A comparison of four medieval Muslim historians' narratives of Saqīfa

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Abstract

Following the death of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) in 632 CE, a hastily convened meeting at Saqīfa resulted in Abū Bakr being chosen as successor. The events at Saqīfa and the issue of the Prophet's legitimate successor soon became one of the most intractable conflicts in the religious history of the Islamic world. To date no researcher has critically analysed the range of early historical works regarding Saqīfa, nor has a comparative in-depth study of these texts been carried out. Little is known about how early medieval historians viewed and presented this controversial episode or the extent to which their historiographical works aligned with a range of proto-Sunnī and proto-Shīʿī theological positions.

Through a comparative analysis I examine the narrative representation of Saqīfa in four primary historical texts, the differences in the representation of this event, and the strategies of compilation, including selection of sources employed by each author to support a particular religio-political view on the issue of the Prophet's succession. The four texts are: *Ansāb al-Ashrāf* by al-Balādhurī (d.278/892), *Taʾrīkh* by al-Yaʿqūbī (d.283/897), *Taʾrīkh al-Rusul wa ʾl-Mulūk* by al-Ṭabarī (d.310/923) and *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* by Ibn Aʿtham (d.314/926-7).

I argue that in view of the centrality of the Saqīfa event to both proto-Shīʿī and proto-Sunnī doctrine, as well as the highly controversial nature of the event, these four historians constructed a narrative that reinforced their particular theological stances regarding succession to the Prophet. Written between two to three centuries after the event, these historical narratives were intended as 'factual' accounts of the Saqīfa incident and indicate that both al-Ṭabarī's and al-Balādhurī's narrative aligned with proto-Sunnism, al-Yaʿqūbī's with an early expression of proto-Imāmi Shīʿism and that Ibn Aʿtham can tentatively be associated with Batri Zaydism.

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Tables and Figures

1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction and context of study

Following the death of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) in 11/632, a hastily
convened meeting was organised by the Anṣār to select a successor[1] It was held in a covered
communal meeting place, known as a Saqīfa, belonging to the Khazrajī clan Banū Sāʿida. This
historical episode in which, after a prolonged debate, Abū Bakr (d. 13/634) succeeded the
Prophet, became known as the Saqīfa.[2]

The legitimacy of Abū Bakr's caliphate and the issue of who was to rightfully succeed the
Prophet is one of the earliest and most intractable conflicts in the religious history of the
Islamic world. It led to a number of civil wars, failed uprisings, and the gradual emergence of a
number of distinct religio-political theories of legitimate leadership. The epistemological basis
of the necessity of leadership, the mechanisms of appointment and deposition and the
qualifications for leadership not only distinguish the (proto-) Sunnī from (proto-) Shi'i streams,
but have also given rise to a multiplicity of groupings within the broad rubric of Sunnī and Shī'ī
thought.

The narrative and memory of Saqīfa, and the question of legitimacy of rule, became crucial
factors in the development of theological doctrine, identity formation and sectarianism, as
well as cultural and intellectual differences that developed over the course of subsequent
centuries. The implications of these differences are still felt today. Despite centuries of largely
peaceful co-existence, the period after the 1979 Iranian Revolution saw a rise in tension
between Sunnīs and Shī'īs. In the 21st century, geopolitical alignments are being formed on the
basis of this intra-religious divide. Thus an understanding of the portrayal/memory of the
Saqīfa incident is crucial for our understanding of Islam in general and Sunnī-Shī'ī relations in
particular.

With no primary extant sources for the events in question, our modern understanding of
Saqīfa is through the work of later historians from the ʿAbbāsid period. The ʿAbbāsid historians
who wrote the earliest extant works relied on a pool of earlier (oral and written) sources which

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[1] See glossary in Chapter 2 for explanation of 'Anṣār'.
[2] Lecomte, G., "al-Saḳīfa", EI².

were themselves shaped by ongoing religious and political debates.[3] Thus we have multiple polemical contexts, with the extant works inevitably absorbing some of the orientation of the earlier works as well as exhibiting the biases of the Abbāsid historians. Although the lack of contemporary sources has led many Islamicists to be sceptical of the historical value of the sources that remain, my research is not concerned with the issue of historicity as such, but rather focuses on how the accounts of Saqīfa were utilised by medieval Muslim historians.

1.2   Statement of Problem

As my review of literature shows, scholars use a range of early sources to discuss a number of issues related to the events at Saqīfa and the succession of Abū Bakr. These issues include the stance of ʿAlī and the Anṣār towards Abū Bakr's succession, the appearance of various factions following the Prophet's death, the concept of hereditary succession, and the nature and relevance of succession in pre-Islamic Arabia to the issue of choosing the Prophet's successor. Madelung's eminent study engages the problem of succession from Shīʿī orientated sources and is the most detailed study of Saqīfa. However, his work is partisan, and he selectively chooses accounts that conform to a pro-Shīʿī version of events.

To date no researcher has critically analysed the range of early historical works regarding Saqīfa, nor has a comparative in-depth study of these texts been carried out. Little is known about how early medieval Muslim historians viewed and presented this highly controversial episode of succession to the Prophet. In addition, no existing study has analysed the relationship between early debates about succession to the Prophet and early historiographical works, or the extent to which these historiographical works aligned with a range of proto-Sunnī and proto-Shīʿī theological positions.

1.3   Research Question

What do the Saqīfa narratives of four medieval historians reveal about their views concerning succession to the Prophet?

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[3] Fred Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing*, (1998), pp. 125-6.

The four texts in question are: *Ansāb al-Ashrāf* by al-Balādhurī (d.278/892), *Ta'rīkh* by al-Yaʿqūbī (d.283/897), *Ta'rīkh al-Rusul wa 'l-Mulūk* by al-Ṭabarī (d.310/923) and *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* by Ibn Aʿtham (d. 314/926-7). Although numerous scholars have referred to these primary sources in their discussions of early Islamic history, the present study is unique in isolating and examining these primary sources on Saqīfa as a series of early texts, in a comparative critical framework.[4]

Both al-Yaʿqūbī and Ibn Aʿtham use a continuous narrative in which they exhibit clear authorship. Hence, if they do propound a particular view on succession, it will not be difficult to ascertain this. Al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī, on the other hand, use a *ḥadīth* format in which various, often contradictory reports are juxtaposed together without a clear narrative thread. In the case of these two historians, the question arises: can we attribute authorship to their text? This question is crucial to my research: if these texts do not display authorship then question of authorial intention is a moot one.

Weststeijn highlights various scholarly opinions regarding the question of authorship in al-Ṭabarī's *Ta'rīkh*. These opinions also apply to al-Balādhurī's *Ansāb* as it broadly shares the same genre of historiography as al-Ṭabarī's *Ta'rīkh*.

1) Lassner argues that al-Ṭabarī's *Ta'rīkh* had no one author. The work is a collection of reports, arbitrarily put together by a group of scribes.[5]

2) According to Humphreys, although al-Ṭabarī was the sole complier of the *Ta'rīkh*, there was no real authorship.[6] Lichtenstadter agrees, adding that al-Ṭabarī merely presented the 'facts' and left the issue of interpretation to the reader.[7]

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[4]Several other medieval historians also wrote on early Islamic history. The following works are extant: *Ta'rīkh* by Khalīfa b. Khayyāt (d.240/854), *Al-Imāma wa-l Siyāsa* by pseudo-Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889), *Murūj al-dhahab wa-maʿādin al-jawhar* by Maʿsūdī (d.345/956), *Al-Akhbār al-Tiwāl* by Abū Ḥanīfa al-Dīnawarī (d.283/896), *Kitāb al-Ṭabaḵāt al-kabīr* by Muḥammad b. Saʿd (d.230/845) and *Kitāb sīrat rasūl Allah* by Ibn Isḥāq (d.150/767). However, with the exception of Ibn Saʿd and Ibn Isḥāq, these authors only mentioned Saqīfa briefly. Ibn Isḥāq used only one (albeit long) ḥadīth on Saqīfa. Al-Balādhurī quotes extensively from Ibn Saʿd, and hence I chose the former over the latter.

[5] J. K. Weststeijn, 'A Handful of Red Earth: Dreams of Rulers in Tabari's History of Prophets and Kings', (University of Amsterdam 2009), p. 9.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

3) A number of scholars including Hodgson, Leder, Robinson, Judd and Mårtensson propose that al-Ṭabarī did exhibit authorship in his *Ta'rīkh*, however he presented his opinion indirectly through the arrangement of material in his text.[8]

The third view is the prevalent scholarly view.[9] Through a close reading of their text, I will demonstrate that both al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī did display authorship, albeit indirectly, and their narratives can reveal their views on succession.

1.4 Research Objectives

My approach to answering this research question rests on my pursuit of the following four objectives:

a) Describe the religio-political milieu in which the four historians lived.

b) Present brief biographies of the four authors.

c) Analyse, compare and contrast the strategies of compilation used by the four historians.

d) Ascertain the degree of congruence of their narratives with proto-Sunnī/proto-Shī'ī views on succession, which I will also define and analyse.

1.5 Conceptual Framework

The key concept that my four medieval historians utilise in their narrative is legitimate succession (to the Prophet). An immediate corollary of this is the concept of legitimate political and religious authority. Over time, two diametrically opposing views on the locus of political and religious authority developed. Sunnīs recognised the political authority of the caliph and located religious authority in the 'ulamā'. Shī'ī's rejected the political authority of the caliph and located both religious and political authority in the Imāms. These conflicting understanding of the nature of legitimate authority have their origins in the historical memory and interpretation of the events at Saqīfa. My four historians predicate their concept of legitimate succession on several other concepts including: *faḍl, sābiqa, qarāba, naṣṣ* and *ijmā'.*[10]

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[8] Ibid. p. 10.; Keaney refers to this as 'unavowed authorship". Heather Keaney, *Medieval Islamic Historiography: Remembering Rebellion*, (2013), p. 3.

[9] Keaney (2013), p. 3.

[10] These terms are explained in the glossary.

My analysis of these four texts is underpinned by a focus on the *narrative techniques* and *compilatory strategies* of these four historians, whose intellectual agency is here deployed in order to promulgate specific and distinctive readings of Saqīfa, which are either pro-Abū Bakr or pro-'Alid. These, in turn, align with proto-Sunnī and proto-Shī'ī theological positions on succession. The conceptual framework of my research is thus characterised by an analysis of a critical and constitutive historical episode, its projection in the earliest extant historical accounts and the relationship of these readings of Saqīfa with theological positions and values such as *imāma*, *faḍl* and *sābiqa*.

1.6 Research Methodology

In order to answer my research question I use a hermeneutical methodology to understand the meaning of the four narratives. In hermeneutics the task of the researcher is to extrapolate the meaning of the text from the author's perspective as well as taking into account the specific socio-historic context in which the text was produced.[11] This involves a "close, detailed reading of text to …discover deeper… meanings that are embedded within the text" as well as looking at the relationship between an entire text and its constituent parts.[12] This methodology is ideal for my research as my aim is to provide a clearer analytical understanding of how early Muslim historians viewed and presented this highly constitutive period of Islamic history. Particular attention will be given to how the authors' use various terms and concepts that have religio-political connotations.

I first provide the intellectual and political context in which the four narratives were produced and give brief biographies of the four authors. Following this, I undertake a systematic and detailed reading of each of the four texts in order to understand what each narrative reveals about authorial views concerning succession to the Prophet. I draw upon and adapt the approach of Fred Donner who, in his discussion of Ibn 'Asākir's account of 'Uthmān, referred to the 'strategies of compilation' used by the author to present a distinctly Sunnī version of events.[13] I examine a number of strategies of compilation and narrative techniques including the selection of sources, omission of other sources, foreshadowing, repetition and use of brief

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[11] Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, (2012), p. 560.

[12] Lawrence Neuman, *Social Research Methods*, (2014), p. 103.

[13] Fred Donner, ''Uthmān and the Rāshidūn Caliphs in Ibn 'Asākir's Ta'rīKh Madīnat Dimashq: A Study in Strategies of Compilation ', in *Ibn 'Asākir and Early Islamic History,* ed. by James Lindsay (2001), pp. 44-61.

commentary which the authors used to highlight the excellence and precedence of either Abū Bakr or 'Alī.[14] I map and discuss each author's organisation of his source material, and the possible impact of this on the reader and on the narrative itself. Through a close reading of each text, I locate the authorial views on succession to the Prophet within the range of proto-Sunnī and proto-Shī'ī theological positions and compare differences in the representation of the Saqīfa event in each of the four narratives. Finally, I contextualise the four Saqīfa narratives within the early debates about succession to the Prophet, draw out unique aspects of each narrative and their significance, explain how my reading of these texts differs from those of other modern scholars, and I briefly examine the longer-term impact of these texts.

1.7   The importance of the four narratives to my study.

The importance of these early narratives to my study is twofold. Firstly, these works are amongst the earliest of those extant; secondly, for the purposes of comparison, the similarities and differences between the authors are significant. In terms of religio-intellectual alignments, al-Balādhurī and al-Ṭabarī were considered to be proto-Sunnī whereas al-Ya'qūbī and Ibn A'tham were considered to be proto-Shī'ī.[15] I hope to be able to identify whether and to what extent sectarian affiliations are discernible from the context, composition and architecture of their respective narratives.

In terms of comparability, the authors all lived in the hundred-year period of the mid-ninth to mid-tenth centuries, and also in the same region of Iraq. All four historians travelled widely, with some holding official government posts. In my biographies of the four historians, I offer further discussion of where these authors lived, studied and travelled, and the implications of these factors for their writing of early Islamic history in general, and of Saqīfa in particular.

It was during this formative period of Islam that the nascent theories of *Imāmate* and Caliphate were in development and were subject to intense debate, both within and between proto-Sunnī and proto-Shī'ī scholarly circles. A number of important works relating to the theory of *Imāmate* were being written including *al-Maḥasin* by al-Barqī, (d. 274/888), as well as Abū Yūsuf's (d. 182/798) *Kitāb al-Kharāj* (book of taxation), and al-Jāhiz's (d. 254/868) book

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[14] The concept of "excellence and precedence" is taken from Asma Afsaruddin, *Excellence and Precedence: Medieval Islamic Discourse on Legitimate Leadership*, (2002).

[15] Chapter 4 gives more information about their purported religious affiliation.

on the theory of the Caliphate.[16] This hundred-year period also covers the deaths of the eighth to twelfth Shīʿī Imāms, the deaths of Sunnī *ḥadīth* compilers al-Bukhāri (d.256/870) and Muslim (d.261/875), and the periods of the minor and major Occultations within the *Shīʿī* historical/religious paradigm.

Politically, this period covers the growing influence of Turkish soldiery, the anarchy at Sāmarrā, the fragmentation of the ʿAbbāsid state and the coming of the Buyids. Both the Umayyads and the ʿAbbāsids had to face numerous revolts from the ʿAlids and the Khawārij who rejected, on religious grounds, the authority and legitimacy of the caliph. In addition, the caliphs had an uneasy relationship with a number of proto-Sunnī scholars. Furthermore, the coming of Fāṭimid dynasty presented an existential threat to the ʿAbbāsid state. Thus all these authors were responding to a similar, if multivalent set of political and theological issues that played out in the social world and informed, to seemingly varying degrees, their writing of history.

1.8   Thesis Overview

1.8.1   Chapter 1. Introduction.
(the current chapter).

1.8.2   Chapter 2. Literature Review.
This chapter consists of a review of the academic literature on succession to the Prophet**.** I compare and contrast academic studies in English that relate to succession in chronological mode, starting from Canon Sell's 1913 work, *al-Khulafa ar-Rāshidūn*. Part one introduces the review and parts two to four examine the issue of succession from historical and historiographical perspectives, in which I evaluate how academic works refer to or portray the events at Saqīfa and the conclusions that they draw. Part five of the literature review is concerned with theoretical aspects related to succession, in which I assess academic debates on the *theory of succession* to the Prophet; i.e. the manner in which a successor to the Prophet might be expected to have been chosen in light of Arab customary practice and religious

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[16] Chapter 3.3.2.2 gives further information about Barqī; As is clear from the title of Abū Yūsuf's book, it primarily intended for administrative purposes. However, the author also gives a religious justification for the legitimacy of the caliph. Ann KS Lambton, *State and Government in Medieval Islam*, (2013), pp. 55-6.; Al-Jāhiz, a Mutazilī scholar was a prolific writer, authoring books on topics as diverse as theology, politics, literature, philosophy, and zoology. He was invited to Baghdad by the caliph Maʾmūm, where he wrote a number of treatises against the *ahl al-ḥadīth*. Michael Cooperson, 'Jāḥeẓ', *Encyclopaedia Iranica* <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/jahez> [accessed 01 February 2019]; Waed Athamneh, 'Al-Jahiz (159/775–255/868)', in *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World,* ed. by Richard C. Martin (2016).

teachings. In this context I examine the strengths and weaknesses of the various positions on the issue. Given the ground-breaking nature of Madelung's book on *The Succession to the Prophet*, I give particular attention to his theories and narrative.

1.8.3 Chapter 3. The political and religious situation in the central Islamic lands.

Historians, like all individuals, are moulded by the society in which they live. Hence, their narratives need to be studied in light of the society in which they were produced.[17] In this chapter I examine the political and religious milieu in which the four historians lived, as this undoubtably influenced their intellectual outlook, and hence their historical narratives.

1.8.4 Chapter 4. Biographies of the four historians.

Here I present brief biographies of the four historians, including discussion of their politico-religious alignments. I examine the structure and style of their books and highlight notable features of each account of Saqīfa (e.g. length, type of format, and use of *isnād*).

1.8.5 Chapter 5. Introduction to chapters 6 to 9.

Here, I give a brief introduction to the subsequent four chapters.

1.8.6 Chapters 6 to 9: An analysis of the four historical texts

In these chapters I analyse the strategies of compilation employed by each of the four historians in turn and how these were used to support a particular religio-political view on succession.

1.8.7 Chapter 10. Analysis

This chapter provides a further level of analysis by

- contextualising the four Saqīfa narratives within the early debates about succession to the Prophet.
- drawing out unique aspects of each narrative and explaining their significance through a comparative analysis.
- showing how my reading and explication of these early texts builds on and adds significantly to present-day understanding of the Saqīfa and its constitutive role in early Islamic history.

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[17] Edward H Carr, *What Is History?,,* (1990), pp. 42-4.

- examining briefly the longer-term impact of the four representations of Saqīfa via the ways in which they shaped later traditions.

1.8.8   Chapter 11. Conclusion.

This chapter restates my key findings and presents my concluding remarks. Here, I gloss the innovation and significant contributions of my research on the basis of its:

- detailed survey of literature on the issue of Saqīfa.

- comparative narrative analysis of the earliest available accounts of Saqīfa.

- analytical discussion of the seeming inevitability, or otherwise, of major sectarian differences in the Islamic world, both in the past and the present.

1.9   Note on terminology

I will now define some important terms that will be used throughout my dissertation.

1.9.1   ‘Alid

Berheimer defines the term *‘Alid* to means "the Prophet's family, and in particular his descendants through Fāṭima, the Ḥasanids and Ḥusaynids."[18] She also includes descendants of ‘Alī through marriage as well as the descendants of ‘Alī's brothers and sister. Not all ‘Alids were proto-Shī‘ī. Although some prominent ‘Alids rebelled against the Umayyads and the ‘Abbāsids, others actively supported the ‘Abbāsid government.[19] Reverence for the Prophet's family, described by Berheimer as *‘Alidism*, was (and still is) cross sectarian, and hence ‘Alidism and proto-Shī‘īsm are not synonymous.[20]

1.9.2   Pro-'Alid

This term is synonymous with proto-Shī‘a.[21]

1.9.3   Proto-Shī‘a

The term proto-Shī‘a refers to a diverse array of religious movements that existed in the formative period of Islam, holding a range of theological positions, but united on the belief

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[18]Teresa Bernheimer, *'Alids, the First Family of Islam. 750-1200*, (2013), p. 2.
[19] Ibid. pp. 5-6.
[20] Ibid. p. 1.
[21] Keany uses 'pro-''Alid' in juxtaposition with proto-Sunnī and hence I infer from this that the term is very close to proto-Shī‘a. Keaney (2013), p. 21.

that legitimate political and religious authority belongs exclusively to the 'Alids. By the tenth century, most but not all of the proto-Shī'a strands evolved into three distinct Shī'ī sects; the Ithnā-'Ashariyya, Zaydī and Ismā'īlī.

1.9.4 Proto-Imāmī

Haider defines Imāmī (without the prefix 'proto') as 'the earliest manifestation of the sect that we today refer to as the Twelvers… [but this] should not be taken as referring exclusively to the antecedents of the modern Imāmi Twelver community.'[22] Following the death of Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (d.765/148), differences arose on the identity of his successor. This led to the emergence of a multiplicity of sects each whom who followed a particular descendant of Ja'far. These sects are included within the definition of Imāmī. Haider believes the proto-Imāmī emerged around the time of Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d.117/733) and Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (i.e. the early 2nd/8th century).[23] The proto-Imāmīs differ from other proto-Shī'ī groups due to their unique doctrine of *Imāmate* which took shape during the time of Ja'far al-Ṣādiq. It was based upon three main principles.

1. *Imāmate* by naṣṣ.[24]
2. The Imām was the sole source of religious knowledge which was transmitted to him through naṣṣ of the preceding Imām. [25]
3. The Imām was immune to sin or error.[26]

This doctrine distinguishes the proto-Imāmīs from the Zaydīs, as well as from the various proto-Sunnī groups.[27] The Zaydīs rejected all three principles, holding that although 'Alī was the most deserving to succeed the Prophet this was based upon implicit evidence from the Quran.[28] Prior to the emergence of the proto-Imāmī, the various Shī'ī groups were subsumed under the umbrella term proto-Shī'ī.

1.9.5 Sunnī

By the fifth/ eleventh century the four *madhabs* as well as the 'Ash'arī, Māturīdī and traditionalist theological schools of thought had all been accepted as part of a Sunnī

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[22] Najam Iftikhar Haider, *The Origins of the Shī'a : Identity, Ritual, and Sacred Space in Eighth-Century Kūfa*, (2011), p. 14 fn 42.
[23] Ibid. p. 14.
[24] Farhad Daftary, *A History of Shi'i Islam*, (2013), p. 53.
[25] Ibid. pp. 53-4.
[26] Ibid. p. 54.
[27] A number of scholars use Imāmī in juxtaposition to Zaydī. See Wilferd Madelung, 'Religious Schools and Sects in Medieval Islam', (1985), (p. 392).
[28] Najam Iftikhar Haider, *Shi'i Islam : An Introduction*, (2014), p. 63.

orthodoxy.[29] This orthodoxy, despite its varying theological and legal schools of thought, was united upon a number of key principles. These included the acceptance of the ḥadīth as a source of law and a means to interpret the Quran, agreement on the collective probity of the Companions, recognition of the legitimacy of the first four caliphs, and a shared historical vision of the transmission of ḥadīth from the time of the Prophet to the era of Aḥmad b. Hanbal.[30] This orthodoxy, whose self-identification was in contradistinction to the Shī'a were also known as ahl al-sunna wa 'l jamā'a, or Sunnīs.

The three aforementioned theological schools that constituted the Sunnī orthodoxy had different origins. The 'Ash'arīs who are associated with their eponym founder Abul Ḥasan al-'Ash'arī differed with him on a number of credal issues and took certain concepts from the Mu'tazila.[31] The Māturīdīs were faithful to the creed and (Ḥanafī) madhhab of their eponym Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī. The traditionalists, who were most closely associated with the madhhab of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, were relatively strong in all four madhabs and predated the 'Ash'arīs and Māturīdīs.[32] They had their origins in a group of eighth-century ḥadīth scholars known as ahl al-ḥadīth.[33] who in contrast to the broad-based Sunnīsm of the eleventh century rejected any creed which, in their view, was in opposition to the Quran and ḥadīth.[34]

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[29] Khalid Blankinship, 'The Early Creed', in *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology,* ed. by Tim Winter (2008), pp. 33-54.; The traditionalists within all four *madhabs* strongly resisted the infiltration of *kalām* based doctrines. George Makdisi, 'Ashʿarī and the Ash'arites in Islamic Religious History I', *Studia Islamica,* (1962), 47.; See 3.3.3.5.5 for details of al-'Ash'arī and Māturīdī.

[30] Asma Sayeed, *Women and the Transmission of Religious Knowledge in Islam*, (2013), p. 7; Mairaj Syed, 'Sunnism', in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought,* ed. by Patricia Crone Gerhard Bowering, Wadad Kadi, et al (2012), pp. 535-7.

[31] Watt, W. Montgomery, "Ashʿariyya" EI²; The origins of the Mu'tazila are subject to scholarly debate. It is believed that the Baṣran Wāṣil b. ʿAṭāʾ (d.131/748) made *iʿtizāl* (withdrawal) from the circle of Ḥasan al-Baṣri on the issue of the status of the major sinner. Sabine Schmidtke, *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, (2015), p. 130.; Gimaret, D., "Muʿtazila" EI².*;* He argued that the major sinner was neither a believer nor a disbeliever but in an intermediate position. Due to his *iʿtizāl*, the name Mu'tazila was coined. William Montgomery Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, (1998), pp. 209-10.; Ian Richard Netton, *A Popular Dictionary of Islam*, (2006), pp. 185-6. According to the Mu'tazila, *tawḥīd* necessitates divesting God of all anthropomorphic qualities and hence they made figurative interpretation of His attributes. Watt (1998), pp. 246-8.; This theological position led to the controversy of the createdness of the Quran. They argued that if the Quran was uncreated, this entailed the existence of another eternal entity alongside God. Ibid. p. 245.; This theological position was adopted by al-Ma'mūn in 211/827, eventually leading to a fully-fledged inquisition (218-237/833-851). Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. 'Ma'mum, Al' Muhammad Qasim Zaman, 'Ma'mum, Al', in *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World,* ed. by Rich Martin (2004), pp. 427-8 pp. 427-8).

[32] Makdisi (1962).

[33] Jonathan AC Brown, *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World*, (2009), p. 174. These ḥadīth scholars were involved in the transmission and critiquing of ḥadīth.

[34] Feryal Salem, *The Emergence of Early Sufi Piety and Sunnī Scholasticism: ʿabdallāh B. Al-Mubārak and the Formation of Sunni Identity in the Second Islamic Century*, (2016), p. 29.; Brown (2009), pp. 174-5.; these groups included the Qadariyya, Mu'tazila, Khawārij as well as the various proto-Shī'ī groups.

The *ahl al-ḥadīth* scholars, who were mainly *ḥadīth* critics and transmitters, played a major role in the articulation of Sunnī Islam.[35] They formed a network of mutually-validating scholars and considered themselves as representative of correct belief.[36] Their high status amongst the masses ensured that their beliefs became recognised and accepted as normative.[37] The canon of *ḥadīth* books that Sunnīs of all four *madhabs* agree upon and revere is one of the enduring results of their cumulative effort.[38]

1.9.6   Proto-Sunnī

Having defined 'Sunnī', I now explain my usage of the term 'proto-Sunnī'. This term refers to individuals and groups in the first four centuries of Islam who were regarded by later Sunnis (fifth century and beyond) as representative of their tradition.[39] Thus this term excludes proto-Shīʿīs, as well as the Khawārij, and Muʿtazila.

In this chapter I have outlined the rationale for my study and offered a brief synopsis of my ten chapters. In the following chapter I critically examine the literature on succession to the Prophet.

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[35] Scott C Lucas, *Constructive Critics, Ḥadīth Literature, and the Articulation of Sunnī Islam: The Legacy of the Generation of Ibn Saʿd, Ibn Maʿīn, and Ibn Ḥanbal*, (2004).
[36] Salem (2016), p. 139.
[37] Ibid. pp. 91-2.
[38] Lucas (2004), pp. 12-13.
[39] Matthew Pierce, *Twelve Infallible Men*, (2016), p. 169 fn 9.

2 Literature Review: The succession to the Prophet

In this literature review I will provide an overview of the academic debate on succession to the Prophet Muhammad. The literature review will consist of four parts.

In parts one of the literature review, I examine the issue of succession from a historical perspective. I compare and contrast different scholars' representations of Saqīfa and related events. I delineate where authors drew similar conclusions and note areas of disagreement. In part two, I examine the incident of the paper and the pen, and the *ḥadīth* of Ghadīr Khumm.

Part three, entitled, 'How should a successor to the Prophet be chosen?', discusses the theoretical aspect of succession to the Prophet; i.e. the manner in which a successor to the Prophet might have been expected to be chosen in light of Arab customary practice and Islamic religious teachings. Given that Madelung's book, *The Succession to Muhammad*, is a seminal study in the field, I give particular attention to his narrative of events and to his theoretical approach.

Parts four is a glossary of key terms.

2.1 Saqīfa and related events

Part two covers the events at Saqīfa Banī Sā'idah, better known as Saqīfa. Given that Madelung devotes 17 pages of his book to describing and analysing the events at Saqīfa, I outline his narrative and analysis of events below, while at the same time, comparing and contrasting it with that of other scholars. A number of scholars hold that the events at Saqīfa averted a crisis in the *umma*, and this view will be discussed briefly. Finally, several modern scholars highlight the re-emergence of tribalism and factionalism following the Prophet's death. I end this section with a description and analysis of various factions, as described by the aforementioned scholars.

2.1.1 Madelung's methodology: a comparison with other scholars

In his magisterial account of *The Succession to Muhammad* (1997), a book that took the field by surprise in its fidelity to early proto-Shī'ī sources, Wilferd Madelung uses extant historical narrations (albeit selectively) to provide an account of the events at Saqīfa. Unlike most scholars, who take a fairly cautious approach to narrating early Islamic history, Madelung, through a "judicious use" of the sources, not only feels confident in stating precisely what happened, but also to delve into the motivations and allegiances of key actors and interest groups.[40] Contrary to the generality of scholars who consider the earliest extant narrations as products of the milieu that produced them, Madelung appears to take some of these as a reliable account of what actually happened. One may note also that his narrative is often interspersed with statements as to what should have happened, rather than what did happen, a result, in my view, of his partisan stance in favour of 'Alī.[41] Another important criticism of the book is the lack of explanation of his approach to the sources.[42] As such, the reviews of Madelung's work have been generally negative. Reviewers have pointed out a number of shortcomings including: rejecting 'inconvenient' traditions,[43] partisanship,[44] use of "self-serving

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[40] Wilferd Madelung, *The Succession to Muhammad: A Study of the Early Caliphate*, (1997), p. xi.

[41] Michael Morony, 'Review of the Succession to Muhammad: A Study of the Early Caliphate. Wilferd Madelung', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies,* 59 (2000), 156.

[42] Keith Lewinstein, 'Review of the Succession to Muhammad: A Study of the Early Caliphate. Wilferd Madelung', *JOAS,* 121 (2001), 326.

[43] Hugh Kennedy, 'Review of the Succession to Muhammad: A Study of the Early Caliphate. Wilferd Madelung', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (Third Series),* 8 (1998), 88.

[44] Ingrid Mattson, 'Review of the Succession to Muhammad: A Study of the Early Caliphate. Wilferd Madelung', *The Journal of Religion,* 78 (1998), 321.

tendentious arguments"[45] arbitrariness in use of evidence,[46] and an unscholarly approach.[47] Newman on the other hand gives a positive review of the book, praising Madelung's high level of scholarship and depth of analysis, whilst at the same time, accepting the controversial nature of the book.[48] Similar to a number of Shīʿī authors (whose works will be covered in the review), Madelung sets a normative position on the issue of succession. This normative position influences his selection and interpretation of sources. On the other hand, most scholars describe and analyse the events at Saqīfa without supporting a particular sectarian viewpoint.

I now briefly examine the source methodology used by a number of scholars who feature prominently in my literature review. I have selected authors who have devoted substantial space (three or more pages) to the issue of succession.

Ayoub (2003) in his eighteen-page discussion of succession to the Prophet uses a number of primary sources from both Sunnī and Shīʿī historians, including pseudo-Ibn Qutaybah, I bn A'tham al-Kūfī, al-Yaʾqūbī ,al-Ṭabarī and al-Masʿūdī. Although Ayoub draws a number of tentative conclusions from the various contradictory reports, unlike Madelung he does not present a normative position.[49] Nor does he attempt to resolve the contradictions between these reports.[50] As Takim points out, Ayoub concludes that the Saqīfa event is "shrouded in confusion."[51]

Afsaruddin (2008) devotes seven pages to the issue of succession and a further four pages in outlining her approach to the sources. [52] In a scathing rebuttal of the revisionist camp, Wansborough (1977), Cook and Crone (1977) and others, she passionately argues that a "judicious scrutiny" of the early sources (ḥadīth, tārikh, biographical works etc.) *can* (italics

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[45] Morony (2000), p. 153.

[46] Mattson (1998), p. 322.; Lewinstein (2001), p. 326.

[47] Mattson (1998), p. 321.

[48] Andrew J Newman, 'Review of the Succession to Muhammad: A Study of the Early Caliphate. Wilferd Madelung', *Iranian Studies,* 32 (1999), 403-5.

[49] E.g. the Prophet did not nominate a successor; the Anṣār favoured ʿAlī over other Meccans; Abū Bakr rekindled inter-tribal conflicts within the Anṣār to secure his own position; ʿAlī opposed the Saqīfa decision and was coerced into pledging allegiance.

[50] Liyakat Takim, 'Review of the Crisis of Muslim History: Religion and Politics in Early Islam. Mahmoud Ayoub', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion,* 73 (2005), 894.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Asma Afsaruddin, *The First Muslims: History and Memory*, (2008).

mine) produce an accurate account of early Islamic history. However, she does not discuss or give any credence to early Shīʿī sources.

Shaban (1971) states explicitly in his preface that he scrutinises, in detail, both newly discovered and existing sources, in order to give a detailed account of the period 600-750.[53] Four pages are devoted to the issue of succession. However, he disregards many secondary sources (Kister, Watt and Serjeant being notable exceptions to this) in order to draw a fresh interpretation from the primary sources. [54] Well-known primary historical works are cited at the end of the book, but Shaban does not mention his criteria for selecting reports, nor does he discuss the problem of contradictory reports. His use of citations has been criticised by one reviewer, for example for supporting an argument with citations that are only general in meaning or at best ambiguous.[55]

Kennedy (2004) discusses the issue of succession in three pages. He devotes an entire chapter at the end of his book to a discussion of the sources.[56] He explains that despite the detailed accounts available in the earliest extant works, there is a time lag of over a century between the documentation of the reports and the events they allegedly described.[57] This raises the issue of the reliability of the sources as well as the tendentious use of reports. Although Kennedy clearly does not support the sceptical camp, he does advocate a more critical approach to the sources. [58] He does not directly outline his approach to the sources, but emphasises the importance of scrutinising the reports, particularly in light of religio-political debates at the time when extant works were compiled. According to Kennedy, many reports are reflective of the milieu that produced them and thus cannot be considered accurate

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[53] Muhammad Shaban, *Islamic History: Volume 1, Ad 600-750 (Ah 132): A New Interpretation*, (1971), pp. vii -viii.; An example of a newly discovered source is *Akhbār Al-ʿAbbās wa Waldihi*. See review by Aziz Ahmad, 'Review of Islamic History, A.D. 600-750 (A.H. 132): A New Interpretation. M. A. Shaban', *Speculum,* 47 (1972).

[54] B. G. Martin, 'Review of Islamic History, A.D. 600-750 (A.H. 132): A New Interpretation. M. A. Shaban', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies,* 5 (1972).

[55] Elton L Daniel, 'Review of Islamic History, a New Interpretation: I. A.D. 600-750 (A.H. 132). M. A. Shaban', *Iranian Studies,* 10 (1977), 238.

[56] Hugh Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates: The Islamic near East from the Sixth to the Eleventh Century*, (2004).; ibid. pp. 346-84.

[57] Ibid. pp. 347-8.

[58] According to the sceptical camp, the extant historical sources contain so many redactions and accretions such that it is impossible to recover any kernel of historical fact from them. Donner (1998), p. 20.

descriptions of the events they purport to describe.[59] He does however accept the broad outline of early Islamic history as contained in these reports.

Donner (1981) devotes three pages to the issue of succession.[60] As for his approach to the sources, very little is given away. He refers the reader to his (then upcoming) work on historiography[61] for a detailed explanation of his approach to the sources.[62] But as Shahid points out, the latter is a general work on historiography and not an explanation of Donner's source methodology.[63] Given that his work is rich in detail and analysis, it is implicit that Donner believes that the sources do have a story to tell. However, his criteria for selecting sources are unclear.

Shoufani (1973) discusses the succession issue at length, devoting thirteen pages to it.[64] He uses almost fifty primary sources and draws on research from secondary sources to produce a narrative and an analysis of the events leading to the election of Abū Bakr. Throughout his book, Shoufani makes regular reference to his source methodology. His approach to the sources is broadly sceptical in that he rejects both the traditional Sunnī and Shīʿī analysis of Saqīfa, and of the causes of the *ridda* wars. He thus uses a critical approach to the sources, investigating a range of narrations on a particular incident or issue, highlighting variant narrations of the same event, pointing out contradictions between these narrations, and also between them and other related incidents. After careful critical analysis, Shoufani rejects some reports, attempts to reconcile some contradictory reports and reinterprets others, often drawing a novel interpretation of the event in question.[65] He also brings together disparate, seemingly innocuous and unrelated narrations to derive a new theory. For example he uses a number of incidents from the *sīra* to support his thesis of the mutual rivalry between Abū Bakr and ʿUmar, which in his view significantly affected the course of events at Saqīfa, and his view that the two eventually only joined forces out of political expediency. He uses well-known and accepted narrations, for example from al-Tabarī and al-Balādhurī, to draw fresh interpretations.

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[59] Kennedy (2004), p. 354.

[60] Fred Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests*, (1981).

[61] Donner (1998).

[62] Donner (1981), p. iv.

[63] Irfan Shahid, 'Review of the Early Islamic Conquests. Fred Mcgraw Donner', *Speculum,* 58 (1983), 455.

[64] Elias Shoufani, *Al-Riddah and the Muslim Conquest of Arabia*, (1973).

[65] Ibid. p. 143.

By looking at a number of variant narrations of one incident, Shoufani concludes that in some cases the historians deliberately misrepresented the facts in order to glorify the commitment and exploits of the Companions.[66] In some cases, he criticises individual narrators, such as Sayf ibn 'Umar, accusing him of bias in favour of his tribe and of embellishing his stories with colourful (and untrue) descriptions.[67] However, his heavy reliance on Sayf's narrations elsewhere demonstrates that unlike other scholars, Shoufani does not completely dismiss him out of hand. Sayf's narrations are compared with other reports, and where there is a contradiction, Sayf's report is usually rejected. Shoufani sometimes uses non-Muslim sources as corroborating evidence for Muslim sources.[68]

2.1.2   Madelung's narrative

Madelung describes Saqīfa as a coup leading to the succession of Abū Bakr.[69] Abū Bakr, who was determined to prevent the election of 'Alī, had decided that "well before Muhammad's death, he was the man" to succeed the Prophet in political terms.[70] The gathering of the Anṣār at Saqīfa gave him the perfect opportunity to achieve his goal. Some historians hold that the meeting at Saqīfa was an attempt by the Anṣār to seize power from the Quraysh.[71] Madelung challenges this view, arguing that after the death of the Prophet, the Anṣār were merely trying to "restore control over their own city."[72] Concurring with Hodgson, Kennedy, and Donner, Madelung argues that Abū Bakr and 'Umar had designs to "rule over all the Arabs".[73] However, this idea had not even occurred to the Anṣār, who were concerned only with maintaining "control over their city".[74] Thus Kennedy argues that the Anṣār, fearing that they might be consigned to a second class status in their own city if the Muhājirūn joined forces with their Qurayshi relatives from Mecca, tried to ensure that they would have at the very least an equal

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[66] Ibid. p. 110.

[67] Ibid. p. 96.

[68] According to Hoyland, the value of non-Muslim sources is to 'enrich' and 'expand' on the accounts provided by Muslim authors (Ibid., p. 598.)

[69] Madelung (1997), p. 56.

[70] Ibid. p. 39.

[71] The tribe of Quraysh inhabited Mecca and controlled the pilgrimage to the Ka'ba. As well as earning revenue from the pilgrimage, they were involved in trading goods between the Indian Ocean and East Africa (via Yemen). The Muhājirūn, including the four *Khulafā Rāshidūn* were from the tribe of Quraysh. The Quraysh had a number of clans the most prominent of which were the Prophet's clan Banū Hāshim, and Banū Umayya. Although Banū Taym and Banū ʿAdī were not as prominent, they were the tribes of Abū Bakr and 'Umar respectively. Donner (1981).

[72] Madelung (1997), p. 31.

[73] Marshall GS Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam, Volume 1: The Classical Age of Islam*, (1974), pp. 197-98.; Kennedy (2004), p. 51.; Donner (1981), p. 83.; Madelung (1997), p. 31.

[74] Madelung (1997), p. 31.

share in any leadership role. Donner argues that the fact that political succession to the Prophet was not a consideration for some of the Arabs is demonstrated by the fact that the Anṣār suggested that each tribe choose their own leader.

According to Madelung, Saqīfa was not only about Abū Bakr's personal ambitions, but also about the reassertion of Qurayshi dominance and hegemony over the Arabs. Abū Bakr rejected the Anṣār's suggestion that a leader should be chosen from them as this would cause disunity among the Arabs. The leader had to be from Quraysh as the Arab tribes would not submit to anyone else.[75] By appointing the Quraysh as leaders of all Arabs, Abū Bakr had secured the backing of the powerful Meccan aristocracy and thwarted "the ambitions of the Anṣār."[76] It was these Meccans, united with the new government in Medina, who now demanded the same absolute obedience from the rest of the Arabs. Almost all the armies sent to fight in the *ridda* wars were headed by Qurayshi generals.[77]

Aware that if a consultation on the issue of succession was to take place, "the plain logic of dynastic succession would thus almost certainly assert itself", Abū Bakr seized the opportunity at Saqīfa to secure for himself the position of successor.[78] Had a consultation taken place, the Anṣār and Banū 'Abd Shams (and obviously Banū Hāshim) would have preferred 'Alī.[79] Other smaller tribes would have fallen in line behind them. Knowing that neither 'Umar and Abū 'Ubayda stood any "chance of being accepted", nor would they accept the position of successor to the Prophet, Abū Bakr put their names forward in order to secure his own position.[80] With most of the prominent Quraysh, including 'Alī, absent from this crucial meeting, he was the only viable candidate. The meeting at Saqīfa ended turbulently; Abū Bakr was given the pledge by 'Umar and by the non-Madinan arch enemies of the Anṣār, the Banu Aslām, who had turned up to the meeting in large numbers.[81] Sa'd ibn 'Ubāda however refused to acknowledge Abū Bakr and threatened to fight him. Not wanting to pick a fight with the Khazraj, Abū Bakr wisely left him alone.[82]

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[75] Ibid. p. 32.
[76] Ibid. p. 44.
[77] Ibid. p. 46.
[78] Ibid. p. 41.
[79] Ibid. p. 40.
[80] Ibid. p. 39.; ibid.
[81] Ibid. p. 34.
[82] Ibid.

2.1.3 Alī's stance regarding the decision made at Saqīfa

The position of 'Alī vis a vis the meeting at Saqīfa is a key battleground in Sunnī-Shī'ī polemics. The traditional Sunnī view is that the selection of Abū Bakr was initially generally uncontentious and in fact 'Alī approved of Abū Bakr's selection. The Shī'a on the other hand insist that 'Alī opposed the decision on religious grounds.

Among scholars this issue is disputed. According to Madelung in *Succession* both the Anṣār and Banu Hāshim preferred 'Alī and thus felt betrayed. This feeling was communicated to Abū Bakr by 'Alī himself who said "you have arbitrarily seized it from us."[83] Although 'Alī did finally pledge allegiance, and on the surface of it, the ranks of the Muslims were united, they both mutually distrusted and loathed each other.[84] In his later 2001 article, Madelung partially revises his position stating that 'Alī was full of praise for their (Abū Bakr's and 'Umar's) 'achievements for the cause of Islam'.[85] However, 'Alī blamed the community for failing to support him, not Abū Bakr and 'Umar. Madelung's change of view may be explained by his examination of additional sources, in particular al-Balādhurī. The latter work mentions a number of sermons in which 'Alī praises the conduct of Abū Bakr and 'Umar as Caliphs but criticises the community as a whole for abandoning him after the Prophet's death.[86]

A number of scholars concur with Madelung, holding that 'Alī opposed the decision at Saqīfa, considering himself to be the rightful successor, and that he was supported in this stance by a number of the Anṣār and Muhājirūn.[87] Ayoub argues that 'Alī considered himself entitled to succeed the Prophet based upon his merits and kinship, but through threats of violence he was coerced into pledging allegiance to Abū Bakr.[88] Momen and Mavani argue that although 'Alī felt that he was entitled to succeed the Prophet, he shied away from any public dissent or discord. Momen add that when 'Abbās and Abū Sufyān offered to pay homage to 'Alī and to "fill Medina with armed men" in support of him, 'Alī refused to cause a split in the Muslim

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[83] Ibid. p. 53.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Madelung, Wilfered,' The Age of the Rightly Guided Caliphs' in Lynda Clarke, 'Shi'ite Heritage: Essays on Classical and Modern Traditions', (2001), pp. 9-18 (p15).

[86] Ibid.

[87] Carl Brockelmann, *History of the Islamic People*, (1960), p. 45.; Mahmoud Ayoub, *The Crisis of Muslim History: Religion and Politics in Early Islam*, (2003), p. 9.; ibid. pp. 8-25.; Hamid Mavani, *Religious Authority and Political Thought in Twelver Shi'ism: From Ali to Post-Khomeini*, (2013), p. 116.; Shoufani (1973), pp. 53,58.; Husain M. Jafri, *Origins and Early Development of Shiʾa Islam*, (1979), p. 59 and 61.

[88] Ayoub (2003), p. 153.

community.[89] Throughout the rule of Abū Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthmān, he never adduced any argument in support of his claim.[90] Shoufani argues that the 'Alid party's support for 'Alī was passive; they accepted the caliphate of Abū Bakr while holding that the Prophet had in fact nominated 'Alī.[91] In a similar vein Kennedy holds that 'Alī did accept the decision, but due to force of circumstances and not out of choice.[92] However, in an early study, Muir differs from the view that 'Alī opposed the decision at Saqīfa based upon his reading of the sources. He states that although 'Alī delayed his pledge, he had no aspirations to be Caliph, nor did he make an issue of Abū Bakr's selection.[93]

2.1.4   Did the Anṣār prefer 'Alī?

Madelung holds that if given the chance, the Anṣār would have chosen 'Alī "since they considered him, like Muḥammad, as partly belonging to them."[94] Yazigi[95] points out that a number of authors, based upon their reading of al-Ya'qūbī's account, also hold that some of the Anṣār did indeed support 'Alī. [96] Yasigi however criticises this position arguing that the Anṣāri support for 'Alī was a much later phenomenon, which occurred during the caliphate of 'Uthmān. Some of the Anṣār, but by no means all, felt increasingly marginalised during 'Uthmān's caliphate and hence made common cause with 'Alī. His support was then projected back.[97] Thus essentially the difference between the two positions comes down to how one approaches the sources.

Although Madelung's opinion that the Anṣār backed 'Alī is held by other scholars, he is unique in arguing that their support was based upon kinship between them and 'Alī. This opinion is criticised in detail by Yazigi. He starts by explaining that 'Alī and the Prophet Muḥammad shared a maternal great grandmother, Salmā bint 'Amr from the Banū al-Najjār clan of Khazraj.[98] He then argues that this kinship did not play any role in the support pledged to the

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[89] Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi'ism*, (1985), p. 19.

[90] Ibid. pp. 19-20.

[91] Shoufani (1973), p. 58.

[92] Kennedy (2004), p. 53.

[93] William Muir, *The Caliphate: Its Rise, Decline and Fall. Revised by T.H. Weir*, (1924), p. 8.

[94] Madelung (1997), p. 40.

[95] Maya Yazigi, ''Alī, Muḥammad, and the Anṣār: The Issue of Succession', *Journal of Semitic Studies,* 53 (2008), 281-2.

[96] Ayoub (2003); Jafri (1979); Momen (1985); Andrew J Newman, *Twelver Shiism: Unity and Diversity in the Life of Islam, 632 to 1722*, (2013).

[97] Yazigi (2008), p. 302.

[98] Madelung (1997), p. 283.

Prophet Muhammad by the Anṣār at Aqaba. Of the twelve men present at the first pledge of Aqaba, only three were from the tribe of Banū al-Najjār and of the sixty-three Anṣār present at the second pledge, only twelve were from Banū al-Najjār.[99] Therefore kinship was not a factor influencing Anṣārī support for the Prophet. The devastating civil war between 'Aws and Khazraj led both sides to search for an impartial arbitrator, and the Prophet was deemed the suitable candidate by most clans within the Anṣār. Had the Prophet's blood ties with the Banū al-Najjār, a clan within the Khazraj, been deemed as significant, the 'Aws "would have doubted his neutrality."[100]

The fact that the 'Aws welcomed the Prophet demonstrates that his blood tie with Banū al-Najjār was deemed insignificant.[101] Yasigi then examines whether the blood tie between 'Alī and Banū al-Najjār was a significant factor in the Anṣār's alleged support for 'Alī. He concludes that if the blood-tie between 'Alī and Banū al-Najjār was significant, it would have alienated the rival 'Aws tribe. Secondly, the fact that the Khazraj had already put their own candidate forward (Sa'd ibn 'Ubāda) and had not invited 'Alī to the meeting at Saqīfa proves that they had not considered 'Alī.[102] Thirdly, the fact Sa'd ibn 'Ubāda was from Khazraj, led some of the 'Aws and some of the sub clans of Khazraj to prefer a non Medinese, who would have been perceived as neutral. If the blood tie between 'Alī and Banū al-Najjār was significant, then 'Alī's candidature would not have been considered appropriate.[103] Thus Madelung's contention that Anṣārī support was based upon kinship between 'Alī and the Anṣār appears weak in light of the detailed critique of Yazigi.

2.1.5   A potential crisis averted?

A number of scholars argue that the hasty manner in which Abū Bakr was selected, was done in order to avert a potential crisis. This is contrary to Madelung's 'coup' theory. Lewis states that with the Prophet no longer alive, a leader had to be found immediately. The task was given added urgency by the Anṣār gathering to choose their own leader. The "inner group of Muḥammad's followers" chose Abū Bakr, thus averting a potential political and religious crisis.[104] According to Sell the purpose of Abū Bakr attending Saqīfa was to avert a political

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[99] Yazigi (2008), p. 293.
[100] Ibid. p. 297.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid. p. 300.
[103] Ibid. p. 301.
[104] Bernard Lewis, *Islam from the Prophet Muhammad to the Capture of Constantinople. Volume 1. Politics and War*, (1976), p. 1.

crisis and potential civil war and not to seize power. [105] Had he intended to seize the Caliphate as Hitti states, he would have taken more than two men with him.[106] Muir explains that 'Umar later commented (during his Caliphate) that the manner in which Abū Bakr was chosen should not be considered a precedent, yet it was done in the interests of the *umma*. [107] In other words, an emergency decision had to be made at Saqīfa, with or without other senior Companions, to prevent a possible breakup of the *umma*.

2.1.6   Re-kindling of tribal partisanship and the appearance of factionalism

According to a number of scholars, the decision at Saqīfa was made in light of, and influenced by, the re-emergence of inter-tribal and personal rivalries.[108] This rivalry according to them was between Anṣār /Muhājirūn and 'Aws/Khazraj alongside personal rivalries between individuals. Both Ayoub and Shoufani argue that this worked to Abū Bakr's advantage.[109] Rather than be dominated by the Khazraj, the 'Aws threw their lot in with Abū Bakr. However, unlike Shoufani, Ayoub claims that Abū Bakr purposely rekindled tribal partisanship between 'Aws and Khazraj in order to prevent the Anṣār from agreeing upon a leader from amongst themselves.

Closely related to the re-emergence of inter-tribal rivalries is the issue of factionalism among the Companions. In my literature review I have examined the mainstream sources on succession and from these works I have identified eleven authors who mentioned the existence of factionalism. I have presented their views in tabular form below. It is clear from this table that almost all of the scholars who argue that factionalism did manifest itself following the Prophet's death agree that the Muhājirūn and Anṣār were two of the main factions, with the opinion regarding the Meccan elite as a faction coming a close second. Six the scholars, three of whom represent traditional Shī'ī beliefs, argue that there existed a legitimist group. Although my analysis looks at a dozen or so secondary studies, these particular books have defined the field and shaped modern understanding of this period of

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[105] Canon Sell, *Al-Khulafa Ar-Rashidun or the Four Rightly-Guided Khalifas*, (1913), p. 8.

[106] PK Hitti, *History of the Arabs: From the Earliest Times to the Present*, (1953), p. 40.

[107] Muir (1924), p. 8.

[108] Ira M Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, (2012), pp. 31-32; Dwight M Donaldson, *The Shi'ite Religion: A History of Islam in Persia and Irak*, (1984), p. xxiii; Brockelmann (1960), p. 45; Hamid Dabashi, *Authority in Islam: From the Rise of Muhammad to the Establishment of the Umayyads*, (1993), p. 66; Khalid Blankinship, 'Imarah, Khilafah and Imamah:The Origins of the Succession to the Prophet Muhammad', in *Shi'ite Heritage: Essays on Classical and Modern Traditions,* ed. by Lynda Clarke (2001), pp. 11-43.; Kennedy (2004), p. 51; Ayoub (2003), p. 22.; Jafri (1979), pp. 48-9.; Shoufani, pp. 49-61; Donner (1981), p. 82.

[109] Ayoub (2003), p. 12.; Shoufani (1973), p. 49.

history. In terms of definition, the 'Meccan elite' refers to those Meccans who initially opposed the Prophet but embraced Islam around the time of the conquest of Mecca. Banū Umayyah are the most prominent clan in this group. The 'religious legitimists' are a group who held that 'Alī's claim to succeed the Prophet was divinely based. The 'political legitimists' on the other hand supported 'Alī's right to succeed the Prophet, based on his merits.

Table 2.1 'Factions' at the time of the Prophet's death

| | Muhājirūn | Anṣār | Meccan elite | Legitimists | | Faction of 'Umar |
				Religious Legitimists	Political Legitimists	'Umar
Donner	√	√	√ (also mentions Thaqīf)			
Blankinship	√	√ (Khazraj only. 'Aws supported Muhājirūn)				
Hourani	√	√	√			
Hitti	√	√	√	√		
Mavani	√	√		√		
Macdonald	√	√	√	√[110]		
Shoufani		√	√ (calls it ' faction of Abū Bakr')	√		√
Dabashi	√	√		√		
Daftary	Doesn't discuss the existence of any other groups.			√		
Lewis	As above.				√	
Afsaruddin	As above.[111]				√ calls it the 'party of 'Alī' & not legitimists.	

I now briefly elaborate on some of the views of the scholars regarding the nature of the factions as described in the table above. Shoufani's discussion regarding the type and nature of the various factions is the most detailed, so I begin with him. He states that death of the Prophet led to a "serious rupture" in the community, leading to the emergence of four factions. Two of these were the Anṣār and the Legitimists. The third faction was that of Abū Bakr, supported by the Meccan elite. As for the fourth, it appears that Shoufani is unique in ascribing a faction to 'Umar, whom he describes as the "arch-enemy of the Meccan

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[110] Macdonald implies that this faction existed from a very early stage, but he doesn't state when.

[111] Daftary and Lewis's discussion is regarding the origins of the early Shī'a, and not the issue of succession per se. As for Afsaruddin, her discussion is regarding the nature of the pro-'Alid group; did they support 'Alī due to kinship, divine designation or due to his personal qualities?

aristocracy."[112] Agreeing with Madelung, he argues that 'Umar was not in favour of Abū Bakr's appointment, favouring either himself or Abū 'Ubayda. [113] The fact the 'Umar opposed many decisions of Abū Bakr when the latter became Caliph, is further corroborating evidence for Shoufani that Abū Bakr was a second best choice.[114] Only when it became clear to 'Umar that neither he nor 'Abū Ubayda were likely to succeed the Prophet did 'Umar give his backing to Abū Bakr. There was another reason why 'Umar eventually agreed to Abū Bakr; he feared that had they left Saqīfa without nominating Abū Bakr, the Anṣār would have chosen one of their own, in their absence.[115] Abū Bakr's nomination thus prevented civil strife. Thus Shoufani rejects the view that Abū Bakr, 'Umar and Abū 'Ubaydah presented a united front at Saqīfa.[116] As for Abū Bakr's faction, Shoufani contends that the Meccan elite were the "backbone of Abū Bakr's group of supporters."[117] He justifies this from two angles. He offers a narration from Ibn Abī Ḥadīd, who states that this Meccan elite who had only recently been fighting the Prophet, were very harsh against anyone (and particularly the Anṣār) who opposed the nomination of Abū Bakr. Second, Shoufani adduces a list of army commanders who led the war against the 'apostates'. Almost all of them were from the Meccan elite. Commanders who had served under the Prophet, and those who were to later serve under 'Umar, such as 'Abū 'Ubayda, Sa'd b. Abī Waqqās were notably absent in Abū Bakr's choice.[118] Finally, Shoufani argues that Abū Bakr was in fact a second-best choice to all the parties, and this was a contributing factor to his successful nomination. The legitimists consisted of 'Alī and his supporters, who believing that the Prophet appointed 'Alī, abstained from giving bay'a to Abū Bakr. However, they did not actively oppose Abū Bakr's rule.

According to Hitti, the Muslims were divided into four parties: the Muhājirūn, the Anṣār, the Meccan elite who had embraced Islam after the conquest of Mecca and the 'legitimists' who held that leadership was the divine right of 'Alī.[119] Lewis also affirm the presence of a legitimist party but, unlike Hitti, he does not claim that this party considered that 'Alī had a divine right

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[112] Shoufani (1973), p. 53.

[113] Roy Vilozny, 'Pre-Buyid Hadith Literature', in *The Study of Shi'i Islam : History, Theology and Law,* ed. by Farhad Daftary, et al. (2014), pp. 203-30 pp. 7-9).

[114] Shoufani (1973), p. 59.

[115] Ibid. pp. 57-58.

[116] Lammens was the first to propose the theory of the "triumvirate" of Abū Bakr, 'Umar and Abū 'Ubayda. See Madelung (1997), p. 3.

[117] Shoufani (1973), p. 61.

[118] Ibid. pp. 61-63.

[119] Hitti (1953), p. 140.

to succeed the Prophet.[120] Lewis argues that for at least half a century, this group was political in nature and its religious beliefs were no different from those of the rest of the Muslim community. On the other hand a number of scholars agree with Hitti that the legitimist party was religious in nature and that it was the embryonic Shī'at 'Alī.[121]

In a similar vein to Lewis, Afsaruddin argues that after the Prophet's death there was a group which supported the candidacy of 'Alī, based upon the latter's virtues and not due to kinship or to any concept of *naṣṣ*.[122] Thus she rejects the idea that this group were legitimists. However, this group accepted the caliphate of Abū Bakr 'while continuing to revere 'Alī.[123]

2.2   The 'Incident of the Paper and the Pen'

Madelung's brief discussion of *the incident of the paper and pen* in *Succession* is *sui generis*. Although cited extensively in Shī'ī polemical works, Madelung is unique as a scholar in bringing this narration to light, and in using it to highlight that the early supporters of 'Alī (such as Ibn 'Abbās) considered it a deliberate and successful attempt to prevent the Prophet Muḥammad naming 'Alī in his will. Given the importance of this story to the Shī'ī argument in favour of 'Alī, I now discuss Madelung's use of this report. Madelung presents the narrative mentioned in Bukhari's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, where it states that Ibn 'Abbās said:

> "When Allah's Messenger was about to leave this world, there were persons (around him) in his house, 'Umar ibn al-Khattab being one of them. Allah's Apostle said: "Come, I may write for you a document; you would not go astray after that." Thereupon 'Umar said: "Verily Allah's Messenger is deeply afflicted with pain. You have the Quran with you. The Book of Allah is sufficient for us."[124]

Madelung paraphrases the remainder of the *ḥadīth* "The companions then started disputing, some insisting that the Prophet be given the chance to write, others siding with others. This angered the Prophet, who asked them all to leave."[125] He concludes with the statement that he (i.e. Ibn 'Abbās) used to comment that "the greatest calamity was thus caused by their

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[120] Bernard Lewis, *The Origins of Ismā'īlism. A Study of the Historical Background of the Fāṭimid Caliphate*, (1940), p. 23.
[121] Dabashi (1993), pp. 95-96; Farhad Daftary, *The Isma'ilis: Their History and Doctrines*, (2007), p. 37. Mavani (2013), pp. 1-2.
[122] It is not clear from her book whether the partisans of 'Alī emerged immediately after the Prophet's death or later on.
[123] Afsaruddin (2002), p. 285.
[124] Madelung (1997), p. 24.
[125] Ibid. pp. 23-24.

disagreement and noise, which prevented the Prophet from writing that *kitāb*."[126] Madelung understands from this narration that Ibn 'Abbās hinted at the Prophet's intention to name 'Alī as his successor, as the word *kitāb* here means "will".[127] Broadly-speaking, the word *kitāb* has a number of meanings. Lane's *Lexicon* describes the word to mean:

> "a thing in which, or on which, one writes: [a book:] a written piece of paper or [a record or register; and a written mandate;] of skin; a writing or writ or, of thing written…. revelation from above; a letter, an epistle, which a person writes and sends…Divine prescript, appointment, or ordinance, judgement, or sentence; fatal decree or predestination".[128]

According to Hans Wehr, the word *kitāb* means:

> "piece of writing, record, paper, letter, note, message, document, deed, contract (esp. marriage contract), book" and in its definite form it means "the Koran, the Bible."[129]

Thus based upon the linguistic meaning of the word *kitāb*, it is possible for it to mean "will"[130]. How one interprets this *ḥadīth* ultimately depends on which perspective it is approached from; Sunnī or Shī'ī, and not from a philological perspective. Madelung clearly uses this narration to further his overall thesis that 'Alī was entitled to succeed the Prophet but was outwitted by his adversaries.

2.2.1   Hadīth of Ghadīr Khumm

The *ḥadīth* of Ghadīr Khumm is highly significant in Shī'ī historiography and theology. According to Lalani and Jafri this incident was an affirmation of the clear divine designation of 'Alī as the Prophet's religious and political successor. As such, the occasion of this *ḥadīth* is taken as a yearly celebration by the Shī'a.[131]

For Sunnīs on the other hand, this *ḥadīth* has no deep theological significance; it is merely one of many that extol the virtues of 'Alī. The difference in the interpretation of this *ḥadīth* is due to the conflicting interpretation of the word *mawlā*, which has multiple meanings. In the

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[126] Ibid. p. 24.

[127] Ibid.

[128] Edward William Lane and others, 'An Arabic-English Lexicon: Derived from the Best and the Most Copious Eastern Sources', (1865).

[129] Hans Wehr, 'A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic: (Arabic-English)', ed. by J Milton Cowan (1979), (p. 812).

[130] As in last will and testament.

[131] Jafri (1979), p. 58.; Arzina Lalani, *Early Shi'i Thought: The Teachings of Imam Muhammad Al-Baqir*, (2000), p. 6.

context of this *ḥadīth*, the Shī'a interpret *mawlā* to mean 'Imām', whereas as to Sunnīs it to means 'close friend'.

The *ḥadīth* is as follows:

> After stopping at Ghadīr Khumm, "The Prophet first asked the believers, "Am I not closer (*awlā*) to the believers than they are to themselves?" After the positive response of all present, he proclaimed, "Anyone who has me as his *mawlā*, has ʿAlī as his *mawlā*" (*man kuntu mawlāhu fa-ʿAliyyun mawlāh*).

Some versions of the *ḥadīth* add a sentence: "O God, befriend the friend of ʿAlī and be the enemy of his enemy" (*Allāhumma wālī man wālāhu ʿwa ʿādi man ʿādāh*). In other versions of this tradition, the word *mawlā* is replaced by *walī*.[132] With these variations in wording, this *ḥadīth* is quoted in both Sunnī and Shī'ī books of *ḥadīth* and history.[133]

Only two scholars discuss this *ḥadīth* in relation to the question of succession, and neither dispute its veracity. Dakake presents a thorough, fifteen-page discussion of the *ḥadīth* of Ghadīr examining the *ḥadīth* from a philological perspective.[134] She concludes that the wording of the *ḥadīth* points to "Alī's unique position and unrivalled closeness to the Prophet" and not in any sense to the concept of *Imamate*, or ʿAlī's distinction due to him being from *ahl al-bayt*.[135] Had the Prophet used the term *Imām* rather than *mawlā* or *walī*, this would have clearly indicated political and spiritual authority and there would not be any ambiguity on the intent of the *ḥadīth*; namely the designation of ʿAlī as his successor.[136] Dakake further adds that ʿAlī, when enumerating his virtues during his conflict with Muʾāwiyah, mentioned this *ḥadīth* as confirmation of his merits, and not as evidence for his divine designation as successor to the Prophet.[137]

Vaglieri, on the other hand, examines this *ḥadīth* in its historical context using Ibn Kathīr's *al-Bidāya wa 'l-nihāya.* Ibn Kathir mentions that the event at Ghadīr Khumm was connected to a number of complaints made against ʿAlī ibn Tālib regarding his distribution of booty.[138] Some individuals went as far as to question his integrity. This upset the Prophet, and he publicly

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[132] Ibid.

[133] Amir-Moezzi. MA., "*Ghadīr Khumm.*", EI³.

[134] Maria Dakake, *The Charismatic Community: Shi'ite Identity in Early Islam*, (2007), pp. 33-49.

[135] Ibid. p. 35.

[136] Ibid. p. 49.

[137] Ibid.p. 44.

[138] Vaglieri, L.,"*Ghadīr Khumm*", EI².

declared his love for 'Alī.[139] Vaglieri concludes that it was likely therefore that the statement made at Ghadīr was to "to put an end to all these accusations", and "to demonstrate publicly his esteem and love for ʿAlī."[140] Thus Vaglieri and Dakake both reach the same conclusion, albeit from different perspectives, that the ḥadīth of Ghadīr is not an evidence for the designation of 'Alī as successor but a public declaration of the Prophet's love for 'Alī. This view is also supported by Halm, who states the Prophet had not intended by it to designate a successor. Ayoub, further argues that the fact that the Anṣār met at Saqīfa to choose a successor meant that they could not have understood the ḥadīth of Ghadīr in the traditional Shīʿī sense. [141] Both Halm and Ayoub devote only one sentence to the issue. Shaban, when discussing the ḥadīth, states that "it was highly improbable" that the Prophet would have appointed 'Alī to be his successor, nor was it invoked in the succession debate.[142]

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[139] Ibid.

[140] Ibid.

[141] Heinz Halm, *Shi'ism*, (2004), p. 8.; Ayoub (2003), p. 9.

[142] Shaban (1971), p. 16.

2.3   How should a successor to the Prophet be chosen?

In this section, I examine the literature on the 'appropriate' mode of succession to the Prophet, as understood by different (groups of) Companions. As with the discussion on Saqīfa, particular attention will be given to Madelung due to the depth of his coverage in *Succession*.

2.3.1   Kinship and hereditary succession in the Quran

In a lengthy (twelve-page) discussion of the concept of legitimate leadership in Islam, Madelung emphasises the centrality of kinship in determining the successor to the Prophet. This was both a Quranic and tribal concept and was invoked by the supporters of 'Alī immediately after the death of the Prophet.[143] This opinion of Madelung concurs with traditional Shī'ī belief.

Madelung argues that the Quran places great emphasis on the inviolable nature of blood ties. Furthermore, the close kin of the Prophet is singled out as having a particularly lofty status. Referred to in the Quran as the *ahl al-bayt,* the Muslims were ordered to love them, a fifth of the booty was allocated to them, they were distinguished by their state of purity, and due to this pure nature, they were forbidden from receiving the *zakāt.*[144] As with the other Prophets, this status was only afforded to the believing members of the Prophet's family.[145]

Building on the verses extolling the importance of kinship, Madelung argues that the descendants of the prophets "became their spiritual and material heirs."[146] He uses a number of Quranic verses to demonstrate that prophecy passed on to their descendants and thus hereditary succession was the norm among the Prophets. Many of the verses utilised by Madelung are also used by Shī'ī commentators of the Quran to support the doctrine of *Imāmate*.[147] For example he mentions that the Quran states that the Prophets were "off-spring of one another."[148] Prophet Abraham implored God to grant *Imāmate* to his descendants. Prophet Solomon inherited both prophethood and kingship from his father David. A number of other Prophets also prayed to God to be succeeded by their offspring. Based upon these verses

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[143] Madelung (1997).
[144] Madelung defines *"ahl al-bayt"* to mean Banū Hāshim*.*
[145] Madelung (1997), pp. 13-14.
[146] Ibid. p. 9.
[147] Hussein Abdul-Raof, *Theological Approaches to Qur'anic Exegesis: A Practical Comparative-Contrastive Analysis*, (2012), p. 40.
[148] Quran: 3:33-34.

there must have been an expectation that the Prophet would also be succeeded by a member of his family.[149] In addition to hereditary succession being sanctioned by the Quran, Madelung also argues, albeit briefly, that the concept of hereditary succession was "the rule" among the Quraysh.[150] Thus Madelung concludes that both the Quran and Arab tribal custom demonstrate that 'Alī was the rightful successor to the Prophet.

Madelung relies heavily on Shī'ī Quranic exegesis in making a connection between the verses emphasising kinship and the concept of hereditary succession. Jafri, whose book represents the standard Shī'ī perspective on legitimate leadership, strongly echoes Madelung's arguments.[151] Jafri arrives at the same conclusion as Madelung but he emphasises the hereditary nature of tribal leadership as evidence for 'Alī's succession compared to Madelung's Quranic argument for hereditary succession.[152] Jafri states that leadership was a religious office which could only be passed on through hereditary succession.[153] The successor had to be from Banū Hāshim, due to the hereditary sanctity of this clan and there was no better candidate than 'Alī.[154] Support for 'Alī was rooted in Islamic principles, whereas for Abū Bakr it was based on pragmatism, with religious principles having very little role to play.[155] Mavani concurs with Jafri in both his claim and his evidence. He argues that among the pre-Islamic Arabs, kinship was one of "the primary marks of identity and sources of authority".[156] Despite its pre-Islamic origins, he argues that kinship was a relevant factor in choosing a successor and was in fact invoked at Saqīfa. Appeals to kinship did not contradict Islam. Alī considered himself the rightful successor to the Prophet based upon "his merits, knowledge…and *kinship* with the Prophet"[157] (italics mine) as well as the fact that he had been divinely appointed as successor.[158]

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[149] Madelung (1997), pp. 12, 16-17. Also Lalani (2000) using almost the same arguments as Madelung, reaches the same conclusion.

[150] Ibid. p. 5.

[151] Jafri (1979). Halm describes the book as a "primary source rather than academic literature". Halm (2004), p. 4.

[152] Jafri (1979), pp. 1-13. However, Jafri does not discount the Quranic argument. He devotes thirteen pages to his thesis that hereditary succession was the norm amongst the Arabs, and four pages to the Quranic argument for 'Alī's right to succeed the Prophet. On the other hand, Madelung discusses tribal basis of hereditary succession in only a few lines, whereas twelve pages are devoted to the Quranic basis of hereditary succession.

[153] Ibid. pp. 13-14.

[154] Ibid. p. 17.

[155] Ibid. p. 50.

[156] Mavani (2013), p. 34.

[157] Ibid. p. 113.

[158] Ibid. p. 114.

Although Madelung and other pro-Shī'ī scholars would argue that the kinship argument was invoked at the time of the death of the Prophet, other scholars believe it to be a much later phenomenon and therefore irrelevant to the issue of succession.[159] One of these scholars, Afsaruddin, uses a variety of sources (*faḍā'il* literature, *ḥadīth*, chronographic history and *tafsīr*) to gain a broad chronological overview of the Sunnī Shī'ī debate on legitimate leadership, and to ascertain which criteria were used by both sides to exemplify the "most excellent leader."[160] Often the argument of one side was developed in response to an opposing argument. Contrary to Madelung, Afsaruddin argues that the initial debates regarding legitimate leadership centred around *sābiqa* and *faḍl* and not kinship.[161] 'Umar's *dīwān*, in which he gave financial preference to Usāma bin Zayd over his own son, is an early example of this.[162] That some prominent early Shī'ī scholars held that "lineage had nothing to do with a person's worth" is further evidence that the emphasis on kinship was a later factor.[163] Sharon adds that only when legitimacy to rule based upon precedence in Islam proved to be an inadequate argument, did the Shī'a invoke the kinship argument.[164] The introduction of kinship in legitimate leadership debate is dated to approximately 100 AH by Afsaruddin, although she states that some Shī'ī scholars emphasized *faḍl* over kinship as late as the third century.[165]

Afsaruddin also discusses the relevance of the verses regarding kinship to the succession debate. In a direct response to Madelung she states that these verses were an exhortation to kindness towards one's relatives, as well as emphasising the nobility of the Prophet's family. Hence, they were unrelated to the issue of succession.[166] The emphasis of kinship in the determination of legitimate leadership was a pre-Islamic one opposing the egalitarianism advocated by the Quran.[167] From Afsaruddin's discussion of the evolution and development of the debate around legitimate leadership, it is clear that she takes a traditional Sunnī position, although she does not make this explicit.

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[159] Afsaruddin (2002), p. 6. and Moshe Sharon, 'The Development of the Debate around the Legitimacy of Authority in Early Islam', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam,* 5 (1984), 134. Sharon dates this to the middle of the first century, whereas Afsaruddin considers it eighty years later.

[160] Afsaruddin (2002), p. 33.

[161] Ibid. p. 6.

[162] Ibid. p. 151. ; *Dīwān* here refers to a state register of pensions. Afsaruddin (2008), p. 32.

[163] Afsaruddin (2002), p. 182.

[164] Sharon (1984), pp. 130-31. Also Muir (1924), p. 7.states that the notion of divine right to rulership or by virtue of being from *ahl al-bayt* was a later invention.

[165] Afsaruddin (2002), pp. 280-1.; ibid. p. 178.

[166] Ibid. p. 147.

[167] Ibid. p. 51.; ibid. p. 280.

2.3.2 Divinely ordained succession

The idea that the successor to the Prophet (and subsequently their successors) were divinely chosen is a fundamental belief of the Shīʿa. Hence, it is unsurprising that in the literature, this view has been propounded solely by Shīʿī-oriented scholars alongside Madelung in his *Succession*. Despite the polemical nature of certain Shīʿī works, I have chosen to include them my review, to enable a comparison between them and the views of non-partisan scholars. Secondly most of the works of Shīʿī scholars mentioned in my review were published by academic publishers and all of them had a least one positive review in a peer reviewed journal.[168]

Three scholars, Mavani, Dabashi and Daftary, representing traditional Shīʿī views, argue that ʿAlī considered himself to be divinely appointed. This divine appointment was according to Dabashi supported by a number of important Companions.[169] According to Daftary, ʿAlī considered himself divinely appointed due to the *ḥadīth* of Ghadīr Khumm, as well as his kinship to the Prophet and service to Islam.[170] Mavani states that ʿAlī, his immediate family, as well as a number of other companions were strongly opposed to the selection of Abū Bakr, considering it a usurpation of his divine right to authority and a violation of "the Prophet's explicit instructions."[171] He therefore refused to pledge allegiance to Abū Bakr, doing so only after his wife's death.[172] His wife Fāṭima censured the Anṣār for betraying her husband at Saqīfa.[173] Mavani rejects Afsaruddin's thesis that *sābiqa* and *faḍl* were the main factors

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[168] Jafri (1979) published by Oxford University Press received a positive review from Mahmoud Ayoub, 'Review of the Origins and Early Development of Shi'a Islam. S. Husain M. Jafri', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion,* 50 (1982). He did add that the book is "clearly a *Shīʿa* presentation."
Mavani (2013) published by Routledge received a positive review from Andrew Newham as stated in the work itself.
Dabashi (1993) received a positive review from John L Esposito, 'Review of Authority in Islam: From the Rise of Muhammad to the Establishment of the Umayyads. Hamid Dabashi', *JOAS,* 113 (1993). However, Bianchi states that Dabashi's book contains "well known Shi'ite arguments" and that his "sectarian arguments…outweigh sociological imagination." Robert Bianchi, 'Review of Authority in Islam: From the Rise of Muhammad to the Establishment of the Umayyads. Hamid Dabashi', *Sociological Analysis,* 52 (1991).
Ayoub (2003) received a positive review from Takim as well as from Madelung.
Daftary's works are published by IB Tauras.
[169] Dabashi (1993), p. 96.
[170] Daftary (2013), pp. 27-8.
[171] Mavani (2013), pp. 38, 114.
[172] Ibid. pp. 114,17.
[173] Ibid. p. 116.; Fāṭima was the daughter of the Prophet Muḥammad and his first wife, Khadija. She married ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib and gave birth to two sons, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn. She is highly venerated up to this day by both Sunnīs and Shīʿas. She outlived all of her siblings and died shortly after the Prophet's death. Through her progeny came the majority of the Prophet's descendants. Amongst the Shīʿa, she has a mythical status. Vaglieri, L., "Fāṭima", *EI².*

invoked by pro-Abū Bakr and pro-'Alī factions, and argues that kinship was a major factor at this early stage.[174]

Madelung also argues that 'Alī was divinely appointed. In the same way that the Quran mentions that the Prophets were succeeded by their offspring, the Prophet should have been succeeded by a member of his family.[175] Thus the succession of Abū Bakr was a direct contradiction of the directives of the Quran.[176] However, Madelung's epistemological basis of the concept of "divine election" differs from the traditional Shī'ī view in that he considers it to be derived solely from the Quran.[177] He makes no reference to various ḥadīth or incidents in the sīra used by Shī'ī scholars to support his case. When mentioning the ḥadīth of Ghadīr Khumm, Madelung considers it irrelevant to the issue of succession. It appears that the Shī'ī concept of naṣṣ has no credence in the view of Madelung. For example, he argues that during his caliphate, following the example of the Prophet, 'Alī decided not to nominate Hasan as his successor.[178](emphasis mine). It is not clear why Madelung chose to ignore the Prophetic ḥadīth in supporting his thesis, particularly given that many of them are accepted by both Sunnī and Shī'ī communities and therefore are unlikely to have been fabricated by the Shī'a in support of their claim. Finally, Madelung makes no reference to the elaborate Imāmate theory, although he does state that 'Alī held that only the ahl al-bayt were entitled to leadership.[179]

In 2001, Madelung reiterated his 1997 Succession thesis stating that 'Alī felt he was the most entitled to succeed the Prophet on the basis of his religious merits, service to Islam and kinship to the Prophet, and not on the basis of an "implied appointment by Muḥammad."[180] This last statement seems to be contradicted by an assertion on the same page that 'Alī approved of the term waṣī being applied to him, and also that 'Alī propagated the ḥadīth of Ghadīr "which implied that he was the chosen successor of the Prophet."[181] Another significant difference between Succession and his 2001 thesis is that in the former, he argued that there was mutual loathing and distrust between Abū Bakr and 'Alī.[182] In 2001, however, he argues that although

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[174] Ibid. p. 34.
[175] Madelung (1997), p. 17.
[176] Ibid. p. 16.
[177] Ibid.
[178] Ibid. p. 311.
[179] Ibid.
[180] Madelung, 'Shi'ism in the age of the Rightly Guided Caliphs', in Clarke, pp. 9-18 (p15).
[181] Ibid. p. 15.
[182] Madelung (1997), p. 53.

'Alī still held that he was the most entitled to succeed the Prophet, he was full of praise for Abū Bakr and 'Umar.[183]

In 2014, Madelung revisited the issue of divine designation, again basing his analysis solely on the Quran, but this time he reached a radically different conclusion. He argued that that the Prophet's daughter was, as the "prime heiress" to the Prophet, also his rightful successor.[184] Even though the Prophet had neither written a will nor named a successor, according to the Quranic law of inheritance the community was obliged to pledge allegiance to the Prophet's daughter Fatima. That the "legitimate successor" was a woman was immaterial; certain tasks that she was unable to do (such as leading the prayer) could be delegated to others.[185] Thus the question of whether the Prophet did or did not name a successor was irrelevant; the answer to 'who should succeed the Prophet?' was to be found in the verses of inheritance. As for the Shī'ī claim that 'Alī should have succeeded the Prophet, Madelung rejects this, as he was not an heir to the Prophet's estate and therefore was not entitled to succeed him.[186] Madelung is unique in equating the thorny task of identifying how a successor to the Prophet should have be chosen and who was the most deserving of it, to the Quranic laws of inheritance. The departure of Madelung's position from one which was fairly close to a Shī'ī understanding of succession to his new position can be explained in light of his application of the Quranic laws of inheritance to the issue of succession.

None of the Sunnī or Shī'ī sources, whether *ḥadīth* compilations, historical works (in all their various forms), theological tracts or heresiographical works, mention the existence of a group who advocated Fāṭima's right to succeed the Prophet. Given Madelung's contention (in his 2014 article) that a legitimist group arose after Saqīfa, upholding 'the divine right of the Prophet's family to succeed him' and this group later evolved into the *Shī'at* 'Alī, it begs the questions of when and why the claim for Fāṭima's right to succeed was dropped in favour of 'Alī. [187]

In this same 2014 article, Madelung makes no reference to other research or to any primary sources (other than the Quran), that may have influenced his new thinking. He explains the

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[183] Wilferd Madelung, 'Shi'ism in the Age of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs', in *Shi'ite Heritage: Essays on Classical and Modern Traditions,* ed. by Lynda Clarke (2001), (p. 15).
[184] Wilferd Madelung, 'Introduction', in *The Study of Shi'i Islam : History, Theology and Law,* ed. by Farhad Daftary, et al. (2014), pp. 3-16 (p. 5).
[185] Ibid.
[186] Ibid. p. 6.
[187] Vilozny (2014)

reason for his change of position in a footnote, as being due to his "realisation that the Qur'anic rules of succession unambiguously made the Prophet's daughter his prime heiress and successor.'[188] His latest position is based upon his own re-reading of primary sources (in this case the Quran) without referring to any Shī'ī exegetical, *fiqh* or political theory works. Whether this view is also held by any Shī'ī scholars, past or contemporary, would be an intriguing avenue of further research. It seems that Madelung arrived at his new position independently. This radical shift in position by an eminent authority on Shī'īsm highlights the unlikelihood of closure on this issue. It is interesting however to note that Jafri makes a tentative link between inheritance and political succession. In postulating the normative Shī'ī position, he argues that the reason Fāṭima was denied her inheritance (Fadak) by Abū Bakr was due to the latter's fear that acknowledgement of her inheritance rights may have led to succession claims by Fāṭima on behalf of her family.[189]

Other than Madelung's original 1997 thesis, Hitti and Shoufani are the only non-Shī'ī scholars who hold that 'Alī considered that he had the divine right to succeed the Prophet.[190] Hitti states that there arose a party of Companions "subsequent to the death of Muhammad" who held that the Prophet had nominated Alī as a divinely designated successor.[191] He describes this party as the "legitimists" and states they believed that 'Alī's right had been usurped by the first three Caliphs.[192] He also claims that although the Prophet did not designate a successor, 'Alī, on appointment as caliph, represented a party who believed that "Allah and His Prophet had clearly designated 'Alī as the only legitimate successor.'[193] It is not clear whether, according to Hitti, this legitimist party emerged immediately after the death of the Prophet, or sometime later. Hitti's use of the word "subsequent" is ambiguous. Hodgson, however, understood Hitti's words to mean that the party of legitimists existed at the time of the death of the Prophet, a view which Hodgson rebuts. He explains that the term 'legitimist' implies that 'Alī's claim to succession was on the basis of the Arab tradition of hereditary succession (i.e. legitimisation). But 'Alī would not have been the heir by traditional Arab rules.[194] Second the basis of 'Alī's right to succeed the Prophet according to the Shi'a was *naṣṣ* and not according to

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[188] Madelung (2014), p. 5 fn3.
[189] Jafri (1979), p. 63.
[190] Hitti (1953), p. 140.
[191] Ibid. pp. 139-40.
[192] Khel states that in England, the word 'legitimist' is applied to anyone in support of monarchy by hereditary right against any other title". Muhammad Nazeer Kaka Khel, 'Legitimacy of Authority in Islam', *Islamic Studies,* 19 (1980).; Hitti (1953), p. 179.
[193] Hitti (1953), p. 139.; ibid. p. 179.
[194] Marshall GS Hodgson, 'How Did the Early Shi'a Become Sectarian?', *JOAS,* (1955).

traditional rules.[195] He further states that it was unlikely that at the time of the Prophet's death 'Alī was the "logical candidate" to succeed the Prophet.[196]

The issue of 'Alī's divine designation is almost synonymous with the issue of whether the Prophet nominated a successor. I say almost because Madelung is unique in believing in the former but not the latter. Although Madelung states that the Prophet did not nominate 'Alī, he argues that this was not entirely out of choice. He postulates a number of possible reasons why the Prophet did not nominate a successor. Intense tribal rivalries within Quraysh and the weak position of Banū Hāshim meant that a Hāshemite succession would be unpopular and problematic. He also speculates that the Prophet was hoping later to appoint one of his grandsons, once they had reached adulthood, but died unexpectedly before this could occur.[197]

The majority of modern scholars, however, maintain that the Prophet did not implicitly or explicitly nominate a successor and therefore by default, 'Alī could not have been divinely appointed.[198] Ayoub, Afsaruddin and Shaban are three scholars who state that the Prophet did not nominate a successor. Ayoub proffers a unique argument: the Prophet believed that the world would end in his time and therefore deemed it unnecessary to nominate a successor. The "crisis of succession" upon his death was how rather than who to choose as a successor.[199] He holds that 'Alī considered himself the most worthy to succeed the Prophet, but this was based upon his kinship and not any concept of divine designation.

Afsaruddin rejects Ayoub's view that Islam was primarily "an apocalyptic movement". In light of the fact that a number of Medinan verses addressed the issue of the smooth functioning of a society, it followed that Islam was intended to outlive the Prophet.[200] She proposes an entirely different thesis from Ayoub for the absence of a nominated successor. She argues that

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[195] Ibid. p. 2 footnote 6 (italics is Hodgson's).

[196] Ibid. p. p2.

[197] Madelung (1997), p. 18.

[198] Afsaruddin (2008). Asma Afsaruddin, 'In Praise of the Caliphs: Re-Creating History from the Manaqib Literature', *IJMES,* 31 (1999), p345.; Ayoub (2003).; Shaban (1971).; Sharon (1984).; Anwar G Chejne, *Succession to the Rule in Islam: With Special Reference to the Early 'Abbasid Period*, (1960).; Thomas. W Arnold, *The Caliphate*, (1924).; Adel al-Abdul Jader, 'The Origin of Key Shiʿite Thought Patterns in Islamic History', in *Living Islamic History: Studies in Honour of Professor Carole Hillenbrand,* ed. by Carole Hillenbrand, et al. (2010), pp. 1-13 (p. 2).; Kennedy (2004).; Jonathan Porter Berkey, *The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the near East, 600-1800*, (2003).; Halm (2004).; Bernard Lewis, *Arabs in History*, (2002).; Vaglieri, L., " *ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib.*" *EI².* Sell (1913).; Reynold Alleyne Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs*, (1907).; Fiazuddin Shu'ayb, "Succession" in Syed, p. 524.; Newman (2013).;

[199] Ayoub (2003), pp. 145-46.

[200] Afsaruddin (2008), p. 26.

from the onset, Islam differentiated between religious and temporal leadership. Affairs of government were a "temporal matter" and hence not "within the purview of divine revelation". Although the Quran did lay down basic moral guidelines necessary for the successful functioning of a state, there was no "blueprint" regarding the mode of succession, the role of the state or the qualifications of the successor. Hence, the Prophet deliberately chose not name a successor, leaving the decision to his companions."[201] That the Companions had no definitive answer to the question of political authority was demonstrated by the different manner in which each of the four Rāshidūn Caliphs were chosen.[202] The occurrence of the debate at Saqīfa is further evidence according to some scholars that the Prophet did not name a successor.[203] According to Afsaruddin, that the concept of *naṣṣ* was not invoked at Saqīfa proves that there was no explicit designation.[204]

Shaban concurs with Afsaruddin: the Prophet knew that his end was near, and he deliberately chose not to name a successor after him.[205] Dismissing the idea of divine designation, Shaban asserts that the Prophet wanted the Companions to decide this matter among themselves.

2.3.3 The institution of *shūrā*

Similar to Shaban, two other scholars, both Sunnī, argue that in juxtaposition to divine designation, *shūrā* was the most appropriate method for choosing a successor. Raysuni[206] refers to two verses in which the believers are described as those "*who rule in consultation among themselves*"[207] and "*take counsel with them in all matters of public concern.*"[208] He explains these verses to mean that any matter of public concern should be subject to public consultation. The Prophet practically demonstrated this in his life on many occasions and advised his Companions to consult each other if they faced an issue for which no textual evidence was available.[209] Khel concurs with Raysuni in explaining that the Prophet deliberately chose not to nominate a successor as he had an expectation that a successor

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[201] Ibid.

[202] Ibid. p. 26.

[203] Afsaruddin (1999), p. 345. Khel (1980), p. 172 and 76. According to Khel the first person to propagate this idea, (which he calls the 'divine right of kings') was 'Abdullah ibn Saba'.

[204] Afsaruddin (1999).

[205] Shaban (1971), p. 16.

[206] Ahmad Al-Raysuni, *Abridged Edition of Al-Shura: The Qur'anic Principle of Consultation*, (2012), p. 3.

[207] Quran: 42:38.

[208] Quran: 3:159.

[209] Al-Raysuni (2012), pp. 4-5.

would be chosen on the basis of *shūrā*.[210] Hereditary succession was not something known to them, nor was it prescribed by the Prophet.[211] Thus according to Khel and Raysuni, Abū Bakr was legitimately chosen as a result of consultation among the Companions.

Some scholars hold that certain events occurring following the assassination of 'Uthmān add further strength to the argument that 'Alī was not divinely chosen. Alī was reluctant to accept the Caliphate after the assassination of 'Uthmān.[212] Khel explains that after killing 'Uthmān, the rebels tried to pay homage to 'Alī. However, 'Alī refused to accept the post of Caliph until senior members of the Muhājirūn and Anṣār offered him the *bay'a*. 'Alī accepted their pledges as he considered them to be representatives of the *Umma*.[213] Legitimacy of authority was determined by the *umma* through a process of consultation.[214] Halm also supports this argument, adding that 'Alī was appointed as Caliph by other senior Companions, and not by divine designation or according to succession.[215] This view is supported by El Hibri, who adds that 'Alī had promised to obey an alternative (leader).[216]

2.3.4 The nature of succession in pre-Islamic Arabia

A key debate in the literature is the nature of mode of succession in pre-Islamic tribal custom. A second issue is whether or not the events at Saqīfa were in line with tribal custom, and/or the precepts of Islam. Thirdly, was the mode of succession in pre-Islamic tribal custom relevant to the issue of succession to the Prophet, and if not, how was the issue to be decided?

Here I discuss the first two issues simultaneously, while the third issue is to be covered in section 2.2.5.

On the mode of the succession prevalent among pre-Islamic Arabs, two main opinions are in evidence. **The first opinion is that succession among the pre-Islamic Arabs was hereditary**. This view is held by Madelung, who does not discuss the issue in any detail.[217] Afsaruddin, on the other hand, makes a distinction between succession among northern Arabs and southern

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[210] Muhammad Nazeer Kaka Khel, 'Succession to Rule in Early Islam', *Islamic Studies,* (1985).

[211] Ibid. p. 14.

[212] Chejne (1960), p. 29.

[213] Khel (1980), p. 177.

[214] Ibid. pp. 178-9.

[215] Halm (2004), p. 8.

[216] Tayeb El-Hibri, *Parable and Politics in Early Islamic History: The Rashidun Caliphs*, (2010), p. 208.

[217] Madelung (1997), p. 5.

Arabs. Although hereditary succession was common in pre-Islamic southern Arabia, it was unknown to the northern Arabs, and as such it was irrelevant to the issue of succession to the Prophet.[218] This view is echoed by Khel and Khel who state that that southern Arabs had 'monarchical traits' (i.e. hereditary succession) whereas the northern Arabs were more 'aristocratic'.[219] The distinction between northern and southern Arabs is not, however, so rigid. Although the southern Arabs had monarchical traits, the mode of governance in the south would vacillate between monarchy and aristocracy.[220] On the other hand, although hereditary succession was *not* the norm among northern Arabs, monarchical tendencies did assert themselves in the north just before the mission of the Prophet and during it.[221] For example in Medina, prior to the arrival of the Prophet, its inhabitants were about to choose 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy as their king. This fact however may be partly explained by the fact that the 'Aws and Khazraj were originally southern Arabs.

As for idea that the northern Arabs were generally aristocratic, (as opposed to monarchical) Khel and Khel provide some historical context. They state that in the fifth century, Quṣayy ibn Kilāb established himself as the ruler of Makka, distributing important offices to his sons and behaving as king. However, after his death this 'kingship' turned into a form of oligarchy in Makka in which the head of the tribes were the key decision makers. Decisions made by the 'council of elders' were binding. In theory all individuals on this council were equal; in reality the will of certain charismatic individuals prevailed.[222] When a leader of a tribe died, members of the tribe would collectively choose his successor using seniority in age and popularity as key deciding factors. An heir could only be chosen if he possessed the necessary qualifications. Once chosen, he was leader for life.[223] The Companions (who were predominately northern Arabs) thus resorted to the northern Arab custom of electing a leader based on piety, maturity and high social standing through the process of mutual consultation.[224]

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[218] Afsaruddin (2002), p. 282.

[219] Muhammad Nazeer Kaka Khel, 'Political System in Pre-Islamic Arabia', *Islamic Studies,* 20 (1981), 375.

[220] Ibid. p. 382.

[221] Ibid. p. 387.

[222] Ibid. pp. 384-5. However, after the collapse of the dam on Ma'rib in 450, many Yamanites migrated of north bringing the concept of monarchy with them, Thus, just before the Prophet migrated to Medina, 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy was about to be crowned as king of Yathrib. (Ibid: 380). So although hereditary succession was known, it was not the norm.

[223] Ibid. p. 386.

[224] Khel (1985).

In summary, the issue of whether hereditary succession was the norm among Arabs depended on whether they were northern or southern Arabs but, as I argue above, the distinction was not always clear cut. In general, hereditary succession was the norm among southern Arabs, whereas among northern Arabs, succession was decided on the basis of consultation.[225]

Jafri also argues that succession among pre-Islamic Arabs was hereditary, and in a similar vein to Afsaruddin and Khel and Khel, he argues that it was a particular trait among southern Arabs.[226] However, he tendentiously links the concept of hereditary succession among southern Arabs with their religiosity. This may have been done to support his thesis that the supporters of 'Alī were religiously motivated, in contrast with the supporters of Abū Bakr who were motivated by political/ pragmatic considerations. Thus at the time of the Prophet's death, Jafri argues that it was the religious faction that wanted a successor to be from the Prophet's family (ie 'Alī). The northern Arabs, who gave less importance to religion, were more accustomed to succession based on seniority and therefore chose Abū Bakr.[227]

Jafri along with 'Athamina mentions a separate phenomenon among the northern Arabs: the concept of hereditary nobility which gives the clan exclusive right to leadership of the tribe.[228] Jafri argues that in the time of the Prophet, this hereditary nobility had been inherited by Banū Hāshim due to their role in the upkeep of the *Ka'ba* as well as providing for the needs of the pilgrims. Thus members of the Banū Hāshim, due to their hereditary nobility, were the best placed to succeed the Prophet. This is also the opinion of Madelung and Takim.[229] However, unlike Jafri, 'Athamina, in his cogent study of succession in pre-Islamic Arabia, argues that this nobility-based tribal leadership was not something permanent. If the clan suffered a decline in strength, the leadership could be transferred to another clan.[230] This was demonstrated by "the transfer of tribal leadership from Banū Hāshim to Banū Makhzūm to Banū 'Abd Shams within a period of three generations."[231] So although hereditary nobility and tribal leadership went hand in hand, there was an important difference between hereditary nobility and hereditary succession. In the latter, rule stays within one family whereas in the former it

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[225] Hodgson (1974), p. 155.

[226] Jafri (1979), p. 12.

[227] Ibid.

[228] Khalil 'Athamina, 'The Pre-Islamic Roots of the Early Muslim Caliphate: The Emergence of Abū Bakr', *Der Islam,* 76 (1999), 11-12.

[229] Madelung (1997), p. 5.; Takim (2005), p. 24.

[230] 'Athamina (1999), pp. 12-13.

[231] Ibid.

depends on and can change according to the qualities and abilities of the clan. 'Athamina also argues, contrary to Jafri that although leadership would remain within a clan (due to its inherited nobility), succession *within* the clan was based on merit and was not hereditary. Secondly, 'Athamina argues that Abū Bakr widened the concept of hereditary nobility from a single clan to that of the entire tribe of Quraysh. This was in line with his "pan tribal orientation."[232]

Takim also argues that succession among the pre-Islamic Arabs was hereditary. Both Takim and Dabashi utilise the Weberian model of charismatic leadership to support the *Imāmate* of 'Alī.[233] According to Takim, the death of a Prophet engendered a split between those who favoured hereditary succession based on the principle of charisma of descent[234] (the Shī'a) and those who desired the re-emergence of traditional Arab polity (the Sunnīs).[235] Takim also argues that hereditary succession *was* the norm amongst the Arabs, and quoting Madelung, he also argues that it had its basis in the Quran.[236]

Dabashi, contrary to Takim, does not associate the concept of hereditary succession with traditional Arab practice. However, due to his use of the Weberian model of charismatic leadership he arrives at the same conclusion as Takim. Both agree on the following: that the election of Abū Bakr was a re-emergence of the old tribal order that the Prophet had tried to abolish; and that given that the Prophet's charisma was hereditary, it was to be preserved and perpetuated in his kin. Hence, only 'Alī and his descendants could succeed the Prophet.

Takim, however, appears to contradict himself when he uses the pre-Islamic origins of the procedure of convening a tribal council as a basis for its rejection. Yet he supports hereditary succession on the basis that it was "known to Arab tribes... [and was] among the Quraysh...an

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[232] Khalil 'Athamina, 'The Tribal Kings in Pre-Islamic Arabia: A Study of the Epithet Malik or Dhu Al-Taj in Early Arabic Traditions', *al-Qantara,* 19 (1998).

[233] Weber argues that there are three different modes of authority; rational-legal (based upon a clearly defined position), traditional (rooted in custom) and charismatic (linked to an individual's personal charisma). These three modes of authority legitimise power in the eyes of the subjects. Henry Tischler, *Introduction to Sociology*, (2013), pp. 368-9. He further argues that, "routinization of charisma" occurs upon the death of the charismatic leader. The successor may be designated by the outgoing leader, selected by the outgoing leader's followers, or chosen by revelation. Ken Morrison, *Marx, Durkheim, Weber: Formations of Modern Social Thought*, (2006), pp. 367-8.

[234] This is similar to Jafri's view that hereditary nobility was to remain within Banū Hāshim. Takim couches it in Weberian terminology.

[235] Which manifested itself at Saqīfa in a "tribal procedure for the selection of a chief".Liyakat Takim, *The Heirs of the Prophet: Charisma and Religious Authority in Shi'ite Islam*, (2012), p. 6.

[236] Ibid. p. 25.

accepted principle."[237] Hence, both the concept of noble lineage (which Takim supports) *and* the procedure of convening a tribal council (which Takim opposes) are pre-Islamic. In addition, it is incorrect to infer that everything that has its origin in pre-Islamic custom is necessarily un-Islamic.[238]

The second opinion is that succession among the pre-Islamic Arabs was not hereditary. Dabashi argues that hereditary succession "was not part of the traditional mode of Arab authority" and as stated above, Afsaruddin and Khel and Khel argue that it was generally not known among the northern Arabs. [239] A number of other scholars also hold that the mode succession amongst the Arabs was not hereditary.[240] For example Lewis and Hitti argue that even if the Prophet had left behind sons to succeed him, "the problem would not have been solved" as chiefdom among the Arabs was not hereditary.[241]

One of the corollaries of the second opinion is that succession amongst the pre-Islamic Arabs was based upon seniority. Several scholars hold that according to Arab custom a new leader would be elected by his tribe based upon his seniority and that this method was used following the Prophet's death.[242] Chejne concurs with this stating that although Abū Bakr was chosen based on tribal custom[243] there were other Companions who were also suitable candidates to succeed the Prophet due to their personal merits.[244] Afsaruddin argues that the pre-Islamic Arab custom of giving prominence and preference to the most pious amongst them was in fact consistent with the Quran. As such it was palatable to the Arabs, particularly so given that no

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[237] Ibid. p. 24.

[238] Bianchi (1991), p. 134. criticises Dabashi for using the two terms interchangeably. There are numerous examples of pre-Islamic customs carried over into Islam. For example; the four sacred months, the Arab custom of hospitality, the concept of blood money, the right of women to own property (Nisrine Abiad, *Sharia, Muslim States and International Human Rights Treaty Obligations: A Comparative Study*, (2008), p. 19.) as well as various types of sales contracts. Abdullah Alwi Haji Hassan, *Sales and Contracts in Early Islamic Commercial Law*, (2007), pp. 128,36.

[239] Dabashi (1993), p. 104. Abiad (2008).

[240] Hitti (1953).; Nicholson (1907). Hayrettin Yücesoy, 'Justification of Political Authority in Medieval Sunni Thought', in *Islam, the State, and Political Authority: Medieval Issues and Modern Concerns,* ed. by Asma Afsaruddin (2010).; William Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Political Thought. The Basic Concepts*, (1968); Chejne (1960); Arnold (1924); Lewis (2002).

[241] Lewis (2002), p. 49.; Hitti (1953), p. 139.

[242] Hitti (1953), p. 139.; Nicholson (1907), p. 183.; Arnold (1924), p. 20.

[243] Chejne (1960), p. 25.

[244] Nicholson (1907).

Islamic alternative existed.[245] She argues that Abū Bakr's piety and other personal qualities were, contrary to Madelung's assertion, a "decisive factor" in his selection. [246]

'Athamina also postulates that seniority was the main criterion in choosing a leader. He states that the method of selecting a new leader amongst pre-Islamic Arabs was neither strictly hereditary nor democratic, although it had elements of both.[247] The successor, who had to be a member of the ruling clan, was chosen on the basis of his personal merits and his noble origins. His relationship with the deceased leader was immaterial.[248] He would be elected by senior clan members of the tribe.[249] So although the candidate could only come from the ruling clan, other senior tribal members did participate in his election. In terms of the *modus operandus*, the selection had to take place at "the regular meeting place of the tribe" with senior members of the tribe in attendance.[250] 'Athamina argues that the manner in which Abū Bakr was selected at Saqīfa was in accordance with this procedure. It took place at Saqīfa; the traditional meeting place, and senior representatives from both the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār were present.[251] Thus this gathering, according to prevailing tribal norms, had the authority to appoint the successor to the Prophet.[252] The tribal tradition of succession had not been abolished by the new religion, and thus any decision regarding succession to the Prophet would be made in accordance with prevailing political concepts and the existing political institution.[253]

Dabashi's opinion is the diametric opposite of 'Athamina's. He accepts that among the pre-Islamic Arabs a successor would be chosen by a tribal council on the basis of his personal qualifications and leadership skills and this was the mode of selection at Saqīfa.[254] Utilising the Weberian model of charismatic leadership to support 'Alī's divine right to succeed the Prophet, Dabashi argues that Saqīfa represented the re-emergence of the old Arab order, and recourse to the ideas of tribal affiliation. Both the convention of a tribal council to decide on a successor

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[245] Afsaruddin (2002), pp. 272-3.
[246] Madelung (1997), p. 42.states that that 'Alī's youth and lack of experience as compared to Abū Bakr's seniority was "quite besides the point".; Afsaruddin (2002), pp. 272-3.
[247] 'Athamina (1999), p. 14.
[248] Ibid.
[249] Ibid.
[250] Ibid. p. 16.
[251] Ibid. pp. 16-18.
[252] Ibid. p. 18.
[253] Ibid. p. 6.
[254] Dabashi (1993), pp. 81-2.

and the insistence that the successor must be from Quraysh were the "antithesis to the new mode of authority that Muḥammad… had introduced."[255] Only the partisans of 'Alī were faithful to the mission of the Prophet by extending his charismatic authority to the Imams.[256]

A diagram summarising succession according to tribal custom among northern Arabs and the method by which Abū Bakr was chosen is given in section 7. There is general agreement within modern scholarship that succession according to the southern Arabs was hereditary, hence it is not included.

2.3.5   The relevance of succession in pre-Islamic Arabia

A number of scholars state that the nature of succession according to pre-Islamic custom was irrelevant to the issue of succession to the Prophet. Given that the political order that the Prophet left upon his death was based upon the concept of an *umma*, i.e. a community which was united upon a common faith, it therefore transcended both tribe and kinship.[257] Donner states the concept of an u*mma*, and complete submission to God formed the ideological basis of the new state in which allegiance and obedience was first and foremost to the state *and no longer the tribe* (italics mine).

For the first time in its history, Arabia was under the control of a centralised authority[258] which had all the hall marks of state including a ruling class,[259] the power to collect taxes[260] and full legal authority over its subjects.[261] Donner further states that through a combination of good timing, persuasion and decisiveness, Abū Bakr and 'Umar ensured that their vision of an "integrated and relatively centralised Islamic political unit ultimately triumphed" with Abū Bakr as the first successor to the Prophet.[262]

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[255] Ibid. pp. 65-66.

[256] Ibid. p. 97.

[257] Denny, F.M., "*Umma*", *EI²*.

[258] Donner (1981), p. 49.

[259] Ibid. p. 75.

[260] Ibid. p. 69.

[261] Ibid. p. 72. Donner also argues that the during the *ridda* wars, not all opposition to Medina was religious despite the fact that '*ridda*' is commonly understood to mean 'apostasy'. In many cases they rebel tribes were challenging the hegemony of the state and not Islam per se, (Ibid: p85-86).

[262] Ibid. p. 83.

This view is echoed by Sharon, who argues that the Prophet had changed the political landscape of Arabia by creating a "supra-tribal system."[263] The Prophet's death resulted in a religio-political succession and not a tribal succession and thus pre Islamic tribal custom was irrelevant to the issue of succession.[264] Sharon further explains that in this new political framework, a person's status was determined neither by tribe nor wealth but by seniority in Islam.[265] It was against this backdrop that Abū Bakr was chosen, as the Prophet died without naming a successor. He further states that Abū Bakr never tried to legitimise his succession, nor was it possible that anyone would have considered 'Alī as a viable candidate. As for Shī'ī reports on the right of 'Alī to succeed the Prophet, these were the products of later polemical debates. During 'Alī's caliphate, his supporters highlighted the principle of *sābiqa* to legitimise his rule (as the fourth Caliph), but they did not intend by this that 'Alī had the sole right to succeed the Prophet. By the middle of the first century, his *qarāba* (kinship to the Prophet) was given prominence as the *sābiqa* argument "proved to be inadequate".[266] Towards the end of Umayyad rule, the principle of *waṣiyya* was introduced; i.e. the Prophet had directly appointed 'Alī to be his heir.[267]

Agreeing with Sharon, Shaban highlights that the choice of the successor had to be in light of the embryonic supra-tribal structure that the Prophet had created**.** A leader from the Anṣār was out of the question due to ongoing antagonisms between the 'Aws and Khazraj. Nor could a prominent member from the *bayt* of the Prophet be chosen, as was common, in the pre-Islamic era. The latter would firstly contradict "the notion of a supra-tribal leadership," and secondly, there were no viable candidates from the Prophet's family; 'Alī was too young, and 'Abbās had only recently converted to Islam. [268] Hence, Shaban argues that Abū Bakr was the ideal candidate; he was Qurayshi, a close associate of the Prophet, wise and firm. His choice and the swift manner in which it was undertaken, which was "in the light of accepted Arab tradition", reflected the political maturity of the community.[269]

The opinion that the choice of Abū Bakr was a wise decision is also held by Donner, who states that Abū Bakr was the ideal choice of leader due to his close proximity with the Prophet,

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[263] Sharon (1984), p. 123; Also Antony Black, *The History of Islamic Political Thought: From the Prophet to the Present*, (2011), p. 13.describes the new system brought by the Prophet as a "post-tribal society".
[264] Sharon (1984).
[265] Ibid.
[266] Sharon (1984), p. 134.
[267] Ibid. p. 137.
[268] Shaban (1971), p. 16.
[269] Ibid. pp. 16-17, 19.

trusted by all parties, and politically astute. In the face of tribal opposition to the Madinian state, only someone who had intricate knowledge of "alliances and rivalries within each tribe" could successfully prosecute a policy to ensure the various tribes fell in line. Abū Bakr, with his expertise in tribal genealogy and his political acumen was the obvious candidate to succeed the Prophet. Other scholars argue that given the factionalism and political wrangling among the Companions, Abū Bakr was the second best choice to all parties, and the "only alternative acceptable to them all even though the Anṣār "felt that they had been cheated of their rightful status."[270] This view is contested by those scholars who believed that ʿAlī considered himself to have been divinely appointed and/or that the method of selection at Saqīfa was a reassertion of un-Islamic tribal norms.[271]

Afsaruddin also rejects the view that tribal custom was the basis of choosing a successor. She states that a dispute occurred among the Companions on the issue of *how* a successor to the Prophet should be chosen due to the lack of any clear directive from the Prophet. Following the Prophet's death two distinct views on leadership emerged favouring ʿAlī and Abū Bakr respectively.[272] Both sides based their claims upon the individual merits of ʿAlī and Abū Bakr respectively.[273] Thus individual merit was the only definitive criterion by which the new successor to the Prophet should be chosen. Those Companions who supported ʿAlī did so on the basis of his piety and his service to Islam, and not due to his kinship with the Prophet. Once Abū Bakr had been chosen, many of ʿAlī's supporters accepted the verdict out of pragmatism.[274] But although the use of the concept of merit in choosing a successor was based upon the Quran, it also happened to concur with tribal custom.

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[270] Shoufani (1973), p. 64.; Kennedy (2004), p. 52.
[271] Dabashi (1993); Jafri (1979); Takim (2012).
[272] Afsaruddin (2002), p. 280.
[273] Ibid. p. 285.
[274] Ibid. p. 24.

Figure 2 1 Succession according to tribal custom

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  The theory: Succession according to tribal custom │
│              amongst northern Arabs               │
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Hereditary, based upon noble lineage **Madelung, Jafri, Takim**

Seniority: **Afsaruddin, 'Athmania, Dabashi, Ayoub, Hitti et al**

This agreed with the Quranic concept of succession: **Madelung, Jafri Takim.**

This agreed with the Quranic concept of succession: **Afsaruddin, 'Athmania.**

This opposed the Quranic concept of succession: **Dabashi.**

Figure 2.2 How Abū Bakr was chosen.

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│        The practice: How Abū Bakr was chosen.     │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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A new Prophetic paradigm

Tribal Custom:

A new tribal supra structure; seniority in Islam took precedence over tribe: **Sharon, Shaban.**

Seniority (sābiqa & fadl) **Afsaruddin.**

Very similar

Tribal Custom did not contradict the Quran: **'Athamina** (although role of Quran in the decision was minimal).

Tribal Custom contradicted the Quran: **Dabashi, Takim, Jafri**

This contradicted tribal custom **Sharon, Shaban.**

This did not contradict tribal custom **Afsaruddin.**

2.4 Glossary of key terms

Table 3.1 Glossary

Ahl al-bayt.	Lit., the people of the house; members of the household of Prophet including, 'Alī, Fāṭima, Ḥasan, Ḥusayn and their progeny.[275]
'Ālim (pl., 'Ulamā'	A learned man, specifically a scholar in Islamic religious sciences.[276]
Anṣār	Lit., helpers. Name given collectively to those Medinese who supported the Prophet after his migration (*hijra*) from Mecca to Medina, as distinct from the *muhājirūn*.[277]
Bay'a	Recognition of authority, especially the act of swearing allegiance to a new sovereign or spiritual leader.[278]
Dīwān	A public finance register; a government department.[279]
Faḍl	Moral excellence.[280]
Fiqh	The technical term for Islamic jurisprudence; the science of law in Islam[281].
Fitna	Temptation, trial, enchantment, civil, war, strife.[282]
Ghadīr Khumm	A Shī'ī day of celebration for what they consider to be Prophet Muḥammad's adoption of 'Alī as his successor.[283]
Ghayba	Lit., absence; the word has been used in a technical sense for the condition of anyone who has been withdrawn by God from the eyes of men and whose life during that period of occultation may be miraculously prolonged.[284]
Ḥadīth	A report relating an action or saying of the Prophet, or the corpus of such reports collectively, constituting the second sources of Islamic law. For Shī'as, it generally also refers to the actions and sayings of the *Imāms*.[285]
Hayra	Confusion.

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[275] Daftary (2007), p. 514.
[276] Ibid.
[277] Ibid.
[278] Ibid. p. 515.
[279] Ibid.
[280] Afsaruddin (2008), p. 239.
[281] Daftary (2007).
[282] Netton (2006), p. 83.
[283] Lapidus (2012), p. 662.
[284] Daftary (2007).
[285] Ibid.

Hijra	The migration of the Prophet and his family from Mecca to Medina in 622. This became the first year of the Islamic calender. [286]
Imām	Leader of a group of Muslims in prayer; the supreme leader of the Muslim community. The title used by the Shīʿīs in reference to the legitimate successors to the Prophet.[287]
Kalām	Lit., speech. Refers to scholastic theology.[288]
Khalīfa (caliph)	The successor of the Prophet and the head of the Muslim community in the Sunnī model; the caliph.[289]
Khurūj	Revolution, revolt, rebellion.[290]
Masʿum	A person who possesses infallibility, freedom from committing sins.[291]
Mahdī	The rightly guided one; a name applied to the restorer of the true religion and justice who, according to a widely held Muslim belief, will appear and rule before the end of the world. Shīʿīs believe in a temporary absence (occultation) of the Mahdī and his eventual return (rajʿa) in glory.[292]
Muhājirūn	Lit., emigrants; Name given collectively to those Meccan followers of Prophet Muḥammad who accompanied him in his emigration from Mecca to Medina as distinct from the anṣār.[293]
Mihna	An inquisition, for example the inquisition of the Caliph Maʾmūn.[294]
Naṣṣ	Explicit designation of a successor by his predecessor, particularly relating to the Shīʿī view of succession to the Imāmate, whereby each Imām, under divine guidance, designates his successor.[295]
Rajʿa	Lit., 'return'; the word has been used in a technical sense to denote the return or reappearance of a messianic personality, specifically one considered as the Mahdī.[296]

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[286] Netton (2006), p. 102.
[287] Daftary (2007), p. 517.
[288] Netton (2006), pp. 140-1.
[289] Lapidus (2012), p. 665.
[290] Mansoor Jassem Al-Shamsi, *Islam and Political Reform in Saudi Arabia: The Quest for Political Change and Reform*, (2012), p. 45.
[291] Lapidus (2012), p. 666.
[292] Daftary (2007), p. 519.
[293] Ibid.
[294] Lapidus (2012), p. 666.
[295] Daftary (2007), p. 520.
[296] Ibid. p. 521.

Ridda	Lit., 'return' and by extension, 'apostasy' referring especially to the efforts of the Arab converts to Islam who sought to renounce their allegiance after the Prophet's death.[297]
Sābiqa	Precedence of priority in Islam, especially through early conversion.[298]
Sharī'a	Lit., the way; referring to divine guidelines for moral and ethical behaviour, usually translated as 'religious law'.[299]
Shūrā.	Consultation.[300]
Sīra	Biographical narrative of the Prophet Muḥammad.[301]
Tafsīr	Commentary and interpretation, the exegesis of the Quran.[302]
Umma	Community, any people as followers of a particular religion or prophet; in particular, the Muslims as forming a religious community.[303]
Waṣī (pl. *awṣiyā'*)	Linguistically a *waṣī* is a person who receives a legacy via a Will. In the Imāmī Shī'ī religious paradigm, a *waṣī* was a successor who received spiritual authority via *naṣṣ*.[304] 'Alī was the first *waṣī* and the *Imāmate* was then transferred to his (and Fāṭima's) descendants via *naṣṣ*. It was the function of the *awṣiyā'* to interpret and explain the message brought by the prophets.[305]
Waṣiyya	Appointment of a testamentary executor or guardian.[306] In the Shī'ī religious paradigm the term is synonymous with *naṣṣ*.[307]

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[297] Berkey (2003), p. xiv.

[298] Afsaruddin (2008), p. 241.

[299] Ibid. p. 240.

[300] Black (2011), p. 357.

[301] Lapidus (2012), p. 668.

[302] Ibid. p. 669.

[303] Daftary (2007), p. 522.

[304] https://iis.ac.uk/what-shia-islam [accessed 5 June 2019]

[305] Daftary (2007).

[306] Peters, R., "Waṣiyya", EI².

[307] Hossein Modarressi and others, *Crisis and Consolidation in the Formative Period of Shi'ite Islam: Abū Ja'far Ibn Qiba Al-Rāzī and His Contribution to Imāmite Shī'ite Thought*, (1993), p. 5.

3 The political and religious situation in the central Islamic lands: 132-334/750-945

3.1 Preliminary remarks and context

As stated in chapter one this thesis will, through a comparative study, examine what the Saqīfa narratives of four ʿAbbāsid-era historians, al-Balādhurī (d.278/892), al-Yaʿqūbī (d.283/897), al-Ṭabarī (d.310/923) and Ibn Aʿtham (d.314/926) reveal about their views concerning succession to the Prophet. In order to examine the above, it is necessary first to study the political and religious milieu in which the four historians lived, as this would have influenced their own religious and political outlook. All four historians lived in the central Islamic lands in the period 132-334/750-945.[308]

Although the idea of a caliphate as a political and religious institution was firmly rooted in the psyche of the Sunnīs, the political reality was uncomfortably far from religious ideals. In period in question, there was a fragmentation of the ʿAbbāsid state coupled with a steady decline in caliphal authority until by the mid tenth century, the caliph wielded no political authority. Although he retained the title of caliph, he was nothing more than a useful figurehead used to legitimise the rule of his new masters, the Shīʿī Būyids.

The four historians were responding to a similar, if broad set of political and theological issues. As with any historian, none of them were politically or religiously neutral. And hence their historical narratives were influenced by and influencing of the debates that were raging in their time.

3.1.1 Time frame
The first historian, al-Balādhurī, was born shortly after Maʾmūm's victory in the civil war (195-204/811-819) against his brother Amīn and the subsequent siege of Baghdad (196/812). The last author died shortly after the beginning of the Buyid entry into Baghdad. From the birth of

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[308] The *central Islamic lands* refers to the area which Hodgson describes as 'from the Nile to the [river] Oxus'. Hodgson (1974), pp. 60-1.

the first author in approximately 204/819, to the death of the last author in 345/956, this period is of approximately 140 years' duration.

In view of important political and religious developments that to a large extent overlapped with this time frame, however, I will focus, in this thesis, most closely on the period 132-334/750-945, for the following reasons:

- It was in 132/750 that the 'Abbāsids seized power through a bloody revolution, and the events following the revolution had major political and religious impact on subsequent Islamic world history. The beginning of 'Abbāsid rule is thus a necessary point of departure.

- It is the year 945 according to Bonner and Kennedy marks the end of the independent 'Abbāsid caliphate with the entry of the Būyids into Baghdad.[309]

- Lewis divides 'Abbāsid rule into two periods; 745-945 and 945-1248.[310] In using the first of these, I am therefore adhering to a recognised periodisation, despite the limitations and artificiality inherent in any attempt at periodisation.

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[309]Tayeb El-Hibri, 'The Empire in Iraq, 769-861', in *The New Cambridge History of Islam,* ed. by Chase Robinson (2010), pp. 269-304.; Michael Bonner, 'The Waning of Empire, 861-945', in *New Cambridge History of Islam,* ed. by Chase Robinson (2010), pp. 305-59.; Kennedy (2010), pp. 360-93.

[310] Lewis, B., "Abbāsids", *EI².*

3.2 The political situation in the central Islamic lands: 132-334/750-945

3.2.1 The period: 132-256/750-870

This period covers the beginning of 'Abbāsid rule up to the end of anarchy at Sāmarrā. The 'Abbāsids came to power in 132/750 by galvanising the support of a disparate number of dissatisfied groups. They were further aided by the internal weakness and mutual rivalry within the Umayyad dynasty.[311] The 'Abbāsid claim to legitimacy was that as descendants (and hence representatives) of the Prophet's family, they alone were entitled to govern. In the period leading up to the overthrow of the Umayyads, the identity of who was to succeed was left deliberately vague in order to enlist the support of as many interest groups as possible. To bolster their claim to legitimacy, they claimed that Abū Hāshim, son of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya had made a will in favour of Muḥammad b. 'Alī, the great-grandson of 'Abbās[312].

Although the Umayyads were literally wiped out, key features of Umayyad rule remained. This included dynastic succession, a standing army, and a centralised empire.[313] Almost from the very beginning of their rule, the issue of succession plagued the 'Abbāsid dynasty. The second Caliph Manṣūr (d.136/754) had to contend with a rival claimant to the throne, his uncle 'Abdullah b. 'Alī. The matter was settled on the battlefield: 'Abdullah b. 'Alī was defeated and he later died in prison.[314] Although the succession to Manṣūr was without controversy, the fact that the death of Manṣūr was announced only *after bay'a* to his successor *Mahdī* had been given is indicative of the sensitivity and volatility of the succession issue.[315]

Due to its pivotal role in supporting the 'Abbāsid revolution, Khurāsān became one of the most important provinces in the dynasty, both politically and militarily.[316] Many Khurāsānis settled in Baghdad along with their descendants and were known as *abnā' al-dawla* (sons of the

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[311] William Montgomery Watt, *The Majesty That Was Islam: The Islamic World, 661-1100*, (1974), p. 144.

[312] Tayeb El-Hibri, 'The Empire in Iraq, 763-861', in *The New Cambridge History of Islam: Volume 1, the Formation of the Islamic World, Sixth to Eleventh Centuries,* ed. by Chase F Robinson (2010), pp. 269 - 304 (p. 104).

[313] Matthew Gordon, *The Rise of Islam*, (2005), p. 50.

[314] Kennedy (2004), pp. 129-30.

[315] Peter Malcolm Holt and others, *The Cambridge History of Islam*, (1977), pp. 112-3.

[316] Through the effort of Abū Muslim, the 'Abbāsid da'wah was particularly successful in Khurāsān, whereas in Kūfa the 'Abbāsids had to contend with the strong attachment of the local population to the 'Alids. As a frontier state, Khurāsān also had a sizeable number of experienced soldiers who were indispensable in the 'Abbāsid military campaign against the Umayyads.

dynasty).[317] They were later to become an important faction in the politics of Baghdad. In addition, important families within the province of Khurāsān were often involved in key matters of the state. Despite their common origin, there was tension between these two groups: the *abnā'* in Baghdad wanted tax revenues from Khurāsān to be spent (on their wages) in Baghdad, whereas the local Khurāsānis wanted the money to be spent within the province.[318]

The other key faction in Baghdad was the civil administration comprising of the palace servants and the secretaries. This group was often at loggerheads with the both military and the provincial governors; the latter two groups preferred power to be devolved to the provinces, whereas the civil servants preferred a centralised bureaucracy.[319] The tension between the two groups often came to the fore in the question of succession. Both sides would jostle to ensure their man succeeded the outgoing caliph. Sometimes it was a choice between the son and brother of the deceased caliph.

The successful candidate would then promote his particular faction, often imprisoning or even executing his opponents from the other camp. For example, upon taking power, al-*Mahdī* arrested Yahyā the Barmakid and gave the military party important responsibilities.[320] His successor Hārūn al-Rashīd, on the other hand, owed his position to a palace coup engineered by the Barmakids.[321] The Barmakids ensured that Baghdad was the centre of both political and financial administration, with provincial governors and the military subservient to the centre.[322]

Unlike other provinces, Khurāsān was given special treatment by the Barmakids, who were from eastern Iran. They appointed Faḍl b. Sahl as governor, who was sympathetic to the needs of local people. However, the *abnā'* strongly opposed this appointment, leading the caliph to dismiss him. His replacement ('Alī b. Isa b. Mahan) led to local uprisings, prompting the caliph to dismiss him also. Therefore, al-Rashīd decided to travel to the province in person but died

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[317] Kennedy (2004), p. 135.

[318] Ibid.

[319] Ibid. p. 138.

[320] Ibid. p. 139.

[321] Ibid. p. 140.

[322] Ibid.; During the reign of Hārūn al Rashīd, the Barmakids suffered a spectacular downfall. Leading many of the family were imprisoned and executed. Netton argues that the caliph felt threatened by their growing political and economic power. Netton (2006), p. 53.

shortly after arriving.[323] The ongoing debate over relations between the centre and the provinces would eventually erupt into violence.[324]

Two of Hārūn al-Rashīd's sons (al-Amīn and al-Ma'mūn) were both possible contenders to the throne. Seven years before his death, Hārūn made a public declaration in Mecca that al-Amīn (r.193/809-198/813) should succeed him, while his brother al-Ma'mūn (r.198/813-218/833) was to have full authority over Khurāsān and would be next in line to succeed al-Amīn as caliph.[325] This policy of choosing two successors was not unique to al-Rashīd; both as-Saffah and al-*Mahdī* had done the same.[326] Although both parties signed the agreement, it quickly broke down after Hārūn's death, and led to a devastating civil war. It seems that initially the brothers were averse to conflict, but the interest groups who backed them were determined to see the power of the opposing party destroyed. In al-Amīn's camp were the *abnā'* and the civil administration of Baghdad, who wanted Khurāsān to be under central control. They persuaded al-Amīn to exert more influence over his brother in Khurāsān.[327] Al-Ma'mūn also had his supporters: a talented *wazīr* (vizier or chief minister) called Faḍl b. Sahl as well as a brilliant Arab general, Tāhir b. al-Ḥusayn, whose descendants had settled in Khurāsān. After negotiations between the two parties broke down, al-Amīn sent a huge army in 195/811 to bring Khurāsān back under the rule of Baghdad. This army was defeated by the much smaller forces of Tāhir. The latter moved quickly westwards, capturing much of Iraq. By 196/812, much of the empire had recognised al-Ma'mūn as Caliph, and even the *abnā'* of Baghdad who had been al-Ma'mūn 's implacable opponents switched sides. Following a siege of Baghdad, Tāhir's forces triumphed and in 198/813 al-Amīn was captured and killed.[328]

Following his victory, al-Ma'mūn chose to rule from Khurāsān. This coupled with his nomination of an 'Alīd as his successor, led many in Baghdad to oppose his rule, and in 201/817 his brother Ibrahīm was proclaimed as a rival caliph. The civil war finally ended after al-Ma'mūn decided to leave Khurāsān for Baghdad in 204/819.[329] However, the dynasty had been severely weakened by the civil war from three angles: *morally,* as for the first time in

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[323] Kennedy (2004), p. 145.

[324] Elton L Daniel, *The Political and Social History of Khurasan under Abbasid Rule, 747-820*, (1979), p. 194.

[325] Kennedy (2004), p. 142.

[326] Michael Cooperson, *Al Ma'mun*, (2012), p. 42.

[327] Kennedy (2004), p. 147.

[328] Ibid. pp. 148-50.

[329] Ibid. pp. 151-3.

'Abbāsid history a reigning Caliph had been killed; *financially*, due to the destruction caused by civil war, which was further exacerbated by 'Alid rebellions in Iraq as well as loss of revenue from the outlying provinces;[330] and *politically*, as large parts of the empire, including Syria, Egypt and North Africa were now outside central control, and the 'Abbāsid family was rapidly becoming side-lined in decision making.[331]

Although 'Abbāsid legitimacy was based on descent from the Prophet, the problem of succession had haunted almost every caliph from al-Saffah up to al-Ma'mūn. Unlike other dynasties, there was no primogeniture and the death of a caliph was a time of great uncertainty and political scheming. The civil war was a direct consequence of the problem of succession and led to a weakening of the authority of the caliphate.

A further complication was the tension within the 'Abbāsid family vis-à-vis their relationship with the 'Alīds. The relationship fluctuated from outright hostility and persecution (e.g. during the reigns of Hārūn al-Rashīd and al-Mutawakkil) to patronage (e.g. al-Saffah, al-Manṣūr and al-*Mahdī*).[332] That al-Ma'mūn had taken the radical step of nominating an 'Alid as successor, much to the consternation of many groups, demonstrates that the issue of legitimate rule was still unresolved. The 'Alids also lacked a uniform stance. Some considered 'Abbāsid rule as illegitimate and rose in rebellion (Ibrahīm and Muhammad b. 'Abdallah, d. 145-146/762-3) whereas others, such as Ja'far as-Ṣādiq, preferred a politically quietist approach.[333]

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[330] Ibid.

[331] Ibid. pp. 153-4.

[332] Fred Donner, 'Muhammad and the Caliphate' in John L Esposito, 'The Oxford History of Islam', (1999), pp. 25-6).; Hugh Kennedy, *The Early Abbasid Caliphate: A Political History*, (1981), pp. 66-7.; Al-Saffah invited leading 'Alīds to his court and sought their advice. Al-Manṣūr continued this policy, although arrested the seventh Imām Mūsā al-Kāẓim. He later released him, satisfied that he had no political ambitions. Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, *The Divine Guide in Early Shi'ism: The Sources of Esotericism in Islam*, (1994), p. 65.;The Caliph Mahdī continued his predecessor's conciliatory policy towards the 'Alīds, giving them gifts and positions at court. This has the desired effect in neutralising all but a few pockets of resistance. Kennedy (2004), p. 136; Kennedy (1981).

[333] Fred Donner, 'Muhammad and the Caliphate' in Esposito, pp. 25-6.; During the 'Abbāsid revolution, a number of 'Alids including the Zaydīs, several *ghulāt* groups and even some leading 'Abbāsids pledged allegiance to Muhamad b. 'Abdallah (al-Nafs al-Zakiyya') who was the great grandson of Ḥasan b. 'Alī b. Abī Tālib. He launched his rebellion in Medina 145/762 supported by a simultaneous uprising by his brother Ibrahim b. 'Abdallah in Baṣra. Although Baṣra held out longer than Medina, both rebellions were quickly crushed by the caliph al-Manṣūr; Daftary (2013), pp. 48-50.;El-Hibri, p. 286.

It was in 204/819, the year that al-Ma'mūn entered Baghdad, that our first historian, al-Balādhurī was born.[334] The period 204-17/819-33 has been described as the 'age of reunification and transition'.[335]

Al-Ma'mūn made peace with his former opponents in Baghdad, and under his competent general 'Abd Allah b. Tāhir, Egypt and northern Syria were brought back under central control.[336] The political and military influence of both the *abnā'* in Baghdad, who had opposed al-Ma'mūn and the 'Abbāsid family, was greatly diminished in favour of a Persian elite of semi-independent hereditary governors, in particular the Tāhirids. Towards the end of al-Ma'mūn's reign, a new phenomenon appeared; the presence of Turkish slave troops imported from Samarkand, under the leadership of his brother and the future caliph al-Mu'taṣim.[337] In a world of shifting loyalties Mu'taṣim felt he needed a reliable corps of troops which, with no local ties, would be fiercely loyal to the Caliph.[338] These troops would also act as a counterweight to the power of the Tāhirids, who not only controlled Khurāsān but also the entire 'Abbāsid army.[339] Unlike the armies of the *abnā'* and *khurāsāniya,* these troops could be relied upon to reconquer areas that had broken away during the civil war.[340]

On succeeding his brother as caliph, Mu'taṣim (r.218/833-227/842) moved his Turkish troops, numbering several thousand, to a new capital, Sāmarrā, eighty miles north of Baghdad. This move was partly due to the deteriorating relationship between the Baghdadis and his troops.[341] By the end of the caliphate, the number of Turkish troops was estimated to be up to 70,000, and to the disquiet of both Arabs and Persians, a significant number of them were promoted to high ranking positions.[342] The cost of maintaining such an army would become a huge challenge to the government. Inability to pay troops often led to mutinies, with the deaths of senior officers, *wazīrs* and even the caliph not uncommon.

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[334] His exact birth date is unknown.

[335] Tayeb El-Hibri, 'The empire in Iraq, 763-861' in El-Hibri (2010).pp 269 -304 (p286)

[336] Ibid.

[337] Ibid.p.290

[338] Sourdel, D., "*Ghulām*", *EI²*.

[339] Lapidus (2012), p. 106.; Siddiqi argues that the Tāhirids were fiercely loyal to the 'Abbāsids, partly because the two parties' interests were mutual. He further argues that the weakening of the Tāhirids coincided with that of the 'Abbāsids. Amir Hasan Siddiqi, *Caliphate and Sultanate in Medieval Persia*, (1942), pp. 53-65.

[340] Hugh Kennedy, *The Armies of the Caliphs. Military and Society in the Early Islamic State*, (2001), p. 118.

[341] Kennedy (2004), p. 163.

[342] Watt (1974), p. 121.

Not only were these troops to have a destabilising effect on the caliphate, they were to eventually render the caliph himself utterly powerless.[343] The troops' loyalty was to their officers (as long as the officers paid them) and not to the caliph.[344] With the commanders in senior positions in both the civil bureaucracy and military, it was only a matter of time before Turkish officers started interfering in state matters. Henceforth, these officers would influence, and in many cases determine who would succeed the caliph. Mutawakkil (r. 232-47/847-861), who was chosen as caliph by a *shūrā* that included Turkish officers, tried to curb their power. He had one powerful Turkish officer assassinated and others had their estates confiscated.[345] Although Mutawakkil's lavish lifestyle led to a depletion in the central treasury, at this stage the problem between the Caliph and the Turkish troops was political not financial.[346] Threatened by his determination to assert caliphal power, Turkish troops conspired with his eldest son al-Muntaṣir (d 247/861) and assassinated him in 247/861.

Mutawakkil's assassination heralded the beginning of the decline of 'Abbāsid authority. Not only had the 'Abbāsids lost a competent and capable caliph, the shocking killing of a Caliph would become something commonplace. The nine-year period (247-256/861-870) following his assassination, known as the anarchy at Sāmarrā, witnessed the reign of four caliphs, three of whom met violent deaths. Reduced tax revenues from the provinces, coupled with extravagant spending meant that Mutawakkil's heirs were unable to meet their financial commitments and pay their soldiers. This led to open revolt and the subsequent civil war between Baghdad and Sāmarrā further worsened the financial crisis.[347] Isolated at Sāmarrā, and with little spending power, the caliphs were unable to challenge the authority of the Turkish military. Thus the conflict, initially political, led to a severe financial crisis.[348] Baghdad witnessed yet another siege (252/866) as the Tāhirids and rival factions within the Turkish military and within the 'Abbāsid family battled for control over an ever-weakening centre of power and its dwindling finances.[349]

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[343] "Ghulām", EI².
[344] Lapidus (2012), p. 106.
[345] Kennedy (2004), pp. 167-9.
[346] Kennedy (2001), p. 141.; El-Hibri, p. 299.
[347] Kennedy (2004), pp. 170-2.
[348] Kennedy (2001), p. 141.
[349] Kennedy (2004), pp. 170-2.

Many senior Turkish military officers were killed during the anarchy, often by fellow Turks.[350]

Although it came to an end with the ascension of Mu'tamid, who ruled for twenty years (r.

256-279/870-892), real power now lay with the Turkish military.[351] For example, revenue from

kharāj lands and estate lands now went directly to the military, and not to the caliph's agents.

Despite this, the caliph was still responsible for paying the troops.[352]

3.2.2   The period 256-295/870-908

The anarchy at Sāmarrā ended in 256/870 with the ascension of Mu'tamid (r. 256-279/870-

892) although real power lay with his capable brother and military man al-Muwaffaq (d.

278/891).[353] The period 256-295/870-908 saw a number of important developments. The

process of political fragmentation of the empire continued and a number of semi-autonomous

dynasties emerged which, unlike the Tāhirids, were not loyal to the Caliph.[354] The Tūlūnid

dynasty led by a former Turkish governor took control of Egypt from 868-905, and at one stage

they controlled large parts of Syria and some of Iraq.[355] Although Egypt was to return to

'Abbāsid control under the reign of Muktafī (r. 289-295/902-908), the demise of the Tūlūnids

coincided with a number of failed attempts by the Fāṭimids to take Egypt.[356] Unlike other

dynasties, the Fāṭimids did not recognise the legitimacy of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate.[357] Adherents

of the Ismā'īlī sect of Shī'īsm, the Fāṭimids posed both a military and ideological threat to the

'Abbāsids. The Fāṭimids had already declared their own *Imāmate* in 297/909 after taking

Ifrīqiya from the Aghlabids.[358] In the East, the Saffarids seized Khurāsān and western Iran,

displacing the Tāhirids. They ruled from 259-287/873-900 and were later displaced by the pro-

'Abbāsid Samanids (287-389/900-99).[359]

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[350] Lapidus (2012), p. 107.

[351] Kennedy (2004), p. 173.

[352] El-Hibri, p. 313.

[353] Kennedy (2004).

[354] The Aghlabids were a semi-autonomous dynasty that ruled parts of north Africa from 184/800-
296/909. They were eventually defeated by the Fāṭimids. Netton (2006), p. 22.; The rise of semi-
autonomous dynasties led to a decline in state revenues. David Waines, 'The Third Century Internal
Crisis of the Abbasids', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient,* 20 (1977), 283.

[355] Lapidus (2012), p. 109.

[356] Egypt was conquered by the Fāṭimids in 358/969.

[357] Most if not all the semi-autonomous dynasties would mint coins in the Caliphs name and mention his
name in the Friday sermon. Siddiqi (1942), p. 75.

[358] Bonner, p. 330.

[359] Lapidus (2012).

The Zanj revolt (255-80/883-893) and Qarāmiṭa rebellions also threatened the very legitimacy of the 'Abbāsid caliphate. Both revolts crippled the Iraqi economy, which was already suffering from lack of investment and the effects of previous civil wars. The two revolts also diverted valuable resources away from other regional conflicts such as that of the Saffarids, who at one stage threatened Baghdad.[360] Iraq had once been the richest province in the empire due to the income from the fertile Sawād lands.[361] Its economic decline further weakened the 'Abbāsid empire.[362]

Under the reign of Mut'aḍid (r. 279-289/892-902), the capital was transferred back to Baghdad.[363] He was successful in restoring 'Abbāsid sovereignty over northern Syria, the Jazīra and Western Iran either through direct rule or payment of tribute.[364] His successor Muktafī (r. 289-320/902-908) built on the achievements of his father, successfully defeating both the Tūlūnids and the Qarāmiṭa, as well as leaving the empire's finances in a healthy state.[365] During the reign of these two caliphs, an intense rivalry began between two bureaucratic factions, Banū al-Furāt and Banū al-Jarrāḥ, for control of financial administration. These factions were more interested in their own personal interests and less in the interests of the government. The caliphs were able to keep this rivalry in check; however, it was later to have disastrous consequences.[366] Thus although the period 256-295/870-908 saw a revival in the fortunes of the caliphate, particularly on the military front, the chaos in bureaucracy at the centre meant that the government was unable to consolidate these gains.[367]

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[360] Ibid. p. 112.; The Zanj refers to East African slaves who were imported to work in the marshes of southern Iraq in appalling conditions. The revolt was led by a free man, 'Alī b. Muḥammad whose exact motives are unknown. His egalitarian message however attracted many of the poor Arabs as well as the Zanj slaves. The political instability of the 'Abbāsids, coupled with the marshy terrain which was ideal for guerrilla warfare, meant that the rebels were initially very successful, capturing Baṣra in 257/871. They were eventually defeated under the effective command of Muwaffaq. Kennedy (2004), pp. 177-9.

[361] Hugh Kennedy, 'The Late Abbasid Pattern, 945-1050', in *The New Cambridge History of Islam,* ed. by Chase Robinson (2010), pp. 360-93 (p. 360).

In 204/891, revenue from the Sawād was approximately 100 million dirhams. By 303/915 it had fell by almost 80% to 22.5 million. This steep decline in agricultural production was caused by the civil wars, heavy taxation which caused the peasants to flee the land as well as the destruction wrought by the Zanj and Qarāmiṭa rebellions. All of this occurred at a time when income from the provinces was also declining to due provincial autonomy. Waines (1977), pp. 284-95.

[362] Lapidus (2012), p. 113.

[363] Mu'taḍid benefited from the close contact of his father (Muwaffaq) with the Turkish military, and the latter were very loyal to him. Kennedy (2004), p. 179.

[364] Bonner, p. 335.; Kennedy (2004), pp. 181-2.

[365] Bonner, p. 349.

[366] Kennedy (2004), p. 180.

[367] Lapidus (2012), p. 109.

3.2.3   The period 295-334/908-945

The next four decades following the death of Muktafī were a period of rapid decline, with the
entry of the Būyids into Baghdad marking the 'end of the independent 'Abbāsid state'.[368]
Muktafī's successor, the young and inexperienced al-Muqtadir (r.295-320/908-932), was
chosen by the *wazīr*, bypassing other more suitable candidates such as 'Abd Allah the talented
son of the Caliph al-Mu'tazz.[369] He was only thirteen years old when ascending to the throne
and was susceptible to manipulation from various bureaucratic factions.[370] He ruled for
twenty-five years in what Kennedy describes as 'one of the most disastrous reigns in the whole
of 'Abbāsid history'.[371] During his reign there were fifteen changes of vizier.[372] His appointment
was a victory for the civilian bureaucracy at the expense of the military, and the former was
able to manipulate him at will, despite itself being far from united.[373] As mentioned earlier,
control of the bureaucracy fluctuated, often violently, between the two opposing factions of
Banū al-Furāt and Banū al-Jarrāh.[374] The ascension of one of the two factions was made
possible by its bribing the caliph, which would be immediately followed by the official
confiscation of the wealth of the opposing faction and their supporters within the secretarial
class. Much of this wealth would be pocketed by the victorious party to the detriment of the
state coffers.[375] Disputes within the bureaucracy spilled over into the military and within the
'Abbāsid family itself. This intense rivalry occurred at a time of financial crisis due to a decline
of income from once rich agricultural lands of Sawād, decline of international trade as well
extravagant spending at the centre by both the military and 'Abbāsid palace.[376] This period also
saw renewed attacks by the Qarāmiṭa, who sacked Baṣra and in 315/927-8 almost took
Baghdad.[377] It was during the rule of al-Muqtadir, that al-Ṭabarī died (310/923).

In 320/929, the military re-asserted its power; al-Muqtadir was killed in a coup engineered by
the general Mu'nis, and al-Qāhir (r. 320-22/932-934) was installed as the caliph. During
factional fighting that followed, al-Qāhir had Mu'nis executed, and with the centre engulfed in
strife, a number of provinces started breaking away, the Hamdānids being the most

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[368] Ibid. p 348.

[369] Kennedy (2004).

[370] El-Hibri (2010), p. 349.

[371] Kennedy (2004), p. 186.

[372] Newman (2013), p. 42.

[373] Kennedy (2004).

[374] Ibid. p333-4.

[375] Lapidus (2012), p. 108.

[376] Kennedy (2004), pp. 187-8.

[377] Ibid. p.351.

prominent.[378] Al-Qāhir's short reign ended with his murder at the hands of the army. By the time of al-Qāhir's death, the jurisdiction of the caliphate hardly extended beyond Baghdad.[379] After the death of al-Qāhir, the authority of the caliphs weakened further; power now lay with the new military elite led by Ibn Rā'iq in the office of the *amīr al-umarā'*.[380] Conflicts continued with and between the caliphs and military officers resulting in the murder of yet another caliph, al-Muttaqī[381] (r. 329-333/940-944). Revenue had been reduced to a trickle, and even the Sawād was outside 'Abbāsid control.[382] The breakdown in authority of a state that was bankrupt provided the perfect opportunity for Ahmed b. Būya to enter Baghdad in 333/945. Appointing himself as *amīr al-umarā'* (commander of the commanders), he deposed the existing caliph Mustakfī, and replaced him with al-Muṭī'lillāh (r. 334-63/946-74). What remained of the 'Abbāsid caliphate was now ruled directly by the Būyids and the once powerful caliphate now existed merely in name.

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[378] Ibid. p.352 and 355. ; The Hamdānids ruled Aleppo and elsewhere in the 4th/10th century. Netton (2006), p. 94.

[379] Lapidus (2012), p. 111.

[380] Kennedy (2004), p. 195.

[381] Ibid. p.356.

[382] Kennedy (2004), p. 194.

3.3   The religious situation in the central Islamic lands: 132-334/750-945

3.3.1   Introduction

The 'Abbāsid revolution in 132/750 was a religious one, initially covert, with strong proto-Shī'ī

undertones. It was centred on replacing Umayyad rule with that of the Āl Muḥammad (family

of the Prophet). Prior to the 'Abbāsid revolution, a number of anti-Umayyad revolts had taken

place in the name of Āl Muḥammad, yet, contrary to the opinion of later Imāmi Shī'a, this term

was not always synonymous with the descendants of Ḥusayn b. 'Alī.[383] Thus the 'Abbāsid claim

that as descendants of the Prophet's uncle 'Abbās, they were from the Āl Muḥammad and

hence entitled to rule, was not entirely unjustified.[384] Secondly, borrowing the concept of *naṣṣ*

from the proto-Shī'a, the 'Abbāsid campaign claimed that Muḥammad ibn 'Alī (the great

grandson of the Prophet's uncle 'Abbās), was designated as the 'Imām' by Abū Hāshim, the son

of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya (d.81/700) and the grandson of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and his wife

Khawla.[385]

In addition to their meticulous planning , the 'Abbāsids were aided by several factors: the

discontent of a large number of Muslim *mawālī* (non-Arab converts to Islam) due to their

inferior tax status under the Umayyads; the infighting among the Arab tribes (Kalb and Qays)

which weakened the Umayyads; the religious tone of the 'Abbāsid revolt, which ensured the

support of a range disaffected groups, particularly the proto-Shī'a, who were eagerly awaiting

for a saviour; and finally the support they received from Khurāsān, which provided battle

hardened soldiers to fight the Umayyad armies.[386]

Many of the 'Alīds felt betrayed by outcome of the revolution, but without powerful military

backing or even agreement amongst themselves, they were unable to successfully challenge

the 'Abbāsids.[387]   I will now examine a number of religious groups, their theological leanings

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[383] Ibid. p. 123.; the revolt of al-Mukhtār in 66/685 was carried out in the name of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya who was a son of 'Alī but not by Fāṭima. The theological implications of the term 'family of the Prophet' were to remain amorphous for almost a century to come.

[384] Ibid.; The claim that as descendants of 'Abbās, they were the rightful successors to the Prophet was made during the Caliphate of *Mahdī* (r. 158–169/775–785) Momen (1985), p. 69.

[385] Watt (1998), pp. 153-4.; 'Alī's wife, Khawla was originally a concubine from the tribe of Ḥanīfa. The 'Abbāsid claim to have inherited the *Imāmate* does not imply that they accepted the concept of 'Imām' as it was understood by later Shī'ī groups. In fact even at this stage, the proto-Shī'a were not in agreement with each other on the role and function of the Imām. Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Religion and Politics under the Early 'Abbāsids: The Emergence of the Proto-Sunnī Elite*, (1997), p. 35 fn 7. ;

[386] Watt (1974), pp. 29-30.; Kennedy (2004), p. 124.

[387] Many of the proto-Shī'a (wrongly) assumed that the Umayyads would be replaced by an 'Alīd and hence gave full backing to the revolution.

and resultant religious trends within the ʿAbbāsid period, all of which had an impact on elite ʿAbbāsid society. Each of these groups had its origin in the Umayyad period, as I will briefly discuss. However, I will focus on their beliefs, their development as distinct groups, and their relationship with the authorities from 132-334/750-945. In this section, I examine the proto-Shīʿa and in section 3.3.3, I examine the proto-Sunnīs.

3.3.2 Proto-Shīʿīsm

The exact nature, as well as the origins of proto-Shīʿīsm prior to the ʿAbbāsid revolution and even during the early ʿAbbāsid period, is confused and obscure according to the various early written sources. Much of the history of this period is either written in polemical heresiography or projected back by one or other branches of later Shīʿīsm to justify their version of early proto-Shīʿī history. This problem is further compounded by the fact that there are almost no extant Shīʿī works from before the 4th/ 10th century.[388] However, the various (and often otherwise unrelated) proto-Shīʿī groups shared a number of common features. These features included the esteem in which the family of the Prophet was held, the idea of a charismatic Imām from the Prophet's clan, Banū Hāshim and that ʿAlī was the Prophet's legitimate successor.[389] Doctrinal terms such as *ahl al-bayt, Imāma, ghayba,* and *raj'a* were fairly fluid during the formative period.

In addition, there existed during the Umayyad period a number of groups which were retrospectively labelled as *ghulāt* (exaggerators/extremists) as they held beliefs which were deemed unorthodox by the Ithnā ʿAshariyya.[390] Such beliefs included the divinity/prophetic status of the Imāms, allegorical interpretations of the Quran, possession of secret knowledge, and the rejection of religious observances. Momen argues that the term *ghulāt* was used post-Jaʿfar Ṣādiq to describe beliefs that were once common among the proto-Shīʿa. By labelling these beliefs as *ghuluww* (exaggeration in religion), they were retrospectively (and incorrectly) claiming that such beliefs had never been from the mainstream.[391]

During Umayyad rule there were several failed uprisings by the proto-Shīʿa. These early revolts seem to be more motivated by political considerations (i.e. the removal of Umayyad rule) than

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[388] Momen (1985), p. 61.

[389] There was considerable difference amongst the various proto-Shīʿī groups on the nature of the Imām's authority, his knowledge, the precise number of Imāms, and the method of his selection. Haider (2011).

[390] Momen (1985), pp. 51-3.

[391] Ibid. p.66-7.

religious ones, although the religious motive cannot be entirely ruled out, and indeed, the two considerations were enmeshed in this early period.[392] These early revolts included those of Ḥusayn ibn Abī Tālib (d. 61/680), Mukhtār al-Thaqifī (d. 68/687), Zayd ibn ʿAlī ibn Ḥusayn (d. 122/740) and ʿAbdallāh ibn Muʿāwiya (d. 129/746).[393]

Regarding the origin of the belief that ʿAlī should have rightfully succeeded the Prophet, Muslim heresiographers mention that ʿAbdullah b. Saba' was the first person to declare that ʿAlī was the *waṣī* of the Prophet, and he would curse Abū Bakr and Umar.[394] Although recent scholars have questioned whether the concept of *waṣī* can be attributed to Ibn Saba', given that both early Sunnī and Shīʿī heresiographers concur on this point, there is a strong likelihood that Ibn Saba' was the first to declare ʿAlī as the Prophet's heir.[395] Following the death of ʿAlī in 40/661, Ibn Saba' denied that his death and predicted his messianic return (*rajaʿ*).[396]

The sources mention little about the followers of Ibn Saba' immediately after the death of ʿAlī, but they make a reappearance during the revolt of Mukhtār al-Thaqifī. His revolt began as a call for vengeance against the killers of Ḥusayn b. Abī Tālib but quickly developed into something more eschatological.[397] Central to the revolt of Mukhtār al-Thaqifī was his claim that Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya was the legitimate leader of the Muslims due to his ʿAlid lineage.[398] Mukhtār referred to Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya as the *Mahdī* and the *waṣī ibn al-waṣī*.[399] During the revolt, some Kūfans would gather at the house of a known follower of Ibn Saba' called Laylā bt. Qumāma. Her activities led to an accusation of *ghuluww* by some of Mukhtār's followers.[400] We can infer from this that some of Ibn Saba's followers played a role in the revolt of Mukhtār.

Many of the ideas of Mukhtār continued after his death by a group called the Kaysāniyya.[401] The term Kaysāniyya refers a number of different groups that emerged following the revolt of

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[392] Momen (1985), pp. 63-4.

[393] Ibid. pp. 28-38.

[394] Lewinstein, K., "ʿAbdallāh b. Sabaʾ", EI³.

[395] Sean Anthony, *The Caliph and the Heretic: Ibn Sabaʾ and the Origins of Shīʿism*, (2011), pp. 148-60.

[396] Ibid. p. 196.

[397] Anthony, S., "*Ghulāt* (extremist Shīʿīs)", EI³.

[398] He was the half-brother of Ḥassān and Ḥusayn, his mother was a Ḥanafī woman.

[399] Halm (2004), pp. 17-8.;Dakake (2007), pp. 97-8. ; For the definition of *mahdī and waṣī* see *Glossary*.

[400] "*Ghulāt* (extremist Shīʿīs)", EI³.

[401] Al-Qāḍī. W, 'The Development of the Term Ghulāt in Muslim Literature with Special Reference to the Kaysāniyya', in *Shiʿism,* ed. by Etan Kohlberg (2016), pp. 295-319 (p. 298).; The name of the group is derived from Abū ʿAmra Kaysān who was the leader of the mawālī under Mukhtār b. Abī ʿUbayd al-Thaqafī.

Mukhtār al-Thaqafī.[402] Rejecting the caliphates of Abū Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthmān, they recognised four Imams; 'Alī b. Abī Tālib, Ḥasan, Ḥusayn, and Muḥammad b. Ḥanafiyya. Kohlberg argues that the doctrine of *waṣiyya* (sacred bequest to a divinely appointed heir) given to 'Alī by the Prophet was in circulation at the time of Mukhtār, if not earlier.[403] It is likely that the Kaysāniyya rejected the caliphate of Abū Bakr based upon this doctrine, which had origins from the time of Ibn Saba'. The Kaysāniyya held that 'Alī was the divinely appointed successor to the Prophet, and, as a corollary, that Abū Bakr was a usurper.[404]

Al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya (d. unknown) wrote a tract called *Kitāb al-Irjā'* in approximately in 73/693 in which he condemned those who opposed Abū Bakr and 'Umar.[405] He referred to this group, who were the followers of Mukhtār, as the Saba'iyya. Although the Saba'iyya predate Mukhtār, the followers of Mukhtār were initially known by their opponents as the Saba'iyya and later on the heresiographers gave them the appellation 'Kaysāniyya'.[406] The Kaysāniyya accounted for the majority of the proto-Shī'ī groups until the 'Abbāsid revolution.[407] From the episode of Mukhtār and the Kaysāniyya we can infer that belief in *naṣṣ* in its rudimentary form first made its appearance in the early part of the first century of Islam and was later refined into a fully formed doctrine by the late second century.[408]

By the end of the first century the traditions of Ghadīr Khumm and *Kisā* were being utilised to bolster the claim that 'Alī had the sole right to succeed the Prophet based upon *naṣṣ*.[409] The

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[402] Madelung, W., "*Kaysāniyya*", EI².

[403] Etan Kohlberg, 'Some Imami Shi'i Views on the Sahaba.', in *Belief and Law in Imami Shi'ism,* ed. by Etan Kohlberg (1991), pp. 143-75 (p. 146).

[404] Kaysān accused the first three caliphs of apostasy. Madelung, W., "Kaysāniyya".

[405] Josef Van Ess, 'The Beginnings of Islamic Theology', in *The Cultural Context of Medieval Learning: Proceedings of the First International Colloquium on Philosophy, Science, and Theology in the Middle Ages-September 1973,* ed. by John Emery Murdoch, et al. (2012), pp. 95-6).

[406] Van Ess, J., "al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya", EI².; It is believed that Kaysān survived Mukhtār and took over the leadership of the movement after his death. This may be why the heresiographers attached his name to the movement. Ibid.; Kohlberg (1991), pp. 146-7.

[407] Daftary, p. 37

[408] The concept of *naṣṣ* was often invoked by various proto-Shī'ī groups leading to competing claims to the *Imāmate*. Daftary (2007), p. 64.

[409] Moshe Sharon, *Black Banners from the East*, (1983), p. 79.; The *ḥadīth* of *Kisā'* (cloak) refers to an incident where the Prophet gathered Fāṭima, 'Alī, al-Ḥasan, and al-Ḥusayn underneath his cloak. While they were beneath the cloak the following verse was revealed: "*God only wishes to remove taint from you, people of the household, and to purify you thoroughly.*" Quran: 33:33. Although the *ḥadīth* is accepted by Sunnis and Shias, it is interpreted differently. According to the Shī'as, this verse is proof that the *ahl al-bayt* is restricted to the aforementioned and their progeny. According to Sunnīs, *ahl al-bayt* encompasses other members of the Prophet's family including his wives. Daftary, Farhad. "Ahl al-Kisā'", EI³.

proto-Shī'ī al-Kumayt b. Zayd al-Asadī (d. 126/743) wrote in his poem *Hāshimiyyāt* that Abū Bakr was as a usurper who had denied 'Alī his divine right to succeed the Prophet.[410] This divine right, he argued, was predicated on the *ḥadīth* of Ghadīr Khumm.

Upon the death of Muḥammad b. Ḥanafiyya, some of the Kaysāniyya believed that he had gone into messianic occultation (*ghayba*) and would return (*rajaʿa*) to fill the earth with justice.[411] The majority of the Kaysāniyya however believed that the *Imāmate* had been transferred to Abū Hāshim (d. 98/717), the son of Muḥammad b. Ḥanafiyya via *naṣṣ*.[412] Upon Abū Hāshim's death, the majority of his followers, known as the Hāshimiyya believed that he had appointed his 'Abbāsid relative, Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. 'Abdullah b. 'Abbās as his successor.[413] The 'Abbāsids thus inherited a proto-Shī'ī movement, and used these proto-Shī'ī sentiments to agitate against and finally overthrow the Umayyads.

We can see from this brief history that during the Umayyad period, the descendants of Ḥusayn ibn Abī Ṭālib were not unanimously afforded a special status by the proto-Shī'a over and above other members of Banū Hāshim, and in fact some of the Ḥusaynids did not claim religious leadership (*Imāmate*) for themselves.[414] Furthermore the proto-Shī'a supported a number of revolts led by individuals who were not from the Husaynid branch of Banū Hāshim. These included Zayd ibn 'Alī ibn Husayn, (whose followers were later to become known as the Zaydis) and 'Abdullah ibn Muʿāwiya (d. 129/746), who was a descendant of 'Alī's brother Ja'far ibn Abī Ṭālib.[415]

Likewise, the 'Abbāsids, who were able to play on proto-Shī'ī sentiments, were descendants of the Prophet's uncle 'Abbās and not from the Ḥusaynid line. At the time of the 'Abbāsid revolution, Ja'far al-Ṣādiq was one of the most prominent figures in the proto-Shī'ī movement. However, choosing a politically quietist approach, he played no part in the uprising and in fact

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[410] Ibid. pp. 79-80. According to Horovitz, this poem was written between 96 and 99 AH. Ibid. p.80.

[411] Halm (2004), p. 18.; these two concepts were later adopted by Imāmi Shī'as.

[412] Daftary (2007), p. 60.; Daftary (2013), p. 39.

[413] Daftary (2013), p. 39.

[414] William Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Philosophy & Theology*, (1962), p. 24.; Momen (1985), pp. 64-5.; Halm argues that the neither Ja'far nor his father or grandfather were recognised as Imāms during their lifetime. Halm (2004), p. 28.

[415] Watt (1962), pp. 21-2; Momen (1985). pp. 49-50.; Zayds' revolt was not supported by his Ḥusaynid half-brother Muḥammad al Bāqir.

refused the offer of the caliphate made to him by one of the leaders of the ʻAbbāsid revolt, Abū Salama.[416]

3.3.2.1 Proto-Shīʻīsm during the ʻAbbāsid period: From Jaʻfar al-Ṣādiq to the death of Ḥasan al-ʻAskarī (d.874/260)

Politically, this period covers the first half of the reign of the second caliph, Abū Jaʻfar al-Manṣūr to the first few years of the reign of al-Muʻtamid. This period witnessed the first ʻAbbāsid civil war, the move of the capital to Sāmarrā and the subsequent ʻanarchy' at Sāmarrā. It also covers the deaths of the sixth to eleventh Imams (Jaʻfar al-Ṣādiq to Ḥasan al-ʻAskarī), the deaths of the eponyms of the four Sunnī *madhhab*s, and the births of al-Balādhurī and al-Ṭabarī.

By claiming the *Imāmate* based upon *naṣṣ* and upon descent from ʻAbbās, the ʻAbbāsids were in fact directly challenging the proto-Shīʻīs on their own ground.[417] Although not everyone was happy with the outcome of the revolution, a number of groups were appeased. These included the *mawālī* and the religious opponents of the Umayyads from both the proto-Shīʻī and proto-Sunnī sides, with some of the proto-Shīʻīs moving into the proto-Sunnī camp.[418] The outcome of this was that the proto-Shīʻa had to formulate and consolidate their beliefs in response to this new, almost existential threat.[419] The main opposition to the ʻAbbāsid claim were the Kūfan ʻAlids.[420] Among the proto-Shīʻa who supported the ʻAbbāsids were the Kaysāniyya (followers of Abū Hāshim) and some of the Zaydīs.[421]

It is in this period that we see the development of the *Imāmate* doctrine. Watt argues that the first known exposition of the *Imāmate* doctrine was around 184/800 by ʻAlī b. Mītham. He states that ʻAlī was more deserving of the Caliphate than Abū Bakr and as such the Muslims

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[416] Momen (1985), p. 38.; Abū Salama Ḥafṣ b. Sulaymān al-Khallāl (d. 132/750) was a prominent figure in the ʻAbbāsid revolution and held the position of *wazīr* under the first ʻAbbāsid Caliph, al-Saffāḥ (r. 132–6/750–4). He was a powerful figure and held strong ʻAlīd sympathies. According to medieval historians, these two factors led to his assassination by the Caliph al-Manṣūr (r. 136–58/754–75). Daniel, Elton L. "Abū Salama Ḥafṣ b. Sulaymān al-Khallāl", *EI³*.

[417] Ibid. p. 69.

[418] Ibid.

[419] Ibid. p. 70.; Berkey (2003), p. 104.

[420] This explains why Abū Salama, who was the ʻAbbāsid representative in Kūfa, preferred an ʻAlid to be the future ʻAbbāsid Caliph.

[421] Momen (1985), pp. 68-9.

were mistaken in giving precedence to Abū Bakr and 'Umar over 'Alī.[422] However, he does not

mention the existence of the Imāms after 'Alī. This is significant as it shows that at this stage,

the proto-Shī'a were not agreed upon a particular line of Imāms.[423] Furthermore, in the

presence of rival claims to leadership of the 'Alīds, many people were not necessarily

committed to one claimant or the other.[424]

As mentioned earlier, Ja'far aṣ-Ṣādiq witnessed, but did not take part in the 'Abbāsid

revolution. He also lived through the anti-Umayyad revolts of Zayd b. 'Alī, 'Abdallāh ibn

Mu'āwiya as well as the anti-'Abbāsid revolt of Muḥammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya.[425] He was, and

still is, held in high esteem by both (proto-) Sunnīs and Shī'īs, and among his thousands of

students were the renowned scholars Abū Ḥanīfa and Mālik b. Anas.[426] He openly refuted

some followers who held extreme beliefs, including a certain Abū 'l-Khaṭṭāb, who was

executed in 138/755.[427] Another follower of al-Ṣādiq was Hishām b. al-Ḥakam, was repudiated

by the former for his *ghuluww* beliefs. These beliefs included attributing a three-dimensional

body to God, claiming that God did not know about an event before its occurrence and that

parts of the Quran had been distorted.[428]

I will now briefly discuss those descendants of Ja'far al-Ṣādiq who were later to become known

as the seventh to eleventh Imāms by the Ithnā 'Ashariyya (the Twelvers).

The death of an Imām often led to disputes and factionalism regarding the identity of his true

heir.[429] The most significant of these splits occurred after the death of Ja'far al-Ṣādiq in

148/765 during the reign of the second 'Abbāsid caliph al-Manṣūr (r. 136-158/754-775).

Approximately six splinter groups arose, eventually crystallising into two groups. The first

group believed in the *Imāmate* ended with his son Ismā'īl (d. 158/755), who would return as

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[422] Watt (1998), p. 158.

[423] Ibid. p. 159.; As I mentioned in 3.3.2, the view that 'Alī should have rightfully succeeded the Prophet was articulated in the first century of Islam.

[424] Ibid.

[425] Momen (1985).

[426] Ibid. p. 38.

[427] Ibid. pp. 52-3. Abū'l Khaṭṭāb attributed divinity to as-Ṣādiq. He also rejected common religious observances such as the prayer. Ibid

[428] Ibid. p. 67.

[429]Ibid. pp. 54-60. Usually the argument was either that the deceased Imām had not really died but was in concealment or raised to heaven to return back to fill the earth with justice, or that he had been succeeded by one of his descendants. Some of the sub-sects held extreme beliefs such as the divinity of the Imām. Ibid.

the *Mahdī* and were later to be known as the Ismāʿīlīs.[430] The second group were those who believed that the *Imāmate* was transferred to his son Mūsā Al-Kāzim (d.183/799) and were later known as the Ithnā ʿAshariyya.[431] However this second group was one of many groups of known existence at the time, and it was not then considered to be normative. Mūsā al-Kāzim lived during the reigns of al-Manṣūr, al-*Mahdī* and al-Rashīd, and it was during the reign of the latter that the persecution of the ʿAlīds increased, although at the same time, the following of Mūsā amongst the ʿAlīds increased.[432]

Mūsā's son, ʿAlī al-Riḍā (d.203/818), lived during the civil war between al-Maʾmūn and al-Amīn. A number of proto-Shīʿa used the unrest to launch their own uprising, capturing parts of the Hijaz, Yemen and Iraq.[433] After Maʾmūn's unexpected victory, he surprised both friend and foe by nominating ʿAlī al-Riḍā as his heir-apparent.[434] He also announced, in opposition to the prevalent proto-Sunnī view, that ʿAlī was the best person after the Prophet.[435] This caused a backlash amongst the ʿAbbāsids, whose very legitimacy to rule was based upon their claim that they were more entitled to rule than the ʿAlids, and in response they set up a rival claimant to the caliphate in Baghdad.[436] The controversy was solved by the sudden, some say suspicious, death of ʿAlī al-Riḍā.[437]

ʿAlī al-Riḍā's son, Muḥammad al-Taqī (d.220/835), was only a child when his father died. Other than his marriage to al-Maʾmūn's daughter, which could be seen as a corollary of al-Maʾmūn's pro-ʿAlīd policy, his life was apparently uneventful. His son ʿAlī al-Hādī (d.254/868) was also a child when his father died.[438] The ascension of al-Mutawakkil as caliph in 232/847 witnessed a persecution of both Shīʿas and Muʿtazila.[439] Both ʿAlī al-Hādī and his son Ḥasan (d. 260/874) were virtual prisoners of the caliphs in the army quarters of Sāmarrā, and hence were called

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[430] Halm (2004), p. 29.

[431] Newman (2013), p. 25.

[432] Momen (1985), p. 41.

[433] Ibid. p. 71.

[434] Ibid.

[435] Christopher Melchert, *Ahmad Ibn Hanbal*, (2012), p. 8.

[436] Cooperson (2012), p. 60.

[437] Momen (1985), p. 42. The Shīʿa and many Muslim historians consider that he was poisoned. As for Maʾmūm's motive for appointing an ʿAlid, there are a number of theories: it was to placate the various Shīʿī rebellions taking place at the time; it was due to Maʾmūm's personal proto-Shīʿī convictions; or that he believed that the end of the world was close and he wanted to return to the ʿAlids that which was due to them. Cooperson (2012), pp. 57,63,65,71.; The modern day ʿAlawites are descended from the followers of Muḥammad ibn Nuṣayr an-Namīrī, who considered ʿAlī ibn Hādī to be God. Momen (1985), p. 58.

[438] Which raised the problem of a non-pubescent Imām. Momen (1985), p. 43; ibid.

[439] Ibid. p. 44.

the two 'Askarīs.[440] Ḥasan al-'Askarī lived during the anarchy at Sāmarrā and the rise of the Turkish military. His death led to a period known as the *ḥayra*, as at the time of his death there was doubt as to whether he had left a male heir.[441] The proto-Shī'a split into many sub-sects, with estimates ranging from between fourteen to twenty.[442] Those who pledged allegiance to Ḥasan's brother Ja'far insisted that Ḥasan had died childless, and formed one of the largest sub-sects.[443] The group that was to prevail, however, believed that Ḥasan al-'Askarī had really died and left behind a son, Muhammad, who had gone into occultation.[444]

What were the beliefs of the proto-Shī'a around the 880s (i.e. just after the death of the eleventh Imām)? Anti-Shī'ī scholars, such as the Mu'tazilī al-Kayyāṭ (d. c.a. 300/913) and al-'Ash'arī, who wrote shortly after the death of the eleventh Imām, state that the Shī'a held anthropomorphic views with respect to God, believed in *badā* and the alteration of the Quran.[445] However, the idea of the divinity of the Imāms was not common at this stage in the view of these two scholars.[446] According to Momen, the beliefs of the proto-Shī'a at this stage was diametrically opposed to what was to be later known as Imāmi Ithnā 'Ashariyya Shī'īsm.[447] In addition, the concept of the *ghayba* of the twelfth Imām, or fixing the number of Imāms at twelve was, at this time, not universally accepted.[448]

3.3.2.2 Proto-Shī'īsm: From the death of the Eleventh Imām to the coming of the Būyids 260-334/874-945

It was in this period that one strand of proto-Shī'īsm developed into Ithnā 'Ashariyya Shī'īsm. To gain an insight into how this process occurred, I will examine five key Ithnā 'Ashariyya works.

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[440] Ibid.

[441] Ibid. p. 45.

[442] Ibid. p. 59.

[443] Newman (2013), p. 31.

[444] Momen (1985), p. 60.

[445] *Badā* refers to a change in God's will. This belief was first articulated by Mukhtār al-Thaqafi after his promised victory did not transpire. Ibid. p. 47 and 66. According to this belief, although God may decree a matter to occur at a particular moment, He may change his mind due to some expediency. Another example of the usage of this term is the argument of Ithnā 'Ashariyya that although Ismā'īl was decreed to succeed his father Ja'far, his brother Mūsā actually succeeded him due to *badā.* Goldziher, "Badā'", *EI²*.

[446] Ibid. p. 74.

[447] Ibid.

[448] Ibid. p. 75. Muḥammad al-Nu'mānī (d.360/971) stated that many of the Shī'ī of his time 'were uncertain as to the identity of the Imām and had doubts as to his occultation'. Ibid. p.74.

The first two earliest extant compilations of Imāmi traditions by two Qummi scholars were penned by al-Barqī (d. 280/894), and al-Ṣaffār al-Qummi (d. 289-290/902-3).[449] Al-Barqī was a contemporary of the ninth and tenth Imāms, and his work *Kitāb al-Maḥāsin* is one of the few extant pre-Būyid Shīʿī *ḥadīth* collections and gives us an insight into pre-Twelver Imāmi doctrine. Written between the minor and major occultation, *Kitāb al-Maḥāsin* is a contains traditions from the Imāms and the Prophet on various topics including; loyalty to ʿAlī and his family, the status of the supporters of ʿAlī and the necessity of an Imām.[450] Al-Saffār was a companion of the eleventh Imām.[451] As well as covering issues of fiqh, his work, *Baṣāʾir al-Darajāt* included chapters on the status and necessity of an Imām. the miraculous nature of the Imām's knowledge, and their access to hidden scriptures including the authentic version of the Quran.[452]

The third important work was written in Baghdad by Muḥammad b. Yaʾqūb al-Kulaynī (d.329/941), who lived in the period between the minor and major occultation. His work, entitled *Al-Kafi fi ʿilm al-dīn*, contains over 16,000 traditions of the Imams on theology and *fiqh*, and is considered to be one of the four authoritative books of Shīʿī *ḥadīth*. Building on the previous two works, Kulaynī states that the definitive source of all religious knowledge is the Ḥusaynid line of Imāms, and this can only be known through the traditions.[453] Regarding the status and knowledge of the Imāms, Kulaynī reiterates much of al-Saffār's works. However, unlike the previous two works, Kulaynī mentions traditions in which each Imām nominated his successor and, significantly, the nomination of the twelfth Imām and his occultation.[454] So by 329/941, the concept of occultation was now backed by traditions attributed to the Imāms.

The fourth highly significant work was the collection of ninety-nine traditions of ʿAlī b. Bābawayh (d.329/941), which dealt exclusively with issue of the *Imāmate*. The traditions state that the Imāms are from the descendants of Ḥusayn, refute the idea that anyone other than Mūsā al-Kāẓim was the seventh Imām and state that humanity would never be left without an

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[449] Newman (2013), pp. 38-40.; Qumm is a town south of Tehran and was home to numerous, prominent Shīʿī scholars from the third century onwards. These scholars were given the appellation, Qummī.
[450] Vilozny (2014), pp. 206-10.
[451] Newman (2013).
[452] Ibid. pp. 40-1.
[453] Ibid. p. 45. This book is also an implicit refutation of the Muʾtazila-influenced rationalist approach among certain proto-Shīʿa which was gaining ground in Baghdad. Ibid. p.44.
[454] Ibid. p. 46. However, it contains contradictory narrations regarding the nature and length of the occultation. Ibid.

Imām. However, the book does not address the issue of the occultation.[455] This suggests that there was no unanimity on the issue amongst the Imāmis.

Our last scholar, Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Nuʿmānī (d.360/970-1), died after the period in question (874-945). However his book, *Kitāb al-ghayba*, written around 954, shed lights on the controversial nature of the occultation issue.[456] Nuʿmānī states that the reason for compiling his book was clarification and removal of confusion and uncertainty amongst the Imāmis on the issue of *ghayba*.[457] As well as reiterating traditions in the previously mentioned books, Nuʿmānī brings additional traditions that fix the number of Imāms to twelve, and also defines the lesser and greater occultations.[458] The works of the five above-named scholars ensured that what was later to become Ithnā ʿAshariyya Shīʿīsm dominated over other versions of Imāmism.[459] The role of the Imām in Ithnā ʿAshariyya Shīʿīsm was that of an infallible religious guide as opposed to a political leader. Furthermore the lack of political authority was immaterial to the issue of *Imāmate*; *Imāmate* depended on *naṣṣ* and inherited knowledge and not on actual political authority.[460] This view is diametrically opposed the Sunnī theory of leadership, in which the leader has no independent authority in religious matters.[461]

Between the periods of the minor and major occultation (260-329/874-941), there were four 'ambassadors' who claimed to represent the hidden Imām. Only through these individuals could the faithful believers communicate with the hidden Imām.[462] However, as previously mentioned, not every Shīʿī believer was convinced by either the concept of the *ghayba*, particularly a prolonged one, nor the idea that 'ambassadors' had been appointed by the Imām.[463] Thus a few days before his death in 329/941, the fourth 'ambassador' al-Sāmarrī

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[455] Ibid. p. 58.

[456] Ibid. p. 59.

[457] Ibid.; As late as 970-1, Ibn Bābawayh was addressing the same scepticism regarding the *ghayba* in his *Kamal*. Ibid. p.63.

[458] Ibid.; The major occultation began in 941.

[459] Halm (2004), pp. 38-9.

[460] Daftary (2013), p. 54.

[461] Robert Crews, 'Imamate', in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought,* ed. by Richard Bulliet, et al. (2012), pp. 247-50.

[462] Halm (2004), pp. 34-6.

[463] Ibid. pp. 36-7.; In addition to these four ambassadors, other individuals also claimed this privilege. Abdulaziz Abdulhussein Sachedina, *Islamic Messianism: The Idea of Mahdi in Twelver Shi'ism*, (1981), p. 97.

reportedly declared that the hidden Imām had gone into the *al-ghayba al-kubrā* (greater occultation) and would only reappear before the end of time.[464]

3.3.2.2.1   The Ismāʿīlīs[465]

The *hayra* surrounding the death of the eleventh Imām was an opportunity for an opposing faction of Imāmi Shīʿīs to propagate what was to become Ismāʿīlī Shīʿīsm in Kūfa (in 261/875) and later Iran.[466] Many Imāmi Shīʿīs were not convinced by the story of *ghayba*, and as stated earlier, there was doubt about whether the eleventh Imām had even had a son. This caused some Imāmi Shīʿīs to embrace the Ismāʿīlī *daʿwa*, which preached that the grandson of Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl, had not died, but had gone into occultation and would reappear as the *Mahdī*.[467] The Ithnā ʿAsharīs on the other hand held that Jaʿfar's son Mūsā was his rightful successor.[468] At this stage, the proto-Ithnā ʿAshariyya were not propagating the concept of the *Mahdī* as there was still a lack of clarity regarding the nature of the twelfth Imām's *ghayba.* Ismāʿīlī propagandists were sent to Yemen, Sind, Syria, eastern Arabia and North Africa.[469] It was in Algeria, among the Kutāma Berbers, that the *daʿwa* had its greatest success. Unlike the proto-Ithnā ʿAsharīs, who after Jaʿfar as Ṣādiq took a quietist approach to politics, the Ismāʿīlīs were politically and militarily active. By 296/909, the Ismāʿīlīs had conquered most of north eastern Algeria and Tunisia.[470] In 297/910, the Ismāʿīlī caliphate was declared, with ʿAbdallāh al-Mahdī (r.296-322/909-934) its first caliph. It lasted until 567/1171, Egypt having been conquered in 358/969.[471] In the *Imāmate* of the Ismāʿīlīs both religious and (real) political authority were incorporated. With political authority came the issue of political succession, and like their ʿAbbāsids counterparts, the Fāṭimids experienced a number of succession crises resulting in a number of splinter groups. The death of the Fāṭimid Caliph Mustanṣir (d.487/1094) led to the first succession crisis. The caliphate passed on to his younger son Mustaʿlī, (d.495/1101) rather than his older son and heir apparent Nizār (d.488/1095), who contested the accession. Nizār led an unsuccessful revolt, resulting in a

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[464] Halm (2004). Daftary (2013), p. 66.

[465] the early history of the Ismāʿīlīs (148-264/765-877)*,* due to lack of sources, is shrouded in mystery. Madelung, W., "Ḳarmaṭī", *EI².*

[466] Halm (2004), p. 165.

[467] Ibid. p. 166.; Berkey argues that as a distinctive sect, the Ismāʿīlīs emerged a century after Ismāʿīl's (d. 138/721) death. It was only in the 850s and onwards that they appeared in the historical records as an active movement. Berkey (2003), p. 137.

[468] Heinz Halm, *The Shiites: A Short History*, (2007), pp. 160-1.

[469] Halm (2004).

[470] Ibid.

[471] Ibid. p. 171.

permanent division between the Musta'līs who remained in power and the Nizārīs.[472] Under the leadership of Hasan-i Ṣabbāḥ (d.518/1124) the Nizārīs managed to establish small principalities in Iran and later Syria which lasted until the Mongol invasion.[473] The Khojas and Bohorās are two contemporary offshoots of the Nizārīs.[474] In 524/1130, a further split occurred amongst the ruling Musta'līs following the assassination of the Caliph Āmir (Mustaʿlī's son). Al-Āmir left behind a baby son, Tayyib, whose fate following his father's death remains unknown.[475] 'Abd al-Majīd, the cousin of the murdered Caliph Amīr, was officially designated the new Caliph. However, another group declared the *Imāmate* of Tayyib, and refused to recognise 'Abd al-Majīd. This group, which survives up to the present day, pronounced Tayyib to be in occultation.[476]

The year 286/899 witnessed a major split in the Ismāʿīlī movement, leading to two factions, the Fāṭimids and the Qarāmiṭa. Up to this point, belief in the hidden *Imām/ Mahdī*, who had representatives working on his behalf, was widespread.[477] However the fourth representative (called 'Alī according to Halm) declared that *he* was the *Mahdī*; henceforth, one faction of Ismāʿīlīs now began to follow a living Imām.[478] Not everyone accepted this new concept of *Imāmate* and those who chose to remain with the *ghayba* model were known as the Qarāmiṭa, named after their founder Hamdan Qarmat.[479] They had a large following in Iraq and Eastern Arabia, and in the latter region, they established territory from where raids were launched against both the 'Abbāsids and Fāṭimids attacking Baṣra and Kūfa, and threatening Baghdad. They also attacked against pilgrim caravans, and in a brazen and direct challenge to the religious authority of the Caliph, the city of Mecca was attacked.[480] Following the seizure of the Black Stone in 317/930, the leader of Qarāmiṭa, Abū Tāhir declared a former Persian slave and a Magian to be the awaited *Mahdī*. But only a few months later, Abū Tāhir declared him to be an imposter and had him killed. This severely weakened the movement and many of the Gulf

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[472] Haider (2014), pp. 128-9. Gibb, H.A.R., "Nizār b. al-Mustanṣir", *EI².*

[473] Halm (2004), pp. 180-2.

[474] Nanji, A., "Nizāriyya", *EI².*

[475] Halm (2004), p. 189.

[476] Ibid. pp. 190-3.

[477] Ibid. p. 168. The representatives were called the 'Grand Master'.

[478] Ibid.; 'Alī was also known by the pseudonym Saʿīd (the happy one). Ibid. p. 198. fn 38. The exact name of the first Fāṭimid caliph is a matter of dispute. AcZayd
cording to Daftary, he was called Abū Muḥammad 'Abdāllah or Saʿīd. Daftary (2007), p. 508. On the other hand, Canard refers to him as Ubayd Allāh.; Canard, M., "Fāṭimids", EI².

[479] Halm (2004).; i.e. the Qarāmiṭa were still awaiting the return of the hidden Imām, Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl.

[480] Ibid. p. 169.

Coast Qarāmiṭa turned to the Ithnā 'Ashariyya and number of Iraqis turned to Sunnism.[481] In 339/995 the Black Stone was returned in exchange for a large sum of money and for a period of time, the Qarāmiṭa abandoned their belligerent policy towards the 'Abbāsids. Hostility renewed between the Qarāmiṭa and the Fāṭimids after the latter took Egypt in 358/969 and at the same time, fighting occurred between the Qarāmiṭa and the pro-'Abbāsid Ikhshids. In 378/988 after suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of the Buyids, very little was heard about the group.[482]

3.3.2.2.2   The Zaydīs

The third proto-Shī'ī group are the Zaydīs. They arose after the revolt of their fourth Imām, Zayd b. 'Alī, who was also the half-brother of Muḥammad al-Bāqir. Zayd b. 'Alī was contacted by the Kūfans and promised support if he was to rise up against the Umayyads. Zayd's refusal to condemn the first two Caliphs resulted in large portion of Kūfans abandoning his cause. Betrayed by the Kūfans, he met a similar fate to his grandfather Hussain b. 'Alī. Zayd accepted of the validity of Abū Bakr's and 'Umar's caliphates based upon the concept of "the acceptance of the *Imāmate* of the less worthy." This was in marked contrast to the Ithnā 'Asharīs and Ismā'īlīs, who condemned the first two caliphs as usurpers. In this sense, the Zaydīs were the closest of the proto-Shī'ī groups to the proto-Sunnī.

In the early second century, Zaydī Shi'ism consisted of two doctrinal tendencies; the Batriyya and the Jarūdiyya. The former, like their founder, refused to condemn Abū Bakr and 'Umar and suspended judgement over 'Uthmān. Although 'Alī was superior in their view, they accepted the Caliphate of the 'less excellent' and thus the legitimacy of the first two caliphs   Some members of this group eventually merged with Kūfan Sunnīsm. The Jarūdiyya represented a more radical Shī'ī doctrine, condemning the first three Caliphs, and believing in the divine designation of 'Alī by the Prophet.

Although some early Zaydis held that any descendant of Abū Tālib could be suitable for *Imāmate*, this was later replaced by belief in the divine designation of 'Alī, Hasan and Hussain. After Hussain, the *Imāmate* could pass to any descendant of Hasan and Hussain, as long as they were prepared to launch an armed revolt. The Imām also had to have the requisite knowledge and piety although he was not considered to be sinless (*maṣ'ūm*). The Ithnā

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[481] Ibid.; "Ḳarmaṭī", *EI²*.

[482] Ibid; Farhad Daftary, 'Qaramatians', in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought,* ed. by Patricia Crone Gerhard Bowering, Wadad Kadi, et al (2012), pp. 445-6.

'Asharīs and the Ismāʿīlis on the other hand restricted the *Imāmate* to designated descendants of Hussain, and they considered all of the Imāms to be *maʿṣūm.* Another crucial difference was the importance of *khurūj* in Zaydī thought. An Imām had to assert his claim by armed revolt and hence the Zaydis rejected the quietest claims to *Imāmate* attributed to Muḥammad al-Bāqir. Finally, unlike the Ithnā ʿAsharīs and the Ismāʿīlīs, the Zaydīs rejected the concept of *ghayba* and the *rajʿa* of the hidden Imām. In the eighth century, most Zaydīs were Batrī. By the ninth century, the Jārūdīs were dominant. In the period 132-334/750-945, the Zaydis were successful in establishing states in Tabaristan (250/864) and Yemen in 288/901.[483] However, their influence in the central Islamic lands was minimal.

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[483] Halm (2004), p. 204.

3.3.3   The religious situation in the central Islamic lands: 132-334/750-945 (the proto Sunnīs)

In this sub-chapter I will highlight a number of features unique to proto-Sunnīsm many of which later were incorporated into what became mainstream Sunnī Islam. Through examining eight extant works of proto-Sunnī scholars, I will extrapolate a number of distinct creedal positions which set apart proto-Sunnīsm from other religious trends in the period in question.

3.3.3.1   Proto-Sunnī and associated terms

A number of terms have been used synonymously with proto-'Sunnī'. This section will examine some of these: *ahl al-Sunna, ahl al-Sunna wa'l jamā'a, ahl al-ḥadīth, aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth, aṣḥāb al-Sunna* and *ahl-ra'y*.

Zaman argues that the term *ahl al-Sunna* was used as early as the late first century by Ibn Sirīn (d. 110/729) in juxtaposition to *ahl al-bida'. Ahl al-Sunna* in this context were following the original practice of Islam as opposed to groups such as the Qadariyya, Khawārij, Shī'ī and *Murji'a*.[484] The term *ahl al-Sunna wa'l jamā'a* is often used synonymously with *ahl al-Sunna*. The addition of the word '*jamā'a*' (community) emphasises the community consensus as a 'locus of authority'.[485] Muslim scholars give a number of different meanings to the term '*jamā'a*'. This includes: the senior 'ulamā', the Companions, and all Muslims when they agree on a matter.[486] According to many traditionalists including Ahmed b. Ḥanbal (d.241/855), the best consensus is that of the Companions.[487] A number of *ḥadīth* emphasise the point that when the community are united, they remain upon right guidance whereas division leads to misguidance.[488]

Another term used for *ahl al-Sunna* is *ahl al-ḥadīth.[489]* The term *ahl al-ḥadīth* is used in contradistinction to both *ahl-ra'y* (semi-rationalists)[490] (in law) and the *mutakallimūn* (*kalām*

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[484] Zaman (1997), p. 49.
[485] Berkey (2003), pp. 142-3.
[486] Binyamin Abrahamov, *Islamic Theology: Traditionalism and Rationalism*, (1998), p. 5.
[487] Ibid.
[488] Ibid. p. 6. These *ḥadīth* are mentioned by the Ḥanbalī scholar Ibn Jawzi in *Tablīs Iblis*.
[489] Christopher Melchert, *The Formation of the Sunni Schools of Law: 9th-10th Centuries Ce*, (1997), p. 3.
[490] Melchert uses the term 'semi-rationalists' to define *ahl-ra'y*. Adis Duderija, *The Sunna and Its Status in Islamic Law: The Search for a Sound Hadith*, (2015).

theologians).[491] In theology the ahl al-ḥadīth reject the *mutakallimūn's* use of rational proofs to formulate doctrine.[492] This theological conflict between *ahl al-ḥadīth* and the *mutakallimūn* came to a head during the *miḥna*.[493] In law, the term *ahl-ra'y* was used against Abū Ḥanīfa and his students.[494] *Ahl-ra'y* were accused of undermining and contradicting the *Sunna* by their excessive use of reason and hypothetical speculation.[495]

Ibn Abī Ḥātim (d. 327/938), a famous *ḥadīth* critic, contrasted those who gave priority to *ḥadīth* in the derivation of doctrine to those who preferred the faculty of reason. He called the first group *ahl al-ḥadīth* and the second *ahl-ra'y* or *ahl-kalām*.[496] Ibn Abī Hatim probably intended the latter term to refer to the Muʿtazila, al-Māturīdī and others from the *mutakallimūn* such as Ibn Kullāb (d. 241/855)[497] However, he uses the terms *ahl-ra'y* and *ahl-kalām* synonymously. This may have been be due to the growing influence of *'ilm-kalām* on the Ḥanafī madhab in his time. After the death of al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944), who was a contemporary of Ibn Abī Ḥātim, most Ḥanafīs embraced his *kalām* based approach to theology and the distinction between *ra'y* and *kalām* became blurred.

Another term used by some of the proto-Sunnīs to identify themselves was *asḥāb al-ḥadīth*.[498] It referred to those who considered authentic *ḥadīth* to be epistemologically divine in nature. The *asḥāb al-ḥadīth* took it upon themselves to compile and critically analyse the growing

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[491] Melchert (1997), pp. 2-3.; Kalām theologians extensively used reason in the derivation and defence of the Islamic creed.; Al-Shāfiʿī opposed both the Ḥanafīs and Malikis by insisting on the primacy of *ḥadīth* over tradition or community consensus. From this angle he could be considered a traditionalist. However, unlike the Zāhirīs, he did not reject legal reasoning (albeit placed at the bottom of a range of hermeneutical devices) and in fact taught it to the arch-traditionalist Ahmed b. Ḥanbal. Ahmed El Shamsy, *The Canonization of Islamic Law: A Social and Intellectual History*, (2013), pp. 50-5.

[492] Abrahamov (1998), p. 19.

[493] George Makdisi, 'The Significance of the Sunni Schools of Law in Islamic Religious History', *IJMES,* 10 (1979), 5.

[494] Wakin, J., "*Raʾy*", *EI²*.

[495] Ibid.

[496] Eerik Dickinson, *The Development of Early Sunnite Ḥadīth Criticism: The Taqdima of Ibn Abī Ḥātim Al-Rāzī (240/854-327/938)*, (2001), p. 3.

[497] Theologically, Ibn Kullāb was situated somewhere between the traditionalists and the Muʿtazila. He utilised *kalām* to affirm aspects of traditionalist theology. He opposed the Muʿtazila doctrine of the creation of the Quran. At the same time, he opposed the traditionalists by stating that the speech of God was not composed of sound nor letters, and that the recitation of the Quran was created (although the Quran itself is uncreated). On the issue of God ascending above the throne, and the believers seeing God on the Day of Judgment, he sided with the traditionalists. Harith Bin Ramli, 'Chapter 12: The Predecessors of Ashʿarism: Ibn Kullāb, Al-Muḥāsibī and Al-Qalānisī', in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology,* ed. by Sabine Schmidtke (2016), (p. 218).; Josef Van Ess, *Theology and Society in the Second and Third Centuries of the Hijra. Volume 4: A History of Religious Thought in Early Islam*, (2018), p. 207.

[498] *asḥāb* is plural of *ṣāḥib* (companion).

number of *ḥadīth* in circulation.[499] In biographical dictionaries and heresiographical accounts, the term *aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth* was used synonymously with *ahl al-Sunna*.[500] Finally the term *aṣḥāb al-Sunna* is present in many biographical dictionaries. Most of those designated as *aṣḥāb al-Sunna* lived in the third century and their names appear frequently in the six canonical Sunni books of *ḥadīth*.[501] Nawas concludes that the appellation *aṣḥāb al-Sunna* was thus reserved for those scholars who were highly regarded as transmitters of *ḥadīth*.[502] The term *aṣḥāb al-Sunna* was also used in juxtaposition to *aṣḥāb al-hawā'* (the people of desires and heresies).[503]

3.3.3.2   The legal schools of thought and the role of al-Shāfi'ī

Another distinguishing and lasting feature of Sunnīsm is the four legal schools of thought or *madhhabs*. A *madhhab* is a 'group of jurists…who are strictly loyal to a …collective legal doctrine attributed to an eponym.'[504] Of the many *madhhabs* that existed in the third century, only four survived. The reasons for the survival of four and the demise of the rest are beyond the scope of this work. But in brief, a number of mutually inter-dependant factors ensured the survival of the four *madhhabs*: outstanding jurists who contributed to the evolution and preservation of the *madhhab*, political patronage, and the association of a *madhhab* with a theological school of thought.[505] The surviving four *madhhabs* are attributed to Abū Hanīfa (d.150/767), Mālik (d 179/795), al-Shāfi'ī (d.204/820) and Ahmed b. Ḥanbal. As will be mentioned in the biography of al-Ṭabarī in chapter four, al-Ṭabarī had his own madhhab, which was strongly influenced by the legal principles of al-Shāfi'ī. However, his madhhab was short lived, eventually dying out.

The distinct identities of the four *madhhabs* came into being in the late ninth, early tenth centuries due to the efforts of a number of scholars. These include al-Karkhī (d.311/923) the founder of the Hanafi madhab, Ibn Surayj (d.306/918) the founder of the Shāfi'ī madhab and al-Khallāl (d.311/923) the founder of the Hanbalī madhab.[506] Each of the four *madhhabs* has its

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[499] Zaman (1997), p. 54.

[500] Ibid.

[501] John Nawas, 'The Appellation Ṣāḥib Sunna in Classical Islam: How Sunnism Came to Be', *Islamic Law and Society,* Volume 23 (2016), 18.

[502] Ibid. p. 19.

[503] Ibid. p. 20.; Nawas argues that the term *aṣḥāb al-sunna* appeared as a reaction to the miḥna. He quotes the following entry in Dhahabi's *Siyār* regarding Imām Aḥmed: "If you see a man who loves Aḥmad, then know that he is a *ṣāḥib sunna*." Ibid. p. 21.

[504] Wael B Hallaq, *The Origins and Evolution of Islamic Law*, (2005), p. 152.

[505] Ibid. pp. 169-71.

[506] Melchert (1997), p. xxiv.

own 'cumulative doctrine of positive law' and this along with their distinct legal methodologies is what separated one *madhhab* from another.[507] Many of the legal principles and rulings of the *madhhab* are from the eponym's predecessors and successors, but attributed to the eponym.[508]

Al-Shāfiʿī, who studied under Mālik and al-Shaybānī, played a pivotal role in steering the future course of jurisprudence.[509] Although both the Medians and Kūfans recognised the authority of *Sunna*, al-Shāfiʿī was not satisfied with their respective (and regionally based) definitions of the *Sunna*. The Mālikīs considered that the practice of the people of Medina embodied the memory of the Prophet's life and hence was indicative of the Prophetic *Sunna*.[510] In a similar vein the Kūfans regarded the practices of Companions who had settled in Kūfa as indicative of the *Sunna*.[511] Al-Shāfiʿī required methodological consistency; reliance on practice as he demonstrated in a number of polemical works directed against both Ḥanafīs and Mālikīs is could only lead to contradiction and inconsistency. According to al-Shāfiʿī, the *Sunna* meant *Sunna* of the Prophet and not custom or practice. Secondly, the *Sunna* was known exclusively through the vehicle of *ḥadīth*.[512] Although his insistence on the supremacy of *ḥadīth* as a source of law was not initially received enthusiastically, the traditionist movement to gather *ḥadīth* through the length and breadth of the Islamic world, and the science of *ḥadīth* criticism gave *ḥadīth* an edge over the regionally based '*Sunna*' practices.[513] Eventually, within a century after the death of al-Shāfiʿī, both the Ḥanafī and Mālikī schools integrated al-Shāfiʿī's understanding of *ḥadīth* into their jurisprudence.[514] The Ḥanbalīs on the other hand, who accepted the primacy of *ḥadīth*, but were fiercely critical of *raʾy*, embraced al-Shāfiʿī's limited use of *raʾy*.[515] Thus al-Shāfiʿī (and his students) played a crucial role in the narrowing the methodological gap (in law) between *ahl al-ḥadīth* and *ahl-raʾy*.[516]

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[507] Hallaq (2005), pp. 156-7.

[508] Ibid. pp. 158-9.

[509] One of foremost students of Abū Ḥanīfa.

[510] El Shamsy (2013), p. 21.

[511] Ibid. pp. 49-51.

[512] Kecia Ali, *Imam Shafi'i: Scholar and Saint*, (2011), p. 54.i

[513] Hallaq (2005), pp. 108-9.

[514] El Shamsy (2013), pp. 201-12.

[515] Ibid. p. 195.

[516] Ibid.

3.3.3.3 The Sunnī theory of Caliphate

The word caliph means 'successor' and in Sunnī political theory, the holder of the title is considered to be supreme leader of the Muslim community.[517] The title Khalīfa (caliph) continued to be applied to the Muslim leader right up to the twentieth century. After the death of the fourth Caliph, the institution became a hereditary monarchy.[518] The provenance and the theological implications of the word 'khalīfa' is an issue of dispute amongst scholars. Sunnī believers and most modern Islamicists hold that the word *khalīfa* was first used by the *Khulafā Rāshidūn* in the sense of *khalīfat rasūl Allah,* i.e. a successor to the Prophet with no intrinsic claim to religious authority.[519] The designation of Abū Bakr as the first Caliph occurred through *bay'a*. This procedure was followed for subsequent Caliphs.[520] Although Sunnī historians hold that Abū Bakr was the first person to be designated with this title, some modern scholars disagree, holding that the title Khalīfa (or *khalīfat rasūl Allah*) was first used by 'Umar.[521] Later during the Umayyad dynasty, the term *khalīfat Allah* was used by the Caliphs.[522]

The Sunnī concept of leadership varies significantly from that of Shī'īsm, a difference summarised concisely by Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328): in contradiction to the Shī'a belief, leadership in Sunnī Islam is "an instrument to serve the faith" and not a fundamental of the faith.[523] In Sunnī theory, the Caliph was a political successor to the Prophet; his role was to apply the rules of the *Sharī'a,* and not to re-interpret it.[524] The caliph in Sunnī political thought was neither divinely appointed nor infallible.

Another important difference is that in Shī'īsm, ultimate religious authority belongs to the Imām, whereas the Sunnīs contend that ultimate religious authority belongs to the *Sharī'a*. Hence, the Caliph is subservient to the *Sharī'a,* which in turn is interpreted by the *'ulamā'*.[525] A corollary of this is that there is no division in Shī'īsm between religious and political authority; both are invested in the Imām. In Sunnīsm, political authority is invested in the Caliph whereas

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[517]Aram Shahin Wadad Kadi, 'Caliph,Caliphate', in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought,* ed. by Patricia Crone Gerhard Bowering, Wadad Kadi, et al (2012), pp. 81-6.

[518] Ibid.

[519] For example, see Sourdel, D., et al. "*Khalīfa", EI².*

[520] Ibid.

[521] "Khalīfa", EI².

[522] Yücesoy (2010).

[523] Qamaruddin Khan, *Political Thought of Ibn Taymiyah*, (2005), p. 35.

[524] "*Khalīfa*", EI².

[525] Wael B Hallaq, *Sharī'a: Theory, Practice, Transformations*, (2009), p. 132.

religious authority is invested in the *'ulamā'*.[526] When the 'ulamā' reached consensus (*ijmā'*) on

a matter, then this represented the will of the community (the *jamā'a*).[527] To oppose *ijmā'* was

tantamount to heresy.[528] A plethora of historical works on Sunnī political theory discuss issues

such as the qualifications and duties of the Caliph, his manner of selection, the legality of

resisting authority and the issue of multiple claims to leadership. Most of these works were

written in response to new political developments and crises facing the Islamic state including

the fragmentation of the 'Abbāsid state, the rising power of the Turkish slave soldiers, the

Fāṭimid Caliphate, and the destruction of the Caliphate by the Mongols. [529] These works were,

in the main, legalistic and pragmatic rather than idealistic. For example, both Ghazālī and Ibn

Taymiyya validated the rule of whoever held power, irrespective of their official designation.[530]

3.3.3.4   Proto-Sunnī views on succession

That Abū Bakr rightfully succeeded the Prophet was never questioned by proto-Sunnis.[531] The

early scholar and ascetic, Ḥasan al-al-Baṣrī (d.110/727), even held that the Prophet explicitly

appointed Abū Bakr. However the respective status and even the political legitimacy of

'Uthmān and 'Alī were hotly debated amongst proto-Sunnis in the first two centuries. Abū

Ḥanīfa ranked Abū Bakr and 'Umar first but remained silent on the respective virtues of

'Uthmān and 'Alī, whereas al-Shāfi'ī preferred 'Alī over 'Uthmān.[532] Some of the Kufan

traditionalists ranked 'Alī higher than 'Uthmān whereas amongst some of the early third

century Baghdad traditionalists, 'Alī was not even recognised as a legitimate caliph.[533] By the

time of Ahmad b. Ḥanbal, the legitimacy of the first four caliphs became accepted as part of

proto-Sunnī dogma and has remained as such ever since.[534] The table below summarises the

proto-Sunnī and proto-Shī'ī views on the legitimacy of the first four caliphs in the first three

centuries of Islam.

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[526] Ibid. p.5.

[527] Berkey (2003), p. 143.

[528] Ibid. p. 147.

[529] Ibid.

[530] Keith Lewinstein, 'Kharijis', in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought,* ed. by Patricia Crone Gerhard Bowering, Wadad Kadi, et al (2012), pp. 294-5.

[531] Likewise nor was the legitimacy of the caliphate of 'Umar ever questioned.

[532] Ibid.

[533] Zaman (1997), p. 51.

[534] Ibid. p. 52.; Part of this doctrine affirmed that their moral superiority was according to the sequence of their rule. Fiazuddin Shu'ayb, 'Succession', in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought,* ed. by Gerhard Bowering (2012), pp. 524-6).; Ibn Ḥanbal eventually professed this view towards the end of his life, initially affirming only the first three caliphs. Wilferd Madelung, *Religious Trends in Early Islamic Iran*, (1988), p. 24.

Table 3.2 Proto-Sunnī and Proto-Shī'ī Views on the Khulafā Rāshidūn

Theological Stance	Comment
The order of first four Caliphs was correct and reflected their respective status.[535]	This became the normative Sunnī position by the fourth/tenth century.
The order of first *three* Caliphs was correct. 'Alī not mentioned.[536]	This was the view of some early proto-Sunnī scholars, and the initial view of Ahmad b. Ḥanbal.
'Alī was more entitled to caliphate than 'Uthmān, but not more than Abū Bakr or 'Umar.[537]	Many proto-Sunnīs held this view and hence were labelled with *tashayyu'*.
'Alī was entitled to be first Caliph, but Abū Bakr and others were not sinful for their mistaken *ijtihād*.[538]	This was the Zaydī view.
Alī was entitled to be first Caliph, and the other Caliphs were usurpers.[539]	This was the proto-Shī'ī view.[540] It was later adopted by the Ithnā 'Ashara and Ismā'īlis.

In the same way that the various proto-Shī'ī groups agreed that 'Alī was the legitimate successor to the Prophet, the various proto-Sunnī groups agreed on the legitimacy of Abū Bakr as the successor to the Prophet. However the two views originated at different points in time. Abū Bakr's legitimacy as caliph was only questioned around 35/40 H by the proto-Shī'a. We can infer from this that in the first few decades of the caliphate, Abū Bakr's succession to the Prophet was not a contentious issue. Some scholars have argued that the proto-Shī'ī position on succession originated at the time of the Prophet's death and not later. However this view is not tenable given the divine and charismatic authority of the Prophet. If the Prophet had designated 'Alī as a successor, it is unimaginable that the Companions, in their entirety, would have brazenly opposed him.[541]

3.3.3.5 The beliefs of the early proto-Sunnīs 132-334/750-945

What was the creed of the early proto-Sunnīs? Was it homogenous? As mentioned earlier, proto-Sunnī scholars articulated their creed in juxtaposition to (what they considered) aberrant beliefs held by other groups. In order to highlight some of the key doctrines that define the proto-Sunnīs, I will now examine eight extant works attributed to their respective

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[535] Zaman (1997), p. 51.
[536] Melchert (2012), p. 96.
[537] Zaman (1997), p. 51.
[538] Haider (2014), pp. 105-6. Haider attributes this belief to Batrī Zaydism.
[539] Daftary (2013), p. 39.
[540] With the exception of the Zaydīs.
[541] Sharon (1984), p. 125.

proto-Sunnī scholars. All of the works are theological and polemical in nature, are directed against a multiplicity of different sects and represent the theological controversies of the time. Thus an article of faith for example, belief in the angels, is rarely found in such works as it was generally agreed upon and hence its inclusion in a treatise was unnecessary. By examining these works we gain a snapshot of the beliefs of the proto-Sunnīs. For the sake of ease, I refer only to secondary sources which contain translation of relevant creedal texts. I have divided the period of my study (750-945) into four approximately fifty-year periods.[542] For each period, I have examined the work of one or two scholars. I start by giving a brief biography of each scholar and then in tabulated form state their creed in contradistinction to other sects. The table below is a list of the eight scholars to be examined.

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[542] With the exception of 900-945 which is a 45-year period.

Table 3.3 Early Proto-Sunnī Scholars

Period	Name of Scholar	Source of his creed
700-750	Abū Ḥanīfa (d.150/767).	Primary Source: *Fiqh al-Absat* based upon translation by A.J Wensinck, The Muslim Creed: Its Genesis and Historical Development, (Routledge, 2013).
	Abdallah b. ʿAwn (d.151/768).	Secondary Source: Steven Judd, *Religious Scholars and the Umayyads: Piety-Minded Supporters of the Marwanid Caliphate*, (Routledge, 2013).
750-800	Al-Awzāʿi (d.157/773).	Secondary Sources: Josef van Ess, *Theology and Society in the Second and Third Century of the Hijra*. (Brill, 2016) and Steven Judd as above.
800-850	Abū ʿUbaid al-Qāsim (d.224/838).	Secondary Sources: Madelung W.; "Early Sunnī doctrine concerning faith as reflected in the Kitāb al-Īmān of Abū ʿUbaid al-Qāsim b. Sallām (d. 224/839)" in Wilferd Madelung, 'Religious Schools and Sects in Medieval Islam', (Variorum Publishing, 1985) and Weipert, Reinhard, "*Abū ʿUbayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām*", EI³.
	Abū Bakr al-Ḥumaydī (d.219/834).	Secondary Source: Adis Duderija, *The Sunna and Its Status in Islamic Law: The Search for a Sound Hadith* (Springer, 2015).
850-900	Ahmed b. Ḥanbal (d.241/855).	Secondary Source: W. Montgomery Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought* (Oneworld Publications, 1998).
900-950	Al-Ṭaḥāwī (d.321/933).	Secondary Source: William G. Shellabear, ed., *The Macdonald Presentation Volume* (New York: Princeton University Press, 1933).
	Al-Ashʿarī (324/935-6).	Primary Source: *Al-Ibanah ʿan Usul Ad-Diyanah* based upon translation by Walter C Klein, 'Abū'l-Hasan ʿʿAlī Ibn Isma ʿil Al-Ashʿari's Al-Ibanah ʿan Usul Ad-Diyanah (the Elucidation of Islam's Foundation): A Translation with Introduction and Notes', (American Oriental Series, 1940).

3.3.3.5.1 The period 700-750

Abū Ḥanīfa (d.150/767)

A renowned jurist, Abū Ḥanīfa was the eponym of the Ḥanafī madhab. He studied under the famous Kūfan jurist, Ḥammād b. Abī Sulaymān (d.120/737) for eighteen to twenty years, taking over his position after the latter's death. His student al-Shaybānī preserved the teachings of his master and is considered to be a founder of the Ḥanafī school of law.[543] He lived through the reigns of the latter Umayyad Caliphs and the early 'Abbāsids, suffering periods of persecution and imprisonment during both dynasties. He is reported to have died in prison. The tenacity of his students coupled with active support from the 'Abbāsids ensured the spread of his *madhhab* across the Muslim world. A number of criticisms were levelled against him by traditionalists, including his 'excessive' use of *raʾy*,[544] his *Murjiʾī* beliefs, and being 'weak' transmitter of *ḥadīth*.[545] Abū Ḥanīfa's beliefs can be ascertained from the book *Fiqh al-Absat*, a document authored by his student Abū Muṭīʿ al-Balkhī in which the latter asked Abū Ḥanīfa a number of questions relating to creed.[546]

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[543] Abū Ḥanīfa's student, Abū Yusuf also played an important role in preserving his teachings.

[544] The word *raʾy* can have a positive or a negative connotation. For its proponents it meant 'sound reasoning'. For others (such as the opponents of Abū Ḥanīfa) *raʾy* implied 'arbitrary reasoning'. *Ahl-raʾy* do not give precedence to opinion over *ḥadīth* if the latter was to be considered sound. Hennigan, P., "Ahl al-raʾy", *EI³*.

[545] Yanagihashi, H.. "Abū Ḥanīfa", *EI³*.

[546] "Abū Ḥanīfa", *EI³*. According to Rippin the *Fiqh al-Absat* closely represents Abū Hanīfa's views.; Andrew Rippin, 'Al-Fiqh Al-Akbar', in *Encyclopedia of Islamic Civilization and Religion,* ed. by Ian Richard Netton (2013), pp. 175-7). Al-*Fiqh al-Absat* is also known as Al-*Fiqh al-Akbar I.*

Table 3.4 Abū Ḥanafī's Creed

Sect /Belief	His views
Muʿtazila	Refers to the Muʿtazila as 'innovators.'[547]
Qadariyya	" What reaches you could not possibly have missed you; and what misses you could not possibly have reached you."[548]
Jahmiyyah	"Whoever says I do not know the punishment in the grave, belongs to the sect of the Jahmiyya."[549] "Whoever says, I do not know whether Allah is in the heaven or in the earth is a disbeliever."[550]
Shīʿī	"We disavow none of the Companions."[551]
Order of the first four Caliphs	Preferred ʿAlī over ʿUthmān.[552] Opposes the majority of the proto-Sunnīs on this point.
Attitude to the rulers	Conflicting opinions. He is reported to have said that the evil arising from rebellion outweighs the good, even if the cause is just.[553] Another report states that he gave financial support to the revolt of Zayd b. ʿAlī.[554]
Khawārij	"We do not consider anyone to be an infidel on account of sin, nor do we deny his faith."[555]
Affirmation of *irjāʾ*[556]	"We leave the question of ʿUthmān and ʿAlī to God, who knows the secret and hidden things."[557]

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[547] Josef Van Ess, *Theology and Society in the Second and Third Century of the Hijra. Volume 1: A History of Religious Thought in Early Islam*, (2016), p. 226.

[548] A.J Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed: Its Genesis and Historical Development*, (2013), p. 103.

[549] Ibid. p. 104.

[550] Ibid.

[551] Ibid.

[552] Muhammad Abu Zahra, *The Four Imams: Their Lives, Works, and Their Schools of Thought*, (2001), p. 212.

[553] Michael Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought*, (2001), p. 8.

[554] "Abū Ḥanīfa", *EI³*.

[555] Wensinck (2013), p. 103.

[556] The term *Murjiʾa* was applied to two groups of people; 1) those who refused to take sides in the disagreements between the Companions, and 2) those who considered faith to be unharmed by acts of disobedience. According to Watt this first meaning is intended here. Watt (1998), p. 132. However, Abū Ḥanīfa was also considered to be from the *Murjiʾa* from a creedal angle. In a letter to ʿUthmān al-Batti, Abū Ḥanīfa affirms his *Murjiʾī* beliefs but rejects the label. Afsaruddin, A.;"Abu Hanifa al-Nu'man" in Josef W Meri, *Medieval Islamic Civilization: An Encyclopedia*, (2005), pp. 5-6; Josef van Ess, *Theology and Society in the Second and Third Century of the Hijra.* , (2016).p.229.

[557] Wensinck (2013), p. 104.

	He held the belief that *īmān* does not increase or decrease.[558]
	Opposed the majority of the proto-Sunnīs on this point.

Abdallah b. 'Awn (d.151/768)

He is considered to be one of the founders of Sunnī Islam, having studied with both al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728) and Muḥammad b. Sīrīn. His other teachers include al-Shaʿbī (d. after 103/721), Makḥūl al-Shamī (d. 113/731) and al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad (d. after 105/723). He was an *ḥadīth* specialist and considered to be one of the founders of *ḥadīth* criticism.[559] He had numerous famous students including al-Awzāʿī (d.157/773), Shuʿba b. al-Ḥajjāj (d.160/776) and Sufyān al-Thawrī (d.161/778).[560]

Table 3.5 Ibn ʿAwn's Creed

Sect /Belief	His views
Muʿtazila	Refused to greet the *Muʿtazili* 'Amr b. Ubayd (d144/761) and walked off when the latter sat next to him.[561]
Qadariyya	Refused to greet them and discuss anything with them. He attended the execution of Ghaylān al-Dimashqī.[562]
Jahmiyya	I have not come across a direct statement regarding the Jahmiyya, but his opposition to the Muʿtazila implies opposition to them.
Shīʿī	Opposed the *'Alīd* rebellion against the 'Abbāsids. [563]
Order of the first four Caliphs	Ranked the merit of the *Rāshidūn* Caliphs in order of their succession, thus affirming the Caliphate of Abū Bakr and 'Umar and placing 'Uthmān before 'Alī.[564]
Attitude to the rulers	Supported the Umayyad dynasty. He was initially hostile to 'Abbāsids but reconciled himself to them.[565]

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[558] Watt (1998), p. 132.

[559] Lucas (2004), p. 10.

[560] Mourad, S., "ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAwn", *EI³*.

[561] Steven Judd, *Religious Scholars and the Umayyads: Piety-Minded Supporters of the Marwanid Caliphate*, (2013), p. 63.

[562] Ibid.; Ghaylān al-Dimashqī was an active proponent of the Qadariyya.

[563] Ibid.

[564] Ibid. p. 65.

[565] Ibid. p. 68.

Khawārij	In opposition to the Khawārij, he recognised the Caliphates of ʿUthmān and ʿAlī and supported the Umayyad dynasty.[566] He opposed revolting against the leaders.[567]
Murji'a	Nothing found.

3.3.3.5.2   The period 750-800

Al-Awzāʿi (d.157/773)

Al-Awzāʿi is the eponym of the now extinct Awzāʿi madhab. He spent his early life in Damascus studying under al-Zuhrī (d.124/721) and Makḥūl al-Shamī.[568] He was widely recognised as a *muḥaddith* and *faqīh* but it was for his legal acumen that he is remembered.[569] Both Umayyad and ʿAbbāsid Caliphs recognised him as an authority on the issue of war booty and he is said to have answered 70,000 questions on fiqh.[570] His vehement opposition to *ra'y* led to enmity between his followers and that of Abū Ḥanīfa's.[571] As a *muḥaddith,* he was the first scholar in *Bilād al-Shām* to collect and thematically order *ḥadīth* according to its subject matter.[572] He was also an authority in *ḥadīth* criticism.[573]

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[566] He refused to criticise Hajjaj b. Yusuf. Ibid. p. 66.
[567] "ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAwn", *EI³*.
[568] Judd (2013), p. 72.
[569] Ibid. p. 74.
[570] Ibid. p. 72.
[571] Ibid. p. 75.
[572] Anke Imam Bouzenita, 'Al-AwzaʿI's Concept of Sunnah. A Postscriptum to J. Schacht', *Journal of Islam in Asia,* 3 (2006), 132.
[573] Ibid.

Table 3.6 Al-Awzāʿī's Creed

Sect /Belief	His views
Muʿtazila	He affirmed seeing Allah on the Day of Judgement.[574]
Qadariyya	Played an active role in persecution of *Qadarite* of Ghaylān al-Dimashqī.[575] Considered the *Qadarite* Maʿbad al-Juhani' to be the source of all evil.'[576]
Jahmiyyah	Affirmed the attributes of Allah.[577]
Shīʿī	Rejected *ʿAlīd* claims that they were designated to rule.[578]
Order of the first four Caliphs	Nothing clear. It is likely he affirmed the order of the first four Caliphs. In answering *fiqh* questions, he would often refer to the practices of ʿUmar and ʿUthmān.[579]
Attitude to the rulers	Had a close relationship with some Umayyad rulers.[580] He begrudgingly accepted the rule of the ʿAbbāsids.[581]
Khawārij	His closeness with some of the ʿAbbāsids and his role as *Mufti* of Damascus makes it highly unlikely that he had any sympathies with the Khawārij.
Murji'a	Nothing found.

3.3.3.5.3   The period 800-850

Abū ʿUbaid al-Qāsim (d.224/838)

He was a famous philologist and wrote numerous tracts on lexicography, *ulūm* al-Quran, ḥadīth, and *fiqh*. He studied law with al-Shāfiʿī and travelled with Yaḥyā b. Maʿīn (d. 233/847). He held a number of official posts including *qāḍī* of Ṭarsūs.[582]

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[574] "Elal Ibn Abi Hatim" (5/468).

[575] Judd (2013), p. 73.

[576] Ess (2016), p. 82. Maʿbad is considered to be the founder of the *Qadariyya.*

[577] Laalika'i, Sharh Usool-I'tiqad Ahlus-Sunna Wal-Jamaa'ah p.875.

[578] Judd (2013), pp. 73-4.

[579] Steven Judd, 'Al-Awzāʿī and Sufyan Al-Thawri, the Umayyad Madhab', in *Islamic School of Law: Evolution, Devolution and Progress,* ed. by Peri Bearman, et al. (2006).

[580] Judd (2013), p. 72.

[581] Ibid. p. 76.

[582] Weipert, R., "Abū ʿUbayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām", *EI³. ;* Ṭarsūs is in south-central Turkey.

Table 3.7 Abū ʿUbaid's Creed

Sect /Belief	His views
Muʿtazila	Refuted *Muʿtazila* definition of faith in his Kitāb al-Īmān.[583]
Qadariyya	Nothing found.
Jahmiyya	Stated that the Jahmiyya are outside the fold of Islam due to their claim that faith is merely knowledge of God.[584]
Shīʿī	Refered to the *Imāmi* Shīʿī with the derogatory term *Rāfiḍa* and criticised their understanding of faith.[585]
Order of the first four Caliphs	Nothing directly, but his book "*al-Khuṭab wa-l-mawāʿiẓ*" included sayings of Prophet Muḥammad, Abū Bakr, and ʿUmar.[586]
Attitude to the rulers	Employed as a *Qāḍī* by the ʿAbbāsids.[587]
Khawārij	Criticised the *Khawārij* concept of faith.[588]
Murjiʾa	Stated that faith is "*ikhlās* to God in the heart, testimony of the tongue, and work of the limbs" and that it increases and decreases.[589]

Abū Bakr al-Ḥumaydī (d.219/834)

He wrote *Usūl al-Sunna* which was one of first theological tracts using the word '*Sunna*' to exemplify the traditionalist belief.[590] A senior student of Shāfiʿī', he was a famous *ḥadīth* scholar, wrote a *musnad* of *ḥadīth* and was one of the teachers of al-Bukhārī.[591] All of the points below are taken from his work *Usūl al-Sunna.*

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[583] Madelung W.; "Early sunnī doctrine concerning faith as reflected in the Kitāb al-Īmān of Abū ʿUbaid al-Qāsim b. Sallām (d. 224/839)" in Madelung, pp. 233-54.

[584] Ibid. p. 247.

[585] Ibid. p. 253.

[586] "Abū ʿUbayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām", *EI³*.

[587] Ibid.

[588] Madelung, pp. 252-3.

[589] Ibid. p. 235 and 44.

[590] Duderija (2015), p. 45.

[591] Ibid.; El Shamsy (2013), p. 119.

Table 3.8 Al-Ḥumaydī Creed

Sect /Belief	His views
Mu'tazila	Affirmed the vision of God in the Hereafter.[592]
Qadariyya	Affirmed belief in *Qadar*.[593]
Jahmiyya	Stated that the Quran is the speech of God. [594]
Shī'ī	Had respect for all Companions.[595]
Order of the first four Caliphs	Nothing found.
Attitude to the rulers	Nothing found.
Khawārij	Did not excommunicate someone from Islam for a major sin.[596]
Murji'a	Held that belief increases and decreases.[597]

3.3.3.5.4   The period 850-900

Ahmed b. Ḥanbal (d.241/855).

He was the eponym of the Ḥanbalī madhab and a staunch advocate of the Sunnī traditionalism. He studied *ḥadīth* under ʿAbd al-Razzāq (d. 211/827), Sufyān b. ʿUyayna (d. 196/811), ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Mahdī (d.198/814), Wakīʿ b. al-Jarrāḥ (d. 197/813), and Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd al-Qaṭṭān (d. 198/813) and studied jurisprudence with al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820). His uncompromising stanch during the *miḥna* and his eventual vindication by the caliph Mutawakkil had a number of far-reaching consequences: it increased his personal standing, the Mu'tazila were discredited, and more importantly the formula that the Quran was "the speech of God, uncreated" became widely accepted amongst Sunnīs. His main work is *al-Musnad* comprising of 30,000 *ḥadīth*.[598] He had a number of famous students including al-Bukhārī (d.256/870), Muslim (d. 261/875), al-Tirmidhī (d.279/892) and al-Nasā'i (d.

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[592] Duderija (2015), p. 45.
[593] Ibid.
[594] Ibid.
[595] Ibid.
[596] Ibid.
[597] Ibid.
[598] Holtzman, L., "Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal", *EI³*.

303/915).[599] His creed below is taken from Watt's translation of a text called *'Aqīda I* by Henri Laoust.

Table 3.9 Ibn Ḥanbal's Creed

Sect /Belief	His View
Mu'tazila	Affirmed intercession on Day of Judgement.[600]
Qadariyya	Affirmed *Qadar* "the good of it and the evil of it" and "sins are by God's…decree."[601]
Jahmiyya	Affirmed that the Quran is the speech of Allah and uncreated.[602]
Shī'ī	Stated about Companions "good qualities are to be mentioned and their bad qualities are not to be mentioned."[603]
Order of the first four Caliphs	Accepted the status of the Rāshidūn Caliphs in their chronological order.[604]
Attitude to the rulers	Stated that ruler must be obeyed "even if they are not upright, just and pious."[605]
Khawārij	About the "people of the *Qibla*" he said, "we do not call any of them an unbeliever on account of a sin."[606]
Murji'a	Criticises the core *Murji'i* beliefs including "faith does not increase or decrease" and "faith is word without actions."[607]

3.3.3.5.5   The period 900-945

This period also witnessed a number of additional works under the '*Sunna*' genre including, *al-Sunna* by Abū Bakr al-Khallāl (d.311/923), *Sharh al-Sunna* by Al-Barbahārī (d.329/941), and *al-Sunna* by Ibn Abī 'Āṣim (d.287/900).[608] All of these were fairly similar in content and are polemical in nature. This period witnessed the disappearance of the Khawārij in the central

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[599] Afsaruddin (2008), p. 140.
[600] Watt (1998), p. 293.
[601] Ibid. p. 292.
[602] Ibid. p. 293.
[603] Ibid.
[604] Ibid.
[605] Ibid. p. 292.
[606] Ibid. p. 293.
[607] Ibid. p. 123.
[608] Duderija (2015).

Islamic lands due to the military efforts of the ʿAbbāsids as well as the lack of popular support for their uncompromising militancy.[609]

Al-Ṭaḥāwī (d.321/933)

He spent most of his life in Egypt initially studying under the famous student of al-Shāfiʿī and his maternal uncle al-Muzanī, but he later transferred to the Ḥanafī madhab. He wrote a number of commentaries on early Ḥanafī madhab texts, and *ḥadīth* criticism but his most famous book is his creedal work entitled *Bayān al-Sunna wa'l-Jamāʿa*.[610] His creed described in the table below is based on the latter. In opposition to the majority of Sunnīs, he continued to affirm the Hanafi Murjiʾī position by stating that "Belief is confession by the tongue and assent by the intellect."[611] Although this position was strongly refuted by other Sunnī scholars, his adherence to it was not considered a serious departure from the general rubric of Sunnīsm.

Table 3.10 Al-Ṭaḥāwī's Creed

Sect /Belief	His view
Muʿtazila	Affirmed seeing Allah on Day of Judgement.[612]
Qadariyya	Affirmed *Qadar* "Whatever He wills comes into existence, whatever He does not will does not".[613]
Jahmiyya	Affirmed that the Quran is the speech of Allah and uncreated.[614]
Shīʿī	"We love the Companions … We hate him who hates them …. We mention them only with good. The love of them is religion, belief, and doing good; the hatred of them is unbelief, hypocrisy, and perverseness".[615]
First four Caliphs	Accepted the status of the *Rāshidūn* Caliphs in their chronological order.[616]

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[609] El-Hibri (2010), p. 694.; Cedric Barnes. "Kharijis (768 CE)"in Meri (2005), pp. 435-6.; Afsaruddin (2008), p. 83.

[610] Calder, N., "al-Ṭaḥāwī", *EI²*.

[611] William Shellabear, 'The Macdonald Presentation Volume', (1933), (p. 139).

[612] Ibid. p. 135.

[613] Ibid. p. 134.

[614] Ibid. p. 135.

[615] Ibid. p. 142.

[616] Ibid.

Attitude to the rulers	"We do not approve secession from our Imams and those in authority. Even though they tyrannize over us we do not curse them nor restrain any hand from obeying them."[617]
Khawārij	Regarding the "people of the *Qibla*"… "we do not impute unbelief ….because of a sin".[618]
Affirmation of irjā'	"Belief is confession by the tongue and assent by the intellect".[619] Opposes the majority of the proto-Sunnī on this point.

Al-Ashʿarī, Abū 'l-Ḥasān (d.324/935-6).

He was said to be a direct descendant of the Companion Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī. He began his early studies with the Muʻtazilī al-Jubbāʾī (303/915-16) and was considered to be one of his best students. According to medieval sources, after a number of dreams, which he interpreted as visions from God, al-Ashʿarī left the Muʻtazila and claimed to follow the creed of Ahmed b. Ḥanbal. But his use of rational arguments in defence of the orthodox creed was criticised by other Ḥanbalīs.[620] Following his death, the leading 'Ashʿarīs began to differ from his creed, for example through the metaphorical interpretation of God's attributes.[621] Assisted by patronage from *wazīr* Niẓām al-Mulk (d. 485/1092), the *'Ashʿarīs* became the dominant Sunnī theological school. Watt cogently observes that by the middle of the 5th/11th century, due to the incorporation of Aristotelian and Neoplatonic concepts, the school 'disappear[ed] in a blaze of philosophy'.[622] His extant books include a*l-Lumaʿ, Rīsālat al-Imān.* and *al-Ibanah `an Usul Al-Diyanah.* The following creed of al-Ashʿarī is taken from a translation of *al-Ibanah `an Usul Al-Diyanah* and *Rīsālat al-Imān.*[623] A cursory read of *al-Ibanah* or *Rīsālat al-Imān* shows that there is negligible difference between al-Ashʿarī's creed and that of Imām Ahmad. Thus for the purpose of this study which is examining proto-Sunnī doctrine during the period 132-334/750-945, there was no Ashʿarī/ Hanbalī theological split. As alluded to by Watt this split occurred

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[617] Ibid. p. 140.

[618] Ibid. p. 138.

[619] Ibid. p. 139.

[620] Al-Barbahārī was one of his critics. Watt (1998), p. 306.

[621] Al-Baghdādī and al-Juwaynī, who were both leading 'Ashʿarī scholars, interpreted God's attributes metaphorically. A number of aspects of 'Ashʿarī creed were taken from Ibn Kullāb, for example the affirmation of seven 'essential' attributes. Ibid. p. 287.; Unlike the 'Ashʿarīs who deviated substantially from the creed of their eponym, the Māturīdiyya were more faithful to the doctrine of their founder. Madelung, W., "Māturīdiyya", *EI²*.

[622] Watt, W. M., "al-Ashʿarī, Abu 'l-Ḥasan", *EI²*.

[623] Walter C Klein, 'Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali Ibn Isma'Il Al-Ash'ari's Al-Ibanah 'an Usul Ad-Diyanah (the Elucidation of Islam's Foundation): A Translation with Introduction and Notes'*,* (1940).

later on.[624] Finally given that the ʿAshʿarīs were to become one of the major theological schools, it would be prudent at this point to mention its counterpart-the school of al-Māturīdī (d.333/944). He was the founder of a theological school of thought that has adherents amongst many Ḥanafīs.

Like al-ʿAshʿarī, al-Māturīdī was opposed to a number of Muʿtazilī teachings, for example he affirmed the vision of God on the Day of Judgement. But the similarity ends there. He was a Ḥanafī, embracing their *Murjiʾī* definition of faith.[625] He also held a number of *Muʿtazilī* beliefs including that knowledge of God could be obtained with reason alone (i.e. without revelation) and the metaphorical interpretation of many attributes of God except those attributes relating to God's essence.[626] By the Mamlūk era, the Māturīdiyya were "recognised as the second orthodox Sunnī *kalām* school besides the Ashʿariyya."[627] The former school was strongly associated with the Ḥanafī school, such that Ḥanafīsm and Māturīdī doctrines went hand in hand.[628]

Table 3.11 Al-Ashʿarī's Creed

Sect /Belief	His View [629]
Muʿtazila	Affirmed God is above the throne.[630] Affirmed God's Face, Sight, Eyes, Hands.[631]
Qadariyya	Affirmed that God wills everything including disobedience.[632] The book mentions the *Qadariyya* by name and contains a detailed refutation of their beliefs.
Jahmiyya	Affirmed that the Quran is the speech of Allah and uncreated.[633]
Shīʿī	Stated that there is *ijmāʿ* on the legitimacy of the caliphate of Abū Bakr.[634]

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[624] "al-Ashʿarī, Abu ʾl-Ḥasan", *EI²*.

[625] For explanation of Murjiʾa see footnote 556.

[626] "al-Māturīdī", *EI²*.

[627] Ibid.

[628] Ibid.

[629] If the source is not mentioned in the table, it is taken from *al-Ibanah ʿan Usul Al-Diyanah.*

[630] Klein, pp. 83-87.

[631] Ibid. pp. 88-94.

[632] Ibid. pp. 102-6.

[633] Ibid. pp. 66-82.

[634] Ibid. pp. 133-4.

Order of the first four Caliphs	Accepted the status of the Rāshidūn Caliphs in their chronological order.[635]
Attitude to the rulers	In point 14 of *Rīsālat al-Īmān* he forbade rebelling against the rulers.
Khawārij	In point 10 *Rīsālat al-Īmān* he said, "do not brand any people of the Qibla an infidel because of a sin he may commit."[636]
Murji'a	In point 13 of *Rīsālat al-Īmān* he said: "faith is word and deed, subject to increase and decrease."

I now summarise the beliefs of the eight scholars.

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[635] Ibid. pp. 135-6.
[636] Ibid. p. 32.

Table 3.12 Summary of the beliefs held by proto-Sunnī scholars

	Opposes *Mu'tazila*	Opposes *Qadariyya*	Opposes *Jahmiyya*	Opposes *Shī'ī*	Agrees with Sunnī status of *Rāshidūn* Caliphs [637]	Quietest Attitude to rulers	Opposes *Khawārij*	Opposes *Murji'a*
Abū Ḥanīfa	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	**No**	Unclear	Yes	**No**
Abdallah b. 'Awn	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Al-Awzā'ī	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Likely	Yes	Yes	
Abū 'Ubaid al-Qāsim	Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes
Abū Bakr al-Ḥumaydī	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes
Ahmed b. Ḥanbal	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Al-Ṭaḥāwī	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	**No**
Al-Ash'arī	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

In this small sample size of eight, there is near unanimity on the early proto-Sunnīs on major points of belief. One main point of creed in which two of the scholars (Abū Ḥanīfa and Al-Ṭaḥāwī) differed from the majority was the issue of *Imām*. However, this did not expel them (in the view of other Sunnī scholars) from the rubric of Sunnīsm.

In addition to the creed of the above eight scholars I have also perused translations of following three treatises on theology written by scholars in this period: *Sharh ul-Sunna* by Al-Muzanī (d.264/878), *Sharh al-Sunna* by Al-Barbahārī, *Aṣl al-Sunna wa i'tiqād al-dīn* by Abū Zur'a al-Rāzī (d.264/878) and Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d.277/890)[638] My reading of these three treatises confirm the above findings.

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[637] I.e. their virtues are commensurate with the chronological order of their rule.
[638] Translation found in Abrahamov (1998), pp. 54-7.

Where do the two Sunnī historians,-al-Balādhurī' and al-Ṭabarī fit into this description of the proto-Sunnīsm? Although very little is known about al-Balādhurī's position on particular creedal matters, he is considered to be from proto-Sunnīs.[639] Al-Ṭabarī on the other hand, as we shall see in chapter five, wrote tracts on creed in which his 'Sunnīsm' was explicitly declared. Thus both can be located within the rubric of proto-Sunnīsm.

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[639] Dakake (2007), p. 37.

3.4 Summary

In this chapter I described the milieu in which the four authors lived. It was a period of political turmoil which witnessed the gradual fragmentation of the empire and the declining authority of the Caliph. Intense debates raged between and within the proto-Sunnī and proto-Shīʿī on the locus of religious authority, legitimate political authority, and the nature of faith. During the life time of the four authors, the death of the eleventh Imām led to a crisis within proto-Shīʿī religious circles. These events inevitably influenced and possibly shaped the world-view of the authors' and how they portrayed the Saqīfa incident.

Having described the religious and political milieu in which the authors lived, in the next chapter I provide further historical context by examining the authors respective biographies.

4 Chapter 4: Biographies of the four historians

4.1 Introduction

In their bid for power the 'Abbāsid successfully exploited pro-'Alīd sentiments, leaving the 'Alīds sorely disappointed with the outcome of the revolution. Once in power, the 'Abbāsids were faced with the challenge of justifying their legitimacy, particularly in light of 'Alīd opposition. During the lifetime of the four authors, a number of important religio-political questions around the issue of succession and legitimacy were still being debated between and amongst proto-Sunnī and proto-Shī'ī.[640] These questions included the legitimacy of the rule of the first three Caliphs as well as that of 'Alī's caliphate, the status of 'Alī vis a vis other Companions, the precise definition of the *ahl-bayt,* the nature and scope of the Caliph/Imām's authority and the lawfulness of rebellion against the Caliph. With strong 'Alīd sympathies amongst many individuals associated with proto- Sunnīsm, scholarly opinions on these issues often transcended the amorphous divide between proto-Sunnī and proto-Shī'ī. The proto-Sunnī Caliph Ma'mūm had had declared 'Alī as most virtuous Companion and even nominated an 'Alīd as his heir.[641] Thus in the era in question, the issue of 'Alid legitimacy was far from resolved. It is within this historical context that the four authors penned their works and constructed a narrative of Saqīfa, a seminal event, the memory of which was inextricably linked to the debates around succession and religio-political legitimacy.

In the previous chapter I described the religious and political milieu in which the authors lived. In this chapter I give a biography of the four authors and describe the salient features of the four texts in question. Chapters three and four taken together provide the historical context in which the four texts were authored and give detail about the genre, format, structure and publication history of the texts. Structurally this chapter is divided into two sections: 4a: biographies and 4b: structure and style of texts. The quantity of biographical data available for the four historians varies considerably from author to author. Hence, I have written a lot more about al-Ṭabarī than for example Ibn A'tham, as data regarding the latter is very brief. In writing the biographies, I have used a number of recent secondary sources including peer

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[640] This issue of succession also plagued the ruling dynasty almost from the very start.
[641] Melchert (2012), p. 8.

reviewed articles, the Encyclopaedia of Islam and the works of reputable scholars.[642] Below I present a brief timeline of a few key events.

Figure 4.1 Timeline

810	**birth of al-Balādhurī (approx.)**	
833		beginning of the *miḥna*
838	**birth of al-Ṭabarī**	
840's	**birth of al-Yaʻqūbī** (approx.)	
	Ibn Aʻtham (born sometime after al-Yaʻqūbī's birth)	
861		anarchy at Samarra (861-870)
869		Zanj revolt (869-83)
870		death of Bukhari
874		minor occultation
892	**d. al-Balādhurī**	
900	**d. al-Yaʻqūbī**	
909		Fāṭimid dynasty (909-1171)
923	**d. al-Ṭabarī**	
926	**d. Ibn Aʻtham al-Kufi**	
934		Buyid Dynasty (934-1062)
941	**d. Ibn Aʻtham al-Kufi**	major occultation

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[642] Such as Rosenthal, Donner, Kennedy, Robinson and Conrad.

4.2   Al-Ṭabarī (224-310/839-923)[643]

This biography is based on works of the following secondary sources: Rosenthal, Mårtensson, Kennedy, Bosworth (in EI²) and Melchert.

Al-Ṭabarī's full name is Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn Jarīr ibn Yazīd al-Ṭabarī. He was born during the reign of al-Muʿtaṣim in Āmul, a town in the province of Ṭabaristān.[644] Al-Ṭabarī's intellectual prowess was evident at an early age; he memorised Quran by the age of seven, led the prayers at the age of eight and was studying *ḥadīth* when he was nine.[645] His father who was a landowner, used his modest income to finance al-Ṭabarī's scholarly pursuits.

Aged only twelve years, al-Ṭabarī moved al-Rayy (modern day Tehran) where he was to spend five years studying under a number of teachers including Ibn Humayd (d.248/862) and Ahmed b. Ḥammād al-Dawlābī (n.d).[646] From the former he studied the historical works of Ibn Isḥāq (d.151/767).[647] The next stage of al-Ṭabarī's journey took him to Baghdad where he was hoping to meet (and study under) the renowned scholar Ahmed b. Ḥanbal. However, it was not to be as the latter died shortly before he had a chance to meet him.[648]

After a two year stay in Baṣra and Kūfa he returned to Baghdad where he tutored the son of the vizier ʿUbayd Allah b. Yaḥya b. al-Khāqān (d.263/877). The latter was an ally of the powerful bureaucratic clan. Banū al-Jarrāḥ.[649] Al-Ṭabarī supported the policies of Banū al-Jarrāḥ which included moderate (and centralised) taxation of the peasantry and cutting back on unnecessary administrative expenditure.[650] Their opponents, the Banū al-Furāt, on the other hand, farmed out tax collection to often unscrupulous individuals, causing immense hardship to the peasantry.[651]

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[643] al-Ṭabarī lived through the rule of the following twelve Caliphs; Al-Maʾmūm, Al-Muʿtassim, Al-Wāthiq. Al-Mutawakkil, Al-Muntaṣir, Al-Mustaʿin, Al-Muʿtazz, Al-Muhtadi, Al-Muʿtamid, Al-Muʿtadid, Al-Muktafi, and Al-Muqtadir.

[644] Franz Rosenthal, *History of Al-Tabari Vol. 1.The General Introduction and from the Creation to the Flood*, (2015), p. 11.; Ulrika Mårtensson, *Tabari*, (2009), pp. 70-1.

[645] Rosenthal (2015), p. 15.

[646] Ibid. p. 17.; Ibn Humayd transmitted *ḥadīth* to ibn Ḥanbal. Al-Dawlābī was a student of Sufyān b. ʿUyayna. Ibid.

[647] Ibid. pp. 17-18.

[648] Ibid. p. 19.; he arrived in Baghdad in 241/855.

[649] Mårtensson (2009), pp. 11-12.; In 3.1.2 and 3.1.3, I mentioned the rivalry between two bureaucratic factions, Banū al-Furāt and Banū al-Jarrāḥ.

[650] Ibid. pp. 46-8.

[651] Kennedy (2004), pp. 189-90.

Al-Ṭabarī's concern with good governance is expressed in praise of the ʿAlīd al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī al-Uṭrūsh who seized power in Ṭabaristan 302/914-5. He says about him: 'People had never seen like of al-Uṭrūsh's justice, his exemplary way of life and the way he established the truth'.[652] Al-Ṭabarī's close relation with the famous *wazīrs* (chief ministers) ʿAlī b. ʿĪsā and al-Khāqān demonstrates his keen and active interest in good governance.[653] At the same time, due to the support he received from his father, he was able to remain financially independent from the government.[654]

Al-Ṭabarī remained in Baghdad for eight years before moving on to Syria to further his religious studies.[655] He also spent several years in Egypt, benefiting from a number outstanding scholars including the two famous Shāfiʿī scholars, al-Muzani (d.264/878), al-Rabiʿ b. Sulaymān (d.270/790-1) as well the Mālikī Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam family.[656] After several years in Egypt al-Ṭabarī returned to Baghdad. This period marked an end to his formal studies, and he was to devote the rest of his life to teaching and writing.[657] The two works for which he is best known for are: *taʾrīkh al-rusul wa ʾl-mulūk wa ʾl-khulafāʾ* and *tafsīr* (Quranic exegesis) - *jāmiʿ al-bayān ʿan taʾwīl al-Qurʾān*.

He was well versed in all four madhhabs as well as the Zāhirī madhhab.[658] Initially al-Ṭabarī was a Shāfiʿī but after his return from Egypt, he developed his own legal school, the Jarīrī madhhab.[659] Although he had many outstanding students, lack of patronage, fierce rivalry from the other four (and by now powerful) madhabs and as well as the lack of distinctiveness between his and the Shāfiʿī madhhab meant the Jarīri madhhab died out within decades of al-Ṭabarī's death. The last adherent of his madhhab was a judge called al-Nahrawānī who died in 390/1000.[660]

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[652] Franz Rosenthal, *History of Al-Tabari Vol. 38. The Return of the Caliphate to Baghdad: The Caliphates of Al-Muʿtadid, Al-Muktafi and Al-Muqtadir Ad 892-915/Ah 279-302*, (1985), p. 205.; Mårtensson translates the last part of the sentence as 'and the way he upheld rights'. Mårtensson (2009), p. 144.

[653] ʿAlī b. ʿĪsā was known as "the good vizier" due to his efforts to ensure good financial management. He took a personal interest in the welfare of al-Ṭabarī. Ibid. p.47; Zaman, MQ.,*"Wazīr",* EI².

[654] Ulrika Mårtensson, 'Discourse and Historical Analysis: The Case of Al-Ṭabarī's History of the Messengers and the Kings', *Journal of Islamic Studies,* (2005), 306.

[655] Rosenthal (2015), p. 21.

[656] Ibid. p. 26 & 76.

[657] Ibid. p. 31.

[658] Melchert (1997), p. 191.

[659] Rosenthal (2015), pp. 63-4.

[660] Melchert (1997), p. 191.; Bosworth, C.E., "al-Ṭabarī", EI².

His fame, his prodigious literary output and his bold use of *ijtihād* invariably led to envy and hostility from other scholars and in particular from the followers of the newly emerging Ḥanbalī madhab.[661] Al-Ṭabarī was accused by a certain Abū Bakr b. Abī Dāwūd (d. 316/929) of harbouring Shīʿī sympathies,[662] and also of distorting the attributes of God.[663] The hostility from the Ḥanbalī was further compounded when al-Ṭabarī controversially excluded Ahmad b. Ḥanbal from the ranks of jurists in his book *Iktilāf al-fuqahā*.[664] On one occasion it is reported that a group of Ḥanbalīs stoned his house on the pretext that al-Ṭabarī had misinterpreted a verse of the Quran.[665] However the extent of Ḥanbalī opposition to him is a matter of dispute among scholars.[666] Al-Ṭabarī's died aged 84. His funeral was a small affair; he was buried in his house with only a few people praying over him.[667]

Al-Ṭabarī lived during a period of huge political turmoil. As a young man he witnessed the assassination of the Caliph Mutawakkil (d.247/861) which led to the nine-year anarchy at Sāmarrā. During this period three Caliphs were assassinated and a second siege of Baghdad (252/866) took place. The conflict at the centre accelerated the process of fragmentation of the empire.[668] Some of the semi-autonomous states recognised the authority of the Caliph albeit nominally. Others such as the Fāṭimids, the Qarāmiṭa and the Zanj rebels rejected the ʿAbbāsids outright.[669]

4.3   Al-Balādhurī (d.278/892).

This biography is based on works of the following secondary sources: Lapidus, Becker (in EI²) and Langarudī.

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[661] Mårtensson (2009), p. 12.

[662] Bosworth refutes this stating: "he was a resolute defender of the pre-eminence of all four of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs, venerating Abū Bakr and ʿUmar and defending the rights of ʿAlī equally… there is no evidence whatever of any inclination by al-Ṭabarī towards Shīʿism beyond the admiration for ʿAlī as a person which was often found in the staunchest of Sunnīs." "al-Ṭabarī", EI².

[663] Abū Bakr b. Abī Dāwūd was scholar closely attached to the ʿAbbāsid court. Rosenthal (2015), p. 59.

[664] Ibid. pp. 70-71.

[665] Ibid. pp. 71-3.; The verse in question was Quran 17:79 which referred to the Prophet's 'praiseworthy position'. The Ḥanbalīs, contrary to al-Ṭabarī, interpreted this as meaning that the Prophet would be seated by God on His throne. Ibid.

[666] Ibid. pp. 77-8.; Mårtensson (2009), p. 12.

[667] Rosenthal (2015), pp. 77-8.

[668] Details of this are given in Chapter 3.1.2

[669] The Aghlabids and the Tāhirids recognised the authority of the Caliph.

Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā b. Jābir b. Dāwūd, better known as al-Balādhurī was born in approximately 194/810 during the civil war between Amīn and Ma'mūm which resulted in the latter's unexpected victory.[670] He spent most of his life in Baghdad and died in approximately 892H. Very little is known about his life and even his ethnicity is a matter of dispute amongst modern scholars. Hitti holds that he was of Persian descent, but this is disputed in the entry in Encyclopaedia of Islam.

Following in the footsteps of his grandfather, al-Balādhuri worked as a secretary in the 'Abbāsid bureaucracy. His employment lasted through the reigns of al-al-Muntaṣir, al-Musta'in and Mu'tazz and following the latter's death he retired from his post. Al-Balādhurī had a keen interest in history and made full use of his relationship with ruling family to access historical material. He studied under a number of prominent historians including al-Madā'inī, Ibn Sa'd, and Muṣ'ab al-Zubayrī (d.236/851). He also translated from Persian to Arabic. According to the Shī'ī scholar, al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā (d.436/1044) al-Balādhurī was a Sunnī. [671]

His designation; al-Balādhurī comes from his alleged use of the mind stimulant called marking-nut (*balādhur*). Although several scholars including Ibn al-Nadīm (d.385/995) and al-Ḍhahabī (d.673/1274) hold that he took *balādhur* and that it eventually led to his death, this position is refuted by Yaqūt al-Hamawi (d.625/1229) who argues that it was his grandfather was the consumer of this substance.

Al-Balādhurī is famous for two works of history, both extant. The first is *Futūḥ al-Buldān* (The conquest of the lands) which was translated in 1916 by P. K. Hitti and F. C. Murgotten, who entitled it *The Origins of the Islamic State*. In this work, he covers the battles of the Prophet, the *ridda* wars and the early Islamic conquests. Each region that was conquered (for example Syria. Iraq, Armenia, Egypt and North Africa, and Spain) are covered in separate chapters. Al-Mas'ūdī regards this book as one of the best sources of the Muslim conquests.[672] Al-Balādhurī's second important work, which is the subject of this thesis, is known as *Ansāb al-Ashrāf* (Genealogies of the Nobility).

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[670] Becker, "al-Balādhurī" in EI².

[671] Al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, a famous Shī'ī theologian and *adīb* known as 'Alam al-Hudā. His brother al-Sharīf al-Raḍī was the complier of Nahjul Balāgha. Brockelmann, C., "al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā", EI².

[672] Riḍā Riḍāzādih Langarudī, 'Al-Baladhuri ', in *Historians of the Islamic World: Selected Entries from Encyclopaedia of the World of Islam,* ed. by Adel Mohammad Jafar Elmi Gholamali Haddad, Hassan Taromi-Rad (2013), pp. 1-10 (p. 4).

As was the case with his contemporary al-Ṭabarī, al-Balādhurī lived during a time of great political uncertainty including civil wars, the rise of semi-autonomous dynasties, the political impotence of the Caliph, and the emergence of movements such as the Qarāmiṭa and Fāṭimids. Key events in his life time included the *Miḥna*, the assassination of Mutawakkil and the anarchy at Sāmarrā.

4.4 Al-Yaʿqūbī (d. after 295/908)[673]

This biography is based on works of the following secondary sources: Robinson, Khalidi, Duri, Millward, Daniel, Johnstone and Zaman (in EI²). Abū 'l-Abbās Aḥmad b. Abī Yaʿqūb b. Jaʿfar b. Wahb b. Wāḍiḥ better known as al-Yaʿqūbī, was born in Baghdad in the early third century and worked in Khurāsān for the Tāhirid bureaucracy. When the Tāhirids were overthrown in 259/872-3, he moved to Egypt where he later died.[674] He was a historian but had keen interest in geography. A number of his important works are extant. His work *Kitāb al-Buldān* (Book of the Provinces) for which he travelled widely, is a historical geography of Muslim and non-Muslim lands in which he examined the influence of climate on human culture.[675] During al-Yaʿqūbī's early life, the Caliph Mutawakkil ended the *Miḥna* but found himself at logger heads with the Turkish military. The latter eventually assassinated him leading to the anarchy at Sāmarrā, civil war and a second siege of Baghdad.

The work of interest to this study is his *Ta'rīkh*, a two-volume universal history of the world up to 259/872.[676] In the first volume which covers pre-Islamic history, he goes beyond a history of the Prophets, the Arabs and Persians and he includes the history and culture of the Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, Turks and Chinese.[677] The origin of various beliefs and customs are discussed.[678] This volume ends with a discussion of pre-Islamic Arabia. He attached great importance to chronology using astronomy to establish dates.[679] The second volume covers Islamic history beginning with the life of the Prophet followed by individual Caliphs up to the reign of the ʿAbbāsid caliph al-Muʿtamid (d. 279/892). The horoscope of each Caliph is included.[680] Considerable detail is given to the lives and deaths of the twelve Imams. According to Zaman, al-Yaʿqūbī's attitude to the Umayyads is hostile, although this is not the case with the ʿAbbāsids in whose service he was employed.[681]

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[673] Matthew Gordon and others, *The Works of Ibn Wāḍiḥ Al-Yaʿqūbī, Volume 1*, (2017), p. 12.

[674] Ibid.

[675] Ibid; Abd al-Aziz Duri, *The Rise of Historical Writing among the Arabs. Translated by Lawrence Conrad.* , (2014), p. 64.; Houari Touati, *Islam and Travel in the Middle Ages*, (2010), p. 129.

[676] Duri (2014).; Zaman considers the *Ta'rīkh* to be 'one of the earliest surviving examples of "universal" history in Islam'. Zaman, MQ., "al-Yaʿḳūbī", EI².

[677] Ibid. p. 65.

[678] Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period*, (1994), p. 118.

[679] Ibid. p. 114.

[680] Chase F Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, (2003), p. 136.

[681] "al-Yaʿḳūbī", EI².; Cooperson describes him as being "(apparently) pro-ʿAbbāsid". Michael Cooperson, *Classical Arabic Biography: The Heirs of the Prophets in the Age of Al-Ma'mun*, (2000), p. 127.

4.5 Ibn Aʿtham al-Kūfī (d. approx. 330/941)

This biography is based on works of the following secondary sources: Lindstedt, Conrad and Shaban (EI²).

Abū Muḥammad Aḥmad Ibn Aʿtham al-Kūfī al-Kindī is better known as Ibn Aʿtham. Other than the fact that his *nisba* indicates that he may have been from Kūfa and that he spent a lot of time in Persia, very little is known about him.[682] He wrote three works, of which one is extant; *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*. This book is an important source of early Islamic history, particularly the period from the time of ʿUthmān up to Hārūn al-Rashīd.[683]

Lindstedt and Conrad have written extensively in their attempt to reconstruct his biography. In addition, Shaban and Daniel wrote entries in the Encyclopaedia of Islam and Encyclopaedia Iranica online respectively. There is disagreement amongst modern scholars on two related issues:

- Ibn Aʿtham's death date.
- The date in which *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* was authored.

Shaban believes that Ibn Aʿtham died in the early third/ninth century. Lindstedt strongly refutes this, arguing that he died in the first half of the fourth/tenth century.[684] However Lindstedt does not give credence to an exact death date of 314/926-7 which was first suggested by Christian Fraehn in 1845, and adopted by many scholars including Brockelmann and Sezgin.[685] According to Lindstedt, the death date of 314 was an educated guess on the part of Fraehn.[686]

Lindstedt proffers some cogent arguments that Ibn A'tham died in the first half of the fourth/tenth century. First, he quotes the historian Yāqūt al-Rūmī al-Ḥamawī who was one of earliest sources for the biography of Ibn A'tham, as stating that he had seen two of Ibn A'tham's works; *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* and the non-extant *Kitāb Ta'rīkh*. The latter covered the reigns of al-Ma'mūn to al-Muqtadir. Given that al-Muqtadir died in 320, then Ibn A'tham must have

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[682] Ilkka Lindstedt, 'Sources for the Biography of the Historian Ibn Aʿtham Al-Kūfī', in *Contacts and Interaction. Proceedings of the 27th Congress of the Union Europeenne Des Arabisants Et Islamisants, Helsinki 2014,* ed. by Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila, et al. (2017), pp. 299-309 (p. 308).
[683] Shaban, M.A., "Ibn Aʿtham al-Kūfī", EI².
[684] Ilkka Lindstedt, 'Al-Madāʾinī's Kitāb Al-Dawla and the Death of Ibrāhīm Al-Imām', in *Case Studies in Transmission,* ed. by Ilkka Lindstedt, et al. (2014), pp. 103-30 pp. 118-22).
[685] Lindstedt, p. 299.
[686] Lindstedt (2014), p. 121.

lived at least up to this point which is the early fourth century.[687] Second, Ibn A'tham's name appears in an *isnād* of al-Sahmī's (d. 427/1035) book called *Ta'rīkh Jurjan* in which Ibn A'tham narrated from Ibn Adī who died in 365/976.[688] Again this late date makes it implausible that Ibn A'tham died in the early third/ninth century.

Conrad and Shaban argue that *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* was composed in 204/819.[689] This is based upon the fact that some of the Persian manuscripts state that the original text was written in 204.[690] If this is correct, then *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* is one of the earliest extant works on early Islamic history preceding al-Yaʿqūbī, al-Balādhurī and al-Ṭabarī. Lindstedt rejects the veracity of the date given for the composition of his work as being 204 arguing that this is likely to be a scribal error.[691] In addition, this date (204) only appears in some of the Persian translation manuscripts.[692] If Lindstedt is correct in his estimation of his death date, then the *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* could not have been written in 204/819.

According to Yāqūt, Ibn A'tham was Shīʿī and was considered a weak narrator by Sunni *ḥadīth* scholars.[693] The famous Shīʿī scholar al-Majlisī (d. 1110/1698) considers *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* to be a trustworthy source.[694] Lindstedt concludes that he "is almost certainly Shīʿite."[695] Conrad also describes him as an " ʿAlid legitimist, Shīʿī and virulently anti-Umayyad".[696] Despite his purported Shīʿī leanings, the *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* has glowing descriptions of Abū Bakr and ʿUmar. This apparent contradiction is explained by the nature of many early Islamic historical works which were compilations of a variety of reports from various authors.[697] Unlike contemporary works, some medieval Muslim historical works contained a variety of contradictory material, without a direct authorial voice to direct the reader to a particular conclusion. So in *Kitāb al-Futūḥ,* we read that rejection of Abū Bakr's caliphate is tantamount *kufr* (disbelief in Islam)

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[687] Ibid. p. 120.
[688] Ibn Adī was the author of the famous *al-Kāmil fī Ḍuʿafāʾ al-Rijāl*. Ibid.; ibid.
[689] Shaban, M.A.; Lawrence Conrad, 'Ibn Aʿtham and His History', *Al-ʿUṣūr al-Wusṭā,* 23 (2015), 204.
[690] Lindstedt (2014), p. 123.
[691] Ibid.
[692] Ibid.
[693] Lindstedt, p. 304. Conrad also affirms his Shīʿī affiliations. Conrad (2015), p. 94.
[694] Lindstedt, p. 307.
[695] Ibid. p. 308.
[696] Conrad (2015), p. 91.
[697] Ibid. p. 97.

whilst at the same time, 'Alī was unjustly deprived of his divine right to succeed the Prophet.[698] This study will examine his views on succession through a close reading of his Saqīfa text.

I will now mention some key political events that occurred during his lifetime. Using Christian Fraehn death date of 314/926-7 and assuming that he lived for approximately 64 years, gives us a birth date of 250/864. Based on this assumption, Ibn A'tham was born during the anarchy of Sāmarrā and the Zanj and Qarāmiṭa revolts. Ibn A'tham lived through most of the disastrous reign of the young al-Muqtadir (r. 295-320/908-932) in which there were fifteen changes of vizier between the two opposing factions of Banū al-Furāt and Banū al-Jarrāḥ. Disputes within the bureaucracy spilled over into the military and within the 'Abbāsid family itself. Less than two decades after the death of Ibn A'tham, the 'Abbāsid state was almost bankrupt and had little or no authority, thus paving the way for the Buyids to take over in 333/945.

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[698] Ibid. pp. 96-7.

4.6 Structure and Style of the four books

4.6.1 Introduction

The first part of this chapter covered the biographies of the four authors. I will now describe the salient features of the four Saqīfa texts including genre, format, and structure of each text.

4.6.2 Al-Ṭabarī's *Ta'rīkh*

The *Ta'rīkh* of al-Ṭabarī is written in the format of a book of *ḥadīth*, i.e. each individual report is preceded by an *isnād*.[699] Al-Ṭabarī introduces each year with the main heading, "then entered the year *x*, mentioning the events that occurred in it."[700] Within each year, there are a number of sub-headings, each pertaining to a particular subject or event. Under each sub heading he brings a number of reports of varying length relating to this subject/event.[701] The length of the report in the section under consideration vary from one to 101 lines.

Only rarely does al-Ṭabarī explicitly comment, when he does it is usually brief, and it takes the form of an introduction to the sub-heading. Occasionally his brief remarks are contained within the sub-heading, for example regarding a scholarly difference of opinion[702] or to mention the chronology of two significant events.[703] The reports which cover a particular topic or event are placed together and in many cases either contradict each other or are a repetition.[704] There is no obvious attempt by al-Ṭabarī to reconcile the contradictions, nor is there any indication as to the correct view. Al-Ṭabarī does not comment on the authenticity of the reports.[705]

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[699] Khalidi (1994), p. 73.; this format applies to the *sīra*, Rāshidūn Caliphate, Umayyads, and the early 'Abbāsids.

[700] However, it is translated as "The Events of the Year *x*" where *x* represents the hijra year. *Akhbār* is plural of *Khabar*. *Khabar* "denotes a piece of information of a historical, biographical or even anecdotal nature". It can vary from a few lines to several pages. Wensinck, A.J., "*Khabar*", EI².

[701] Ibid

[702] E.g. al-Ṭabarī states that there is a difference of opinion regarding the Prophet's age when he died.

[703] E.g. al-Ṭabarī states that the burial of the Prophet was after the *bay'a* to Abū Bakr.

[704] Repetition of, and contradiction between narrations is common feature of compilations such as al-Ṭabarī's *Ta'rīkh* as pointed out by Humphreys. R Stephen Humphreys, *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry*, (1991), p. 73.

[705] Khalidi (1994), p. 80.; Al-'Umari argues that by giving the *isnād*, al-Ṭabarī is leaving the issue of authentication to future scholars. Akram Diya al-'Umari, *Madinan Society at the Time of the Prophet*, (1991), p. 35.; Khalidi, on the other hand, 'presumes' that al-Ṭabarī expended great effort in choosing those reports that were considered by him to be reliable. Khalidi (1994). In a similar vein Duri argues that al-Ṭabarī's only included reports that came from well-known and trustworthy historians. Duri (2014), p. 70.

Due to the deliberate lack of direct authorial voice, there is no continuous narrative in the text itself, although the sub headings do provide a semblance of a narrative.[706] The sub headings follow a logical sequence, although the same cannot be said about the *reports* within each sub-heading. The subheadings are on the whole, chronologically arranged. The Prophet's final illness is followed by his death and then the events at Saqīfa. After these three sub-headings, al-Ṭabarī digresses into a discussion about the various opinions regarding the Prophet's age, day and the month when he died. The final sub-heading (in this study) returns to the events of Saqīfa. The text under consideration also contains two separate couplets of poetry in which Abū Sufyān mocks ʿAlī for his weakness following the events of Saqīfa.[707] This study will examine the text from the end of year ten to the beginning of year eleven.

4.6.2.1 Publication history

The standard edition of the *Taʾrīkh* is the Leiden edition. This was prepared using a number of Arabic manuscripts by a team headed by M.J. de Goeje (d.1909).[708] It was printed by Brill between the years 1879 and 1901.[709]

The English translation of the *Taʾrīkh* is based on the Leiden edition and was initiated by Ehsan Yarshater in 1971.[710] Completed in 1999 it runs into 38 volumes. As well as the translation, there are an additional two volumes in English; the first of these is an extract from al-Ṭabarī's supplement covering a list of his references from the Companions and Successors which was published in 1998. The second is an index to the entire work and was published in 2007.[711] Each volume covers approximately 200 pages of the Arabic text. The first five volumes cover pre-Islamic history from the Creation to the period just before the Prophet's birth and are arranged chronologically. The remaining thirty-three volumes, starting with the *hijra* are arranged annalistically.[712] Four volumes (6-9) cover the history of Mecca and life of the Prophet, in which al-Ṭabarī utilises the works of Ibn Ishāq, al-Wāqidī (d.207/822) and Hishām

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[706] Unlike the shorter *akhbār* which are akin to anecdotes, the lengthier *akhbār* resemble a story. But regarding the text as a whole, Humphreys argues there is 'no effort to construct a connected narrative of events'. Humphreys (1991), p. 70.

[707] Ismail K Poonawala, *History of Al-Tabari Vol. 9. The Last Years of the Prophet*, (1990), p. 199.

[708] Rosenthal (2015), p. 142.; Turkish and Persian manuscripts were not utilised.

[709] Ibid.

[710] Ibid. p. 145.

[711] Mårtensson (2009), p. 161.; the translation is based upon 15 volume, Arabic Leiden text which was edited by M.J De Goeje et.al. Rosenthal (2015), p. x.

[712] Rosenthal states that al-Ṭabarī was preceded by a number of historians including Khalīfa Khayyāt in his choice of presenting history annalistically. Franz Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, (1968), pp. 71-2.

b. al-Kalbī (d.204/819).[713] Eight volumes (10-17) cover the period of the Rāshidūn Caliphs in which he utilises Sayf b. 'Umar (d.170-93/786-809), Ibn Ishāq, al-Wāqidī, Ibn al-Kalbi, al-Madā'ini and Abū Mikhnaf (d. 157/774). Eight volumes (18-26) cover the Umayyad period and twelve volumes (27-38) cover the 'Abbāsid period up to 302/914-915.

For the purpose of this study, two of the translated volumes are relevant; volumes nine and ten. Volume nine covers the last two and a half years of the Prophet's life starting with the events of the latter part of year eight of the *hijra*, concluding in year eleven with the death and burial of the Prophet and the events of Saqīfa.[714] Volume ten continues with the events of Saqīfa followed by the *ridda* wars.[715]

4.6.3   A0l-Balādhurī's Ansāb al-Ashrāf

Al-Balādhurī does not give this book a formal title, hence it is known by several different names. Ibn al- 'Adīm refers to it as *Jumal Ansāb al-Ashrāf wa Akhbāruhum*, Yaqūt al-Hamawi refers to it as *Jumal Nasab al-Ashrāf* as well as *al-Ta'rīkh*, in the *Fihrist* it is called *Akhbār wa 'l Ansāb,* and Masʿūdī refers to it *as al-Nasab*.[716] The Andalusian historian, Ibn Abbār (d.658/1059) was the first to use the title *Ansāb al-Ashrāf* and this title was adopted by Goitein who published the first volume of Ansāb in 1936.[717] The entire work consists of 1.25 million words compared to the *Ta'rīkh* of al-Ṭabarī which is 1.5 million words.[718]

The term *Ashrāf* (Nobility) refers to important aristocratic Arab families.[719] *Ansāb* refers to genealogies. Hence, the work is intended to be a genealogy of important Arab families. More than a third of the entire work covers Banū Umayya due to their central role in early Islamic history.[720] Despite his close association with the 'Abbāsid court, his portrayal of the Umayyads

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[713] Khalidi (1994), pp. 76-7.

[714] Poonawala (1990).

[715] Fred Donner, *History of Al-Tabari Vol. 10. The Conquest of Arabia*, (1993).

[716] Langarudī, p. 6.

[717] Ibid. pp. 6-7.; Hugh Kennedy and others, 'Review of Ansab Al-Ashraf. Vol. Vi B. Ahmad B. Yahya B. Jabir Al-Baladhuri. Edited and Annotated by Khalil Athamina. (Max Schloessinger Memorial Series. Texts, 7) Pp. Xviii, 306. Jerusalem, Institute of Asian and African Studies, the Hebrew University,1993', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society,* 5 (1995), 410.

[718] Kennedy and others (1995), p. 410.

[719] George Sarton, 'Review of the Ansāb Al-Ashrāf of Al-Balādhurī. S. D. F. Goitein', *Isis,* 26 (1937), 458.

[720] M. Zwettler, 'Review of the Ansāb Al-Ashrāf of Al-Balādhurī, Vol. Iv A. Max Schloessinger and M. J. Kister', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies,* 33 (1974), 160.

is often sympathetic.[721] Goitein argues that he was able to do this as the 'Abbāsids felt that they could learn much from Umayyad statecraft.[722]

Khalidi describes the *Ansāb* as "more like a comprehensive history loosely arranged around prominent families than a work of strict genealogy."[723] The *Ansāb* begins with a biography of the Prophet followed by a genealogy of his family, followed by Banū 'Abbās, Banū Umayya and then smaller Qurayshi and non-Qurayshi tribes. The biographies of the Caliphs are detailed. However, within these biographies, activities of other important men are detailed.[724] In a sense, such biographies are more akin to a history of important events during the reign of each Caliph as opposed to a biography of the Caliph. Only the first two 'Abbāsid caliphs are dealt with in any detail.[725] Al-Balādhurī died before completing his *Ansāb*.[726] Other notable aspects of the *Ansāb* are that:

- it contains extensive information on the Khawārij[727]
- it is a unique source of ancient Arab poetry[728]
- it is written in the format of a *ḥadīth* book, often containing several versions of the same text.[729]

4.6.3.1   Sections of Ansāb relevant to this study

The portion of the text relevant to the study is fifty-two pages long and consists of the following four chapters entitled as follows[730]:

1. The speech of the Messenger of Allah regarding Abū Bakr.
2. The matter of the Messenger of Allah during his death illness.
3. The washing of the Messenger of Allah, his shrouding and his burial.
4. The Affair of Saqīfa.

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[721] Sarton (1937), p. 458.

[722] Al-Balādhurī Aḥmad Ibn Yaḥyā, 'The Ansāb Al-Ashrāf of Al-Balādhurī. Volume V'*,* ed. by S.D.F Goitein (1936), (p. 16).

[723] Khalidi (1994), p. 58.

[724] Langarudī, p. 7.;Yaḥyā, p. 14.

[725] Yaḥyā, p. 12.

[726] Ibid.

[727] Amanullah Khan, *A Critical Study of Al-Baladhurī as a Historian*, (1986), p. 210.

[728] Yaḥyā, p. 20.

[729] Khan (1986), p. 211.

[730] pp. 540-591 of volume one, edited by M. Hamidullah.

4.6.3.2 Publication history

The publication history of *Ansāb* is complicated, as various sections of it have been published by different teams of scholars (both Israeli and Arab) and using different manuscripts. Full manuscripts of the text are in Istanbul and Rabat.[731]

Volume I was edited by M. Hamidullah in 1959, comprising of 594 pages, corresponding to pp. 1-285 of the Istanbul Manuscript.[732] This volume also contains a table of contents of the entire work.[733] This covers a brief history of the Prophets, the life of the Prophet Muḥammad, the virtues of Abū Bakr, the death, washing and burial of the Prophet.[734] I will be utilising part of this volume.

Pages 437-525 were edited by Maḥmūdi in 1974 and 1977 entitled, *The 'Alīd pretenders* (no volume number).[735]

Volume III pp. 525-689 was edited by Dūrī in 1978 entitled, *The 'Abbāsids.*[736]

Vol. IVi, pp. 689-993 was edited by Ihsan 'Abbās entitled, *The Umayyads.*[737]

Vol. IVA, pp. 689-817 was edited by Max Schloessinger in 1971 and then M. J. Kister, entitled, *The Umayyads to the death Mu'āwiya.*[738]

Vol. IVB, pp. 817-918 was edited by Schloessinger in 1938 entitled, *The Umayyads-Yazīd b. Mu'āwiya.*[739]

Vol. V, pp. 918-1137 was edited by Goitein in 1936 entitled, *'Uthmān and the third fitna.*[740]

Vol. VIB, pp. 233-309: was edited by 'Athamina in 1993 entitled, *Hishām b. 'Abd al-Malik.*[741]

The entire work was edited and published by Suhayl Zakkār and Riȳaḍ Ziriklī in 1996 in thirteen volumes.[742]

4.6.4 Ya'qūbī's *Ta'rīkh*

Unlike al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī, al-Ya'qūbī dispenses with the *isnād* and uses a continuous narrative. Al-Ya'qūbī uses his own discretion when selecting material and gives preference to

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[731] Kennedy and others (1995), p. 410.
[732] Khan (1986), p. 152.
[733] Kennedy and others (1995), p. 410.
[734] Khan (1986), pp. 156-7.
[735] Kennedy and others (1995).
[736] Ibid.
[737] Ibid. p. 411.
[738] Ibid. p. 412.
[739] Ibid.; Langarudī, p. 9.
[740] Kennedy and others (1995).
[741] Ibid.
[742] Langarudī, p. 9.

accounts that are widely accepted.[743] In his introduction to volume two, al-Ya'qūbī gives some of his sources, mentioning thirteen individuals whom he related from, many of them prominent historians.[744] But he also states there are other (unnamed sources) whom he took from.

4.6.4.1   Publication history

In his 1962 PhD dissertation, William Millward translated a number of passages of the *Ta'rīkh* into English using Houtsma's two volume 1883 Leiden edition.[745] Houtsma based his edition on a Cambridge manuscript dated 1096/1685.[746]

A second manuscript, which was not known to Houtsma, can be found in the John Rylands library and is known as the Manchester manuscript.[747] The manuscript is undated but Mingana in his catalogue of Arabic manuscripts, dates it to 1350.[748] This manuscript is significantly earlier than the Cambridge manuscript. No other manuscripts of the *Ta'rīkh* are known to exist.[749]

Interestingly there are some significant differences between the Manchester and the Cambridge manuscript. In the Manchester manuscript, under the heading of the Saqīfa, the phrase *radiya Allah 'anhu* is used after Abū Bakr's name.[750] In other sections similar phrases are used after the names of 'Umar, 'Uthmān and 'Āisha.[751] How does one reconcile this with al-Ya'qūbī's alleged Shī'īsm? Daniels argues that a closer examination of the history of the two manuscripts and their manipulation by later scribes reveals that the 'Shī'ī nature' of the *Ta'rīkh* is due later additions and insertions, particularly rubrics.[752] Furthermore he argues that an

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[743] Duri (2014), p. 65.; al-Ya'qūbī in his *Ta'rīkh* refers to "the reports and accounts enjoying the greatest consensus of approval". Ibid.

[744] Muhidin Mulalic, *A Survey of Early Muslim Historiography*, (2012), p. 133.

[745] William Millward, 'A Study of Al-Ya'qubi with Special Reference to His Alleged Shi'a Bias', (Ph.D., Princeton University, 1962).; Elton L Daniel, 'Ya'qubī and Shi'ism Reconsidered', in *'Abbasid Studies: Occasional Papers of the School of 'Abbasid Studies. ,* ed. by James Edward Montgomery (2004), pp. 209-32 (p. 224).
Three additional versions of the *Ta'rīkh* have been published; Najaf, 1358/1939; Beirut, 1375/1955-6; and Beirut, 1379/1960. William Millward and others, 'The Adaptation of Men to Their Time: An Historical Essay by Al-Ya'qubi', *JOAS,* 84 (1964), 329 fn3.

[746] Daniel, pp. 224-5.

[747] Ibid. p. 226.

[748] T.M Johnstone, 'An Early Manuscript of Ya'kubi's Ta'rikh', *Journal of Semitic Studies,* 2 (1957), 189.

[749] Ibid. p. 190.

[750] Daniel.

[751] Ibid.

[752] e.g. 'the *ayyam* (days) of Abū Bakr' and not 'the caliphate of Abū Bakr'.

examination of the sources used for the *Ta'rīkh* reveals that very few sources in fact are Shī'ī.[753] In addition, there is nothing from the biography of al-Ya'qūbī that indicates his Shī'īsm. Hence, Daniels concludes that there is no evidence of al-Ya'qūbī's Shī'īsm.[754] Through a close reading of his Saqīfa text, I will examine the issue of al-Ya'qūbī's alleged Shī'īsm.

The entire works of al-Ya'qūbī, including his *Ta'rīkh*, were published in a three-volume set by Brill in 2017. Volume 1 covers an introduction to the translation project, a biographical sketch, a discussion of the various manuscripts, a translation of two books: *The Book of the Adaptation of Men to Their Time and Their Dominant Characteristics in Every Age*, and the *Kitāb al-Buldān*. This volume ends with a bibliography. Volume 2 covers the *Ta'rīkh* from Adam to pre-Islamic Arabia. Volume 3 completes the *Ta'rīkh* covering the period from the rise of Islam to the reign of al-Mu'tamid. For this purpose of this research I use the translation of two chapters of the *Ta'rīkh,* entitled *Al-Wafāt* (death-i.e. of the Prophet) and *Khabr Saqīfa Bani Sā'ida wa bay'a Abī Bakr* (Report of the (events at) the Saqīfa of Banū Sā'ida and the Oath of Allegiance to Abū Bakr).[755] Where relevant, I will utilise text outside these two chapters.

4.6.5   Ibn A'tham's Kitāb al-Futūḥ

Ibn A'tham uses a continuous narrative and hence his format is similar to al-Ya'qūbī's *Ta'rīkh*. Important early events such the assassination of 'Uthmān, Ṣiffīn and Karbala are prefixed with a collective *isnād*.[756] However shorter reports are not prefixed with an *isnād*.[757] However after the Karbala incident, there is a distinct change in the way that Ibn A'tham cites authorities; some of the shorter reports have *isnād*s whereas the collective *isnād* for longer narratives disappears completely.[758]

Shaban argues that Ibn A'tham was a contemporary of al-Madā'inī (d. 235/850), and took material from the latter directly, but this is rejected by Lindstedt.[759] The latter argues that based upon Ibn A'tham's death date, it is impossible that he would have met al-Madā'inī.

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[753] Daniel, p. 214.

[754] Ibid. p. 227.

[755] Matthew Gordon and others, *The History (Taʾrīkh). The Rise of Islam to the Reign of Al-Muʿtamid*, (2018).

[756] Conrad (2015), p. 99.

[757] Ibid. p. 113.

[758] Ibid.

[759] Shaban, M.A.; Lindstedt (2014), p. 123.

4.6.5.1 Publication History

Part of the Kitāb al-Futūḥ was translated into Persian by Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Mustawfī al-Harawī in 569/1199. This translation, which covers events up to the death of Ḥusayn was published in Bombay in 1300/1882.[760] The Hyderabad edition of *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* is 2,700 pages and was published in 1968-1975.[761] It is based upon five surviving manuscripts and is regarded as the standard edition.[762] However as Conrad points out, the manuscripts that form the basis of this edition are incomplete. At the time of writing, Monika Schönléber is preparing a critical edition of the first part of *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* utilising additional manuscripts that were not available at the time of the publication of the Hyderabad edition.[763] One of the manuscripts which was not utilised in the Hyderabad edition is what is known as the 'Bankipore text' or 'MS Patna'. This manuscript was initially attributed to al-Wāqidī's lost *Kitāb al-ridda wa-nabdha min futūḥ al-ʿIrāq* and a critical edition of this was published by Hamidullah in 1989. It is now generally accepted amongst scholars that the MS Patna due to its congruence with other manuscripts of Kitāb al-Futūḥ can be ascribed to Ibn Aʿtham.[764] The MS Patna includes an 'Alid version' of the Saqīfa incident and hence its incorporation into a new standard edition of *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* will be interesting.[765] The Hyderabad edition of *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* covers period from the election of Abū Bakr up to Hārūn al-Rashīd. The works consists of a number of smaller single themed works, assembled chronologically which Ibn Aʿtham often interpolates with additional material.[766]

For the purpose of this study, I have translated the MS Patna text as it covers the Saqīfa incident in detail. In the standard Hyderabad edition, the Saqīfa section abruptly stops at the point where Abū Bakr enters the discussion at Saqīfa. I have also translated the relevant pages from al-Balādhurī's *Ansāb.*

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[760] Shaban, M.A

[761] Conrad (2015), p. 88.; Monika Schönleber, 'Notes on the Textual Tradition of Ibn Aʿtham's Kitāb Al-Futūḥ', in *Contacts and Interaction: Proceedings of the 27th Congress of the Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants, 2014,* ed. by Ilkka Lindstedt (2017), pp. 427–38.

[762] Lindstedt, p. 300.

[763] Conrad (2015), p. 87.

[764] Schönleber.

[765] Conrad (2015), p. 89 fn3.

[766] Ibid.

4.7 Conclusion

In the first part of this chapter I have presented brief biographies of the four authors. Taken together this, and the previous chapter, places the four texts within their political and religious context. In the second part of this chapter I have described the salient features of the four Saqīfa texts including genre, format, structure and publication history.

Having described the context in which the four texts were constructed, the next chapter will examine, through a close reading of the text, al-Ṭabarī's view on Abū Bakr's succession to the Prophet.

5 Introduction to chapters six to nine

Having described the religious and political milieu in which the four authors lived and wrote, I now turn to the four texts in question. In the following four chapters I examine, through a close reading of key extracts from their texts, the authors' views regarding ʿAlī's right to succeed the Prophet Muḥammad. To recap, the four texts in question are the *Taʾrīkh* of al-Ṭabarī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf* of al-Balādhurī, *Taʾrīkh* of al-Yaʿqūbī, and *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* of Ibn Aʿtham.

Each chapter is devoted to one of the four texts. In chapters six and seven I show how al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī, who wrote using a *ḥadīth* format, used specific strategies of compilation to support the succession of Abū Bakr. Al-Yaʿqūbī and Ibn Aʿtham, discussed in chapters eight and nine respectively, wrote using continuous prose and relied mainly on their selection of sources to present a distinctively proto-Shīʿī view of succession.

I first examine the sources that the four authors used for their Saqīfa narratives and identify their alignment with either nascent proto-Shīʿī or proto-Sunnī theological-historical positions. Both al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī give *isnād*s for all their reports, and thus the task of identifying their main sources is relatively simple. Al-Yaʿqūbī mentions in his introduction some of the sources that he used for his *Taʾrīkh* as a whole, while Ibn Aʿtham introduces his Saqīfa narrative with a collective *isnād*. In both cases, I identify sources that the authors chose not to name, by comparing their narrative with other texts.

Having examined the authors' sources, I summarise and analyse their narrative. Al-Ṭabarī offers a number of mutually contradictory reports, some of which support the proto-Sunnī narrative on Saqīfa, and others which support the proto-Shīʿī narrative. I explain how he uses his skills as a traditionist to resolve this dichotomy. Al-Balādhurī, on the other hand, prefers to select those reports that support the proto-Sunnī narrative. Both al-Yaʿqūbī's and Ibn Aʿtham's narratives support the succession of ʿAlī, the former based upon his ontological status as a divinely appointed Imām, the latter based upon ʿAlī's kinship with the Prophet as well as his many personal virtues.

I conclude each chapter with an explanatory summary of the methods each author employed to support a particular religio-political view on the issue of the Prophet's succession.

6 An Analysis of the *Ta'rīkh* of al-Ṭabarī

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I discussed the biographies of the four authors and the salient features of the four texts in question. The chapter placed the four texts in historical context and elaborated the genre, structure and publication history of each text.

In this chapter, I demonstrate that al-Ṭabarī in his Saqīfa narrative uses a number of strategies of compilation to highlight the excellence and precedence of Abū Bakr and by this, favour his succession to Prophet Muḥammad. These strategies of compilation include his selection of sources, omission of other sources, foreshadowing, repetition and use of brief commentary. Structurally this chapter consists of an introduction, organisation of source material, a timeline of events leading up the succession of Abū Bakr, a discussion of the main sources, followed by six sections each relating to a chapter from the *Ta'rīkh*, and then a conclusion. In each section, I draw to attention to the strategies of compilation that al-Ṭabarī used to highlight the excellence and precedence of Abū Bakr. The word 'text' refers to al-Ṭabarī's six chapters.

6.1.1 The paradigm of excellent leadership

Afsaruddin argues that the early debates around succession to the Prophet and political legitimacy revolved around two concepts; *faḍl* and *sābiqa*.[767] Proto-Sunnī and proto-Shī'ī groups would, in her view, argue that either Abū Bakr or 'Alī respectively were best suited to succeed the Prophet by emphasising virtues constitutive of moral excellence. These virtues included generosity[768], abstemiousness[769], veracity[770], valour[771], knowledge[772], and closeness to the Prophet[773]. Precedence in conversion and service to Islam was the second important

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[767] Afsaruddin (2002), p. 6. 'early' refers to the first two centuries of Islam.; *Faḍl* refers to moral excellence. Afsaruddin (2008), p. 239.; *Sābiqa* refers to precedence in submission and service to Islam, especially through early conversion. Afsaruddin (2002), p. 36.

[768] Afsaruddin (2002), pp. 81-4.

[769] Ibid. pp. 84-7.

[770] Ibid. pp. 87-94.

[771] Ibid. pp. 94-8.

[772] Ibid. pp. 113-45.

[773] Ibid. pp. 147-96. The proto-Shī'ī groups would emphasise 'Alī's kinship with the Prophet whereas the proto-Sunnī groups would emphasise Abū Bakr' closeness to the Prophet. Ibid.

concept.[774] Together, the two concepts of moral excellence and precedence formed a 'paradigm of the most excellent leadership'.[775] The debate around legitimate leadership occurred within this paradigm. It was only around the ninth century that the proto-Shīʿī concept of *naṣṣ* was advanced to lay claim to ʿAlī's exclusive right to the caliphate.[776]

There are however some issues with Afsaruddin's theory. As Robinson points out, by placing exclusive emphasis of *faḍl* and *sābiqa*, Afsaruddin ignores the 'charismatic holiness' of the ʿAlids.[777] Although much of the early debate around political and religious legitimacy was conducted within the paradigm of most excellent leadership, amongst the various strands of first century proto-Shīʿī groups, the concept of *naṣṣ* was also used in favour of ʿAlī's right to succeed the Prophet. This concept was used alongside excellence and precedence much earlier than stated by Afsaruddin. Despite her over-emphasis on excellence and precedence, Afsaruddin's theory is useful model for understanding how my four medieval historians used their narrative to argue in favour of either Abū Bakr or ʿʿAlī.

6.1.2 Al-Ṭabarī's authorship

A first reading of the Saqīfa narrative seems to show that al-Ṭabarī's narrative was a neutral repository consisting of a non-partisan compilation of disparate accounts, with no predilection towards a particular view. This view rests upon the following observations of his chronicle:

- his narrative contains multiple contradictory accounts, with no attempt to harmonise between them.
- he includes reports that contradicts the proto-Sunnī position regarding the integrity of the Companions.[778]
- his lack of authorial voice.
- the non-polemical nature of his work suggests that he is merely presenting the 'facts' and leaving it to the reader to make up their mind.

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[774] i.e. who converted first; Abū Bakr or ʿAlī. The proto-Sunnī groups would place greater emphasis on the impact of Abū Bakr's conversion who as an adult was able to assist the Prophet in a way that ʿAlī, a child, was not. Ibid. pp. 53-4.

[775] Ibid. p. 36.

[776] Afsaruddin (1999).

[777] Chase F Robinson, 'The Ideological Uses of Early Islam', *Past & Present,* (2009), 220.

[778] i.e. the proto-Sunnī position view that the Companions were the epitomy of virtue and selflessness, and that mutual love and harmony existed between them.

Recent research however has challenged the belief that early medieval historians were mere compliers of facts and not authors.[779] Firstly the mere process of selecting some sources (and by default excluding others) indicates a level of authorship. Secondly as Waldman points out, the structure of the work, for example arrangement of text, repetition, juxtaposition, omission and emphasis are influenced by the author's values and hence constitute a form of subtle authorship.[780] A close reading of the *Ta'rīkh* highlights the subtle authorship that Waldman alludes to.

6.1.3   Al-Ṭabarī's use of the *isnād*

Al-Ṭabarī's ubiquitous use of the *isnād* in his *Ta'rīkh* does not imply that each report had been fully scrutinised to ensure its authenticity, as it was not uncommon for traditionists to record well-known weak reports in their collections.[781] Al-Ṭabarī often included multiple contradictory versions of a single event, and hence he could not have considered them all to be authentic. Given that these versions were irreconcilable, al-Ṭabarī included them to firstly demonstrate the range of opinions held by his predecessors, and secondly to select one of the versions (and by default dismiss the others).

How did al-Ṭabarī select the 'correct' report from a number of contradictory reports? To answer this question, I refer to his *Commentary*.[782] Khalidi explains that where a historical event was in dispute al-Ṭabarī would give precedence to the *ḥadīth* with the most trustworthy *isnād*.[783] Hence, the verification of a report took place within the paradigm of the science of *ḥadīth*. However I disagree with Khalidi's contention that al-Ṭabarī was inimical to the idea of presenting a single interpretation in his *Ta'rīkh* as he did in his *Commentary*, on the basis that doing so would have led to 'the adoption of an extreme sectarian position, a highly unlikely position for him to adopt given his general anti-sectarianism.'[784] It is clear that in a number of works, al-Ṭabarī took a very uncompromising stance against his theological opponents, for

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[779] By 'recent' I mean in the past thirty years; See Donner Steven Judd, 'Ibn 'Asākir's Sources for the Late Umayyad Period', in *Ibn 'Asākir and Early Islamic History,* ed. by James E Lindsay (2001), (p. 46).; Marilyn Robinson Waldman, *Toward a Theory of Historical Narrative: A Case Study in Perso-Islamicate Historiography*, (1980), p. 16.

[780] Waldman (1980), p. 2.

[781] Although the *ḥadīth* might have been weak in and of itself, other reports (which the traditionist may have been unaware of at the time) could be used to strengthen it and hence the traditionist would record it. Also the some traditionists would record a well-known but weak report in order to point out its weakness (by attaching the *isnād*).

[782] i.e. his commentary of the Quran known as *Jāmiʿ al-bayān ʿan taʾwīl āy al-Quran.*

[783] Khalidi (1994), p. 74.

[784] Ibid. p. 81.

example calling for those who did not recognise the caliphate of Abū Bakr and 'Umar to be killed.[785] Just as al-Ṭabarī gave preference in his *Commentary* to the *ḥadīth* with the strongest *isnād*, his implicit solution to contradictory reports in the *Ta'rīkh* also lay in choosing the one with the strongest *isnād*.[786]

6.1.4 Al-Ṭabarī's theological alignment

Al-Ṭabarī, as a scholar was known for his proto-Sunnī views. His *Jāmiʿ al-bayān ʿan taʾwīl āy al-Qurʾān* was well received by Sunnī scholars and the book is revered by Sunnī scholars of all theological schools of thought up to the present day. The impact of his exegesis in Shīʿī religious thought has been negligible if not non-existent. Despite this, during his lifetime, al-Ṭabarī was accused of harbouring pro-Shīʿī sentiments. This may have been an attempt to malign him by his Ḥanbali adversaries, or it may have been as a result of certain pro-'Alid views that he held.[787] As Melchert has shown, in the formative period of Islam it was not unusual for proto-Sunnī scholars to be accused of having pro-'Shīʿī sympathies, and a number of important *ḥadīth* traditionalists were labelled with *tashayyu'*.[788] In addition a number of proto-Sunnī scholars supported 'Alid revolts and were also labelled with the term *tashayyu'*.

However by al-Ṭabarī's time, the sectarian boundaries between proto Shīʿī and proto-Sunnī groups were becoming more pronounced.[789] Among proto-Sunnī groups the legitimacy of the first four Caliphs and their rank in order of their reign was becoming widely accepted and eventually become enshrined in Sunnī dogma.[790] Support for 'Alid revolts was becoming rarer and a *ḥadīth* scholar's association with Shīʿīsm was considered a liability.[791] The proto-Shīʿa on the other hand were faced with the challenge of the minor occultation. In this period the

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[785] In *Sariḥ Sunnah* he refutes a number of theological sects including the *Shīʿī, Mu'tazila, Jahmiyya,* and *Qadariyya*. Mårtensson (2009), pp. 19-20. Rosenthal (2015), p. 244.

[786] 'implicit' as al-Ṭabarī does not comment on the *isnād* in his *Ta'rīkh* as he does in his Commentary.

[787] He authenticated the *ḥadīth* of Ghadīr Khumm, wrote a tract on the *Fadā'il* of 'Alī, and described 'Alī as 'Imām 'Alī'. Rosenthal (2015), pp. 91-3. Mårtensson (2009), p. 21.

[788] Melchert (1997).; There were exceptions. A century after the death of Ahmad b. Ḥanbal we find an avowed Shīʿī, Abū al-'Abbās Ibn 'Uqda (d. 332/944), recognised as one of the Sunnī *ḥadīth* critics. Al-Dhahabī described him as 'the *ḥadīth* master of his age'. Jonathan AC Brown, 'A Man for All Seasons. Ibn 'Uqda and Crossing Sectarian Boundaries in the 4th/10th Century.', *Al-'Uṣūr al-Wusṭā,* 24 (2016).

[789] Afsaruddin argues that by the mid-ninth century, *ahl al-sunna* as a group, could be said to 'properly …exist'. Afsaruddin (1999), p. 342. One of the defining features of *ahl-al-sunna* was the acceptance of four Rāshidūn caliphs. Ibid. Other features included the belief in the collective probity of the Companions. Lucas (2004), p. 21.

[790] 'Alī's legitimacy as the fourth caliph was initially a contested matter amongst proto-Sunnis. An accusation of *tashayyu'*, for example by preferring 'Alī over 'Uthmān, was a more serious indictment in al-Ṭabarī's time than in late Umayyad/ early 'Abbāsid times.

proto-Imāmi Shī'a were developing a theology which clearly distinguished them from the proto-Sunnīs. Unlike the pro-'Alids of the first and second centuries whose reverence for 'Alī and support for 'Alid revolts was palatable to proto-Sunnīs, the proto-Imāmi Shī'īsm of the early fourth/tenth century was characterised by denigration of Abū Bakr and 'Umar and the doctrine of the twelve Imāms. The other main proto-Shī'ī group, the Fāṭimids who during al-Ṭabarī's lifetime had established a dynasty in north Africa, as well as the Qarāmiṭa, also disavowed the first three caliphs.

6.2 Organisation of source material

Al-Ṭabarī's chapter headings are as follows. (Text from the *Taʾrīkh* is in bold.)

The Events of the Year 10 (A few words by al-Ṭabarī - nothing of significance).

Table 6.1 The Events of the Year 11

Chapter No.		% of text
1	(**no chapter heading).**[792] The Prophet's illness and death.	42%
2	**An Account of the Day on Which the Messenger of God Died and His Age.**[793] Date of death, reaction to death, support for ʿAlī, events at Saqīfa.	8%
3	**An Account of the Saqīfa.**[794] ʿUmar's account of Saqīfa. Post Saqīfa events; the reaction of ʿAlī and others. The Prophet's burial and date of death.	23%
4	**The Disagreements about His Age When He Died.**[795]	2%
5	**The Day and the Month in Which the Messenger of God died.**[796]	2%
6	**What Took Place between the *Muhājirūn* and the *Anṣār* over the Matter of Leadership at the Portico of the Banu Saʾidah.**[797] Lengthy report covering the Saqīfa incident. Debate between Anṣār and Muhājirūn. Lack of unity amongst Anṣār. Reaction of Saʿd b. ʿUbāda. Abū Bakr's inaugural speech.	22%

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[792] Muḥammad ibn Jarīr Al-Ṭabarī, 'Taʾrīkh Al-Rusul Waʾl Mulūk. Volume 4', ed. by M.J. De. Goeje (1879-1901), pp. 1794-814).; Poonawala (1990), pp. 162-83.

[793] Al-Ṭabarī, pp. 1815-20. ; Poonawala (1990), pp. 183-89.

[794] Al-Ṭabarī, pp. 1820-34.; Poonawala (1990), pp. 189-206.

[795] Al-Ṭabarī, pp. 1834-36.; Poonawala (1990), pp. 206-08.

[796]Al-Ṭabarī, pp. 1836-7.; Poonawala (1990), pp. 208-9.

[797] Al-Ṭabarī, pp. 1837-51.; Donner (1993), pp. 1-18.

Al-Ṭabarī devotes almost half of the text in question to the Saqīfa incident and the *bay'a* to Abū Bakr and discusses it over three separate chapters. The material in the first three chapters follow a rough (but not a strict) chronology: the Prophet's illness, death, reaction to his death, Saqīfa, post Saqīfa events; reaction to selection of Abū Bakr, the Prophet's burial and date of death. The next two chapters give various opinions about the age, day and the month of the Prophet's death. Finally, chapter six returns to the issue of Saqīfa and ends with the campaign of Usāma b. Zayd.

Is there any significance to the organisation of source material? At first glance it appears a purely chronological arrangement. However the story starts with Abū Bakr playing a central role during the illness of the Prophet (chapter one) and ends with his selection at Saqīfa with minimal opposition from the Anṣāri supporters of Sa'd b. 'Ubāda (chapter six). There is no mention of support for 'Alī's claim. The prominence of Abū Bakr in the first and last chapters is contrasted with the almost complete absence of the mention 'Alī.

6.3   Timeline of events.

Below I give a brief timeline of significant events leading up to the succession of Abū Bakr.

Year Ten	
Dhul Hijja:	Prophet leads the farewell Hajj.
18 Dhul Hijja[798]:	Ghadīr Khumm.
Year Eleven	
Muharram:	Prophet orders Usāma b. Zayd's expedition to Syria.
End of Ṣafar/Rabīʾ I:	Beginning of Prophet's illness.
8th Rabīʾ I:	Incident of paper and pen.
9th Rabīʾ I:	Abū Bakr begins leading the prayer.
12th Rabīʾ I:	Prophet prays the dawn prayer behind Abū Bakr.
	The Prophet dies.
	Bayʾa given to Abū Bakr at Saqīfa.
13th Rabīʾ I:	The Prophet is buried.[799]
	General *Bayʾa* given to Abū Bakr in the mosque.[800]

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[798] Arzina Lalani, 'Ghadir Khumm', *Oxford Bibliographies*
<*http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195390155-obo-9780195390155-0105.xml*> [accessed 26 July 2018]
[799] According to al-Wāqidī, the Prophet was buried on Tuesday after midday, whereas Ibn Ishāq reports that he was buried on Tuesday night. Poonawala (1990), pp. 184, 208-9.
[800] Ibid. p. 200.

6.4 Sources

I now give brief detail of four of the main sources used by al-Ṭabarī in the text. Together they account for sixty-one (65%) of the ninety-three reports.

Table 6.2 Al-Ṭabarī's Sources

Name of Source	Number of reports
Ibn Ishāq	35 (38%)
Sayf b. 'Umar	16 (17%)
al-Wāqidī	4 (4%)
Abū Mikhnaf	6 (6%)

Ibn Ishāq is the author of the oldest extant work of *sīra*. He was asked to write a *sīra* by the ruling 'Abbāsid caliph, Manṣūr.[801] The version of the *sīra* that has reached us today is the recension of Ibn Hishām (d. 218/813) who edited and abridged Ibn Ishāq's work to ensure it was compatible with the standards of *ḥadīth* scholars.[802] Al-Ṭabarī received the works of Ibn Ishāq through Ibn Humayd and on one occasion, via Abū Kurayb (d.247/861) who received Ibn Ishāq's *Kitāb al-Maghāzī* via Yūnus b. Bukayr (d.199/814)[803] Al-Ṭabarī also used Salama b. Faḍl al-Abrash's *riwāya* of Ibn Ishāq's *Sīra*.[804] Ibn Ishāq was accused of Mālik b. Anas of harbouring Shī'ī tendencies,however, given that he was praised by a number of proto-Sunni *ḥadīth* critics, it unlikely that this accusation is true. [805] Although some of Ibn Ishāq's reports contradict the view that Saqīfa passed off without any major incident or upset, al-Ṭabarī uses a number of strategies of compilation to minimise their impact.

Sayf b. 'Umar al-Tamīmī al-Usayyidī al-Kūfī is a famous Iraqi historian. Al-Ṭabarī relies heavily on Sayf for the account of the *ridda* wars and the early conquests. Early scholars (Wellhauusen, De Goeje, Caetani, and Petersen) are highly critical of Sayf, accusing him outright fabrication. Dūrī and Noth on the other hand disagree with the singling out Sayf for criticism, arguing that his reports are no more biased than other early Iraqi historians. Noth further argues that the contradictions contained within Sayf's narratives are a result of the contradictory nature of his sources and not a result of his deliberate inventions. Among early Sunnī Muslim scholars, Sayf was disparaged as a *ḥadīth* scholar, however his skills as a historian were widely

[801] Chase F Robinson, 'History and Heilsgeschichte in Early Islam: Some Observations on Prophetic History and Biography', *History and Religion: Narrating a Religious Past,* 68 (2015), 136.
[802] Duri (2014), pp. 33-6.
[803] Rosenthal, pp. 17-8; Claude Gilliot, 'The Scholarly Formation of Al-Tabari ', in *Education and Learning in the Early Islamic World,* ed. by Claude Gilliot (2017), (p. 122).
[804] Poonawala, p. xi.
[805] Jones, J.M.B., "Ibn Isḥāḳ",EI².; Muḥammad Ibn Isḥāq, 'The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Isḥāq's Sīrat Rasūl Allah'*,* ed. by Alfred Guillaume (1967), pp. xxxv-i).

acknowledged.[806] Al-Sarī b. Yaḥya was a transmitter of the recension of Sayf b. ʻUmar.[807] One of Sayf's source was Mūsā b. ʻUqba al-Asadī (d.141/758) an earlier Muslim historian and a student of al-Zuhrī. His written works, which are no longer extant were used by al-Ṭabarī, al-Wāqidī and Ibn Ishāq.[808]

ʻAbdullah Muhammad b. ʻUmar **al-Wāqidī**, (d.207/823) author of one of the earliest extant books on the *Sīra* entitled *Kitāb al-Maghāzī*. He was born and lived in Medina where he collected reports about the Prophet from people who had met the Companions. During Hārūn al-Rashīd's visit to Medina in 170/786, al-Wāqidī acted as his official tour guide. The Caliph invited him to Baghdad where he was appointed as a judge. Al-Wāqidī authored a number of works on *Sīra* and history and is one of the main sources of al-Ṭabarī for early Islamic history.[809] Although in the Fihrist, al-Wāqidī is described as a Shīʻa, the Shīʻī books of *rijāl* do not mention him.[810]

Abū Mikhnaf was an early Iraqi historian who wrote extensively on Arab (mainly Iraqi) history. No extant works of his have been preserved. However, both al-Balādhurī and al-Ṭabarī quote him extensively.[811] Al-Ṭabarī received Abū Miknaf's reports via Muḥammad b. al-Sāʼib al-Kalbī (d.147/763) and his son Hishām b. Muḥammad b. al-Sāʼib al-Kalb, (d. 204/819 or 206/821) both whom were prolific writers and experts in Arab genealogy.[812]

Al-Ṭabarī uses these four sources to present a distinctly proto-Sunnī view of the succession to the Prophet Muḥammad. His use of the *isnād* implies that in the event where two or more reports are irreconcilable, the strongest report, according to the science of *ḥadīth* is chosen.

Sayf b. ʻUmar accounts for sixteen (17%) reports in the six chapters. Twelve of these reports are regarding the false prophets and the Usāma b. Zayd's expedition. Although not directly related to the issue of Saqīfa, these reports reflect well on Abū Bakr due to his decisive

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[806] Ella Landau-Tasseron, 'Sayf Ibn ʻUmar in Medieval and Modern Scholarship', *Der Islam,* 67 (1990), 1-7.; Donner, F.M., "Sayf b. ʻUmar", EI².

[807] Rosenthal (2015), p. 6.

[808] Bosworth. C.E., "Mūsā b. ʻUḳba", EI².

[809] Rizwi Faizer, *The Life of Muhammad: Al-Waqidi's Kitab Al-Maghazi*, (2013), pp. xi- xiii.

[810] Josef Horovitz and others, *The Earliest Biographies of the Prophet and Their Authors*, (2002), p. 117.

[811] Gibb, H.A.R. "Abū Mikhnaf", EI².

[812] Atallah, W., "al-Kalbī", EI².

leadership. Two of the remaining four reports from Sayf b. 'Umar are used by al-Ṭabarī to present a distinctly pro-Sunnī narrative. These two reports mention that:

1. Only the hypocrites refused to give *bay'a* to Abū Bakr. All of the Muhājirūn gave *bay'a*.
2. 'Alī rushed to give *bay'a* not even taking time to dress properly.

The final two reports contradict the view that the *bay'a* to Abū Bakr was occurred without major contention. These reports mention the following:

3. Chaotic scenes at Saqīfa eventually resulting in Abū Bakr receiving the *bay'a*.
4. Sa 'd b. 'Ubāda was compelled to give *bay'a* to Abū Bakr. The unity of the *umma*h took priority over the ambitions of a single man.

However, elsewhere al-Ṭabarī subtly dismisses the above two reports.

Al-Ṭabarī only uses Al-Wāqidī on four occasions. Two of his reports refer to the number of times/days that Abū Bakr led the people in prayer. That the Prophet chose Abū Bakr to lead the prayer during his illness is used by Sunnīs as one of the main justifications for Abū Bakr's selection.

Abū Mikhnaf is used six times. None of his reports advance the proto-Shī'ī claim that 'Alī was the rightful successor to the Prophet. The absence of any mention of 'Alī's claim in Abū Mikhnaf's Saqīfa reports is conspicuous given his proto-Shī'ī sympathies.

6.5   Al-Ṭabarī's Chapter 1: [no chapter title]

This is the longest of the six chapters under consideration amounting to 42% of the total text. Al-Ṭabarī begins this chapter by discussing the beginning of the Prophet's illness and the emergence of rival claims to prophethood.[813] As the Prophet's illness worsened, he asked to be nursed in the house of his favourite wife 'Āisha, the daughter of Abū Bakr.[814] In the rest of the chapter al-Ṭabarī foreshadows the outcome of the Saqīfa meeting by using a number of reports to demonstrate the excellence of Abū Bakr and hence his right to succeed the Prophet. He does this in the following ten ways:

1. He brings a report from Ibn Isḥāq in which the Prophet addressed the people, stating:

> 'God has given a servant a choice between this world and that which is with Him, and the servant chose the latter'.[815]

Only Abū Bakr understood the intent behind the Prophet's words and began to cry.[816] A second report in which the Companions expressed surprise that Abū Bakr cried, further emphasizes that only Abū Bakr understood the intent of the Prophet's words.[817] The wording of third report is similar to the first. The open grief displayed by Abū Bakr was expressive of his deep love for the Prophet. Through a strategy of repetition, al-Ṭabarī highlights that Abū Bakr's knowledge excelled that of the other Companions.

2. Al-Ṭabarī brings two reports with identical wording demonstrating the strong personal and spiritual bond between the Prophet and Abū Bakr. In these reports the Prophet stated that if he were to take a *khalīl* (a very close intimate friend) then it would have been Abū Bakr.[818] Implicit in this report is that Abū Bakr was a closer friend to the Prophet than 'Alī b. Abī Tālib.

3. Al-Ṭabarī brings three reports in which the Prophet ordered all mosque doors to be closed except that of Abū Bakr's.[819] By singling out Abū Bakr, these reports demonstrate the strong bond between the Prophet and Abū Bakr. Two of the three reports state the reason why Abū

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[813] Al-Ṭabarī, pp. 1794-800.;Poonawala (1990), pp. 163-9.
[814] Al-Ṭabarī, pp. 1800-1.;Poonawala (1990), p. 169.
[815] Al-Ṭabarī, p. 1803.; Poonawala (1990), pp. 171-2.
[816] Al-Ṭabarī, p. 1803.; Poonawala (1990), p. 172.
[817] Al-Ṭabarī, p. 1804.; Poonawala (1990), p. 172.
[818] Al-Ṭabarī, pp. 1804-5.; Poonawala (1990), pp. 172-3.;EM Badawi and others, 'Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage'*,* (2008), (p. 284).; The word *khalīl* come from the root *kh-l-l* whose meaning includes friendship, close confidant, loved person. Ibid.
[819] Al-Ṭabarī, pp. 1803,04, 08.; Poonawala (1990), pp. 172,73, 77.

Bakr's door was to remain open; 'I know no one who is a better friend to me with regard to generosity than he.'[820] Two of Abū Bakr's qualities are emphasised here; close friendship and generosity.

4. Abū Bakr assumed a quasi-leadership role during the Prophet's illness by leading the prayers for three consecutive days. This is stated in five different reports.

In the first report, the Prophet ordered Abū Bakr to lead the prayer. 'Āisha however suggested that 'Umar lead instead. The Prophet agreed but 'Umar refused to lead Abū Bakr in prayer. Whilst Abū Bakr was leading the prayer, the Prophet joined him, ordered him to remain in his place, and took over the prayer whilst sitting.[821] In this report, 'Umar acknowledged the status of Abū Bakr.

The second report is similar to the first except that the Prophet became angry at Āisha's repeated insistence that 'Umar lead the prayer.[822]

The third and fourth report from al-Wāqidī state that the Abū Bakr led the prayer seventeen times, and for three prayers. [823]

The final report from Ibn Ishāq states that the Prophet prayed his final prayer alongside Abū Bakr whilst Abū Bakr was leading.[824]

Al-Ṭabarī uses these reports as an implicit endorsement of Abū Bakr succession to the Prophet. Although some proto-Sunnīs held that the Prophet *explicitly* appointed Abū Bakr, the fact that al-Ṭabarī does not include reports in support of this, shows that he did not hold this position.[825] The stance of 'Āisha may appear counter-intuitive. Why would she *not* want her father to have the honour of leading the Companions in prayer. Her argument in front of the Prophet was that: 'Abū Bakr is a tender-hearted. When he will stand in your place, he will not be able to bear [the idea of taking your place.]'[826] However elsewhere, she stated another reason for her

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[820] Al-Ṭabarī, pp. 1803, 08.; Poonawala (1990), pp. 172,77.
[821] Al-Ṭabarī, pp. 1810-11.; Poonawala (1990), p. 179.
[822] Al-Ṭabarī, pp. 1811-12.;Poonawala (1990), p. 180.
[823] Al-Ṭabarī, p. 1812.;Poonawala (1990), pp. 180-1.
[824] Al-Ṭabarī, pp. 1813-14.; Poonawala (1990), p. 182.
[825] Afsaruddin (2002), p. 222.
[826] Al-Ṭabarī, pp. 1811-12.;Poonawala (1990), p. 180.

insistence: 'I felt that nobody would take his (the Prophet's) place without being regarded by the people as a portent of evil.'[827]

5. After a number of short reports of the Prophet's severe pain during the final days of his life, it appeared that the Prophet had made a recovery. According Ibn Ishāq, the Prophet died whilst reclining on 'Āisha's lap.[828] There is an implicit connection with Abū Bakr here, as 'Āisha, the favourite wife of the Prophet was the daughter of Abū Bakr.

6. At the beginning of the chapter, al-Ṭabarī brings two reports regarding the Prophet's insistence, despite protests from some Medinans, that Usāma b. Zayd be dispatched to fight the Byzantines.[829] At first sight it appears that these reports have no particular significance other than the fact that they were part of the chronology of events that occurred during the Prophet's final illness. However, immediately after the death of the Prophet, Abū Bakr also insisted that Usāma b. Zayd be dispatched, again there were objections, but Abū Bakr stood his ground and the campaign against the Byzantines was highly successful. The Prophet and Abū Bakr are depicted here as possessing unique insight.

7. Al-Ṭabarī brings six reports, again at the beginning of the chapter, about the looming existential threat to the nascent Islamic State; the emergence of a number of claimants to prophethood.[830] This greatly troubled the Prophet. Immediately after the Prophet's death Abū Bakr began a successful campaign to bring the rebellious tribes under the tutelage of Medina. This was despite the initial opposition from a number of senior companions including 'Umar.[831] Thus, two matters which were of great concern to the Prophet; the army of Usāma b. Zayd, and the rise of false prophets were resolved by Abū Bakr during his caliphate. It could be argued that these were Abū Bakr's crowning achievement as they paved the way for further conquests and massive territorial gains.

8. 'Umar received a strong endorsement from the Prophet in a few brief words. ''Umar is with me and I am with him…follow 'Umar after me, wherever he might be'.[832] Given that 'Umar was instrumental in securing the *bay'a* to Abū Bakr, this report is highly significant. If 'Umar should be followed *after* the Prophet, then his unwavering support for Abū Bakr at Saqīfa had been implicitly endorsed by the Prophet.

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[827] Poonawala (1990), p. 180 f.n.1247.
[828] Al-Ṭabarī, p. 1814.;Poonawala (1990), pp. 182-3.
[829] Al-Ṭabarī, pp. 1795,96.; Poonawala (1990), pp. 164, 65-6.
[830] Al-Ṭabarī, pp. 1794-99.;Poonawala (1990), pp. 164-8.
[831] Al-Ṭabarī, pp. 1848-51.; Donner (1993), pp. 13-18.
[832] Al-Ṭabarī, p. 1803.;Poonawala (1990), p. 171.

9. Two reports mention that 'Abbās, sensing that the Prophet's death was close, advised 'Alī to speak to the Prophet regarding succession.[833] He argued that the Prophet would either nominate 'Alī, or if not, then he would advise his successors to treat them (i.e. Banū Hāshim) well. However, 'Alī refused to raise the issue with the Prophet, fearing that if he was not directly nominated, then the people would never nominate him in the future. Implicit in these two reports is a rebuttal by al-Ṭabarī of the Shī'ī view of *naṣṣ*. If 'Alī had been divinely designated at Ghadīr Khumm (in front of thousands of Companions) then he would have had no apprehension that the Prophet would refuse to nominate him. Also the fact that 'Abbās felt the need to ask the Prophet about succession demonstrated that the Prophet had to date not nominated anyone. These two reports also suggest that Abū Bakr succession was not a forgone conclusion but a matter for debate. If the Prophet had explicitly nominated Abū Bakr, then 'Abbās would have not suggested that the Prophet be asked regarding his successor. Finally, these reports suggest that 'Alī considered himself to be a worthy candidate for leadership, either immediately after the Prophet's death or sometime after.

However, al-Ṭabarī omits a report recorded by al-Balādhurī in which 'Alī refuses 'Abbās's suggestion to ask the Prophet about succession on the basis that his ('Alī's) succession was a *fait accompli.* When the Prophet died, al-'Abbās said to 'Alī:

> Come out so that I pledge allegiance to you in front of the people. And no two people will differ with you. So he refused and he ('Alī) said, <u>is there anyone from them who denies our right and rules tyrannically over us?</u> (emphasis mine). Al-'Abbās said: So we shall see, that will occur. So when the pledge of allegiance (happened) al-'Abbās said to him: Did I not tell you O 'Alī?[834]

Al-Ṭabarī's omission of this report indicates that he did not believe that 'Alī considered himself to be automatically entitled to succeed the Prophet.

10. Another significant omission in the *Ta'rīkh* is the *ḥadīth* of Ghadīr Khumm. It is all the more surprising given that al-Ṭabarī wrote a treatise authenticating it.[835] The *ḥadīth* of Ghadīr Khumm is pivotal to the proto-Shī'ī claim that the *Imāmate* of 'Alī was a divinely ordained matter, and as a corollary, that the first three caliphs were illegitimate usurpers. Any narrative

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[833] Al-Ṭabarī, pp. 1807-8.;Poonawala (1990), pp. 175-6.

[834] Aḥmad Ibn Yaḥyā Al-Balādurī and others, *The Ansāb Al-Ashrāf of Al-Balādhurī,* (1936).

[835] Rosenthal (2015), pp. 91-3.

in support of the *Imāmate* of 'Alī is usually predicated on this *ḥadīth*. Hence, al-Ṭabarī's deliberate omission of this *ḥadīth* from his *Ta'rīkh* is an indication that he did not believe that it held any particular theological or historical value, nor did he support the view that 'Alī's claim was divinely ordained.[836] Hence, through the strategy of omission, al-Ṭabarī rebuts the view that 'Alī considered himself the rightful heir to the Prophet, or that the Prophet nominated 'Alī.

Al-Ṭabarī brings three reports regarding the incident of the 'paper and pen'.[837] The Prophet wished to dictate a testament to his Companions, but they began arguing amongst themselves. This angered the Prophet and the testament was never dictated, much to the grief of the narrator, Ibn 'Abbās. The incident in its broad details is accepted by both proto-Sunnīs and proto-Shī'a, although interpreted radically differently. From al-Ṭabarī's point of viewpoint, this report does not detract from the legitimacy of the succession of Abū Bakr.

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[836] According to the proto-Shī'ī, several incidents during the life of the Prophet indirectly point to the exclusive right of 'Alī to the caliphate. Ghadīr Khumm, coming towards the end of the life of the Prophet, unambiguously designates 'Alī as the political and spiritual heir of the Prophet. Haider (2014), pp. 56-63.

[837] Al-Ṭabarī, pp. 1806-7.;Poonawala (1990), pp. 174-5.

6.5.1 Summary

In chapter one, al-Ṭabarī foreshadows the outcome of debate at Saqīfa, with a clear endorsement of the virtues and superiority of Abū Bakr. These are summarised in the table below.

Table 6.3 Virtues of Abū Bakr

Virtue of Abū Bakr	No. of occurrences.
Abū Bakr's superior knowledge.	3
Abū Bakr was a *khalīl*.	2
The close friendship between the Prophet and Abū Bakr and the latter's generosity.	2
The quasi-leadership role played by Abū Bakr during the Prophet's illness by leading the prayers for three consecutive days.	5
The Prophet and Abū Bakr share a common view regarding the army of Usāma.	2
Abū Bakr's far-sightedness regarding fighting the false prophets, which is not shared by other Companions, pays off.	See footnote.[838]

Also in this chapter, the Prophet gave a clear endorsement of the status of ʻUmar by ordering the people to follow him after his death. Al-Ṭabarī rebuts the proto-Shīʻī claim that ʻAlī was the Prophet's rightful successor, as ʻAlī was unsure whether the Prophet would nominate him or not as a successor.

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[838] This is alluded to in this chapter but not mentioned directly. The reports regarding the Abū Bakr's war against the false prophets are mentioned after the Saqīfa narrative.

6.6 Al-Ṭabarī's Chapter 2: 'An Account of the Day on Which the Messenger of God Died and His Age'

Al-Ṭabarī begins this chapter with a comment stating unanimity that the Prophet died on a Monday, in the month of *Rabī I*. but not regarding the date itself.[839] There are six consecutive reports in this chapter. Reports one and two (from Abū Mikhnaf and al-Wāqidī respectively) mention the different opinions regarding the date of the Prophet's death. The second report is followed by a brief comment regarding the whereabouts of Abū Bakr and 'Umar when the Prophet died.[840]

- Report three focuses exclusively on the reaction to the Prophet's death.
- Report four cover the reaction to the Prophet's death, and the events at Saqīfa in which some of the Anṣār favour 'Alī.
- Report five briefly describes how 'Alī was intimidated into giving *bay'a*.
- Report six cover the reaction to the Prophet's death, the events at Saqīfa, and the opposition from 'Alī.

The first report from Abū Mikhnaf states that the Prophet died at noon on Monday, 2nd *Rabī I* and that the *bay'a* was given to Abū Bakr the very same day.[841] The second report from al-Wāqidī states that the Prophet died on Monday, 12th Rabī I and was buried the following day.[842] Although there is a minor difference regarding the exact date of the Prophet's, the chronology of events is clear:

- Monday: The Prophet died - *Bay'a* given to Abū Bakr at Saqīfa.
- Tuesday: The Prophet was buried.

The news of the Prophet's death came as a shock to the Companions. 'Umar not only refused to believe it but violently threatened those who spread the news.[843] However, in three reports (three, four and six) al-Ṭabarī emphasises the fact that Abū Bakr acted with calmness and resolve and informed the Companions that the Prophet had indeed died.[844] Abū Bakr's knowledge and understanding of the Quran was also evident. Despite the calamitous situation,

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[839] Al-Ṭabarī, p. 1815.;Poonawala (1990), p. 183.; Comments from al-Ṭabarī are rare in his *Ta'rīkh*.
[840] Al-Ṭabarī, p. 1815.;Poonawala (1990), p. 184. Abū Bakr was at Sunḥ (on the outskirts of Medina) and 'Umar was present in Medina.
[841] Al-Ṭabarī, p. 1815.;Poonawala (1990), p. 184.
[842] Ibid.
[843] Al-Ṭabarī, pp. 1815-6.; Poonawala (1990), p. 184.
[844] Al-Ṭabarī, pp. 1816-9.; Poonawala (1990), pp. 184-7.

he was able to recollect a verse to support his position that the Prophet was a mortal.[845] As for the rest of the Companions, it was as if they heard the verse for the first time. Abū Bakr did not hesitate to uncover the face of the Prophet in order to kiss him, something that no-one else dared to do.[846] In the midst of the grief and confusion, Abū Bakr took control of the situation, clearly demonstrating his leadership qualities. Hence, the theme of Abū Bakr's excellence; his knowledge, his closeness to the Prophet, and his leadership qualities are continued in this chapter. Through repetition (three times over the three reports), al-Ṭabarī emphasises the excellence of Abū Bakr.

Up to this point, no individual has figured so prominently and so positively in the narrative as Abū Bakr. His leadership skills, his virtues and his knowledge are beyond doubt. At Saqīfa, however difference arose among the Companions regarding the issue of succession. Two strong candidates emerged as contenders to Abū Bakr; Sa'd b. 'Ubāda and 'Alī. The opposition of 'Alī was taken seriously by Abū Bakr and swiftly dealt with. Three consecutive reports in this chapter (four to six) mention the claim of 'Alī.

In **report four[847]**, after Abū Bakr had convinced the companions that the Prophet had indeed died, the scene abruptly transfers to Saqīfa. Abū Bakr, 'Umar and Abū 'Ubayda arrived at the meeting just as the Anṣār were preparing to give *bay'a* to Sa'd b. 'Ubāda. A small debate ensued; one Anṣāri suggested joint leadership between the Anṣār and Muhājirūn but Abū Bakr insisted that leadership was for his group stating that: 'the rulers are from us, the ministers are from you'. He then recommended Abū 'Ubayda, stating that the Prophet had vouched for his trustworthiness. However, 'Umar objected insisting that *bay'a* was only for Abū Bakr as he had led the prayer during the Prophet's illness. 'Umar gave *bay'a* to Abū Bakr and the people followed suit. The connection between spiritual succession (Abū Bakr leading the prayer) and political succession is highlighted here. However some of the Anṣār objected to the choice of Abū Bakr, stating that they would only give *bay'a* to 'Alī. This is the first indication in al-Ṭabarī's text that there was support for 'Alī. Although the initial contender was Sa'd, the dissenting voices were now favour of 'Alī. Support for 'Alī superseded tribal considerations although the text does not elaborate on the reason why some of the Anṣār supported 'Alī over Abū Bakr.

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[845] Ibid.
[846] Ibid.
[847] Al-Ṭabarī, pp. 1817-8.; Poonawala (1990), pp. 185-6.

In **report five**[848] al-Ṭabarī narrates that:

> Umar Ibn al-Khattab came to the house of 'Alī. Talha and Zubair and some of the Muhājirūn were [also] in the house [with 'Alī]. Umar cried out: 'By God, either you come out to render the oath of allegiance, or I will set the house on fire.' Al-Zubair came out with his sword drawn. As he stumbled, the sword fell from his hand so they jumped over him and seized him.'

Whether 'Alī gave *bay'a* or not is left open. However what is clear from this report is the strong feelings on both sides regarding succession and willingness to resort to violence in support of their respective positions.

In **report six**[849], a man rushed to inform Abū Bakr and 'Umar about the meeting at Saqīfa and they both quickly made their way there. At the meeting, Abū Bakr extoled the virtues of the Anṣār, but at the same time reminded Sa'd b. 'Ubāda that the Prophet had stated that the leadership could only be within Quraysh. Sa'd accepted this from Abū Bakr with the following words: 'You have spoken the truth. We are the viziers and you are the rulers.'[850] 'Umar and Abū Bakr then attempted to give *bay'a* to each other. 'Umar succeeded in giving the *bay'a* to Abū Bakr and the people followed suit. The report then mentions that Zubayr drew his sword, demanding that *bay'a* be given to 'Alī. Both 'Alī and Zubayr were subdued by 'Umar who brought them to Abū Bakr where they were compelled to give *bay'a*.

The impact of opposition to Abū Bakr from some of the Anṣār mentioned in report four is mitigated by report six as Sa'd b. 'Ubāda, an Anṣāri leader, publicly supported Abū Bakr.[851] Although 'Alī and Zubayr opposed the decision at Saqīfa the fact that they gave *bay'a* without any further resistance suggests a lack of support for their position. Also as I will mention below, al-Ṭabarī later dismisses the view that 'Alī opposed Abū Bakr.

Given that the narrative, was up to this point, building up a case to support the succession of Abū Bakr, why did al-Ṭabarī include these three reports (four - six), which appear to cast doubt on the legitimacy of Abū Bakr's selection as Caliph, or at the least, highlight the strong opposition from 'Alī and his supporters? There are four main reasons why al-Ṭabarī may have included them.

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[848] Al-Ṭabarī, p. 1818.; Poonawala (1990), pp. 186-7.

[849] Al-Ṭabarī, pp. 1818-20.;Poonawala (1990), pp. 187-9.

[850] Poonawala (1990), p. 188.

[851] Sa'd was the leader of the Khazraj and one of the earliest Medinan converts to Islam. The fact the Anṣār were about to choose him as their leader is indicative of his status amongst the Anṣār.

1.Reports four and six contain valuable information about the Companions' reaction to the death of the Prophet, and the events at Saqīfa. Abū Bakr features prominently in both these reports; he kissed the deceased Prophet, declared his mortality, and demonstrated his superior knowledge of Quran. Both reports also describe the events at Saqīfa and in report six, Saʿd b. ʿUbāda actually supported Abū Bakr's claim. Had al-Ṭabarī not included these two reports, much valuable information, most of which presents Abū Bakr in a very positive light, would have been lost.

2. That some of the Anṣār supported ʿAlī does not detract from the legitimacy of Abū Bakr's right to rule, especially when examined in light of his earlier reports in al-Ṭabarī's first chapter which suggested that the Prophet implicitly designated Abū Bakr. In the process of selecting a leader, complete unanimity on one candidate is something very rare and the support for ʿAlī should be seen in this light. In addition, Saʿd's support for Abū Bakr (in report six), given that he was the de facto ruler of the Anṣar, brings into question the extent of Anṣāri support for ʿAlī.

3. In report four al-Ṭabarī implicitly rebuts the proto-Shīʿī theory of naṣṣ. in the following way. That the Anṣār debated the issue of succession, initially favoured Saʿd and later (some of them) ʿAlī, shows that naṣṣ could not have taken place. Had the Prophet appointed ʿAlī, a debate would never have taken place. It is not clear why they preferred ʿAlī over Abū Bakr but is likely due to either his kinship with the Prophet, or on account of his many virtues.

4. The negative impact of the above three reports on Abū Bakr's legitimacy is mitigated by al-Ṭabarī's account of the general pledge, (mentioned in the next chapter) which took place in the mosque the day after Saqīfa.[852] No dissenting voices were raised in this general pledge, implying that the Anṣar supporters of ʿAlī either dropped their claim and were convinced of Abū Bakr's suitability, or they chose to remain silent in favour of unity. This point is reinforced by another report from al-Ṭabarī in which the companion, Saʿīd b. Zayd stated that only the apostates opposed Abū Bakr, and all of the Muhājirūn gave bayʿa to Abū Bakr.[853] Significantly al-Ṭabarī omitted the report, alluded to in the Taʾrīkh of al-Yaʿqūbī, in which, after Abū Bakr entered the mosque to receive the general bayʿa, twelve of the Muhājirūn stood up, each

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[852] See Chapter 8.6
[853] Ibid.

extoling the virtues of 'Alī, and proclaiming 'Alī's right to the caliphate.[854] Hence, opposition to Abū Bakr and the support for 'Alī was, according to al-Ṭabarī, the initial position held by some of the Anṣār, but the overriding need for unity led the Anṣār to quickly fall in line behind Abū Bakr.

However, the inclusion of reports containing threats of violence as well as actual altercation between senior Companions such as 'Umar, 'Alī, and Zubayr is far more difficult to justify for a proto-Sunnī author who rejected the idea of any challenge to the legitimacy of Abū Bakr and supported the view of mutual love and harmony between the Companions. Al-Ṭabarī could have chosen to completely exclude report five in which 'Umar threatened to set 'Alī's house on fire, and to edit report six by removing the last few lines (in which Zubayr drew his sword in favour of 'Alī).

These two reports (five and six) contradict the view that the succession of Abū Bakr was a relatively smooth and uncontentious matter. They also contradict two subsequent reports (in the next chapter) in which 'Alī gave *bay'a* of his own volition. How al-Ṭabarī intended to deal with this contradiction, and the reason for his inclusion of reports which mention violent disagreement amongst the Companions, is dealt with in the next chapter.

Summary

In this chapter as in the previous chapter, al-Ṭabarī highlights, through a strategy of repetition, Abū Bakr's leadership qualities and his knowledge, and hence his suitability to succeed the Prophet. In the ensuing confusion following the Prophet's death, Abū Bakr calmly took charge of the situation. At Saqīfa although some Anṣār favoured 'Alī, the majority gave *bay'a* to Abū Bakr. Significantly, Sa'd b. 'Ubāda, who earlier was preparing to take over the leadership of Medina, is convinced by Abū Bakr, based upon prophetic *ḥadīth*, to give *bay'a* to him. Although al-Ṭabarī mentions a number of reports regarding the bitter acrimony between 'Umar and 'Alī (and his supporters), in the following chapter I demonstrate how he subtly dismisses them through the use of opposing reports that he considered to be authentic.

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[854] Asma Afsaruddin, 'Maslahah as a Political Concept', in *Mirror for the Muslim Prince: Islam and the Theory of Statecraft,* ed. by Mehrzad Boroujerdi (2013), pp. 16-44 (p. 27). Al-Ya'qūbī briefly mentions this in his *Ta'rīkh*. Ibid. fn 8.

6.7 Al-Ṭabarī's Chapter 3: Account of the Saqīfa:

6.7.1 Reports one to five

The third chapter consists of twenty-one reports making up almost of a quarter of the text under consideration. It starts with a long report, reported via al-Zuhrī, in which ''Umar, during his caliphate, described the events at Saqīfa at a Friday sermon in Medina.[855]

'Umar began his sermon by stating that although the *bay'a* to Abū Bakr was a *falta* (a sudden, unexpected event without consideration)[856] it was necessary in order to prevent a greater harm. In addition, Abū Bakr was undoubtedly the right choice. Upon the death of the Prophet, there was no unanimity on who should succeed him. 'Alī and his supporters remained in the house of Fāṭima, the Anṣār stayed away from the Muhājirūn, and the latter had gathered around Abū Bakr. 'Umar stated that he and Abū Bakr hastened to Saqīfa where the Anṣār were staking their claim to authority. Although 'Umar wanted to refute them, he remained quiet out of deference to Abū Bakr.

The latter then addressed the Anṣār, acknowledged their virtues but insisted that the Arabs would not submit except to the Quraysh. Abū Bakr successfully convinced some of the Anṣār that the Quraysh alone were entitled to succeed. He then recommended that *bay'a* be given to either 'Umar or Abū 'Ubayda. 'Umar was horrified at the suggestion that he be appointed over Abū Bakr given his status. One Anṣāri suggested joint leadership between the Anṣār and Muhājirūn. Although some of the Anṣār wanted to discuss the issue further, 'Umar ended any further discussion by initiating the *bay'a* to Abū Bakr. Others from the Muhājirūn and then the Anṣār then followed suit. In the rush, Sa'd b 'Ubāda, who was sitting down and wrapped up due to an illness, was trampled upon.

This report shows that initially there was no unanimity amongst the Companions on the issue of succession following the Prophet's death. Hence, 'Umar's statement that the Muslims were in three groups; Banū Hāshim, the Anṣār and the supporters of Abū Bakr. If the Prophet had appointed a successor, it is unlikely that any debate or discussion amongst the Companions

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[855] Al-Ṭabarī, pp. 1820-3.;Poonawala (1990), pp. 189-94.
[856] Poonawala (1990), p. 192 fn 1326.

would have taken place. Hence, this report is another implicit refutation of the Shī'ī theory of
naṣṣ.

Al-Ṭabarī's version of the account of 'Umar (via al-Zuhrī) differs from that Ibn Hishām's
recension.[857] The following addition is found in al-Ṭabarī's version.

> ['Umar said] By God, nothing was mightier than the rendering of the oath of allegiance
> to Abū Bakr. We feared that if [we] left [without rendering the oath of allegiance], no
> agreement would be hammered out later. It was either to follow the Anṣār in what we
> did not like, or else to oppose them, which would have led to disorder.[858]

By including this addition, al-Ṭabarī endorses the following justification made by 'Umar for the
hasty manner in which the decision was made to select Abū Bakr:

- Abū Bakr was the correct choice. (*By God, nothing was mightier than the rendering of
  the oath of allegiance to Abū Bakr*).

- Unity was paramount, even at the expense of protocol. (…*no agreement would be
  hammered out later*).

- Only the Muhājirūn were entitled to rule and not the Anṣār (*either to follow the Anṣār
  in what we did not like, or else to oppose them*).

The second report in this chapter contains some details about the virtues of the two men that
Abū Bakr and 'Umar met on their way to Saqīfa and is not of significance to our discussion.[859]
In the third report which is from Sayf b. 'Umar, al-Ṭabarī continues with the theme of unity.[860]
The body of Muslims could only be united under a single leader and hence the *bay'a* to Abū
Bakr occurred even before the Prophet was buried. He quotes the prominent companion, Sa'īd
b. Zayd as stating the following:

1. the *bay'a* to Abū Bakr was made on the same day as the Prophet died as the people
   disliked spending even a part of a day without being organised into a community,

2. only the apostates opposed Abū Bakr,

3. all of the Muhājirūn (and by implication 'Alī and the tribe of Banū Hāshim) gave *bay'a*
   to Abū Bakr.[861]

The fact that the Muhājirūn and Anṣār quickly followed suit in giving *bay'a*, without any
hesitation suggests that Abū Bakr never faced any serious opposition.

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[857] Ibid. p. 194 fn 1348.
[858] Al-Ṭabarī, p. 1823.; Poonawala (1990), p. 194.
[859] Al-Ṭabarī, p. 1824.;Poonawala (1990), pp. 194-5.
[860] Al-Ṭabarī, pp. 1824-5.; Poonawala (1990), p. 195.
[861] Sa'īd b. Zayd is stated in a *ḥadīth* as being one of the ten Companions promised Paradise.

That Abū Bakr was unopposed, this time from a key protagonist, is further emphasised in the fourth report, again from Sayf b. Umar.[862] ʿAlī rushed out of his house without taking time to fully dress, for fear of delaying his *bayʿa*. Thus, contrary to two reports in the previous chapter of al-Ṭabarī in which ʿAlī (and Zubayr) only gave *bayʿa* after being forced and threatened, in this report ʿAlī was not only happy and willing to give *bayʿa* to Abū Bakr but was in a rush to do so. Al-Ṭabarī in this report clearly intended to rebut the proto-Shīʿī narrative regarding the stance of ʿAlī regarding succession. If ʿAlī, from the outset, supported the selection of Abū Bakr, then the *Imāmate* theory, which is the edifice of proto-Shīʿīsm would collapse.[863]

In the fifth report from al-Zuhrī, two separate issue are mentioned.[864] The issue of Fāṭima's inheritance, and the delayed *bayʿa* of ʿAlī. The former was to become the subject of intense Sunnī-Shīʿī polemics. Al-ʾAbbās and Fāṭima asked Abū Bakr for their share of inheritance of the Prophet which included the land of Fadak.**[865]** Abū Bakr refused stating that he had heard the Prophet state that whatever was left behind by a Prophet could not be inherited from. Fāṭima therefore shunned Abū Bakr and did not speak to him about it for the rest of her life. ʿAlī buried her at night and did not permit Abū Bakr to attend her funeral. Despite the fact that Fāṭima was upset with Abū Bakr he is exonerated of any wrongdoing by virtue of the fact that he based his verdict on a prophetic *ḥadīth*.

The second topic in this report is the delayed *bayʿa* of ʿAlī and Banū Hāshim.[866] Contrary to Sayf's report in which ʿAlī rushed to give *bayʿa* as well as other reports in the previous chapter in which ʿAlī was coerced through threats of violence to give *bayʿa*, al-Zuhrī reports that neither ʿAlī nor Banū Hāshim gave *bayʿa* for six months. It appears from this report that although ʿAlī and the Banū Hāshim did not give *bayʿa*, they were left alone. This may have been due to the presence of ʿAlī's wife, Fāṭima - the daughter of the Prophet. Her presence in

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[862] Al-Ṭabarī, p. 1825.; Poonawala (1990), pp. 195-6.
[863] As for reverence for ʿAlī and his household, this is not particular to proto-Shīʿīs. This report contradicts the one favoured by al-Ṭabarī; that ʿAlī delayed his *bayʿa*. However, as we shall see, some scholars tried to reconcile the two reports.
[864] Al-Ṭabarī, pp. 1825-7.; Poonawala (1990), pp. 196-8.
[865] Fadak was a small agricultural village, one hundred fifty kilometres north of Medina. Despite its symbolic status, its exact location today is unknown. Prior to its conquest in 6-7/628, Fadak was inhabited by Jewish farmers. After conquest, according to some sources, Fadak became the personal property of the Prophet who used its revenue to support the needy. Upon the death of the Prophet, Fāṭima requested her share of inheritance including the land of Fadak. Abū Bakr refused stating that the Prophets were not inherited from. Abū Bakr continued to manage the land, distributing its produce amongst the poor. Vaglieri, L., "Fadak", .*EI²*,; Munt, H., "Fadak", *EI³*.
[866] Al-Ṭabarī, pp. 1825-7.;Poonawala (1990), pp. 197-8.;Both the Prophet and ʿAlī were from Banū Hāshim; a sub-clan of Quraysh.

protecting the reputation of 'Alī is supported by the fact that when she died, respect for 'Alī declined. Abū Bakr's caliphate was now firmly established, and 'Alī asked for reconciliation with Abū Bakr. Abū Bakr visited 'Alī with Banū Hāshim in attendance. In this meeting 'Alī acknowledged the high status of Abū Bakr but argued, that by virtue of his kinship with the Prophet, he had a right to be consulted regarding the succession. Because he was denied this, he had delayed his *bay'a*. Abū Bakr wept and stated that the only reason he did not distribute the Prophet's inheritance was due to what he had heard from the Prophet. Abū Bakr is presented as uncompromising in his adherence to the prophetic *ḥadīth*. Following this discussion 'Alī agreed to reconcile with Abū Bakr. Later that day Abū Bakr led the prayer and publicly excused 'Alī. 'Alī then publicly extoled the virtues of Abū Bakr, gave *bay'a* and was congratulated by the Companions. Although 'Alī felt aggrieved, the narrative does not give any sense of outright hostility towards Abū Bakr nor a sense of outrage at the latter's succession. Thus the 'Alī's only contention was the failure to consult him on an issue of paramount importance.

The kinship between 'Alī and the Prophet is given prominence in this report. It was on this basis that 'Alī felt he had a right to be consulted regarding the choice of leader. As for the issue of virtue and status, he affirmed it for Abū Bakr. There is no mention of *naṣṣ*. Given that 'Alī eventually gave *bay'a* to Abū Bakr, the legitimacy of Abū Bakr's caliphate, which was affirmed previously by most of the Companions, was now beyond doubt. Prior to giving *bay'a* to Abū Bakr, 'Alī was shunned by many of the Companions. Following the *bay'a*, they reconciled with him. Thus is appears that from the very beginning, support for Abū Bakr was strong and those who refused to give *bay'a* were censured.

In the previous chapter, al-Ṭabarī brought two reports demonstrating that 'Alī was forced to give *bay'a*. But in this chapter 'Alī gave *bay'a* of his own volition; one report mentions that he gave *bay'a* immediately after the Prophet's death and the other mentions that his *bay'a* occurred after six months. Thus al-Ṭabarī presents the reader with three irreconcilable views on the stance of 'Alī vis a vis Abū Bakr's selection. Al-Ṭabarī included all three views regarding the stance of 'Alī in order to highlight the range of opinions on this highly contentious and theologically significant issue. At the same time, through the use of the *isnād*, he gives precedence to the view that would later become the standard Sunnī narrative. The three views are summarised in the table below.

Table 6.4 'Alī's Bay'a

'Alī forced to give *bay'a*	'Alī gave *bay'a* of his own volition
1. 'Alī gave *bay'a* under compulsion and as a result of threats of violence. (chapter 2: **report five** and the **last few lines of report six)**	2. Alī rushed to give *bay'a* very quickly, not taking time to dress. (chapter 3: Sayf b. 'Umar).
	3. 'Alī delayed his *bay'a* until after the death of Fāṭima. (chapter 3: al-Zuhrī). A similar report is mentioned in al-Bukhari's *Ṣaḥīḥ* with almost identical wording.[867]

Given that reconciliation between the first view and the other two views is impossible, the reader has to choose between them. As stated in the introduction, where two or more reports contradicted each other, al-Ṭabarī would give preference to what *ḥadīth* specialists considered the 'most authentic' report.[868] Al-Ṭabarī implicitly rejects the reports that mention that 'Alī gave *bay'a* under compulsion and as a result of threats of violence, as they contradict an authentically established report, in this case a report corroborated by a *ḥadīth* in Bukhari.[869]

By the tenth century the first view became widespread amongst Shī'as and the second and third views became widely accepted amongst Sunnīs. Some Sunnī scholars such as Ibn Kathīr tried to reconcile the second and third views by stating that 'Alī gave *bay'a* twice.[870]

Regarding the contradiction in this chapter between al-Zuhrī's report ('Alī delayed his *bay'a* by six months) and Sayf b. 'Umar's report ('Alī rushed to give *bay'a*), Sayf's report is more favourable to the proto-Sunnī view than al-Zuhrī's, in that it gives the impression of complete harmony between 'Alī and Abū Bakr. However, al-Zuhrī's report ends with a reconciliation

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[867] https://sunnah.com/bukhari/64 [accessed 11 August 2018]
[868] There are multiple factors why one ḥadīth might be considered more authentic than another. These factors relate to the isnād (e.g. it being fully connected or being shorter, a higher level precision of narrators, a higher level of integrity of the narrators, and the manner in which the narrators reported the ḥadīth). Traditionists would also critique ḥadīth based upon the *matn.* Even if the *isnād* met the conditions of authenticity, the *ḥadīth* could be deemed weak if the *matn* contradicted a *matn* of a *ḥadīth* with a stronger *isnād.*
[869] A *ḥadīth* which contradicts a more reliable *ḥadīth* is called *Shāhdh or Munkar.* Brown (2009), p. 280.
[870] Ibn Kathir, *The Life of the Prophet Muhammad: A Translation of Al-Sira Al-Nabawiyya. Translated by Trevor Le Gassick*, (1998), pp. 357-8.

between Abū Bakr and 'Alī, with the latter acknowledging the former's status. It is reported with almost identical wording in Bukhari's Ṣaḥīḥ and hence would be given preference by traditionist such as al-Ṭabarī.[871] It may be argued that 'Alī's delay in giving *bay'a* implied that he initially rejected the validity of Abū Bakr's caliphate. However a close reading of the report shows that for the following three reasons this view is incorrect:

1. The reason for the delayed *bay'a* was related the issue of Fadak and not due to Abū Bakr's lack of credentials. 'Alī appeared reluctant to give *bay'a* because of the dispute between his wife and Abū Bakr. After his wife died, 'Alī took the initiative to reconcile with Abū Bakr.

2. 'Alī expressed his disappointment that he was not involved in the process of selecting a ruler particularly in light of his kinship with the Prophet. However, he accepted what he described as the 'good qualities' of Abū Bakr and later publicly enumerated his qualities including his precedence in Islam. He did not question the legitimacy of Abū Bakr's rule, only the process in which he was selected.

3. The fact that 'Alī did eventually give *bay'a*, albeit after a delay, demonstrated that he acknowledged the leadership of 'Alī. If he held that the caliphate was his sole right, due to *naṣṣ,* he would not have compromised his religious ideals in the interests of political expediency.

6.7.2 Reports Six to Nine

The next four reports in this chapter mention the reaction of Abū Sufyān to Abū Bakr's *bay'a* and the acrimonious exchange that occurred between him and 'Alī.[872] Abū Sufyān offered to supply men and cavalry to support the claim of 'Alī. 'Alī refused his offer and admonished Abū Sufyān, accusing him of stirring up trouble and reminding him of his past hostility to Islam. He defended Abū Bakr's authority. In reply Abū Sufyān mocked 'Alī and al-'Abbās referring to them as lowly and weak.

These four reports reflect very negatively on Abū Sufyān. His issue with the selection of Abū Bakr is a purely tribal one. Abū Bakr was from a less prominent Qurayshi tribe; hence his support for 'Alī was based on the noble status of Banū Hāshim. 'Alī is portrayed as upholding unity of the *umma*h and not allowing tribal partisanship to break this unity. Tribal

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[871] https://sunnah.com/bukhari/64 [accessed 19 September 2018]
[872] Al-Ṭabarī, pp. 1827-8.; Poonawala (1990), pp. 198-200.

considerations aside, he considered Abū Bakr as worthy of leadership. Thus al-Ṭabarī presents 'Alī in these four reports as a person who:

- was a staunch defender of Abū Bakr's right to rule.

- relegated tribal loyalties to Islamic values.

- was keen to maintain the unity of the *umma*.

Al-Ṭabarī is clearly supporting the choice of Abū Bakr as successor, using the report of the endorsement of 'Alī, to support this position.[873]

Reports Ten and Eleven

Report ten discusses the general *bay'a* given to Abū Bakr in the mosque the day after Saqīfa.[874] 'Umar informed the people that his reaction to the Prophet's death was incorrect. He then presented Abū Bakr to the people, enumerated his virtues and told them to give *bay'a* to him. After the *bay'a* was given, Abū Bakr addressed the people stating the following: he was not the best of them, he requested their aid if he did good and to be corrected if he did wrong, he made a promise to rule with justice and to aid the weak, he extoled the virtues of jihad, and stated that obedience to him was due only if he obeyed God and His Prophet. Thus in al-Ṭabarī's report of Abū Bakr inaugural address, the latter's humility, sense of justice, concern the downtrodden, and adherence to the teachings of the Prophet are apparent. In report eleven 'Umar told Ibn 'Abbās that he misunderstood a particular Quranic verse to mean that the Prophet would always remain amongst his *umma*h. Hence, his reaction of shock and disbelief upon hearing of the death of the Prophet.

Just as 'Umar was instrumental in securing the *bay'a* at Saqīfa, he was present the following day to ensure the people gave *bay'a* to Abū Bakr. Abū Bakr stressed his fallibility contrary to the proto-Shī'ī view of the infallible Imām. Abū Bakr made it clear that he did not seek leadership (I have been put in charge of you (*Qud wulaytu alaykum)*. His humility is also apparent ('I am not the best of you').[875]

6.7.3 Reports Twelve to Twenty-One

The remaining eight reports from Ibn Humayd are about the ritual washing, shrouding, burial and *janāza* of the Prophet.[876] Al-Ṭabarī states that the burial took place either a day after or three days after the Prophet's death. A lot of detail is given; 'Alī and his close relatives feature

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[873] The other contender was Sa'd b. 'Ubāda.
[874] Al-Ṭabarī, pp. 1828-9.; Poonawala (1990), pp. 200-1.
[875] Al-Ṭabarī, p. 1829.; Poonawala (1990), p. 201.
[876] Al-Ṭabarī, pp. 1830-4.; Poonawala (1990), pp. 202-6.

prominently in all the various funeral rites. However given that it was customary for the close relatives to carry out the various funeral rites, this fact it not particularly significant. The last two reports in this chapter state that during the Prophet's illness he cursed those who took the graves of their prophets as places of worship. The last injunction of the Prophet was that no two religions were to co-exist in the Arabian peninsula. He died on the 12ᵗʰ Rabī I, on the very same day he came to Medina, competing ten years since migration. These reports are not significant to my discussion.

In summary, al-Ṭabarī in this chapter gives considerable space to 'Umar's account of Saqīfa in which the latter justified both the decision to select Abū Bakr and the manner in which this was done. Al-Ṭabarī then uses the remainder of this chapter to further justify the selection of Abū Bakr through a number of reports in which 'Alī, whom the proto-Shī'ī considered to be Abū Bakr's nemesis, supported the decision at Saqīfa. According to the third report in this chapter there was unanimity amongst the Muhājirūn (and hence by default 'Alī) regarding Abū Bakr's selection. Two further reports demonstrate that 'Alī gave *bay'a* willingly thus refuting the reports in the previous chapter, in which he was coerced into giving *bay'a*. In his interaction with Abū Sufyān, 'Alī vehemently defended the decision to select Abū Bakr. The chapter ends with an inaugural address by Abū Bakr in which his humility, piety and justice are apparent.

6.8   Al-Ṭabarī's Chapter 5: The Day and the Month in Which the Messenger of God died

There are four reports in this chapter. In al-Ṭabarī's first report he attaches his own name to the *isnād* 'Abū Ja'far' (i.e. al-Ṭabarī). There is only one other report in the six chapters in question in which al-Ṭabarī does this. According to the first report in this chapter, the Prophet put Abū Bakr in charge of the Hajj in the year nine and explained to him its rites.[877] The following year (year eleven) the Prophet led the Hajj and died in the month of Rabī I.

This report is significant from a number of angles:

a)   In the year eleven, the Prophet led the Hajj in person, demonstrating the strong link between leadership of the Muslim community and leadership of the Hajj.

b)   The previous year, the Prophet had chosen Abū Bakr as the *emīr* of Hajj. Abū Bakr thus acted as a deputy for the Prophet in this pivotal role.

c)   Abū Bakr as the *emīr* of Hajj had to be knowledgeable about the details of the rites of Hajj in order to ensure that those under his authority were performing it correctly.

d)   The very first Hajj under Islam was led by Abū Bakr.

e)   The fact that al-Ṭabarī attached his name to the *isnād* suggests that he agrees with the text of the report.

f)   Although the Hajj led by Abū Bakr occurred in year ten, Al-Ṭabarī placed this narration in the midst of discussion about the Prophet's death and his succession (i.e. in year eleven). Al-Ṭabarī is thus making an intrinsic link between the position of *emīr* of Hajj and succession to the Prophet.

The second report highlights that a number of significant events occurred on a Monday: the birth of the Prophet; receipt of revelation; the lifting of the Qurayshi boycott; the Prophet's migration from Mecca to Medina; the Prophet's arrival in Medina; and his death.[878]

The third and fourth reports state that the Prophet died on Monday 12th of Rabī I and was buried on the night of Wednesday (i.e. Tuesday night).[879]

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[877] Al-Ṭabarī, p. 1836.;Poonawala (1990), p. 208.
[878] Ibid.
[879] Al-Ṭabarī, p. 1837.;Poonawala (1990), pp. 208-9.

6.9   Al-Ṭabarī's Chapter 6: 'What Took Place between the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār over the Matter of Leadership at the Portico of the Banu Sa'idah'.

6.9.1   Abū Mikhnaf's three reports

The final chapter in the text consists of eleven reports. The first three reports are from Abū Mikhnaf (amounting to half of the total chapter) and the remaining eight reports are from Sayf b. 'Umar. Both sources were received by al-Ṭabarī in written format.[880] Al-Ṭabarī received all three reports of Abū Mikhnaf via Hishām b. Muḥammad al-Kalbi.

6.9.1.1   Report One:

The first report by Abū Mikhnaf is the longest report in the entire text.[881] When the Prophet died, the Anṣār gathered at Saqīfa to appoint Saʿd b. 'Ubāda as their leader. Despite a severe sickness, he attended the gathering and addressed the Anṣār through one of his relatives. He extoled the virtues of the Anṣār stating that they: 'have <u>precedence in religion and merit in Islam</u> that no [other] tribe of Arabs can claim'.[882] (emphasis mine).

He mentioned other virtues of the Anṣār; they believed in the Prophet when others rejected him, they protected him and his companions, they fought jihad on his behalf, and through them, the Prophet was able to subjugate the Arabs. The Prophet died being pleased with the Anṣār, so they alone should succeed him. Initially his speech was met with unanimous approval (from the Anṣār) and they were keen to appoint him. But in the ensuing discussion some feared the reaction of the Muhājirūn who might also claim leadership based upon their precedence and kinship. One Anṣāri suggested joint leadership, much to the dismay of Saʿd.

When 'Umar heard about the meeting, he convinced Abū Bakr to leave the Prophet's house and immediately attend the meeting. 'Alī at this time was busy with burial preparations. On route, they met Abū 'Ubayda who joined them. They also met two Companions who tried unsuccessfully to convince them to turn back. At the meeting, 'Umar intended to deliver a speech, but Abū Bakr told him to allow him to speak first. Abū Bakr started by mentioning the

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[880] "al-Ṭabarī", EI².

[881] Al-Ṭabarī, pp. 1837-43.; Donner (1993), pp. 1-8.

[882] Donner (1993), p. 2.

reason why God sent the Prophet, to call to the worship of God alone. Most of the Arabs rejected this not wishing to leave the religion of their forefathers. But Allah chose the Muhājirūn to believe in the Prophet, and they endured persecution as a result. They bore this patiently <u>and they were the first people on earth to worship God alone and to follow his Prophet</u>. (emphasis mine). They were the friends and kinsmen of the Prophet and only an oppressor would dispute their right to succeed the Prophet. Abū Bakr then extoled the virtues of the Anṣār; they aided the Prophet and Islam, *hijra* was made to them, and the majority of the Prophet's wives and companions were from amongst them. No one was better than the Anṣār after the Muhājirūn. The Muhājirūn would always consult them in important matters, but they were to be the leaders and the Anṣār, their helpers.

Then al-Ḥubāb b. al-Mundhir spoke inciting the Anṣār not to differ amongst themselves but to take the authority, as they possessed power, wealth and courage. He suggested a leader from the Anṣār and a leader from Quraysh. ʿUmar rejected this idea arguing that the Arabs would only submit to the tribe of the Prophet and only a sinner would deny this. Al-Ḥubāb b. al-Mundhir urged the Anṣār not to listen to ʿUmar and Abū Bakr but to take control, and if the Muhājirūn refused then to drive them out. He exchanged insults with ʿUmar and Abū ʿUbayda tried to calm the situation down. Then Bashīr b. Saʿd spoke arguing that the good that was done by the Anṣār was for the pleasure of God, not for worldly gain. The Prophet was from Quraysh and hence, he argued, Quraysh had a greater right to leadership.

Abū Bakr then presented ʿUmar and Abū ʿUbayda, suggesting that *bayʿa* be given to one of the two. Both refused, due to Abū Bakr's precedence in Islam, and his leading of the prayer during the Prophet's illness. As they were about to give *bayʿa* to him, Bashīr preceded them, at which al-Ḥubāb admonished him and accused him of envying his cousins.[883] Bashīr replied that they had greater right than him and he would never contend with them. The ʿAws followed suit in giving *bayʿa* out of fear that Saʿd b. ʿUbāda, a Khazraji would be put in authority over them.

In this report al-Ṭabarī uses Abū Mikhnaf to highlight some of the tensions at Saqīfa amongst the Anṣār as well as between the Anṣār and the Muhājirūn. Both the Anṣār and Muhājirūn made recourse to paradigm of excellence and precedence in support of their respective claims to leadership. Abū Bakr and ʿUmar presented a unified front with cogent arguments in favour of a Qurayshi leader. The Anṣār on the other hand appear disunited from the onset. They did

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[883] Bashīr was from the 'Aws.

not unanimously agree on the leadership Sa'd b. 'Ubāda, as some were sensitive to the feelings of the Muhājirūn and hence suggested joint leadership. Hence, even before Abū Bakr arrived, there was disagreement in their ranks. This lack of unity was further compounded by underlying tribal tensions which came to the fore as soon as 'Umar nominated Abū Bakr. The 'Aws, not wanting to be dominated by their Khazraj rivals, supported Abū Bakr. Abū Bakr' speech in favour of the Muhājirūn also convinced at least one prominent Anṣārī, Bashīr b. Sa'd to support the Muhājirūn.

Abū Mikhnaf's report highlights several different opinions amongst the Anṣar.

- Sa'd b. 'Ubāda held that complete political authority should go to the Anṣār.

- Some of the Anṣār were apprehensive about Sa'd's proposal due to the possible reaction of the Muhājirūn if the Anṣār were to take power.

- Hubāb b. Mundhir suggested power sharing between the Anṣār and Muhājirūn.

- Some of the Anṣār were convinced by Abū Bakr's argument that authority belonged exclusively to the Quraysh.

- Some of the 'Aws clan of Anṣar supported Abū Bakr out of fear of being dominated by the Khazraj.[884]

Despite Abū Mikhnaf's 'Alid sympathies, none of his three reports in this chapter mention 'Alī's right to succeed the Prophet.[885] By excluding any reference to 'Alī in the Saqīfa debate, and focusing instead on the Anṣār-Muhājirūn debate, al-Ṭabarī uses Abū Mikhnaf's narrative to downplay proto-Shī'ī claims in favour of 'Alī and hence implicitly supports the succession of Abū Bakr. Throughout the six chapters, al-Ṭabarī uses Abū Mikhnaf used sparingly, and selectively; none of his accounts advance the proto-Shī'ī view of succession to the Prophet.

6.9.1.2 Report Two

The second report from Abū Mikhnaf states that the tribe of Aslam thronged the streets of Medina, gave *bay'a* to Abū Bakr. Their presence assured 'Umar that he had won the day.[886]

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[884] The Khazraj were numerically superior to the 'Aws. Clarke, p. 36.

[885] Athamina mentions that although Abū Mikhnaf had 'Alid sympathies, it is not clear that he had "pure Shī'ī tendencies". Athamina, K., "Abū Mikhnaf", EI³.

[886] Al-Ṭabarī, p. 1843.;Donner (1993), p. 8. ;Aslam resided on the outskirts of Medina. Madelung argues that they were bitter enemies of the Anṣār and hence supported Abū Bakr. Madelung (1997), p. 34.

6.9.1.3   Report Three

The third report from Abū Mikhnaf states that when the people crowded to give *bay'a* to Abū

Bakr, Saʿd was almost trampled leading some people to say: 'Be careful not to step on Saʿd'.[887]

'Umar said; 'May Allah kill him', and stepped on his head, at which Saʿd threatened to knock

his teeth out. Abū Bakr intervened to calm things down. Saʿd then lamented that if he had the

strength he would have taken over Medina. He returned home, but refused to give *bay'a*,

stating that he would rather fight with everything at his disposal. Bashīr b. Saʿd suggested that

he be left alone, to which Abū Bakr and 'Umar agree. Saʿd abandoned the congregational

prayer.

The first and third reports from Abū Mikhnaf contradict the proto-Sunnī view that

disagreement amongst the Companions at Saqīfa was something very rare and when it did

occur it was minimal and short lived. In these reports al-Ḥubāb b. al-Mundhir suggested that

the Anṣār should drive the Muhājirūn out of Medina and exchanged insults with 'Umar. Tribal

tensions between the 'Aws and Khazraj came to the fore, Saʿd refused to give *bay'a*,

exchanged very harsh words with 'Umar and even left of the congregational prayer.

There are several reasons why al-Ṭabarī included these reports from Abū Mikhnaf despite the

fact that they contradict the proto-Sunnī view regarding the lack of animosity between

Companions.

1. Unlike the question as to who was entitled to succeed the Prophet; Abū Bakr or 'Alī,

    which determined one's sectarian identity, the dispute between Sa 'd b. 'Ubāda and

    Abū Bakr (and between the Muhājirūn and Anṣār) had no theological significance. At

    the most, it was uncomfortable reading for proto-Sunnīs. Hence, al-Ṭabarī was willing

    to use the reports of the pro-'Alid Abū Mikhnaf which mention some unpleasant

    incidents between the Muhājirūn and Anṣār, in order to divert attention away from

    the claims in favour of 'Alī.

2. Although (according to report three) Saʿd b. 'Ubāda refused to give *bay'a*, he was not

    able to lead any concerted opposition to Abū Bakr. Despite his strong standing as

    leader of the Khazraj, his fellow tribesmen appeared to support Abū Bakr.

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[887] Al-Ṭabarī, pp. 1843-4.; Donner (1993), pp. 8-10.

3. The belligerent stance of Sa'd and his refusal to give *bay'a* is contradicted by two other reports. In a report mentioned earlier in chapter two, Sa'd b. 'Ubāda was convinced that Abū Bakr should be the Caliph replying to Abū Bakr: 'You have spoken the truth, We are the viziers and you are the rulers'.[888] Also as we shall see in the next section, according to Sayf b. 'Umar, Sa'd did give *bay'a* albeit unwillingly.

By presenting these three contradictory reports, al-Ṭabarī is informing the reader of the range of opinions held by his predecessors regarding the stance of Sa'd and directing the reader to choose between them. The three opinions are given in the table below:

Table 6.5 Sa'd's Bay'a

Sa'd gave *bay'a* to Abū Bakr.	Report 1. Sa'd gave *bay'a* willingly.[889]	chapter two.
	Report 2. Sa'd was compelled to give *bay'a*.[890]	chapter six: Sayf b. 'Umar.
Sa'd refused to give *bay'a* to Abū Bakr.	Report 3. Sa'd refused to give *bay'a* and abandoned the congregational prayer.[891]	chapter six: Abū Mikhnaf.

As with the contradictory reports regarding 'Alī's stance towards Abū Bakr, al-Ṭabarī would have given preference to the 'most authentic' report. However in this case all three reports, according to the Sunnī science of *ḥadīth,* are weak.

Report three from Abū Mikhnaf's is the severest in weakness, so it is likely al-Ṭabarī would have rejected this and given preference to the first or second report - i.e. Sa'd gave *bay'a*, either willingly or unwillingly. But given that these other two reports are also weak, al-Ṭabarī may be implying that although Sa'd did give *bay'a*, his exact stance towards Abū Bakr cannot be stated with any certainty. However according to a *ḥadīth* reported in the *Musnad* of Ahmad, Sa'd b. 'Ubāda gave *bay'a* willingly after being convinced by Abū Bakr. In this *ḥadīth*, which is similar to the report in chapter two, Abū Bakr reminded Sa'd that the Prophet said, in

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[888] Poonawala (1990), p. 188.

[889] Its *isnād* is *mursal* (i.e a *tabi'i* directly narrates from the Prophet) and the *matn* is *nakāra* (no supporting evidence for that particular wording). Muhammad bin Tahir al-Barzanji & Muhammad Subhi Hasan Hallaq, *Da'If Tarikh Al-Tabari. Volume 3*, (2013), p. 17.

[890] *Isnād* is *da'īf* and the *matn* is *nakāra*. Ibid. p. 24.

[891] *Isnād* is *da'īf* as: 1) it contains Abū Mikhnaf and Hishām b. Kalbi, and 2) *isnād* is disconnected. The *matn* is rejected as it contradicts stronger reports. Ibid. p. 23.

his presence, that 'Quraysh are to be charge of this affair'. Sa'd replied: 'You have spoken the truth; we are the advisors and you are the leaders.[892]

Although the *isnād* of this *ḥadīth* is weak due to it being *mursal*, the *ḥadīth is Ṣaḥīḥ li Ghayrihi* (authentic due to corroborating evidence).[893] Given al-Ṭabarī's long stay in Baghdad shortly after the death of Ahmad b. Ḥanbal, it is likely that al-Ṭabarī was aware of this *ḥadīth* and hence supported the view that Sa 'd gave *bay'a* willingly after being convinced by Abū Bakr. Hence, the other two opinions are presented by al-Ṭabarī with a view to dismissing them.

6.9.2   Sayf b. 'Umar's eight reports

The next eight reports are from Sayf b. 'Umar, however only two relate to Saqīfa and its immediate aftermath. The other six concern the campaign of Usāma b. Zayd.

The first of two reports mention that during the debate at Saqīfa, al-Ḥubāb b. Mundhir drew his sword and was attacked by 'Umar who then went on to attack Sa'd.[894] After the people gave *bay'a* to Abū Bakr, Sa'd followed suit. When Sa'd was being trampled 'Umar referred to him as a hypocrite. This report begins in the middle of the Saqīfa debate with a violent altercation involving 'Umar with al-Ḥubāb and then with Sa'd. But after 'Umar attacked Sa'd, the latter gave *bay'a* to Abū Bakr along with the rest of the Companions and was then accused of hypocrisy by 'Umar. This report is confusing and difficult to follow and gives the impression of chaos and mayhem leading up to the *bay'a* to Abū Bakr.

In the Sayf b. 'Umar's second report, Sa'd complained to Abū Bakr that he was compelled by the Muhājirūn and by his tribe (emphasis mine) to render the *bay'a*.[895] Abū Bakr emphasised the importance of unity, adding that if he were to cause division, he would be killed. Implicit in this report is the overwhelming support for Abū Bakr. Thus contrary to the reports of Abū Mikhnaf, Sa'd b. 'Ubāda gave *bay'a* to Abū Bakr albeit begrudgingly. Sa'd addressed the Muhājirūn stating that they, and his tribe compelled him to give *bay'a* to Abū Bakr. The decision to select Abū Bakr as caliph was supported on all sides. The community addressed him in the plural; 'we forced you to unity…if you withdraw your hand from unity, we will strike of you head'. This text from Sayf juxtaposes the feelings and aspirations of the sole individual - Sa'd, against the needs of the community to maintain unity. The feelings of Sa'd were

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[892] Nasiruddin Al-Khattab, *English Translation of Musnad Imam Ahmad Bin Hanbal*, (2012), p. 37.
[893] Ibid.
[894] Al-Ṭabarī, pp. 1844-5.;Donner (1993), p. 10.
[895] Al-Ṭabarī, p. 1845.;Donner (1993), p. 11.

immaterial in light of the overarching need for the *umma* to be united. This unity could not be broken at any cost, and even a prominent Companion such as Sa'd b. 'Ubāda was threatened with death if he were to cause disunity.

However, these two reports need to be read in light of the previous discussion; i.e. al-Ṭabarī supported the view that Sa 'd gave the *bay'a* willingly and that al-Ṭabarī only included contrary reports with a view to dismissing them.

The final six reports discuss the army of Usāma.[896] Two days after the Prophet's death, Abū Bakr dispatched the army of Usāma. He addressed the people, stating that his fallibility, and that his mistakes should be corrected. He discussed the approaching day of judgement, the importance of good deeds, and the transitory nature of this world.[897]

In light of the apostasy / rebellion of a number of Arab tribes, Abū Bakr was advised him to delay the mission of Usāma but he staunchly refused.[898] Usāma, having heard about the Prophet's death, wished to return back to Medina for fear that the hypocrites would attack the city.[899] 'Umar was sent back to Medina to convey this response, as well as the request from the Anṣār that an older person should lead them into battle. Abū Bakr refused the first request and became infuriated at the second.[900] He caught up with Usāma and convinced him to discharge 'Umar from his army. Abū Bakr then advised the army about the rules of warfare, the route to take and places to attack. Usāma returns after 40 days with booty.[901]

Abū Bakr's firm resolve and determination to follow the commands of the Prophet are clear from these reports. Despite the grave danger posed to Medina from the rebellious tribes, Abū Bakr was insistent on dispatching the army of Usāma given that it was the command of the Prophet. Nothing could take precedence over a command of the Prophet. Abū Bakr angrily refused a suggestion that Usāma should be replaced by someone his senior, considering it an affront to the Prophet. He gave instructions to Usāma about the rules of warfare, essentially repeating prophetic injunctions regarding the prohibition of treachery, the killing of civilians, destroying trees and killing livestock. Abū Bakr also advised Usāma about battle strategy. Abū

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[896] Al-Ṭabarī, pp. 1845-51.; Donner (1993), pp. 11-18.
[897] Al-Ṭabarī, pp. 1845-7.; Donner (1993), pp. 11-13.
[898] Al-Ṭabarī, p. 1848.; Donner (1993), pp. 13-14.
[899] Al-Ṭabarī, p. 1849.; Donner (1993), pp. 14-15.
[900] Ibid.
[901] Al-Ṭabarī, pp. 1850-1.; Donner (1993), pp. 15-17.

Bakr's knowledge of both fiqh and tactical issues are evident here. The army proceeded, with Usāma at the head, and returned successful with much booty. Abū Bakr's uncompromising stance in following the Prophet's wishes was vindicated.

6.10 Conclusion.

An initial perusal of the *Ta'rīkh* gives the impression that al-Ṭabarī, by presenting a range of contradictory reports, remains aloof from the debate on the issue of legitimate leadership, leaving it to the reader to decide 'what really happened'. However, a close reading of the Saqīfa text reveals that al-Ṭabarī espoused a proto-Sunnī perspective on the issue of succession to the Prophet. Through a number of strategies of compilation, he clearly dismisses the view that 'Alī was the rightful heir of the Prophet and vindicates the decision to select Abū Bakr. These strategies include his selection of sources, omission of other sources, foreshadowing, repetition and use of brief commentary. By use of these strategies al-Ṭabarī emphasises the 'excellence and precedence' of Abū Bakr over and above 'Alī, thus legitimising his succession to the Prophet. Although al-Ṭabarī's narrative mentions conflict between Abū Bakr on one side and 'Alī and Sa 'd b. 'Ubāda on the other, he dismisses the reports of this conflict through the use of other 'authentic' reports that diametrically oppose them. Through the use of the *isnād*, he directs the reader to choose more authentic reports, in which 'Alī and Sa'd unhesitatingly accepted the outcome at Saqīfa.[902]

In the following chapter I offer a close reading of al-Balādhurī's chronicle, in order to examine his stance on succession to the Prophet.

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[902] This view concurs with Mårtensson who states that al-Ṭabarī brings variant reports, "and then proceed to evaluate which ones are the most reliable, his main criteria of evaluation being soundness of the *isnād*". Mårtensson (2005), p. 292.

7   An Analysis of the *Ansāb* of al-Balādhurī

7.1   Introduction

In this chapter I will demonstrate that, like al-Ṭabarī, al-Balādhurī uses a number of strategies of compilation in his Saqīfa narrative to highlight the excellence and precedence of Abū Bakr, and by this, favour his succession to Prophet Muḥammad. These strategies of compilation include selection of sources, omission of other sources, foreshadowing and repetition. Structurally this chapter consists of an introduction, organisation of source material, a discussion of the main sources, followed by four sections each relating to a chapter from the *Ansāb,* and then a conclusion.

In each section, I draw to attention to the strategies of compilation that al-Balādhurī used to highlight the excellence and precedence of Abū Bakr. I use the word 'text' to refer to al-Balādhurī's four chapters.

7.2   Organisation of Source Material

Similar to al-Ṭabarī, Al-Balādhurī's text is written in the *ḥadīth* genre; each report is preceded by an *isnād*. As with al-Ṭabarī, not all the *isnāds* are complete.[903] His presentation of the events follows a much more logical sequence than al-Ṭabarī. He has four distinct chapter headings in chronological order. The four chapter headings are given in the table below:

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[903] Several *isnāds* stop at either al-Wāqidī, Ibn Ishāq or Abū Mikhnaf implying that al-Balādhurī had access to their written sources, usually through an intermediary. Other *isnād*s were received incomplete. For example, al-Zuhrī often fails to give an *isnād* or would just mention his immediate source. Khalidi (1994), p. 33.; John Marsden Beaumont Jones, 'The Maghazi Literature', in *Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period,* ed. by A Beeston, et al. (1983), pp. 344-51 (p. 347).

Table 7.1 Al-Balādhurī's Chapter Headings

Name of Chapter	No. of reports	% of text
[chapter 1] **The speech of the Prophet regarding Abū Bakr.** [904]	13	6%
[chapter 2] **The death illness of the Prophet.**[905]	93	49%
[chapter 3] **The washing of the Prophet, shrouding and burial.**[906]	51	19%
[chapter 4] **The Affair of Saqīfa.**[907]	36	26%

In the *Ansāb*, one entire chapter is devoted to the Saqīfa incident and the *bay'a* to Abū Bakr amounting to 26% of the text. In al-Ṭabarī's *Ta'rīkh*, reports of the Saqīfa incident and the *bay'a* to Abū Bakr are dispersed over three separate chapters. These reports amount to 40% of the total text. Hence, al-Ṭabarī devotes almost half of the text in question to the Saqīfa incident and the *bay'a* to Abū Bakr, whereas al-Balādhurī devotes just over a quarter. However, whereas al-Balādhurī addresses the topic in one dedicated chapter, al-Ṭabarī discusses it over three different chapters. Important individuals such as Abū Bakr, 'Āisha, 'Alī and 'Abbās feature prominently in the section - all of them in a positive light.

Half of the text is devoted to the final illness of the Prophet. Although only six per cent of the text covers the virtues of Abū Bakr, this percentage figure is not inconsequential. That an entire heading has been devoted to enumerating Abū Bakr's virtues is highly significant particularly given that it comes just before the discussion on succession. The Sunnī books of *ḥadīth* are replete with reports about the virtues of 'Alī, yet al-Balādhurī chooses not to use any of them.

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[904] Aḥmad b. Yāḥyā al-Balādhurī, 'Ansab Al-Ashraf', ed. by Muhammad Ḥamidullah (1959), pp. 540-3).;The chapter headings (e.g. *The speech of the Prophet regarding Abū Bakr*) are from al-Balādhurī. The numbering of the chapters; one, two….are from me.
[905] Ibid. pp. 543-69.
[906] Ibid. pp. 569-79.
[907] Ibid. pp. 579-91.

7.3   Al-Balādhurī's sources

The main sources used by al-Balādhurī in this section of the *Ansāb* are Muḥammad b. Saʿd al-Wāqidī, Ibn Ishāq, al-Zuhrī, Abū Mikhnaf and al-Madāʾini.[908]

Table 7.2 Al-Balādhurī's sources

Name of Source	Number of Reports
Muḥammad b. Saʿd [909]	30 (15%)
al-Wāqidī	34 (18%)
Ibn Ishāq [910]	18 (9%)
al-Zuhrī	42 (22%)
Abū Mikhnaf [911]	4 (2%)
al-Madāʾini	14 (7%)

Al-Zuhrī (d. 124/742) was a famous traditionist and a student of Saʿīd b. al-Musayyab and ʿUrwa b. al-Zubayr. In his quest for knowledge he would write down *ḥadīth* and reports from the Companions. He would later dictate these to his students. His erudition was recognised by the Umayyad Caliphs and despite his family's support for the counter-caliphate of Ibn Zubayr, he enjoyed the patronage of various Umayyad Caliphs. Maʿmar b. Rāshid narrated from him.[912]

Muḥammad b. Saʿd was the scribe of al-Wāqidī and transmitted the latter's works. He also studied genealogy under Hishām b. al-Kalbī. He is known for his *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kabīr* (Book of Classes) consists of biographical entries for 4250 *ḥadīth* narrators (including about six hundred women) over the first two centuries of Islam. The work begins with the *Sīra* and then for each generation he gives biographies of *ḥadīth* narrators arranged geographically, and within each region chronologically.

Al-Madāʾinī (d.228/843) was a famous historian who authored over 200 works on subjects as diverse as *adab* (literature addressed to the ruling classes and intellectuals on moral refinement), geography, zoology and poetry. He was considered to be an authority in *Sīra*, genealogy, the *futūḥ*, the *maghāzī* and the transmission of poetry. Only two of his works, the *Kitāb al-Murdifāt min Quraysh* and the *Kitāb al-Taʿāzī* have survived. In compiling his historical

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[908] The biographies of al-Wāqidī, Ibn Ishāq and Abū Mikhnaf are given in chapter 6.4.

[909] All but five of Ibn Saʿd's reports are from al-Wāqidī.

[910] Half of Ibn Ishāq's reports in this section are from al-Zuhrī.

[911] Only one of the four reports of Abū Mikhnaf is remotely connected to the issue of ʿAlī's claim to the caliphate. In this report ʿAbbās admonishes ʿAlī for repeatedly ignoring his advice, when told to put himself forward as a potential leader.

[912] Lecker, M.. "al-Zuhrī", EI².

works, he used the methodology of the *muḥaddith*.[913] He had a number of students including al-Balādhurī.[914]

7.4 Al-Balādhurī's Chapter 1: The speech of the Messenger of Allah regarding Abū Bakr

This chapter consists of thirteen reports including one combined *isnād*. Muḥammad b. Saʿd appears four times in these *isnāds* as al-Balādhurī's immediate source, and al-Madāʾini appears once.

Four reports explicitly state that the Prophet wanted to write a Will in favour of Abū Bakr.

1. 'Bring me a shoulder blade in order for me to write a Will for Abū Bakr so that nobody will differ regarding him'.[915]

2. (The Prophet said to ʿĀisha) 'Call for me your father and your brother in order that I write for Abū Bakr a Will. For I fear that a claimant might say, or a person of desires might covet (succeeding me). But Allah and the believers refuse anyone except Abū Bakr'. [916]

3. (The Prophet said to ʿĀisha): 'Call your father and your brother, I will make testament for Abū Bakr. For indeed I fear that a person of desires might covet (succeeding me)'. (ʿĀisha said): 'Or he thought that an untrustworthy person'. 'And Allah and the believers refuse that'.[917]

4. 'Call for me ʿAbd al-Rahman b. Abī Bakr and I will write for Abū Bakr a Will so that the Muslims will not differ regarding it after me'. Then he: 'Leave it. We seek refuge from Allah that the believers differ regarding Abū Bakr'.[918]

In the fourth report the Prophet changed his mind regarding the writing of a Will in favour of Abū Bakr as he did not expect the people to differ regarding his succession.

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[913] He carefully selected his material and where possible he would give an *isnād*. However, not all of his *isnād*s were complete. Sezgin, U., "al-Madāʾinī", EI².; Ilkka Lindstedt, 'Who Authored Al-Mada'ini's Works?', in *Concepts of Authorship in Pre-Modern Arabic Texts,* ed. by Lale Behzadi, et al. (2016), pp. 153-66. published online 2012.

[914] "al-Madāʾinī", EI².

[915] al-Balādhurī, p. 541.; The English translation of the text contained within al-Balādhurī's *Ansāb* is mine.

[916] Ibid.

[917] Ibid

[918] al-Balādhurī, p. 542.

Five reports imply that the Prophet wanted to Abū Bakr to succeed him.

1 & 2.   'I do not know how long I will remain amongst you, so follow the example of these two after me - and he pointed to Abū Bakr and 'Umar' (mentioned twice).[919]

3 & 4.   'Follow the example of the two/those who come after me-Abū Bakr and 'Umar.' mentioned twice, with slightly different wording).[920]

5.   'A woman came to the Prophet asking him something. He said: 'Return to me'. She said: And If I return to you and I do not find you, O Messenger of Allah?'- meaning death. He said to her: 'If you return and do not find me, then go to Abū Bakr'.[921]

One report states the virtues of Abū Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthmān, mentioning them in that order. Finally, one report alludes to the succession of Abū Bakr and 'Umar, and states that 'Alī would not be nominated:

   'If you appoint Abū Bakr you will find him weak him in his body, strong in the affairs of Allah. And if you appoint 'Umar you will find him strong within himself, strong in the affairs of Allah. *And if you appoint 'Alī and you will not do that*, (emphasis mine) you will find him to be a guide and guided, guiding you to the Straight Path'.[922]

7.4.1   Summary.

Al-Balādhurī uses this chapter to argue that the Prophet wanted Abū Bakr to succeed him. He adduces a number of reports in which the Prophet either explicitly nominated Abū Bakr or alluded to Abū Bakr's nomination. Al-Balādhurī uses this chapter as a preamble to the events at Saqīfa. If Abū Bakr had been nominated by the Prophet, then his succession was a *fait accompli*. Thus the rest of the narrative must be seen in light of this fact. That some Companions may have initially supported alternative candidates does not in any way detract from the legitimacy of Abū Bakr in al-Balādhurī's view.

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[919] Ibid. p. 540.
[920] Ibid.
[921] Ibid.
[922] Ibid. p. 542.

7.5 Al-Balādhurī's Chapter Two: The final illness of the Prophet

This chapter covers some significant events that occurred during the Prophet's final illness. It consists of ninety-four reports and is the longest of the four chapters, comprising of half of the total text. Given the large number reports in this chapter, I have broken it down into sections denoted A, B and C; each section contains a group of reports with similar themes.

7.5.1 Section A: Reports 1-13[923]

Key themes: The beginning of the Prophet's illness, his supplication for the deceased, the day of his death and burial, permission to be nursed in 'Āisha's house, his death in 'Āisha's house, the Prophet was given a choice between this world and next, the severity of his illness, his family administered medicine to the Prophet believing that he was suffering from pleurisy.

The chapter starts with a number of reports in which, accompanied by Abū Muwayhiba, the Prophet visited the graves of the martyrs in Baqī. He sought forgiveness for them and informed Abū Muwayhiba that he had been given a choice between this world and the next, and he that had chosen the latter. On return from Baqī', the Prophet became severely ill.[924] As the illness intensified, the Prophet asked permission to be relocated to the house of 'Āisha and was assisted by two men to walk to 'Āisha's house.[925] The severity of his illness caused him to faint, and whilst he was unconscious a number of his wives, out of concern that he might be suffering pleurisy, administered medicine to him through the side of his mouth. [926]When he awoke, he admonished them and, as a punishment, he ordered that they administer the medicine to each other.[927] On another occasion, despite his severe illness, 'Āisha joked with him making him smile.[928] He died on Monday in the middle of *Rabī' I* and was buried on Wednesday night.[929]

7.5.2 Section B: Reports 14-42[930]

Key themes: Abū Bakr's knowledge, Abū Bakr's close companionship with the Prophet, the Prophet was given a choice between this world and the next, his death and burial in 'Āisha's house, the severity of his illness, 'Āisha recited Quranic verses over the Prophet, 'Āisha

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[923] Ibid. pp. 543-6.;
[924] Ibid. pp. 543-4.
[925] Ibid. p. 544.
[926] Ibid. pp. 545-6.
[927] Ibid.
[928] Ibid. p. 544.
[929] Ibid. p. 543.
[930] Ibid. pp. 546-53.

understood from words of the Prophet that he had chosen the Hereafter over this world, the Prophet secretly informed Fāṭima of his death, her distress due to the severity of the Prophet's illness.

This section begins with the following report:

> Indeed one of the slaves of Allah has been given the choice by Allah between the ephemeral world and that which is with Him (the Hereafter). So he chose that which is with his Lord. Abū Bakr understood that and he knew that he meant by this his death (emphasis mine). So he cried saying: 'may our lives, wealth and sons be sacrificed for you'. Then he (the Prophet) said: 'Look at these open doors. So close them except Abū Bakr's door. As indeed I do not know of anyone who is more virtuous in companionship to me than him'. [931]

The next report gives additional information. After Abū Bakr had started to cry:

> Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī said: 'O Abū Bakr 'What makes you cry, when a slave has been given a choice between the ephemeral world and Hereafter, and he chose the Hereafter?'[932]

Only Abū Bakr out of all the Companions understood that the Prophet's choice referred to his death. The report then continues:

> The Prophet looked towards Abū Bakr and said: 'the most generous of you in companionship and in his possessions is Ibn Abī Quḥāfa (i.e. Abū Bakr). Close every door to the masjid except the door of Abū Bakr'.[933]

A number of virtues of Abū Bakr are highlighted in these two reports. Firstly, his superior knowledge due to his ability to fully comprehend the intent of the Prophet's words. Secondly, in both reports the Prophet orders all of the doors to the mosque to be closed except that of Abū Bakr. Thirdly, the closeness between the Prophet and Abū Bakr surpassed that of other Companions. Fourthly, the generosity of Abū Bakr as attested to by the Prophet.

A number of reports in this section mention the dying moments of the Prophet.[934] Almost half of the reports in this section are narrated by ʿĀisha and the wordings of the reports collectively

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[931] Ibid. p. 547.
[932] Ibid.
[933] Ibid.
[934] Ibid. pp. 547-52.

suggest that she was with the Prophet during his final days, and during his final moments. Two reports state that he died whilst leaning on ʿĀisha's lap.[935]

In one report, the Prophet urged the Muhājirūn to treat the Anṣār well and to overlook their faults.[936] This report shows that the Prophet knew that his death was imminent. But it also implies that he knew that he would be succeeded by someone from the Muhājirūn.

Many of the reports in the section are unrelated to the issue of succession, however I will briefly mention them for the sake of completion.

- Seven reports mention that the Prophet, in his final moments chose to be joined with the Highest Companion (i.e. to die) and in two of these reports ʿĀisha realised that the Prophet had indeed chosen death.[937]

- Five reports mention the severity of the Prophet's fever, and the severe pain that he was in.[938]

- Two reports mention that due to the fact he knew he was close to death, the Prophet chose not to supplicate for a cure, and he instructed ʿĀisha not to recite Quranic invocations over him. However he did recite these invocations over himself.[939]

- In two reports the Prophet cursed those who took the graves of their Prophets as places of worship.[940] Due to this, ʿĀisha stated that he was buried in her room.

- In three reports, the Prophet knew that his death was close. Upon receiving a chapter of the Quran called *Naṣr* (victory) the Prophet stated: 'My death has been announced'.[941] Another report highlights the end of prophethood and hence the impending death of the Prophet. The Prophet repeated three times: 'O Allah have I conveyed (the message)?'[942]

- The Prophet's daughter Fāṭima is mentioned in four reports. In the first report the Prophet informed Fāṭima of his impending death at which she cried. He then informed her that she would be the first of his family to join her and that she was the leader of the female believers, causing her to laugh.[943] Three reports mention that the severity

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[935] Ibid. p. 549.
[936] Ibid. p. 547.
[937] Ibid. pp. 547-9.;The 'Highest Companion' refers to the Prophets, martyrs and truthful.
[938] Ibid. pp. 549-52.
[939] Ibid. pp. 549-50.
[940] Ibid. p. 551. ;i.e. Jews and Christians.
[941] Ibid. p. 553.
[942] Ibid. p. 551.
[943] Ibid. p. 552.

of the Prophet's illness caused immense distress to Fāṭima. The Prophet consoled her by stating that his death, which was close, would be a relief for him.[944]

Like al-Ṭabarī, Balādhuri gives considerable attention to the Prophet's final illness. However, in al-Balādhurī's narrative, the Prophet's daughter Fāṭima features prominently during the Prophet's illness. The reports demonstrate the status of Fāṭima and the mutual love between her and the Prophet. Proto-Sunnī scholars were at pains to stress their love for the *ahl-bayt* in light of proto Shī'ī accusations to the contrary. The space devoted to the Prophet's daughter by al-Balādhurī may be indicative of this. As with al-Ṭabarī, al-Balādhurī is keen to demonstrate Abū Bakr's superior knowledge, his generosity and closeness to the Prophet and hence his suitability for leadership. In the above reports, the Prophet enumerated these virtues of Abū Bakr and ordered all entrances to the masjid to be closed except that of Abū Bakr, at a time when he knew his death was close. The timing of the Prophet's statements in favour of Abū Bakr, i.e. just before his death, is also significant.[945] Al-Balādhurī uses this to further support the succession of Abū Bakr.

7.5.3   Section C. Reports 43-79.[946]

The most important theme in this chapter is that of Abū Bakr leading the prayer during the illness of the Prophet. This is mentioned in thirty-two reports and narrated in several different ways. I have summarised these reports in the table below.

Table 7.3 Abū Bakr leading the prayer

Type of report	Frequency
Prophet ordered Abū Bakr to lead the prayer. [947]	12
Abū Bakr led the prayer.[948]	4
Prophet objected to 'Umar leading the prayer, stating that only Abū Bakr should lead.[949]	3

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[944] Ibid. pp. 552-3.

[945] A person's last words are usually remembered by posterity, particularly in the case of an important personality.

[946] al-Balādhurī, pp. 554-63.

[947] Ibid. pp. 554,55,56,57,58,59,60,61.

[948] Ibid. pp. 555,56,58.

[949] Ibid. pp. 554,55.

'Āisha suggested that someone other than Abū Bakr should lead the prayer, but the Prophet angrily rejected this.[950]	3
Reports regarding the number of days that Abū Bakr led the prayer.[951]	4
Prophet entered the mosque whilst Abū Bakr was leading and took over the prayer.[952]	4
Both Ḥasan b. 'Alī and 'Alī b. Abī Tālib stated that the fact that the Prophet had chosen Abū Bakr to lead the prayer implied that he was the most worthy to succeed him.[953]	6

The reports regarding Abū Bakr leading the prayer account for more than a third of reports in this chapter. Al-Balādhurī uses the strategy of repetition to highlight the status of Abū Bakr and to suggest that he was most suited to succeed the Prophet. The Prophet ordered him and him alone to lead the prayer in his absence. On a number of occasions, the Prophet actually prayed behind him. Upon hearing the voice of 'Umar (leading the prayer) the Prophet reacted angrily stating this role was only for Abū Bakr. Likewise the Prophet was angered at 'Āisha's insistence that someone other than her father should lead. Finally, and significantly, al-Balādhurī uses the statements of 'Alī and his son Ḥasan, who deduced that based upon his leading of the prayer, Abū Bakr was the most entitled to succeed the Prophet.

> 'Alī said: When the Messenger of Allah passed away, we looked into our matter and we found that the Prophet put Abū Bakr forward to lead the prayer. So we were satisfied and pleased for the matters of our worldly affairs that which the Messenger of Allah was happy for our religious affairs. So we put Abū Bakr forward (emphasis mine).[954]

Ḥasan was asked if the Prophet appointed Abū Bakr as Caliph. He replied:

> Are you in doubt concerning you companion? By Allah from Whom there is no deity except Him, he definitely appointed him (emphasis mine) when he appointed him to lead the prayer to the exclusion of anyone else. And he was more God fearing than to eagerly desire it.[955]

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[950] Ibid. pp. 556,59.;In one report 'Āisha suggests to the Prophet that 'Umar should lead instead of Abū Bakr. In a second report, '.Āisha tells Ḥafṣa to suggest this to the Prophet.

[951] Ibid. pp. 555,56.;Two reports from Ibn Sa'd state that Abū Bakr led the prayer for three days. Another report states seven days. Finally, one report states that he led the prayer from midday Thursday until the day he died - i.e. just over four days.

[952] Ibid. pp. 557,60.

[953] Ibid. pp. 558,60,61.;Three reports are from Ḥasan and three are from 'Alī.

[954] Ibid. p. 558.

[955] Ibid. p. 561.

There is a subtle difference between the two above reports. According to 'Alī, by instructing Abū Bakr to lead the prayer, the Prophet indirectly appointed him. However the actual appointment of Abū Bakr was made by the Companions, including 'Alī; 'So we put Abū Bakr forward'. However Ḥasan b. 'Alī took the position that by instructing Abū Bakr to lead the prayer, the Prophet <u>directly</u> appointed Abū Bakr; 'he definitely appointed him when he appointed him to lead the prayer'. In either case the proto-Shī'ī contention that 'Alī was the most entitled to succeed the Prophet is directly rebutted by al-Balādhurī through the words of two prominent figures in proto-Shī'īsm; 'Alī and Ḥasan. By postulating that either 'Alī 'put Abū Bakr forward' or the Prophet 'definitely appointed him' one could read this as al-Balādhurī intending to rebut the theory of *naṣṣ* and as a corollary, the nascent *Imāmate* theory.

A number of reports enumerate certain virtues that were exclusive to 'Āisha:

- The Prophet died in her house.[956]
- He died on her day and night (i.e. her allocated day and night as a co-wife).[957]
- He died reclining on her.[958]
- Only she witnessed his death.[959]
- Her saliva joined his saliva in his final moments.[960]

These reports demonstrate the strong affection between the Prophet and Abū Bakr's family. The Prophet could have chosen to be nursed in 'Alī's (and Fāṭima's) house; however, he afforded this privilege to the daughter of Abū Bakr.

Finally as with al-Ṭabarī, al-Balādhurī mentions two reports regarding the incident of the paper and pen.[961]

> Report One: Ibn 'Abbās said: The day of Thursday. And what will make you know what the day of Thursday was? The pain on the Messenger of Allah intensified. So when the pain intensified, he said: bring me an inkpot and shoulder blade (i.e. writing materials). I shall write something for you, after which you will never go astray after me. So they said: 'do you not see that he is delirious?' So they began discussing this in a noisy manner. The Messenger of Allah was saddened by this and it made him angry. So he said: 'leave me.' And hence nothing was written down.[962]

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[956] Ibid. pp. 547,48,49,61,62,63.
[957] Ibid. pp. 548,62.
[958] Ibid. pp. 549,62.
[959] Ibid. p. 562.
[960] Ibid. p. 549.;Shortly before his death, 'Āisha chewed a *mishwāk* and gave it to the Prophet to clean his mouth. Hence her saliva joined his saliva.
[961] al-Ṭabarī brings three reports.
[962] al-Balādhurī, p. 562.

Report Two: Abū Zubayr reported that the Prophet called for some writing material intending to write in it a document for his *umma*. But due to the noise in his house he abandoned the idea.[963]

This incident is discussed in detail in the literature review. Al-Balādhurī does not afford to these reports any theological significance. Hence, they do not detract from his overall contention that Abū Bakr was the most entitled to succeed the Prophet.

7.5.4   Section D. Reports 80-93[964]

Most of these reports deal with the immediate aftermath of the Prophets' death. Interspersed between them are reports that mention events prior to his death. These latter reports include the following information:

1. The Prophet given a choice, by the angel of death, between this world and the next.[965]
2. The Prophet gave instructions for his funeral prayer.[966]
3. 'Abbās suggested that to 'Alī that they ask the Prophet about succession but 'Alī refuses, arguing that if the Prophet did not appoint him, then he would never be appointed.[967]

Most of the five points above have already been discussed. However the last point is pertinent to my discussion. The report states that:

> ... So al-'Abbās took him ('Alī b. Abī Tālib) by the hand and then he said: O 'Alī, you will be. by Allah, a slave of the stick after three (nights). I have certainly seen death in the face of the Messenger of Allah as I have known it in the faces of Banū 'Abd-al-Muṭṭalib. So come with us to the Messenger of Allah. If the authority is for us, we will (then) know. And if it is for other than us, we will ask him to advise the people regarding us (i.e. to treat us kindly). So 'Alī said: <u>By Allah, I will not do that. By Allah, if we are prevented from it, the people will not give it to us after him</u> (emphasis mine).[968]

This report suggests that the succession to the Prophet was an unresolved matter, as least in the minds of 'Abbās and 'Alī. Neither of the two assumed that 'Alī was automatically entitled to succeed the Prophet, however they did consider his succession to be a distinct possibility. As I explained in the previous chapter, the fact 'Abbās considered asking the Prophet about

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[963] Ibid.
[964] Ibid. pp. 564-69.
[965] Ibid. p. 565.
[966] Ibid. p. 564.
[967] Ibid. p. 565.
[968] Ibid.

succession rebuts the theory of *naṣṣ*. I will now move onto reports the reports that deal with the immediate aftermath of the Prophet's death.

Following the death of the Prophet, two reports mention that the Companions heard the voice of the angel Jibrīl consoling them for the death of the Prophet. Three reports states that 'Umar refused to accept that the Prophet had died and strongly censured those who said otherwise.[969] But Abū Bakr, uncovered the face of the Prophet, kissed him and then immediately affirmed the Prophet's death stating:

> 'O people, whoever worships Allah, then Allah is every living and will never die. And whoever worships Muḥammad, then Muḥammad has died'.[970]

He then recited four verses of the Quran, pertinent to the situation.[971] Upon hearing these verses, the narrator of the report, Abū Hurayra, commented that it was as if the Companions had not heard these verses until that very day. Al-Balādhurī uses these reports to highlight a number of qualities of Abū Bakr. First his closeness to the Prophet. He was the first to uncover the Prophet's face and kiss him, something that no-one else did. Second, his calmness in the face of adversity as he immediately affirmed the Prophet's death. Third he demonstrated his superior knowledge by quoting a number of verses relevant to the situation at hand and deriving a jurisprudential ruling from them (i.e. that the Prophet was not immortal). Even though it was likely that the Companions were aware of these verses, they were unable to apply them to the situation at hand.

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[969] The three reports mention that 'Umar said: 'he has not died and will not die until he has been ordered to fight the hypocrites; '(he) has not died but he has gone to his Lord just as Mūsā b. Imrān went and was absent from his people for forty nights'; '(he) has not died and will not die. He has only fainted'. One report mentions that 'Uthmān denied that the Prophet had died.

[970] al-Balādhurī, p. 566.

[971] Ibid. pp. 563, 64, 66.;Verse One: 'Indeed you will die and indeed they will die.' Quran: 39:30. [mentioned in three reports].

Verse Two: 'And We granted not to any human being immortality before you, then if you die, would they live forever?' Quran: 21:34. [mentioned in one report].

Verse Three: 'Everyone shall taste the death. Then unto Us you shall be returned.' Quran 29:57. [mentioned in one report].

Verse Four: 'Muhammad is no more than a Messenger, and indeed (many) Messengers have passed away before him. If he dies or is killed, will you then turn back on your heels? And he who turns back on his heels, not the least harm will he do to Allah, and Allah will give reward to those who are grateful.' Quran; 3:144 [mentioned in two reports].

In two reports, 'Umar explained that his denial of the Prophet's death was based on his misconception that the Prophet would always remain with his *umma*.[972] The day after Saqīfa, 'Umar encouraged the people to pledge allegiance to Abū Bakr based upon a number of his virtues:

> Allah has united you under the leadership of the best of you. The companion of the Messenger of Allah, the second of the two, and the most deserving of the people to have authority over you. So stand and pledge allegiance. So the people pledged allegiance to Abū Bakr after Saqīfa, a general pledge.[973]

Al-Balādhurī uses this report to enumerate a number of unique qualities of Abū Bakr which by implication meant that he was the ideal candidate to succeed the Prophet.

- He was the best leader to unite the Muslims.
- He was a close companion of the Prophet.
- He was the 'second of the two', This refers to the verse that mentions that Abū Bakr and the Prophet hid in a cave during the migration to Medina.[974]
- He was most deserving of the people to have authority.

The final five reports in this section mention the day of the Prophet's death and burial.[975]

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[972] 'Umar's misconception was based on the verse: "And thus we have made you a just community that you will be witnesses over the people and the Messenger will be a witness over you." Quran: 2:143.

[973] al-Balādhurī, p. 567.

[974] The verse in question is: "If you do not help him, yet God has helped him already, when the unbelievers drove him forth the **second of two**, when the two were in the Cave, when he said to his companion, 'Sorrow not; surely God is with us." Quran: 9:40.

[975] al-Balādhurī, pp. 568-9.

7.6 Al-Balādhurī 's Chapter 3: The washing of the Messenger of Allah, his shrouding and his burial.

This section consists of fifty-one reports and makes up 20% of the total text. Very little information in this chapter is relevant to the issue of succession. I have summarised the themes in the table below.

Table 7.4 Key themes in Chapter 3

Theme	Frequency[976]
The Prophet's close relatives washed his body.[977]	6
The Prophet was not undressed during ritual bathing.[978]	2
The description of the Prophet's death shroud.[979]	9
'Āisha's dream interpreted as the best three people will be buried in her room.[980]	3
The location of the burial place. [981]	3
The *Janāza* prayer.[982]	5
The description of the Prophet's grave.[983]	9
The names of men who descended into the Prophet's grave.[984]	9
The last person to enter the Prophet's grave.[985]	5
The calamity of Prophets death.[986]	1
The Prophet' age at the time of death.[987]	3

Six reports name the men who washed the Prophet's body. They are 'Alī, al-'Abbās, Faḍl b. al-'Abbās, Quthama b. al-'Abbās, Usāma b. Zayd and Shuqrān freed slave of the Prophet.[988] The

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[976] Some reports consist of more than one theme.
[977] al-Balādhurī, pp. 569-71.
[978] Ibid. pp. 569-70.
[979] Ibid. pp. 571-2.
[980] Ibid. pp. 572-3.
[981] Ibid. pp. 573-4.
[982] Ibid. pp. 574-5.
[983] Ibid. pp. 575-6.:These reports mention that the grave contained a niche in which the Prophet was buried.
[984] Ibid. pp. 576--8.
[985] Ibid. pp. 577-8.
[986] Ibid. p. 578.
[987] Ibid. p. 579.
[988] Ibid. pp. 568-71.

number of men involved in the washing differs from report to report but 'Alī and Faḍl are named in all six reports. Given that it was customary for the immediate family to wash the deceased, that 'Alī was involved in washing the deceased Prophet is not significant.

Three reports, with similar wordings mention the dream of 'Āisha.

> I saw (in a dream) as if three moons were falling in my room. So I told Abū Bakr about my dream. He said: Three will be buried in your room and they are the best of the inhabitants of the earth. So when the Messenger of Allah died, he was buried in her house. So Abū Bakr said: this is one of your moons and he is the best of them.[989]

Al-Balādhurī uses this report to argue that after the Prophet, the two best people were Abū Bakr and Umar.[990] Regarding the Prophet's burial, al-Balādhurī cites three reports in which the Companions differed as to where to bury him. One of the reports is given below.

> … One speaker said: Bury him in *Baqī'*. And another speaker said: Bury him next to the pulpit. And another speaker said: Bury him besides the (tree) trunk which he used to pray towards. Abū Bakr may Allah the Most High be pleased with him said: I have some knowledge regarding the issue in which you are differing. I heard the Messenger of Allah saying: No Prophet is buried except where he died (emphasis mine). So they (drew a) mark around his bed. Then the Messenger of Allah was moved with the bed to the other side (in order to dig the grave).[991]

The issue of the location of the Prophet's burial was of immense importance given his status. Abū Bakr alone was able to resolve this important issue by recollecting a prophetic *ḥadīth* regarding it, thus again demonstrating his superior knowledge.

Four reports describe the *Janāza* prayer. Given the small size of 'Āisha's room, the people prayed over the Prophet in small groups without being led by an Imām. On report mentions that the first to enter the room and convey their greetings to the deceased Prophet were Abū Bakr and 'Umar.[992]

Nine reports mention who entered the grave and five reports mention the last person to exit the grave. 'Alī and the Prophet's other cousins feature prominently in these reports. Given the immense status that the Prophet had with the Companions (in life and in death), it was considered to be a virtue to be one of the individuals who entered his grave. However as with

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[989] Ibid. p. 572.

[990] Based upon the fact that the three people to be buried in 'Āisha's room were the Prophet, Abū Bakr and 'Umar.

[991] al-Balādhurī, p. 574.

[992] Ibid.

the case of washing his body, it was customary for the close family to take a leading role in the burial. As such these reports are not relevant to the issue of succession. Finally, three reports state that the Prophet died aged sixty-three.

7.7 Al-Balādhurī's Chapter 4: The Affair of Saqīfa.

This is al-Balādhurī's final chapter in the text and the most relevant of his four chapters to my research question. It consists of thirty-five reports and makes up almost a quarter of the total text. The reports in this chapter follow a logical order. As with al-Balādhurī's chapter two, I have divided this chapter of into a number of sections.

Earlier I mentioned that al-Balādhurī used chapter one, in which Abū Bakr was presented as the ideal candidate to succeed the Prophet, as a preamble to the rest of text. In this final chapter, which is dedicated to Saqīfa, al-Balādhurī uses three reports as a preamble to the rest of the chapter. These three reports suggest that the decision to select Abū Bakr was the correct one.

7.7.1 Reports 1 to 3: The Status of Abū Bakr

Al-Balādhurī begins this chapter with two reports regarding the *bay'a* to Abū Bakr and one report in which 'Umar commented on the *bay'a*. In the first two reports, the narrative begins as the Saqīfa meeting is concluding. Al-Balādhurī gives no background to the report as his aim is solely to demonstrate the superiority of Abū Bakr. In the first report, after the death of the Prophet, 'Umar asked Abū 'Ubayda to accept the *bay'a*.[993] The latter strongly admonished 'Umar for offering him *bay'a* when Abū Bakr was in their midst. Abū 'Ubayda did not refer to Abū Bakr by name but by two descriptions, which in and of themselves indicated his suitability to succeed the Prophet; *al-Ṣiddīq* and 'the second of the two.'[994] In the second report, several people came to Abū 'Ubayda to offer him *bay'a*.[995] He gave a similar reply except that in this case he referred to Abū Bakr as 'the third of the three.'[996] In the third report, during his discussion regarding the succession to the Prophet, 'Umar argued that no-one had the status of Abū Bakr and hence he was most deserving of the caliphate.[997] These three reports, on the status and suitability of Abū Bakr. are an introduction to the detailed account of Saqīfa.

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[993] Ibid. p. 579.

[994] *Al-Ṣiddīq* (the truthful) was a nickname given to Abū Bakr by the Prophet.

[995] al-Balādhurī, p. 579.

[996] i.e. meaning God, the Prophet and Abū Bakr.

[997] al-Balādhurī, pp. 579-80.;From the wording of the third report, it appears that 'Umar said this in a *khutba* (during his caliphate) whilst discussing Saqīfa.

7.7.2 Reports 4 to 11 and Report 36.[998] The events at Saqīfa and 'Umar's sermon regarding it.

Reports four to eleven provide copious amounts of information regarding the events at Saqīfa. Within these nine reports are three accounts of the events of Saqīfa, and four versions of 'Umar's sermon in which he explains and justifies the decision made at Saqīfa. In addition there are two other reports: one, in which al-al-Zuhrī states that when the Prophet died the Muslims were in three groups, and a second, regarding 'Alī's reaction to Saqīfa. I will discuss this last report in 7.7.4.

7.7.2.1 The events at Saqīfa

I will first discuss the three reports regarding Saqīfa and then the four versions of 'Umar's sermon.

In the first report, the Anṣār gathered at Saqīfa to pledge allegiance to Saʿd b. 'Ubāda.[999] Abū Bakr, 'Umar and Abū 'Ubayda made their way to Saqīfa. At the meeting Ḥubāb b. al-Mundhir addressed Abū Bakr and 'Umar and recommended that there should be two leaders; one from the Anṣār and one from the Muhājirūn. This was, he explained, to protect the Anṣār from being oppressed (in the future by the descendants of the Muhājirūn). Abū Bakr spoke and said: 'We are the leaders and you are the ministers.' The first to pledge allegiance to Abū Bakr was the Anṣāri Bashīr b. Saʿd. In this brief report, Abū Bakr receives the *bay'a* without any commotion or argumentation. There is no indication of any concerted opposition from the Anṣār.

In the second report, an unnamed Anṣāri suggested two leaders; one from the Anṣār and Muhājirūn.[1000] 'Umar responded by asking the Anṣār if they were aware that the Prophet had selected Abū Bakr as a leader over the people in the prayer. The Anṣār affirmed this, to which 'Umar rhetorically asked if they would be pleased to precede him. The Anṣār replied by seeking refuge in God from such an idea. In this report the Anṣār willingly accepted the choice of Abū Bakr as caliph based upon 'Umar's analogy between leadership in the prayer, and temporal leadership.

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[998] Report ten is not included in this section but discussed in 7.7.4.
[999] al-Balādhurī, p. 580.
[1000] Ibid.;We can safely assume that it was Ḥubāb b. al-Mundhir.

In the third (and longest) report on Saqīfa, the Anṣār gathered to give *bay'a* to Sa'd b. 'Ubāda.[1001] Abū Bakr, 'Umar and Abū 'Ubayda were warned by a companion called Ma'n b. Adi of the dire consequences that would result from this meeting if they did not attend, so they made their way to meeting.[1002] 'Alī and 'Abbās at the time were pre-occupied with the funeral arrangements. At the meeting Ḥubāb b. al-Mundhir suggested two leaders; one from the Anṣār and one from the Muhājirūn in order to prevent one side oppressing the other. Then Abū Bakr spoke. He started by extoling the virtues of the Muhājirūn; they were the first Muslims, the most noble in lineage and abode, and they were close in kinship to the Prophet. He then extoled the virtues of Anṣār and commended them for aiding Islam but stated: 'We are the leaders and you are the ministers. None of the Arabs will submit except to this group of Quraysh'. He then quoted a prophetic ḥadīth: 'the leader is from Quraysh' and advised the Anṣār not to envy them for that which God had favoured them with. Al-Ḥubāb denied any envy but re-expressed his fear that in the future the Anṣār would be oppressed. Abū Bakr then suggested that *bay'a* be given to either 'Umar or Abū 'Ubayda. 'Umar rejected this outright due to the status of Abū Bakr and he gave *bay'a* to Abū Bakr. The people followed suit. In the commotion Sa'd b. 'Ubāda was almost crushed and the Anṣār stated 'you have killed Sa'd.'[1003] 'Umar criticised Sa'd as a companion of *fitna*[1004].

In the first part of the report, Abū Bakr argued that leadership was exclusively for the Muhājirūn based upon their excellence (the most noble in lineage and abode and closeness in kinship to the Prophet), and precedence (the first Muslims) in Islam. He then followed this up with a *ḥadīth* in which the Prophet stated the leader should be from Quraysh. Abū Bakr thus provided compelling arguments in favour of the Muhājirūn and it appears that the Anṣār quickly fell in line. Al-Balādhurī clearly dismisses any Anṣāri claim to leadership, only mentioning their apprehension of possible future oppression which carried very light weight in light of Abū Bakr's argument. I now continue with the remainder of the report.

After the initial *bay'a* at Saqīfa, Abū Bakr was brought to the mosque where a general *bay'a* took place.[1005] 'Alī heard the noise in the mosque and asked 'Abbās about it. He admonished 'Alī for not taking his previous advice.[1006] The report continues:

[1001] Ibid. pp. 581-2.
[1002] I will discuss Ma 'n b. Adi further below.
[1003] This is an expression which carries the meaning 'you have defeated Sa'd'.
[1004] Companion of *fitna* can be loosely translated as 'trouble maker'.
[1005] The following day.
[1006] i.e. to ask the Prophet regarding his successor.

So 'Alī went out and he said: O Abū Bakr: do you not consider that we have a right in this matter (caliphate). He said: yes, indeed. But I feared *fitna.* And I have been appointed to a great matter*.* So 'Alī said: <u>I already knew that the Messenger of Allah, appointed you to lead the prayer, and you are the second of the two in the cave.</u> (emphasis mine). And there was for us a right and we were not consulted. And may Allah forgive you. And he pledged allegiance to him.[1007]

This last portion of the report concerns 'Alī's stance towards the succession of Abū Bakr. Al-Balādhurī uses this report to make a number of points.

First and most importantly, 'Alī acknowledged Abū Bakr's right to succeed the Prophet and hence gave him *bay'a*.

Second, Abū Bakr's right to succeed the Prophet was, according to 'Alī, very compelling. The Prophet had appointed him to lead the prayer, and in addition, he was alluded to in the Quran as 'the second of the two'.

Third, the only bone of contention on the part of 'Alī was the lack of consultation. Abū Bakr acknowledged that he had a right to consulted but the exigencies of the situation prevented this from happening: 'But I feared *fitna*'. In other words, the matter could not wait. Had they left the meeting at Saqīfa without a decision, the Khazraj clan of the Anṣār would have chosen their own leader. Abū Bakr feared that such an outcome could have led to civil strife.[1008]

In the first part of the report, Abū Bakr cogently dismissed the Anṣāri claim to leadership and successfully convinced them that only the Quraysh could succeed the Prophet. In the second part of the report, al-Balādhurī addresses the other possible contender to leadership; 'Alī. He accepted Abū Bakr's right to succeed the Prophet only expressing dissatisfaction with the process (i.e. lack of consultation). Hence, there was no real question of anyone succeeding the Prophet except Abū Bakr. However, even the process by which Abū Bakr was chosen is justified in this report, as Abū Bakr feared *fitna* if an immediate decision had not been made.

[1007] al-Balādhurī, p. 582.

[1008] Abū Bakr may have been referring to the possible *fitna* between the Muhājirūn and Anṣar as stated by 'Umar in his sermon (reported by al-Ṭabarī) 'We feared that if [we] left [without rendering the oath of allegiance], no agreement would be hammered out later. It was either to follow the Ansar in what we did not like, <u>or else to oppose them, which would have led to disorder</u>' (emphasis mine). However, Abū Bakr may have also been referring to the possible *fitna* between the 'Aws and Khazraj tribes. Al-Ṭabarī mentions a report from Abu Mikhnaf in which the 'Aws gave *bay'a* to Abū Bakr out of fear that Sa'd b. 'Ubāda, a Khazrajī would be put other them. It is also possible that Abū Bakr intended both meanings.

The next report is a statement from al-Zuhrī that when the Prophet died, the Companions formed three groups: the Anṣār with Saʿd b. ʿUbāda, ʿAlī, Zubayr, Ṭalḥa in the house of Fāṭima, and the Muhājirūn with Abū Bakr. The three grouping were based on their stance on the issue of succession. However when read light of other reports in this text, we understand from this report that *initially* there was lack of consensus on the Prophet's successor. Later on, however, the Companions agreed on Abū Bakr.

7.7.2.2   The sermon of ʿUmar regarding Saqīfa

I will now discuss the four reports of ʿUmar's Friday sermon which was delivered during his caliphate. Of my four historians, both al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī use it. Al-Balādhurī brings four different versions of this report; three are from al-Zuhrī and one is from al-Wāqidī.[1009] These four versions are substantially shorter than al-Ṭabarī's and have some important differences.[1010] According to al-Ṭabarī, it reached ʿUmar that an *unnamed person* said that if ʿUmar was to die, he would pledge allegiance to a *particular individual.* Al-Balādhurī gives additional information. In the first of his four versions, he stated that it was Zubayr b. Awwām who said that he would pledge allegiance to ʿAlī in the event of ʿUmar's death.[1011] (emphasis mine).

7.7.2.2.1   Was the *bayʿa* to Abū Bakr a falta?

In al-Ṭabarī's report, ʿUmar stated that the *bayʿa* given to Abū Bakr may well have been a falta, but evil was averted because of it. Al-Balādhurī's second and fourth version of this report concur with al-Ṭabarī.[1012]

> Version 2: ʿUmar addressed the people one day and he said: Even if the pledge to Abū Bakr was a falta then Allah averted its harm'. **[1013]**

> Version 4: When ʿUmar was told at the Hajj, which he returned from and then was later stabbed, that men were saying that the *bayʿa* of Abū Bakr was a *falta*. He said: Even if it was a *falta*, Allah had protected it from its evil.[1014]

[1009] The version from al-Wāqidī is very short and does not add anything to al-Zuhrī's version, except that ʿUmar had left the issue of his successor to a *shūrā* of six men.

[1010] al-Ṭabarī's version is also from al-Zuhrī.

[1011] al-Balādhurī, p. 581.

[1012] Version four of ʿUmar's report is from al-Wāqidī and is the very last report (report 36) in this chapter.

[1013] al-Balādhurī, p. 583.

[1014] Ibid. p. 591.

However, in the first and third accounts of al-Balādhurī, 'Umar denied that the *bay'a* to Abū Bakr was a *falta* as the Prophet had indirectly chosen him to succeed by appointing him to lead the prayer.

> Version 1: ('Umar said): It reached me that Zubayr said: if 'Umar were to die I would pledge allegiance to 'Alī. And the pledge to Abū Bakr was only a *falta.* So he lied, by Allah (emphasis mine). The Messenger of Allah had established him in a position and chosen him as a pillar of the religion to the exclusion of other than him. So Allah and the believers refuse except Abū Bakr. So is there anyone amongst you whom the necks have stretched out towards, similar to him. [1015]

> Version 3. ('Umar said): Indeed, such and such person said. 'If 'Umar was to die, we would pledge allegiance to 'Alī so his pledge would be carried out. For it was only a *falta* regarding Abū Bakr by which Allah prevented evil'. And he lied for by Allah, the bay'a of Abū Bakr was not a falta (emphasis mine).The Messenger of Allah had established in his place and chose him for their religion, to the exclusion of anyone else. Allah and the believers refuse anyone except Abū Bakr. Is there anyone amongst you to whom necks have been cut towards as they have been cut for Abū Bakr? So whoever gives *bay'a* to a man without consultation is deserving to be killed. And I swear by Allah, that I will definitely stop such a man, or cut off his hand, or his legs and crucify him on the trunk of a date palm tree.[1016]

Al-Balādhurī makes no effort to harmonise the four reports. Given that all four reports support the decision to select Abū Bakr, it is likely that he did not feel that harmonization was necessary.

In two reports that the *bay'a* was not a *falta*, it was because the Prophet had already indirectly selected Abū Bakr to succeed him. In the other two reports, in which the *bay'a* was a *falta*, the particular situation they found themselves in necessitated that. However, 'Umar went on to argue that that this could not be used a precedent. Any future leader must be chosen by consultation and he strongly reprimanded anyone who tried to use the manner in which Abū Bakr was selected as a precedent. 'So whoever gives *bay'a* to a man without consultation is deserving to be killed.'

In the first report it may appear that 'Umar rejected the idea that 'Alī should succeed him.

> 'It reached me that Zubayr said: if 'Umar were to die I would pledge allegiance to 'Alī. And the pledge to Abū Bakr was only a *falta*. So he lied, by Allah.'[1017]

[1015] Ibid. p. 581.
[1016] Ibid. p. 584.
[1017] Ibid. p. 581.

However, as stated above, 'Umar was concerned that proper consultation take place before selecting a leader. 'Umar actually chose 'Alī to be a member of the council that would decide on his successor. Hence, 'Alī could have been chosen as a leader by six-man council. 'And if it had occurred to me then the matter is with the six (members of the *shūrā* who chose 'Uthmān) and the Messenger of Allah, died whilst he was pleased with them'.**[1018]**

7.7.2.2.2 Significant difference between al-Balādhurī and al-Ṭabarī's versions of 'Umar's sermon.

In al-Balādhurī's four accounts of 'Umar's speech there are a number of significant differences when compared to al-Ṭabarī's account.[1019]

I will only mention those differences between the two authors' accounts which are relevant to my research question. Unlike al-Balādhurī's four versions, al-Ṭabarī's account is significantly longer and gives background information on the events that led him to deliver a sermon on the issue of Saqīfa. I will first mention significant omissions in al-Balādhurī's accounts when compared to al-Ṭabarī.

1. Upon the death of the Prophet, 'Umar explained that the Companions gathered into a number of groups. Al-Ṭabarī mentions the existence of three groups: 'Alī's group, the Anṣār and the Muhājirūn. However, in this report, al-Balādhurī only mentions the existence of two groups: the Anṣār and the Muhājirūn.[1020] By not mentioning that 'Alī's supporters at all, al-Balādhurī downplays the contention between 'Alī and Abū Bakr. Al-Ṭabarī's reports are more emphatic in highlighting the division; ''Alī, Zubayr and those with them <u>stayed away from us'</u> and 'the Anṣār, <u>all of them, stayed away from us</u>.'[1021] Al-Balādhurī's reports are worded to downplay any serious differences; 'the Helpers <u>gathered</u> in the Saqīfa of Banū Sā'ida, and the Emigrants <u>gathered</u> with Abū Bakr.'[1022]

2. Al-Balādhurī's reports omit the sense of chaos that is found in al-Ṭabarī's report. For example al-Ṭabarī mentions that voices were raised and Sa'd was trampled upon. [1023]

[1018] Ibid. p. 591.
[1019] The longest of the four reports in al-Balādhurī comes via al-Zuhrī - al-Madā'inī. Hence the comparison below is essentially between al-Madā'inī's version and al-Ṭabarī.
[1020] Although in a previous report, al-Balādhurī states the existence of three groups.
[1021] Al-Ṭabarī, p. 1822.; Poonawala (1990), p. 192.
[1022] al-Balādhurī, p. 584.
[1023] Al-Ṭabarī, pp. 1823, 43, 44.; Poonawala (1990), p. 194.; Donner (1993), pp. 8-10.

3. Related to the above point, al-Balādhurī ends his reports without even mentioning that the *bay'a* took place, although it is implied. By doing this, al-Balādhurī avoids some of the unpleasant details that followed the *bay'a*.

4. Al-Ṭabarī's report justifies the hasty manner in which the *bay'a* to Abū Bakr occurred; any delay in the *bay'a* would have led to disorder.[1024] Al-Balādhurī's reports do not mention this. In two of al-Balādhurī's reports, Umar rejected that the *bay'a* was a falta, hence the lack of need to justify the manner in which the *bay'a* occurred.[1025] In the other two reports in which 'Umar affirmed that the *bay'a was* a falta, 'Umar merely stated that 'Allah averted its harm', without elaborating.[1026] The sense of foreboding, conveyed in al-Ṭabarī's report, that the *umma* was a brink of a possible disaster (if Sa'd was to be elected) is not found in al-Balādhurī's reports.

I will now mention four pieces of information contained in al-Balādhurī's reports on 'Umar's sermon that are not found in al-Ṭabarī's report.[1027] In the first three points below, we see how al-Balādhurī uses the statements and actions of the Prophet to support Abū Bakr succession.

1. In two reports 'Umar stated that the Prophet had established Abū Bakr and chosen him to the exclusion anyone else. 'So Allah and the believers refuse [the appointment of anyone] except Abū Bakr.'[1028] In these two reports, the actions of the Prophet (in appointing Abū Bakr to lead the prayer) are used to support the succession of Abū Bakr.

2. One report contains the following prophetic *ḥadīth*: 'This affair after me is with Quraysh.'[1029] In matters of dispute, a prophetic *ḥadīth* is decisive, and by including this, al-Balādhurī clearly dismisses the Anṣāri claim.

3. In one report, an Anṣāri affirmed, after 'Umar asked him, that the Prophet stated the above *ḥadīth*.[1030] Al-Balādhurī this re-emphasises the point made above.

[1024] Al-Ṭabarī, p. 1823.; Poonawala (1990), p. 194.
[1025] al-Balādhurī, pp. 581,84.
[1026] Ibid. pp. 583,94.
[1027] As mentioned earlier, three reports are from al-Zuhrī and one very short report is from al-Wāqidī. The longest of of al-Zuhrī's report comes via al-Madā'īnī. The other two reports from al-Zuhrī are relatively short.
[1028] al-Balādhurī, pp. 581, 84.
[1029] Ibid. p. 574.
[1030] Ibid.

4. In one report, Zubayr said that if 'Umar was to die, he would give *bay'a* to 'Alī.[1031] Al-Ṭabarī omits both names, stating that 'someone said' that if 'Umar was to die, he would give the *bay'a* to 'so and so'.[1032]

In the first three points, al-Balādhurī emphasizes Abū Bakr's legitimacy; the Prophet had established him in his (prayer) place, Allah and the believers refused other than him, the Prophet affirmed that a Qurayshi was to succeed him, and this fact was affirmed by an Anṣāri. In summary, al-Balādhurī's reports downplay the differences that occurred following the Prophet's death and supports the decision to select Abū Bakr.

7.7.3 Reports 12 and 13. The virtue of Ma'n b. 'Adī[1033].

Al-Balādhurī only narrates report twelve, stating that report thirteen has a similar wording.

> (Report twelve): Al-Zuhrī said: 'that Ma'n was saying: 'I did not wish to die until I testified (in the truthfulness) of the Messenger of Allah in (his) death just as I testified in his life'. And he was martyred on the day of Yamāma (in the battle against Musaylima).'[1034]

The significance of this report only becomes clear when we examine it in light of two earlier reports in which Ma'n b. 'Adī made a brief but prominent appearance. Immediately after the Prophet had died,

> … and 'Alī b. Abī Tālib and al-'Abbās were busy with him, suddenly Ma'n b. 'Adī and 'Uwaym b. Sā'ida came and said to Abū Bakr: *the door of fitna (tribulation). <u>If</u> Allah <u>does not close it</u> <u>with you</u>*, it will never close. This is Sa'd b. 'Ubāda al-Anṣāri in the Saqīfa of Banū Sā'ida, and they are wishing to pledge allegiance to him (emphasis mine).[1035]

and

> When the Prophet the Helpers aligned with Sa'd b. 'Ubāda in the Saqīfa of Banū Sā'ida. … So someone came to Abū Bakr: then he said<u>: take over (command) of the people before things get worse</u>.[1036] (emphasis mine).

In both reports, Ma'n played a pivotal role in the selection of Abū Bakr by:

- alerting him to the meeting at Saqīfa.

[1031] Ibid. p. 581.
[1032] Al-Ṭabarī, pp. 1821-22.; Poonawala (1990), pp. 191-2.
[1033] He was an Anṣāri, and according to Madelung, a close friend of Abū Bakr. Madelung (1997), p. 30.; In other words, Ma'n did not wish to die before the Prophet.
[1034] al-Balādhurī, p. 585.; Report thirteen and fourteen are very similar in wording.
[1035] Ibid. p. 581.
[1036] Ibid. p. 583.;One can safely assume that this person is Ma'n b. Adi.

- warning Abū Bakr that unless he intervened, the Saqīfa meeting would result in tribulation.[1037]

- warning Abū Bakr that the once started, the tribulation would not end.

- urging Abū Bakr to attend the meeting in order to assert his leadership (and thus implying that he was the most suitable person to succeed the Prophet).

In light of this, we can see why al-Balādhurī cites his reports regarding Maʿn's desire to die whilst testifying to the truthfulness of the Prophet, as well as his eventual death on the battlefield against a rival claimant to prophethood. Although they appear not to be related to the issue of Saqīfa, on closer inspection these two reports vindicate Maʿn stance regarding Saqīfa. His wish to die as a martyr in defence of Islam after the Prophet's death, was fulfilled (by God). His piety and truthfulness had been established and hence his timely and earnest advice regarding Saqīfa can be seen (retrospectively) as carrying immense weight and foresight.

Interestingly although al-Ṭabarī also mentions the virtues of Maʿn, in his report of ʿUmar's sermon Maʿn tries to convince Abū Bakr and ʿUmar *not* to attend the Saqīfa meeting. In Ibn Isḥāq's version, Maʿn advises them not to approach the Anṣār but to decide the matter amongst themselves.[1038]

7.7.4   Reports 10, 14 to 28, and 35. The reaction of ʿAlī and his supporters.

Al-Balādhurī has now covered the incident at Saqīfa which led to the selection of Abū Bakr. These reports present Abū Bakr's succession as a relatively smooth affair.[1039] Although in some reports there was initial opposition from some Anṣār, in other reports the Anṣār were convinced of Abū Bakr's right to succeed the Prophet. ʿUmar in his sermon as caliph gave an impassioned defence of the decision to select Abū Bakr *and* the manner in which he was chosen. Abū Bakr's succession is also supported by another key protagonist; ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib. He affirmed Abū Bakr's right to succeed based upon the fact he led the prayer, and that he was mentioned in the Quran. His only grievance was the lack of consultation.

[1037] By 'tribulation' it is likely that he meant civil war.
[1038] Poonawala (1990), p. 192 fn 1333.
[1039] As opposed to the acrimony found in some of al-Ṭabarī's reports.

Al-Balādhurī now brings seventeen reports regarding the reaction of 'Alī and his supporters.[1040] In some of these reports it appears that 'Alī opposed the succession of Abū Bakr. However, when read as a whole, this section gives the distinct impression that 'Alī did support Abū Bakr's succession.

In report ten 'Alī was confident that he would be chosen as successor to the Prophet, and that no-one would oppose him given that he was more entitled to it than anyone else. When al-'Abbās offered to pledge allegiance to 'Alī :

> he ('Alī) refused and he said, 'Is there anyone from them who denies our right and rules tyrannically over us?'[1041]

This is the only report in the text in which 'Alī asserted his right to succeed the Prophet. This report contradicts the many reports in which 'Alī strongly supported Abū Bakr's right to succeed. However, as we shall see, this report can be reconciled with other reports in which 'Alī eventually agreed to give *bay'a*.

In report fourteen Abū Bakr expressed frustration at the fact that some people delayed in giving him *bay'a*, given his status and personal qualities.[1042] The report doesn't mention the names of those who delayed the *bay'a* to Abū Bakr but one can safely assume that it was 'Alī as well as some members of Banū Hāshim.

In report fifteen, 'Alī (and Zubayr) delayed their *bay'a*, believing that 'Alī was more entitled to the caliphate, so Abū Bakr sent 'Umar and Zayd b. Thābit to them.[1043] When they arrived, Zubayr said to 'Alī: 'These are two men from the people of Paradise, and it is not befitting for us to fight'. Both 'Alī and Zubayr then willingly accompanied 'Umar to Abū Bakr. Abū Bakr was able to convince both of them that he was the most entitled to the caliphate and they gave him *bay'a*.

In this report although 'Alī did not give *bay'a* to Abū Bakr immediately, believing that he was more entitled, Abū Bakr was able to convince him of the error of his ways, after which he gave *bay'a*. 'Alī's initial position (that he was more entitled) is presented here as being flawed. The

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[1040] All but two of the reports are consecutive.
[1041] al-Balādhurī, p. 583.
[1042] Ibid. p. 585.
[1043] Ibid.

previous report in which Abū Bakr expressed frustration at the fact that some people delayed in giving him *bay'a*, can be read in light of this report. i.e. the delay in giving *bay'a* to Abū Bakr was the initial (and incorrect) position, but 'Alī eventually did give *bay'a*. Finally, 'Umar and Zayd b. Thābit, both supporters of Abū Bakr are described by Zubayr as 'two men from the people of Paradise' thus further albeit, indirectly, strengthening their stance.

It may also be possible to reconcile report ten, in which 'Alī believed that he was the most entitled to the caliphate and was confident that the companions would choose him as successor to the Prophet, with report fifteen. Report ten represents the initial position of 'Alī. However Abū Bakr was later able to convince him (in report fifteen) that he was most entitled to lead.

In report sixteen, Abū Bakr sent for 'Alī to receive his *bay'a* but to no avail. 'Umar then approached his door with a fire brand, much to the consternation of Fatima. 'Alī then gave *bay'a* explaining that his delay was due to being preoccupied with compiling the Quran. In this report. 'Alī's delay in giving *bay'a* was not based upon opposition to Abū Bakr' rule. Instead he was pre-occupied with another religious duty.

In report seventeen from Abū Mikhnaf, after 'Uthmān had been chosen as caliph, 'Abbās expressed his frustration with 'Alī for repeatedly ignoring his advice regarding the caliphate.[1044] During the Prophet's illness he suggested that 'Alī ask him about succession, then upon the death of the Prophet he offered to give 'Alī *bay'a*, and finally after the death of 'Umar he told him not to participate in the *shūrā*, but on all three occasions 'Alī refused.

In this report, 'Abbās was determined to see his nephew 'Alī assume the role of Caliph. 'Alī on the other hand appeared to be nonchalant on the issue of leadership.

In report eighteen, 'Alī delayed his *bay'a* until the death of Fāṭima; a period of six months.[1045] After she died, he asked Abū Bakr to visit him with a view to reconciliation. Abū Bakr agreed, and during a discussion 'Alī acknowledged Abū Bakr virtues but complained that his right to be consulted regarding the choice of leader was ignored. Both agreed to meet at the mosque in front of the people. 'Alī explained the reason why he had delayed his delay: - although Abū

[1044] Ibid. p. 586.
[1045] Ibid.

Bakr had a right to the caliphate, he also had a right to be consulted. 'Alī then gave him *bay'a* and was congratulated by the people.

In report nineteen Abū Bakr admonished 'Alī for not giving *bay'a* and reminded him that he was more entitled to the position than 'Alī.[1046] This report can be read in light of report fifteen where Abū Bakr was able to convince 'Alī he was the most entitled to the caliphate.

In report twenty, 'Alī explained to Abū Bakr that he delayed his *bay'a* due to an oath he had taken to complete the compilation of the Quran, and not due to a dislike of his leadership.[1047] Implicit in this report is that 'Alī, upon completing the compilation of the Quran, willingly gave *bay'a*.

In report twenty-one, 'Alī abstained from giving *bay'a*. Abū Bakr sent 'Umar to him, upon which 'Alī accused 'Umar of desiring power for himself.[1048] He stated that the only reason that he delayed his *bay'a* was his displeasure at not being consulted in such an important matter. He then gave *bay'a*. There is clear tension in this report between 'Alī and 'Umar but the report does not detract from al-Balādhurī's main theme; 'Alī never contested Abū Bakr's right to succeed the Prophet, but he felt aggrieved due to his exclusion from the decision-making process.

In report twenty-two, Abū Bakr after receiving the *bay'a*, expressed his willingness to relinquish himself from the post. 'Alī replied:

> 'we are not dismissing you, nor are we asking you to resign. The Messenger of Allah put you forward in the prayer, so who can put you back?'[1049]

In this report, 'Alī was unequivocal in his support for Abū Bakr's succession. This is the fifth report brought by al-Balādhurī in which 'Alī supports Abū Bakr's right to succeed the Prophet based upon the fact that he led the prayer during the Prophet's illness.

Report twenty-three is set during the wars of apostasy. 'Alī complained to 'Uthmān that the people had turned away from him.[1050] In reply 'Uthmān expressed his disappointment that,

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[1046] Ibid.
[1047] Ibid. p. 587.
[1048] Ibid.;i.e. after the death of Abū Bakr.
[1049] Ibid.
[1050] Ibid.

despite the fact that the Muslims were engaged in war with the enemy, 'Alī had failed to give *bay'a* to Abū Bakr. In other words, he was not surprised that the people had turned away from him. He advised 'Alī that, unless he gave *bay'a*, his isolation would continue. 'Alī accepted this advice, gave *bay'a*, and the people were overjoyed.

7.7.4.1 Khālid b. Sa'īd's reaction to the *bay'a*.

In reports twenty-four and twenty-five, Khālid b. Sa'īd expressed dissatisfaction that Abū Bakr, who was from a lessor clan of Quraysh, had been selected as caliph.[1051] In the first report Khālid complained about this to 'Alī and 'Uthmān. 'Alī however defended the decision to select Abū Bakr, stating that he had not taken the position by force, and further adding that his selection was a result of divine providence. 'Alī, in this report, clearly supported the decision to select Abū Bakr. In the second report, Khālid b. Sa'īd eventually gave *bay'a* after six months, although other opinions stated that he gave *bay'a* after two months. In either case, Khālid eventually accepted Abū Bakr's authority.

7.7.4.2 Abū Sufyān's reaction to the *bay'a*.

In reports twenty-six to twenty-eight Abū Sufyān's expressed his dissatisfaction at the selection of Abū Bakr.[1052] He told 'Alī that Abū Bakr was from a lowly clan (and hence unworthy of the position of caliph) and offered military support to remove him.[1053] 'Alī, in response, accused him of treachery to Islam and of hypocrisy.[1054] He then, in no uncertain terms, expressed his support for Abū Bakr. In one report he said: 'Were it not for the fact I consider Abū Bakr worthy of it I would not have left him or it.'[1055] In a second report he stated: 'And we had indeed given *bay'a* to Abū Bakr, by Allah he was worthy of it.'[1056] 'Alī's loyalty to Abū Bakr, and his acknowledgement that he was the most suited to rule is contrasted here with the tribal based opposition of Abū Sufyān.

[1051] Ibid. p. 588.;Khālid b. Sa'īd b. al-'Aṣ b. Umayya was an early convert to Islam, a rich member of Banū Umayya and one of emigrants to Ethiopia. The Prophet appointed him as one of his governors in the year eleven. Abū Bakr later appointed him to command an army against the Byzantines. Loucel, H., "Khālid b. Sa'id", EI².

[1052] Ibid. pp. 588-9.

[1053] In one report he stated: "Indeed, I see a rupture that will not be repaired except by blood." Ibid. p. 589.

[1054] Ibid. p. 588.

[1055] Ibid.

[1056] Ibid.

7.7.4.3   Sa'd b. 'Ubāda's reaction to the *bay'a*.

Report twenty-nine states that he left for Sham and was killed there, without further elaborating.[1057] Report thirty from Abū Mikhnaf states that Sa'd b. 'Ubāda did not give *bay'a* to Abū Bakr and left for Shām.[1058] 'Umar sent a man to him demand his *bay'a* and instructed him that if he refused them to fight him. However Sa'd refused and was killed by the man. Al-Balādhurī states that some reports mention that Sa'd was killed by the Jinn.[1059]

In report thirty-five, Salmān Farsi expressed his disappointment with the *bay'a* to Abū Bakr and stated that God would have blessed them with much provision if only the *bay'a* had been given to 'Alī.[1060]

Al-Balādhurī presents the opposition to Abū Bakr by the above four Companions, Khālid b. Sa'īd, Abū Sufyān, Sa'd b. 'Ubāda and Salmān Farsi as isolated cases and hence carrying little weight. None were able to rally opposition against Abū Bakr, nor they did not join forces, and in Khālid's case, the report states that he eventually gave *bay'a*. Some opposition to Abū Bakr was based purely on tribal grounds, something that a religiously-inclined reader would give no credence to.

This completes my presentation of the seventeen reports about 'Alī's reaction to the bay'a. Like al-Ṭabarī, al-Balādhurī omitted the report, alluded to in the *Ta'rīkh* of al-Ya'qūbī, in which, after Abū Bakr entered the mosque to receive the general *bay'a* twelve of the Muhājirūn stood up, each extolling the virtues of 'Alī, and proclaiming 'Alī's right to the caliphate.[1061]

7.7.5   Analysing the reports of 'Alī's stance *vis-à-vis* Abū Bakr

In al-Balādhurī's chapter two and in this chapter, I discussed a number of reports above regarding 'Alī's stance towards the succession of Abū Bakr, and I now analyse them in further depth. The reports can be divided into two categories; 1) the reason for 'Alī's delay in giving *bay'a*, 2) his view regarding Abū Bakr's suitability to succeed the Prophet.

[1057] Ibid.
[1058] Ibid. p. 589.
[1059] Ibid.
[1060] Ibid. p. 591.
[1061] Afsaruddin (2013), p. 27. Al-Ya'qūbī briefly mentions this in his *Ta'rīkh*. Ibid. fn 8.

7.7.5.1 'Alī delaying his *bay'a*

In the table below, I tabulate the reports in which 'Alī delayed his *bay'a*.[1062] All of the reports

are found in this chapter (four).

[1062] In report seventeen and twenty-two, no mention is given of a delay in *bay'a*.

Table 7.5 'Alī delaying the bay'a

Report	Incident	Reason for delay	Outcome
14	'Alī delayed his *bay'a*.	Not mentioned.	Not mentioned.
15.	'Alī <u>refused</u> to give *bay'a*.	He felt that he was more entitled.	Abū Bakr convinced him, and he gave bay'a willingly.
16	''Alī initially refused to give *bay'a*. 'Umar brought a firebrand to his door.	He was busy compiling the Quran.	Gave *bay'a* willingly.
18	'Alī delayed his *bay'a* for six months.	He was not consulted.	Gave *bay'a* willingly (after six months).
19	'Alī delayed his *bay'a*. Abū Bakr admonishes him.	Not mentioned.	Not mentioned.
20	Alī delayed his *bay'a*.	He was busy compiling the Quran.	Implicit in the report that he gave *bay'a* willingly.
21	'Alī delayed his *bay'a*. Harsh words exchanged between 'Alī and 'Umar.	He was not consulted.[1063]	Gave *bay'a* willingly.
23	'Alī delayed his *bay'a*. The people turn away from him. 'Uthmān advised him to give *bay'a*.	Not mentioned.	Eventually gave *bay'a* willingly.

In six of the eight reports in which 'Alī initially delayed or refused to give *bay'a*, he eventually gave *bay'a* willingly. In two reports (reports fourteen and nineteen) it does not mention whether he eventually gave *bay'a* or not, but we can safely assume, in light of the other six reports, that he did. Unlike al-Ṭabarī, al-Balādhurī does not use any reports in which 'Alī was coerced into giving *bay'a* and only selects reports in which 'Alī gave *bay'a* of its own volition.

In summary, the fact that 'Alī delayed his *bay'a* (or initially refused) is not presented by al-Balādhurī as being problematic given that:
- in one report Abū Bakr convinced him, thus implying that 'Alī's initial position was mistaken.

[1063] Report seven also states that 'Alī was unhappy at the lack of consultation, however I have not included it here, as he did not delay his *bay'a*.

- in two reports, the reason for his delay was due to his preoccupation with the compilation of the Quran and not out of opposition to Abū Bakr.

- in two reports, the reason for his delay was his unhappiness at the lack of consultation on such an important matter, and not due to a rejection of Abū Bakr's rule.[1064]

7.7.5.2   The stance of 'Alī towards the succession of Abū Bakr

'Alī's stance towards Abū Bakr is mentioned ten times in al-Balādhurī's chapters two and four. The table below summarises this.

Table 7.6 Stance of 'Alī towards Abū Bakr

Stance of 'Alī	Frequency
Alī believed that Abū Bakr had been indirectly chosen by the Prophet to succeed him based upon the fact that Prophet appointed him to lead the prayer.[1065]	5
In reply to Khālid b. Saī'd/ Abū Sufyān, 'Alī defended the decision to select Abū Bakr.[1066]	3
'Alī refused to ask the Prophet about succession.[1067]	1
Alī was confident that he would be chosen as successor to the Prophet, given that he was entitled to it, and that no-one would oppose him.[1068]	1

In the first five reports, al-Balādhurī uses the strategy of repetition to emphasise that, not only did 'Alī acknowledge the legitimacy of Abū Bakr but believed that the Prophet had chosen Abū Bakr to succeed him by commanding him to lead the prayer. The latter point is significant given that a prophetic command (whether explicit or tacit) on any matter was considered binding and authoritative.

Al-Balādhurī emphasises this point over two chapters with different wordings and in different contexts. In the chapter two 'the matter of the Messenger of Allah during his death illness', he brings a number of reports in which the Prophet ordered Abū Bakr to lead the prayer. The reports regarding Abū Bakr leading the prayer are mixture of first and third person, although third person reports dominate the text. All three reports from 'Alī are all in the first person, i.e.

[1064] In two reports, the reason for the delay is not given.
[1065] al-Balādhurī, pp. 558,60, 82, 87.
[1066] Ibid. pp. 588-9.
[1067] Ibid. p. 565.
[1068] Ibid. p. 583.

he was a character in the text itself. However, unlike the other first-person narrators (e.g. ʿĀisha), ʿAlī links the fact that Abū Bakr led the prayer with the issue of succession. He infers from this that Abū Bakr was the rightful successor to the Prophet. ʿAlī said that when the Prophet died:

> 1…. (the people) saw that the Messenger of Allah had appointed him (Abū Bakr) in their religious matters, so we appointed him (to be in charge) of our worldly matters.[1069]
>
> 2… we looked into our matter and we found that the put Abū Bakr forward to lead the prayer. So we were satisfied and pleased for the matters of our worldly affairs that which the Messenger of Allah was happy for our religious affairs. So we put Abū Bakr forward.[1070]
>
> 3…. the Muslims chose for their worldly affairs whom the Messenger of Allah was pleased with for their religion. So we appointed Abū Bakr. And he was, by Allah, deserving of this. So what could remove him from the position that the Messenger of Allah had placed him in?[1071]

A number of points emerge from the three reports.

- ʿAlī made an analogy between leadership in the prayer and temporal leadership.
- That the Prophet selected Abū Bakr to lead the prayer implied that he was suitable to lead in the temporal affairs.
- It is implied that there was consensus on the leadership of Abū Bakr ('we were satisfied and pleased for the matters of our worldly affairs…')
- ʿAlī was involved in the appointment of Abū Bakr '(we put Abū Bakr forward').
- ʿAlī took an oath on Abū Bakr's suitability.
- Abū Bakr was appointed by the Prophet, and to remove him would entail opposing an action of the Prophet.

In above three reports, ʿAlī, the narrator, informed the reader the Abū Bakr was most entitled to succeed the Prophet. In the next two reports below, we are informed by a third person narrator, that ʿAlī spoke directly to Abū Bakr about the issue of succession and confirmed that his right to succeed the Prophet.

[1069] Ibid. p. 558.
[1070] Ibid.
[1071] Ibid. p. 560.

1. ('Alī said to Abū Bakr) I already knew that the Messenger of Allah appointed you to lead the prayer, and you are the second of the two in the cave. (report seven)[1072]
2. ('Alī said to Abū Bakr) The Messenger of Allah put you forward in the prayer, so who can put you back?' (report twenty-two).[1073]

In all five reports above, al-Balādhurī uses 'Alī, an individual whose credibility is beyond reproach, to legitimise Abū Bakr's succession, thus challenging his religious adversaries; the proto-Shī'a. Al-Balādhurī uses two types of voice to make the same point; first person voice ('Alī is the speaker and we see the events through his eyes) and a third person voice (where a narrator tells us what 'Alī said and did). Al-Balādhurī uses the first person after the events occurred. 'Alī, with the advantage of hindsight explained why Abū Bakr was selected. The third person tense is used to describe 'Alī's insight into the issue of succession at the time it occurred.

Al-Balādhurī further bolsters his argument through an additional three reports in which Ḥasan b. 'Alī confidently asserts that the Prophet had appointed Abū Bakr as successor. These three reports are significant given Ḥasan was 'Alī's son and was unlikely to oppose his father. He was also highly revered by the proto-Shī'a and his statements were considered to be a decisive religious proof.

1. (The Prophet ordered Abū Bakr to lead the prayer).
Ḥasan said: this was done to inform them, by Allah, who would be their companion (leader) after him.[1074]

2.(Al-Ḥasan was asked whether the Prophet appointed Abū Bakr).
So Ḥasan replied: Are you in doubt concerning you companion? By Allah from Whom there is no deity except Him, he definitely appointed him when he appointed him to lead the prayer to the exclusion of anyone else (emphasis mine). And he was more God fearing than to eagerly desire it.[1075]
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3.Different *isnād* but similar wording to above.[1076]

[1072] Ibid. p. 582.;In this report, 'Alī expressed his unhappiness at the lack of consultation but did not delay his *bay'a*.
[1073] Ibid. p. 587.
[1074] Ibid. p. 560.
[1075] Ibid. p. 561.
[1076] Ibid.

The choice of words are even more emphatic than those used by 'Alī. In the first report, Ḥasan stated that the Prophet implied that Abū Bakr should succeed him by asking him to lead the prayer.

In the second and third report, in response to a direct and unambiguous question regarding succession; 'Did the Messenger of Allah appoint Abū Bakr?' Ḥasan took an oath by God that the Prophet 'definitely appointed him'. He also added that Abū Bakr had no desire for leadership. As with the case with 'Alī, these reports are all the more significant given the status of Ḥasan among the proto-Shī'a.

Al-Balādhurī uses another setting to demonstrate that 'Alī supported the succession of Abū Bakr. Following Abū Bakr's selection, 'Alī was approached by Khālid b. Sa'īd and also by Abū Sufyān who expressed their dissatisfaction at the selection of Abū Bakr. In all three reports, 'Alī strongly defends the decision to select Abū Bakr.

> Alī said (to Khālid b. Sa'īd): 'Do you think that he took over by force? Allah places His matter wherever He wishes'.[1077]
> Alī said (to Abū Sufyān): 'Were it not for the fact I consider Abū Bakr worthy of it I would not have left him or it.'[1078]
> Alī said (to Abū Sufyān): 'And we had indeed given *bay'a* to Abū Bakr, by Allah he was worthy of it.'[1079]

The response to Abū Sufyān is unequivocal; 'Abū Bakr was worthy of it'. However 'Alī''s response to Khālid b. Sa'īd is rhetorical; 'Do you think that he took over by force?' i.e. the fact that the succession occurred peacefully implied that it was done with people's consent. 'Alī also attributed the outcome to the decree of God -i.e. it was God who gave the position to Abū Bakr and therefore this outcome should be accepted.

In report thirty-one the father of Abū Bakr upon hearing that his son was selected as caliph expressed surprise that the senior clans of Quraysh had accepted this. When the Prophet died, and later when Abū Bakr died, Mecca was shaken by an earthquake. That the earth shook at the death of the Prophet and then at Abū Bakr's death is used by al-Balādhurī to indicate the status of the latter.

[1077] Ibid. p. 588.
[1078] Ibid.
[1079] Ibid.

7.7.6 Reports thirty-two to thirty-four

These cover Abū Bakr's inaugural address. In this speech, a number of Abū Bakr's qualities are highlighted.

7.7.6.1 Humility and not desiring leadership

- Abū Bakr stated that he was not from the best of the Companions.[1080] (Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī in the next report stated that Abū Bakr knew he was the greatest Companion but did not say so as it would not be befitting for a believer to praise himself - this is an endorsement of Abū Bakr by the son of ʿAlī).[1081]

- he stated that he never desired leadership and wished that someone stronger than him was in his position.[1082]

7.7.6.2 Piety

- praised piety and censured sin.[1083]

- warned against the punishment on the Day of Judgement.[1084]

- encouraged to do good deeds before death came. [1085]

- warned against leaving jihad and committing obscenities.[1086]

- advised adhering to the Quran.[1087]

- encouraged repentance.[1088]

- stated that he was a follower of religious teaching and did not introduce anything new into the religion.[1089]

7.7.6.3 Justice and accountability

- promised to support the weak and restrain the strong.[1090]

- asked for assistance in doing good and to be restrained if he deviated. [1091]

- Obedience to him was conditional on his obedience to God and the Prophet.[1092]

[1080] Ibid. p. 590.
[1081] Ibid.
[1082] Ibid. p. 591.
[1083] Ibid. pp. 590,91.
[1084] Ibid. p. 591.
[1085] Ibid.
[1086] Ibid.
[1087] Ibid.
[1088] Ibid.
[1089] Ibid. pp. 590, 91.
[1090] Ibid.
[1091] Ibid.
[1092] Ibid. p. 591.

Abū Bakr also acknowledged that his *bay'a* was a *falta* but it prevented the occurrence of *fitna*.[1093] In other the words, the manner in which he was chosen may not have been ideal, but the decisive action at Saqīfa prevented a greater harm.

[1093] Ibid. pp. 590-1.

7.8 Conclusion/Summary

Throughout this text, al-Balādhurī is unequivocal in his support for the succession of Abū Bakr. Unlike al-Ṭabarī, who adduces reports for and against Abū Bakr's succession (and then subtly dismisses the latter through the use of the *isnād*), al-Balādhurī relies, in most cases, on reports which favour Abū Bakr's succession.

The few reports, which when read in isolation imply that 'Alī opposed Abū Bakr, are to be considered in light of the large number of reports in which 'Alī unequivocally supported the succession of Abū Bakr. When examining the text as a whole, the contradiction can be reconciled; Alī initially delayed his *bay'a*, never displayed open opposition to Abū Bakr, and eventually gave *bay'a*. This is one view that al-Balādhurī is proposing. However, there is a second view that also emerges from the text; 'Alī unhesitatingly gave *bay'a* to Abū Bakr (without delay) basing his decision on the Prophet's appointment of Abū Bakr to lead the prayer.

Al-Balādhurī thus leaves it to the reader to decide between two opinions:
1. 'Alī initially delayed his *bay'a*. However he eventually gave *bay'a*, fully acknowledging Abū Bakr's right to rule.
2. 'Alī gave *bay'a* immediately and without hesitation.

As for the reason for 'Alī's delay in giving *bay'a*, the majority of reports state that it was due to his unhappiness at not being consulted.[1094] Only two reports mention that 'Alī felt that he was more entitled to succeed the Prophet, and in one of them, Abū Bakr convinced him otherwise.

Unlike al-Ṭabarī who resolves contradictory reports by choosing one over the other, al-Balādhurī chooses to harmonise between them. His task is made easier through his careful selection of reports; none of them overtly oppose the succession of Abū Bakr. One of the reasons why al-Balādhurī may have only selected favourable reports, as opposed to al-Ṭabarī's method of selection and then subtle dismissal, is that al-Balādhurī was not a trained traditionist. Without the tools to subject the reports to critical scrutiny, al-Balādhurī selected

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[1094] Three reports state that 'Alī was unhappy at the lack of consultation, two reports state that he delayed his *bay'a* due to his preoccupation with compiling the Quran. One report states that he delayed his *bay'a* because he felt he was more entitled. And finally, three reports do not give a reason for the delay.

only those reports which were favourable to the proto-Sunnī narrative.[1095] He clearly omits reports that contradict his overall thesis.

Forty one percent of reports in al-Balādhurī's text are openly favourable to Abū Bakr compared to twenty three percent of reports in al-Ṭabarī's text. Hence, al-Balādhurī's narrative is far more tendentious than al-Ṭabarī's *Ta'rīkh*. The latter's support for Abū Bakr is far more subtle, whereas as in the case of al-Balādhurī, it is overt.

The non-discerning reader approaching al-Ṭabarī's text may well be left with many unanswered questions: What was the extent of opposition to Abū Bakr? Was 'Alī coerced into giving *bay'a*? Did the Anṣāri supporters of 'Alī eventually acquiesce to Abū Bakr's appointment? And finally: Was there continued support for 'Alī, albeit covert, throughout the reign of Abū Bakr? In al-Balādhurī's text, none of these questions are raised.[1096]

[1095] That Abū Bakr was the most virtuous of Companions, the rightful successor to the Prophet, that his succession occurred with minimal opposition, and that 'Alī never contested the succession of Abū Bakr.
[1096] By 'non-discerning', I mean one who is unable to distinguish, according to the Sunnī science of *ḥadīth*, between authentic and inauthentic narrations.

8 Analysis of al-Yaʿqūbī's *Taʾrīkh*

8.1 Introduction

In the preceding two chapters, I analysed the Saqīfa narratives of al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī. Both authors wrote using the *ḥadīth* format and as such their works were written without the explicit guiding interpolation of a direct authorial voice. I demonstrated how, through a number of strategies of compilation, they highlighted the excellence and precedence of Abū Bakr, and through this, supported his succession to the Prophet.

In this chapter I show how my third historian, al-Yaʿqūbī, unequivocally argues in favour of ʿAlī's sole right to succeed the Prophet. Dispensing with the *isnād*, and selecting and editing a range of sources, al-Yaʿqūbī writes in a continuous prose format and constructs his own unique narrative of the succession to the Prophet. His work, in contrast to the subtle signs of authorship in the works of al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī, exhibits clear authorship. The main theme that runs throughout the narrative, although not explicitly stated, is one of betrayal. A major sub-theme is the indignation suffered by ʿAlī's wife, Fāṭima.

Yaʿqūbī contrasts the forbearance and dignity of ʿAlī with Abū Bakr, whom he characterises as scheming and desirous of power. By portraying his ascension as an act of usurpation, al-Yaʿqūbī delegitimises Abū Bakr's rule. In this reading of historical events, having deprived ʿAlī of his rightful authority, Abū Bakr then uses his powerful position as caliph to deprive the Prophet's grieving daughter of her rightful inheritance. The narrative is framed as a battle between good (Fāṭima, ʿAlī and the latter's supporters) and evil (Abū Bakr, ʿUmar and their supporters).

The text comprises just under two thousand words and is much shorter than al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī's texts, each of which consist of approximately fourteen thousand words. Al-Yaʿqūbī's narrative consists almost entirely of dialogue, with verbatim quotes from key protagonists including the Prophet, several indirect quotes (e.g. 'some have said…'), lines of poetry, and only the occasional comment from al-Yaʿqūbī himself. The text is internally consistent without the need to reconcile between conflicting reports and serves al-Yaʿqūbī's narrative purpose. Only occasionally does he mention different opinions on an issue (e.g. the various opinions on when Fāṭima died). In order to support his religio-political perspective on

the issue of succession, al-Yaʿqūbī excludes a significant amount of detail that does not concur with his narrative goal.[1097]

Structurally, the present chapter consists of nine sections. In sections two and three, I discuss al-Yaʿqūbī's main sources and provide an outline of the text. In the remaining six sections, I analyse al-Yaʿqūbī's text.

In section four, I examine al-Yaʿqūbī's chapter one, in which he uses the event of the Farewell Pilgrimage, in particular the *ḥadīth* of Ghadīr Khumm and *thaqalayn*, as evidence that ʿAlī should have succeeded the Prophet.

In section five, I examine al-Yaʿqūbī's chapter two, entitled 'Death (of the Prophet).' al-Yaʿqūbī highlights a miraculous incident that occurred during the Prophet's *ghusl*, and which affirmed the lofty status of *ahl al-bayt*. In this section, he portrays Fāṭima as a tragic victim, oppressed by some of the Companions.

In section six, I examine al-Yaʿqūbī's chapter three, entitled 'Report of (the events at) Saqīfa of Banū Sāʿida and the Pledge of Allegiance given to Abū Bakr.' In this chapter, al-Yaʿqūbī depicts Abū Bakr as an illegitimate usurper, who is subsequently willing to use bribery and violence to maintain his power.

In section seven, I examine al-Yaʿqūbī's chapter four, in which he discusses the caliphate of Abū Bakr. ʿAlī, Fāṭima and the continued opposition to Abū Bakr's rule are prominent in this chapter.

In section eight, I describe al-Yaʿqūbī's evolving characterisation of Abū Bakr and offer my concluding remarks in section nine.

[1097] As an example, although al-Yaʿqūbī mentions Ibn Isḥāq as a source, he excludes details such as: Abū Bakr leading the prayer during the Prophet's illness, and Abū Bakr solving the issue of the location of the Prophet's burial site.

8.2 Yaʿqūbī 's sources

In his introduction to Volume Two of his *Ta'rīkh*, al-Yaʿqūbī informs the reader of some of his

sources, mentioning thirteen individuals whom he related from, many of them prominent

historians.[1098] He also mentions that he took from other (unnamed) sources. Some of his

named sources include al-Wāqidī, Ibn Ishāq, Ibn Hishām, al-Haytham b. ʿAdī (d.206-209/821-

824), Hishām Ibn Kalbi, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, Mūsā b. ʿUqba (d.141/758), al-Zuhrī, and al-Madā'ini.[1099]

Brief explanatory notes on the aforementioned individuals now follow.

Haytham b. Adī was the author of a number of historical works, none of them extant. He was

an important source for al-Balādhurī, al-Yaʿqūbī, al-Ṭabarī and al-Masʿūdī.[1100] Goitein argues

that al-Balādhurī modelled his *Ansāb* on Haytham b. Adī's *Kitāb Ta'rīkh al-Ashrāf*.[1101]

Hishām b. al-Kalbī was a famous and highly regarded genealogist, and an *akhbāri*, who wrote

over 150 works.[1102] He was from an 'Alid family and his pro-'Alid leanings led to harsh criticism

of him from a number of proto-Sunnī scholars. He was close to the 'Abbāsid Caliph al-

Ma'mūn.[1103]

Abū 'Abdallah b. Muḥammad known as **Jaʿfar as-Ṣādiq** was the eldest son of Muḥammad al-

Bāqir. He was a renowned jurist and *ḥadīth* scholar, and both Abū Ḥanīfa and Mālik b. Anas

studied with him. The major Shīʿī school of law, the Ja'fari , is traced back to him. Like his

father and grandfather, he remained aloof from politics. Although he is known as the sixth Shīʿī

[1098] Mulalic (2012), p. 133.

[1099] Ibid.; William Millward, 'Al-Yaʿqubi's Sources and the Question of Shīʿa Partiality', *Abr-Nahrayn,*
(1971).; **Al-Madā'inī's** biography is given in Chapter 7.3. **Al-Wāqidī's**, **Ibn Ishāq's** and **Al-Zuhrī's**
biography are given Chapter 6.4.

[1100] Pellat, Ch., "al-Haytham b. ʿAdī al-Ṭāʾī", *EI²*.

[1101] Al-Balādhurī Aḥmad Ibn Yaḥyā trans. by S.D.F Goitien, The Ansāb Al-Ashrāf of Al-Balādhurī,
(Jerusalem: University Press, 1936), p. 14.

[1102] An *akhbārī* is a collector of *akhbār* (reports, singular-*khabar*). Duri argues that the *akhbārīs* emerged
in the Kūfa and Baṣra in the second century. They collected *akhbār* on a particular topic or event and
wrote them down in a prose format. Their works are not extant but survive in later historical
compilations such as that of al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī. Examples of *akhbārīs* include Abū Mikhnaf,
'Awāna b. al-Ḥakam (d.147/764), Sayf b. 'Umar and Nasr b. Muzāḥim (d.212/847) .Duri (2014), pp. 42-8.

[1103] Atallah, W., "al-Kalbī", *EI²*.; Amanullah Khan, A Critical Study of Al-Balādhurī as a Historian, (Lahore,
Pakistan, 1986), pp. 86-7.

Imām by the Ithnā 'Ashariyya, both Halm and Momen argue that it is unlikely that he made such a claim.[1104]

Mūsā b. 'Uqba b. Abī 'Ayyāsh was an authority on the *maghāzi*, having studied under al-Zuhrī.[1105] A small fragment of his *Kitāb al-Maghāzi* survives. Non-extant content was preserved by Ibn Ishāq, al-Ṭabarī and al-Wāqidī. All of his reports were prefaced with an *isnād*.[1106]

One source that al-Ya'qūbī does not name, but was undoubtedly used by him, was the *Kitāb al-Saqīfa* attributed to Sulaym b. Qays al-Hilālī, an alleged disciple of 'Alī b. Abī Tālib and a contemporary of the subsequent four Imāms. He gave a proto-Shī'ī version of events of the succession to the Prophet. However, according to Modarressi, Sulaym b. Qays was a fictional character.[1107] Modarressi provides a number of cogent arguments that the book attributed to him, *Kitāb al-Saqīfa*, was authored towards the end of the reign of Hishām b. 'Abd al-Malik (r. 105-25/724-43). He states that the book repeatedly mentions twelve unjust rulers who usurped leadership; three of the Rāshidūn caliphs and the first nine Umayyads (i.e. up to reign of Yazīd II who was succeeded by Hishām b. 'Abd al-Malik). The proto-Shī'ī Imāms are mentioned up to Muḥammad al-Bāqir. Hence, the book cannot have been written before the time of Muḥammad al-Bāqir and given that Ja'far Ṣādiq was not mentioned, it is likely that it was written during the lifetime of Muḥammad al-Bāqir (i.e. before 117/733).[1108]

Based upon Modarressi's argument I will assume that it was written in 115/733 (just before the death of Muḥammad al-Bāqir).[1109] The book gives an insight into proto-Shī'ī beliefs in Kūfa in the early second/eighth century of Islam.[1110] In the period in which the book was authored,

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[1104] Heinz Halm, Shi'ism, (Columbia University Press, 2004), pp. 28-9.;Moojan Momen, An Introduction to Shi'i Islam: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi'ism, (Yale University Press, 1985), p. 38.

[1105] He was ranked as 'trustworthy', by Imām Mālik. Horovitz and others (2002), p. 69.

[1106] "Mūsā b. ʿUḳba", *EI²*.

[1107] Hossein Modarressi, *Tradition and Survival: A Bibliographical Survey of Early Shī'ite Literature*, (2003), pp. 82-3.

[1108] Ibid. p. 83.; Gleave examines one of the reports in the book and dates it to between the second/late eighth century and the early third century/early ninth century.; Robert Gleave, 'Early Shiite Hermeneutics and the Dating of Kitāb Sulaym Ibn Qays', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies,* 78 (2015).

[1109] Dakake dated the book between 122 and 132. Maria Dakake, 'Writing and Resistance', in *The Study of Shi 'I Islam: History, Theology and Law,* ed. by Farhad Daftary (2014), pp. 181-201. However, this means that the book was authored during the lifetime of Ja'far b. al-Ṣādiq. Given that the latter is not mentioned in the book, I hold that that Dakake dating is incorrect.

[1110] With the caveat that the proto-Shī'a were an amorphous group, with multiple and opposing doctrines.

we witness two unsuccessful 'Alid revolts: those of Zayd b. 'Alī and 'Abdullah b. Mu'āwiya (d. 127/744); the emergence a of number of *ghulāt* sects who believed in the divinity of the Imāms; and in Khurāsān an underground 'Abbāsid movement which was sowing the seeds of a meticulously planned revolution that would eventually see the overthrow of the Umayyads.[1111] *Kitāb al-*Saqīfa consists of ninety eighty traditions covering a range of topics centred around the status of 'Alī, his divine right to succession and his betrayal by Abū Bakr and his supporters. Several lengthy traditions describe how, from a proto-Shī'ī perspective, Abū Bakr came to be the leader of the nascent Muslim polity.[1112] Amīr-Moezzi has translated a number of these traditions. Some parts of al-Ya'qūbī's chapter three, *Report of (the events at) Saqīfa of Banū Sā'ida and the Pledge of Allegiance given to Abū Bakr*, are based upon traditions three and four in *Kitāb al-*Saqīfa*. Although al-Ya'qūbī bases his narrative upon traditions from *Kitāb al-*Saqīfa*, he prudently excludes some of the more violent and lurid details included within these reports.[1113] Such details, due to their disparagement of Abū Bakr and 'Umar, would have outraged proto-Sunnīs.

[1111] Momen (1985), pp. 52-3.; Sharon (1983), pp. 155-9.

[1112] Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, *The Silent Qur'an and the Speaking Qur'an. History and Scriptures through the Study of Some Ancient Texts, Trans by Eric Ormsby*, (2014), pp. 13-43.

[1113] Three examples suffice; a) 'Umar struck Fāṭima on both sides with his sword, then whipped her. b) A man called Qunfudh beat her violently breaking her ribs and causing her to miscarry. c) A cord was tied around 'Alī's throat. Ibid. p. 30.

8.3 The structure of the *Ta'rīkh*

Table 8.1 The Structure of the *Ta'rīkh*.

Chapter No.	Chapter Heading
1	**The Farewell Pilgrimage.**[1114]
2	**The Death (of the Prophet).**[1115]
	Description of the Messenger of God.[1116]
	Those Who Resembled the Messenger of God.[1117]
	The Lineage of the Messenger of God, His Female Ancestors Back to Abraham, and the Ātikas and Fāṭimas Who were His Ancestors.[1118]
	Names of Fāṭimas who bore him.[1119]
	The Governors of the Messenger of God.[1120]
3	**Report of the (events at) the Saqīfa of Banū Sā'ida and the Oath of Allegiance to Abū Bakr.**[1121]
4	**[The Days of Abū Bakr].**[1122]

My analysis utilises four of al-Yaʿqūbī's chapters (numbered above in bold). Each chapter is discussed in a separate section.

[1114] Aḥmad b. Abī Yaʿqūb Yaʿqūbī, 'Ta'rikh Volume 2', ed. by M. Th Houtsma (1883), pp. 121-25).
[1115] Ibid. pp. 125-29.
[1116] Ibid. pp. 129-30.
[1117] Ibid. p. 130.
[1118] Ibid. pp. 131-5.
[1119] Ibid. p. 135.
[1120] Ibid. p. 136.
[1121] Ibid. pp. 136-41.
[1122] Ibid. pp. 141-57.

8.4 Al-Yaʿqūbī's Chapter 1-The Farewell Pilgrimage

Prior to the chapter on death of the Prophet, al-Yaʿqūbī mentions an important episode, consisting of two closely related events that occurred around the time of the Farewell Pilgrimage. The first of the two events occurred at the conclusion of this valedictory pilgrimage, in which the Prophet is reported to have said:

> 'Do not revert after my death to being unbelievers led astray, with some of you owning others of you as slaves. I have left among you something which, if you hold fast to it, you will not go astray: God's book and my family, the people of my house. (emphasis mine). Have I conveyed the message?' "Yes," they replied. "Bear witness, O God!" he said.'[1123]

A few lines later in the text, al-Yaʿqūbī mentions the second event. After the Prophet had completed the Hajj, he made his way back to Medina. En route,

> '…he came to a place in the lowland of al-Juḥfa called *Ghadīr Khumm*. He stood to deliver an address, took the hand of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, and said, "Am I not closer to the believers than they are to themselves?" They said, "Yes, that is so, Messenger of God!" He said, "To whomever I am a mawlā, ʿAlī is mawlā.[1124] O God, be the friend of whoever helps him, and be the enemy of whoever treats him as an enemy." emphasis mine). Then he said, "People, I shall arrive at the water before you; you will come to me at the pool, and I shall ask you, when you come to me, about the two weighty things **(thaqalayn);** be mindful therefore of how you succeed me regarding the two of them." They said, "What are the two weighty things, Messenger of God?" He replied, "The weightier of the two is the Book of God, a rope one end of which is in God's hand and other end of which is in your hands. Hold fast to it and do not stray from it or alter it**.** (The other) is my family, the people of my house**."'[1125]** (emphasis mine).

Yaʿqūbī strategically places this episode at the end of the chapter on the Farewell Hajj, and immediately prior to the chapter on Prophet's death and Saqīfa. In the first incident, at the Farewell Pilgrimage, the Prophet ordered his Companions to hold fast to the Quran and to the *ahl al-bayt*. Thus the *ahl al-bayt* were deemed to be sources of knowledge and guidance alongside the Quran.

In the second incident, at Ghadīr Khumm, the Prophet declared ʿAlī to be the *mawlā* of the believers. To the proto-Shīʿa, this was a defining moment, as ʿAlī had in their view been

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[1123] Ibid. pp. 124-5.; Gordon and others (2018), p. 730.
[1124] Yaʿqūbī, p. 125.;For an explanation of the term *mawlā,* see the Glossary.
[1125] Ibid. ;Gordon and others (2018), pp. 730-1.

unequivocally designated by the Prophet to succeed him.[1126] At Ghadīr Khumm, the Prophet also reiterated his order to hold fast to the Quran and to the *ahl al-bayt*. The proto-Shī'a defined the *ahl al-bayt* as comprising of the Prophet, 'Alī, Fāṭima, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn and their descendants.[1127] After the death of the Prophet, the *ahl al-bayt*, with 'Alī at the head, were to succeed him, followed by the descendants of 'Alī and Fāṭima. Allegiance to the *ahl al-bayt*, and the belief that political and religious authority were exclusive to them, was a key proto-Shī'ī doctrine.[1128] As I demonstrate in my discussion of al-Ya'qūbī's chapters 2 to 4, a close reading of his text suggests that he shared this understanding.

Ya'qūbī cites both above-mentioned incidents without commentary, considering them to be self-explanatory; the Prophet designated 'Alī and his descendants to succeed him, and the believers were ordered to follow *ahl al-bayt*. Al-Ya'qūbī then uses the following two chapters to show how 'Alī, despite his unambiguous designation, was deprived of his rightful position by the opportunistic actions of Abū Bakr.

[1126] The various interpretations of the *ḥadīth* of Ghadīr Khumm is discussed in the glossary.

[1127] "Fāṭima", *EI²*.
 The proto-Sunnīs on the other hand, in their definition of *ahl-bayt*, included the Prophet's wives and members of his tribe. Goldziher, I., "*Ahl al-Bayt*", *EI².*;The proto-Shī'ī definition of *ahl al-bayt* is based upon the *ḥadīth* of *ahl-Kisā*. See footnote 409 for a discussion of *ahl-Kisā.*

[1128] Haider (2014), p. 37.

8.5 Al-Yaʿqūbī's Chapter 2: The Death (of the Prophet)

A summary of al-Yaʿqūbī's chapter two is as follows.

- The Prophet dispatched Usāma b. Zayd to avenge the death of the latter's father.[1129]

- The Prophet complained about his illness, which lasted fourteen days until he died.[1130]

- Yaʿqūbī gives astrological information about the day and year of the Prophet's death.[1131]

- The Prophet died aged sixty-three.[1132]

- The *ghusl* of the Prophet's body was performed by ʿAlī and other relatives.[1133]

- During the *ghusl* they heard a voice reciting a number of Quranic verses.[1134]

- A description of the Prophet's shroud.[1135]

- A description of the Prophet's grave.[1136]

- A description of the manner in which the funeral prayer was conducted.[1137]

- The day and approximate time of burial.[1138]

- The shock and disbelief expressed by ʿUmar.[1139]

- Abū Bakr affirmed the Prophet's death.[1140]

- The death of Fāṭima, the various opinions regarding when she died, and her private burial.[1141]

- Fāṭima expressed her aggrievement with the way she had been mistreated.[1142]

- The age of Fāṭima at the time of her death.[1143]

The first thing which strikes the reader is the absence of any detail regarding the Prophet's illness and subsequent death. This is in stark contrast to al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī who

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[1129] Yaʿqūbī, pp. 125-6.;Gordon and others (2018), p. 731.
[1130] Yaʿqūbī, p. 126.;Gordon and others (2018), pp. 731-2.
[1131] Yaʿqūbī, p. 126.;Gordon and others (2018), p. 732.
[1132] Yaʿqūbī, p. 126.;Gordon and others (2018), p. 732.
[1133] Yaʿqūbī, pp. 126-7.;Gordon and others (2018), pp. 732-3.
[1134] Yaʿqūbī, pp. 126-7.;Gordon and others (2018), pp. 732-3.
[1135] Yaʿqūbī, p. 127.;Gordon and others (2018), p. 733.
[1136] Yaʿqūbī, p. 127.; Gordon and others (2018), p. 733.
[1137] Yaʿqūbī, p. 127.; Gordon and others (2018), p. 733.
[1138] Yaʿqūbī, p. 127.;Gordon and others (2018), p. 733.
[1139] Yaʿqūbī, p. 128.;Gordon and others (2018), pp. 733-4.
[1140] Yaʿqūbī, p. 128.;Gordon and others (2018), pp. 733-4.
[1141] Yaʿqūbī, p. 128.;Gordon and others (2018), p. 734.
[1142] Yaʿqūbī, pp. 128-9.;Gordon and others (2018), p. 734.
[1143] Yaʿqūbī, p. 129.;Gordon and others (2018), p. 734.

describe the events and the setting, leading up to and including the Prophet's death, in considerable detail.[1144]

In a mere few lines, al-Yaʿqūbī informs the reader that the Prophet was ill for fourteen days, and died on Monday 2nd Rabīʿ I, aged sixty three, and then discusses the *ghusl* of the Prophet.[1145] Details such as the time of his death, his exact location, his final words and those who witnessed his death are not mentioned.

As stated earlier, al-Yaʿqūbī's narrative is made up almost entirely of dialogue, with Abū Bakr as the villainous protagonist. Al-Yaʿqūbī characterises certain individuals (Abū Bakr as scheming, Fāṭima as tragic, ʿAlī as forbearing and ʿUmar as violent) in order to serve his narrative purpose. The setting in which the dialogue occurred is peripheral and is therefore virtually absent from the text.

As well as leaving out contextual information, al-Yaʿqūbī also skips the chronology of events leading up to the Prophet's death.[1146] The two main characters to feature prominently during the Prophet's final illness are Abū Bakr and ʿĀisha. Their inclusion in the text would perforce portray them in a positive light and hence detract from al-Yaʿqūbī's overall narrative goal.

Immediately after mentioning the death of the Prophet, al-Yaʿqūbī discusses the *ghusl* of the Prophet. Unlike al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī, who devote considerable space presenting the various opinions of who performed the *ghusl* and the manner in which it was performed, al-Yaʿqūbī merely states that the *ghusl* was performed by ʿAlī, ʿAbbās's son, and Usāma b. Zayd.[1147] He uses the event of the *ghusl* to reiterate a point made in the previous chapter: the mythical status of *ahl al-bayt*. While performing the *ghusl*, ʿAlī and his companion hear the voice of the angel Gabriel reciting three Quranic verses:

[1144] Al-Balādhurī devotes an entire passage, consisting of twenty-six pages, to the final illness of the Prophet.

[1145] Yaʿqūbī, pp. 126-7.;Gordon and others (2018), pp. 731-2.;Al-Yaʿqūbī provides astrological information regarding the date of his death, quoting the words of Māshāʾallāh and al-Khwārazmī.

[1146] These events include: that the Prophet spent his final days in the house of ʿĀisha and died in her lap, he appointed Abū Bakr to lead the prayer and at times he prayed behind Abū Bakr, he alluded to his death but only Abū Bakr understood it, he ordered all doors to the mosque to be closed except that of Abū Bakr's, and he was buried in ʿĀisha's house based upon Abū Bakr's recollection of a prophetic *ḥadīth*.

[1147] Yaʿqūbī, p. 126.;Gordon and others (2018), p. 732.

'Peace and the mercy of God and His blessings be upon you, <u>ahl al-bayt</u>! Surely, He is praiseworthy and glorious'.[1148] (emphasis mine).

'God only desires to keep disgrace away from you, <u>ahl al-bayt</u>, and to purify you completely'.[1149] (emphasis mine).

'Every soul shall taste death. You shall receive your wages in full on the Day of Resurrection. Whoever is removed from the fire and made to enter the Garden shall have succeeded. The life of this world is nothing but the joy of deception. You will surely be tested in your possessions and your souls. You will surely hear much insult from those to whom the Book was sent before you and from those who have associated [other beings with God]. But if you persevere and are Godfearing, surely that will decide the matter'.[1150]

The proto-Shī'a believed that the first two verses highlight the special position afforded to *ahl al-bayt*.

From the context of the overall narrative the third verse, which stresses patience in the face of adversity, alluded to the suffering and affliction that the family of 'Alī were about to undergo at the hands of Abū Bakr and his supporters.

Ya'qūbī devotes one line to the Prophet's shrouding and then discusses his burial.[1151] 'Alī was one of those who entered the Prophet's grave to complete the funeral rites. The funeral prayer lasted several days, as the people prayed over him in small groups (due to the small size of 'Ā'isha's house).[1152] Al-Ya'qūbī then mentions the shock and grief of the Companions, in particular 'Umar, who refused to belief that the Prophet had died. Abū Bakr replied to 'Umar with a Quranic verse to affirm the Prophet's mortality.[1153]

Al-Ya'qūbī devotes the rest of the chapter (comprising almost half of it) to the Prophet's daughter (and wife of 'Alī) Fāṭima. She died soon after the Prophet, and al-Ya'qūbī mentions a number of opinions regarding how long she lived after the Prophet. He does not direct the reader to any particular view. Interestingly, he does not state the various opinions concerning the Prophet's death date, settling for one opinion.

[1148] Ya'qūbī, pp. 126-7.;Gordon and others (2018), pp. 732-3. ;Quran 11:73.

[1149] Ya'qūbī, p. 127.; Gordon and others (2018), p. 733. ;Quran: 33:33.

[1150] Ya'qūbī, p. 127.; Gordon and others (2018), p. 733. ;Quran 3: 185-186.

[1151] Ya'qūbī, p. 127.; Gordon and others (2018), p. 733.

[1152] Although 'Āisha is not mentioned at all in this passage.

[1153] Ya'qūbī, p. 128.;Gordon and others (2018), pp. 733-4. ;"Indeed, you are to die, and indeed, they are to die." Quran: 39:30.

Al-Yaʿqūbī depicts Fāṭima as a tragic figure. In her dying days she lamented to Asmāʾ bt. Umays: 'Do you not see what I have come to? Shall I be borne away on an open bed, exposed?'[1154] Asmāʾ consoled her by making a (funeral) bier for her. Upon seeing this, Fāṭima smiled, and al-al-Yaʿqūbī states:

> 'she was never seen smiling except on that day. She was buried by night and no-one attended her burial except Salmān (al-Fārisī) and Abū Dharr (al-Ghifārī); others have said ʿAmmār [b. Yāsir]'.[1155]

The three above named individuals are considered by the Imāmi Shīʿa to be the founding fathers of the Shīʿī movement. By stating that only *they* attended the funeral of ʿAlī's wife, al-al-Yaʿqūbī aims to highlight a rift between the partisans of ʿAlī and the rest of the Community. In the final two paragraphs of this chapter, the sadness and grief of Fāṭima turns to bitterness and anger:

> 'Some of the wives of the Messenger of God came to Fāṭima during her illness and said, "Daughter of the Messenger of God! Allow us to participate in being present at the washing of your body!" She replied, "Do you wish to say about me what you said about my mother? I have no need for your presence." During her illness the wives of the Messenger of God and other women of Quraysh came to her and said, "How are you?" She said, "By God, I find myself disliking this world of yours, and happy to be leaving you. I shall meet God and His Messenger with griefs caused by you: my right was not maintained, the obligation me was not respected, … the testament was not accepted, and my inviolability was not recognized." Her age was 23 years.'[1156]

Thus al-Yaʿqūbī ends this chapter on sombre note. Bereft of her father, and abandoned by the rest of the community, Fāṭima, in her final days, was consumed with grief. So strong was her feeling of estrangement that, during her illness, she eagerly awaited death. Unlike al-Balādhurī, who reports on the grief of Fāṭima due to the severity of the Prophet's illness, al-Yaʿqūbī omits this as it does not serve his polemical goal. His focus is not on grief *per se* but on grief due to betrayal. Compared to his poignant portrayal of Fāṭima who longs for death, al-Yaʿqūbī presents the Prophet's death in a fairly dispassionate way.

In his portrayal of Fāṭima, al-Yaʿqūbī aims to evoke feelings of both pity and outrage in the mind of the reader. The (yet) unnamed villain is Abū Bakr, who is accused of depriving Fāṭima

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[1154] Yaʿqūbī, p. 128.;Asmāʾ was her sister-in-law.
[1155] Ibid.; Gordon and others (2018), p. 734.
[1156] Yaʿqūbī, pp. 128-9.;Gordon and others (2018), p. 734.

of her inheritance.[1157] The wives of the Prophet do not fare much better. Again al-Yaʿqūbī does not name them, but they stand accused of disrespecting the Prophet's first wife Khadija (and mother of Fāṭima). Of the four historians, this lamenting portrayal of Fāṭima is unique to al-Yaʿqūbī.

In summary, al-Yaʿqūbī, in this chapter, glosses over many of the important events during the Prophet's final illness and in many cases completely omits information. This is deliberate, as the inclusion of such information would not serve his narrative purpose. Whilst washing the deceased Prophet's body, God sent the angel Gabriel with a message of consolation directly to ʿAlī and his family. The consolation took the form of three Quranic verses, two of which were understood by the proto-Shīʿa to indicate the lofty status of *ahl al-bayt* and necessitated complete allegiance to them. Finally, Fāṭima is portrayed as a tragic figure, oppressed and treated contemptuously by the Prophet's wives and companions.

As mentioned in section three, this chapter is followed by a number of chapters which are not relevant to this study. I now turn to al-Yaʿqūbī's discussion of Saqīfa.

[1157] Gordon and others (2018), p. 734 fn 688.; I return to the issue of Fāṭima's inheritance at the end of the chapter.

8.6 Al-Yaʿqūbī's Chapter Three: Report of (the events at) Saqīfa of Banū Sāʿida and the Pledge of Allegiance given to Abū Bakr.

A summary of this chapter is given below.

- The Anṣār met to elect Saʿd b. ʿUbāda.[1158]

- Abū Bakr and a number of Quraysh rushed to the meeting.[1159]

- A debate ensued. Anṣār extoled their virtues and Abū Bakr emphasised the superiority of Quraysh.[1160]

- One Anṣāri suggested joint leadership between the Muhājirūn and Anṣār.[1161]

- Abū Bakr replied: 'We are the leaders and you are the ministers.'[1162]

- An Anṣāri extoled the virtues of the Anṣār. Abū Bakr agreed but reiterated that Quraysh had priority in leadership.[1163]

- Abū Bakr suggested the *bay'a* be given to either ʿUmar or Abū ʿUbayda. The latter two resolutely refused.[1164]

- ʿUmar, Abū ʿUbayda and the Qurayshis pledged allegiance to Abū Bakr.[1165]

- Abū ʿUbayda reminded the Anṣār that they were the first to help, and not to change their allegiance.[1166]

- ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAwf told the Anṣār that none of them were comparable to the likes Abū Bakr, ʿUmar and ʿAlī.[1167]

- One Anṣāri agreed but stated that he would prefer ʿAlī.[1168]

- Bashīr b. Saʿd was the first Anṣāri to give *bay'a* followed immediately by many others.[1169]

- In process of giving *bay'a*, the crowd almost trampled on Saʿd b. ʿUbāda.[1170]

- Banu Hāshim opposed the election of Abū Bakr, argued that the leadership belonged to ʿAlī, and accused the Quraysh of deceit.[1171]

[1158] Yaʿqūbī, pp. 136-7.;Gordon and others (2018), p. 742.
[1159] Yaʿqūbī, p. 137.; Gordon and others (2018), p. 742.
[1160] Yaʿqūbī, p. 137.; Gordon and others (2018), p. 742.
[1161] Yaʿqūbī, p. 137.;Gordon and others (2018), p. 742.
[1162] Yaʿqūbī, p. 137.;Gordon and others (2018), p. 742.
[1163] Yaʿqūbī, p. 137.; Gordon and others (2018), p. 742.
[1164] Yaʿqūbī, p. 137.; Gordon and others (2018), pp. 742-3.
[1165] Yaʿqūbī, p. 137. ;Gordon and others (2018), p. 743.
[1166] Yaʿqūbī, p. 137.; Gordon and others (2018), p. 743.
[1167] Yaʿqūbī, p. 137.;Gordon and others (2018), p. 743.
[1168] Yaʿqūbī, p. 137.; Gordon and others (2018), p. 743.
[1169] Yaʿqūbī, p. 137.;Gordon and others (2018), p. 743.
[1170] Yaʿqūbī, p. 137.; Gordon and others (2018), p. 743.
[1171] Yaʿqūbī, p. 138.; Gordon and others (2018), pp. 743-4.

- Yaʿqūbī states that the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār had no doubt that ʿAlī was the Prophet's successor. [1172]

- Yaʿqūbī brings some lines of poetry from ʿUtba b. Abī Lahab extoling the virtues of ʿAlī.[1173]

- A number of prominent Companions withheld their *bayʿa* from Abū Bakr.[1174]

- Abū Bakr and others approached ʿAbbās to offer him and his descendants a share in the Caliphate, in order to exclude ʿAlī, but ʿAbbās refused. He opposition to Abū Bakr was unequivocal.[1175]

- ʿAbbās criticised Abū Bakr for taking the title *khalīfat rasūl Allah*.

- Abū Sufyān and Khālid b. Saʿīd also opposed the decision to elect Abū Bakr and offered to give *bayʿa* to ʿAlī.[1176]

- One Companion recited some poetry to ʿAlī, inciting him to take power.[1177]

- A crowd gathered around ʿAlī, imploring him to accept the *bayʿa*. ʿAlī asked them to shave their head and go to Abū Bakr to complain, but only three complied with his instruction.[1178]

- Fāṭima's house was stormed by Abū Bakr's supporters, and a fight ensued between ʿAlī and ʿUmar. Fāṭima intervened, threatening to unveil herself. They then left the house.[1179]

- One by one ʿAlī's supporters gave *bayʿa* to Abū Bakr.[1180]

- ʿAlī eventually gave *bayʿa* to Abū Bakr after six months / forty days.[1181]

In this chapter, al-Yaʿqūbī covers two main events; the selection of Abū Bakr at Saqīfa, which takes up approximately a quarter of the chapter, and the reaction of ʿAlī and his supporters to Abū Bakr's selection, which takes up the remainder of the chapter.

Al-Yaʿqūbī' begins his narrative of Saqīfa by drawing attention to the fact that it occurred on the same day as the death of the Prophet. 'The Anṣār gathered at the portico of the Banū Sāʿida <u>on the day</u> the Messenger of God died [and] was to be washed'[1182] (emphasis mine).The

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[1172] Yaʿqūbī, p. 138.; Gordon and others (2018), p. 744.
[1173] Yaʿqūbī, p. 138.;Gordon and others (2018), p. 744.;ʿUtba was the cousin of the Prophet. His infamous father, Abū Lahab, was the Prophet's paternal uncle.
[1174] Yaʿqūbī, p. 138.;Gordon and others (2018), p. 744.
[1175] Yaʿqūbī, p. 139.;Gordon and others (2018), pp. 744-5.
[1176] Yaʿqūbī, pp. 140-1.; Gordon and others (2018), pp. 746-7.
[1177] Yaʿqūbī, pp. 140-1.; Gordon and others (2018), p. 747.
[1178] Yaʿqūbī, p. 141.; Gordon and others (2018), p. 747.
[1179] Yaʿqūbī, p. 141.;Gordon and others (2018), p. 747.
[1180] Yaʿqūbī, p. 141.;Gordon and others (2018), p. 747.
[1181] Yaʿqūbī, p. 141.;Gordon and others (2018), p. 747.
[1182] Yaʿqūbī, p. 136.; Gordon and others (2018), p. 742.

impression given is that the jostle for power began the very day the Prophet died. Al-Yaʿqūbī also mentions: '[and] was to be washed' i.e. ʿAlī was dutifully washing the deceased Prophet, oblivious to the fact that his divine right to succeed the Prophet was being appropriated from him.

Al-Yaʿqūbī's discussion of the events at Saqīfa is very brief. The overall narrative does not differ substantially from al-Ṭabarī's or al-Balādhurī's accounts. At Saqīfa, Abū Bakr, ʿUmar and Abū ʿUbayda spoke with one voice stating: 'Assemblies of the Anṣār! The Messenger of God was one of us, and therefore we are entitled to his place.'[1183] In reply to the Anṣāri suggestion of 'a leader from us and a leader from you', Abū Bakr reiterated that the 'Quraysh are closer to Muḥammad than you are'.[1184] The Quraysh gave *bayʿa* to Abū Bakr and then,

> ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAwf stood up and said, "Companies of Anṣār! Even if you possess merit, there is no-one among you like Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, and ʿAlī." Al-Mundhir b. Arqam stood up and said, "We do not deny the merit of those you have mentioned; <u>indeed, there is a man among them such that if he had sought this matter, no one would have disputed him for it: ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib</u>"[1185] (emphasis mine).

According to al-Mundhir b. Arqam, ʿAlī would have been acceptable to both parties. The Anṣār would have supported him based upon his merit, and the supporters of Abū Bakr would (or should) have accepted him based upon his merit and Qurayshi lineage. But although ʿAlī was the most deserving to succeed the Prophet, he had not, unlike Abū Bakr, rushed to Saqīfa, 'and sought this matter'. Al-Mundhir b. Arqam's suggestion of a compromise choice was too late. *Bayʿa* had already been given to Abū Bakr, and the rest of the Anṣār followed suit.

Although al-Yaʿqūbī omits much of the detail of the events at Saqīfa, he uses the dialogue that occurred between Abū Bakr and his supporters, and the Anṣār, to expound the view that only ʿAlī was entitled to succeed the Prophet. Abū Bakr's argument that the caliphate was exclusively for the Quraysh is presented by al-Yaʿqūbī as a clear argument for the succession of ʿAlī. Hence, the Anṣāri, al-Mundhir b. Arqam, argued that ʿAlī (and not Abū Bakr or ʿUmar) would have been the ideal candidate to succeed the Prophet.

In the remaining part of the chapter, al-Yaʿqūbī describes the aftermath of Saqīfa. ʿAlī's supporters were stunned at their exclusion in the decision-making process, and they rejected

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[1183] Yaʿqūbī, p. 137.;Gordon and others (2018), p. 742.
[1184] Yaʿqūbī, p. 137.;Gordon and others (2018), p. 742.
[1185] Yaʿqūbī, p. 137.;Gordon and others (2018), p. 743.

the decision to select Abū Bakr. Just as Abū Bakr at Saqīfa argued on the basis of kinship that the "Quraysh are closer to Muḥammad than you (the Anṣar) are", 'Alī's supporters, many of whom were from Banū Hāshim, used the same argument against Abū Bakr: "we are closest to Muḥammad."[1186]

Al-Ya'qūbī then adds his own brief but candid remark: "Now the Muhājirūn and Anṣār never had any doubt about 'Alī".[1187] That the Anṣār 'never had had any doubt about 'Alī' was alluded to by al-Mundhir b. Arqam.[1188] But by also claiming that the Muhājirūn also never doubted 'Alī's right to succeed the Prophet, he presents the outcome at Saqīfa as a *coup d'état* against 'Alī. The reason why, according to al-Ya'qūbī, the Muhājirūn 'had no doubt about 'Alī' is discussed shortly. Al-Ya'qūbī continues with the theme of the betrayal felt by Banū Hāshim, by quoting Faḍl b. 'Abbās's address to the Quraysh in which he argued that that Abū Bakr had taken the caliphate through deceit, and that 'Alī was more entitled to it.[1189] Another of 'Alī's (and the Prophet's) cousins, 'Utba, recited some lines of poetry in which he expressed:

- his dismay at the caliphate going to other than Banū Hāshim and 'Alī.
- that 'Alī had precedence over the other Companions.
- that 'Alī was the most knowledgeable of the Companions.
- that 'Alī had the virtue of being the last person in the (deceased) Prophet's presence.
- that the Companions did not doubt that 'Alī excelled them in virtue.
- that 'Alī possessed certain virtues that no one else had.[1190]

Al-Ya'qūbī uses this poetry, which emphasises 'Alī's excellence, precedence, knowledge and kinship, to support the claim that 'Alī was the Prophet's rightful successor. It may have been on this basis that "the Muhājirūn and Anṣār never had had any doubt about 'Alī ('s right to succeed the Prophet)". However, another possible reason why they "had no doubt about 'Alī"

[1186] Ya'qūbī, p. 138.;Gordon and others (2018), pp. 473-4. ; i.e. if one could dismiss the Anṣāri claim to caliphate based upon the fact that the Quraysh were closer to the Prophet than the Anṣār, then likewise, Abū Bakr's leadership could be dismissed given that Banū Hāshim were closer to the Prophet than him.

[1187] Ya'qūbī, p. 138.; Gordon and others (2018), p. 744.

[1188] Ya'qūbī, p. 137.;Gordon and others (2018), p. 743.; "indeed, there is a man among them such that if he had sought this matter, no one would have disputed him for it: 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib."

[1189] Ya'qūbī, p. 138.;Gordon and others (2018), p. 744. ; These were not his exact words, but the meaning implied by his statement. (Faḍl b. 'Abbās was the paternal cousin of both the Prophet and 'Alī).

[1190] Ya'qūbī, p. 138.;Gordon and others (2018), p. 744.;Madelung states that this poem may be attributed to al-'Abbās b. Utba b. Abī Lahab with the additional line: 'What is it that has turned them away from him ('Alī). Let us know? Surely, we have been cheated in the most monstrous way.' Madelung (1997), pp. 36-7. ;Gordon and others (2018), p. 744 fn 65.

was the concept of *naṣṣ*. At the end of the previous chapter, al-Yaʻqūbī mentioned the incident at Ghadīr Khumm which was witnessed by the majority of Companions. According to the proto-Shīʻa, the incident at Ghadīr Khumm was indisputable evidence that the Prophet had explicitly designated ʻAlī as his successor (i.e. *naṣṣ*).[1191]

Despite the support from his clan, ʻAlī, desirous to maintain the unity of the *umma*, forbade them from agitating against Abū Bakr.[1192] Al-Yaʻqūbī mentions the names of twelve prominent Companions who withheld the *bayʻa* from Abū Bakr.[1193] In response to this possible threat to his leadership, Abū Bakr consulted ʻUmar, Abū ʻUbayda and Mughīra b. Shuʻba. They advised him to:

> 'meet with al-ʻAbbās b. ʻAbd al-Muṭṭalib and give him a share in this affair, to be for him and for his descendants after him, thereby cutting off the claim of ʻAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, as an argument for you against ʻAlī, if (al-ʻAbbās) leans to your cause'.[1194]

In order to prevent ʻAlī from reclaiming his rightful position, Abū Bakr and his close confidantes planned to drive a wedge between ʻAlī and his close supporter and uncle, al-ʻAbbās, by offering to share power with him and his descendants. That the four men visited al-ʻAbbās at night adds to the sense of intrigue. A discussion ensued between Abū Bakr and al-ʻAbbās in which al-ʻAbbās cogently rebutted all the points made by Abū Bakr. He rejected the claim that Abū Bakr was chosen by the believers, given that they (Banū Hāshim) were excluded from the decision-making process.[1195] He also rejected Abū Bakr's use of the title, successor (*khalīfa*) of God's Messenger.[1196] He then replied to the offer in question: Abū Bakr did not have the authority to make such an offer; only the believers (Banū Hāshim) had this right to proffer leadership. [1197]

In the concluding part of his speech, al-ʻAbbās directly rebutted Abū Bakr's statement that: '…the Messenger of God was one of us and one of you' by replying; 'For indeed the Messenger of God was of a tree of which we are the branches, while you are its neighbours!'[1198] In other words, political legitimacy was predicated upon blood ties to the Prophet, and thus only ʻAlī was deserving to succeed the Prophet.

[1191]Yaʻqūbī, pp. 124-5. ;Gordon and others (2018), pp. 730-1.
[1192] Yaʻqūbī, p. 138.;Gordon and others (2018), p. 744 fn 67.; Madelung (1997), p. 37.
[1193] Yaʻqūbī, pp. 138-9.; Gordon and others (2018), p. 744.
[1194] Yaʻqūbī, p. 139.;Gordon and others (2018), p. 745.
[1195] Yaʻqūbī, p. 140.;Gordon and others (2018), p. 746.
[1196] Yaʻqūbī, p. 140.;Gordon and others (2018), p. 746.
[1197] Yaʻqūbī, p. 140.;Gordon and others (2018), p. 746.
[1198] Yaʻqūbī, p. 140.;Gordon and others (2018), p. 746.

Further support for 'Alī came from Abū Sufyān and Khālid b. Sa'īd, who both offered him *bay'a*, and from another Companion who recited some rousing words of poetry in which he:[1199]

- urged 'Alī not to allow Abū Bakr or 'Umar take advantage of him.[1200]

- insisted that 'Alī alone had the right to succeed the Prophet.[1201]

- urged 'Alī to seize power.

- stated that the people were hopeful in 'Alī (assuming leadership).

Al-Ya'qūbī uses these lines of poetry to challenge the legitimacy of Abū Bakr, to argue that 'Alī alone had the right to succeed the Prophet, and to give the impression that there was a groundswell of opinion in favour of 'Alī. A crowd gathered around 'Alī and implored him to receive the *bay'a*.[1202] 'Alī was clearly furious with Abū Bakr, as was evident from the wording of his instruction 'go to this man' with shaved heads (in protest).[1203] However, only three complied with his request, compounding the sense of betrayal.[1204]

Having usurped power, Abū Bakr consolidated his rule by using violence to crush opposition. The sanctity of Fāṭima's house was violated by 'Umar and his supporters. In desperation, she threatened to unveil herself, forcing the attackers to leave her house.[1205] Realising the futility of opposition, 'Alī and his supporters resigned themselves to the situation, and eventually gave *bay'a* to Abū Bakr.[1206]

Al-Ya'qūbī concludes this section by mentioning two opinions regarding when 'Alī gave *bay'a*; after six months or after forty days.[1207] Despite the *bay'a* of 'Alī, the conflict over the issue of succession remained unresolved, as I show in my discussion of al-Ya'qūbī's subsequent chapter.

[1199] Ya'qūbī, pp. 140-1.; Gordon and others (2018), pp. 746-7.

[1200] He does not mention Abū Bakr and 'Umar by name but names their tribes; Taym b. Murra or 'Adi.

[1201] 'the affair is yours only, and yours by right'. Gordon and others (2018), p. 747.

[1202] Ya'qūbī, p. 141.; Gordon and others (2018), p. 747.

[1203] Ya'qūbī, p. 141.; Gordon and others (2018), p. 747.;'this man' being Abū Bakr.

[1204] Ya'qūbī, p. 141.; Gordon and others (2018), p. 747.;Al-Ya'qūbī does not mention which three.

[1205] Ya'qūbī, p. 141.;Gordon and others (2018), p. 747. ;In the following chapter, Al-Ya'qūbī reports that, on his deathbed, Abū Bakr expressed regret for entering Fāṭima's house. Thus the impermissibility of Abū Bakr's action is, according to al-Ya'qūbī, even confirmed by Abū Bakr himself, albeit too late.

[1206] Ya'qūbī, p. 141.;Gordon and others (2018), p. 747.

[1207] Ya'qūbī, p. 141.;Gordon and others (2018), p. 747.

8.7   Al-Yaʿqūbī's Chapter Four. [The Days of Abū Bakr]

Having completed the discussion on Saqīfa, al-Yaʿqūbī begins a new chapter dedicated to the major events that occurred during the caliphate of Abū Bakr.[1208] The bitter aftermath of Saqīfa dominates this chapter.

8.7.1   Fadak

At the beginning of this chapter, he states that Fāṭima approached Abū Bakr, asking for her share of inheritance (i.e. Fadak). Abū Bakr refused, quoting a prophetic *ḥadīth*: "We, the company of prophets, do not bequeath; what we leave behind is charity."[1209] Fāṭima angrily replied:

> "Is it God's wish that you inherit from your father, but that I do not inherit from my father? Didn't the Messenger of God say, 'A man should care for his children?' " [1210]

In this brief exchange, al-Yaʿqūbī evokes feelings of both sympathy and anger. Abū Bakr is presented as a despotic ruler and of having double standards; he would inherit from his father, yet he prevented Fāṭima from inheriting from her father. Second, her rhetorical question: 'Didn't the Messenger of God say, "A man should care for his children"?' implied that she was now left destitute. Fāṭima's desperate appeal did elicit some reaction in Abū Bakr, as the exchange ended with him weeping profusely.[1211] The reader is left with the impression that Abū Bakr felt guilty at her plight, yet at the same time maintained his stance in order to marginalise the *ahl al-bayt.* Al-Yaʿqūbī mentions this exchange only a few lines after the incident in which Fāṭima's house is attacked. Together, these two incidents portray an image of vindictiveness against Fāṭima and her victimhood.

8.7.2   Continued opposition from the Anṣār

According to al-Yaʿqūbī, discontent with Abū Bakr's ascension to power and support for ʿAlī both were manifested openly during Abū Bakr's rule. This led to tension between the Quraysh and the Anṣār. The Anṣār kept their distance from Abū Bakr prompting some of the Quraysh to disparage them with poetry.[1212] ʿAlī, upon hearing this, reacted angrily and publicly praised the

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[1208] The translation includes the following heading in brackets;-[The Days of Abū Bakr], with a footnote to state that this heading was supplied in the Leiden edition and not in the manuscript.
[1209] Yaʿqūbī, p. 142.; Gordon and others (2018), p. 748.
[1210] Yaʿqūbī, p. 142.; Gordon and others (2018), p. 748.
[1211] Yaʿqūbī, p. 142.; Gordon and others (2018), p. 748.
[1212] Yaʿqūbī, p. 143.; Gordon and others (2018), p. 749.

Anṣār.[1213] This delighted them, and they asked Ḥasan b. Thābit to recite some poetry (in favour of ʿAlī). In his fourteen lines of poetry, Ḥasan stated that: [1214]

- There was no one compared to ʿAlī.

- He was the best amongst the Quraysh.

- Senior Qurayshīs desired his place (a possible allusion to Abū Bakr).

- He possessed dignity and was the hope of the Quraysh.

- He cared for the Prophet (when he was ill?)

- The Prophet delegated authority to him.

- No one was more suited to (this delegation of authority) than ʿAlī.

- He was the Prophet's 'brother' in Medina.[1215]

- He was the Prophet's waṣī.[1216]

- He was the most knowledgeable of the Quran and Sunna.

Al-Yaʿqūbī uses the poem to demonstrate that the Anṣār, or at least some of them, firmly believed that ʿAlī should have succeeded the Prophet. Amongst the many virtues that this poem ascribed to ʿAlī, one description in particular stands out: ʿAlī was the inheritor (waṣī) of the Prophet. The idea of waṣī was central and unique to the creed of the early proto-Shīʿa. Al-Yaʿqūbī, through the use of this concept, clearly associates himself with the Imāmi branch of the proto-Shīʿa.

8.7.3   Depiction of ʿAlī during Abū Bakr's rule.

The figure of ʿAlī predominates throughout Abū Bakr's rule. Despite the betrayal at Saqīfa, the indignity of the assault on his home, and the denial of his wife's inheritance rights, al-Yaʿqūbī portrays ʿAlī as immensely selfless and forbearing. Motivated only by altruistic considerations, ʿAlī remained a loyal and trustworthy advisor to the caliph. When Abū Bakr wanted to launch a

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[1213] Yaʿqūbī, p. 143.; Gordon and others (2018), p. 749.

[1214] Yaʿqūbī, pp. 143-4.;Gordon and others (2018), pp. 749-50.;Ḥassān b. Thābit (d. 40/659) was from the Khazraj tribe of the Anṣār and a famous poet prior to, and after embracing Islam. He used his literary talents to support the message of Islam. A *diwān* (collection of poems) consisting of poems is attributed to him, although Arafat considers 70-80% of the poems to be fabrications. In his recension of Ibn Ishāq's *Sīra*, Ibn Hāshim removed 15 out of 78 poems, considering them to fabrications. ʿArafat, W., "Ḥassān b. Thābit", *EI².*; The translator adds a footnote to state that this poem is not found in the *Diwān* of Ḥassān b. Thābit thus bringing into question the poem's attribution to Ḥassān b. Thābit. Ibid. p. 749 fn 803.

[1215] On arrival to Medina, the Prophet established a system of brotherhood in which an Anṣār was paired with a Muhājir. However, ʿAlī and the Prophet were paired together, despite the fact that both were from the Muhājirūn.

[1216] See Glossary.

raid on the Byzantines, he consulted some of the Companions. All of them hesitated except 'Alī, who confidently and without hesitation asserted: "If you do it, you will be victorious."[1217]

One of the significant events during the caliphate of Abū Bakr was the compilation of the Quran into one codex (*muṣḥaf*). This was at the suggestion of 'Umar, following the large loss of life of memorizers of Quran in the *ridda* wars. Al-Yaʿqūbī presents a counter-view to the dominant Sunnī narrative. In a few lines, al-Yaʿqūbī mentions that Abū Bakr gathered seventy-five Companions, who 'collected it and wrote it down in sheets'.[1218] The next fifty lines are a detailed description of 'Alī's compilation of the Quran, which he began immediately after the Prophet died.[1219] By devoting considerable space to 'Alī's compilation of the Quran, al-Yaʿqūbī emphasises that the Quran was compiled and preserved by 'Alī and not by Abū Bakr. The implication is that the 'authentic' Quran was only with 'Alī and the official 'Uthmāni codex was in fact a distorted version of the Quran. This belief was held by many proto-Imāmi Shī'a particularly in the pre-Buyid period.[1220] A number of early Shī'ī works mention this, including the aforementioned Kitāb al-Saqīfa by pseudo Sulaym b. Qays, Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Sayyār (fl. third century), al-Ṣaffār al-Qummi and Muḥammad b. Yaʿqūb al-Kulayni (d.328/939-40).[1221]

8.7.4 Regret

Although Abū Bakr had taken power, doubts about his course of action lingered with him until his death. At the end of the chapter, al-Yaʿqūbī brings a report in which Abū Bakr, on his deathbed, lamented: 'I wish I had asked the Messenger of God: Whose is this affair? and so no-one would have disputed him about it. Do the Anṣār have any share in it?'[1222] Thus Abū Bakr was uncertain, to his dying days, whether he really was entitled to the lead the Muslims. The question 'Whose is this affair?' is rhetorical, as the entire narrative revolves around the answer to this question; i.e. the affair of leadership belonged to 'Alī. This was not the only regret of Abū Bakr. On his deathbed, he expressed remorse at sending men to enter Fāṭima's house.[1223]

[1217] Yaʿqūbī, p. 149. ; Gordon and others (2018), p. 756.

[1218] Yaʿqūbī, p. 152.;Gordon and others (2018), p. 759.

[1219] Yaʿqūbī, pp. 152-5. ; Gordon and others (2018), pp. 759-62.

[1220] Amir-Moezzi (2014), p. 62.

[1221] Ibid. p. 63.; Al-Ṣaffār al-Qummi brings seventeen reports in his *Baṣā'ir al-Darajāt* in which the Imāms claimed to be in possession of the authentic Quran. Al-Kulayni in *Al-Kāfī* mentions numerous traditions about the falsification of the Quran including twenty reports in volume 1 of *Usūl* which mention an alternate version of the Quran. Andrew J Newman, *The Formative Period of Twelver Shi'ism: Hadith as Discourse between Qum and Baghdad*, (2013), pp. 75,126. Sayyār's book was entitled *Kitāb al-Qirā'āt*.

[1222] Yaʿqūbī, p. 156.;Gordon and others (2018), p. 763.

[1223] Yaʿqūbī, p. 155.;Gordon and others (2018), pp. 762-3.

8.8 Al-Yaʿqūbī's Abū Bakr

Prior to Saqīfa, al-Yaʿqūbī's portrayal of Abū Bakr is non-committal and at times positive. He is an early convert and a loyal companion.[1224] After the death of the Prophet, al-Yaʿqūbī depicts an entirely new character.[1225] The change from the old Abū Bakr to the new is abrupt and permanent. He usurps power, attacks the home of the Prophet's daughter and denies her inheritance. This sudden and unexpected transformation in Abū Bakr's character caught ʿAlī and his supporters off guard. The backdrop to the sudden change in the character of Abū Bakr is the issue of succession to the Prophet. The new Abū Bakr emerged when the Muslims were grieving and disorientated following the Prophet's death. Sensing an opportunity, he seized power. Thus, al-Yaʿqūbī implies, it was the allure of power that led to the transformation and fall from grace of one of the Prophet's closest Companions.

Post Saqīfa, al-Yaʿqūbī's portrays Abū Bakr as an uninspiring figure. Two of Abū Bakr's main achievements, victory in the *ridda* wars and the opening offensive attack on Byzantine and Persia, are presented unenthusiastically. The aftermath of Saqīfa lingers in the narrative. The Anṣār kept their distance from Abū Bakr, and they were excluded from command roles in the various armies sent from Medina in the *ridda* wars. Although the Muhājir, Khālid b. Saʿīd, was initially appointed by Abū Bakr to lead an expedition against the Byzantines, ʿUmar convinced Abū Bakr to relieve him of his position, due to his unfavourable stance on the succession of Abū Bakr.[1226]

In al-Ṭabarī's and al-Balādhurī's Saqīfa narratives, both authors provide closure at the end of the story, with ʿAlī willingly giving *bayʿa*, and acknowledging the status and virtue of Abū Bakr.[1227] In al-Yaʿqūbī's narrative, support for ʿAlī, and bitterness with the outcome at Saqīfa, remained throughout Abū Bakr's rule. There was no mutual reconciliation and no closure to the issue of succession.

[1224] Yaʿqūbī, pp. 22,39,40.; Gordon and others p. 617; Gordon and others (2018), p. 636.

[1225] I borrowed the idea of the depiction of an individual possessing multiple characters, depending on the period in which the historian places himself in, from Keshk. Khaled Keshk, *The Historians' Muʿāwiya: The Depiction of Muʿāwiya in the Early Islamic Sources*, (2008).

[1226] Yaʿqūbī, p. 150.;Gordon and others (2018), p. 756.

[1227] Immediately according to al-Balādhurī, after six months according to al-Ṭabarī. In both cases, the episode ended with all sides satisfied.

8.9 Conclusion/Summary

Al-Yaʿqūbī's narrative on the succession to the Prophet is a story of usurpation of power, the betrayal of ʿAlī and the mistreatment of his family. As such it is a highly tendentious piece. Sixty-four per cent of the text is used to either denigrate Abū Bakr or to commend ʿAlī and his supporters. The belief of the proto-Shīʿa in al-Yaʿqūbī's time was still very fluid, but based upon my analysis of his text, I would associate him with one of the nascent strands of Imāmi Shīʿīsm. Al-Yaʿqūbī clearly espouses the view that ʿAlī was the divinely appointed successor to the Prophet, and as a corollary, Abū Bakr was an illegitimate usurper. ʿAlī is described as a *waṣī*, i.e. he was divinely designated by the Prophet as spiritual and political successor. Al-Yaʿqūbī was by no means the first to hold such a view on succession, and as I mentioned chapter 3.3.2, such views were in circulation as early as the first half of the first century. Al-Yaʿqūbī's unique contribution was that he was the first to frame this proto-Shīʿī belief within a universal historical narrative.

My conclusion corroborates with Antony's view on al-Yaʿqūbī's religious affiliation. He argues that based upon a reading of the *Taʾrīkh*, al-Yaʿqūbī exhibited a staunchly rejectionist (*rāfidī*) view of early Islamic history.[1228] This is borne out by al-Yaʿqūbī's contention, through his selective use of sources, that only the Prophet's family were entitled to succeed the Prophet, and as a corollary, companions such as Abū Bakr and ʿUmar were grave sinners.[1229] Antony also considers al-Yaʿqūbī's description of ʿAlī as the *waṣī* of the Prophet as indicative of the latter's sole right to succeed the Prophet.

Al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī, through their strategies of compilation, absolve all of the Companions of any wilful wrongdoing, whilst accepting that there were human failings. This was by al-Ṭabarī's time the standard proto-Sunnī narrative on the Companions. Al-Yaʿqūbī in this passage presents a counter-narrative, this time an Imāmi Shīʿī one of bitter conflict between the Companions as soon as the Prophet died, and betrayal of the Prophet's legacy and of *ahl al-bayt.*

[1228] Sean Anthony, 'Was Ibn Wāḍiḥ Al-Yaʿqūbī a Shiʿite Historian? The State of the Question', *Al-ʿUṣūr al-Wusṭā,* 24 (2016), 17.; Millward, on the other hand, whilst accepting that al-Yaʿqūbī had 'Alid-Shīʿī leanings, considers that his Shīʿīsm was 'moderate. He also states that there is no 'conclusive proof that the author was a devotee of one or another group of the Imāmiyya.'Millward (1962), pp. 258-9.

[1229] Anthony (2016), p. 18.

9   Analysis of Ibn Aʿtham's narrative of the Saqīfa

9.1   Introduction

The final text that I analyse is the Saqīfa section from Ibn Aʿtham's *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*. The text in question consists of two chapters; a brief introduction (although Ibn Aʿtham does not give it a chapter heading) and a chapter on Saqīfa. The narrative takes the form of continuous prose made up almost entirely of verbatim quotes.[1230] Sections of text are marked off by the phrase 'he said', which appears twenty-seven times. Thus it appears that the text consists of twenty-seven different reports, juxtaposed in a coherent narrative.

9.2   Ibn Aʿtham's Sources.

Ibn Aʿtham begins his *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* with a collective *isnād* mentioning his main sources for this portion of the book. The *isnād* is as follows:

> Abū al-Qāsim ʿAbdullah b. Ḥafṣa b. Mihrān al-Barḍaʿī,[1231] may Allah strengthen him, narrated that: Muḥammad Ahmad b. Aʿtham al-Kūfī informed me that Abū Jaʿfar ʿAbdul ʿAziz b. Mubārak said that Naʿīm b. Muzāḥim al-Munqarī and Muḥammad b. ʿUmar b. al-Wāqidī al-Aslamī informed me; and Ibrahīm b. ʿAbdullah b. al-ʿAlāī al-Qurshī al-Madanī informed me (i.e. informed Ibn Aʿtham) that Ahmad b. Ḥusayn al-Kindī and Naṣr b. Khālid al-Naḥwī and Abū Ḥamzatul Qurshī, from Muḥammad b. Ishāq b. Yāsir al-Muṭlabī, said that al-Zuhrī (and) Zayd b. Rūmān informed me, and Ṣāliḥ b. Kaysān, and Yaḥya b. ʿUrwa from Zubayr b. ʿAwām, and Maḥmūd b. Labīd, and ʿĀṣim b. ʿUmar b. Qatāda, all of them mentioned that Abū al-Qāsim ʿAbdullah b. Ḥafṣa b. Mihrān al-Barḍaʿī, may Allah strengthen him, narrated that[1232]…

Using Muranyi's pictorial representation of the *isnād*, I put these informants' names into a table format.[1233]

[1230] Verbatim quotes account for over eighty per cent of the text.

[1231] He is unknown. Miklos Muranyi, 'Ein Neuer Bericht Über Die Wahl Des Ersten Kalifen Abū Bakr', *Arabica,* 25 (1978), 237.

[1232] Al-Wāqidī and others, 'Kitāb Al-Ridda Maʿa Nabdha Min Futūḥ Al-ʿirāq Wa-Dhikr Al-Muthannā B. Ḥāritha Al-Shaybānī, Riwāyat Aḥmad B. Muḥammad B. Aʿtham Al-Kūfī', ed. by Yaḥyā l-Jabūrī (1990), pp. 27-8).

[1233] Muranyi (1978), p. 236.

Table 2.2 Ibn A'tham's Sources

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī	Abū Ja'far 'Abdul 'Aziz b. Mubārak	Na'īm b. Muzāḥim al-Munqarī		
		al-Wāqidī		
	Ibrahīm b. 'Abdullah b. al-'Alāi al-Qurshī	Ahmad b. Ḥusayn al-Kindī	Ibn Ishāq	al-Zuhrī
				Zayd b. Rūmān
		Naṣr b. Khālid al-Naḥwī		Ṣāliḥ b. Kaysān
				Yaḥya b. 'Urwa b. Zubayr
		Abū Ḥamza al-Qurashī		Maḥmūd b. Labīd
				'Āṣim b. 'Umar b. Qatāda

I will now give some brief information about the individuals in the *isnād*.

Level 1.

Ibn A'tham's two informants are Abū Ja'far 'Abdul 'Aziz b. Mubārak and Ibrahīm b. 'Abdullah b. al-'Alāi al-Qurshī al-Madanī. I consulted the following Shī'ī biographical dictionaries and neither names are mentioned in these works.

1. *Rijāl* of Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b, Khālid al-Barqī (d. ca 280/894).[1234] His biographical dictionary comprises of the names of the companions of the first eleven Imāms. He also lists those Companions who rejected the appointment of Abū Bakr.[1235] Although this is the earliest extant Shī'ī biographical dictionary, there is controversy over the book's authorship. Modarressi argues that the book was authored after al-Barqī.[1236]

[1234] Al-Barqī was a disciple of the ninth and tenth Imāms.; Aḥmad ibn 'Abd Allāh Barqī, 'Rijāl Al-Barqī', ed. by Ḥaydar Muḥammad 'Alī al-Baghdādī (2011).
[1235] Vilozny (2014), pp. 204-5.
[1236] Modarressi (2003), p. xvii.

2. Fihrist of al-Ṭusī (d. 460/1067)[1237]. This book is an index of works written by key proto-Shī'ī figures.[1238]

3. Rijāl al-Ṭusī. Similar to Barqī's book, he lists the names of the companions of the eleven Imāms. He also lists those who had not met any of the Imāms.[1239]

4. Rijāl al-Najashī (d. after 463/1071). He lists 1240 narrators in alphabetical order.[1240]

Level 2

According to Muranyi, Na'īm b. Muzāḥim al-Munqarī is actually Naṣr b. Muzāḥim al-Munqarī, (d.212/827) an early proto-Shī'ī historian from Kūfa and the author of *Kitāb Waqa'āt Ṣiffīn*.[1241] Due to a copyist error the name became distorted. Conrad disagrees, stating that two are different individuals, and that Na'īm is the brother of Naṣr.[1242] Even if the second opinion is correct, it is still likely that Naṣr b. Muzāḥim al-Munqarī, had proto-Shī'ī leanings. Al-Wāqidī's biography is given in 6.4. Ahmad b. Ḥusayn al-Kindī, Naṣr b. Khālid al-Naḥwī, Abū Ḥamza al-Qurashī are not mentioned in the Shī'ī *rijāl* works.**[1243]**

Level 3

Ibn Ishāq's biography is given in 6.4.

Level 4

The remaining narrators are scholars who taught Ibn Ishāq. According to Ibn Hajar, 'Āṣim b. 'Umar b. Qatāda (d. 120/737) had knowledge of *maghāzī* and *Sīra* and was praised by proto-Sunnī *ḥadīth* critics.[1244] He was invited to Damascus by the Caliph to narrate stories about *maghāzī* and the virtues of Companions.[1245]

[1237] Muḥammad b. al-Ḥassān al-Ṭusi studied with the major Shī'ī scholars of his time including Shaikh al-Mufīd and Shaikh al-Murtada. Upon the latter's death he was appointed at head of Baghdad's Shī'ī community. He was a prolific writer, authoring books on traditions of the Imāms, fiqh, Quranic commentary and creed. Newman (2013), pp. 97-94.

[1238] Ibid. pp. 88-9. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥassān al-Ṭusi, 'Fihrist Kutub Al-Shī'a Wa Uṣūlihim', ed. by 'Abd al-Aziz al-Ṭabaṭabā'ī (n.d.).

[1239] Muḥammad ibn al-Hasan Ṭūsī, 'Rijāl Al-Ṭūsī', ed. by Jawād al-Qūmī al-Iṣfahānī (2008).

[1240] Aḥmad b. 'Alī al-Najashī, 'Rijal Al-Najashī ', (2010).; He was a contemporary of al-Ṭusī. Najahi mentions in his work that he was a student of al-Mufīd.

[1241] Conrad (2015), p. 115.; *Kitāb al-Jamal* is also attributed to Naṣr b. Muzāḥim, but is no longer extant. Anthony (2011), p. 17 fn 19.

[1242]Conrad (2015), p. 115.

[1243] Muranyi (1978), p. 237.

[1244] Herbert Berg, *Method and Theory in the Study of Islamic Origins*, (2003), p. 31.

[1245] Ibid. p. 68.

Ṣāliḥ b. Kaysān (d.140/757) was a jurist from Medina, a collector of *ḥadīth* and *fiqh*, and a teacher of the sons of 'Umar b. 'Abdul al-Aziz.[1246] He was considered reliable by Sunnī *ḥadīth* critics.

Yaḥya b. 'Urwa b. Zubayr (d. ca 114/732) was a prominent Median and a nephew of 'Abdullah b. Zubayr.[1247] His grandfather Zubayr was a famous Companion of the Prophet and an early convert to Islam who migrated to Abyssinia twice and participated in all the battles alongside the Prophet. He was killed at the Battle of Jamal in 36/656.[1248]

Maḥmūd b. Labīd al-Awsī al-Anṣārī (d. 96/714-5) died in Medina.[1249] Al-Zuhrī and 'Āṣim b. 'Umar b. Qatada narrated from him.[1250]

From the brief discussion above, it appears that Ibn A'tham's main three sources for his Saqīfa narrative in *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* are al-Wāqidī, Ibn Ishāq and Na'īm b. Muzāḥim al-Munqarī. However a comparison of his text with the works of the three named individuals reveals the following: Al-Wāqidī, in his *Kitāb al-Maghāzi*, glosses over Saqīfa and hence he cannot be considered a source for Saqīfa. We have no information about Na'īm b. Muzāḥim al-Munqarī other than Conrad's supposition that he was the brother of Naṣr b. Muzāḥim.[1251] There is some congruence between Ibn A'tham's and Ibn Ishāq's narratives, but Ibn A'tham's is far more detailed than Ibn Ishāq's. Thus Ibn A'tham utilised other sources which he chose not to name. In addition, he named certain individuals in his *isnād*, yet did not utilise their material. Why was this?

The answer becomes clear we examine Ibn A'tham's style of authorship. According to Conrad, Ibn A'tham was more akin to a *qāṣṣ* than an *akhbāri*.[1252] The authenticity of material mattered little to the *quṣāṣ*; they were more concerned with the ability of the story to entertain or educate.[1253] For Ibn A'tham, the *isnād*, when used, was a tool to legitimise a proto-Shī'ī view of

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[1246] Al-Wāqidī and others p. 27 fn 4.

[1247] William M Brinner, *History of Al-Tabari Vol. 3, the Children of Israel*, (2015), p. 69 fn 394.

[1248] Ella Landau-Tasseron, *History of Al-Tabari Vol. 39. The Biographies of the Prophet's Companions and Their Successors: Al-Tabari's Supplement to His History*, (2015), pp. 27-8.

[1249] Poonawala (1990), p. 36 fn 274.

[1250] Al-Wāqidī and others p. 28 fn3.

[1251] Naṣr b. Muzāḥim al-Munqarī is not known to have written on Saqīfa.

[1252] Conrad (2015), p. 114.

[1253] Ibid.

history and not a means to determine the reliability of his reports.[1254] Hence, Ibn A'tham's collective *isnād* tells us little about his sources. In light of this, I will compare his text with other texts on Saqīfa to identify his sources.

The first source (which he mentions in his *isnād*) is Ibn Ishāq.[1255]

The second source is Abū Bakr Ahmad b. 'Abd al-Aziz al-.(fl. tenth century)[1256] who wrote *Kitāb al*-Saqīfa. This book is contained within Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd's explanation of *Nahj al-Balāgha*.[1257] A comparison between Ibn A'tham's text with the latter reveals significant congruence between the two. Ibn A'tham mentions a discussion which occurred after the *bay'a* at Saqīfa between Abū Bakr and his supporters and 'Alī, and also between the Anṣār and 'Alī.[1258] The wording of this discussion is almost identical to that found in Jawharī's *Kitāb al*-Saqīfa, and therefore I surmise that Ibn A'tham used this work as a source.

The third source is Abū Mikhnaf, whose reports on Saqīfa are found in al-Ṭabarī's *Ta'rīkh*. The following reports are common to both Abū Mikhnaf and Ibn A'tham:

1. Al-Ḥubāb b. al-Mundhir insisted that the leadership was only for Anṣār and was subsequently involved in an altercation with 'Umar.[1259]

2. Bashīr b. Sa'd al-Anṣari was the first to give *bay'a* to Abū Bakr. Al-Ḥubāb b. Mundhir reprimanded him and accused him of being jealous of his Khazraj cousins.[1260]

However it is not possible to ascertain whether Ibn A'tham took Abū Mikhnaf's reports from al-Ṭabarī or through another route.

[1254] Ibid. p. 117.

[1255] As mentioned previously, the two texts concur, although Ibn A'tham's version is much more detailed.

[1256] Asma Afsaruddin, 'History and Religion: Aspects of Shi'ism. Jamāl Al-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Ṭāwūs and His Binā' Al-Maqāla Al-Fāṭimiyya', *The Harvard Middle Eastern and Islamic Review,* Volume 2, Number 1, Spring (1995), 65.; According to Jafri, he died in 298/910-11. Jafri (1979), p. 39.

[1257] Abū Ḥāmid ibn Hibat Allāh Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd; Muḥammed Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, *Sharḥ Nahj Al-Balagha. Volume 6*, (n.d.), pp. 11-13.

[1258]Al-Wāqidī and others p. 46. ;Al-Ṭabarī, p. 1841.;Donner (1993), pp. 6-7.

[1259] Al-Wāqidī and others p. 39.; Al-Ṭabarī, p. 1842. ; Donner (1993), pp. 7-8.

[1260] Al-Wāqidī and others p. 42.;Although all four of my authors mention that Bashīr b. Sa'd al- Anṣari was the first to give *bay'a*, only al-Ṭabarī (who takes the report from Abū Mikhnaf), and Ibn A'tham state that al-Ḥubāb subsequently reprimanded him. Hence I conclude that Ibn A'tham took the report from Abū Mikhnaf and not from any of the other three authors.

There are two further possible sources for Ibn A'tham's Saqīfa narrative. The two reports I provide and comment on below are mentioned by all four authors (al-Ṭabarī, al-Balādhurī, al-Ya'qūbī and Ibn A'tham):

1. Abū Bakr said to the Anṣār: "We are the leaders and you are the ministers."[1261]
Al-Ṭabarī, al-Balādhurī and al-Ya'qūbī attribute this statement to Abū Bakr whereas Ibn A'tham attributes it to "one of the Muhājirūn". Al-Ṭabarī reports it from Abū Mikhnaf, al-Balādhurī reports it from al-Madā'inī, and according to Gordon, al-Ya'qūbī reports the Saqīfa incident from either al-Ṭabarī or Ibn Ishāq.[1262] However given that this particular statement is not found in Ibn Ishāq's *Sīra*, al-Ya'qūbī must have taken it from al-Ṭabarī. Hence, I conclude that Ibn A'tham took this report, despite the slight variation in wording, from either Abū Mikhnaf or al-Madā'inī.

2. Sa'd b. 'Ubāda was almost trampled by the crowd giving *bay'a*.[1263]
This is also mentioned by all four authors. Al-Ṭabarī reports it from Abū Mikhnaf, al-Balādhurī reports it from Ibn Sa'd, and according to Gordon, al-Ya'qūbī reports the Saqīfa incident from either al-Ṭabarī or Ibn Ishāq.[1264] As with the previous report, given that this particular statement is not found in Ibn Ishāq's *Sīra*, al-Ya'qūbī must have taken it from al-Ṭabarī. Hence, I conclude that Ibn A'tham took this report from either Abū Mikhnaf, or Ibn Sa'd.

In summary, I have identified three sources for Ibn A'tham's Saqīfa narrative: Ibn Ishāq, al-Jawharī, and Abū Mikhnaf/ al-Ṭabarī. In addition, Ibn Sa'd and al-Madā'ini are possible sources. Why did Ibn A'tham not mention these sources? The inclusion of al-Jawharī and Abū Mikhnaf in the *isnād*, who were known for their proto-Shī'ī inclinations, would add little value to a proto-Shī'ī version of history.[1265] Hence, Ibn A'tham chose Ibn Ishāq, al-Wāqidī and some early proto-Sunnī scholars such as al-Zuhrī, Ṣāliḥ b. Kaysān, Yaḥyā b. 'Urwa b. Zubayr and 'Āṣim b. 'Umar b. Qatāda in his *isnād*, in order to add legitimacy to his proto-Shī'ī version of Saqīfa.

[1261] Ya'qūbī, p. 137.;Gordon and others (2018), p. 742.; Al-Wāqidī and others p. 37. ;al-Balādhurī, p. 580. ; Al-Ṭabarī, pp. 1817-8.; Poonawala (1990), pp. 185-6.
[1262] Gordon and others (2018), p. 742 fn 43.
[1263] Al-Ṭabarī, pp. 1843-4.; Donner (1993), pp. 8-10.; Ya'qūbī, p. 137.; Gordon and others (2018), p. 743.; Al-Wāqidī and others p. 43.; al-Balādhurī, p. 582.
[1264] Ibid.
[1265] Conrad (2015), p. 117.

9.2.1   Was the book *al-Imāma wa 'l siyāsa* a source for Ibn A'tham?

Some of the wording in Ibn A'tham's chapter on Saqīfa is identical to sections of pseudo-Ibn Qutayba's book, *al-Imāma wa 'l siyāsa*.[1266] In this section I wish to establish which book came first. Did Ibn A'tham copy from pseudo-Ibn Qutayba or did the latter copy from Ibn A'tham. Ibn Qutayba (d.276/889) was a proto-Sunnī theologian. He studied under Ishāq b. Rāhawayh (d. ca. 237/851) who was a famous student of Ibn Ḥanbal. He wrote on a variety of topics including theology, *adab*, astronomy, poetry, *fiqh*, philology, and *ḥadīth*. The book *al-Imāma wa 'l siyāsa* is falsely attributed to him.[1267] Given that the actual author is unknown, scholars refer to the author as pseudo-Ibn Qutayba.

To investigate whether Ibn A'tham took the passages from pseudo-Ibn Qutayba or vice versa, I compare the death dates of the two authors. However both authors' death dates are subject to controversy. In chapter four I discussed the biography of Ibn A'tham concluding that he died after 330.[1268] The death date of pseudo-Ibn Qutayba is more problematic given that his identity is unknown.

On first sight it appears that Ibn A'tham had borrowed from pseudo-Ibn Qutayba, as according to two scholars, mentioned below, pseudo-Ibn Qutayba died before Ibn A'tham.

1) Roberts argues that pseudo-Ibn Qutayba died after 194, given that the book covers up to the period of the caliphate of Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 170-194).[1269]

2) Munajid refers to an unnamed 1978 MA dissertation from the University of Jordan entitled 'a*l-Imāma wa 'l siyāsa, dirāsa wa taḥqīq* in which the author argues that pseudo-Ibn Qutayba died in the mid-third century.[1270]

Ayoub, on the other hand, argues that pseudo-Ibn Qutayba died in Spain in the tenth century, based upon an anachronism highlighted in the introduction to the 1990 edition of the book by 'Alī Shīrī.[1271] Shīrī points out that according to pseudo-Ibn Qutayba, Mūsā b. Nuṣayr (d. 98/716) conquered Marakesh.[1272] However Marakesh was not built until the year 454/1062 in the era

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[1266] Ibn Qutayba (pseudo), 'Al Imama Wa'l Siyāsa Wa Ta'rikh Al-Khulafā'', ed. by 'Alī Shīrī (1990).

[1267] Lecomte, G., "Ibn Ḳutayba", EI².

[1268] See Chapter 4.5.

[1269] Joseph Bradin Roberts, 'Early Islamic Historiography: Ideology and Methodology', (Phd Thesis, Ohio State University, 1986), p. 95.

[1270] https://islamqa.info/ar/answers/121685 /بطلان-نسبة-كتاب-الامامة-والسياسة-لابن-قتيبة-رحمه-الله .؛ (accessed 14 November 2018) I have unable to obtain the unnamed 1978 dissertation. Hence, I do not know on what basis he argues that pseudo-Ibn Qutayba died in the mid-third century.

[1271] Ayoub (2003), p. 8 fn 1.; (pseudo).

[1272] Ibid. p.8,

of the Almoravids.[1273] This anachronism rebuts the idea of the early origin of this work. Hence, I conclude that Ibn A'tham could not have used pseudo-Ibn Qutayba as a source, and it is likely that pseudo-Ibn Qutayba borrowed from Ibn A'tham's work. Thus six centuries after Ibn A'tham's authored his work, his Saqīfa narrative was being utilised in Muslim Spain.

9.3 Ibn A'tham's Chapter One [Introduction]

The narrative starts with the aftermath of the death of the Prophet and the emergence of apostasy amongst the Arab tribes. In some lines of poetry, one Companion, alarmed at the threat posed to the nascent Islamic state, expressed the need for either 'Alī, or (Abū Bakr) al-Siddīq or 'Amr to assume leadership and tackle the looming threat.[1274] Abū Bakr then entered the scene. He consoled the Companions for their loss, reminded them of the mortality of the Prophet by quoting a number of Quranic verses and emphasised the importance of choosing a leader.[1275] Ibn A'tham excludes any details of the Prophet's illness, details surrounding his death, his *ghusl*, shrouding, *janāza* and burial.

This 'introduction' by Ibn A'tham is very brief.[1276] Abū Bakr is presented in a positive light in the following ways:

- He is named as one the three possible candidates to succeed the Prophet.[1277]

- He is referred to as 'Al-Siddīq,' and his name is followed by the honorific formula, 'may Allah be pleased with him'. [1278]

- Abū Bakr quoted four Quranic verses as evidence that the Prophet had indeed died, demonstrating his proficiency in Quranic exegesis.[1279]

- Abū Bakr provided decisive leadership at a time of crisis. He argued that as the Prophet had died, it was imperative to choose a leader.[1280]

[1273] The Almoravids were a Berber dynasty who ruled in North Africa and then Spain during the second half of the 5th/11th century and the first half of the 6th/12th century. They are known in Arabic as the *Murābitūn*. Norris, H.T. and Chalmeta, P., "al-Murābiṭūn", EI².

[1274] Al-Wāqidī and others pp. 30-1.; This work was initially attributed to al-Wāqidī's lost K*itāb al-ridda wa-nabdha min futūḥ al-ʿIrāq*. It is now generally accepted amongst scholars that due to its congruence with other manuscripts of Kitāb al-Futūḥ it can be ascribed to Ibn A'tham. ; It is possible that there is a mistake in the text and that 'Amr (عَمرو) should have been written 'Umar (عمر).

[1275] Ibid. p. 31.

[1276] Eighteen lines in the Arabic text (excluding the poetry).

[1277] Al-Wāqidī and others p. 30.

[1278] Al-Wāqidī and others pp. 30-1.

[1279] Al-Wāqidī and others p. 31.

[1280] Ibid.

- Abū Bakr left it to the Companions to choose a leader and did not put himself forward.[1281]

[1281] Ibid.

9.4   Ibn A'tham's Chapter Two: The Affair of Saqīfa of Banū Sāʿida

In summarising this chapter I have divided it into two sections: one covering Saqīfa and the other focusing on its aftermath, in particular the claim of ʿAlī. As I elaborate later, it appears that Ibn A'tham took the two sections from different sources, one proto-Sunnī and the other proto-Shīʿī.

9.4.1   Section One: The debate at Saqīfa

- Following the death of the Prophet, the Companions were divided into three groups: the Muhājirūn with Abū Bakr, the Anṣār with Saʿd b. ʿUbāda, and Banū Hāshim with ʿAlī.[1282]

- A debate amongst the Anṣār took place in the Saqīfa of Banū Sāʿida, with some of the Muhājirūn present as silent observers. One Anṣari favoured Saʿd b. ʿUbāda. Four Anṣāris spoke in favour of Qurayshī leadership, including one who highlighted the significance of Abū Bakr leading the prayer. The discussion was acrimonious.[1283]

- Abū Bakr arrived at the meeting with ʿUmar, ʿUthmān and Abū ʿUbayda.[1284]

- Thābit b. Qays extolled the virtues of the Anṣār, the sacrifices they made for Islam, and the hospitality that they had afforded to the Muhājirūn. He mentioned that the Prophet had not appointed a successor. He concluded by stating that the leadership should go to the Anṣār.[1285]

- Abū Bakr acknowledged the virtues of the Anṣār but insisted, based upon two Quranic verses, that leadership was the sole right of the Muhājirūn. In addition he argued that the Arabs would only submit to the Quraysh. He then proposed either ʿUmar or Abū ʿUbayda to be the leader.[1286]

- Thābit b. Qays retracted his initial position in favour of the Anṣār, having been convinced by Abū Bakr's argument. He went on to say that to choose anyone other than Abū Bakr as leader would be tantamount to disobedience to the Prophet, given that Abū Bakr had led the Muslims in prayer during the Prophet's illness.[1287]

[1282] Al-Wāqidī and others p. 32.
[1283] Ibid. pp. 32-5.
[1284] Ibid. p. 35.
[1285] Ibid. pp. 35-6.
[1286] Ibid. p. 36.
[1287] Ibid. p. 37.

- One of the Muhājirūn acknowledged the virtues of the Anṣār but asserted that the Muhājirūn had precedence over the Anṣār, concluding that: "we are the leaders and you are the ministers."[1288]

- Ḥubāb b. Mundhir reiterated the point made by some of his fellow Anṣāris that they were most deserving of leadership. If the Anṣār were prevented from taking sole leadership, there should be two leaders: one from the Anṣār and one from the Muhājirūn. Other Anṣāris rejected this idea as impractical.[1289]

- Al-Ḥubāb recited a number of lines of poetry in support of his claim, criticising those Anṣāris who disagreed with him.[1290]

- 'Umar rejected the idea of joint leadership. He reiterated that the leader had to be from Quraysh, given that the Prophet was from Quraysh.[1291]

- Ḥubāb b. Mundhir urged the Anṣār to ensure that leadership went to them, using force if necessary.[1292]

- Harsh words were exchanged between 'Umar and al-Ḥubāb.[1293]

- 'Umar extolled the virtues of the Anṣār and stressed that the *umma* must remain united. He stated that Sa'd b. 'Ubāda was not fit for the post. [1294]

- Ḥasan b. Thābit composed lines of poetry in support of Sa'd b. 'Ubāda and the Anṣār.[1295]

- Voices were raised between the Muhājirūn and Anṣār almost resulting in violence.[1296]

- Ma'n b. 'Adi al-Anṣāri raised a concern that, after some time, the Anṣār would be treated unjustly by the Quraysh.[1297]

- Bashīr b. Sa'd al-Anṣāri supported the claim of Quraysh.[1298]

- Abū Bakr suggested that the leadership go to either 'Umar or Abū 'Ubayda. Both refused, asserting that it should only go to Abū Bakr based upon his excellence and precedence.[1299]

- *Bay'a* was given to Abū Bakr. Bashīr b. Sa'd al-Anṣāri was the first to give *bay'a*. [1300]

[1288] Ibid.
[1289] Ibid. pp. 37-8.
[1290] Ibid. pp. 38-9.
[1291] Ibid. p. 39.
[1292] Ibid.
[1293] Ibid.
[1294] Ibid. pp. 40-1.
[1295] Ibid.
[1296] Ibid. p. 41.
[1297] Ibid.
[1298] Ibid.
[1299] Ibid. pp. 41-2.
[1300] Ibid. p. 42.

- Hubāb b. Mundhir admonished Bashīr, and insinuated that his action was done out of jealously of Sa'd b. 'Ubāda.[1301] Bashīr replied that he gave *bay'a* because he considered it to be the right of Quraysh. [1302]

- Al-Ḥubāb angrily drew his sword but was restrained by other Anṣārīs.[1303]

- The rest of the Anṣār followed suit in giving *bay'a* to Abū Bakr, to the consternation of Hubāb b. Mundhir who predicted that, in the future, the children of the Anṣār would be oppressed by the Quraysh.[1304]

- Ḥārith b. Hishām recited lines of poetry. He praised the Anṣār for aiding Islam, admonishes Sa'd b. 'Ubāda for coveting leadership and reiterated that the caliphate is exclusively for Quraysh.[1305]

- Sa'd b. 'Ubāda was almost trampled by the crowd giving *bay'a*.[1306]

- A man from the Muhājirūn recited poetry glorifying the outcome at Saqīfa.[1307]

I now analyse the above summary. Ibn A'tham concurs with al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī that the Companions were divided into three groups following the Prophet's death. Unlike the other three authors, Ibn A'tham states that prior to the arrival of Abū Bakr, the Anṣār debated at Saqīfa with some of the Muhājirūn present. The debate was acrimonious, with the majority of the Anṣār favouring Abū Bakr over Sa'd b. 'Ubāda. Thus prior to Abū Bakr's arrival, he was already a strong contender. Abū Bakr then arrived at the meeting. Ibn A'tham is unique in mentioning that he was accompanied by 'Uthmān (along with 'Umar and Abū 'Ubayda). Thābit b. Qays, a spokesperson for the Anṣār, (both before and during the Islamic period), was the first to address Abū Bakr. He argued at length in favour of the Anṣār and backed his argument with a Quranic verse which praised the Anṣār.

Abū Bakr replied with three arguments in favour of the Muhājirūn:
1) He used the following two Quranic arguments: **For the poor emigrants who were expelled from their homes and their properties, seeking bounty from Allah and [His] approval and supporting Allah and His Messenger, [there is also a share]. Those are the truthful**.[1308] In other words, God described the Muhājirun as 'truthful'. In the next

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[1301] Bashīr b. Sa'd was from the 'Aws, whereas Sa'd was from the Khazraj.
[1302] Al-Wāqidī and others p. 42.
[1303] Ibid.
[1304] Ibid.
[1305] Ibid. pp. 42-3.
[1306] Ibid. p. 43.
[1307] Ibid. pp. 43-4.
[1308] Ibid. p. 36. ;Quran: 59: 8.

verse used by Abū Bakr: **O you who have believed, fear Allah and be with those who are true,**[1309] the believers are ordered to be with the truthful i.e. with the Muhājirūn.

2) He argued that the Arabs would only submit to the Quraysh.

3) Finally, he stated that the Quraysh were recipients of the supplication of the Prophet Ibrahīm.[1310]

Upon hearing this, Thābit b. Qays changed his opinion and rejected the idea that anyone other than Abū Bakr was entitled to lead the Muslims, particularly given that he had been appointed by the Prophet to lead the prayers. The debate continued, with the majority of the Anṣār convinced that the leadership was the right of the Muhājirūn. Al-Ḥubāb b. Mundhir's suggestion of joint leadership was rejected by both the Anṣār and by 'Umar from the Muhājirūn. Although al-Ḥubāb continued to argue in favour of the Anṣār, his voice was drowned out by his fellow Anṣāris. The debate concluded with an Anṣāri being the first to give *bay'a* to Abū Bakr, much to the consternation of al-Ḥubāb. The narrator states that the Khazraj, who had pinned their hopes on Sa'd b. 'Ubāda, had been defeated. However, unlike the text in al-Ṭabarī, there is no further mention of Sa'd. It is not known whether he gave *bay'a* or not, nor his fate after Saqīfa.

The Saqīfa debate centred on the respective rights of the Anṣār and Muhājirūn to assume leadership, with the latter presenting compelling reasons in their favour. The majority of the Anṣār were convinced, and they agreed that Abū Bakr was the ideal candidate to succeed the Prophet. 'Alī's name was not mentioned at all throughout the narrative. The narrative flows logically, is coherent and despite the regular interjections of "he said", it reads as if it was written by a single author.[1311] Up to this point, Ibn A'tham's Saqīfa narrative reads like a proto-Sunnī version, with very little acrimony between the Companions, no mention of 'Alī, and the majority of the Anṣār being convinced that Abū Bakr was the right man to succeed, due to his excellence, precedence and the leading of the prayer. There is nothing to suggest that Sa'd was bitter with the outcome. I now summarise the second section of this chapter.

[1309] Ibid.;Quran: 9: 119.

[1310] Abū Bakr was referring to the verse: "Our Lord and send among them a messenger from themselves who will recite to them Your verses and teach them the Book and wisdom and purify them. Indeed You are the Exalted in Might, the Wise." Quran: 2: 129; Ibn Kathīr, in explaining this verse mentions the statement of the Prophet Muḥammad in which he says about himself: "The supplication of my father Ibrahim and the glad tidings brought forth by Jesus the son of Mary."
http://www.qtafsir.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=299) [accessed 11 December 2018]

[1311] Either a single reporter complied disparate reports into a coherent narrative and then narrated it to Ibn A'tham, or Ibn A'tham took disparate reports and complied them into a coherent narrative.

9.4.2   Section Two: The aftermath of Saqīfa

- 'Abd al-Rahman b. 'Awf argued with the Anṣār about the respective virtues of the Muhājirūn and Anṣār. In response, they mentioned eight Anṣāris who were known for their outstanding virtues. They also stated that if 'Alī had not been preoccupied with the Prophet's burial, they would have preferred him.[1312]

- Abū Bakr admonished 'Abd al-Rahman b. 'Awf for re-opening the issue after the *bay'a* had been given.[1313]

- 'Alī was invited by Abū Bakr to give *bay'a*.[1314]

- 'Alī argued that he was more entitled to leadership than Abū Bakr due to his virtues, his kinship with the Prophet, his knowledge and his precedence in the religion. The kinship argument that Abū Bakr used against the Anṣār was in reality an argument in favour of 'Alī. He then asked Abū Bakr to give him his right (to leadership).[1315]

- 'Umar insisted that 'Alī give *bay'a*. 'Alī reiterated that he had more right to leadership than Abū Bakr.[1316]

- Abū 'Ubayda advised 'Alī to maintain unity, whilst implicitly accepting 'Alī's arguments. 'Alī reiterated that the leadership was only for the *ahl al-bayt*, who were the most knowledgeable of the Companions. He admonished Abū 'Ubayda and warned him against following his whims.[1317]

- The Anṣār were convinced by 'Alī's argument but stated that *bay'a* had already been given to Abū Bakr (i.e. it was too late to overturn the decision). The fact that 'Alī remained in his house led them to believe that he had no interest in leadership.[1318]

- 'Alī responded that he chose to stay away, as organising the Prophet's funeral took priority over arguing about leadership.[1319]

- Abū Bakr stated that he had never desired leadership. He had not expected 'Alī to oppose him and would not mind if 'Alī took time to consider the matter.[1320]

- 'Alī eventually gave *bay'a*, but there is difference of opinion among historians as to exactly when.[1321]

[1312] Al-Wāqidī and others pp. 44-6.
[1313] Ibid. p. 46.
[1314] Ibid.
[1315] Ibid.
[1316] Ibid.
[1317] Ibid.
[1318] Ibid. pp. 46-7.
[1319] Ibid. p. 47.
[1320] Ibid.
[1321] Ibid.

- Ibn A'tham concludes by stating that this is what he had heard from the scholars, and that he chose not to include any narrations from the *Rāfiḍa* (pejorative term used to describe the proto-Shī'a).[1322]

The second section of the narrative, which covers the period after the election of Abū Bakr, reads very differently from the first. It is likely that Ibn A'tham took this range of reports from a different narrator who had proto-Shī'ī sympathies. The second section does however flow logically from the first, and the narrative in both parts is internally coherent.

After the *bay'a*, the debate regarding the respective virtues of the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār continued. It is during this debate that the name of 'Alī b. Abī Tālib is first mentioned. After enumerating the virtues of a number of prominent Anṣāris, one of the Anṣār stated that due to 'Alī's preoccupation with the Prophet's funeral arrangements, he did not aspire to become leader. The implication is that the Anṣār would have preferred 'Alī, had he put himself forward. That this report states that the Anṣāris only argued in favour of 'Alī <u>after</u> the *bay'a* to Abū Bakr supports my contention that this section was reported from a different authority than the first.[1323]

The rest of the passage is devoted to the disagreement between 'Alī on one side, and Abū Bakr and his supporters on the other. The discussion begins with both Abū Bakr and 'Umar instructing 'Alī to give the *bay'a*. Other than the fact that "the Muslims have agreed upon (Abū Bakr)", no other argument was given as to why 'Alī should give *bay'a*. 'Alī in reply presents a cogent argument why he considers himself as the most worthy individual to succeed the Prophet.

> "You only took this matter from the Anṣār due to an argument that you had over them and due to the kinship of Abū Bakr. Because you claim that that Muḥammad is from you. So they gave you the leadership and handed over to you the sovereignty<u>. And I raise the same objection against you, that you had raised against the Anṣār. We are worthier to succeed Muḥammad in life and in death, because we are the ahl al-bayt and the closest of creation to him</u>".[1324] (emphasis mine).

[1322] Ibid.

[1323] In al-Ṭabarī and al-Ya'qūbī's passage, some of Anṣār favoured 'Alī <u>during</u> the *Saqīfa* debate. This difference is likely due to the fact that, in Ibn A'tham's narrative, Saqīfa and post-*Saqīfa* events were reported by two different narrators, a proto-Sunnī and proto-Shī'a respectively. The former had no interest in presenting 'Alī as the favoured choice of the Anṣār.

[1324] Al-Wāqidī and others p. 46.

'Alī employed the same kinship argument that Abū Bakr used against the Anṣār, in his favour. Given that he was from *ahl al-bayt*, 'Alī was more entitled to leadership than Abū Bakr. 'Alī then refused outright to give *bay'a*, as he alone was entitled to it, based on his kinship to the Prophet.

The reporter then presents, what appears to be a straw man argument in favour of Abū Bakr. Abū 'Ubayda, unable to rebut 'Alī's argument, affirmed that 'Alī did indeed have the right to succeed the Prophet due to his virtue, precedence and closeness to the Prophet. However given that everyone had now pledged allegiance to Abū Bakr, he urged 'Alī, for the sake of unity, to do the same. 'Alī rebutted this fallacious argument by reiterating his virtue and status. It appears from this passage that Abū 'Ubayda was already aware that 'Alī's status entitled him to succeed the Prophet, (i.e. it was not the speech of 'Alī' that convinced him).

One of the Anṣār upon hearing 'Alī's argument, said to him.

> " By Allah, if the people had heard this speech from you before giving *bay'a*, no two men would have differed regarding you. And all of the people would have given *bay'a* to you, irrespective of the fact that you sat in your house and you did not witness this affair."[1325]

'Alī's speech had convinced the Anṣār. The Anṣār would have given *bay'a* to 'Alī had he put himself forward. The fact that he was pre-occupied with the Prophet's funeral arrangements led them to mistakenly believe that he was not interested in the position of leadership. However, given that *bay'a* had been given to Abū Bakr, there was no way to overturn the decision. Ibn A'tham excuses the Anṣār from mistakenly giving *bay'a* Abū Bakr. As for whether the three representatives of the Muhājirūn were blameworthy or not, Ibn A'tham remains vague.[1326]

The passage ends with a mildly conciliatory note. Abū Bakr told 'Alī that he had never desired to become leader, but the people chose him. 'Alī was given time to consider the matter, and he eventually decided to give *bay'a*.

Ibn A'tham concludes with a closing remark.

> "So this, may Allah make you noble, is what occurred in the Saqīfa Bani Sāʿida. And this is the narration of the scholars. And I did not wish to write here anything of the

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[1325] Ibid. pp. 46-7.
[1326] i.e. Abū Bakr, 'Umar and Abū 'Ubayda.

additions of the *Rāfiḍa* in case this book falls into the hands of other than you, and you are accused of many things. And may Allah protect you".[1327]

Regarding Ibn A'tham's omission of the more controversial reports, for example those mentioned by al-Ya'qūbī, he either omitted them out of fear (*in case this book falls in to the hands of other than you*), or out of conviction. I will address this issue in my conclusion.

[1327] Al-Wāqidī and others p. 47.

9.5 Conclusion.

Similar to al-Yaʿqūbī, Ibn Aʿtham presents a proto-Shīʿī version of Saqīfa. However the manner of presentation differs markedly. In Ibn Aʿtham's narrative, the meeting at Saqīfa and the subsequent discussion with ʿAlī take place without the acrimony and violence that we see in al-Yaʿqūbī's text.

Whereas al-Yaʿqūbī uses his own authorial voice, as well as that of the prominent individuals from Banū Hāshim and other Qurayshis to support ʿAlī's claim, Ibn Aʿtham's uses ʿAlī's voice to support his claim to succeed the Prophet.[1328] Banū Hāshim as well as other Qurayshis are absent in Ibn Aʿtham's narrative.[1329]

The most significant difference between Ibn Aʿtham and al-Yaʿqūbī is that the former's support for ʿAlī does not carry the same religious undertones as al-Yaʿqūbī's. The concept of *naṣṣ* or *waṣī*, which are used by al-Yaʿqūbī, are not mentioned in his text. Ibn Aʿtham emphasises ʿAlī's kinship with the Prophet which, in his opinion, automatically entitled him to succeed the Prophet.[1330] The decision to elect Abū Bakr is clearly presented as an error but not, as in al-Yaʿqūbī's text, as a betrayal of the Prophet's wishes. Throughout the narrative, Abū Bakr is portrayed in a relatively positive light: he never aspired to be leader; the majority of Anṣār were in favour of his succession to the Prophet; and he is highly conciliatory towards ʿAlī, not pressurising him to give *bayʿa*. Based upon this it appears that Ibn Aʿtham's view of succession is closer to that of the Batrī Zaydīyya.[1331] The Batrīs recognised the caliphate of Abū Bakr, rejected explicit *naṣṣ, ghayba, rajāʾ* and did not consider the Imāms to be immune from sin and error.[1332] Unlike other proto-Shīʿī, they did not disparage Abū Bakr or ʿUmar.

Other scholars have taken a different view of Ibn Aʿtham's religious affiliation. Conrad contends that Ibn Aʿtham was 'a fervent supporter of the Shīʿa…in their legitimist claims to the caliphate, …their early doctrines concerning the religious knowledge of the Imāms, and their

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[1328] E.g. Al-Yaʿqūbī said: "the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār had no doubt that ʿAlī was the Prophet's rightful successor." Yaʿqūbī, p. 138.; Gordon and others (2018), p. 744.
[1329] Such as Zubayr, Abū Sufyān, al-ʿAbbās and others.
[1330] Ibn Aʿtham also emphasises the personal qualities of ʿAlī such as his knowledge and precedence in Islam.
[1331] For an explanation of Batrī Zaydism see 3.3.2.2.2.
[1332] Haider (2014), pp. 105-7. These terms are explained in the glossary.

focus on the sufferings…of the ''Alid (s).'[1333] Conrad also states that according to Ibn A'tham, 'Alī was the Prophet's *waṣī* and heir to his knowledge.[1334] Without explicitly stating it, Conrad aligns Ibn A'tham with the proto-Imāmi Shī'a. Lindstedkt agrees, asserting that Ibn A'tham is 'almost certainly Shi'ite.'[1335]

Thus my tentative conclusion of Ibn A'tham's religious affiliation contradicts Conrad assertion. Is it possible to reconcile the two views?

That *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* contains pro-'Alid <u>and</u> pro-Abū Bakr/Umar reports is not problematic according to Conrad. He explains that medieval texts such as *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* are compilations of a multitude of reports from different authors who hold varying religio-political views.[1336] These differing views are reflected in the compiler's text. Thus Ibn A'tham's positive portrayal of Abū Bakr does not negate his 'fervent' Shī'īsm, nor is it indicative of his Batrī Zaydism.

Although agreeing with the general thrust of Conrad's argument, for an event as seminal as Saqīfa, a proto-Imāmī Shī'ī could only but present Saqīfa as a clash between good ('Alī) and evil (Abū Bakr and his supporters).[1337] To do otherwise would negate a number of concepts and ideas integral to proto-Imāmī theology and historiography, such as explicit *naṣṣ*, the usurpation of power by Abū Bakr and the oppression of Fāṭima bint Muḥammad.

Thus how do we reconcile Ibn A'tham's conciliatory attitude to Abū Bakr in his Saqīfa narrative, with his other views highlighted by Conrad, which appear to be proto-Imāmi Shī'ī. There are two possible ways of reconciling this.

1) Ibn A'tham chose to avoid disparaging Abū Bakr and the other Companions out of fear of the authorities. This may be the intent behind his statement: 'And I did not wish to write here anything of the additions of the *Rāfiḍa* in case this book falls into the hands of other than you, and you are accused of many things.' In Ibn A'tham's time, their was conflict between different factions of the bureaucracy. Power fluctuated between the pro-'Alid *Banū Furat* and the pro-proto-Sunnī *Banū al-Jarrāḥ*. It is possible that he

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[1333] Conrad (2015), p. 96.
[1334] Ibid.
[1335] Lindstedt, p. 308.
[1336] Conrad (2015), p. 97.
[1337] Whereas a Batrī Zaydī would present outcome of Saqīfa as a genuine error on the part of the Companions, whilst still recognising Abū Bakr's caliphate.

authored his book during the era of Banū al-Jarrāḥ, thus risking their wrath if he was to openly disparage Abū Bakr or other Companions. However he was able to safely express other proto-Imāmī Shī'ī views elsewhere in his book (as mentioned by Conrad) as these did not entail a disparagement of the Companions.

2) In the same way that certain individuals, who were acceptable to proto-Sunnī ḥadīth critics, held strong 'Alid views, thus making the task of giving them with a definitive sectarian label difficult, it is possible that Ibn A'tham did not fit neatly into the Zaydī /Imāmi typology. He may well have held beliefs that defied any particular sectarian label.[1338]

As for the proto-Imāmi credal views identified by Conrad, these are tentative. By way of example, Conrad highlights that Ibn A'tham's states that Alī was the heir to the Prophet's knowledge. This appears, on first sight, a clear example of the proto-Imāmi doctrine of *Imāmate*.[1339] However the concept of inheriting the Prophet's knowledge is not unique to the proto-Shī'a. According to a *ḥadīth* in Abū Dāwūd and Tirmidhī, the Prophet said: 'The scholars are the inheritors of the Prophets.'[1340] Whether Ibn A'tham intended the former or latter can only be ascertained through a close reading of his text.[1341]

In conclusion, although a close reading of his Saqīfa narrative tentatively indicates that Ibn A'tham was sympathetic to the Batrī Zaydī strand of proto-Shī'īsm, only a close reading of the relevant sections of Kitab al-Futūḥ can substantiate or disprove this finding.

[1338] A century after the death of Ahmad b. Ḥanbal we find an avowed Shī'ī, Abū al-'Abbās Ibn 'Uqda (d.332/944), recognised as one of the Sunnī ḥadīth critics. Al-Dhahabī described him as 'the ḥadīth master of his age'. Brown (2016).

[1339] Kohlberg also refers to a passage in *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* in which 'Umar b. Khaṭṭāb refers to 'Alī as 'the inheritor of the Prophet's knowledge' (*wārith 'ilm rasūl Allah*). Etan Kohlberg, *A Medieval Muslim Scholar at Work: Ibn Ṭāwūs and His Library*, (1992), p. 359.Proto-Imāmīs held that *'ilm* was transmitted through *naṣṣ* from the Prophet to 'Alī, and from 'Alī to his successors.; Daftary (2013), p. 53.

[1340] Taken from https://sunnah.com/riyadussaliheen/13. [accessed 19 February 2019]. According to proto-Sunnī and Zaydīs, the scholars inherit the Prophet's knowledge through learning, and not, as the proto-Imāmīs claim, through *naṣṣ*.

[1341] Lindstedt concluded in her article on the biography of Ibn A'tham that a close reading of his work would identify his intellectual outlook.

10 Analysis

In the previous four chapters, I analysed the Saqīfa narrative of the four authors in order to ascertain their views regarding ʿAlī's right to succeed the Prophet Muḥammad. All four authors used a number of strategies of compilation to support either a proto-Shīʿī or proto-Sunnī view of succession. I concluded each chapter with an explanatory summary of the methods each author employed to support a particular religio-political view on the issue of the Prophet's succession.

In this chapter I add a further level of analysis by contextualising the four Saqīfa narratives within the early debates about succession to the Prophet. Secondly, through a comparative analysis I draw out unique aspects of each narrative and explain their significance. Thirdly I show how my reading of these early texts differs from that of other scholars. Finally I look briefly at the longer-term impact of the four texts and how they may have shaped later traditions.

10.1 Religious context

The belief that ʿAlī was divinely appointed to succeed the Prophet emerged in the first half of the first century and was common to all the various proto-Shīʿī groups. Following rebellion of Mukhtār al-Thaqafī in 65/685 the issue of Saqīfa came to the fore, as many of Mukhtār's followers rejected Abū Bakr's caliphate in favour of ʿAlī and his descendants. At the beginning of the second century, Sulaym b. Qays authored *Kitāb al*-Saqīfa*, a highly polemical account of Saqīfa in which Abū Bakr usurped power from ʿAlī, and the family of the Prophet including Fāṭima were viciously attacked.[1342] The belief in ʿAlī's sole right to succession was now backed by a detailed counter-narrative of Saqīfa.[1343] *Kitāb al-* Saqīfa was in circulation only a few decades after the failed uprising of Mukhtār al-Thaqafi, and the author may well have borrowed material from individuals who were involved in Mukhtār's failed rebellion. Despite questions about the authorship of the book, *Kitāb al*-Saqīfa is the earliest known proto-Shīʿī

[1342] The existence of Sulaym b. Qays is a matter a controversy. See chapter 8.2.

[1343] Kohlberg (1991), p. 146.; By counter-narrative, I mean one that was in opposition to predominant narratives articulated by proto-Sunnī scholars such as al-Zuhrī, ʿUrwa b. Zubayr and Saʿīd b. Musayyib who were writing *ḥadīth* and historical reports in the late first century. All three scholars are utilised by al-Ṭabarī in his Saqīfa reports.

narrative of Saqīfa. Al-Yaʻqūbī directly borrowed material from this book for his Saqīfa narrative although he chose not to list it as one of his sources.[1344]

Proto-Sunnīs on the other hand considered that Abū Bakr, based upon the agreement of the Companions, was the most suitable person to succeed the Prophet.[1345] ʻAlī was not appointed by the Prophet, nor was he divinely invested with religious and political authority. The issue of succession to the Prophet was a temporal matter, and Abū Bakr was the most suited to succeed the Prophet based upon his many virtues and not divinely-sanctioned. The stance of ʻAlī at Saqīfa, although important, is not critical to this doctrine. Whether ʻAlī delayed his *bayʻa* or not, and whether he agreed with the decision to elect Abū Bakr or not, did not detract from Abū Bakr's legitimacy. That ʻAlī did eventually give *bayʻa* (agreed by Sunnīs and Shīʻīs) and his support for the decision to elect Abū Bakr (rejected by Shīʻīs) reinforced the proto-Sunnī belief that Abū Bakr was the most suitable candidate to succeed the Prophet. This was used to counter the proto-Shīʻī historical narrative and hence rebut the doctrine upon which this narrative is built.

Given the danger that Shīʻī narrative of Saqīfa posed to core proto-Sunnī doctrines such as the *ʻadala* of the Companions, the concept of *ijmāʻ* and the institution of caliphate, Sunnī historians such as al-Balādhurī and al-Ṭabarī felt compelled to elucidate a detailed narrative to defend what they considered to be the orthodox position.[1346] They relied on a number of early proto-Sunnī sources including ʻUrwa b. Zubayr, al-Zuhrī, Sayf b. ʻUmar, al-Wāqidī, Ibn Ishāq, Ibn Saʻd and al-Madāʼinī.

Within the framework of a comprehensive history of Islam, al-Balādhurī and al-Ṭabarī brought together the disparate accounts relating to Saqīfa and compiled them to produce a 'paradigmatic' account, one that fitted in with their proto-Sunnī affiliation. That both narratives simultaneously rebutted the proto-Shīʻī position and affirmed the proto-Sunnī position on Saqīfa demonstrates that al-Ṭabarī's and al-Balādhurī's narratives were responses to proto-Shīʻī Saqīfa narratives.

[1344] This may have been due to the controversy over the book's authorship.

[1345] Haider (2014), pp. 37-8.

[1346] *Ijma* is defined as "the unanimous agreement of the jurists of the community of a particular age on a certain issue." Ahmad Hasan, 'Ijmā' in the Early Schools', *Islamic Studies,* 6 (1967), 121.; The election of Abū Bakr was considered by proto-Sunnīs as the first instance of *ijmaʻ*.; In addition, an attack on the *ʻaḍala* of the Companions brought the probity of *ḥadīth* into question.

Other scholars used various genre of writing to defend a proto-Sunnī reading of Saqīfa. As early as 73/693, Al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya wrote *Kitāb al-Irjā'* condemning those who opposed Abū Bakr and 'Umar. Theological tracts were authored in the second and third centuries, affirming, amongst other issues, the caliphates of Abū Bakr and 'Umar.[1347] Likewise a number of Sunnī books of *ḥadīth* included reports on the virtues of Abū Bakr, 'Umar and in some cases the narrative of Saqīfa, thus valorising the proto-Sunnī position.[1348]

[1347] See chapter 3.3.3.5.

[1348] Reports of Saqīfa are mentioned in a number of *ḥadīth* books including; Musnad of Abū Dāwūd at-Tayālisī (d.204/819), Musannaf of Ibn Abī Shayba (d.235/849), Musnad of Aḥmad (d. 241/855), Bukhari, Muslim (d. 261/875), Sunan Kubra of Bayhaqi (d. 458/1066), Mustadrak of al-Hākim (d.405/1014).

10.2 The four authors compared

Although the four authors agree on the general outline of events from the death of the Prophet to the election of Abū Bakr, there are a number of key disparities in the four narratives that are worth isolating and commenting on. I begin next with reports that are exclusive to al-Yaʿqūbī's *Taʾrīkh*.

10.2.1 Reports exclusive to al-Yaʿqūbī

Yaʿqūbī utilises Sulaym b. Qays's *Kitāb al-*Saqīfa to present a proto-Imāmi Shīʿī view of succession. His narrative portrays Abū Bakr's usurpation of power, the betrayal of ʿAlī and the oppression of Fāṭima. By incorporating key Shīʿī doctrinal concepts and ideas such as *waṣī,* Ghadīr Khumm and *ahl al-bayt*, al-Yaʿqūbī's narrative intertwines theology with historical narrative.[1349]

 A number of reports are unique to al-Yaʿqūbī's narrative:

i. The *ḥadīth* of Ghadīr Khumm and the *ḥadīth* of *al-thaqalayn* which indicate, according to proto-Imāmīs, that the Prophet explicitly designated (i.e. by virtue of *naṣṣ*) ʿAlī as his successor.[1350]

ii. A statement from al-Yaʿqūbī in which he states that 'the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār had no doubt that ʿAlī was the Prophet's successor.' The Companions knew the import and implication of the above two *ḥadīth* and were thus guilty of openly opposing the Prophet's commands.

iii. A report in which Banu Hāshim oppose the election of Abū Bakr, stating that the leadership belongs to ʿAlī, and they accuse the Quraysh of deception. This report reiterates reports i) and ii) above.

iv. During the ritual washing of the deceased Prophet, ʿAlī and his Companions hear the angel Gabriel recite three Quranic verses, two of which refer to *ahl al-bayt*. The third verse stresses patience in the face of adversity. This report highlights the status of *ahl al-bayt*, and it foreshadows the betrayal that was about to take place.

[1349] These terms have been explained elsewhere.
[1350] Both these *ḥadīth* are accepted, albeit with different wordings, by proto-Sunnīs. However, they interpret the *ḥadīth* to indicate the high status of ʿAlī and *ahl al-bayt.*

v. Fāṭima expresses, in very strong terms, her aggrievement at the way she has been oppressed.[1351]

vi. Abū Bakr and others approach 'Abbās, offering him and his descendants a share of the Caliphate, in order to exclude 'Alī, but 'Abbās refuses. He makes clear his opposition to Abū Bakr's leadership.

The above two reports reflect highly negatively on Abū Bakr and his Companions. The Prophet's only surviving child is mistreated by the Companions, and Abū Bakr acts in an underhand and conniving manner to deprive 'Alī of his rightful position and to secure his own position.

vii. A crowd gathers around 'Alī, imploring him to accept the *bay'a*. 'Alī asks them to return the following morning; only three return.

This is the proverbial 'final nail in the coffin' for 'Alī, as he is abandoned even by his own supporters. The Companions are collectively guilty of betrayal of the Prophet's legacy.

Al-Ya'qūbī died shortly before the major *ghayba.* During his lifetime, as well as shortly after his death, a number of extant works were authored outlining the nascent proto-Imāmī position on the *Imāmate* doctrine.[1352] Al-Barqī in his *Kitāb al-Maḥāsin*, wrote extensively on the *Imāmate* doctrine declaring disloyalty to 'Alī as disbelief.[1353] Al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī who authored *Baṣā'ir al-Darajāt* discussed the necessity of the existence of an Imām, his supernatural qualities, including, amongst other things, his all-encompassing *'ilm*, and his ability to revive the dead.[1354] Nawbakhti's (d.300-310/912-22) *al-Firaq al-Shī'a* makes mention of the various proto-Shī'ī sects that arose after the death of the eleventh Imām, adding that the Imāmi Shī'īs were the correct group.[1355] Finally, Kulayni, who began authoring his *al-Kāfi* a decade after al-Ya'qūbī's death, reiterated the points made by his predecessors, but added that each Imām, including the twelfth, was nominated by his predecessor. Al-Ya'qūbī thus presents what was already the normative proto-Imāmī Shī'ī view on succession; 'Alī, through *naṣṣ*, was the sole legitimate successor to the Prophet, Abū Bakr was a usurper, and almost all of the Companions were guilty of betraying the Prophet and his family.

[1351] The text explicitly mentions that the wives of the Prophet were disrespectful of Fāṭima's mother, Khadija. The text also alludes to Abū Bakr's refusal to give Fāṭima the oasis of Fadak.

[1352] Newman (2013), p. 54.

[1353] Vilozny (2014), pp. 209-10.

[1354] Newman (2013), pp. 67-84.

[1355] Yaron Friedman, *The Nuṣayrī-'alawīs: An Introduction to the Religion, History, and Identity of the Leading Minority in Syria*, (2010), p. 181.; Nawbakhti died around the same time as al-Ya'qūbī.

10.2.2 Reports exclusive to Ibn A'tham

Like al-Ya'qūbī, Ibn A'tham dispenses with the *ḥadīth* format, preferring a continuous prose in which his authorial voice is at the fore. Ibn A'tham presents the following unique report immediately following the death of the Prophet: An unnamed Companion urges the Muslims to immediately choose a leader to deal with the existential threat facing the community in Medina. He suggests three possible candidates: 'Alī, Abū Bakr or 'Amr.[1356] This report suggests that any of these three individuals were viable candidates to succeed the Prophet.

Ibn A'tham implicitly argues that although 'Alī had the most right to succeed the Prophet, this was not entirely clear to the Companions and hence they were absolved of any blame. The decision to elect Abū Bakr was clearly a mistake; however his narrative does not denigrate any of the Companions, nor does it portray any of the acrimony between 'Alī and Abū Bakr which one finds in al-Ya'qūbī's narrative. Whereas al-Ya'qūbī uses the concept of *naṣṣ* to support 'Alī's claim, Ibn A'tham highlights 'Alī's *qarāba* (his kinship with the Prophet) and his religious knowledge. On the proto-Sunnī/proto-Shī'ī spectrum regarding succession to the Prophet, Ibn A'tham's narrative falls somewhere between al-Ṭabarī/al-Balādhurī and al-Ya'qūbī and appears to conform to the Batri Zaydī view. The latter were a group of Kūfans who, similar to the proto-Shī'īs, held that 'Alī was the Prophet's rightful successor, and that legitimate political authority was restricted to his descendants.[1357] However they held that 'Alī 's designation as successor was not implicit and hence the Companions were not sinful for selecting Abū Bakr.[1358] At the same time a number of commonalities existed with proto-Sunnīs including affirmation of the *'adala* of the Companions, acceptance of the authority of *ḥadīth*, and rejection of a number of proto-Shī'ī beliefs such as *rajā, taqiyya,* and *badā.*[1359] The Batrī theological stance was very similar to the eponymous founder of Zaydism, Zayd b. 'Alī, and they may well have taken their doctrine (or aspects of it) from him.[1360]

10.2.3 Al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī

Both al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī present, in different ways, a narrative of Saqīfa in which the decision to appoint Abū Bakr is vigorously is defended. Because, according to proto-Sunnī scholars, the issue of succession was within the purview of the temporal, their narrative is

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[1356] See footnote 1007. It is possible that Ibn A'tham meant 'Umar and not 'Amr.
[1357] Haider (2014), p. 107.
[1358] Ibid. p. 105.
[1359] Ibid. pp. 106-7.
[1360] Ibid. p. 104.; it is also possible that doctrines preceded and were developed independently of Zayd b. 'Alī.

purely historical, devoid of the doctrinal concepts found in al-Yaʿqūbī's narrative. ʿAlī, whom the proto-Shīʿa would characterise as Abū Bakr's nemesis, is portrayed as defending the decision to elect Abū Bakr, thus rebutting nascent *Imāmate* theory.

Given that Abū Bakr was appointed by the Companions (and not directly by the Prophet), then in theory at least, other possible candidates, including ʿAlī, could have been chosen. Both al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī discount this possibility. Abū Bakr's excellence and precedence, as well as the indications from the Prophet during his illness that he should succeed him, meant that his succession was a foregone conclusion.[1361] My reading of al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī's Saqīfa narrative demonstrates that the two authors not only vindicate the decision to approve Abū Bakr's succession, but they consider it to be the only possible correct decision. Al-Balādhurī in fact attributes Abū Bakr's succession to the decree of God by quoting Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, who said 'Allah places His matter wherever He wishes'.

Al-Ṭabarī's view on the succession to the Prophet as expressed in his *Taʾrīkh* is in line with his proto-Sunnī stance. Although the issue of the respective merit and order of the first four caliphs was still in flux in the second/ninth century, the issue of Abū Bakr's right to succeed the Prophet was never questioned by proto-Sunnīs. Faced with reports in favour of and against the succession of Abū Bakr, al-Ṭabarī records both sides of the debate by bringing different versions of an incident, and then uses a two-pronged approach to affirm the proto-Sunnī stance on succession.[1362] Firstly, he uses the *isnād* to pass silent judgment on specific (proto-Shīʿī) reports, implicitly declaring them to be weak. Secondly, given that few of his readers were likely to be *muḥaddithīn*, and hence unlikely to identify weak reports solely based upon *isnād* analysis, al-Ṭabarī brings additional reports that contradict the weak *ḥadīth* and are also 'authentic', to affirm the normative proto-Sunnī position on succession.

One report that al-Ṭabarī chooses to exclude, despite affirming its authenticity elsewhere, is the *ḥadīth* Ghadīr Khumm. This *ḥadīth* was used by proto-Shīʿīs to argue in favour of ʿAlī's *Imāmate*, and if al-Ṭabarī had included it in the Saqīfa narrative, without commenting on it,

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[1361] Both authors use the Abū Bakr's appointment to lead the prayer during the Prophet's illness as an indication of his future role as leader.

[1362] Tahāwi does something similar in his *Maʿāni al-Athar*. This book is a collection of *ḥadīth* on various *fiqh* topics in which the author examines the differing interpretations of a *ḥadīth* and then gives his opinion, usually in favour of the Ḥanafī madhhab. He also brings different versions of a *ḥadīth* and selects the most authentic based upon a discussion of the *isnād*.

this would have added weight to the proto-Shī'ī argument.[1363] Al-Ṭabarī's goal was to present and then investigate (through *isnād* analysis), the authenticity of the Saqīfa reports, and his use of the *ḥadīth* format did not allow him to comment on their meaning.[1364]

Al-Balādhurī like al-Ṭabarī affirms the normative proto-Sunnī stance on succession. The theme of Abū Bakr's superior status runs through his narrative. In his view, the Prophet considered writing a will in favour of Abū Bakr's succession but then changed his mind as he did not consider that anyone would put himself forward over Abū Bakr. Al-Balādhurī also devotes considerable space to Abū Bakr's appointment to lead the prayer during the Prophet's illness (forty-two reports) to indicate his future succession. The vocal support for Abū Bakr from 'Alī himself is also prominent: although the latter did express dissatisfaction at the lack of consultation, the outcome itself was never questioned. Unlike al-Ṭabarī, he generally avoids reports that support the proto-Shī'ī view. Thus al-Balādhurī's methodology is selection (as well as placement and omission), whereas al-Ṭabarī juxtaposes contradictory *ḥadīth*, resolving them through *ḥadīth* criticism.

10.2.4 Reports unique to al-Ṭabarī and to al-Balādhurī

In the following discussion I firstly examine reports mentioned by both al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī, and then move to reports unique to each author. I show that although both authors used a number of reports to highlight Abū Bakr's superiority, al-Balādhurī's utilises reports that unequivocally support the succession of Abū Bakr.

Both authors cite a number of reports in which the Prophet implicitly appoints Abū Bakr as successor by ordering him to lead the prayer, and also affirms Abū Bakr's superiority over other Companions.[1365] Both authors also highlight 'Alī's approval of Abū Bakr's appointment.[1366] Al-Ya'qūbī and Ibn A'tham on the other hand exclude any mention of the Prophet enumerating the virtues of Abū Bakr, or the events during the Prophet's illness (the

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[1363] According to proto-Sunnīs, Ghadīr Khumm was an affirmation of the lofty status of 'Alī, and nothing more.

[1364] Almost all of the reports that favoured 'Alī/opposed Abū Bakr were deemed 'weak' by al-Ṭabarī and hence did not represent a historical reality. Given that al-Ṭabarī's *Ta'rīkh* lacked any direct authorial voice, to include the *ḥadīth* of Ghadīr Khumm in his Saqīfa narrative, without commentary, would have added weight to the proto-Shī'ī argument.

[1365] By ordering all the doors to the mosque to be closed except Abū Bakr's, and by affirming Abū Bakr's generosity. Both authors also emphasise, throughout their narrative, Abū Bakr's superior knowledge.

[1366] For example, both authors mention that Abū Sufyān offers to military support to 'Alī to oppose Abū Bakr, but 'Alī refuses and affirms his support for Abū Bakr.

most significant of which is Abū Bakr leading the prayer). These reports are an ex ante approval of Abū Bakr's appointment and do not serve the narrative goals of al-Yaʿqūbī or ibn Aʿtham.

10.2.4.1 Unique to al-Ṭabarī

Al-Ṭabarī is unique in citing the following reports, all of which imply that Abū Bakr was the most suited to succeed the Prophet.

i) Abū Bakr leads the *Hajj* in year 10, thus acting as a deputy for the Prophet in this pivotal role.

ii) the Prophet demonstrates the strong personal bond between himself and Abū Bakr by stating that if he were to take a *Khalīl* it would be Abū Bakr.[1367]

iii) the Prophet orders his Companions to: 'Follow ʿUmar after me'. Given that the latter was instrumental in securing the *bayʿa* for Abū Bakr, the command to follow him necessitates that the Companions follow ʿUmar in giving *bayʿa* to Abū Bakr.

Although al-Ṭabarī's authorial voice is absent in the text, he does present a report from Saʿīd b. Zayd who, commenting on the appointment of Abū Bakr, states that: 'only the apostates opposed Abū Bakr… and all of the Muhājirūn (and by implication ʿAlī and the tribe of Banū Hāshim) gave *bayʿa* to Abū Bakr.' Al-Ṭabarī uses Saʿīd b. Zayd's post-factum reflection to demonstrate unanimity (i.e. *ijmāʿ*) of the Muslims on the succession of Abū Bakr. This report also equates opposition to Abū Bakr with apostasy.

10.2.4.2 Unique to al-Balādhurī

Al-Balādhurī utilises a number of reports that are even more emphatic than al-Ṭabarī's unique reports in supporting Abū Bakr' succession, as follows:

i. The Prophet said: 'Follow Abū Bakr and ʿUmar after me.'

ii. The Prophet mentioned the virtues of Abū Bakr, ʿUmar and ʿUthmān in that order.
The use of these two reports is an implicit endorsement of the future caliphates of Abū Bakr and ʿUmar (and ʿUthmān).

iii. The Prophet wanted to write a will regarding Abū Bakr's succession. However he decided against it as he didn't think it conceivable that anyone would put themselves forward over Abū Bakr.

[1367] See footnote 807 for the meaning of *Khalīl*.

This report leaves little doubt in the reader's mind that the Prophet wanted Abū Bakr to succeed him.

iv. Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī stated that Abū Bakr was the best of Muslims.

v. ʿAlī said that Abū Bakr leading the prayer was a sign that he should be the Caliph.

vi. Ḥasan b. ʿAlī said that Abū Bakr leading the prayer was a sign that he should be the Caliph.

That the last three reports are attributed to ʿAlī and Ḥasan further rebuts the claim that ʿAlī was the Prophet's rightful successor.

10.2.5 The four authors on Saʿd b ʿUbāda

The four authors agree that, prior to the arrival of Abū Bakr, the Anṣār were about to nominate Saʿd b. ʿUbāda as their new leader. However once the *bayʿa* is given to Abū Bakr, Saʿd is conspicuously absent from al-Yaʿqūbī and Ibn Aʿtham's narrative. Issues such as whether Saʿd gives *bayʿa* or not, his relationship with Abū Bakr after Saqīfa and his eventual fate are not mentioned. The view that ʿAlī was the Prophet's rightful successor is the central theme in al-Yaʿqūbī and Ibn Aʿtham's narratives. As such, the aftermath of Saʿd's unsuccessful attempt to assume leadership is not considered significant.

Of the 36 reports that al-Balādhurī presents under the chapter of Saqīfa, only one report briefly mentions Saʿd in the context of the aftermath of the *bayʿa* to Abū Bakr. After the *bayʿa*, Saʿd is inadvertently trampled upon, and ʿUmar calls him a 'companion of *fitna*'. Al-Balādhurī also mentions in two separate reports, that the Anṣār (i.e. Saʿd's supporters) are convinced that Abū Bakr should succeed the Prophet. As for Saʿd view on Abū Bakr's succession, nothing is mentioned.

Al-Yaʿqūbī and Ibn Aʿtham omit to mention the issue of Saʿd in order to focus on ʿAlī's claim to succeed the Prophet. Al-Balādhurī, on the other hand, downplays it to give the impression that Abū Bakr's appointment was a smooth process without bitterness or acrimony.

Al-Ṭabarī's narrative is the most detailed regarding Saʿd's stance on the appointment of Abū Bakr. He presents a range of contradictory opinions: Saʿd refuses to give *bayʿa* and abandons the congregational prayer; Saʿd is compelled to give *bayʿa*; Saʿd gives *bayʿa* willing. As explained in chapter 6, al-Ṭabarī, through the use of the *isnād*, privileges what he presents as the most authentic opinion, i.e. Saʿd gives *bayʿa* willingly. Thus unlike al-Balādhurī who, through omission of relevant reports, ignores the issue of Saʿd's stance, al-Ṭabarī tackles the

issue head on. By implicitly favouring the report that Saʿd gives *bayʿa* willingly, he rebuts the view that there was acrimony between Saʿd and Abū Bakr. Like al-Balādhurī, al-Ṭabarī presents Abū Bakr's appointment as a relatively smooth affair.

10.3 The Saqīfa debate: a dividing line between proto-Sunnī and proto-Shī'ī positions

During the first three centuries of Islam, a number religio-political issues, such as support for 'Alid revolts, preference of 'Alī over 'Uthmān, and favouring the leadership of 'Alids over that of non-Alids, were not exclusive to the proto-Shī'a, but straddled the broad spectrum of proto-Sunnī and proto-Shī'ī positions.[1368] By the fourth century, however, these issues became indicative one one's sectarian affiliation, as a consensus developed amongst proto-Sunnīs on the respective status of the first four caliphs and on the *'aḍala* of the Companions, as well as opposition to 'Alid rebellions.

However regarding the issue of succession to the Prophet, there was little ambiguity. The stance of both proto-Sunnīs and proto-Shī'īs remained unchanged from the first century onwards. The two opinions were irreconcilable; one that recognised the legitimacy of Abū Bakr, and one that rejected it in favour of 'Alī. The first was unanimously accepted by the proto-Sunnīs, and the latter by the proto-Imāmi Shī'īs. A third opinion, that of the Zaydīs, accepted the legitimacy of Abū Bakr's caliphate whilst arguing that 'Alī was more deserving of it. Unlike, for example, the issue of the respective merits of 'Uthmān and 'Alī, one's position on the issue of succession to the Prophet squarely placed one within one camp or another. Also unlike one's stance on the respective merits of 'Uthmān and 'Alī, the issue of succession to the Prophet was never a matter of debate amongst the proto-Sunnīs; it was a given fact.

For the proto-Imāmī Shī'īs, the Saqīfa narrative, containing theological concepts such as *naṣṣ,* and *waṣī*, was inextricably tied with core proto-Shī'ī beliefs and formed the basis of the doctrine of *Imāmate*. Given that the latter became a pillar of Shī'ī faith, salvation in the Hereafter was dependant on a 'correct' understanding of the events at Saqīfa.[1369] Al-Ya'qūbī's Saqīfa narrative affirms the proto-Imāmi Shī'ī doctrine of *Imāmate*.

[1368] Sufyān al-Thawrī (d.161/778) and Ibn Khuzayma (d.311/923) were two famous proto-Sunnī *muḥaddithīn* who favoured 'Alī over 'Uthmān. Lucas (2004), p. 37. Likewise 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan'ānī (d. 211/826) was described by scholars as a 'moderate Shī'ī' yet his reports were accepted by Ahmad b. Ḥanbal and Bukhari. Harald Motzki, *The Origins of Islamic Jurisprudence: Meccan Fiqh before the Classical Schools*, (2002), pp. 67-8.

[1369] The belief that 'Alī was the rightful successor to the Prophet and the first Imām, is a fundamental of proto-Imāmi Shī'ī belief.

For proto-Sunnīs, the relationship between historical narrative and theology was seemingly more nuanced. There are no explicit theological concepts found in proto-Sunnī creed relating to the issue of selecting a leader. Likewise, there was nothing in the Quran or ḥadīth relating to the issue of succession to the Prophet. Later Sunnī scholars framed the decision by the Companions to appoint Abū Bakr as the first instance of ijmā'.[1370] Given that *ijmā'* constitutes a binding legal proof, the decision to appoint Abū Bakr was beyond reproach.

Thus although both sides justify their stance based upon the sources of the Sharī'a, proto-Shī'īs based the creed of *Imāmate* on the two primary sources; the Quran and the prophetic ḥadīth, whilst proto-Sunnīs based Abū Bakr's appointment on a secondary source; *ijmā'*. Another difference is that the *Imāmate* of 'Alī is a fundamental of proto-Shī'ī faith, whereas the institution of caliphate, although 'obligatory', was 'an instrument to serve the faith'.[1371] In response to rejection by the proto-Shī'īs of Abū Bakr's caliphate, early proto-Sunnī tracts on theology included the affirmation of Abū Bakr's caliphate alongside 'pure' credal issues such as belief in *qadr*, and the nature of *Īmān*.

[1370] Hasan (1967), p. 122.; For example al-'Ash'arī mentions the *ijma'* of the Companions on the leadership of Abū Bakr. Klein, p. 133.
[1371] As stated by Ibn Taymiyya. See Chapter 3.3.3.

10.4 The view of other scholars.

My conclusion that the Saqīfa narrative of the four authors is indicative of their religious affiliation contradicts Hibri, who argues that 'the narratives of al-Ṭabarī and others ought not be categorized as being in favour of one sect or another'.[1372] Rather he argues that '…the debate at the Saqīfa is ultimately more a polemical piece than actual history, reflecting ninth century debates on whether non-Arabs… have the right to partake in ruling the Islamic state or whether the merits of the Quraysh established its continuous political primacy.'[1373] He claims that narratives of the past were in reality a commentary on 'certain political, religious, social, or cultural issue(s)'.[1374] Keaney also agrees with Hibri arguing that Muslim historians manipulated their source material in order to produce 'narratives that reflected contemporary debates.[1375] However it appears that, unlike Hibri, she does not deny the historicity of the reports.

Shoshan reads al-Ṭabarī's *Ta'rīkh* as a literary work and not history per se.[1376] Al-Ṭabarī's portrayal of Saqīfa was a literary representation of the division that occurred following the death of the Prophet.[1377] He argues, contrary to Hibri, that al-Ṭabarī used a number of poetic techniques to give the reader the impression that he was describing what happened in the past.

Khalidi on the other hand, in his discussion of the Islamic portion of al-Ṭabarī's *Ta'rīkh* notes the 'total absence of any comments on the veracity of reports or any moral verdict on events of momentous consequences to the Muslim community.'[1378] He concludes that 'the 'Adams and 'Satans' of Islamic history are left largely to the reader.'[1379] Khalidi conflates the lack of authorial voice as well as the transmission of divergent reports without any explicit commentary on their veracity, with a morally neutral stance.

[1372] El-Hibri (2010), p. 300.

[1373] Ibid. p. 43.

[1374] Tayeb El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography: Harun Al-Rashid and the Narrative of the Abbasid Caliphate*, (1999), p. 13.

[1375] Keaney (2013), p. 366. through their portrayal of the revolt against ''Uthmān.

[1376] Steven Judd, 'Review of Poetics of Islamic Historiography: Deconstructing Tabari's History. Boaz Shoshan', *JOAS,* 128 (2008), 389.

[1377] Ibid.

[1378] The 'Islamic portion of the *Ta'rīkh*' refers to the period from the Sīra up to the year 302/915. Khalidi (1994), p. 79.

[1379] Ibid. p. 80.

I partially concur with Keaney's argument that historians used their narratives to address contemporary debates. The issue of the Prophet's legitimate successor was a live debate in milieu in which the four Saqīfa works were authored. However I disagree with her assertion that "ninth century historians …convey(ed) distinct interpretations of the past while maintaining the guise of authority through the *isnād/khabar* format" as this presupposes that concern with historical accuracy took second place.[1380]

I argue that all four authors produced a narrative of Saqīfa which accurately represented, in their view, a historical episode. At the same time, that an author accepts the historicity of a report does not prevent them from using that report to also comment on contemporary issues. The two are not mutually exclusive.[1381] In the case of my four authors, however, the primary purpose of their narrative was to use these 'historical facts' to support their respective views on the succession to the Prophet. In the case of the proto-Shī'īs, the Saqīfa narrative was inextricably linked to the doctrine of *Imāmate*. As for proto-Sunnīs, the legitimacy of Abū Bakr was based upon a binding consensus.

Keaney also examines how the authors whose works she examines used the 'Uthmān narrative to reconcile past religio-political ideals with contemporary realities, and in particular the justice versus unity dichotomy.[1382] In her view, the political situation strongly influenced the content and form of the narrative. I argue, that in the case of my four historians, their primary goal was to use their narrative to reinforce a foundational tenet of their sectarian faith and not to respond to contemporary political events. The debate around Saqīfa was primarily religious.

[1380] Keaney (2013), p. 3.
[1381] Therefore it is possible that the four historians were expressing their own religious pre-commitments whilst, at the same time, using the past to address contemporary debates.
[1382] Keaney (2013), p. 1.

10.5 Long term implications of the succession of Abū Bakr

In this section, I attempt to trace how the four authors' works shaped later thinking on Saqīfa. I do this by examining the extent to which a number of later texts, written by Sunnī and Shī'ī scholars, cited the four authors. However given that numerous early works addressed the issue of Saqīfa, some of which directly influenced my four authors, to isolate and trace the impact of the four authors' works in shaping later thinking is difficult. The task is further complicated by the fact that some of the later works did not always state their sources.

10.5.1 Later Sunnī Works

I first examine six historical works written by Sunnī scholars to trace how al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī were received. The first work was written three centuries after the death of al-Ṭabarī and the last work, almost six centuries after his death. All six works are written by famous Sunnī scholars and five of them have had a number of their works translated into English. The authors and their works are as follows.[1383]

Ibn al-Athīr (d.555/1233) in *al-Kāmil fil Ta'rīkh* discusses the illness of the Prophet, his death, burial and Saqīfa over fifteen pages. The author does not utilise the *isnād*. Although he does not cite al-Ṭabarī directly, almost the entire passage is made up of several reports from al-Ṭabarī, juxtaposed together without commentary. One of the reports is the long *ḥadīth* of 'Umar' sermon in which the latter explains the events at Saqīfa and justifies the outcome. Another report is Abū Miknaf's account of Saqīfa which does not portray Abū Bakr in a particularly positive light. Together, these two reports make up 90% of the narrative.

Ibn 'Asākir (d.571/1176) devotes one volume from his 80 volume *Ta'rīkh al-Dimasqh* to the life of Abū Bakr of which approximately ninety pages refer to the Prophet' illness, death and Saqīfa. Almost all of the reports have *isnāds*. No reference to earlier works is made. Ibn 'Asākir leaves no doubt in the readers mind that Abū Bakr was the logical candidate to succeed the Prophet based upon his numerous virtues as well as number of reports in which the Prophet explicitly stated that Abū Bakr would succeed him. Ibn 'Asākir excludes reports that indicate opposition to Abū Bakr's succession.

[1383] I also examined Ibn Sayyid al-Nas's (d.734/1333) biography of the Prophet entitled *Uyūn al-Athar*. However, this stops at the Prophet's farewell *haj*. The absence of any detail after the *haj* maybe due to the lack of complete manuscripts.

Ibn al-Jawzī (d.597/1200) in his 18 volume *al-Muntaẓim fil Ta'rīkh al-Mulūk wa al-Umam* devotes over 40 pages to the Prophet's illness, death and Saqīfa. He includes the long *ḥadīth* of 'Umar' sermon. Other than Sa'd b. 'Ubāda, there is no opposition to Abū Bakr's succession. 'Alī is reported as supporting Abū Bakr succession. All his reports have an *isnād* and he occasionally mentions his sources including Bukhari, Muslim, Aḥmad, Ibn Sa'd, and al-Wāqidī. Although Ibn al-Jawzī clearly supports Abū Bakr succession, he is not an emphatic in his support as Ibn Kathīr, al-Dhahabī, or al-Suyūṭī.

Ibn Kathīr (d.774/1373) in his *Sīra Nabawiyya* devotes ninety pages to the Prophet' illness, death and Saqīfa. Almost all of his reports have an *isnād* and he often discusses the authenticity of the various reports. Through his selection of reports, his own commentary, as well as commentary from earlier scholars, Ibn Kathīr argues that the Prophet gave an indication that Abū Bakr should succeed him, and that there was *ijmā'* of the Companions that he was the best suited to succeed him. Both 'Alī and Sa'd b. 'Ubāda are portrayed as supporting his succession. He cites from *ḥadīth* works such Bukhari, Muslim, Aḥmad, Ibn Māja, Nasā'ī, Bayhaqī as well as Ibn Ishāq.

Al-Dhahabī (d.748/1248) in his 50 volume *Ta'rīkh al-Islam al-Kabīr* has a section on Abū Bakr in which he devotes six pages to the final days of the Prophet and the succession of Abū Bakr. He cites a number of reports in which the Prophet implicitly appointed Abū Bakr as well as several Quranic verses, which allude to Abū Bakr's caliphate. Saqīfa is only briefly mentioned. All reports have an *isnād*. In many reports, Dhahabi cites a number of references including Bukhari, Muslim, and Aḥmad.

Al-Suyūṭī (d.915/1505) in his *Ta'rīkh Khulafā* devotes fourteen pages to the issue of the Prophet's illness, death and Saqīfa. He provides references for all of his reports, which include the major *ḥadīth* scholars, as well as al-Wāqidī, ibn Sa'd, Ibn Ishāq and Ibn Asākir. Like Ibn Kathīr, al-Suyūṭī selects reports that suggest that the Prophet implicitly appointed Abū Bakr, and that the Companions agreed on his caliphate. He adds his own commentary and Quranic verses to add weight to his argument that Abū Bakr was the best person to succeed the Prophet.

Surprisingly none of the above six historians cites al-Ṭabarī or al-Balādhurī in their Saqīfa narrative, and only Ibn al-Athīr utilises al-Ṭabarī's *Ta'rīkh*. There are a several possible reasons

for this which are numbered below. However without a detailed study of the authors' religious affiliations and a close reading of their text, the reasons given must be regarded as tentative.

1. Al-Suyūṭī and Ibn 'Asākir are both 'Ash'arī scholars adhering to the al-Shāfi'ī' madhhab. Their theological and jurisprudential school of thought put them at logger heads with al-Ṭabarī who is a mujtahid in fiqh, with his own madhhab, as well as a traditionalist in aqīda.[1384] *Madhhab* fanaticism was a common phenomenon by the sixth century onwards ; *not* adhering to one of the four madhabs was something frowned upon. Hence, they did not want to give credence someone in opposition to their madhhab and creed, particularly when other sources were available.[1385] Likewise Ibn al-Jawzī, as a Ḥanbalī Ash'arī, may have taken a similar stance towards al-Ṭabarī.[1386]

2. Ibn Kathīr and al-Dhahabī's theological persuasion aligned with that of al-Ṭabarī. Both were, like al-Ṭabarī, scholars of *ḥadīth*. The reason they did not quote al-Ṭabarī or al-Balādhurī is twofold. First, as *ḥadīth* scholars, they gave preference to early reports such Ibn Ishāq. Secondly, reports from canonical books of *ḥadīth* such as Bukhari, Muslim, and others carried more weight than reports from historical works.[1387] For this same reason, al-Suyūṭī and Ibn al-Jawzī did not cite al-Balādhurī preferring instead to cite the famous *ḥadīth* scholars.

3. Related to point two, given the theological importance of Saqīfa, scholars privileged *ḥadīth* reports over *Ta'rīkh*, as the latter was not considered a source of religious knowledge.

I also looked at three modern Sunnī *Sīra* works. None of them cited al-Ṭabarī or al-Balādhurī.

- *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources* by Martin Lings has no references.
- *The Life of Muḥammad* by Muhammad Husayn Haykal has no references.
- *The Sealed Nectar* by Sayf al-Mubārakpuri quotes Bukhari and Ibn Hishām.

[1384] In *Sarīh al-Sunna* al-Ṭabarī affirms that the Quran is the uncreated speech of God and that the believers will see God on the Day of Judgement (in refutation of the Mu'tazila, Jahmiyya and some of the 'Ashariyya), that the actions of people are under the Will of God (in refutation of the Qadariyya), that the virtue of the Rāshidūn Caliphs was commensurate with their order of succession God (in refutation of the proto-Shī'ī) and that faith increases and decreases God (in refutation of the Murji'a). He also affirms a number of Allah's attributes (in refutation of the Mu'tazila, Jahmiyya and some of the 'Ashariyya). Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Ṣarīḥ Al-Sunna*, (Kuwait: Darul Khulafā lil Kitāb Islamiyya, 1985).

[1385] Judd argues that Ibn 'Asākir neglected to mention al-Ṭabarī as he gave preference to Syrian sources over Iraqi ones. Judd (2001), pp. 93-4.

[1386] Al-Ṭabarī, during his lifetime, faced severe opposition from the Ḥanbalīs, despite little or no difference in their mutual creed.

[1387] This may also be an additional reason why al-Suyūṭī and Ibn al-al-Al-Jawzī did not cite al-Ṭabarī.

The fact that Saqīfa is cited, often at great length, in almost all of the major Sunnī ḥadīth collections as well as in the early proto-Sunnī books of *Sīra* and *Ta'rīkh* demonstrates its importance to proto-Sunnism. Furthermore, the respective status of the first four caliphs, commensurate with their reign, is stated in the early books of proto-Sunnī creed and later became a defining feature of Sunnism.[1388] Collectively, these early works (of *ḥadīth*, *Sīra* and *Ta'rīkh*) directly influenced the later narratives. The fact that al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī were not cited by later works does not necessarily suggest that they did not influence them. However without a close comparison of the later works with that of al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī, it is difficult to ascertain the impact that they may have had. With the exception of Ibn Athir, the above six historians are unequivocal in their defence of Abū Bakr's succession, a number utilise Quranic verses in support of his caliphate, and some even imply that the Prophet explicitly designated Abū Bakr. I will now look at the influence of al-Yaʿqūbī and Ibn Aʿtham's text on later narratives.

10.5.2 Later Shīʿī Works

Shīʿī books on *Sīra* are not as numerous as those written by Sunnīs. I selected four books to trace the influence of al-Yaʿqūbī's *Ta'rīkh* and Ibn Aʿtham's *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*. Two of the works were written in this century. My analysis is based upon the English translations of these text.

- *Kitāb al-Irshād* by Shaikh al-Mufīd (d.413/1022) translated by I.K.A. Howard.
- *Hiyāt al-Qulūb* (volume 2) by Shaikh Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī (d. 1110/1699) translated by Sayyid Athar Husayn S.H. Rizvi.
- *Imamate and Leadership: Lessons on Islamic Doctrine* by Mujtabá Musavi Larī. (d. 1424/2003) translated by Professor Hamid Algar.[1389]
- *Muḥammad, the Man of Allah* by Seyyed Hossein Nasr. (b. 1933)

Kitāb al-Irshād by al-Mufīd is a 554-page book (in the English translation) covering the biography of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib and the other eleven Imāms. The text is a continuous narrative without any references. He discusses succession and related issues over fourteen pages. The

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[1388] This is directly linked to the issue of succession. By affirming the legitimacy of the first four caliphs, by implication one is supporting the decision made at Saqīfa and rejecting the proto-Shīʿī narrative and its theological implications.

[1389] Mujtabá Musavi Larī is an Iranian born author from a scholarly Shīʿī family. Mujtabá Musavi Larī and others, *Imamate and Leadership: Lessons on Islamic Doctrine*, (1996), pp. 4-5. The book has no date, but according to Wikipedia the English translation was done in 1996. The original text in Persian was written in 1967. https://hawzah.net/fa/Magazine/View/5211/7605/95231/-کتاب-شناسی-فارسی-آیت-الله-سید-مجتبی موسوی-لاری [accessed 3 March 2019]

author uses a number of events during the life of the Prophet to demonstrate the superiority of 'Alī over the other Companions, and hence his right to succeed the Prophet. A number of theological concepts are mentioned including *naṣṣ, ahl al-bayt* and *waṣī*. At Ghadīr Khumm, the Prophet appoints 'Alī as his successor after which the Companions congratulate him. Several pages describe the Prophet's illness, during which he expresses displeasure with Abū Bakr and 'Umar and his affection for 'Alī. The events of Saqīfa are only mentioned in passing. There is little or congruence between this text and al-Ya'qūbī's or Ibn A'tham's narrative.

Volume 2 of *Hiyāt al-Qulūb* is a 1004-page book (English translation) covering the biography of the Prophet. The person of 'Alī is prominent throughout the work. Along with the Prophet, 'Alī, Fāṭima and their two sons were created before the rest of mankind from light. Other virtues include 'Alī's precedence in Islam, his bravery, and his knowledge. On the night of the ascension, the Prophet sees a vision of the twelve Imams engaged in prayer, the name of 'Alī written on the *Bayt al-Ma'mūr*, and an angel in the likeness of 'Alī.[1390] Also during the night of ascension, Allah orders the Prophet to appoint 'Alī as his successor. The author devotes twenty-seven pages to Ghadīr Khumm in which 'Alī is appointed as successor, after which the Companion pledge allegiance to him. Following this, the Prophet transfers his divine knowledge to 'Alī. The Prophet, during his illness, emphasises the status and rights of *ahl al-bayt*, appoints 'Alī as his successor, praises the future Shī'ī of 'Alī, and criticises the enemies of the Shī'a, namely the Jews and Banū Umayya. Saqīfa is only mentioned briefly. Majlisi states that the hypocrites (meaning Abū Bakr, 'Umar and their supporters) usurp power as 'Alī helplessly looks on. The author cites a number of references including Kulayni, Tabarsi, Ibn Bābawayh, al-Mufīd, and Ṭusī. Al-Ya'qūbī nor Ibn A'tham are not mentioned, nor are any quotes taken from their works.

Imamate and Leadership is a 186-page book (English translation) by Mujtabá Musavi Larī in which he presents the normative Shī'ī view of the *Imāmate* concept, covering issues such as the necessity, infallibility, knowledge, and function of the Imām from a rational and s*harī'a* perspective. He uses a number of incidents from the *Sīra* to argue that 'Alī was the most entitled to succeed the Prophet, culminating in the announcement at Ghadīr Khumm. This explicit designation was ignored by the Companions when they selected Abū Bakr which in turn led to the birth of the Shī'ī movement immediately after Saqīfa. In his description of

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[1390] Muslims belief that *Bayt al-Ma'mūr* is the *Ka'ba* of the angels in heaven.

Saqīfa he quotes both al-Ṭabarī (six times) and al-Yaʿqūbī (four times). However his use of al-Ṭabarī and other proto-Sunnī sources is selective and only used to bolster his arguments.

In *Muḥammad, the Man of Allah*, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, devotes eight pages out his 103-page book to Ghadīr Khumm, arguing that the Prophet clearly and unambiguously designated ʿAlī and his successor.[1391] For example he quotes the Prophet as saying: "'ʿAlī ibn Abi Talib is my brother, and heir, and *khalīfah*, and the leader after me." However the author does not mention any events during the Prophet illness, his death or the events at Saqīfa.

In all four works, theology and historical narrative are intertwined. This is unsurprising given that the concepts of prophethood and *Imāmate* are inseparable in Shīʿīsm. Unlike al-Yaʿqūbī and Ibn Aʿtham who devote considerable space to Saqīfa and its aftermath, the above Shīʿī authors only mention Saqīfa briefly. All four authors devote considerable space to the event of Ghadīr Khumm in which they argue that ʿAlī was explicitly appointed as successor, thus leaving no doubt in the reader's mind that Abū Bakr was a usurper. As such, the details of exactly what happened at Saqīfa is not important; it was the outcome that mattered. These four later works focus on what should have happened following the death of the Prophet, as opposed to what actually did happen. As such all four works are highly polemical. With the exception of Larī's book, there is very little congruence between these works and al-Yaʿqūbī and Ibn Aʿtham, the influence of the latter two is minimal.[1392]

In summary, the textual traces of my authors' influence does not appear to be clearly visible in later works. This may be for a number of different reasons: theological differences with later authors, methodological reasons (e.g. using the earliest possible sources, privileging *ḥadīth* reports over *Ta'rīkh*) or polemical reasons (in the case of a number of Shīʿī books, elucidating what should happened is more important than what was reported to have happened). Due to the religious significance of the issue of succession, later Sunnī scholars did not give priority to works of *Ta'rīkh*. Shīʿī scholars emphasised Ghadīr Khumm rather than Saqīfa, as the former was a definitive proof of ʿAlī's *Imāmate*.

[1391] The author references the Prophet's Ghadīr Khumm speech to the book *Hayat al-Qulūb*, by Muhammad Bāqir al-Majlisi.

[1392] In relation to Ghadīr Khumm and Saqīfa, Larī quotes al-Yaʿqūbī nine times, and in most cases, Al-Yaʿqūbī is quoted alongside other historians.

11 Conclusion

11.1 Introduction

This research offers an in-depth study of four of the earliest extant works on Saqīfa: *Ansāb al-Ashrāf* by al-Balādhurī (d.278/892), *Ta'rīkh* by al-Ya'qūbī (d.283/897), *Ta'rīkh al-Rusul wa 'l-Mulūk by* al-Ṭabarī (d.310/923) and *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* by Ibn A'tham (d.314/926-7). Through a comparative study, I have examined how these four medieval historians constructed a narrative of Saqīfa in their texts, the differences in the representation of this event, and what their narratives revealed about their views concerning the rightful successor to the Prophet. Through a close reading of their respective Saqīfa narratives and by examining their strategies of compilation I have been able to establish the four historians' views on succession to the Prophet, locate this within the range of proto-Sunnī and proto-Shī'ī religio-political views on succession to the Prophet and thus provide a better understanding of how early Muslim historians understood this highly constitutive period of history. After drawing out the intellectual and political context in which the four authors lived and wrote, I have presented brief biographies of the four authors and a description of their relevant works.

11.2 A summary of findings

Using the *ḥadīth* format, al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī use their narratives to advocate a pro-Abū Bakr (and thus de facto proto-Sunnī) view of succession. Al-Ṭabarī presents reports representing both the proto-Sunnī and proto-Shī'ī sides of the debate on succession, namely arguments in favour of the succession of both Abū Bakr and 'Alī. However, he simultaneously downgrades reports opposing the proto-Sunnī position by presenting alternative reports that contradict them. Through the use of the *isnād*, he directs the reader to choose the more 'authentic' (according to Sunnī *ḥadīth* science) proto-Sunnī reports in which 'Alī and Sa'd b. 'Ubāda accepted the outcome of Saqīfa. Al-Balādhurī like al-Ṭabarī uses the *ḥadīth* format to support Abū Bakr's succession. Unlike al-Ṭabarī he only selects reports which favour Abū Bakr's succession, thus sparing him the task of having to reconcile between contradictory reports. His support for Abū Bakr is overt, whereas, al-Ṭabarī's is more subtle.

Al-Ya'qūbī and Ibn A'tham dispense with the *isnād*, preferring a continuous narrative to articulate their views on succession. Al-Ya'qūbī's support for 'Alī and his opposition to Abū Bakr has a strong theological underpinning. 'Alī is the *waṣī* to the Prophet, and was

unequivocally appointed by the Prophet as his successor at Ghadīr Khumm. The status of *ahl al-bayt* is prominent in his narrative. Thus al-Yaʿqūbī's text reflects the proto-Imami Shīʿī view on succession.

Ibn Aʿtham also supports succession of ʿAlī, but his narrative shows little hostility to Abū Bakr and his supporters. As such, his view on succession does not correspond with either the later normative Sunnī or Imāmī Shīʿī view of succession but lies somewhere in between. According to my reading of his text, his view on succession appears to align with the Batrī Zaydī position.[1393] Although the Batriyya, which incorporated both proto-Sunnī and proto-Shīʿī ideas, were prevalent in the second/eighth century, a number of scholars argue that doctrinally, by the late third/ninth century, most Zaydīs were Jarūdi, thus aligning them closer with Imāmī Shīʿīs. My reading of Ibn Aʿtham's text demonstrates that the Batrī stance on succession was still in circulation in the early fourth/tenth century. Although by this time the distinction between proto-Shīʿīsm and proto-Sunnīsm was becoming more pronounced, significant overlap between some proto-Shīʿī and proto-Sunnī precepts and doctrines, as shown in Ibn Aʿtham's *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*, still remained.

The four historians differ in two related issues; the chain of events leading up to the meeting at Saqīfa, and secondly, an interpretation of the outcome at Saqīfa. Al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī, in different ways, portray the succession as a relatively uncontentious affair. The decision to appoint Abū Bakr is portrayed as correct, given his many virtues, the Prophet's commendation of him and the near unanimity on the decision itself. For al-Yaʿqūbī, the succession was far from a smooth affair. The decision to appoint Abū Bakr was a betrayal of the Prophet's legacy and the first of many instances of the victimisation and oppression of *ahl al-bayt*. According to Ibn Aʿtham, the choice of Abū Bakr was clearly a mistake, but an unintended one.

11.3 The limitations of my study, and directions for future enquiry

I have used the Saqīfa narrative to establish the authors' view on succession to the Prophet and align this with normative proto-Sunnī/proto-Shīʿī view on succession. The issue of the Prophet's legitimate successor was one of the first issues that divided early and subsequent proto-Shīʿīs from proto-Sunnīs and can be considered a litmus test of affiliation with either

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[1393] As mentioned in 9.5, this conclusion is tentative, subject to a close reading of the rest of his text.

side. All the proto-Shīʿī groups agree that ʿAlī was the rightful successor to the Prophet.[1394] Likewise the proto-Sunnīs all agree on the legitimacy of Abū Bakr's caliphate. This issue is thus pivotal and credally foundational, even if there were nebulous positions between these two as exemplified in Ibn Aʿtham's text.

My conclusions regarding the authors' theological alignments is deduced from my detailed reading of this one, albeit constitutive, event in Islamic history. In future research, close readings of the remainder of the four books in their entirety, and of how the four authors depicted subsequent historical episodes, could corroborate my findings: the events leading to the assassination of ʿUthmān, the caliphate of ʿAlī, in particular *Jamal* and *Ṣiffīn*, the caliphate of Muʿāwiya, the failed revolt of Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī, and other ʿAlid revolts. Proto-Sunnīs and proto-Shīʿīs took different, although not diametrically opposed, stances on these events. A close reading of how the four authors portrayed these events would give an insight into their theological alignment.

11.4 How the research contributes to the literature

The memory of 'what happened' at Saqīfa influenced every conceivable aspect of Muslim intellectual, political and cultural life. This included: theological concepts (e.g. *waṣī, naṣṣ*), religio-political theory (the irreconcilable doctrines of *Imāmate* and Caliphate), juristic concepts (e.g. *ijmāʿ*), the concept of the *ʿaḍala* versus the disparagement of the Companions and its implication for *ḥadīth* verification, religious celebrations (e.g. Eid Ghadīr), interpretations of early Islamic history (a 'golden age of conquests' or a history of betrayal) and the emergence and subsequent rebellion of a number of sects or confessional groups that differed from one another on questions raised by the Saqīfa incident. The course of Islamic history itself was shaped by this debate: the ʿAbbāsid revolution and rise of the Fāṭimid caliphate are just two examples of the long-term consequences of Saqīfa.

My research breaks new ground by presenting the first in-depth comparative analytical study of four of the earliest extant historical works on Saqīfa, in which I have been able to show how early Muslim historians viewed and represented this influential (and controversial) reference point of Islamic history, a key moment in both social and religio-political history, as well as for

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[1394] Shīʿīs would argue that their view on succession pre-dated Saqīfa, that *imāmate* was commensurate with Prophethood and that the former was thwarted by Saqīfa. Haider (2014), pp. 54-65.

intellectual-theological developments. In terms of the memorialisation of this event, the four historians I have examined use specific strategies of compilation, including selection and omission of sources, to support distinctive views on the issue of the Prophet's successor that were broadly consonant with nascent proto-Shī'ī or proto-Sunnī theological-historical positions. Thus the Saqīfa narratives of my four historians were likely written to conform to existing theological predilections. Historical texts, particularly those dealing with normative and constitutive events in Islamic history, must be read in light of authorial theological alignments along a spectrum of pro-'Alid vs pro-Abū Bakr interpretations of Saqīfa , as the latter often influences narrative itself.[1395] My research also confirms a growing view amongst modern scholars that Muslim historians were not mere compilers of reports but were authors displaying considerable and locatable epistemological as well as narratorial agency.[1396]

Although the boundaries between proto-Shī'īsm and proto-Sunnīsm were still fluid during the life time of the four historians, the issue of succession to the Prophet clearly distinguished the two strands of Islam from one another from the second half of the first century onwards. The legitimacy of Abū Bakr's caliphate remained a defining feature of proto-Sunnīsm, and any opposition to this view was often strongly rebutted. This is reflected in the Saqīfa narratives of al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī. Likewise 'Alī's right to succeed the Prophet was a defining feature of proto-Shī'īsm. Both al-Ya'qūbī and Ibn A'tham reflect this, albeit from distinctive theological perspectives.

In her comparative analysis of various historians' portrayal of the revolt against 'Uthmān b. Affān, Keany argues that historians constructed narratives that reflected their respective political visions. My research, in partial contrast to this, demonstrates that the four Saqīfa narratives were intended as factual accounts of 'what really happened' with a didactic purpose in mind. They were not necessarily intended as religio-political commentaries on contemporary events in a primary sense, as the debate about succession was still a live theological issue at the time of their writing. That said, my thesis is not incompatible with the

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[1395] This point is made by Haider who argues that theology influences the remembrance of the past. Ibid. p. 8.

[1396] Hoyland explains that historians such as al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī lie somewhere on a continuum between transmission and authorship. The selection, reshaping and arrangement of *akhbār* all point to the fact these historians were authors as well as transmitters: Robert G Hoyland, 'History, Fiction and Authorship in the First Centuries of Islam', in *Writing and Representation in Medieval Islam,* ed. by Julia Bray (2006), pp. 16-46.; Stefan Leder, 'Authorship and Transmission in Unauthored Literature: The Akhbār Attributed to Al-Haytham Ibn 'Adī', *Oriens,* 31 (1988).

view that historical narratives reflected contemporary debates, as I have explicated in earlier chapters.

The presence of contemporary debates in the works of my four historians waxes and wanes. At some moments it is prominent and at other times it recedes. Specific events-such as the succession to the Prophet-were formative of proto-Sunnī and proto-Shī'ī theology, political thought and identity. As such it was paramount to construct an authoritative and normative version of an event which aligned with and vindicated the historian's theological position. In such cases political commentary would recede to the background. On other occasions, the four historians *would* use their historical narrative to provide political commentary. And on other occasions they would do both.

11.5 The legacies of Saqīfa

The bifurcation of Muslim religious belief into two main Sunnī and Shī'ī streams is one the enduring legacies of Saqīfa. The relationship between these two groups has fluctuated between peaceful co-existence and brutal sectarian violence. In the 21st century, Sunnī-Shī'ī sectarianism has affected several Middle East countries as well as parts of Asia profoundly, leading to civil wars, terrorism and even genocide. Due to its global ramifications, the issue has attracted the attention of researchers from a wide range of disciplines, politicians and the media.

The rise in sectarian violence, over the past two decades, has led to some politicians and sections of the media to conclude that Sunnī-Shī'ī sectarianism is an inevitable consequence of two irreconcilable interpretations of Islam, and in particular their differences over what constitutes legitimate authority and thus succession to religious and/or political leadership over Muslim communities.[1397] Dixon refers to this approach, in which Muslims are portrayed as essentially violent, as primordialism.[1398] A diametrically opposed view downplays the role of theology and history in sectarianism, and instead blames state actors, whether external (e.g. Iranian or Saudi foreign policy) or internal (e.g. poor governance in Iraq and Syria under Saddam and Asad respectively) for sectarianism.[1399] Neither of these explanations are

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[1397] Nader Hashemi and others, 'Introduction. The Sectarianization Thesis', in *Sectarianization: Mapping the New Politics of the Middle East,* ed. by Danny Postel Nader Hashmi (2017), (p. 5).
[1398] Dixon (2017), pp.11-36.
[1399] Hashemi and others (2017). ; Wehrey refers to this view as 'Instrumentalism'.

satisfactory in isolation. The causes of sectarianism are complex and multi-faceted and cannot be reduced to a primordial hatred between Sunnī and Shī'ī, nor blamed solely on state actors.[1400]

The 1979 Iranian revolution and subsequent Saudi-Iranian rivalry provides the backdrop to much of the subsequent Sunnī-Shī'ī sectarian conflict of the twenty first century.[1401] However, each sectarian conflict, whether in Iraq, Syria, Yemen or Pakistan has been shaped and driven by particular political, economic and social factors.[1402] Religion is not a key driver in the conflicts, yet the presence of a confessional or sectarian identity has allowed non-religious factors such as economic disparity, political marginalisation, geo-political rivalries, and weak state structures to exploit religious differences and exacerbate the conflicts.[1403] Although confessional identity is ever present, its salience is dictated by socioeconomic and political considerations.[1404] Sometimes religious markers of difference come to the fore; at other times they recede and are subsumed under other identity markers.[1405] Yet the tracing of religious markers of difference, whether they engender inter-confessional coexistence or conflict, to the events of Saqīfa in 632 CE is not a point that is in doubt.

To illustrate this point I use the example of Iraq, which witnessed brutal sectarian violence following the 2003 US led invasion. At the peak of the violence in 2005-6, tens of thousands of civilians were killed and a further two million were internally displaced.[1406] A multiplicity of factors led to the sectarian violence including the memory of discrimination and persecution of Shī'īs during Saddam's rule,[1407] the collapse of state institutions during the (1990s) sanctions

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[1400] Christine Baker, *Medieval Islamic Sectarianism*, (2019), p. 88.

[1401] Hashemi and others (2017), p. 3. To this I would also add the radicalisation of Sunnīs during the international jihad against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, which led the formation of Al-Qā'ida, a trans-national sectarian movement.

[1402] Heather Robinson and others, *Sectarianism in the Middle East. Implications for the United States*, (2018), p. 107.

[1403] Geneive Abdo, *The New Sectarianism: The Arab Uprisings and the Rebirth of the Shi'a-Sunni Divide*, (2017), p. 7. Fanar Haddad, *Sectarianism in Iraq: Antagonistic Visions of Unity*, (2011), p. 183.

[1404] Haddad (2011), p. 2.

[1405] Ibid. p. 6.; For example, an individual living in Kirkuk (Iraq) may identify themselves as a Kurd, an Iraqi, a Muslim, a Sunnī, or by their political affiliation, or tribe.

[1406] Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, (2002), p. 308.

[1407] In the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf war defeat, returning Shī'ī Iraqi soldiers began an uprising which was brutally crushed within a month, leaving over 30,000 dead. Phebe Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq*, (2004), pp. 242-52. Shī'īs viewed this episode as one of the most explicit examples of a state attack on Shī'īsm, and it greatly extenuated their sense of victimhood, Sunnīs on the other hand viewed the tragedy as an Iranian inspired attack on their country which was reeling from a devastating military

era, intervention by external state (America) and non-state (al-Qaʻida) actors, incompetent government, and Sunnī marginalisation during the post 2003 period of Shīʻī-centric state building.[1408] Two years after the invasion, elections were held in which parties actively politicised religious identities to win votes.[1409] This election was boycotted by many Sunnī parties, and a unified bloc of Shīʻi parties won 50% of the vote.[1410] Nuri Mālikī of the Daʻwa Party became Prime Minster in 2006, in a midst of a full scale insurgency against the US occupation and a slide to civil war. Thus the socio-economic and political factors outlined above led to the salience of sectarian identity, which was predicated on the historical memory of Saqīfa, and to inter-confessional violence.

In the 2018 election the religio-political landscape was refreshingly different. No longer was the election fought on sectarian grounds but on issues that affected all Iraqis; corruption, instability, and poverty. The *Naṣr* Coalition led by the former (Shīʻī) Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi comprised of both Sunnī and Shīʻī parties.[1411] The Sāirūn, a coalition of secularists, communists and Shīʻī Islamists, stood on an anti-sectarian platform, winning the largest number of seats in the elections.[1412] A change in the political and economic environment led to the receding of sectarian violence.

Modern researchers trying to understand contemporary waves of Sunnī-Shīʻī sectarianism must have an understanding of key historical moments which led to the formation of these sectarian identities. Saqīfa is one of those moments and is at the heart of Sunnī-Shīʻī difference. My research, and its presentation of a textual analysis of four of the earliest extant historical sources on Saqīfa, provides important historical and religio-political context for researchers in Sunnī-Shīʻī sectarianism, and a much-needed corrective to the notion that sectarian difference leads to implacable hostility.

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defeat. Such radically different interpretation of the same event only served to exacerbate sectarian divisions. Haddad (2011), p. 140.; ibid. p. 65.; ibid. p. 117.

[1408] Fanar Haddad, 'Shia-Centric State Building and Sunni Rejection in Post-2003 Iraq', in *Beyond Sunni and Shia: The Roots of Sectarianism in a Changing Middle East,* ed. by Frederic Wehrey (2018), (p. 118).

[1409] Ibid. p. 117.

[1410] Tripp (2002), p. 297.

[1411] https://www.iraqinews.com/baghdad-politics/ahead-of-iraqs-elections-there-are-signs-that-sectarianism-is-at-last-collapsing/. [accessed 17 June 2019]

[1412] https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-44178771 [accessed 17 June 2019]. Communists were known for their opposition to religious sectarianism.

12 Abbreviations

EI²   Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd Edition.

EI³   Encyclopaedia of Islam, 3rd Edition.

IJMES   International Journal of Middle East Studies.

JOAS   Journal of the American Oriental Society.

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