarian particularism in the second century A.H. (eight century C.E.). Shiite particularism entailed the development of an electionism defining itself against the majority of the companions of the Prophet, who Shiites believe betrayed Muhammad's legacy and were open enemies of Fatima, Ali and their children. As a result, the Shiite hadith makes no attempt to digest or negotiate the conflict between Muhammad's daughter and his closest associates. Rather, Abu Bakr, Umar and their supporters are presented as tyrants who not only usurped the leadership of the community from Fatima's husband Ali and denied her claim to the garden of Fadak, but were guilty of physically assaulting the daughter of the Prophet and murdering her unborn son. These scandalous accusations leveled at those who formed Muhammad's inner circle of companions (*aṣḥāb*) constitutes a sweeping repudiation of the foundations of Sunnite Islam. It should also be emphasized that belief in the suffering of Fatima and her violent conflict with the companions cannot be dismissed as being limited to the fringes of popular

Shiism, since many accounts are found in mainstream Shiite hadith tradition, with complete chains of transmission testifying to their 'authenticity', an important matter for the scholars of hadith who vest authority in such chains. In addition, unlike the historical sources, the Shiite corpus of hadith, despite its vastness and inconsistency, has attained a sacral status.<sup>200</sup> The extraordinary details of Fatima's quest for justice, suffering and eventual lonely death reflect a thoroughly sober Shiite world view in which God's friends are few and His enemies many.

Similar to the historical material, the Shiite hadith presents a highly gendered Fatima. Gender themes are at play in both tellings, although, of course, in different ways, so that Shiite treatment of Fatima's femaleness has little in common with that of the historical sources. In the Shiite hadith, Fatima is portrayed as a forceful woman able to command the attention and even awe of grown men, including the venerable Abu Bakr. Her towering presence as communicated in the Speech of Fatima suggests, however, that her influence is unique for a woman, something not entirely of her own doing but a result of her drawing on the charisma of her father.

The intellectually powerful Fatima of Shiite tradition also stands helpless as she is physically assaulted and miscarries her child. Fatima functions as the Shiite matriarch of suffering. But she is also courageous and resistant, as one would expect a male to be. She is a staunch and fearless upholder of rights and truth. She is perhaps forced, like her daughter Zaynab after her, to play a conventionally masculine role because no male can come forward to do so. She seems, that is, to stand in for Ali, who cannot be made to play the active role because it is historically too well known that, Ali

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<sup>200</sup> I have used the wording of A. Al-Azemeh applied to the Sunnite tradition. See: A. Al-Azemeh, "The Muslim Canon" in *Canonization and Decanonization* ed. A Van Der Kooji and K Van Der Toorn (Leiden: Brill Publications, 1998), 204.

as a contender to the caliphate would have been treated as a political threat by the regime and thus did not content the caliphates of Abu Bakr and Umar in the way Fatima has been shown to do so. Finally, Fatima is portrayed as a woman who wished to campaign for her own cause; as the prophet's daughter, she wished to lay claim to what she believed was rightfully hers.

A study of any early prominent Muslim personality raises the question of historicity. In the case of Fatima, the question is complicated by the fact that both Sunnites and Shiites have contributed to constructing her image. It is also evident that statements or actions have been ascribed to Fatima in order legitimate dogmatic positions that only crystallized a hundred to two hundred years after her death.<sup>201</sup> With this in mind, I made the choice to treat the Fatima material not as history, but cosntraction; this is the approach I have taken not only for the hadith (a literature of piety), but also Muslim historiography. This should not be misconstrued as suggesting that the entire Sunnite and Shiite memory of the past is devoid of historical value. Rather, the project at hand has focused on Fatima as a motif of contention and suffering from the perspective of one aspect of the sources that is Islamic intellectual history, particularly as it pertains to the development of Sunnism, Shiism, and controversies between the two. The Fatima figure is at the heart of competing sectarian constructions of a sacralized past;<sup>202</sup> I have argued, in fact, that Fatima is used to

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<sup>201</sup> The inspiration for this description of the pitfalls in a historical study of early Muslim figures originates in my reading of Suleiman Ali Mourad's work on al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d.110/728). See: Suleiman Ali Mourad, *Early Islam Between Myth and History al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and His Legacy in Classical Islamic Scholarship* (Leiden: Brill Publications, 2006), 4-16.

<sup>202</sup> The inspiration for this line of thought came from Rainer Brunner's highly arcane article on Shiite hadith. See: Brunner, 329.

powerfully mark and develop the sectarian divide. She is not, as some Western scholars have imaged, an incidental figure either for Shiites or Sunnites.

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